

## **Chandi Homam**

### **Laghu Paddhati (Short Procedure)**

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#### **A Word from the author**

My spiritual master Dr Manish Pandit hails from Pune, India and lives in Manchester, UK. The idea of spreading homam in the world was revealed to him in a dream a few years ago. He saw eight elevated beings in a dream. They transported him across blue skies to Chennai, India, where he was shown the big fire that was to be lighted in future. They told him to start the work. They assured him that homam as a spiritual sadhana was very appropriate in Kali yuga. As spiritually inclined people have fewer and fewer hours to spend on spiritual sadhana everyday with the progressing Kali yuga, sadhanas that work fast are more relevant. Homam works much faster than japam and other spiritual sadhanas. They told him that the practice of homam would transform into a movement that would reach across caste, class and race barriers.

Later, when we were performing a Shata Chandi Homam in the first week of March 2006 at the Kalikambal temple in Chennai, he had a darshan of Divine Mother on a Friday and was reassured by Her about the right course of events regarding spreading homam. A Mahaganapathi homam manual was published later and several people are performing it daily or weekly or monthly.

Our goal is to create a community of people who regularly perform a quick homam for the deity that they are attracted to. We intend to make manuals available for simplified homam procedures for several deities.

#### **What is Homam**

Homam is a fire ritual of sacrifice. It is also known as homa or havan or yajna (yagya) or yajana. In homam, divine presence is invoked into fire using specific procedures. Then materials are sacrificed into fire, along with sacred chants (mantras). The sacrifices are supposed to reach gods. It is interesting to note that fire ritual is an ancient practice and several religions taught worshipping gods in fire.

#### **Why Homam**

Homam is a very powerful tool for spiritual progress. Chanting mantras in front of fire while offering material substances into fire has a great cleansing and calming influence on one's mind and gives great level of mental focus, peace, calmness and bliss. This practice has been extolled in many scriptures such as Yajurveda and Bhagavad Gita. Vedic seers practiced it regularly. Several people are experiencing the benefits of homam even today. The proof of the pudding is

in eating it. If one performs homam regularly for a few months, one will surely see the difference in one's mental state.

### **Word of Caution**

Chandi is a very fierce and powerful deity – She is the primordial energy that is responsible for the creation, sustenance and destruction of this entire universe. She is the sum total of the energies of all beings of this universe. Chandi homam is unquestionably a very powerful sadhana.

This ritual *can* be used for getting wealth and health, for success in various worldly matters and for destroying enemies. However, one performing Chandi homam for such a specific purpose needs to meet some exacting demands, such as perfect pronunciation, perfect procedure and perfect materials for the purpose, and have some accumulated spiritual energy to pull off the *feat*.

Neither is the author an expert in performing homam with such an attitude nor does he teach that. This document is strictly for one who performs Chandi homam for spiritual upliftment and looks at the Divine Mother as a mother and looks at oneself as a helpless child who desperately wants to improve. This document is strictly for one who is willing to undergo whatever one's mother wants one to undergo, for the sake of spiritual upliftment.

However, it is *not* necessary that She should take away one's material success and prosperity in order to give spiritual upliftment. In fact, many people who perform Chandi homam everyday or every week using this document may experience continued or even increased material success (and yet be able to remain detached from it and progress spiritually). However, in *some* cases, She *may* decide to give a shock or two in worldly matters if something is badly blocking one's spiritual progress and a setback is needed. The path towards self-realization is different for each person. She knows the best for each person. Unless one is willing to surrender to Her completely and accept whatever comes one's way – good or bad – as Her blessings and unless one does not *expect* any specific material benefit from this homam, one should *not* use this document to perform Chandi homam.

Again, as emphasized in the Mahaganapathi homam manual, regularity is the key. Performing a homam once in a while is insufficient. One should repeat the sadhana daily or weekly. If one performs Chandi homam once everyday, it is **almost sure to transform** one's attitude and outlook and put one's spiritual evolution on the fast track.

### **What Homam Does**

Hinduism teaches that gods come into fire and receive the prayers of spiritual aspirants. Even when one meditates without an external fire, gods being meditated on come into the internal fire of the aspirant and receive the mantras via that fire. However, the internal fire is quite weaker than an external fire for most people and hence it is beneficial to perform worship using an external fire. That practice eventually strengthens the internal fire also.

We all see and feel our *sthoola sareera* (gross body), which is made up of gross matter. But, we also have a *sookshma sareera* (subtle body) made up of subtle matter. It cannot be perceived by the senses attached to the gross body (eyes, ears, nose *etc*). It contains thousands of *naadis*, which are essentially subtle channels of energy flow. A fire called *bhootaagni* (existential fire) burns in this subtle body. It is the subtle basis of one's entire existence. It manifests in the gross body in the form of various fires. Examples are the "fire" in the stomach that helps one digest the food eaten and the "fire" in the brain that helps one digest and understand various sense experiences.

This *bhootaagni* is vital to one's existence. In most people, it is quite weak. Due to impurities and obstructions in the *naadis* of the subtle body, this fire cannot burn strongly to energize the entire existence. When it burns low, the divine presence that can enter it is quite limited in magnitude.

If one overcomes the internal weaknesses such as desire, anger, greed, false prestige, wantonness and jealousy, develops compassion, one-pointed devotion, detachment, and sheds one layer of ego and delusion after another, eventually the impurities in the *naadis* will be cleared and *bhootaagni* will burn strong. However, this is a very difficult and time-consuming process.

One can take advantage of an external fire in that regard. As the deity of homam enters the external fire on a regular basis, the nearby divine presence burns the impurities in the *naadis*, by burning various karmas (*actions* from the *past*, which will get corresponding *reactions* in the *future*) in the *kaarana sareera* (causal body). This eventually leads to the strengthening of *bhootaagni*.

After one performs homam for a long enough time, one's *naadis* are cleared of the obstructions and one's *bhootaagni* burns brightly. At that juncture, all *sadhanas* performed by one, including regular meditation, become much more effective. If *bhootaagni* can accommodate divine presence to a larger degree, the meditation becomes more effective.

The goal of all spiritual sadhana, whether one thinks in those terms or not, is actually to cleanse oneself of all the internal impurities. Various karmas from previous lives hang on to the *kaarana sareera* (causal body), making it heavy. These in turn manifest in the *sookshma sareera* (subtle body) as various impurities in various *nadis* (subtle energy channels) that block the free flow of energy. These in turn manifest in the *sthoola sareera* (gross body) as various problems of the body and mind. These also cause dense conditioning of one's mind to sink one's consciousness in an ocean of delusion. This conditioning of the consciousness due to previous karmas is also known as *maayaa*. When one is sunk in *maayaa*, one is beaten down by the six enemies – *kaama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (delusion), *mada* (wantonness) and *maatsarya* (jealousy). As one makes spiritual progress, one's karmas drop off the *kaarana sareera*, the impurities in the *nadis* are cleansed, one's mental conditioning becomes weaker and one can resist the internal enemies. All these are inter-related and happen simultaneously. When one burns all of one's major karmas, one becomes karmically very light. *Nadis* in the *sookshma sareera* are all clear and energy can freely flow anywhere. One is untouched by the internal enemies then. When one sees *all* as *god*, nothing can make one angry or jealous or deluded. When mental conditioning drops, nothing excites one and nothing saddens one. One stays in a

state of bliss always. Despite the changing nature of the external work and appearance, one is in the same state internally.

The goal of all spiritual sadhana is to reach that state. Whether through jnaana (knowledge and wisdom) or through bhakti (devotion and surrender) or both, one has to burn the karmas and impurities blocking one from reaching that state. The goal of all sadhana is to let ego (the sense of “I-ness”) go completely and merge (have yoga) with divinity. If a vacuum can be created within oneself, then divine presence can fill the vacuum. As long as one has egotism and various kinds of conditioning (vasanas) of mind, such a vacuum cannot be created. When all those cease and the mental conditioning is weakened, the mind become extremely calm and a vacuum is created within. Then divine presence fills one and the result is indescribable bliss.

Homam facilitates this process quickly by burning various karmas that are creating various layers of conditioning and obstructing spiritual progress.

A lot of Hindu rituals involve invoking divine presence in an idol or a water pot (kalasha) and offering worship to the idol/pot. Unfortunately, we are living in Kali yuga in which the elements of earth, water and air are not pure. If the idol has any impurities on account of the time when it was made, how it was made, the thoughts of the person who made it *etc*, the impurities heavily restrict how much divine presence the idol can accommodate.

The only elements that cannot be polluted are space/ether (aakaasa) and fire (agni). It is very difficult to do spiritual sadhana via the medium of space. So the best medium for sadhana is fire. One of the Sanskrit words for “fire” is “paavaka”, which means “the one that purifies”. Fire is by definition pure and purifies everything that it comes in touch with. The wood or coconut used to sustain fire may have impurities, but fire itself is very pure and accommodates a divine presence of the highest degree. For a ritual using the earth or water elements as the medium to be successful, the sadhaka must be quite pure and the sadhaka’s bhootagni must be reasonably strong. On the other hand, a ritual using the fire element as the medium can be successful irrespective of the stature and purity of the sadhaka. For this reason, homam is the most apt sadhana for most spiritual aspirants in this yuga, especially as the Kali deepens. Unfortunately, many people have unfounded fears of making mistakes and being punished for them and hence do not take advantage of the fantastic practice of homam.

Apart from the personal benefits, there are universal benefits of homam. The offerings in the fire finally reach Sun, who feeds the entire earth. The gross material body of the burnt offerings reaches the gross material body of Sun. The subtle body of the burnt offerings reaches the subtle body of Sun. It is the subtle body of Sun that feeds the subtle bodies of all beings on earth. Thus, feeding it is very important for the smooth running of life on earth. As we enter the Ghora Kali (terrible age of strife and disorderliness) phase, adharma (un-righteous activities) will be on the rise in the world and as such the subtle body of Sun will become weaker. If more and more people perform homam and strengthen the subtle body of Sun, it will balance the adharma and keep the world away from a total collapse.

## Common Mis-conceptions

(1) *Misconception:* Homam is very difficult to perform. It is for experts only.

