

## **Sri Mahalakshmi 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. Mother Mahalakshmi is the favorite deity of this author.

#### **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.

### **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, adharmas (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 adharmas 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 saattvik spirit for saattvik 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.

(11) *Misconception*: Mahalakshmi is the goddess of money. Her homam only gives money and not spiritual progress.

*Comment*: Mahalakshmi takes different forms such as Dhana Lakshmi (wealth), Dhaanya Lakshmi (food), Santana Lakshmi (children) *etc* and even Moksha Lakshmi, who gives spiritual progress and liberation. Mahalakshmi is the goddess of well-being and prosperity. Wealth is one kind of well-being and spiritual progress is another kind of well-being. Mahalakshmi covers all.

If appropriate mantras are selected for Mahalakshmi homam, it can be great for spiritual progress without sacrificing material well-being.

### **About This Document**

This document describes a short procedure for performing Sri Mahalakshmi homam, which takes 30-45 minutes. This document is for those who are interested in performing Sri Mahalakshmi homam by themselves every day or week or month. The procedure taught here is simple enough to do daily and yet retains all the important steps in a full-fledged traditional Vedic homam. Those who want an even simpler procedure with fewer mantras may refer to **Appendix A** for a **super-short procedure** with **bare minimum** mantras.

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 Sri Mahalakshmi 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)
- 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 Mahalakshmi. If you have none, use a metallic coin or any metallic object. Actually, you can do without any idol and just invoke Sri Mahalakshmi 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.

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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>.

- 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 Sri Mahalakshmi 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.

ॐ ऋद्ध्यास्म हव्यैर्नमसोपसद्य । मित्रं देवं मित्रधेयं नो अस्तु । अनूराधान् हविषा वर्धयन्तः । शतं जीवेम शरदः  
सर्वीराः ।

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.

ॐ केशवाय स्वाहा ।

ॐ नारायणाय स्वाहा ।

ॐ माधवाय स्वाहा ।

### 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:

शुक्लांबरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजं । प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् सर्व विघ्नोपशान्तये ॥

अगजानन पद्मार्कं गजाननमहर्निशं । अनेकदं तं भक्तानां एकदन्तं उपास्महे ॥

वक्रतुंड महाकाय कोटिसूर्यसमप्रभ । निर्विघ्नं कुरु मे देव सर्वकार्येषु सर्वदा ॥

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 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:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।

ॐ नमश्शिवाय ।

ॐ गं गणपतये नमः ।

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 Sri Mahalakshmi. 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 Sri Mahalakshmi.

ॐ ममोपात्त समस्त दुरितक्षयद्वारा श्री परमेश्वर प्रीत्यर्थम् श्री महालक्ष्मी प्रसाद सिद्धयर्थम् अद्य शुभदिने शुभमुहूर्ते श्री महालक्ष्मी होमकर्म यथाशक्ति करिष्ये ।

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.

वं

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

गंगे च यमुने चैव गोदावरि सरस्वति ।  
नर्मदे सिन्धु कावेरि जलेऽस्मिन् सन्निधिं कुरु ॥  
अमृतं भवतु

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).

ॐ ब्रह्मणे नमः ।  
ॐ यमाय नमः ।  
ॐ सोमाय नमः ।  
ॐ रुद्राय नमः ।  
ॐ विष्णवे नमः ।  
ॐ इन्द्राय नमः ।

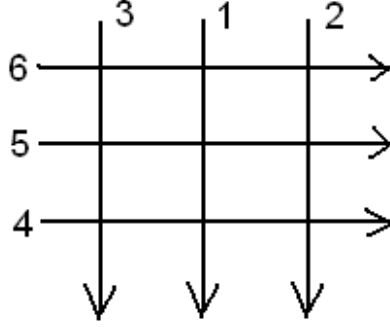
### **Agni Pratishthaapana (fire installation)**

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:

ॐ भूर्भुवस्सुवरोम्

Figure 1



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”.

क्र॒व्या॒द॒म॒ग्निं॑ प्र॒हि॒णो॒मि॒ दूरं॑ य॒मरा॒ज्ञो ग॒च्छतु॑ रि॒प्रवा॒हः ।  
इ॒हैवा॒यमि॒तरो॑ जा॒तवे॒दा दे॒वेभ्यो॑ ह॒व्यं व॒हतु॑ प्र॒जान॑न् ।

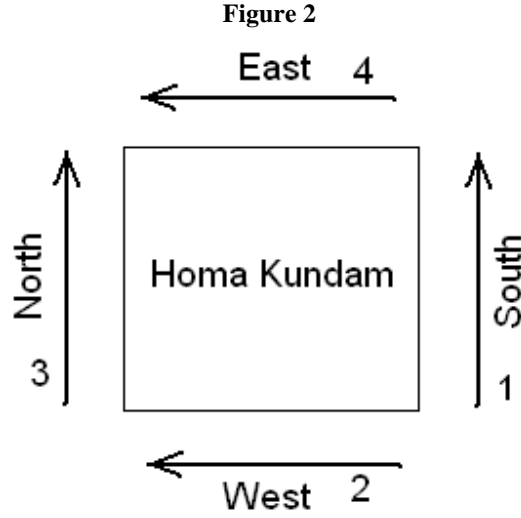
Now we have to do samskara (refinement) to the fire. Pour 8 drops of ghee in the fire while saying the following mantra 8 times.

