

## **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.

ஓம் ருத்த்யாஸ்ம ஹவ்யைர்நமஸோபஸத்ய| மித்ரம் தேவம் மித்ரதேயம் நோ  
அஸ்து| அநூராதாந் ஹவிஷா வர்தயம்தஃ| ஸுதம் ஜீவேம ஸுரதஃ ஸவீராஃ|

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.

ஓம் கேசுவாய ஸ்வாஹா| ஓம் நாராயணாய ஸ்வாஹா| ஓம் மாதவாய ஸ்வாஹா|

### 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:

ஸூக்லாம்பரதரம் விஷ்ணும் ஸஸிவர்ணம் சதுர்புஜம்| ப்ரஸந்நவதநம் த்யாயேத்  
ஸர்வ விக்நோபஸாம்தயே||  
அகஜாநந பத்மார்கம் கஜாநநமஹர்நிஸம்| அநேகதம் தம் பக்தாநாம் ஏகதம்தம்  
உபாஸ்மஹே||  
வக்ரதும்ட மஹாகாய கோடிஸூர்யஸமப்ரப| நிர்விக்நம் குரு மே தேவ  
ஸர்வகார்யேஷு ஸர்வதா||

Pray within your mind to Ganesha to remove obstacles from your homam. If you have time, energy and inclination (or when you are doing a longer version), you can even make a small

Ganesha idol with turmeric and water and do shodasopachaara pooja to the idol. But just reading the above verses and praying to Ganesha in mind should suffice for a short homam that is performed on a regular basis.

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

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

ஓம் நமோ பகவதே வாஸுதேவாய       ஓம் நமஸ்சிவாய       ஓம் கம் கணபதயே நமஃ
---

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.

ஓம் மமோபாத்த ஸமஸ்த துரிதக்ஷயத்வாரா ஸ்ரீ பரமேஸ்வர ப்ரீத்யர்தம் ஸ்ரீ மஹாலக்ஷ்மீ ப்ரஸாத ஸித்த்யர்தம் அத்ய ஸூபதிநே ஸூபமுஹூர்தே ஸ்ரீ மஹாலக்ஷ்மீ ஹோமகர்ம யதாஸக்தி கரிஷ்யே
---

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.

வம்

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

கம்கே ச யமுநே சைவ கோதாவரி ஸரஸ்வதி |  
நர்மதே ஸிம்து காவேரி ஜலேஸ்மிந் ஸந்நிதிம் குரு ||  
அம்ருதம் பவது

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).

ஓம் ப்ரஹ்மணே நமஃ|  
ஓம் யமாய நமஃ|  
ஓம் ஸோமாய நமஃ|  
ஓம் ருத்ராய நமஃ|  
ஓம் விஷ்ணவே நமஃ|  
ஓம் இம்த்ராய நமஃ|

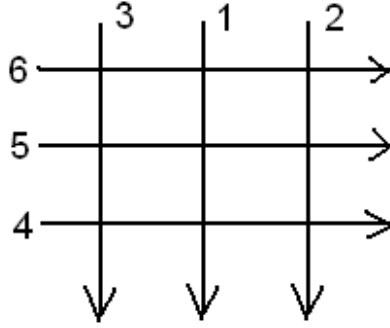
### Agni Pratishthaapana (fire installation)

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:

ஓம் பூர்புவஸ்ஸுவரோம்|

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”.

க்ரவ்யாதமக்நிம் ப்ரஹிணோமி தூரம் யமராஜ்ஞோ கச்சது ரிப்ரவாஹம் |  
இஹைவாயமிதரோ ஜாதவேதா தேவேப்யோ ஹவ்யம் வஹது ப்ரஜாநந் |

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.

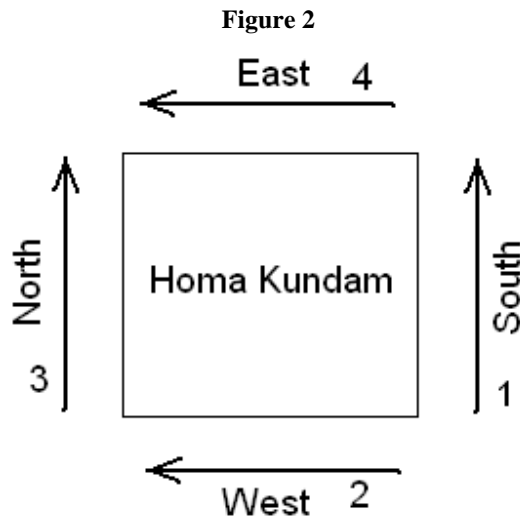
ஓம் பூர்புவஸ்ஸுவம் ஸ்வாஹா|

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.

