

Sri Maha Ganapathi 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 Mahaganapathi 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.

Starting from that Shata Chandi homam, a chain of events led to the preparation of this document. It is hoped that spiritual seekers interested in homam will find this resource useful.

What is Homam

Homam is a fire ritual. 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 offered into fire, along with sacred chants (mantras). The offerings 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

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 *sthoala 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 12th 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:* The moola mantra of Mahaganapathi is given below.

om śrīm hrīm klīm glaum̐ gam̐ gaṇapataye varavarada sarvajanaṁ me vaśamānaya svāhā |

The phrase "sarva janam me vashamaanaya" literally means "bring all people under my control". Thus, this is a selfish mantra for controlling people. It is raajasik/taamasik and inappropriate for someone who wants to remain saattwik and desires only self-knowledge and nothing else.

Comment: Let us look at this mantra closely. Om is the *pranava* – the source of all. It represents Brahman. Shreem is Lakshmi beeja and stands for prosperity and well-being of all kinds (not just wealth). Hreem is Mahalakshmi beeja and also known as maayaa beeja. It represents the entire manifested creation and running of it. Kleem is the Mahasaraswati beeja and also known as kaama (desire) beeja. The consonant 'g' belongs to Ganapathi. The beeja 'gloum' comes from it by adding 'l' and 'oum'. Adding 'r' and 'l' to consonants, we make them work mainly through Pingala and Ida nadis (respectively), *i.e.* knowledge and surrender (respectively). The vowel added at the end 'oum' belongs to Maheswara and shows removing darkness. Overall, the syllable 'gloum' makes one surrender to the power of Ganesha and remove the darkness through that surrender. The next beeja 'gam' in the mantra stands for realizing the nature of Ganesha.

Ganapataye means “to Ganapati”. Varavarada means “the best giver of the best things”. Sarvajanam means “all beings”. Vashamaanaya means “bring under control”. We are not asking for one or two people to come under our control here. We are asking for *all* beings to be under control. It should be remembered that each of us is a microcosm of the entire universe and various beings of this universe represent various aspects of ourselves. So we are actually asking for perfect control over all of our thoughts, all of our intentions, all of our actions *etc.* Control over all beings within us basically means perfect self-control.

We are essentially saying that Mahaganapathi represents Brahman as well as the well-being and running of this entire manifested universe that springs from Brahman. We are desiring a perfect surrender to Mahaganapathi, which completely removes darkness, makes us understand the tattwa (nature) of Mahaganapathi fully and hence gives us perfect self-control.

This mantra is a highly saattwik mantra. It destroys the *tamas* and *rajas* in us, gives devotion towards Mahaganapathi and makes us understand His true nature, which means understanding unmanifested Brahman as well as the manifested universe.

Why Mahaganapathi Homam

Mahaganapathi homam is apt for everyone. Ganesha sits in the mooladhara chakra. Chakras exist in the subtle body and they represent different realms in which one’s consciousness can dwell. Mooladhara chakra represents the physical/material realm, while higher chakras represent higher realms of consciousness. Being in Mooladhara chakra, Ganesha takes care of material prosperity and well being.

Ganesha is also in charge of the opening of the sushumna nadi, which is located in Mooladhara chakra. Nadis are channels of energy flow in the subtle body. Sushumna nadi contains various lokas (worlds) and all the beings that dwell in them, in a microcosmic form. The self-consciousness of a person is normally limited to the mooladhara chakra, *i.e.* the material realm. When the self-consciousness ascends through sushumna nadi through various chakras, one becomes aware of other realms of consciousness and the beings that dwell in them, including various lokas and various gods. For one to experience various gods, one’s self-consciousness has to ascend through sushumna nadi and reach higher realms of existence. Ganesha, being the gatekeeper of the sushumna nadi, controls one’s spiritual experience of various gods and lokas. No wonder shastras recommend praying to Ganesha before praying to *any* deity!

As Ganesha controls the material realm as well as the gate to the higher spiritual realms of being, his homam is very useful to any spiritual seeker. It facilitates spiritual progress while protecting the material aspects of one’s life. Thus, Mahaganapathi homam is recommended to all.