ॐ भूर्भुवस्सुवः स्वाहा ॥

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 with the spoon and sprinkle it outside the homa kundam, on its four boundaries while reading the following 4 mantras. The order and direction of sprinkling is shown in Figure 2. For example, first sprinkle water from the southwestern corner to the southeastern corner, as shown by the arrow marked “1”. Then follow other arrows marked as 2, 3 and 4.

अ॒दि॒तेऽनु॑म॒न्यस्व॑ । अ॒नु॒म॒तेऽनु॑म॒न्यस्व॑ । स॒रस्व॑तेऽनु॒म॒न्यस्व॑ । दे॒व स॒वितः॑ प्र॒सुव॑ ।



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

च॒त्वारि॑ शृ॒ंगा॒स्त्रयो॑ अ॒स्य पा॒दा द्वे॑ शी॒र्षे स॒प्तह॑स्तासो अ॒स्य ।  
 त्रि॒धा ब॒द्धो वृ॒षभो॑ रो॒रवी॑ति॒ महो॑ दे॒वो म॒र्त्यां आवि॑वेश ।  
 ए॒ष हि दे॒वः प्र॒दिशो॑ नु॒ सर्वाः पूर्॒वो हि जा॑तः स उ॒ गर्भे॑ अ॒न्तः ।  
 स वि॒जाय॑मानः स ज॒निष्य॑माणः प्र॒त्यङ्मु॒खास्तिष्ठ॑ति वि॒श्वतो॑मुखः ।  
 प्राङ्मु॒खो दे॒व । हे अग्ने॑ । म॒माभि॑मुखो भव ।

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:

ॐ इन्द्राय नमः । ॐ अग्नये नमः । ॐ यमाय नमः । ॐ निऋतये नमः । ॐ वरुणाय नमः । ॐ वायवे नमः । ॐ सोमाय नमः । ॐ ईशानाय नमः । ॐ ब्रह्मणे नमः । ॐ शेषाय नमः । ॐ अग्नये नमः । ॐ आत्मने नमः ।

### 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.

ॐ प्रजापतये स्वाहा । प्रजापतय इदं न मम ।

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.

ॐ इन्द्राय स्वाहा । इन्द्रायेदं न मम ।

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

ॐ अग्नये स्वाहा । अग्नय इदं न मम ।

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:

ॐ सोमाय स्वाहा । सोमायेदं न मम ।

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:

आरंभप्रभृति एतत्क्षणपर्यन्तं मध्ये संभावित समस्त दोष प्रायश्चित्तार्थं सर्व प्रायश्चित्तं होष्यामि । ॐ भूर्भुवस्सुवः  
स्वाहा । प्रजापतय इदं न मम ।

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 (Sri Mahalakshmi) 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.



ॐ गं गणपतये नमः । असुनी ते पुनरस्मासु चक्षुः पुनः प्राणमिह नो देहि भोगं । ज्योक्पश्येम सूर्यमुच्चरन्तमनुमते  
मूळया नः स्वस्ति । ॐ श्री महागणपति प्राणशक्त्यै नमः । अत्र आगच्छ । आवाहितो भव । स्थापितो भव । सन्निहितो  
भव । सन्निरुद्धो भव । अवकुण्ठितो भव । प्रसीद प्रसीद ।

Now, we have to offer worship with several servies 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.

लं पृथिव्यात्मने नमः । गन्धं समर्पयामि ।

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

हं आकाशात्मने नमः । पुष्पं समर्पयामि ।

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.

यं वाय्वात्मने नमः । धूपं आघ्रापयामि ।

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

रं अग्न्यात्मने नमः । दीपं दर्शयामि ।

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 Sri Mahalakshmi and use something else for Mahaganapathi. You can offer just a raisin or a little sugar also.

वं अमृतात्मने नमः । नैवेद्यं समर्पयामि ।

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

सं सर्वात्मने नमः । सर्वोपचारान् समर्पयामि ।

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.

ॐ गं गणपतये नमः स्वाहा ।

### 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.

अस्य श्री प्राणप्रतिष्ठापन मंत्रस्य ब्रह्म विष्णु महेश्वरा ऋषयः ऋग्यजुस्सामाथर्वाणि छन्दांसि श्री महालक्ष्मी देवता ।  
श्रीं बीजं । हीं शक्तिः । ऐं कीलकं । श्रीं अंगुष्ठाभ्यां नमः । हीं तर्जनीभ्यां नमः । ऐं मध्यमाभ्यां नमः । श्रीं  
अनामिकाभ्यां नमः । हीं कनिष्ठिकाभ्यां नमः । ऐं करतल करपृष्ठाभ्यां नमः । श्रीं हृदयाय नमः । हीं शिरसे स्वाहा । ऐं  
शिखायै वषट् । श्रीं कवचाय हुं । हीं नेत्रत्रयाय वौषट् । ऐं अस्त्राय फट् । भूर्भुवस्सुवरोमिति दिग्बन्धः ।