அதிதேநுமந்யஸ்வ | அநுமதேநுமந்யஸ்வ | ஸரஸ்வதேநுமந்யஸ்வ | தேவ ஸவிதஃ  
ப்ரஸுவ |



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

சத்வாரி ஸ்ரும்காஸ்த்ரயோ அஸ்ய பாதாத்வே ஸரீர்ஷே ஸப்தஹஸ்தாலோ  
அஸ்ய |  
த்ரிதா பத்தோ வ்ருஷ்போ ரோரவீதி மஹோ தேவோ மர்த்யாக்ம் ஆவிவேஸ |  
ஏஷ ஹி தேவஃ ப்ரதிஸோ நு ஸர்வஃ பூர்வோ ஹி ஜாதஃ ஸ உ கர்பே  
அம்தஃ |  
ஸ விஜாயமாநஃ ஸ ஜநிஷ்யமாணஃ ப்ரத்யங்முகாஸ்திஷ்டதி விஸ்வதோமுகஃ |  
ப்ராங்முகோ தேவ ஹே அக்நே மமாபிமுகோ பவ |

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:

ஓம் இம்த்ராய நமஃ | ஓம் அக்நயே நமஃ | ஓம் யமாய நமஃ | ஓம் நிர்ருதயே  
நமஃ | ஓம் வருணாய நமஃ | ஓம் வாயவே நமஃ | ஓம் ஸோமாய நமஃ | ஓம்  
ஈஸாநாய நமஃ | ஓம் ப்ரஹ்மணே நமஃ | ஓம் ஸேஷாய நமஃ | ஓம் அக்நயே  
நமஃ | ஓம் ஆத்மநே நமஃ |

### **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.

ஓம் ப்ரஜாபதயே ஸ்வாஹா || ப்ரஜாபதய இதம் ந மம |

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.

ஓம் இம்த்ராய ஸ்வாஹா || இம்த்ராயேதம் ந மம |

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

ஓம் அக்நயே ஸ்வாஹா || அக்நய இதம் ந மம |

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:

ஓம் ஸோமாய ஸ்வாஹா || ஸோமாயேதம் ந மம |



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:

ஆரம்பப் ப்ருதி ஏதக்ஷண பர்யம்தம் மத்யே ஸம்பாவித ஸமஸ்த தோஷ  
ப்ராயஸ்சித்தார்தம் ஸர்வ ப்ராயஸ்சித்தம் ஹோஷ்யாமி| ஓம் பூர்புவஸஸுவஃ  
||  
ஸ்வாஹா| ப்ரஜாபதய இதம் ந மம|

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.

ஓம் கம் கணபதயே நமஃ| ஓம் ஸ்ரீ மஹாகணபதி ப்ராணஸக்த்யை நமஃ| அத்ர  
ஆகச்ச| ஆவாஹிதோ பவ| ஸ்தாபிதோ பவ| ஸந்நிஹிதோ பவ| ஸந்நிருத்தோ  
பவ| அவகும்பிதோ பவ| ப்ரஸீத ப்ரஸீத|

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.

லம் ப்ருதிவ்யாத்மநே நமஃ| கம்தம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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

ஹம் ஆகாஸாத்மநே நமஃ| புஷ்பம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

யம் வாய்வாத்மநே நமஃ| தூபம் ஆக்ராபயாமி|

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

ரம் அக்ந்யாத்மநே நமஃ| தீபம் தர்ஸ்யாமி|

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.

வம் அம்ருதாத்மநே நமஃ| நைவேத்யம் ஸமர்ப்யாமி|

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

ஸம் ஸர்வாத்மநே நமஃ| ஸர்வோபசாராந் ஸமர்ப்யாமி|

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.