*Comment:* Not really. Several people who did not know anything about how to do any kind of worship conducted homam by themselves by reading this document. It is a simple practice.

(2) *Misconception:* One must either do a “perfect” homam or not do any homam at all. A perfect homam takes a very long time.

*Comment:* Though one may eat a sumptuous meal on an important festival day, one does not necessarily get a lot of energy from it. One gets most of one’s energy from the regular dal (lentils) and rice that one eats everyday.

Though there are complicated versions of homam, it is better to do a simple homam on a regular basis than to do a complicated version very rarely. A small half-hour or one-hour homam done on a daily basis is far better for spiritual sadhana than a big annual or half-yearly homam.

(3) *Misconception:* If mistakes happen in a homam, the consequences will be bad.

*Comment:* If a homam is performed with a saattwik spirit for saattwik purposes, there are no risks.

If you act nice with your parents because you want their money, you have to understand their thinking well, take the advice of people who know them well and act very carefully to get money from them. Mistakes can be costly and spoil your goal.

But, if you act nice with your parents simply because you love them and want to show your love, you do not need to be careful. You just show your love in whatever way you know. There is no need to follow anybody’s advice strictly and there are no risks.

Similarly, you have to be careful if you perform a homam for certain material goals (such as getting money, attracting someone, destroying someone *etc*). If you perform a homam just to show your love to god, cleanse yourself spiritually and make yourself worthy of divine communion, then there are no risks. The procedure taught in this document is based on the teachings of rishis and it is safe for anybody to use. Small mistakes will not result in any punishment.

In fact, it is expected that everybody who uses this document is interested in only the second kind of goal, *i.e.* spiritual cleansing and upliftment.

(4) *Misconception:* One not initiated by a guru (master) cannot perform homam or recite certain mantras.

*Comment:* If one receives a mantra or a procedure from the mouth of a master, it is analogous to a millionaire opening a bank account in his son’s name with a high starting balance. The son is

lucky, as he is starting off with a big balance. Similarly, some of the siddhi (attainment) the master has in the mantra or procedure is transferred to the disciple even as (s)he starts out.

If one does *not* receive a mantra or a procedure from the mouth of a master, it is analogous to starting off with a zero bank balance. While it is useful to start off with a positive balance, it is neither necessary nor sufficient. There are sons of millionaires who used up the millions earned by parents and reduced them to zero, while there are some self-made men who made millions purely with self-effort. Similarly, one taught by the greatest guru can fall while one not taught by a guru can reach the ultimate. While it is desirable to have a guru, it is by no means compulsory.

If one is the kind who needs to have a guru figure behind every mantra or procedure, one can think of the author and/or his spiritual master, Dr Manish Pandit from Pune, India (currently residing in Manchester, UK) as the guru for this homam procedure.

(5) *Misconception*: Those who are not learned in Veda cannot recite Veda mantras and perform homam based on Veda mantras.

*Comment*: Jnaneshwar was a 12<sup>th</sup> century master. He was a great Krishna devotee. When he was asked to not recite Veda by a council of erudite scholars, as he was not formally qualified, he replied that every being had a right to recite Veda. When he started reciting, they tried to shut his mouth. Then, a buffalo standing next to him recited Veda! The scholars begged his pardon and corrected their narrow-minded attitude.

Many great souls like him taught that Veda could be recited by anyone. One engaged in *tantric* practices that serve specific purposes and give specific *siddhis* (attainments) need to be afraid of side effects and punishments for mistakes, but mantras from Veda were taught by great rishis for the highest purpose of self-realization. One reciting them need not be afraid of any side effects. Veda mantras are saattwik, self-correcting and ultimately leading to self-realization.

Those who have an affinity to tantric practices should not be discouraged from learning and using them, but those who appreciate the teachings of rishis must be encouraged to recite Veda mantras and perform homam based on Veda mantras. The key is to have an attitude of submission and a desire for nothing other than self-realization and to do homam without any expectations whatsoever. Then there are no risks.

The procedure taught in this document contains just a few Veda mantras, which are not very difficult to pronounce.

(6) *Misconception*: Those who are not born in a Brahmin family cannot perform homam.

*Comment*: One's varna (caste) is not to be determined solely from the family one is born in. There are examples of men born to parents belonging to various castes performing *tapascharya* and becoming rishis. Maharshi Viswamitra, who taught the Savitru Gayatri mantra, was a kshatriya by birth. Maharshi Valmiki, who taught Brahma Jnana to Maharshi Bharadwaja, was a shoodra by birth.

One who has affinity to knowledge is a Brahmin (scholar). One who has affinity to power and authority is a kshatriya (warrior). One who has affinity to money is a vaisya (trader). One who has affinity to carnal pleasures is a shoodra (worker). If a person born in a Brahmin family is after money, he becomes a vaisya and not a Brahmin. On the other hand, if a person born in a vaisya family desires nothing but knowledge and self-realization, he automatically becomes a Brahmin and very fit to perform homam.

Irrespective of the caste of birth, one who is interested in knowledge (especially knowledge of self) and one whose interest in power, money and pleasures is decaying is fit to perform homam.

(7) *Misconception*: Women cannot perform homam.

*Comment*: There is a big difference between men and women when it comes to the gross body. But, at the level of subtle body or causal body, there is no difference based on gender. All spiritual practices operate mainly at the subtle and causal level. So, it makes no sense to have a *total* ban on women performing homam.

However, there are some practical reasons behind the biases of tradition. Though there are no differences based on gender in the subtle body, the differences at the gross body level can come into play in the initial stages. Women interested in performing homam may carefully consider the following factors and make their decision.

Any spiritual practice performed well over a period of time eventually results in a Kundalini awakening and rise. Kundalini is nothing but one's self-identification. It is a microcosmic representation of the Divine Mother within oneself. It defines how one identifies oneself. Though everything in the universe is just Brahman, each being forms a separate self-identity and that self-identity is reinforced quite strongly with time. When one identifies completely with the body without any kind of questioning, Kundalini is asleep. As kundalini wakes up and rises, one starts to wonder "who am I" and one's awareness of self becomes more and more refined. As kundalini reaches higher chakras, one realizes one's true nature. When Kundalini reaches Sahasrara chakra, one realizes one's truest nature, *i.e.* one realizes that one is the formless Brahman.

If Kundalini gets stuck at swadhishtana chakra, one's sexual drive increases and one is tested in that matter. In this matter, women and men are very different. This phase can be very difficult for women. This is not to say that this phase is easy for men.

More importantly, some spiritual experiences in a pregnant lady can even kill a fetus, if the soul in it is not spiritually elevated. On the positive side, if an elevated soul is in the fetus at the time of such experiences, a siddha may be born.

There is a negative for every positive and it is a matter of balancing the factors and making an individual decision. Women interested in homam should consider the above factors and decide whether they want to perform homam or not. If any women are interested, they should be encouraged to perform homam.

(8) *Misconception*: Homam is just like meditation. It is not any better. It does not really make any difference.

*Comment*: The proof of the pudding is in eating it. If one tries performing a homam to the best of one's ability on a daily basis for a few months, one will know what homam can do! After doing homam for several months, one will find that all other sadhanas one does become more effective as a result of homam.

(9) *Misconception*: One should get a priest to do homam and not do it oneself.

*Comment*: Let us revisit a previous analogy. If one wants to be nice to one's parents to get their money, one may engage someone who will act on one's behalf to get the money of parents. But, if one's sole purpose is to just love one's parents and show that love, it is better to do it directly than to engage other people.

(10) *Misconception*: Before doing homam with any mantra, one must do japam of that mantra by a count that is ten times the homam count. For example, one must do japam by a count of 10,000 before one does homam by a count of 1,000.

*Comment*: This convention is not without reason. The true meaning of this convention is that homam is ten times more powerful than japam. If one does a mantra 1,000 in a homam, it is *equivalent* to doing the mantra 10,000 in japam. If one wants, one can offer the mantra entirely in external fire and there is no need to do any japam before doing homam.

All thumb rules and conventions have exceptions. If a rishi with a very strong bhootagni does japam, it is equivalent to a homam and the "ten times" rule does not apply. However, for most normal people, homam is ten times more powerful than japam. The bottomline is that the strength and the purity of the medium that accommodates the presence of the deity who receives the mantra will decide the effectiveness of the mantra.

## **About This Document**

This document describes a short procedure for Chandi homam. Of course, even a short version of Chandi homam may take 1.5 hours to 3 hours based on how fluent one is with the long text. To perform Chandi homam, one will need the following in addition to this document:

(1) "Sree Durgaa Saptashati" (in any script) from Gita Press, Gorakhpur ([www.gitapress.org](http://www.gitapress.org)) or any other publisher. This contains 700 verses in praise of the Divine Mother, known as Durga saptashati or Chandi saptashati or saptashati or Chandipath or Devi mahatmyam. Some associated prayers known as kavacha, argala, keelaka are also there in most books. One should familiarize oneself with this text and become reasonably comfortable in reading it, before undertaking a Chandi homam. If one can read the Devanagari script of Sanskrit, one may try downloading it from [http://www.gitapress.org/books/paath/118/Durga\\_Saptashati.pdf](http://www.gitapress.org/books/paath/118/Durga_Saptashati.pdf).

One should consult one's elders and gurus and decide whether one is allowed to perform a homam or not. If one thinks one is allowed to do homam and is interested in doing homam on a regular basis but does not know how to do it, then one can use this document to learn *one* way to



do it. If one's gurus have taught one a different procedure, one may use the procedure taught by one's gurus. This document is for the benefit of those who do *not* know *any* procedure and want to learn *some* procedure to do homam. Those who learnt a slightly different procedure from the previous versions of this document need not worry and either follow what they have already learnt or switch to the procedure in this document.

### **Excessive Movement of Body and Mind**

Some people move a lot when they meditate. As it was mentioned earlier, the goal of all sadhana is to calm the mind down and create a vacuum within oneself, so that the deity of the sadhana can come and occupy the space. One should lose awareness of the body. When meditating, it is a good idea to keep the back straight without making it too tense. It is a good idea to not move. If it is not possible to stay still for extended periods, one should at least try to stay still over short periods of time. It is also a good idea to close the eyes. One can focus one's mind on either a deity or on the sound of the mantra.