ध्यानं - सरसिज निलये सरोजहस्ते । धवळतमां शुक गन्धमाल्यशोभे । भगवति हरिवल्लभे मनोज्ञे । त्रिभुवनभूतिकरि  
प्रसीद मह्यं ॥

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

ॐ श्रीं हीं ऐं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं ळं क्षं । ॐ हंसः सोऽहं सोऽहं हंसः । श्री महालक्ष्म्याः प्राण इह प्राणः । जीव इह  
स्थितः । सर्वेन्द्रियाणि वाङ्मनस्त्वक् चक्षुः श्रोत्र जिह्वाघ्राण प्राणापानव्यानोदानसमानाः इहैवागत्य सुखं चिरं तिष्ठन्तु  
स्वाहा । सान्निध्यं कुर्वन्तु स्वाहा । असुनी ते पुनरस्मासु चक्षुः पुनः प्राणमिह नो देहि भोगं । ज्योक्पश्येम  
सूर्यमुच्चरन्तमनुमते मृळ्या नः स्वस्ति । श्रीं हीं ऐं । ऐं हीं श्रीं । ॐ श्री महालक्ष्मी प्राणशक्त्यै नमः । अत्र आगच्छ ।

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.

आवाहिता भव । स्थापिता भव । सन्निहिता भव । सन्निरुद्धा भव । अवकुंठिता भव । देवि प्रसीद प्रसीद । देवि सर्व  
जगन्नायकि यावद्धोमावसानकम् । तावत्त्वं प्रीतिभावेन मूर्तौ अग्नौ च सन्निधिं कुरु ।

While saying this, pray to Sri Mahalakshmi 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 Mahalakshmi *is in the fire* and treat her with *respect* and *love*.

## Panchopachaara Pooja (worship of god)

Now, we have to offer worship with several services to Sri Mahalakshmi 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 B and use that procedure instead of what is given in this section.

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

लं पृथिव्यात्मिकायै नमः । गन्धं समर्पयामि ।

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

हं आकाशात्मिकायै नमः । पुष्पं समर्पयामि ।

Say the following and offer dhoopam (incense) to Sri Mahalakshmi 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.

यं वाय्वात्मिकायै नमः । धूपं आग्रापयामि ।

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

रं अग्न्यात्मिकायै नमः । दीपं दर्शयामि ।

Say the following and offer some food to Sri Mahalakshmi 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.

वं अमृतात्मिकायै नमः । नैवेद्यं समर्पयामि ।

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

सं सर्वात्मिकायै नमः । सर्वोपचारान् समर्पयामि ।

### Pradhaana Homam (main part)

Now, you can offer any mantras of Sri Mahalakshmi you want. Suggested count for each mantra is 4 or 8 or 12 or 16 or 21 or 28 or 108 or 1008. Pick a count with each mantra and try to meet that count. At the end of the mantra, you have to add the following (if it is not already present as a part of the mantra itself) and then make an offering in the fire.

स्वाहा

When making the last offering with a mantra (*i.e.* you are going to stop that mantra after this offering and switch to a different mantra), you add the following instead of the above:

वौषट्

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, pomegranate seeds, 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.

The most popular mantra chanted for Sri Mahalakshmi homam is **Sri Sooktam**. This is a powerful Vedic prayer. It is given in Appendix D. Another excellent possibility is **Mahalakshmi Ashtottara Shata Naama stotram** – the 108 name prayer taught by Lord Shiva to goddess Parvati. This is also powerful and given in Appendix E. Another good one is the **Mahalakshmi Ashtakam** – the eight verses composed by Lord Indra. This is given in Appendix F.

Though there are several other Vedic and Puranic mantras, the above three are strongly recommended in a homam in this age for spiritual progress.

You can pick any of the prayers above and repeat them several times, with offerings made to fire at each svaahaa (स्वाहा). Make sure that you spend atleast 25-30 minutes in repeating the main mantra you picked for the pradhaana homam. If you cannot pick, we suggest Mahalakshmi Ashtottara Shata Naama Stotram. It is very powerful and appropriate for this age.

You can pick multiple mantras and do all of them also. But it is advisable to pick **any one** mantra you like the most and repeat it as many times as you can, instead of doing a little bit of several mantras. If one wants water, one should dig deep for a well in one place instead of digging a little in ten places. One's chance of finding water is maximized then.

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

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

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

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै नमः । नैवेद्यं समर्पयामि ।

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.

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै नमः । नीराजनं समर्पयामि ।

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>2</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”.

ॐ प्रजापते न त्वदेतान्यन्यो विश्वा जातानि परि ता बभूव । यत्कामास्ते जुहुमस्तन्नो अस्तु वयं स्याम पतयो  
रयीणाम् । स्वाहा । प्रजापतय इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ भूः स्वाहा । अग्नय इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ भुवः स्वाहा । वायव इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ सुवः स्वाहा । सूर्यिदं न मम ॥

<sup>2</sup> Skip this and go to the next section to find a shorter procedure for uttaraangam.

यदस्य कर्मणोऽत्यरीरिचं यद्धान्यूनमिहाकरम् । अग्निष्टत् स्विष्टकृद्विद्वान् सर्वं स्विष्टं सुहुतं करोतु स्वाहा ॥ अग्नये  
स्विष्टकृत इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ भूर्भुवस्सुवः स्वाहा ॥ प्रजापतय इदं न मम ॥

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”.