ஓம் கம் கணபதயே நமஃ| ஸ்வாஹா||

### **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.

அஸ்ய ஸ்ரீ ப்ராணப்ரதிஷ்டாபந மம்த்ரஸ்ய ப்ரஹ்ம விஷ்ணு மஹேஸ்வரா  
ருஷ்யஃ ருக்யஜுஸ்ஸாமாதர்வாணி சம்தாக்ம்ஸி ஸ்ரீ மஹாலக்ஷ்மீ தேவதா| ஸ்ரீம்  
பீஜம்| ஹ்ரீம் ஸக்திஃ| ஐம் கீலகம்| ஸ்ரீம் அம்குஷ்டாப்யாம் நமஃ| ஹ்ரீம்  
தர்ஜநீப்யாம் நமஃ| ஐம் மத்யமாப்யாம் நமஃ| ஸ்ரீம் அநாமிகாப்யாம் நமஃ|  
ஹ்ரீம் கநிஷ்டிகாப்யாம் நமஃ| ஐம் கரதல கரப்ருஷ்டாப்யாம் நமஃ| ஸ்ரீம்  
ஹ்ருதயாய நமஃ| ஹ்ரீம் ஸிரஸே ஸ்வாஹா| ஐம் ஸிகாயை வஷட்| ஸ்ரீம் கவசாய  
ஹும்| ஹ்ரீம் நேத்ரத்ரயாய வெளஷட்| ஐம் அஸ்த்ராய பட்|  
பூர்புவஸ்ஸுவரோமிதி திக்பம்தஃ|

த்யாநம் - ஸரஸிஜ நிலயே ஸரோஜஹஸ்தே| தவளதமாம் ஸுக

கம்தமால்யஸோபே| பகவதி ஹரிவல்லபே மநோஜ்ஞே த்ரிபுவநபூதிகரி ப்ரஸீத

மஹ்யம்||

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் யம் ரம் லம் வம் ஸம் ஷம் ஸம் ஹம் ளம் க்ஷம்| ஓம்  
ஹம்ஸஃ ஸோஹம் ஸோஹம் ஹம்ஸஃ| ஸ்ரீ மஹாலக்ஷ்ம்யாஃ ப்ராண இஹ  
ப்ராணஃ| ஜீவ இஹ ஸ்திதஃ| ஸர்வேம்த்ரியாணி வாங்மநஸ்சக்ஷுஃ ஸ்ரோத்ர  
ஜிஹ்வாக்ராண ப்ராணாபாநவ்யாநோதாநஸமாநாஃ இஹைவாகத்ய ஸுகம் சிரம்  
திஷ்டம்து ஸ்வாஹா| ஸாந்நித்யம் குர்வம்து ஸ்வாஹா| அஸுநீ தே  
புந்ரஸ்மாஸு சக்ஷுஃ புநஃ ப்ராணமிஹ நோ தேஹி போகம்| ஜ்யோக்ப்யேம  
ஸூர்யமுச்சரம்தமநுமதே ம்ருளயா நஃ ஸ்வஸ்தி| ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம்| ஐம் ஹ்ரீம்  
ஸ்ரீம்| ஓம் ஸ்ரீ மஹாலக்ஷ்மீ ப்ராணஸக்த்யை நமஃ|அத்ர ஆகச்ச|

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.

ஆவாஹிதா பவ| ஸ்தாபிதா பவ| ஸந்நிஹிதா பவ| ஸந்நிருத்தா பவ| அவகும்பிதா  
பவ| தேவி ப்ரஸீத ப்ரஸீத| யாவத்தோமாவஸாநகம்| தாவத்த்வம் ப்ரீதிபாவேந  
மூர்தௌ அக்நௌ ச ஸந்நிதிம் குரு|

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 servies 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.

ஹம் ப்ருதிவ்யாத்மிகாயை நமஃ| கம்தம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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

ஹம் ஆகாஸாத்மிகாயை நமஃ| புஷ்பம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

யம் வாய்வாத்மிகாயை நமஃ| தூபம் ஆக்ராபயாமி|

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

ரம் அக்ந்யாத்மிகாயை நமஃ| தீபம் தர்ஸயாமி|

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.