About This Document

This document describes a short procedure for performing Sri Maha Ganapathi homam, which takes 40-45 minutes. This document is for those who are interested in performing Maha Ganapathi 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 homam. Those

who are very **uncomfortable with Sanskrita** and want an even simpler procedure with fewer mantras may refer to **Appendix B** 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 Mahaganapathi homam.

Materials Needed

Must have

- One homa kundam (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. It is symbolic of the mooladhara chakra.
- 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 Ganesha. If you have none, use a metallic coin or any metallic object. Actually, you can do without any idol and just invoke Mahaganapathi 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 Mahaganapathi 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 rddhasyāma havyairnamasopasadya | mitraṁ devaṁ mitradheyaṁ no astu | anūrādhān
haviṣā vardhayantaḥ | śataṁ jīvema śaradaḥ savirāḥ |

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:

śuklāambaradharaṁ viṣṇuṁ śaśivaraṇaṁ caturbhujam | prasannavadanaṁ dhyāyet sarva
vighnopaśāntaye | | aḡajānana padmārkaṁ ḡajānanamaharṇiśaṁ | anekadaṁ taṁ bhaktānāṁ
ekadantaṁ upāsmāhe | | vakratuṇḡa 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 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 Maha Ganapathi. 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 Maha Ganapathi.

om mamopātta samasta duritakṣayadvārā śrī parameśvara prītyartham śrī mahāgaṇapati prasāda siddhyartham adya śubhadine śubhamuhūrte śrī mahāgaṇapati 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.

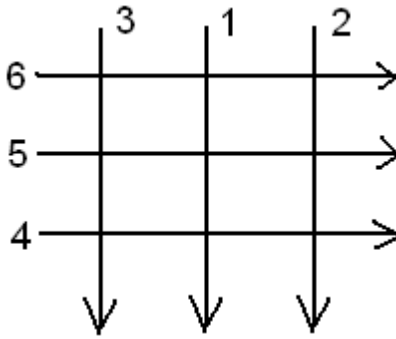
gaṅge ca yamune caiva godāvāri sarasvati |
narmade sindhu kāveri jale'smin sannidhiṁ kuru | |
amṛtaṁ bhavatu

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”.

kravyādamagnim̐ prahiṇomi dūram̐ yamarājño gacchatu ripravāhaḥ |
ihaivāyamitaro jātavedā devebhyo havyaṁ vahatu prajānan |

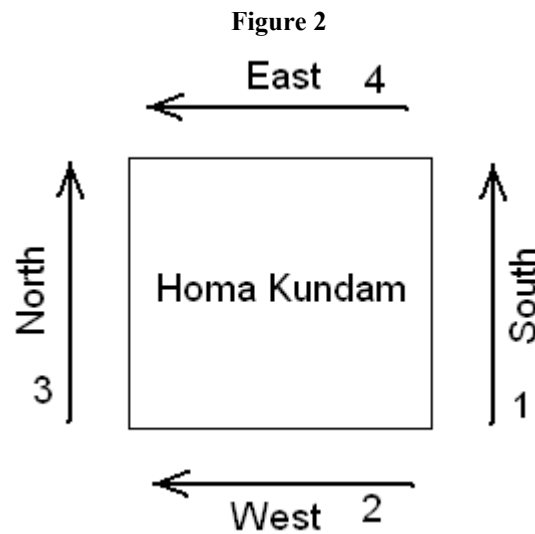
Now we have to do samskara (refinement) to the fire. Pour 8 drops of ghee in the fire while saying the following mantra 8 times.

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 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.

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



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

catvāri śrīṅgāstrayo asya pādā dve śīrṣe saptahastāso asya |
tridhā baddho vṛṣabho roravīti mahō devo martyāṃ āviveśa |
eṣa hi devaḥ pradiśo nu sarvāḥ pūrvo hi jātaḥ sa u garbhe antaḥ |
sa vijāyamānaḥ sa janīṣyamānaḥ 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 idaṃ 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 | indrāyedaṃ na mama |

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

om agnaye svāhā | agnaya idaṃ 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.