Similarly, when performing homam also, it is a good idea to keep the back straight and minimize the movement, especially of the back. It is ideal if one keeps the back and head erect and manages with a minimal movement of just one arm.

If body is stationary, there is some chance that mind too will become stationary for a while in the middle. That is the goal after all.

### **Correct Attitude**

While it is good to follow the procedure faithfully, it is even more important to surrender oneself to god, leave ego and identify one's self with the deity in the fire when performing the homam. If that is there, all other minor errors will have no negative effect. If that is not there, even an impeccably performed homam will not have any tangible effect. Like mentioned earlier, the goal is to melt ego (I-ness or sense of self) and create a vacuum within oneself, so that the deity can fill it. Complete devotion, single-minded focus on deity/mantra/procedure and minimization of the activity of body and mind can help one achieve that eventually.

If one has an over-active mind, doing pranayama before homam can be useful. The time around sunrise in the morning is a particularly conducive to a pleasant homam.

### **Materials Needed**

#### ***Must have***

- One homa kundam<sup>1</sup> (a copper container with preferably a square shaped base). If a homa kundam is not available, one can dig a square shaped pit in the ground (with 1-2 foot sides and half to one foot deep) and arrange a few layers of bricks around the pit.
- Dry coconut halves (available in Indian stores) or wood (for burning)

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<sup>1</sup> If in India, search for "Havan Kund" on <http://shopping.rediff.com>. If in US, search for "Kund" on <http://indousplaza.com>.

- Ghee (clarified butter) from cow's milk. It is available in Indian stores. If unable to find, just get some butter and melt it in low heat. After it melts, some black stuff will separate from the melted liquid. Filter out the black deposit and use the liquid. It will solidify after a time. Before the homam, melt it again and use it.
- A wooden spoon/ladle to put ghee into the fire
- Some akshatas. Those can be made by mixing raw (uncooked) white (or brown) rice grains with a drop of sesame oil (or some other oil) and a pinch of turmeric powder. Instead of turmeric powder, one can also use vermilion (kumkum) powder used for the dot on the forehead.
- A small lamp, consisting of a wick that can be lit in sesame oil/ghee. A candle can also be used as an alternative, though it is better to burn ghee or sesame oil than wax.
- A match box to light fire
- One tumbler or cup to store water. It should preferably be made of silver or copper or clay. If unavailable, you may use steel or glass.
- One spoon (preferably silver or copper)
- Some water

### *Optional*

- A small idol of Divine Mother. If you have none, use a metallic coin or any metallic object. Actually, you can do without any idol and just invoke Chandi in fire.
- A mixture of various auspicious materials known as the *havan samagri* (available in India stores), if possible.
- Some sandalwood powder, turmeric powder and kumkum (vermilion) powder
- Some flowers or flower petals
- Some sesame seeds, some mamra/murmura (puffed white rice), some nuts, some mildly popped corn and other materials that can be offered in fire. Small fruits are also fine. Honey can also be used. All these are optional. The absolute minimum needed is coconut pieces and ghee.
- Some darbhas (dried blades of sacred grass). Check with a local temple priest to find out how to procure them. If darbhas are unavailable, you may think of creative alternatives. For example, find some other dry grass or dry leaves or just thin twigs and pray to your ishta devata (favorite deity) before the homam to make them acceptable.
- An incense stick (agarbatti) if available and a holder to stick it to (a banana can be used instead)
- Camphor and a container or plate for lighting camphor and offering haarati
- Some food that you can offer to god. Eggs, meat and seafood should not be used in that food. In fact, do not *eat* eggs, meat and seafood on the day of homam. Onion, garlic, strong spices and too much of chillies should also be avoided in the food cooked for God. Fruits are also fine. Just sugar or brown sugar or rock candy sugar or jaggery can be offered to god too. When using sugar, please note that the normal white refined sugar used these days has bone ash in it. Brown sugar, vegetarian sugar or jaggery are to be preferred.
- Some milk, if available.

## Preparation Before Homam

- (1) Instead of arranging homa kundam directly on the floor, place a wood plank or something on the floor, wrapped with aluminum foil (or some such thing), and put 4 bricks of the same height on it and place the homa kundam on the bricks. Thus, there is some air and a wooden plank under the homa kundam and the floor does not get heated up.
- (2) If you want easy cleaning, place some aluminum foils on the floor all around the plank containing homa kundam. If ghee or something is spilled in that area, it is easy to clean.
- (3) If you want, you can also cover the interior of homa kundam with some aluminum foils, so that it is easy to clean.
- (4) Make some food items to offer to god. You can just use rock sugar candy or raisins or dates or fruits or jaggery also. Please see the notes in the previous section on this.
- (5) Cook a little plain white rice. I put a few grains of rice and a little water in a small container and put it in microwave oven before my homam and cooked rice is ready at the end when I need it. If this is not possible, take a banana or apple or some other fruit and make it into 6 slices.
- (6) Fill water in the tumbler/cup and place the spoon in it.
- (7) Make a seat for yourself in front of the homa kundam. Ideally you should be facing east, i.e. homa kundam should be on the east from you. On the east of the homa kundam, place a small plate or a wooden plank, make a pile of some rice grains on it and place the idol (or a metal/clay object such as a coin) on it. You can decorate based on your ability and taste. An idol is optional. You can worship Chandi directly in fire.
- (8) From the middle of the western edge of the homam kundam, draw two parallel red lines with kumkum (vermilion) powder towards your seat. They should go east-west and connect homa kundam to your seat. Melt the ghee and place the bowl containing it on those lines.
- (9) Cut dry coconuts into small pieces. Pieces of 1 inch x 1 inch size are useful.
- (10) *Important:* Do not consume any food within 3-4 hours before the homam (atleast one hour). Evacuate the bowels before homam and take bath. Stomach should be empty during a homam for the best experience.

## Homam Procedure

### Anujnaa (Permission)

Before starting the homam, think in your mind of Mother Earth who is bearing you, Lord Ganesha who removes obstacles, your ishta devata (favorite deity), your parents, the rishis of your gothra (if you know them), all the rishis and all your gurus. Then say the following, while mentally requesting all the gods to co-operate with your homam.

om ṛddhyāsmā ḥavyairnamāsoṣadyaḥ   mītraṁ devaṁ mītrādheyam   no astu   anūrādhān haviṣā vārdhayantaḥ   śataṁ jīvema śaradaḥ savīrāḥ
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If you have a “pavitram” (a ring made of darbha or a special ring made of metal), wear it now. If you don’t have a pavitram, take any ring that you have, pray to your ishta devata and wear it. It should be worn on the right hand ring finger. If you don’t have a ring, don’t worry and move on.

### **Aachamanam (sipping water to purify)**

Take a little water from the tumbler into your right hand with a spoon. Drink the water after saying the first item below. Take more water with the spoon into your hand, say the second item below and drink it. Take more water, say the third item below and drink it. Imagine that Vishnu who is within you is getting that water.

om keśavāya svāhā |      om nārāyaṇāya svāhā |      om mādhavāya svāhā |

### **Vighneswara Pooja (worshipping the remover of obstacles)**

In order to not have any obstacles in the pooja, we have to pray to Ganesha in the beginning. Just read the following verses:

śuklāmbāradharaṁ viṣṇuṁ śaśivaraṁ caturbhujam | prasannavadanaṁ dhyāyet sarva  
vighnopaśāntaye || agajānana padmārkaṁ gajānanamaharṇiṣam | anekadaṁ taṁ bhaktānām  
ekadantaṁ upāsmāhe || vakratuṅḍa mahākāya koṭisūryasamaprabha | nirvighnaṁ kuru me  
deva sarvakāryeṣu sarvadā ||

Pray within your mind to Ganesha to remove obstacles from your homam. If you have time, energy and inclination (or when you are doing a longer version), you can even make a small Ganesha idol with turmeric and water and do shodasopachaara pooja to the idol. But just reading the above verses and praying to Ganesha in mind should suffice for a short homam that is performed on a regular basis.

### **Praanaayaamam (restraining the life force)**

Take some akshatas (see “Materials Needed” for a description of how to make them) in the left palm, place the left palm on the left lap, hold the nostrils with the right hand and do praanaayaamam. Place the little finger and ring finger on the left nostril and thumb on the right nostril. Close the left nostril, open the right nostril by releasing the thumb and say the Gayatri mantra mentally while gently breathing in through the right nostril (without making any breathing sound). If you don’t know the Gayatri mantra, use one of the following mantras:

om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya |      om namaśśivāya |      om gaṁ gaṇapataye namaḥ |

After saying the mantra once, close the right nostril with the thumb and say the mantra once more while retaining the air previously breathed in. Then open the left nostril by relaxing the little and ring fingers and say the mantra for the third time while breathing out through the left nostril. When done, say the mantra once more, while breathing in through the left nostril. Then close the left nostril with little and ring fingers and say the mantra for the fifth time while retaining the air previously breathed in. Then release the thumb and say the mantra for the sixth time while breathing out through the right nostril. While reading the mantra all the six times, contemplate the formless supreme Brahman (supreme soul of the entire universe) that fills each being of this universe and also the air being breathed in and out. If you want, you can imagine a

specific form (such as your ishta devata) also and imagine that your ishta devata fills the entire universe. If you want, you can repeat the above sequence as many times as you comfortably can.

### **Sankalpam (taking the vow)**

Now, declare your intention of doing a homam to please Chandī. Transfer the akshatas to the right hand, place the open left palm (empty) on right lap, place the closed right palm containing akshatas on the left palm. Then say the following, while mentally thinking that you are going to do a homa to the best of your ability, to please Chandī.

om mamopāṭṭa samasta duritakṣayadvārā śrī parameśvara prītyartham śrī mahākālī mahālakṣmī mahāsarasvatī prasāda siddhyartham adya śubhadine śubhamuhūrte śrī caṇḍī homakarma yathāśakti kariṣye |

Then leave the akshatas from your hand in front of the homa kundam or the idol and sprinkle a little bit of water on the palms. Now light the ghee/oil lamp.