வம் அம்ருதாத்மிகாயை நமஃ| நைவேத்யம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஸம் ஸர்வாத்மிகாயை நமஃ| ஸர்வோபசாராந் ஸமர்பயாமி|

### **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.

ஸ்வாஹா ॥

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:

வெளஷ்டம்

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 *svaaha* (வெளஷ்டம்). Make sure that you spend atleast 25-30 minutes in repeating the main mantra you picked for the *pradhana* 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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை நமஃ| நைவேத்யம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை நமஸ்கரி| நீராஜநம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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”.

ஓம் ப்ரஜாபதே ந த்வதேதாந்யந்யோ விஸ்வா ஜாதாநி பரி தா ப்பூவ|  
யத்காமாஸ்தே ஜுஹுமஸ்தந்நோ அஸ்து வயகம் ஸ்யாம பத்யோ ரயீணாம்|  
ஸ்வாஹா|| ப்ரஜாபதய இதம் ந மம||  
ஓம் பூஃ ஸ்வாஹா|| அக்நய இதம் ந மம||  
ஓம் புவஃ ஸ்வாஹா|| வாயவ இதம் ந மம||  
ஓம் ஸுவஃ ஸ்வாஹா|| ஸூர்யாய இதம் ந மம||  
யதஸ்ய கர்மணோத்யரீரிசம் யத்வாந்யந்நமிஹாகரம்| அக்நிஷ்டத்  
ஸ்விஷ்டக்ருத்வித்வாந் ஸர்வம் ஸ்விஷ்டம் ஸுஹுதம் கரோது ஸ்வாஹா|  
அக்நயே ஸ்விஷ்டக்ருத இதம் ந மம||  
ஓம் பூர்புவஸ்ஸுவஃ ஸ்வாஹா|| ப்ரஜாபதய இதம் ந மம||

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”.

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

அநாஜ்ஞாதம் யதாஜ்ஞாதம் யஜ்ஞஸ்ய க்ரியதே மிது| அக்நே ததஸ்ய கல்பய  
 த்வகம் ஹி வேத்த யதாததம்| ஸ்வாஹா| அக்நய இதம் ந மம||  
 புருஷஸம்மிதோ யஜ்ஞோ யஜ்ஞஃ புருஷஸம்மிதஃ| அக்நே ததஸ்ய கல்பய  
 த்வகம் ஹி வேத்த யதாததம்| ஸ்வாஹா| அக்நய இதம் ந மம||  
 யத்பாகத்ரா மநஸா தீநதக்ஷா ந| யஜ்ஞஸ்ய மந்வதே மர்தாஸஃ|  
 அக்நிஷ்டத்தோதா க்ரதுவித்விஜாநந்| யஜிஷ்டோ தேவாந் ருதுஸோ யஜாதி|  
 ஸ்வாஹா| அக்நய இதம் ந மம||

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”.

ஒம் பூஃ ஸ்வாஹா| அக்நய இதம் ந மம||  
 ஒம் புவஃ ஸ்வாஹா| வாயவ இதம் ந மம||  
 ஒம் ஸுவஃ ஸ்வாஹா| ஸூர்யாயேதம் ந மம||

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.

அஸ்மிந் ஹோமகர்மணி மத்யே ஸம்பாவித ஸமஸ்த மம்த்ரலோப தம்த்ரலோப  
 க்ரியாலோப பக்திலோப ஸ்ரத்தாலோப நியமலோப நிஷ்டாலோப  
 த்ரவ்யலோபாதி ஸமஸ்த தோஷ ப்ராயஸ்சித்தார்தம் ஸர்வ  
 ப்ராயஸ்சித்தாஹுதிம் ஹோஷ்யாமி| ஒம் பூர்புவஸுஃ ஸ்வாஹா| ப்ரஜாபதய  
 இதம் ந மம||

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.

ஒம் ஸ்ரீ விஷ்ணவே ஸ்வாஹா| விஷ்ணவே பரமாத்மந இதம் ந மம||  
 ஒம் நமோ ருத்ராய பஸுபதயே ஸ்வாஹா| ருத்ராய பஸுபதய இதம் ந மம||

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)