Praana Pratishthaapanaa (invocation of god)

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 mahāgaṇapati prānapratiṣṭhāpana mantrasya gaṇaka ṛṣiḥ nicṛdgāyatrī chandaḥ śrī mahā gaṇapatirdevatā | glāṁ bījam | glīm śaktiḥ | glauṁ kilakaṁ | gām aṅguṣṭhābhyām namaḥ | gīm tarjanībhyām namaḥ | gūṁ madhyamābhyām namaḥ | gaim anāmikābhyām namaḥ | gauṁ kaniṣṭhikābhyām namaḥ | gaḥ karatala karapṛṣṭhābhyām namaḥ | gām hṛdayāya namaḥ | gīm śirase svāhā | gūṁ śikhāyai vaṣaṭ | gaim kavacāya hum | gauṁ netratrāyāya vaṣaṭ | gaḥ astrāya phaṭ | bhūrbhuvassuvaromiti digbandhaḥ |

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

om āṁ hrīm krom yaṁ raṁ laṁ vaṁ śaṁ ṣaṁ saṁ haṁ ḷaṁ kṣaṁ | om haṁsaḥ so'haṁ so'haṁ haṁsaḥ | śrī mahāgaṇapateḥ prāṇa iha prāṇaḥ | jīva iha sthitaḥ | sarvendriyāṇi vānmanaścakṣuḥ śrotra jihvāghrāṇa prāṇāpānavyānodānasamānāḥ ihaivāgatya sukhaṁ ciraṁ tiṣṭhantu svāhā | sānnidhyaṁ kurvantu svāhā | asunī te punarasmāsu cakṣuḥ punaḥ prāṇamiha no dehi bhogaṁ | jyokpāsyema sūryamuccarantamanumate mṛḷayā naḥ svasti | āṁ hrīm krom krom hrīm āṁ | āṁ hrīm krom krom hrīm āṁ | āṁ hrīm krom krom hrīm āṁ | āṁ hrīm krom krom hrīm āṁ | om śrī mahāgaṇapati prāṇaśaktyai namaḥ |

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.

āvāhito bhava | sthāpito bhava | sannihito bhava | sanniruddho bhava | avakuṅṭhito bhava |
deva prasīda prasīda | deva sarva jagannātha yāvaddhomāvasānakam | tāvattvaṃ prītibhāvena
mūrtau agnau ca sannidhiṃ kuru |

While saying this, pray to Ganapathi in your mind and ask him to *stay* in the fire and the idol till the *end* of the homam.

Panchopachara Pooja (worship of god)

Now, we have to offer worship with several services to Mahaganapathi in the fire and idol. There are several options. One can do a panchopachara 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 C and use that procedure instead of what is given in this section.

Say the following and offer sandalwood powder/paste to Mahaganapathi in the fire and the idol. 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 and the idol.

ham 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.

yaṃ vāyvātmane namaḥ | dhūpam āghrāpayāmi |

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

ram agnyātmane namaḥ | dīpaṃ darśayāmi |

Say the following and offer some food to Mahaganapathi 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 amṛtātmane namaḥ | naivedyaṁ samarpayāmi |

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

saṁ sarvātmane namaḥ | sarvopacārān samarpayāmi |

Dasadha Vibhakta Moola Mantra (root mantra divided into 10 parts)

Now, we have to make ten offerings of ghee (ghee drops) for the ten parts of the moola mantra. Say the following ten sentences. Offer a drop of ghee into the fire after each sentence.

om svāhā | om śrīm svāhā | om śrīm hrīm svāhā | om śrīm hrīm klīm svāhā | om śrīm hrīm klīm glauṁ svāhā | om śrīm hrīm klīm glauṁ gaṁ svāhā | om śrīm hrīm klīm glauṁ gaṁ gaṇapataye svāhā | om śrīm hrīm klīm glauṁ gaṁ gaṇapataye varavarada svāhā | om śrīm hrīm klīm glauṁ gaṁ gaṇapataye varavarada sarvajanaṁ svāhā | om śrīm hrīm klīm glauṁ gaṁ gaṇapataye varavarada sarvajanaṁ me vaśamānaya svāhā svāhā |

Mahaganapathi Mantras

Now, you can offer as many mantras of Mahaganapathi as you want. Suggested counts for each mantra are 4 or 8 or 12 or 21 or 28 or 108 or 1008. At the end of the mantra, you have to add the following (if it is not already present in the mantra) and then make an offering in the fire.

svāhā^{||}

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:

vauṣaṭ

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 (especially jack fruit, grapefruit, pomegranate and *kapittha* fruit), nuts (cashews, almonds etc), modakas (a specific Indian cuisine item), 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.