अनाज्ञातं यदाज्ञातं यज्ञस्य क्रियते मिथु । अग्ने तदस्य कल्पय त्वं हि वेत्थ यथातथम् । स्वाहा ॥ अग्नय इदं न मम ॥  
पुरुषसंमितो यज्ञो यज्ञः पुरुषसंमितः । अग्ने तदस्य कल्पय त्वं हि वेत्थ यथातथम् । स्वाहा ॥ अग्नय इदं न मम ॥  
यत्पाकत्रा मनसा दीनदक्षा न । यज्ञस्य मन्वते मर्तासः । अग्निष्टद्धोता क्रतुविद्विजानन् । यजिष्ठो देवान् ऋतुशो यजाति ।  
स्वाहा ॥ अग्नय इदं न मम ॥

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”.

ॐ भूः स्वाहा ॥ अग्नय इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ भुवः स्वाहा ॥ वायव इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ सुवः स्वाहा ॥ सूर्ययिदं न मम ॥

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.

अस्मिन् होमकर्मणि मध्ये संभावित समस्त मंत्रलोप तंत्रलोप क्रियालोप भक्तिलोप श्रद्धालोप नियमलोप निष्ठालोप  
द्रव्यलोपादि समस्त दोष प्रायश्चित्तार्थं सर्वं प्रायश्चित्ताहुतिं होष्यामि । ॐ भूर्भुवस्सुवः स्वाहा ॥ प्रजापतय इदं न मम ॥

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.

ॐ श्री विष्णवे स्वाहा ॥ विष्णवे परमात्मन इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ नमो रुद्राय पशुपतये स्वाहा ॥ रुद्राय पशुपतय इदं न मम ॥

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)

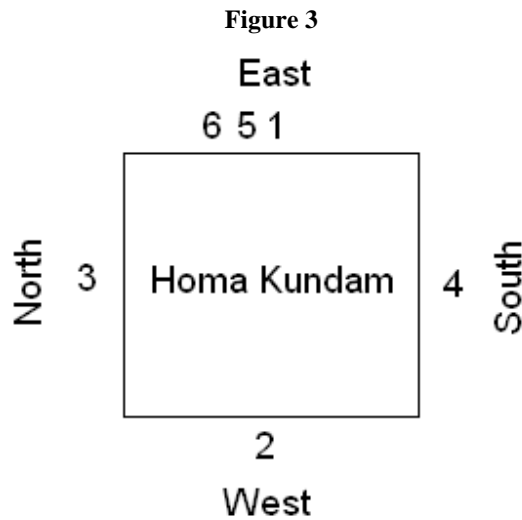
When you are in a hurry, you can perform uttaraanham in a brief form by saying the following and making an offering of ghee with each line.

ॐ भूः स्वाहा । अग्नय इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ भुवः स्वाहा । वायव इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ सुवः स्वाहा । सूर्ययिदं न मम ॥  
ॐ भूर्भुवस्सुवः स्वाहा । प्रजापतय इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ श्री विष्णवे स्वाहा । विष्णवे परमात्मन इदं न मम ॥  
ॐ नमो रुद्राय पशुपतये स्वाहा । रुद्राय पशुपतय इदं न मम ॥

### 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:

ॐ पाषदेभ्यो नमः । बलिं समर्पयामि ।



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.

ॐ शं च मे मयश्च मे प्रियं च मेऽनुकामश्च मे कामश्च मे सौमनसश्च मे भद्रं च मे श्रेयश्च मे वस्यश्च मे यशश्च मे भगश्च मे द्रविणं च मे यन्ता च मे धर्ता च मे क्षेमश्च मे धृतिश्च मे विश्वं च मे महश्च मे संविच्च मे ज्ञात्रं च मे सूश्च मे प्रसूश्च मे सीरं च मे लयश्च मन्त्रतं च मेऽमृतं च मेऽयक्ष्मं च मेऽनामयच्च मे जीवातुश्च मे दीर्घायुत्वं च मेऽनमित्रं च मेऽभयं च मे सुगं च मे शयनं च मे सूषा च मे सुदिनं च मे ॥

### 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).

ॐ पूर्णाहुतिमुत्तमां जुहोति । सर्वं वै पूर्णाहुतिः । सर्वमेवाप्नोति । अथो इयं वै पूर्णाहुतिः । अस्यामेव प्रतितिष्ठति ।  
 ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
 ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै पूर्णाहुतिं समर्पयामि ।



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

ॐ ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्महविर् ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतं । ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्म कर्म समाधिना ॥

Imagine that you are completely surrendering yourself to Sri Mahalakshmi. 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 Sri Mahalakshmi. Think that Sri Mahalakshmi fills the whole universe and that he 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.