### **Kalasa Suddhi (water purification)**

When you are doing a long version of the homam, you can establish a kalasam in the northeastern side of the homa kundam and invoke Varuna in it and do shodasopachaara pooja to Varuna and read Punyaaha Vaachanam (Pavamana Sooktam). For a short homam, you can just do the following.

Place a few akshatas and a flower (if available) in the tumbler containing water. If you can, put dhenu mudra (else, don't worry). Say the following syllable 11 times to purify the water.

vaṁ

Now read the following and think that auspicious essence of various rivers of the world is entering the water in the tumbler.

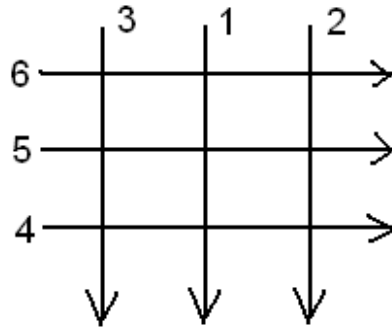
gaṅge ca yamune caiva godāvāri sarasvati |  
narmade sindhu kāveri jāle'smin sannidhiṁ kuru ||  
amṛtaṁ bhavatu

Then take a little water from the tumbler with a flower or flower petal or spoon and sprinkle it on yourself, on homa kundam, on the idol you are going to use and other materials to be used in homam (like fruits, flowers and food).

Take a darbha (see "Materials Needed" for a description) and draw 6 lines with the darbha on the base of the homakundam, in the same order as shown in Figure 1. The direction in which each line is drawn is indicated by the direction of the arrow in the figure. Say the following six mantras while drawing the six lines (respectively).

om brahmaṇe namaḥ |  
om yamāya namaḥ |  
om somāya namaḥ |  
om rudrāya namaḥ |  
om viṣṇave namaḥ |  
om indrāya namaḥ |

Figure 1



### Agni Pratishthaapana (fire installation)

Take a darbha. Place it inside the homa kundam (on the base), with the tip of the darbha facing east and the other end facing west. Take another darbha. Place it inside, with the tip of the darbha facing north and the other end facing south.

Take a piece of camphor, light it from the lamp and place it in the middle of the homa kundam, while saying:

om bhūrbhuvassuvarom

Place one or more dry coconut pieces (or a log/twig/piece of wood) above the burning camphor and make sure that it catches fire. Next pray to the fire god using the following mantra from RigVeda. It requests the fire god to keep an inauspicious form of fire called “kravyaada” and carry the offerings to gods through the auspicious form of fire called “jaatavedas”.

kravyādamāgnīm prahiṇomi dūraṁ yamarājño gacchatu ripravāhaḥ |  
iḥaivāyamitaro jātavedā devebhyo havyam vahatu prajānan |

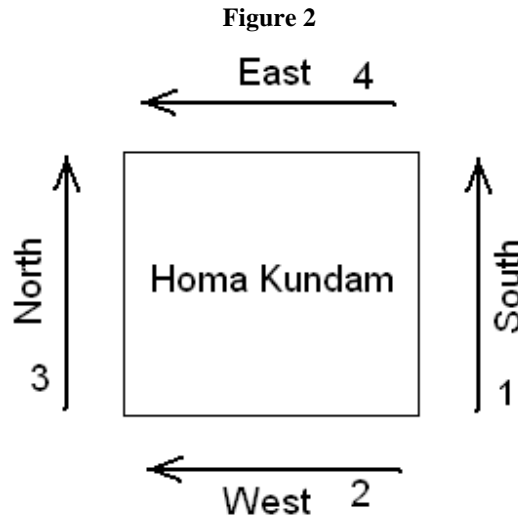
Now we have to do samskara (refinement) to the fire. Pour 8 drops of ghee in the fire while saying the following mantra 8 times.

om bhūrbhuvassuvaḥ svāhā |

Take 2 or more darbhas (or twigs). Place them outside the homa kundam, along the eastern boundary. The tips should be facing north and the other end facing south. Then take another 2 or more darbhas and place them on the southern boundary, with tips facing east and the other end facing west. Then take 2 or more darbhas and place them on the western boundary, with tips facing north. Then take 2 or more darbhas and place them on the northern boundary, with tips facing east. If you do homam on a regular basis, you can leave these darbhas/twigs around the homa kundam there is no need to do this step every time.

Take some water in a spoon and sprinkle it around the homa kundam as shown in Figure 2. This is similar to what we did at the beginning, but the mantras to say are slightly different. Instead of the four mantras used earlier, use the following four mantras when sprinkling water along the four arrows marked as 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Figure 2:

adite'numanyasva | anumate'numanyasva | sarasvate'numanyasva | deva savitaḥ prasūva |



Now pray to Agni (fire god) with the following mantra:

caṭvāri śṛṅgāstrayo asya pādā dve śīrṣe saptahastāso asya |  
 tridhā baddho vṛṣabho roravīti maḥo devo martyāṃ āviveśa |  
 eṣa hi devaḥ praḍiśo nu sarvāḥ pūrvō hi jātaḥ sa u garbhē antaḥ |  
 sa vijāyamānaḥ sa janiṣyamānaḥ pratyāṅmukhāstiṣṭhati viśvatomukhaḥ |  
 prāṅmukho deva | he agne | mamābhimukho bhava |

Now think within your mind of Lord Ganesha, your ishta devata (favorite deity), rishis of your gotra (if you know them), all rishis, your gurus, various gods and other beings of this universe.

### **Dikpaalaka Pooja (worshipping the rulers of directions)**

Now, take some akshatas and also some flowers (if available) and offer them to the rulers of directions. Starting with the eastern edge of the homa kundam, go clockwise (*i.e.* east, southeast,

south, southwest *etc*) and offer akshatas and flowers in the eight directions. You can place them on the edges of the homa kundam. After the eight directions, offerings are made to Brahma (ruler of the upward direction) in the middle of northeast and east and to Sesha (ruler of the downward direction) in the middle of southwest and west.

Then offer akshatas and flowers to Agni in the middle of the homa kundam. Finally, touch your heart and offer respect to the self (soul). For the 8+2+1+1=12 offerings, say the following 12 mantras:

om indrāya namaḥ | om agnaye namaḥ | om yamāya namaḥ | om nirṛtaye namaḥ | om varuṇāya namaḥ | om vāyave namaḥ | om somāya namaḥ | om īśānāya namaḥ | om brahmaṇe namaḥ | om śeṣāya namaḥ | om agnaye namaḥ | om ātmane namaḥ |

### **Poorvaangam (preliminary offerings)**

Now hold the wooden spoon/ladle pointing from northwest towards southeast and offer a ghee drop in the fire for Prajapati (progenitor of all beings), with the following mantra.

om prajāpataye svāhā | prajāpataya idaṁ na mama |

Now hold the wooden spoon/ladle pointing from southwest towards northeast and offer a ghee drop in the fire for Indra (ruler of gods), with the following mantra.

om indrāya svāhā | indrāyedaṁ na mama |

Offer a little ghee to Agni (fire god) in the middle of the fire with the following mantra:

om agnaye svāhā | agnaya idaṁ na mama |

Then offer a little ghee to Soma (god of nourishment and well-being) in the upper half of the northern side of the homa kundam with the following mantra:

om somāya svāhā | somāyedaṁ na mama |

Now, we have to offer a “forgiveness offering” to Prajapati again to request his forgiveness for all the mistakes that happened in the homa upto this point, with the following mantra:

ārambhaprabhṛti etatkṣaṇaparyantaṁ madhye sambhāvita samasta doṣa prāyaścittārthaṁ sarva prāyaścittaṁ hoṣyāmi | om bhūrbhuvassuvaḥ svāhā | prajāpataya idaṁ na mama |

After making an offering to the basic gods as shown above, one can invoke Ganesha in the fire. After the above preliminary offerings and before invoking Ganesha, one can also make offerings to rishis. One can, for example, make offerings to the rishis of one’s lineage. It is optional.



### Quick Homam for Mahaganapathi

Before calling the main deity of homam (Chandi) into fire, a quick pooja of Mahaganapathi in fire needs to be done for the removal of obstacles. Mahaganapathi can be invoked in fire while chanting the following.

om gaṃ gaṇapataye namaḥ| asuṇī te punārasmāsu cakṣuḥ punaḥ prāṇamiha nō dehi bhogaṃ|  
jyokpaśyema sūryamuḥcarāntamanumate mṛḷayā naḥ svasti| om śrī mahāgaṇapati  
prāṇaśaktyai namaḥ| atra āgacha| āvāhito bhava| sthāpito bhava| sannihito bhava|  
sanniruddho bhava| avakuṅṭhito bhava| prasīda prasīda|

Now, we have to offer worship with several services to Mahaganapathi in the fire. Say the following and offer sandalwood powder/paste to Mahaganapathi in the fire. You can also offer turmeric powder and kumkum.

laṃ pṛthivyātmane namaḥ| gandhaṃ samarpayāmi|

Say the following and offer a flower (or a flower petal) to Mahaganapathi in the fire.

haṃ ākāśātmane namaḥ| puṣpaṃ samarpayāmi|

Say the following and offer dhoopam (incense) to Mahaganapathi in the fire and the idol. Light the tip of the incense stick, let the fire burn brightly and then extinguish the fire. There should be no fire on the stick but smoke coming from the burning tip. Show the smoke to the fire in the homa kundam. You can also offer the incense stick completely into fire.

yaṃ vāyvātmane namaḥ| dhūpaṃ āghrāpayāmi|

Say the following and show the deepam (light/lamp) to Mahaganapathi in the fire.

raṃ agnyātmane namaḥ| dīpaṃ darśayāmi|

Say the following and offer some food to Mahaganapathi in the fire. You can use cooked food or a fruit or jaggery or sugar. Show it to the fire and offer a little bit into the fire. If you cooked only one item, keep it for Chandi and use something else for Mahaganapathi. You can offer just a raisin or a little sugar also.

vaṃ amṛtātmane namaḥ| naivedyaṃ samarpayāmi|

Say the following and offer some akshatas to Mahaganapathi in the fire. This mantra means that we are offering “all services” to Him.