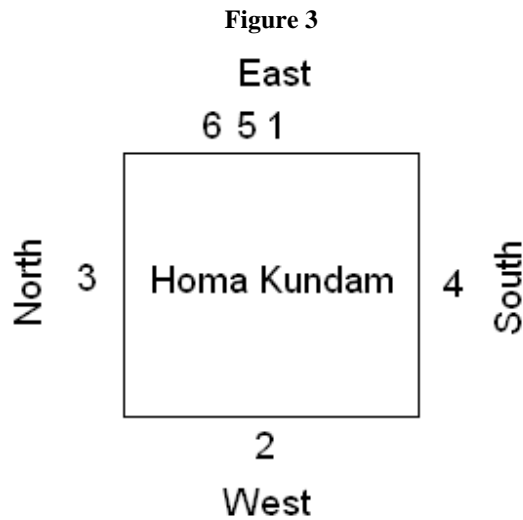
When you are in a hurry, you can perform uttaraanham in a brief form by saying the following and making an offering of ghee with each line.

ஓம் பூஃ ஸ்வாஹா|| அக்நய இதம் ந மம||  
ஓம் புவஃ ஸ்வாஹா|| வாயவ இதம் ந மம||  
ஓம் ஸுவஃ ஸ்வாஹா|| ஸூர்யாய இதம் ந மம||  
ஓம் பூர்புவஸுஃ ஸ்வாஹா|| ப்ரஜாபதய இதம் ந மம||  
ஓம் ஸ்ரீ விஷ்ணவே ஸ்வாஹா|| விஷ்ணவே பரமாத்மந இதம் ந மம||  
ஓம் நமோ ருத்ராய பஸுபதயே ஸ்வாஹா|| ருத்ராய பஸுபதய இதம் ந மம||

### 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:

ஓம் பார்ஷதேப்யோ நமஃ| பலிம் ஸமர்பயாமி|





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.

ஓம் ஸம் ச மே மயஸ்ச மே ப்ரியம் ச மேநுகாமஸ்ச மே காமஸ்ச மே  
 ஸௌமநஸஸ்ச மே பத்ரம் ச மே ஸ்ரேயஸ்ச மே வஸ்யஸ்ச மே யஸஸ்ச மே  
 பகஸ்ச மே த்ரவிணம் ச மே யம்தா ச மே த்ர்தா ச மே கேஷமஸ்ச மே  
 த்ருதிஸ்ச மே விஸ்வம் ச மே மஹஸ்ச மே ஸம்விச்ச மே ஜ்ஞாத்ரம் ச மே  
 ஸௌஸ்ச மே ப்ரஸௌஸ்ச மே ஸீரம் ச மே லயஸ்ச மருதம் ச மேம்ருதம் ச  
 மேயக்ஷம் ச மேநாமயச்ச மே ஜீவாதூஸ்ச மே தீர்காயுத்வம் ச மேநமித்ரம் ச  
 மேபயம் ச மே ஸுகம் ச மே ஸயநம் ச மே ஸௌஷா ச மே ஸுதிநம் ச மே||

### 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).

ஓம் பூர்ணாஹுதிமுத்தமாம் ஜுஹோதி ஸர்வம் வை பூர்ணாஹுதிஃ  
 ஸர்வமேவாப்நோதி அதோ இயம் வை பூர்ணாஹுதிஃ அஸ்யாமேவ

ப்ரதிதிஷ்டதி

ஓம் பூர்ணமதஃ பூர்ணமிதம் பூர்ணாத்பூர்ணமுத்ச்யதே| பூர்ணஸ்ய  
பூர்ணமாதாய பூர்ணமேவாவஸிஷ்யதே||  
ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மயை பூர்ணாஹுதிம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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

ஓம் ப்ரஹ்மார்பணம் ப்ரஹ்மஹவிர் ப்ரஹ்மாக்நௌ ப்ரஹ்மணா ஹுதம்|  
ப்ரஹ்மைவ தேந கம்தவ்யம் ப்ரஹ்ம கர்ம ஸமதிநா||

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.

ஸப்த தே அக்நே ஸமிதஃ ஸப்தஜிஹ்வாஃ ஸப்த ருஷ்யஸ்ஸப்தஃ தாம்  
ப்ரியாணி| ஸப்த ஹோத்ரா ஸப்த தாத்வா யஜந்திஸப்தயோநீராப்ருணஸ்வா  
க்ருதேந ஸ்வாஹா|| அக்நயே ஸப்தவத இதம் ந மம||

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.

அதிதேந்வமம்ஸ்தாஃ| அநுமதேந்வமம்ஸ்தாஃ| ஸரஸ்வதேந்வமம்ஸ்தாஃ| தேவ  
ஸவிதஃ ப்ராஸாவீஃ|

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.