Three mantras are particularly important. The first one is the moola mantra with beejas. The second one is a Vedic mantra. The two are given below (with “swaha” added already). After them, you can read “Ganapathi Atharva Seersham” (also known as “Ganapathi Upanishat”). If one reads the moola mantra 12 times, the Vedic mantra 8 times and Ganapathi Atharva Seersham 3 times, it will take about 40-45 minutes. You can decide your own counts. If you are doing

leisurely, you can add many more mantras from various books. It is a good idea to add the mantra(s) of your ishta devata. If you do sadhana of a specific mantra like Gayatri mantra everyday, it is a good idea to make some offerings with that mantra too. The two main mantras (moola mantra and Vedic mantra) are given below.

om śrīm hrīm klīm glaum gaṁ gaṇapataye varavarada sarvajanaṁ me vaśamānaya svāhā |

om gaṇānām tvā gaṇapatim havāmahe kavim kavīnāmupamaśravastamam | jyēṣṭharājam brahmaṇām brahmaṇaspata ā naḥ śṛṇvannūtibhissīda sādānam || svāhā |

Ganapathi Atharva Seersham is given in an Appendix A at the end of this document. It is a very powerful prayer of Mahaganapathi. In fact, it is the highest prayer of Mahaganapathi. It lauds Mahaganapathi as the source of creation, as the Supreme Being from whom all gods such as Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra are derived. When read with correct swaram (intonation), it brings inner peace and bliss. You can repeat it as many times as you want in your homam.

Punah Pooja (worship again)

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

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

om gaṁ gaṇapataye namaḥ | naivedyam 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 gaṁ gaṇapataye namaḥ | nīrājanam samarpayāmi |

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)¹

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”.

¹ Skip this and go to the next section to find a shorter procedure for uttaraangam.

om prajāpate na tvadetānyanyo viśvā jātāni pari tā babhūva | yatkāmāste juhūmastanno astu
vayaṁ syāma patayo rayīnām | svāhā | prajāpataya idaṁ na mama | |
om bhūḥ svāhā | agnaya idaṁ na mama | |
om bhuvah svāhā | vāyava idaṁ na mama | |
om suvah svāhā | sūryāyedaṁ na mama | |
yadasya karmano'tyarīricaṁ yadvānyūnamihākaram | agniṣṭat sviṣṭakṛdvidvān sarvaṁ
sviṣṭaṁ suhutaṁ karotu svāhā | agnaye sviṣṭakṛta idaṁ na mama | |
om bhūrbhuvassuvah svāhā | prajāpataya idaṁ 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”.

anājñātaṁ yadājñātaṁ yajñasya kriyate mithu | agne tadasya kalpaya tvaṁ hi vettha
yathātatham | svāhā | agnaya idaṁ na mama | |
puruṣasammito yajño yajñah puruṣasammitah | agne tadasya kalpaya tvaṁ hi vettha
yathātatham | svāhā | agnaya idaṁ na mama | |
yatpākatrā manasā dīnadakṣā na | yajñasya manvate martāsaḥ | agniṣṭaddhotā
kratuvidvijānan | yajīṣṭho devān rtuṣo yajāti | svāhā | agnaya idaṁ na mama | |

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”.

om bhūḥ svāhā | agnaya idaṁ na mama | |
om bhuvah svāhā | vāyava idaṁ na mama | |
om suvah svāhā | sūryāyedaṁ na mama | |

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
prāyaścittāhutiṁ hoṣyāmi | om bhūrbhuvassuvah 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 paramātmana idaṁ na mama | |
om namo rudrāya paśupataye svāhā | rudrāya paśupataya 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 uttaraanham in a brief form by saying the following and making an offering of ghee with each line.