स॒प्त॒ ते॒ अ॒ग्ने॒ स॒मि॒धः॑ स॒प्त॒जि॒ह्वाः॑ स॒प्त॒ ऋ॒ष॒य॒स्स॒प्तः॑ धाम॒ प्रि॒याणि॑ । स॒प्त॒ हो॒त्रा॑ स॒प्त॒ धा॒त्वा॑ य॒ज॒न्ति॒स॒प्त॒यो॒नी॒रा॒पृ॒ण॒स्वा॑ घृ॒तेन॑  
स्वाहा॑ । अ॒ग्नये॑ स॒प्त॒वत॑ इ॒दं न॒ मम॑ ॥

Take some water in a spoon and sprinkle it around the homa kumdam as shown in Figure2. 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.

अ॒दि॒तेऽन्व॑मं॒स्थाः॑ । अ॒नु॒म॒तेऽन्व॑मं॒स्थाः॑ । स॒र॒स्व॒तेऽन्व॑मं॒स्थाः॑ । दे॒व॒ स॒वि॒तः॑ प्रा॒सा॒वीः॑ ।

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. It can be the mantra with which you did homam. Try to forget about the your body and what you are doing and get into the mantra fully. Think that Sri Mahalakshmi is the only one that exists and the whole universe is his play. Think that all beings and all objects of this world are expressions of Sri Mahalakshmi’s play. Think that Sri Mahalakshmi 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! 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.

अस्मादग्नेः श्रीमहागणपतिं यथास्थानं प्रतिष्ठापयामि ।

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

अस्मान्मूर्तेश्च अग्नेश्च श्री महालक्ष्मीं यथास्थानं प्रतिष्ठापयामि ।

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

अग्ने॑ न॒य सु॒पथा॑ रा॒ये अ॒स्मान् विश्वा॑नि॒ देव॑ व॒युना॑नि॒ वि॒द्वान् । यु॒यो॒ध्यस्म॑ञ्जु॒हुरा॑णमे॒नो भू॒यिष्ठां॑ ते॒ नम॑ उ॒क्तिं वि॒धेम ।  
अ॒ग्नये॑ नमः ॥

## 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.

मंत्र॑हीनं॒ क्रिया॑हीनं॒ भक्ति॑हीनं॒ हुता॑शन । यद्भु॑तं तु मया देव परिपूर्णं तदस्तु ते ॥  
प्रायश्चि॑त्तान्यशेषाणि तपः कर्मात्मकानि वै । यानि तेषामशेषाणां श्री कृष्णस्मरणं परं ॥ श्री कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण ।  
काये॑न वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा बुद्ध्यात्मना वा प्रकृतेः स्वभावात् । करोमि यद्यत् सकलं परस्मै नारायणायेति समर्पयामि ॥

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

अने॑न दि॒व्य मंग॑ळ होमे॒न भग॑वती सर्वात्मिका श्री महा॒लक्ष्मी॑ प्रीयताम् । ॐ तत्सत् । सर्वम् श्री कृष्णार्पणमस्तु । ॐ  
शान्तिः॑ शान्तिः॑ शान्तिः॑ ।

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 Sri Mahalakshmi. 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: Super-short Homam (minimum mantras)

For those who are uncomfortable with Sanskrita and yet want to perform homam, the procedure given in this document may still be difficult. For such people, I can recommend a much shorter procedure. It is hoped that those who start with this super-short homam will eventually make an effort to switch to the main procedure given in this document, after they get some practice and become comfortable with mantras in Sanskrita.

Mantras offered to a deity in fire are powerful irrespective of the procedure used. Instead of not doing homam at all, it is better to do this super-short homam.

This appendix will describe a super-short procedure very briefly. If some details are unclear, please contextualize them by reading the rest of the document. The Sanskrita mantras are minimized in this super-short procedure.

### Preliminary Procedure

Think in your mind of Mother Earth, Lord Ganesha, Sri Mahalakshmi, your parents, rishis of your lineage (if you know them), all rishis and all gods. You can use a language that you are comfortable with (*e.g.* English or Hindi or your mother tongue) and say something in an intuitive way to remember all of them.

Take a tumbler or glass of water. Take three spoonfuls of water from the tumbler and drink them while saying: “This is for Keshava (केशव)”, “This is for Naaraayana (नारायण)” and “This is for Maadhava (माधव)”.

With akshatas in hand, pray to Ganesha: “O Ganesha (गणेश)! Please remove obstacles from my homam”. Do praanaayaama (see the section on it in the main document), possibly with the *Om* sound or a mantra given earlier.

Now take a vow: “I shall now perform a homam to the best of my ability, for the pleasure of Mahalakshmi (महालक्ष्मी).”

Leave the akshatas in front of the idol or homa kundam.

### Early Offerings

Light a lamp. Put some akshatas in the water tumbler and say “vam (वं)” 11 times. Take the water with the spoon and sprinkle it on yourself, on the homa kundam, on the idol and on the food, fruits and flowers.

Homa kundam should be on your east and you should be facing east. Draw two red parallel east-west lines with kumkum (vermilion) connecting the middle of the western edge of homa kundam with your seat and place the container with melted ghee on those lines.

Take a small camphor piece, light it in the lamp and place the burning camphor piece in homa kundam while saying the following.

ॐ भूर्भुवस्सुवरोम् ।

O Fire god, please co-operate with me and make my offerings reach gods in a state of purity.