அஸ்மாதக்நேஃ ஸ்ரீமஹாகணபதிம் யதாஸ்தாநம் ப்ரதிஷ்டாபயாமி|

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.

அஸ்மாந்மூர்தேஸ்ச அக்நேஸ்ச ஸ்ரீ மஹாலக்ஷ்மீம் யதாஸ்தாநம்  
ப்ரதிஷ்டாபயாமி|

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

அக்நே நய ஸுபதா ராயே அஸ்மாந் விஸ்வாநி தேவ வ்யநாநி வித்வாந்|  
ய்யோத்யஸ்மஜ்ஜுஹூராணமேநோ பூயிஷ்டாம் தே நம உக்திம் விதேம|  
அக்நயே நமஃ||

### 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.

மம்த்ரஹீநம் க்ரியாஹீநம் பக்திஹீநம் ஹுதாஸந| யத்துதம்து மயா தேவ  
பரிபூர்ணம் ததஸ்துதே||  
ப்ராயஸ்சித்தாந்யஸேஷாணி தபஃ கர்மாத்மகாநி வை யாநி  
தேஷாமஸேஷாணாம் ஸ்ரீ க்ருஷ்ணஸ்மரணம் பரம்|| ஸ்ரீ க்ருஷ்ண க்ருஷ்ண  
க்ருஷ்ண|  
காயேந வாசா மநஸேம்த்ரியைர்வா புத்த்யாத்மநா வா ப்ரக்ருதேஃ ஸ்வபாவாத்|  
கரோமி யத்யத் ஸகலம் பரஸ்மை நாராயணாயேதி ஸமர்பயாமி||

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.

அனேன திவ்ய மம்கள ஹோமேன பகவாதீ ஸர்வாத்மிகா ஸ்ரீ மஹாலக்ஷ்மீ  
ப்ரீயதாம்| ஓம் தத்ஸத்| ஸர்வம் ஸ்ரீ க்ருஷ்ணார்பணமஸ்து| ஓம் ஸாம்திஃ  
ஸாம்திஃ ஸாம்திஃ|

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 (கேசவ)”, “This is for Naaraayana (நாராயண)” and “This is for Maadhava (மாதவ)”.

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

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 (வம்)” 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.

ஓம் பூர்புவஸ்ஸுவரோம்

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:

ஓம் ப்ரஜாபதயே ஸ்வாஹா||  
ஓம் இம்த்ராய ஸ்வாஹா||  
ஓம் அக்நயே ஸ்வாஹா||  
ஓம் ஸோமாய ஸ்வாஹா||

This is for forgiveness of my mistakes so far.

ஓம் பூர்புவஸ்ஸுவஃ ஸ்வாஹா||

## Quick Worship of Ganesha in Fire

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

ஆவாஹிதோ பவ| ஸ்தாபிதோ பவ|

Put some akshatas in the fire and say “O Ganesha (கணேச), 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.

ஓம் கம் கணபதயே நமஃ | ஸ்வாஹா |

## Main Homam of Sri Mahalakshmi

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

ஆவாஹிதா பவ| ஸ்தாபிதா பவ|

Put some akshatas in the fire and say “O Mahalakshmi (மஹாலக்ஷ்மி), 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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீ மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை நமஃ | ஸ்வாஹா||

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 (மஹாலக்ஷ்மி), 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:

ஓம் பூஃ ஸ்வாஹா|  
ஓம் புவஃ ஸ்வாஹா|  
ஓம் ஸுவஃ ஸ்வாஹா|  
ஓம் பூர்புவஸ்ஸுவஃ ஸ்வாஹா|  
ஓம் விஷ்ணவே ஸ்வாஹா|  
ஓம் ருத்ராய ஸ்வாஹா|

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 (மஹாலக்ஷ்மி)". 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:

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை பூர்ணாஹுதிம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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

ஓம் அக்நயே ஸப்தவதே ஸ்வாஹா|

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 (கணேச) and O Mahalakshmi (மஹாலக்ஷ்மி), please come back into my heart". Also, thank the fire god mentally for his co-operation in the ritual. Then say:



ஸர்வம் ஸ்ரீ க்ருஷ்ணார்பணமஸ்து| ஓம் ஸாம்திஃ ஸாம்திஃ ஸாம்திஃ|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை நமஃ| ஆஸநம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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).