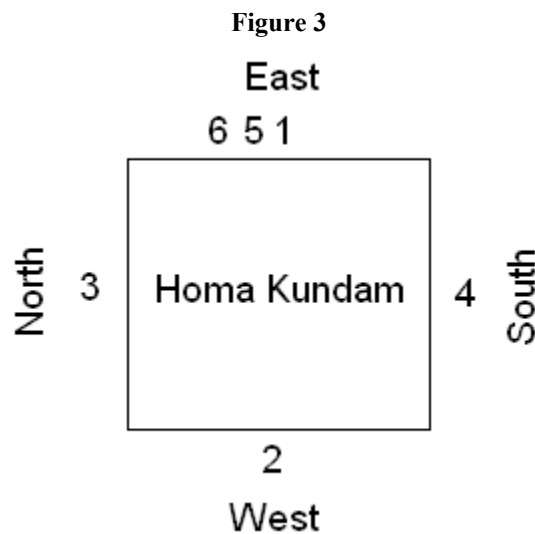
om bhūḥ svāhā | agnaya idam na mama | |
om bhuvah svāhā | vāyava idam na mama | |
om suvah svāhā | sūryāyedaṁ na mama | |
om bhūrbhuvassuvah svāhā | prajāpataya idam na mama | |
om śrī viṣṇave svāhā | viṣṇave paramātmāna idam na mama | |
om namo rudrāya paśupataye svāhā | rudrāya paśupataya idam na mama | |

Tarpanam (satisfying with liquid)

Then, get a little milk in a cup or a tumbler. If you don't have milk, use water. Keep your right palm horizontal, with the palm facing up. Make an upward vertical circle with thumb and index finger. Pour a little milk in the palm. Then angle the palm slightly and make the milk drop from the palm through the tips of middle and ring fingers into a corner of the homa kundam. While doing that, say the following:

om śrīm hrīm klīm glaum gam gaṇapataye varavarada sarvajanaṁ me vaśamānaya svāhā | om śrī mahāgaṇapatiṁ tarpayāmi |

Do this once or 4 times or 8 times or 12 times. At the end, throw away the milk remaining in the cup/tumbler and don't use it.



Suddhaanna Bali (sacrifice of pure rice)

Now, we have to offer bali (sacrifice to other beings – associates of Mahaganapathi). Get the cooked white rice (or banana slices or some other fruit slices). 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 śrī mahāgaṇapati pārṣadebhyo namaḥ | baliṁ 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 mayāśca me priyaṁ ca me'nukāmaśca me kāmaśca me saumanaśca me
bhadraṁ ca me śreyaśca me vasyāśca me yaśāśca me bhagaśca me draviṇaṁ ca me yantā ca me
dhartā ca me kṣemaśca me dhṛtiśca me viśvaṁ ca me mahaśca me saṁvicca me jñātraṁ ca me
sūśca me prasūśca me sīraṁ 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 pūrṇāhutiṃ muttamām juhōti | sarvaṃ vai pūrṇāhutiḥ | sarvamevāpnoti | atho iyaṃ vai pūrṇāhutiḥ | asyāmeva pratitiṣṭhati |
om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidam pūrṇātpūrṇamudacyate | pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate | |
om śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye pūrṇāhutiṃ samarpayāmi |

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

om brahmārpaṇaṃ brahmahavir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam | brahmaiva tena gantavyam
brahma karma samādhinā | |

Imagine that you are completely surrendering yourself to Mahaganapathi. 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 Mahaganapathi. Without that inner sense of 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 yajantisaptayonirāpṛṇasvā ghr̥tena svāhā | agnaye saptavata idam 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'nvamamsthāḥ | anumate'nvamamsthāḥ | sarasvate'nvamamsthāḥ | 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. It does not have to be a mantra of Ganapathi. You may, for example, meditate with the Gayatri mantra. Try to forget about the your body and what you are doing and get into the mantra fully. Think that the deity of the mantra is the only one that exists. Think that all beings and all objects of this world are expressions of the same 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! 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 the idol and came back into your heart.

asmānmūrteśca agneśca śrīmahāgaṇapatiṃ yathāsthānaṃ 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_ vayunāni_ vidvān | yuyodhyasmajjuhurānameno_ bhūyiṣṭhām_ te_ nama_ uktiṁ_ 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.

mantrahīnaṁ kriyāhīnaṁ bhaktihīnaṁ hutāśana | yaddhutaṁ tu mayā deva paripūrṇaṁ tadastu te | |
prāyaścittānyaśeṣāni tapaḥ karmātmakāni vai | yāni teṣāmaśeṣānām śrī kṛṣṇasmarāṇaṁ paraṁ | | śrī kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa |
kāyena vācā manasendriyairvā buddhyātmanā vā prakṛteḥ svabhāvāt | karomi yadyat sakalam parasmai nārāyaṇāyeti samarpayāmi | |

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

anena divya maṅgala homena bhagavān sarvātmakaḥ śrīmahāgaṇapatiḥ prīyatām | 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 to Mahaganapathi 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 Ganesha. 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.