Place dry coconut pieces or wood above it and make sure that they catch fire. Now offer five drops of ghee while saying the following:

ॐ प्रजापतये स्वाहा ॥  
ॐ इन्द्राय स्वाहा ॥  
ॐ अग्नये स्वाहा ॥  
ॐ सोमाय स्वाहा ॥

This is for forgiveness of my mistakes so far.

ॐ भूर्भुवस्सुवः स्वाहा ॥

### Quick Worship of Ganesha in Fire

Say “O Ganesha (गणेश), please come into this fire”. Say the following while showing the fire with folded palms (as though you are telling someone “come here”):

आवाहितो भव । स्थापितो भव ।

Put some akshatas in the fire and say “O Ganesha (गणेश), please be pleased with these services from me”. Now repeat the following mantra of Ganesha 4 times with an offering of ghee or something else.

ॐ गं गणपतये नमः । स्वाहा ।

## Main Homam of Sri Mahalakshmi

Say “O Mahalakshmi (महालक्ष्मि), please come into this fire”. Say the following while showing the fire with folded palms (as though you are telling someone “come here”):

आवाहिता भव । स्थापिता भव ।

Put some akshatas in the fire and say “O Mahalakshmi (महालक्ष्मि), please be pleased with these services from me”.

Now repeat the mantras of Mahalakshmi that you know 4 or 8 or 12 or 21 or 28 or 108 or 1008 times. Some mantras are suggested in the main document (see pages 21-22 before). At a minimum, do the following simple mantra as many times as you can.

ॐ श्री महालक्ष्म्यै नमः । स्वाहा ।

Each time you say this, offer ghee or akshatas or sesame seeds or some other materials described earlier in this document in the fire. If you do the above mantra many times and not do any other mantras, it is acceptable.

At the end of the offerings, take some food you cooked (or fruit), show it to the fire and say “O Mahalakshmi (महालक्ष्मि), please accept this” and throw a small bit into fire. Then stand up and go around the homa kundam once or 3 times. If someone looks at you from the roof or from the sky, it should look like you are going around the homa kundam in clockwise direction. At the end, you can bow in front of the fire. Finally sit down in front of the fire in your original place.

## Final Offerings

Say the following lines and offer a drop of ghee in the fire after each line:

ॐ भूः स्वाहा ।

ॐ भुवः स्वाहा ।

ॐ सुवः स्वाहा ।

ॐ भूर्भुवस्सुवः स्वाहा ।

ॐ विष्णवे स्वाहा ।

ॐ रुद्राय स्वाहा ।

At the end, sprinkle a little water on your right hand.

If it is possible, now offer six chunks of cooked white rice or fruit slices in the six places shown in Figure 3, while saying these are for the associates of Mahalakshmi (महालक्ष्मी)". Otherwise, you may skip this step.

### **Poornaahuti**

While saying "Om", pour a stream of ghee from the spoon into the fire. When the fire becomes big, you can offer poornaahuti.

Please read the section on poornaahuti in the main document for the description of materials needed, meaning of poornaahuti and the spirit to be followed. Instead of the mantras in the main document, just say the following:

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै पूर्णाहुतिं समर्पयामि ।

Then drop the full coconut or half coconut or coconut piece in fire. Offer one more drop of ghee while saying:

ॐ अग्नये सप्तवते स्वाहा ।

Now, meditate with any mantra you like for 5-10 minutes as the poornaahuti burns. For some useful tips, please refer to the main document.

At the end of the meditation, show your heart with your hands and say "O Ganesha (गणेश) and O Mahalakshmi (महालक्ष्मि), please come back into my heart". Also, thank the fire god mentally for his co-operation in the ritual. Then say:

सर्वम् श्री कृष्णार्पणमस्तु । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

If you minimize the entire procedure and spend maximum time chanting a mantra of Mahalakshmi with offerings into fire and then meditating as the poornaahuti burns, you will get the most out of your homam and not lose much! After some practice, you can compare this super-short procedure with the procedure given in the main document and keep adding mantras from the main procedure and eventually switch to the main procedure. But even this super-short procedure, when performed sincerely, can give good results.

## Appendix B: Shodasopachaara Pooja

[If you want to perform a shodasopachaara pooja (a worship consisting of 16 services) to Sri Mahalakshmi 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 Sri Mahalakshmi to sit on. While imagining that, just offer a few akshatas to the idol and the fire.

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै नमः । आसनं समर्पयामि ।

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).

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै पादयोः पाद्यं समर्पयामि ।

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

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै हस्तयोः अर्घ्यं समर्पयामि ।

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

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै मुखे शुद्धाचमनीयं समर्पयामि ।

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

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्मीं स्नपयामि । स्नानानन्तरं आचमनीयं समर्पयामि ।

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

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै वस्त्राणि धारयामि ।



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

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै यज्ञोपवीतं समर्पयामि ।

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

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै आभरणानि समर्पयामि ।

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.

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै गन्धान् धारयामि । हरिद्रा कुंकुमं समर्पयामि । अक्षतान् समर्पयामि ।

Keep sprinkling a few flowers or flower petals or akshatas on the idol and the fire while reading the following 16 names of Sri Mahalakshmi. 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.

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै पुष्पैः पूजयामि ।

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

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै धूपं आग्रापयामि ।

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.