saṃ sarvātmane namaḥ| sarvopacārān samarpayāmi|

Now say the following offer ghee (or other allowed materials mentioned at the beginning) into fire for Mahaganapathi. Repeat that 4 or 8 or 12 times.

om gaṃ gaṇapataye namaḥ svāhā|

### **Praana Pratishthaapanaa (invocation of main deity)**

Now we have to invoke the deity in the idol and the fire. If you know how to do anganyaasam and karanyaasam, do it while saying the following. Otherwise, just read the following.

asya śrī prānapratiṣṭhāpana mantrasya brahma viṣṇu maheśvarā ṛṣayaḥ ṛgyajussāmātharvāṇi  
chandāṃsi śrī caṇḍikā devatā| aim̐ bijam̐ hrīm̐ śaktiḥ| klīm̐ kilakam̐| aim̐ aṅguṣṭhābhyām̐  
namaḥ| hrīm̐ tarjanībhyām̐ namaḥ| klīm̐ madhyamābhyām̐ namaḥ| aim̐ anāmikābhyām̐  
namaḥ| hrīm̐ kaniṣṭhikābhām̐ namaḥ| klīm̐ karatala karapṛṣṭhābhyām̐ namaḥ| aim̐ hṛdayāya  
namaḥ| hrīm̐ śirase svāhā| klīm̐ śikhāyai vaṣaṭ| aim̐ kavacāya huṃ| hrīm̐ netratrayāya vaṣaṭ|  
klīm̐ astrāya phaṭ| bhūrbhuvassuvaromiti digbandhaḥ|

śvetānanā nīlabhujā suśveta stana maṇḍalā| rakta madhyā rakta pādā nīlajāṅghorurunmadā||  
sucitra jaghanā citra mālyāmbara vibhūṣaṇā| citrānulepanā kānti rūpa saubhāgyaśālīni||  
aṣṭādaśa bhujā pūjyā sā sahasrabhujā satī| āyudhānyatra vakṣyante dakṣiṇādhaḥkara kramāt||  
akṣamālā ca kamalam̐ bāṇo'siḥ kuliśam̐ gadā| cakram̐ triśūlam̐ paraśuḥ śaṅkho ghaṇṭā ca  
pāśakaḥ|| śaktirdaṇḍāścarma cāpaṃ pānapātram̐ kamaṇḍaluḥ|

Now invoke the deity in the fire and the idol with the following mantra. While saying it, imagine that Chandi who is in your own heart is entering the fire and the idol.

om aim̐ hrīm̐ klīm̐ yaṃ raṃ laṃ vaṃ śaṃ ṣaṃ saṃ haṃ ḷaṃ kṣaṃ| om haṃsaḥ so'haṃ so'haṃ  
haṃsaḥ| śrī caṇḍikāyāḥ prāṇa iha prāṇaḥ| jīva iha sthitaḥ| sarvendriyāṇi vāṇmanastvak cakṣuḥ  
śrotra jihvāghrāṇa prāṇāpānavyānodānasamānāḥ ihaivāgatya sukham̐ ciram̐ tiṣṭhantu svāhā|  
sānnidhyam̐ kurvantu svāhā| asūnī te punārasmāsu cakṣuḥ punaḥ prāṇamīha nō dehi bhogaṃ|  
jyokpāśyema sūryamuccarantamanumate mṛḷayā naḥ svasti| aim̐ hrīm̐ klīm̐| klīm̐ hrīm̐ aim̐|  
om śrī caṇḍikā prāṇaśaktyai namaḥ| atra āgaccha| āvāhitā bhava| sthāpitā bhava| sannihitā  
bhava| sanniruddhā bhava| avakuṅṭhitā bhava| devi prasīda prasīda| devi sarva jagannāyaki  
yāvaddhomāvasānakam̐| tāvattvaṃ prītibhāvena mūrtau agnau ca sannidhim̐ kuru| atra  
āgaccha|

Now read the following and make the aavaahani, samsthaapani, sannidhaapani, sannirodhini and avakunthana *mudras* with your hands if you know them. If not, don't worry and just read.

āvāhitā bhava| sthāpitā bhava| sannihitā bhava| sanniruddhā bhava| avakuṅṭhitā bhava| devi prasīda prasīda| devi sarva jagannāyaki yāvaddhomāvasānakam| tāvattvaṁ prītibhāvena mūrtau agnau ca sannidhiṁ kuru|

While saying this, pray to Mother Chandi in your mind and ask Her to *stay* in the fire and the idol till the *end* of the homam. Now, till the end of the homam, *you* should *firmly* believe that Chandi *is in the fire* and treat him with *respect* and *love*.

### **Panchopachaara Pooja (worship of god)**

Now, we have to offer worship with several services to Chandi in the fire and idol. There are several options. One can do a panchopachaara pooja with 5 services or a shodasopachara pooja with 16 services or a chatusshashtyupachara pooja with 64 services. For simplicity, a panchopachara pooja is recommended in a homam. Those who have a lot of time and want to perform a shodasopachara pooja may refer to Appendix A and use that procedure instead of what is given in this section.

Say the following and offer sandalwood powder/paste to Chandi in the fire and the idol. You can also offer turmeric powder and kumkum.

laṁ pṛthivyātmikāyai namaḥ| gandhaṁ samarpayāmi|

Say the following and offer a flower (or a flower petal) to Chandi in the fire and the idol.

haṁ ākāśātmikāyai namaḥ| puṣpaṁ samarpayāmi|

Say the following and offer dhoopam (incense) to Chandi in the fire and the idol. Light the tip of the incense stick, let the fire burn brightly and then extinguish the fire. There should be no fire on the stick but smoke coming from the burning tip. Show the smoke to the fire in the homa kundam.

yaṁ vāyvātmikāyai namaḥ| dhūpam āghrāpayāmi|

Say the following and show the deepam (light/lamp) to Chandi in the fire and the idol.

raṁ agnyātmikāyai namaḥ| dīpaṁ darśayāmi|

Say the following and offer some food to Chandi in the fire and the idol. You can use cooked food or a fruit or jaggery or sugar. Show it to the fire and idol and offer a little bit into the fire.

If you made only one food item, it is a good idea to offer it at the end of the homam. There will be a naivedyam (food offering) again. Offer something else for now. The offering at the end is the main one.

vam amṛtātmikāyai namaḥ | naivedyaṁ samarpayāmi |

Say the following and offer some akshatas to Chandi in the fire and the idol. This mantra means that we are offering “all services” to Him.

saṁ sarvātmikāyai namaḥ | sarvopacārān samarpayāmi |

### Parivaara Devata Aahutis (offerings to associates)

If one is in a hurry, just one aahuti (offering) of ghee can be made for all deities together:

om yoginyādibhyaḥ caṇḍikā parivāra devatābhyo namaḥ svāhā |

If one has time, aahutis can be made individually by chanting the following instead. Make an offering of ghee whenever you encounter svaahaa (svāhā).

om sūryāya namaḥ svāhā | om agnaye namaḥ svāhā | om rudrāya namaḥ svāhā |  
om candrāya namaḥ svāhā | om abbhyo namaḥ svāhā | om gauryai namaḥ svāhā |  
om maṅgalāya namaḥ svāhā | om pṛthivyai namaḥ svāhā | om kṣetrapālakāya namaḥ svāhā |  
om budhāya namaḥ svāhā | om viṣṇave namaḥ svāhā | om nārāyaṇāya namaḥ svāhā |  
om bṛhaspataye namaḥ svāhā | om brahmaṇe namaḥ svāhā | om indrāya namaḥ svāhā |  
om śukrāya namaḥ svāhā | om indrānyai namaḥ svāhā | om indramarutvantāya namaḥ svāhā |  
om śanaīscarāya namaḥ svāhā | om prajāpataye namaḥ svāhā | om yamadharṁarājāya namaḥ  
svāhā |  
om rāhave namaḥ svāhā | om gomātre namaḥ svāhā | om sarpebhyo namaḥ svāhā |  
om ketave namaḥ svāhā | om citraguptāya namaḥ svāhā | om brahmaṇe namaḥ svāhā |  
om sarasvatī brahmabhyāṁ namaḥ svāhā | om gaurīrudrābhyāṁ namaḥ svāhā | om lakṣmī  
hṛṣīkeśābhyāṁ namaḥ svāhā | om aṣṭādaśabhujāyai mahālakṣmyai namaḥ svāhā | om  
daśānanāyai mahākālyai namaḥ svāhā | om aṣṭabhujāyai mahāsarasvatyai namaḥ svāhā |  
naṁ nandāyai namaḥ svāhā | raṁ raktadantikāyai namaḥ svāhā | śāṁ śākambharyai namaḥ  
svāhā | duṁ durgāyai namaḥ svāhā | bhīm bhīmāyai namaḥ svāhā | bhrām bhrāmaryai namaḥ  
svāhā |  
jaṁ jayāyai namaḥ svāhā | viṁ vijayāyai namaḥ svāhā | jaṁ jayantyai namaḥ svāhā | am  
aparājitāyai namaḥ svāhā | om simhāya namaḥ svāhā | om mahiṣāya namaḥ svāhā |  
brām brāhmyai namaḥ svāhā | mām māheśvaryai namaḥ svāhā | kauṁ kaumāryai namaḥ  
svāhā | vaiṁ vaiṣṇavyai namaḥ svāhā | vām vārāhyai namaḥ svāhā | nām nārasimhyai namaḥ  
svāhā | aim aindryai namaḥ svāhā | cām cāmuṇḍāyai namaḥ svāhā |  
am asitāṅga bhairavāya namaḥ svāhā | ruṁ ruru bhairavāya namaḥ svāhā | caṁ caṇḍa  
bhairavāya namaḥ svāhā | kroṁ krodhana bhairavāya namaḥ svāhā | um unmatta bhairavāya  
namaḥ svāhā | kaṁ kapāla bhairavāya namaḥ svāhā | bhīm bhīṣaṇa bhairavāya namaḥ svāhā |  
saṁ saṁhāra bhairavāya namaḥ svāhā |