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

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

Appendix A

Ganapathi Atharva Seersham (Ganeshopanishat)

The text of “Ganapathi Atharva Seersham” (also known as “Ganeshopanishat”) is given below. It can be recited once or a few times while making offerings into the fire during the homam. Offering can be made at the end of each stanza, when “swaahaa” comes.

This Vedic hymn is the highest prayer of Maha Ganapathi. It extols the highest nirguna form of Maha Ganapathi. All gods, including Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, are different manifestations of this form. All the worlds are created, sustained and destroyed in this form of Maha Ganapathi. When reading this, imagine Maha Ganapathi as *Parama Purusha* (Supreme Cosmic Being).

om namaste gaṇapataye | tvameva pratyakṣam tattvamasī | tvameva kevalam kartāsi | tvameva
kevalam dhartāsi | tvameva kevalam hartāsi | tvameva sarvam khalvidam brahmāsi | tvam
sākṣādātmāsi nityam | | svāhā |

ṛtam vacmi | satyam vacmi | | svāhā |

ava tvam mām | ava vaktāram | ava śrotāram | ava dātāram | ava dhātāram |
avānūcānamavaśiṣyam | ava paścāttāt | ava purastāt | avottarāttāt | ava dakṣiṇāttāt | ava
cordhvāttāt | avādhārāttāt | sarvato mām pāhi pāhi samantāt | | svāhā |

tvam vānmayastvam cinmayaḥ | tvamānandamayastvam brahmanmayaḥ | tvam
saccidānandādviṭiyo'si | tvam pratyakṣam brahmāsi | tvam jñānamayo vijñānamayo'si | |
svāhā |

sarvam jagadidam tvatto jāyate | sarvam jagadidam tvattastiṣṭhati | sarvam jagadidam tvayi
layameṣyati | sarvam jagadidam tvayi pratyeti | tvam bhūmirāpo'nalo'nilo nabhaḥ | tvam
catvāri vākpadāni | | svāhā |

tvam guṇatrayātītaḥ | tvam avasthātrayātītaḥ | tvam dehatrayātītaḥ | tvam kālatrayātītaḥ |
tvam mūlādhārasthito'si nityam | tvam śaktitrayātīmakāḥ | tvam yogino dhyāyanti nityam |
tvam brahmā tvam viṣṇustvam rudrastvamindrastvamagnistvam vāyustvam sūryastvam
candramāstvam brahma bhūrbhuvassuvarom | | svāhā |

gaṇādīm pūrvamuccārya varṇādīmstadanantaram | anusvāraḥ paratarāḥ | ardhendulasitam |
tāreṇa rddham | etattava manusvarūpaḥ | gākāraḥ pūrvarūpaḥ | akāro madhyama rūpaḥ |
anusvāraścāntyarūpaḥ | binduruttararūpaḥ | nādaḥ sandhānam | saṁhitā sandhiḥ | saiṣā
gaṇeśavidyā | gaṇaka rṣiḥ | nicṛdgāyātrī chandaḥ | gaṇapatir devatā | om gaṇ gaṇapataye
namaḥ | om gaṇ gaṇapataye namaḥ | om gaṇ gaṇapataye namaḥ | | svāhā |

ekadantāya vidmahe | vakratuṇḍāya dhīmahi | tanno dantiḥ pracodayāt | | svāhā |

ekadantaṁ caturhastāṁ pāśamaṁkuśadhāriṇāṁ | radaṁ ca varadāṁ hastairbibhrāṇāṁ
mūṣakadhvajāṁ | raktaṁ lambodaraṁ sūrpakarṇakāṁ raktavāsasaṁ |
raktagandhānuliptāṅgaṁ raktapuṣpaiḥ supūjitaṁ | bhaktānukāmpināṁ devaṁ
jagatkāraṇamacyutaṁ | āvirbhūtaṁ ca sṛṣṭyādau prakṛteḥ puruṣātparaṁ | evaṁ dhyāyati yo
nityaṁ sa yogī yogināṁ varaḥ | | svāhā |

namo vrātapataye | namo gaṇapataye | namaḥ pramathapataye | namaste'stu
lambodarāyaikadantāya vighnanāśīne śivasutāya varadamūrtaye namaḥ | | svāhā | |

Appendix B: 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, your favorite deity, 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) 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 (keśava)”, “This is for Naaraayana (nārāyaṇa)” and “This is for Maadhava (mādhava)”.