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை பாதயோஃ பாத்யம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை ஹஸ்தயோஃ அர்க்யம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை முகே ஸுத்தாசமநீயம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீம் ஸ்நாநாநம்தரம் ஆசமநீயம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை வஸ்த்ராணி தாரயாமி|

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

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை யஜ்ஞோபவீதம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை ஆபரணாநி ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை கம்தாந் தாரயாமி| ஹரித்ரா கும்குமம் ஸமர்பயாமி| அக்ஷதாந் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை புஷ்பைஃ பூஜயாமி|

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

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை தூபம் ஆக்ராபயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை தீபம் தர்ஸயாமி| ஆசமநீயம்  
ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை நைவேத்யம் ஸமர்பயாமி| தாம்பூலம்  
ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை கர்பூரநீராஜநம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை மம்த்ரபுஷ்பம் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஸ்ரீம் ஹ்ரீம் ஐம் மஹாலக்ஷ்மீயை ப்ரதக்ஷிண நமஸ்காராந் ஸமர்பயாமி|

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.

ஓம் ஹிரண்யவர்ணாம் ஹரிணீம் ஸுவர்ணரஜதஸ்ரஜாம்| சம்த்ராம்  
 ஹிரண்மயீம் லக்ஷ்மீம் ஜாதவேதோ ம ஆவஹ| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 தாம் ம ஆவஹ ஜாதவேதோ லக்ஷ்மீமநபகாமிநீம்| யஸ்யாம் ஹிரண்யம்  
 விம்தேயம் காமஸ்வம் புருஷாநஹம்| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 அஸ்வபூர்வாம் ரதமத்யாம் ஹஸ்திநாத ப்ரபோதிநீம்| ஸ்ரியம் தேவீமுபஹ்வயே  
 ஸ்ரீர்மா தேவீர்ஜுஷதாம்| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 காம் ஸோஸ்மிதாம் ஹிரண்யப்ராகாராமார்த்ராம் ஜ்வலம்தீம் த்ருப்தாம்  
 தர்பயம்தீம்| பத்மே ஸ்திதாம் பத்மவர்ணாம் தாமிஹோபஹ்வயே ஸ்ரியம்|  
 ஸ்வாஹா||  
 சம்த்ராம் ப்ரபாஸாம் யஸஸா ஜ்வலம்தீம் ஸ்ரியம் லோகே  
 தேவஜுஷ்டாமுதாராம்| தாம் பத்மிநீம் ஸரணமஹம் ப்ரபத்யேலக்ஷ்மீர்மே  
 நஸ்யதாம் த்வாம் வருணே| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 ஆதித்யவர்ணே தபஸோதிஜாதோ வநஸ்பதிஸ்தவ வருக்ஷாத பில்வஃ| தஸ்ய  
 பலாநி தபஸா நுதம்து மாயாம்தராயாஸ்ச பாஹ்யா அலக்ஷ்மீஃ| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 உபைது மாம் தேவஸகஃ கீர்திஸ்ச மணிநா ஸஹ| ப்ராதூர்பூதோஸ்மி  
 ராஷ்ட்ரேஸ்மிந் கீர்திம்ருத்திம் ததாது மே| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 க்ஷுத்பிபாஸாமலாம் ஜ்யேஷ்டாமலக்ஷ்மீம் நாஸ்யாம்யஹம்|  
 அபூதிமஸம்ருத்திம் ச ஸர்வாம் நிர்ணுத மே க்ருஹாதி| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 கம்தத்வாராம் துராதர்ஷாம் நித்யபுஷ்டாம் கரீஷிணீம்| ஈஸ்வர்கம்  
 ஸர்வபூதாநாம் தாமிஹோபஹ்வயே ஸ்ரியம்| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 மநஸஃ காமமாகூதிம் வாசஃ ஸத்யமஸீமஹி| பஸூநாம் ரூபமந்நஸ்ய மயி  
 ஸ்ரீஃ ஸ்ரயதாம் யஸஃ| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 கர்தமேந ப்ரஜாபூதா மயி ஸம்பவ கர்தம்| ஸ்ரியம் வாஸய மே குலே மாதரம்  
 பத்மமாலிநீம்| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 ஆபஃ ஸ்ருஜந்து ஸந்தித்தாநி சிக்லீத வஸ மே க்ருஹே| நி ச தேவீம் மாதரம்  
 ஸ்ரியம் வாஸய மே குலே| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 ஆர்த்ராம் புஷ்கரிணீம் புஷ்டிம் ஸுவர்ணாம் ஹேமமாலிநீம்| சம்த்ராம்