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै दीपं दर्शयामि । आचमनीयं समर्पयामि ।

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 Sri Mahalakshmi and offer some akshatas in their place to the idol and the fire.

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै नैवेद्यं समर्पयामि । ताम्बूलं समर्पयामि ।

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.

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै कर्पूरनीराजनं समर्पयामि ।

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.

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै मन्त्रपुष्पं समर्पयामि ।

Say the following and bow before Sri Mahalakshmi 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.

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं महालक्ष्म्यै प्रदक्षिण नमस्कारान् समर्पयामि ।

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 C: 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) Apart from mantras of Sri Mahalakshmi, mantras of other deities can be offered in the fire while imagining them to be different manifestations of Sri Mahalakshmi.

(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.

## Appendix D: Sri Sooktam

Sri Suktam is a Vedic prayer for Mahalakshmi that is very well-known. It is can possibly be used in pradhaana homam. There are 16 verses and there are 16 ahutis each time this is recited. They may be repeated several times. This may be repeated 8 times everyday if one has time. If not, one can do as many times as one can.

ॐ हिरण्यवर्णां हरिणीं सुवर्णरजतस्रजां । चन्द्रां हिरण्मयीं लक्ष्मीं जातवेदो म आवह । स्वाहा ॥  
तां म आवह जातवेदो लक्ष्मीमनपगामिनीं । यस्यां हिरण्यं विन्देयं गामश्वं पुरुषानहं । स्वाहा ॥  
अश्वपूर्वा रथमध्यां हस्तिनाद प्रबोधिनीं । श्रियं देवीमुपह्वये श्रीर्मा देवीर्जुषतां । स्वाहा ॥  
कां सोस्मितां हिरण्यप्राकारामाद्रां ज्वलन्तीं तृप्तां तर्पयन्तीं । पद्मे स्थितां पद्मवर्णां तामिहोपह्वये श्रियं । स्वाहा ॥  
चन्द्रां प्रभासां यशसा ज्वलन्तीं श्रियं लोके देवजुष्टामुदारां ।  
तां पद्मिनीमीं शरणमहं प्रपद्येऽलक्ष्मीमे नश्यतां त्वां वृणे । स्वाहा ॥  
आदित्यवर्णे तपसोधिजातो वनस्पतिस्तव वृक्षोऽथ बिल्वः ।  
तस्य फलानि तपसा नुदन्तु मायान्तरायाश्च बाह्या अलक्ष्मीः । स्वाहा ॥

उपैतु मां देवसखः कीर्तिश्च मणिना सह । प्रादुर्भूतोऽस्मि राष्ट्रेऽस्मिन् कीर्तिमृद्धिं ददातु मे । स्वाहा ॥  
 क्षुत्पिपासामलां ज्येष्ठामलक्ष्मीं नाशयाम्यहं । अभूतिमसमृद्धिं च सर्वां निर्णुद मे गृहात् । स्वाहा ॥  
 गन्धद्वारां दुराघर्षां नित्यपुष्टां करीषिणीं । ईश्वरीं सर्वभूतानां तामिहोपह्वये श्रियं । स्वाहा ॥  
 मनसः काममाकूर्तिं वाचः सत्यमशीमहि । पशूनां रूपमन्नस्य मयि श्रीः श्रयतां यशः । स्वाहा ॥  
 कर्दमेन प्रजाभूता मयि सम्भव कर्दम । श्रियं वासय मे कुले मातरं पद्ममालिनीं । स्वाहा ॥  
 आपः सृजन्तु स्निग्धानि चिह्नीत वस मे गृहे । नि च देवीं मातरं श्रियं वासय मे कुले । स्वाहा ॥  
 आर्द्रा पुष्करिणीं पुष्टिं सुवर्णां हेममालिनीं । चन्द्रां हिरण्मयीं लक्ष्मीं जातवेदो म आवह । स्वाहा ॥  
 आर्द्रा यः करिणीं यष्टिं पिंगलां पद्ममालिनीं । सूर्यां हिरण्मयीं लक्ष्मीं जातवेदो म आवह । स्वाहा ॥  
 तां म आवह जातवेदो लक्ष्मीमनपगामिनीं । यस्यां हिरण्यं प्रभूतं गावो दास्योऽश्वान् विन्देयं पुरुषानहं । स्वाहा ॥  
 ॐ महादेव्यै च विद्महे विष्णुपत्न्यै च धीमहि । तन्नो लक्ष्मीः प्रचोदयात् । स्वाहा ॥

*Note on a Controversy:* The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> verses are controversial. There are different versions given in different books. Some put Surya verse before Chandra verse also interchange the words in the two verses. But this author believes that this is the correct version. Chandra nadi, *i.e.* Ida nadi, is comforting and calming (ida means comfort). It causes pushti (nourishment). Surya nadi, *i.e.* Pingala nadi, is heating and provocative. It makes the fire of knowledge burn and causes sacrifice in that fire and discrimination results from it. The word “yashti” comes from the root dhaatu “yaj” as in “yajna” and it means sacrifice. While nourishment is associated with the comforting lunar energy of Ida, sacrifice and fire of knowledge are associated with the solar energy of Pingala. Re-arranging the verses, as some do, to associate pushti with Surya and yashti and pingala with Chandra is not so meaningful. It is the other way around. Pushti and golden (suvarna) hue are associated with Chandra nadi, while yashti and reddish brown (pingala) hue are associated with Surya nadi. After looking at all the available versions, this author strongly recommends the above.