om viṣṇumāyāyai namaḥ svāhā | om cetanāyai namaḥ svāhā | om buddhyai namaḥ svāhā | om nidrāyai namaḥ svāhā | om kṣudhāyai namaḥ svāhā | om chāyāyai namaḥ svāhā | om śaktyai namaḥ svāhā | om tṛṣṇāyai namaḥ svāhā | om kṣāntyai namaḥ svāhā | om jātyai namaḥ svāhā | om lajjāyai namaḥ svāhā | om śāntyai namaḥ svāhā | om śraddhāyai namaḥ svāhā | om kāntyai namaḥ svāhā | om lakṣmyai namaḥ svāhā | om dhṛtyai namaḥ svāhā | om vṛtyai namaḥ svāhā | om smṛtyai namaḥ svāhā | om dayāyai namaḥ svāhā | om tuṣṭyai namaḥ svāhā | om puṣṭyai namaḥ svāhā | om mātṛe namaḥ svāhā | om bhrāntyai namaḥ svāhā | om cityai namaḥ svāhā | lam indrāya namaḥ svāhā | ram agnyaye namaḥ svāhā | maṁ yamāya namaḥ svāhā | kṣaṁ nirṛtaye namaḥ svāhā | vaṁ varuṇāya namaḥ svāhā | yaṁ vāyave namaḥ svāhā | saṁ somāya namaḥ svāhā | haṁ rudrāya namaḥ svāhā | āṁ brahmaṇe namaḥ svāhā | hrīm śeṣāya namaḥ svāhā |

vaṁ vajrāya namaḥ svāhā | śaṁ śaktyai namaḥ svāhā | daṁ daṇḍāya namaḥ svāhā | khaṁ khaḍgāya namaḥ svāhā | pāṁ pāsāya namaḥ svāhā | am aṅkuśāya namaḥ svāhā | gaṁ gadāyai namaḥ svāhā | triṁ triśūlāya namaḥ svāhā | paṁ padmāya namaḥ svāhā | caṁ cakrāya namaḥ svāhā |

gaṁ gaṇapataye namaḥ svāhā | kṣeṁ kṣetrapālakāya namaḥ svāhā | vaṁ vaṭukāya namaḥ svāhā | yoṁ yoginībhyo namaḥ svāhā |

### **Pradhaana Homam (main part)**

The offering can be a drop of ghee or sesame seeds or murmura/mamra (puffed white rice) or havan samagri or small dry coconut pieces or small pieces of darbha. If you are doing homam on a big scale with a big fire, you can even put banana slices, full coconuts, various fruits, nuts (cashews, almonds etc), dates, raisins, sugar cane pieces, several sweets and snacks *etc*. But, if you are doing on a small scale with a small fire, stick to sesame seeds, dry coconut pieces, puffed white rice and ghee drops. At any cost, avoid spicy substances like any kind of pepper, cinnamon, cloves etc and products containing eggs, meat etc. In general, sweet substances are better. Just offering ghee when you do not have any other substances is also fine.

### **Introductory Parts**

Now kavacham, argala and keelakam should be read. Kavacham should just be read with no offerings in the fire. If fire is becoming weak, it is ok to offer more firewood or dry coconut pieces or ghee to keep the fire going. But do not add “swaahaa” to the verses.

When reading argala and keelakam, swaahaa should be added to the end of each verse and ghee offered.

After kavacham, argala and keelakam, read “Ratri sooktam” without offering anything in the fire. Do not even add “swaahaa” at the end of each verse.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Adding “swaahaa” in veda mantras may require changing the swaram (intonation) of the last few syllables of the mantra. Most people are unfamiliar with the relevant rules. Even some good priests end up reading the verse with the original swaram and simply add “swaahaa”. This is not correct. It is instead better to not add “swaahaa” and to read it as is and not make an offering.

Then do kara nyaasam, hridayaadi nyaasam, akshara nyaasam and dik nyaasam and offer the moola mantram (navaarna mantram) in the fire only with ghee. You can repeat the moola mantram 12 or 21 or 28 or 54 or 108 times. It is ok to skip moola mantra altogether to make it short.

Then read the saptashati nyasam with “khadgnini soolini ghora” etc. Then we are done with the introductory parts.

Offer only ghee with argala, keelakam and moola mantram.

If one is in a hurry, it is ok to skip the introductory parts and directly go to the thireen chapters, which are the **main** thing in Chandi homam!

### **Thirteen Chapters**

Now you can read the thireteen chapters of saptashati. It has 3 charitras (parts), ruled by Mahaakaali, Mahaalakshmi and Mahaasaraswati. It has 13 chapters, ruled by 13 deities – Mahaakaali, Mahaalakshmi, Sankari, Jayadurga, Mahaasaraswati, Padmaavati, Maatangi, Bhavaani, Ardhaambikaa, Kaameswari, Bhuvanewari, Agnidurga and Sivaa. There are three approaches:

- (1) Offer all the 13 chapters to Chandi who was invoked in fire earlier, as the 3 main part deities and 13 chapter deities are Her own amshas (parts)
- (2) Separately invoke the 3 deities of the 3 parts at the beginning of each part and offer each part to its deity
- (3) Separately invoke the 13 deities of the 13 chapters at the beginning of each chapter and offer each chapter to its deity

If separate deities are invoked in fire, panchopachaara pooja is done for each deity. We will treat all deities as the amshas of the Supreme one and use approach (1) in this short procedure.

Now just read the 13 chapters in front of fire. Whenever a verse ends or “uvaacha” or “oochuh” comes, it is marked in the text with a number. Wherever a number is marked in the text, add “swaahaa” (svāhā) and offer something in the fire. You can offer ghee or black/white sesame seeds or honey or marmara or juwar dhani or poha or raisins (kismis) or dry fruits or nuts or pomegranate seeds or so many other things. A list of things that can be offered is given in the Mahaganapathi homam manual. The restriction on offering only ghee is only for the introductory parts of argalaa, keelakam and moola mantram. Now anything can be offered.

Make sure not to put spicy substances such as chillies (green/red pepper) and black pepper at any cost. Even cloves should be avoided. Those substances have specific purposes and most people today are totally incapable of performing a homam for such purposes. Many people offer them in fire and cause problems for themselves.

Whenever you encounter an “uvaacha” or “oochuh” followed by a number, you may want to consider offering a flower or a fruit piece. For example, a rose petal or a raisin (kismis) may be offered.

If you read all the 13 chapters adding “swaahaa” at each number in the text, you will end up making 700 offerings. At the end of each chapter, you may consider offering a small fruit (can be a raisin/kismis) or a dry coconut half/piece as the final offering.

If you are not fluent in reading the text and stopping between verses to make an offering is breaking your flow and you end up wasting time to figure out where you are in the page, it may be useful to use the left thumb as an index. Keep moving the left thumb on the page you are reading. Even when you take your eyes and right hand off the book to make an offering, left thumb shows where you are.

### **Formalities after 13 Chapters**

After finishing 13 chapters, one may do anga nyaasam, kara nyaasam, akshara nyaasam and dik nyaasam again and do the moola mantram (navaarna mantram) again. It can be offered 12 or 21 or 28 or 54 or 108 times, accompanied only by ghee. It is ok to skip moola mantram altogether.

Then “Devi sooktam” may be read without offering anything in the fire. Do not even add “swaahaa” at the end of each verse.<sup>3</sup>

Now offer any other mantra of any other deity you may want to offer. As Chandi is the supreme primordial energy of this universe and the sum total of Mahaakaali (laya), Mahaalakshmi (sthiti) and Mahaasaraswati (srishti), all deities are within Her. Mantras of any deities can be submitted to Her.

When you offer all the mantras you want to offer, you are ready for “punah pooja”.

### **Punah Pooja (worship again)**

After all the offerings with mantras, we offer a quick worship again to Shiva in the fire.

Say the following and offer some food to Chandi in the fire and the idol.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | naivedyaṁ samarpayāmi |

Light a small camphor piece in a plate and show it to the fire while saying the following. At the end, you can throw the camphor piece into fire.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | nīrājanam samarpayāmi |

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<sup>3</sup> See footnote 1 for “Ratri sooktam”. Same thing applies.

If one has time, a panchopachara pooja can also be done as the punah pooja. But the above two things will suffice.

Now get up and do *pradakshinas* to the homa kundam. If someone stands on the roof (or in the sky) and looks down at you, it should look like you are going around the homa kundam in the clockwise direction. Do one or three rounds and then sit down again in front of fire.

#### Uttaraangam (vote of thanks)<sup>4</sup>

Now, offer one drop of ghee to Prajapati, then the controllers of the three worlds (bhuh – fire god, bhuvah – wind god, who controls space too, suvah – sun god for all the non-material spiritual realms), to Agni who processes the food for gods and makes it consumable and finally Prajapati again. Read the following and offer a drop of ghee at each “swaahaa”.

om prajāpate na tvadetānyanyo viśvā jātāni pari tā bābhūva | yatkāmaṣṭe juhūmastanno astu  
vāyaṃ syāma patayo rayiṇām | svāhā | prajāpataya idaṃ na mama ||  
om bhūḥ svāhā | agnaya idaṃ na mama ||  
om bhūvaḥ svāhā | vāyava idaṃ na mama ||  
om suvaḥ svāhā | sūryāyedaṃ na mama ||  
yadāsyā karmaṇo tyarīricāṃ yadvānyūnamihākaram | agniṣṭat sviṣṭakṛdvidvān sarvaṃ sviṣṭam  
suhutaṃ karotu svāhā | agnaye sviṣṭakṛta idaṃ na mama ||  
om bhūrbhuvassuvaḥ svāhā | prajāpataya idaṃ na mama ||

Now do pranaayaamam again. The procedure of pranaayaamam is explained earlier.

Now, make three offerings to the fire god, asking for forgiveness for any mistakes committed knowingly or unknowingly, while using fire as the medium. Read the following and offer a drop of the ghee in the fire at each “swaahaa”.