With akshatas in hand, pray to Ganesha: “O Ganesha (gaṇeśa)! 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 Lord Ganesha (gaṇeśa).”

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 (vaṁ)” 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.

om bhūrbhuvassuvarom |

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:

om prajāpataye svāhā | om indrāya svāhā | om agnaye svāhā | om somāya svāhā |

This is for forgiveness of my mistakes so far: om bhūrbhuvassuvaḥ svāhā |

Main Homam

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

āvāhito bhava | sthāpito bhava |

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

Now repeat the mantras of Ganesha 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. At a minimum, do the following simple mantra as many times as you can:

om gaṁ gaṇapataye namaḥ | svāhā |

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. The above mantra is part of Ganapathi Atharva Seersham and is a powerful (and yet simple) mantra.

At the end of the offerings, take some food you cooked (or fruit), show it to the fire and say “O Ganesha (gaṇeśa), 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:

om bhūḥ svāhā | om bhuvaḥ svāhā | om suvaḥ svāhā | om bhūrbhuvassuvaḥ svāhā |
om viṣṇave svāhā | om rudrāya svāhā |

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 Ganesha (gaṇeśa)”. 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:

om gaṁ gaṇapataye pūrṇāhutiṁ samarpayāmi |

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

om agnaye saptavate svāhā |

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 (gaṇeśa), please come back into my heart”. Also, thank the fire god mentally for his co-operation in the ritual. Then say:

sarvam śrī kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu | om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ |

If you minimize the entire procedure and spend maximum time chanting a mantra of Ganesha 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 C: Shodasopachara Pooja

[If you want to perform a shodasopachara pooja (a worship consisting of 16 services) to Mahaganapathi who is in fire and the idol, instead of the panchopachara 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 Mahaganapathi to sit on. While imagining that, just offer a few akshatas to the idol and the fire.

om śrīm hrīm klīm śrī mahāgaṇapataye namaḥ | āsanam samarpayāmi |

Now, say the line below imagine that you are washing his 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 śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye pādayoḥ pādyam samarpayāmi |

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

om śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye hastayoḥ arghyam samarpayāmi |

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

om śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye mukhe śuddhācamanīyam samarpayāmi |

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

om śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapatim 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 śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye 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 śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye 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 śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye 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 śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye gandhān dhārayāmi | haridrā kuṅkumaṁ samarpayāmi | akṣatān samarpayāmi |

Keep sprinkling a few flowers or flower petals or akshatas on the idol and the fire while reading the following 16 names of Mahaganapathi. 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 śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye puṣpaiḥ pūjayāmi | om sumukhāya namaḥ | om ekadantāya namaḥ | om kapilāya namaḥ | om gajakarṇakāya namaḥ | om lambodarāya namaḥ | om vikaṭāya namaḥ | om vighnarājāya namaḥ | om dhūmaketave namaḥ | om gaṇādhyakṣāya namaḥ | om phālacandrāya namaḥ | om gajānanāya namaḥ | om vakratuṇḍāya namaḥ | om sūrpakarṇāya namaḥ | om herambāya namaḥ | om skandapūrvajāya namaḥ | om siddhivināyakāya namaḥ | om śrī mahāgaṇādhipataye namaḥ |

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

om śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye 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 śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye dīpaṁ darśayāmi | ācamaṇīyaṁ 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 Mahaganapathi and offer some akshatas in their place to the idol and the fire.

om śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye 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 śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye karpūranīrājanaṁ 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 śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye mantrapuṣpaṁ samarpayāmi |

Say the following and bow before Mahaganapathi 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 śrīm hrīm klīm mahāgaṇapataye 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 D: 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 smoke 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 Ganapathi, mantras of other deities can be offered in the fire while imagining them to be different manifestations of Maha Ganapathi.

(9) Vedic hymns have an indescribable power. Even one chanting them without knowing the meaning will find a lot of peace, happiness and bliss through them after repeated chanting. One should try Ganapathi Atharva Seersham.

(10) 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.

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

(12) 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.