Those who believe that the version mentioned here is wrong and the version in another book is correct are most welcome to follow the text of their choice. They too will get some result.

## Appendix E: Sri Mahalakshmi Ashtottara Sata Naama Stotram

This is a powerful prayer consisting of 108 names of Mahalakshmi, as taught by Lord Shiva to goddess Parvati. It can possibly be used in pradhaana homam.

There are 14 verses and there are 14 ahutis each time. This may be repeated 12 times everyday if one has time. If not, one can do as many times as one can.

प्रकृतिं विकृतिं विद्यां सर्वभूतहितप्रदां । श्रद्धां विभूतिं सुरभिं नमामि परमात्मिकां । स्वाहा ।

वाचं पद्मालयां पद्मां शुचिं स्वाहां स्वधां सुधां । धन्यां हिरण्मयीं लक्ष्मीं नित्यपुष्टां विभावरीं । स्वाहा ।  
 अदितिं च दितिं दीप्तां वसुधां वसुधारिणीं । नमामि कमलां कांतां कामां क्षीरोदसंभवां । स्वाहा ।  
 अनुग्रहपरां बुद्धिं अनघां हरिवल्लभां । अशोकां अमृतां दीप्तां लोकशोकविनाशिनीं । स्वाहा ।  
 नमामि धर्मनिलयां करुणां लोकमातरं । पद्मप्रियां पद्महस्तां पद्माक्षीं पद्मसुंदरीं । स्वाहा ।  
 पद्मोद्भवां पद्ममुखीं पद्मनाभप्रियां रमां । पद्ममालाधरीं देवीं पद्मिनीं पद्मगंधिनीं । स्वाहा ।  
 पुण्यगंधां सुप्रसन्नां प्रसादाभिमुखीं प्रभां । नमामि चंद्रवदनां चंद्रां चंद्रसहोदरीं । स्वाहा ।  
 चतुर्भुजां चंद्ररूपां इंदितां इंद्रशीतलां । आह्लादजननीं पुष्टिं शिवां शिवकरीं सतीं । स्वाहा ।  
 विमलां विश्वजननीं पुष्टिं दारिद्र्यनाशिनीं । प्रीतिपुष्करिणीं शांतां शुक्लमाल्यांबरां श्रियं । स्वाहा ।  
 भास्करीं बिल्वनिलयां वरारोहां यशस्विनीं । वसुंधरां उदारांगां हरिणीं हेममालिनीं । स्वाहा ।  
 धनधान्यकरीं सिद्धिं स्त्रैणसौम्यां शुभप्रदां । नृपवेश्मगतानंदां वरलक्ष्मीं वसुप्रदां । स्वाहा ।  
 शुभां हिरण्यप्राकारां समुद्रतनयां जयां । नमामि मंगळां देवीं विष्णुवक्षःस्थलस्थितां । स्वाहा ।  
 विष्णुपत्नीं प्रसन्नाक्षीं नारायण समाश्रितां । दारिद्र्यध्वंसिनीं देवीं सर्वोपद्रववारिणीं । स्वाहा ।  
 नवदुर्गा महाकाळीं ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मिकां । त्रिकालज्ञानसंपन्नां नमामि भुवनेश्वरीं । स्वाहा ।

## Appendix F: Sri Mahalakshmi Ashtakam

This is the 8 verse prayer of Mahalakshmi composed by Indra. It is can possibly be used in pradhaana homam.

There are 8 verses and there are 8 ahutis each time. This may be repeated 16 times everyday if one has time. If not, one can do as many times as one can.

नमस्तेऽस्तु महामाये श्रीपीठे सुरपूजिते । शंखचक्रगदाहस्ते महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तुते ॥ स्वाहा ।  
 नमस्ते गरुडारूढे डोलासुरभयंकरि । सर्वपापहरे देवि महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तुते ॥ स्वाहा ।  
 सर्वज्ञे सर्ववरदे सर्वदुष्टभयंकरि । सर्वदुःखहरे देवि महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तुते ॥ स्वाहा ।  
 सिद्धिबुद्धिप्रदे देवि भुक्तिमुक्तिप्रदायिनि । मंत्रमूर्ते महादेवि महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तुते ॥ स्वाहा ।  
 आद्यंतरहिते देवि आदिशक्ति महेश्वरि । योगज्ञे योगसंभूते महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तुते ॥ स्वाहा ।  
 स्थूलसूक्ष्ममहारौद्रे महाशक्ति महोदरे । महापापहरे देवि महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तुते ॥ स्वाहा ।  
 पद्मासनस्थिते देवि परब्रह्मस्वरूपिणि । परमेशि जगन्मातः महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तुते ॥ स्वाहा ।

श्वेतांबरधरे देवि नानालंकारभूषिते । जगत्स्थिते जगन्मातः महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तुते ॥ स्वाहा ।