Next, three offerings are made to the fire god, wind god and sun god, the controllers of the three worlds. Read the following and offer a drop of the ghee in the fire at each “swaahaa”.

anājñātaṃ yadājñātaṃ yajñasya kriyate mithu | agne tadāsyā kalpaya tvaṃ hi vetthā  
yathātatham | svāhā | agnaya idaṃ na mama ||  
puruṣasammito yajño yajñah puruṣasammitah | agne tadāsyā kalpaya tvaṃ hi vetthā  
yathātatham | svāhā | agnaya idaṃ na mama ||  
yatpākatrā manasā dīnadakṣā na | yajñasya manvatē martāsaḥ | agniṣṭaddhotā kratuvidvijānan |  
yajīṣṭho devān ṛtuśo yajāti | svāhā | agnaya idaṃ na mama ||  
om bhūḥ svāhā | agnaya idaṃ na mama ||  
om bhūvaḥ svāhā | vāyava idaṃ na mama ||  
om suvaḥ svāhā | sūryāyedaṃ na mama ||

<sup>4</sup> Skip this and go to the next section to find a shorter procedure for uttaraangam.



One final offering to Prajapati is made to beg for forgiveness for various mistakes made in the homam, with respect to pronunciation, actions, procedure, devotion, materials used *etc.* Read the following and offer of drop of ghee.

asmin homakarmani madhye sambhāvita samasta mantralopa tantralopa kriyālopa bhaktilopa śraddhālopa niyamalopa niṣṭhālopa dravyalopādi samasta doṣa prāyaścittārthaṁ sarva prāyaścittāhutim hoṣyāmi | om bhūrbhuvassuvaḥ svāhā | prajāpataya idaṁ na mama ||

An offering to Vishnu and an offering to Rudra must be made. Read the following two lines and offer a drop of ghee for each line. Think of Vishnu and Shiva.

om śrī viṣṇave svāhā | viṣṇave paramātmāna idaṁ na mama ||  
om namo rudrāya paśupatiḥ svāhā | rudrāya paśupatiḥ idaṁ na mama ||

After making an offering to Rudra, wash the hand once. You can simply sprinkle a little bit of water on the right palm for that purpose.

#### **Uttaraangam – shorter version (vote of thanks)**

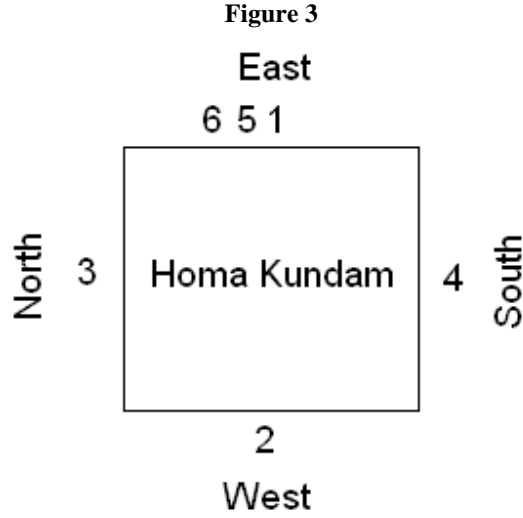
When you are in a hurry, you can perform uttaraangam in a brief form by saying the following and making an offering of ghee with each line.

om bhūḥ svāhā | agnaya idaṁ na mama ||  
om bhuvaḥ svāhā | vāyava idaṁ na mama ||  
om suvaḥ svāhā | sūryāyedaṁ na mama ||  
om bhūrbhuvassuvaḥ svāhā | prajāpataya idaṁ na mama ||  
om śrī viṣṇave svāhā | viṣṇave paramātmāna idaṁ na mama ||  
om namo rudrāya paśupatiḥ svāhā | rudrāya paśupatiḥ idaṁ na mama ||

#### **Suddhaanna Bali (sacrifice of pure rice)**

Now, we have to offer bali (sacrifice to other associated beings). Get the cooked white rice (or banana slices or some other fruit slices or raisins). Just place a small token amount as bali. You need to place bali in six different places outside the homa kundam. First, place it on the east of the homa kundam. Then on the west, then on the north, then on the south and finally two more on the east (a little north to the previous bali(s) placed in the east). The order and positions can be found in Figure 3. While offering balis in six places, the following sentence can be said:

om pārṣadebhyo namaḥ | balim samarpayāmi |



The rice remaining after offering balis should be thrown away and not consumed. If cooked rice is not available, small banana slices or some other fruit slices can be used. Again, any fruit pieces left over after bali should be thrown away and not consumed.

### **Vasordhaaraa (stream of excellence)**

Take a little ghee into the ladle and pour it slowly on the burning dry coconut pieces in the homa kundam while reading the third verse from “Rudra Chamakam”. It is given below.

Don’t pour too much ghee if you don’t want much smoke. Just take one teaspoonful of ghee in the wooden ladle and manage with it slowly. This ghee should be just enough to make the pieces burn well so that poornaahuti (about to be offered) burns well.

om śaṁ ca me mayaśca me priyaṁ ca me'nukāmaśca me kāmaśca me saumanaśca me  
 bhādraṁ ca me śreyaśca me vasyaśca me yaśaśca me bhagaśca me draviṇaṁ ca me yaṅtā ca me  
 dhartā ca me kṣemaśca me dhṛtiśca me viśvaṁ ca me mahaśca me saṁvicca me jñātraṁ ca me  
 sūśca me praśūśca me siraṁ ca me layaśca maṛtaṁ ca me'mṛtaṁ ca me'yakṣmaṁ ca  
 me'nāmayacca me jīvātuśca me dīrghāyutvaṁ ca me'namitraṁ ca me'bhayaṁ ca me sugaṁ ca  
 me śayanaṁ ca me sūṣā ca me sudinaṁ ca me||

### **Poornaahuti**

Now, we have to prepare a package for poornaahuti (“complete offering”). The normal procedure is to place a full dry coconut, some metal coins, some turmeric, some sandalwood, some kumkum, some akshatas, samples of some of the materials used in homam as offerings in a cloth and tie the cloth.

For a simple homam with a small fire, you may take a dry coconut half and place a few akshatas, one coin, little sandalwood powder, turmeric powder, kumkum powder and samples of materials offered earlier in it. If you do a small homam everyday in a western country and need to minimize the smoke, you may put just a small coconut piece as poornaahuti. If you are doing

homam in a big firepit that is dug in ground, you may want to experiment with a regular full coconut that has little water. It is a more accurate representation of the ego of a normal person.

Place the poornaahuti on the wooden ladle, say the mantra below and then place the poornaahuti in fire carefully with hand (if you drop it on a small fire from the wooden ladle, it can extinguish the fire and also loose materials can spill everywhere in the homa kundam).

om pūrṇāhṛtimuttamām juhōti | sarvaṁ vai pūrṇāhṛtiḥ | sarvāmevāpnoti | atho iyaṁ vai pūrṇāhṛtiḥ | asyāmeva pratitiṣṭhati |  
om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṁ pūrṇātpūrṇamudācyate | pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate ||  
om aiṁ hrīm klīm cāmuṇḍāyai vice vaṣaṭ ||

While (or after) placing the poornaahuti in the fire, say the following mantra.

om brahmārpaṇaṁ brahmahavir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutaṁ | brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ brahma karma samādhinā ||

Imagine that you are completely surrendering yourself to Chandi. Poornaahuti basically means “complete surrender”. The full (or half) coconut used in the poornaahuti is a symbol of one’s head, *i.e.* ego (“I-ness”), which is to be sacrificed (surrendered) to Chandi. Think of Chandi as a manifestation of the Supreme Cosmic Being who fills the whole universe and who is the true owner of your body, mind, existence, thoughts, knowledge and actions. Surrender to Him fully. Without that inner sense of complete surrender, an elaborate poornaahuti ritual with pristine materials has no meaning. Most Vedic rituals are symbolic of certain inner changes that you bring about within yourself, to remove obstacles within your sookshma sareera that are blocking self-knowledge. The purpose of Veda is the knowledge of self (Aatman) and all rituals are ultimately for that purpose. Doing rituals blindly is a good starting point, but at some stage, one has to wonder about the inner meaning.

### Winding Up and Meditation

The fire god (Agni) has carried all our offerings to various gods. So the final offering is to him. Read the following and offer a drop of ghee in the fire.

sapta te agne samidhaḥ saptajihvāḥ sapta ṛṣayassaptaḥ dhāma priyāni | sapta hotrā sapta dhātvā yajantisaptayonīrāpṛṇasvā ghr̥tena svāhā | agnaye saptavata idaṁ na mama ||

Take some water in a spoon and sprinkle it around the homa kundam as shown in Figure 2. This is similar to what we did at the beginning, but the mantras to say are slightly different. Instead of the four mantras used earlier, use the following four mantras when sprinkling water along the four arrows marked as 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Figure 2:

adite'nvāmaṁsthāḥ | anumate'nvāmaṁsthāḥ | sarasvate'nvāmaṁsthāḥ | deva savitaḥ prāsāvīḥ |

The ritual of homam cleanses one internally. The powerful divine presence in the fire has a great ability to cleanse one. Especially, a sincerely offered poornaahuti creates a lot of positive energy as it burns. One can take advantage of it by meditating in front of the fire as the poornaahuti burns. The time when the poornaahuti burns is the best time to meditate.

Sit still with a straight back in front of the fire and meditate. Make sure that the back is erect and yet not too tight. Make sure that the neck and head are also erect. Close the eyes, imagine your favorite deity in a form you like and meditate on that form with your favorite mantra. You can meditate on Chandi also. It can be the mantra with which you did homam or any other mantra of any deity. Try to forget about the your body and what you are doing and get into the mantra fully. Think that the deity you are imagining is a manifestation of Supreme Cosmic Being and think that all beings and all objects of this world are expressions of the play of that deity. Think that that deity is the true Doer of all actions by all beings of this world. Your chances of losing consciousness of your body and immersing in the mantra fully are the maximum at this point of time than any other (while the poornaahuti is burning)! Take advantage and meditate for atleast 5-10 minutes with maximum focus now. Consider this an essential part of the homam.

### **Rakshaa**

Now, take the darbhas placed at the beginning outside the homa kundam on the western side (or new darbhas, if you did not place any darbhas along the boundaries due to lack of darbhas), apply a little ghee to them and place the tips in fire. When they catch fire, remove them from the fire, place them in a container and let the whole darbhas burn. The black ash you get is called “rakshaa” (protection). At the end of the homam, you can apply a little rakshaa to the forehead of the idol and then a little to your own forehead and the foreheads of others. This is believed to protect from evil forces. You can store the rakshaa for future use on important occasions.

If your fire is too small and does not last till this point, you may consider taking rakshaa before meditation.

It is not *necessary* to take raksha. One can skip this step. Alternately, one can skip now and later mix the ashes of the materials burnt in the homa kundam with ghee and use that as rakshaa.

### **Udvaasana (good bye)**

Take a couple of darbhas in your right hand and a couple more darbhas with your left hand. Take some flowers or akshatas also if available. Hold the darbhas with the tips facing away from you and the bases in your hands. Now touch the two sides of the homakundam with the darbhas in the two hands. Then touch the idol with those darbhas and leave the akshatas and flowers on the god. Imagine that the energy from the homakundam has been transferred into the idol. To simplify this, you can also place your fists containing a few akshatas on top of the northern and southern sides of homa kundam and then deposit the akshatas in those fists at the feet of the idol.

Say the following and show your heart with your hands. Imagine that Sri Mahaganapathi has exited the fire and came back into your heart.

asmādagneḥ śrīmahāgaṇapatim yathāsthānam pratiṣṭhāpayāmi

Say the following and show your heart with your hands. Imagine that Chandi has exited the fire and the idol and came back into your heart.

asmānmūrteśca agneśca śrī caṇḍikādevīm yathāsthānam pratiṣṭhāpayāmi

Now, we have to say goodbye to the fire god too. Say the following and bow to the fire god.

agne naya supathā rāye asmān viśvāni deva vāyunāni vidvān| yuyodhyaśmajjūhurānameno  
bhūyiṣṭhām te nama uktim vidhema| agnaye namaḥ||

### Conclusion

Say the following three verses. Think of Krishna and imagine that you are not the doer and Krishna is the doer who is acting through you. While you do it, place a few akshatas on the tips of the ring and middle fingers of the right hand, place the palm on the small deposit bowl and wash it such that the water and akshatas are deposited in the deposit bowl.

mantrahīnam kriyāhīnam bhaktihīnam hutāśana| yaddhutam tu mayā deva paripūrnam  
tadastu tel|  
prāyaścittānyaśeṣāni tapaḥ karmātmakāni vai| yāni teṣāmaśeṣānām śrī kṛṣṇasmaranam  
param|| śrī kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa|  
kāyena vācā manasendriyairvā buddhyātmanā vā prakṛteḥ svabhāvāt| karomi yadyat sakalam  
parasmai nārāyaṇāyeti samarpayāmi||

Say the following finally. Imagine that Chandi became pleased with your homam. Surrender the doership of the homam to Krishna and pray for peace.

anena divya maṅḡala homena bhagavatī sarvātmikā śrī caṇḍikādevī priyatām| om tatsat|  
sarvam śrī kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu| om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ|

After this, you should not think of yourself as the doer of the homam just finished, for you have surrendered the doership to Krishna!

The naivedyam (food) you offered can be eaten now and served to others. The rakshaa (holy ash) can be mixed with a drop of ghee and applied on the forehead as a dot or a line.

If you used a kalasam (water pot) in addition to an idol to invoke the god, you can take a bath with the water in the kalasam. Pour the water on yourself after you finish your bath, while saying a mantra of Chandi. After pouring that water on yourself, don't pour any more regular water. The water from kalasam should be the last water you pour on yourself in the bath. In other words, you should absorb the energy in that water for a while.

It is possible to put a kalasam and use it everyday without changing water. One may change the water every weekend or on every Ashtami or Ekadasi day and take bath with the old water.

:: Sarvam Sri Krishnarapanamastu ::    :: Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ::

## Appendix A: Shodasopachaara Pooja

[If you want to perform a shodasopachaara pooja (a worship consisting of 16 services) to Chandi who is in fire and the idol, instead of the panchopachaara pooja mentioned in this document, please use the procedure in this appendix instead. This will take more time.]

Say the line below and think in the mind that you are offering a nice seat to Chandi to sit on. While imagining that, just offer a few akshatas to the idol and the fire.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | āsanam samarpayāmi |

Now, say the line below imagine that you are washing Her feet. While imagining that, show a little water with the spoon to the fire and leave the water in a small empty bowl (we will call it “the deposit bowl” from now onwards).

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | pādayoḥ pādyam samarpayāmi |

Say the line below, imagine that you are washing the hands of Chandi, show a little water in the spoon to the fire and leave it in the deposit bowl.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | hastayoḥ arghyam samarpayāmi |

Say the line below, imagine that you are offering drinking water to Chandi’s mouth, show a little water in the spoon to the fire and leave it in the deposit bowl.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | mukhe śuddhācamanīyam samarpayāmi |

Say the first sentence below, imagine that you are giving a bath to Chandi, show a little water in the spoon to the fire and leave it in the deposit bowl. Say the second sentence below, imagine that you are giving drinking water to Chandi’s mouth after bath, show a little water in the spoon to the fire and leave it in the deposit bowl.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | snapayāmi | snānānantaram ācamanīyam samarpayāmi |

Say the line below, imagine that you are offering a pair of nice clothes (one in the top and one in the bottom, *i.e.* like a shirt and a pant) and offer a few akshatas to the idol and the fire.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | vastrāṇi dhārayāmi |

Say the line below, imagine that you are offering a yajnopaveetam (sacred thread) and offer a few akshatas to the idol and the fire.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai| yajñopavītaṁ samarpayāmi|

Say the line below, imagine that you are offering nice jewelry and offer a few akshatas to the idol and the fire.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai| ābharaṇāni samarpayāmi|

Say the line below and offer a little bit of sandalwood paste, turmeric powder, kumkum powder and akshatas to the idol and the fire. If you don't have all these, just sprinkle a few akshatas on the idol and the fire.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai| gandhān dhārayāmi| haridrā kuṅkumaṁ samarpayāmi| akṣatān samarpayāmi|

Keep sprinkling a few flowers or flower petals or akshatas on the idol. Make sure you put very little amount of materials in the fire, so that you don't extinguish it accidentally. Offer most things to the idol instead. Just offer a token amount in the fire.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai| puṣpāṇi samarpayāmi|

Say the following line and show the incense stick lighted before to the fire and the idol.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai| dhūpam āghrāpayāmi|

Say the following line and show the lamp lighted before to the fire and the idol. Then show a little water in the spoon to the fire and idol and leave it in the deposit bowl.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai| dīpaṁ darśayāmi| ācamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi|

Say the first sentence below, show one of the two food items you prepared (or fruits) to god and imagine that he tasted it. If you know the standard procedure of offering *naivedyam* with the Gayatri mantra, you can do it. Else, don't worry and just say the line below. When saying the second line, imagine that you are offering a nice *taamboolam* (*paan*) to Chandi and offer some akshatas in their place to the idol and the fire.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai| naivedyaṁ samarpayāmi| tāmbūlaṁ samarpayāmi|

Place a little camphor on a camphor container or a plate, light it and make a clockwise vertical circle in the air with the plate in front of the fire. Say the line below while you do it.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | karpūranīrājanam samarpayāmi |

Take a small flower (or some akshatas) in your right hand, say the following and offer the flower to the idol (and perhaps a couple of petals into the fire). If you know “Narayana Sooktam” and/or Mantrapushpam (and if you have time), read them first and then say the line below. Otherwise, just this line will do. Imagine that you are offering a flower that captures the essence of all mantras.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | mantrapuṣpaṁ samarpayāmi |

Say the following and bow before Chandi mentally. Of course, you can also get up, go around the homa kundam once or thrice and bow down (or kneel down or lie down) in front of the fire, if you are not in a hurry. If someone looks at you from the roof or sky, it should look like you are going around the fire in clockwise directions.

om namaścaṇḍikāyai | pradakṣiṇa namaskārān samarpayāmi |

While you do all this, make sure that the fire gets going. Keep placing more dry coconut pieces if necessary to keep the fire going. It may be tricky the first few times, but you will get used to it. When necessary, you can sprinkle a little camphor powder in the fire to make it bigger.

## Appendix B: Practical Tips and Hints

Here are some hints related to practical aspects of homam:

- (1) In the beginning, there may be problems with maintaining the fire. New dry coconut pieces (or wood pieces) have to be put in the fire while old pieces are still burning, in order to keep the fire going. One’s ability to estimate how long a dry coconut piece can sustain fire will improve with time.
- (2) If the fire completely goes away, sprinkling some camphor powder on the hot pieces can bring the fire back. That fire can be sustained by placing new pieces.
- (3) If only a small amount of akshatas are offered during pooja (one or two akshatas each time) and placed on a coconut piece, they will eventually burn.
- (4) When offering a flower, if only a petal is placed on a coconut piece and the rest of the flower is placed near the idol, it has a better chance of burning fully in the fire without creating problems to the fire. Of course, in a homam performed with a big fire, full flowers burn easily.
- (5) If small amounts are offered, it works better (when the fire is also small).
- (6) If merely a drop of ghee is offered each time, less smoke is generated.



(7) Wood generates smoke. But dry coconut generates very little smoke. It generates smokes mainly at the end when the fire goes away. If the homa kundam is close to a window and the window is opened at the end, that may be sufficient to drive the little smoke out.

(8) Mantras of other deities also can be offered in the fire while imagining them and Chandi to be different manifestations of the same Cosmic Being.

(9) It is a very good idea to keep the body as still as possible, with minimal movement of only those body parts that must move (*e.g.* arm and mouth). It will maximize the positive spiritual benefit from homam.

(10) It is a good idea to keep atleast two coconut pieces burning all the time. Even if the fire in one becomes weak, the other piece can help re-ignite it.

(11) If one puts a lot of oil or ghee in a pan and heats it, it generates smoke as the ghee burns. If one puts too little oil in a pan and tries to fry vegetables, they burn and generate smoke. If one puts the right balance of oil and vegetables, they get cooked properly and there is no smoke. Similarly, if one puts the right balance of ghee and solid materials, they burn without smoke. There will be some smoke only at the end, when the fire goes off. Wood, on the other hand, is different from dry coconut and generates more smoke.