ஹிரண்மயீம் லக்ஷ்மீம் ஜாதவேதோ ம ஆவஹ| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 ஆர்த்ராம் யஃ கரிணீம் யஷ்டீம் பிம்களாம் பத்மமாலிநீம்| ஸூர்யாம்  
 ஹிரண்மயீம் லக்ஷ்மீம் ஜாதவேதோ ம ஆவஹ| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 தாம் ம ஆவஹ ஜாதவேதோ லக்ஷ்மீமநபகாமிநீம்| யஸ்யாம் ஹிரண்யம்  
 ப்ரபூதம் காவோ தாஸ்யோஸ்வாந் விம்தேயம்  
 புருஷாநஹம்| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 ஓம் மஹாதேவ்யை ச வித்மஹே விஷ்ணுபத்நயை ச தீமஹி| தந்நோ லக்ஷ்மீஃ  
 ப்ரசோதயாத்| ஸ்வாஹா||

*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 is 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.

ப்ரக்ருதிம் விக்ருதிம் வித்யாம் ஸர்வபூதஹிதப்ரதாம்| ஸ்ரத்தாம் விபூதிம்  
 ஸூரபிம் நமாமி பரமாத்மிகாம்| ஸ்வாஹா||  
 வாசம் பத்மாலயாம் பத்மாம் ஸூசிம் ஸ்வாஹாம் ஸ்வதாம் ஸூதாம்| தந்யாம்

ஹிரண்மயீம் லக்ஷ்மீம் நித்யபுஷ்டாம் விபாவரீம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 அதிதிம் ச திதிம் தீப்தாம் வஸுதாம் வஸுதாரிணீம்| நமாமி கமலாம்  
 காம்தாம் காமாம் க்ஷீரோதஸம்பவாம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 அநுக்ரஹபராம் புத்திம் அநகாம் ஹரிவல்லபாம்| அஸோகாம் அம்ருதாம்  
 தீப்தாம் லோகஸோகவிநாஸரிநீம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 நமாமி தர்மநிலயாம் கருணாம் லோகமாதரம்| பத்மப்ரியாம் பத்மஹஸ்தாம்  
 பத்மாக்ஷீம் பத்மஸும்தரீம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 பத்மோத்பவாம் பத்மமுகீம் பத்மநாபப்ரியாம் ரமாம்| பத்மமாலாதரீம் தேவீம்  
 பத்மிநீம் பத்மகம்திநீம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 புண்யகம்தாம் ஸுப்ரஸந்நாம் ப்ரஸாதாபிமுகீம் ப்ரபாம்| நமாமி சம்த்ரவதநாம்  
 சம்த்ராம் சம்த்ரஸஹோதரீம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 சதுர்புஜாம் சம்த்ரரூபாம் இம்திராம் இம்துஸீதலாம்| ஆஹ்லாதஜநீம் புஷ்டிம்  
 ஸிவாம் ஸிவகரீம் ஸதீம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 விமலாம் விஸ்வஜநீம் புஷ்டிம் தாரித்ர்யநாஸரிநீம்| ப்ரீதிபுஷ்கரிணீம் ஸாம்தாம்  
 ஸுக்லமால்யாம்பராம் ஸ்ரியம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 பாஸ்கரீம் பில்வநிலயாம் வராரோஹாம் யஸஸ்விநீம்| வஸும்தராம்  
 உதாராம்காம் ஹரிணீம் ஹேமமாலிநீம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 தநதாந்யகரீம் ஸித்திம் ஸ்த்ரைணஸௌம்யாம் ஸுபப்ரதாம்|  
 ந்ரூபவேஸ்மகதாநம்தாம் வரலக்ஷ்மீம் வஸுப்ரதாம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 ஸுபாம் ஹிரண்யப்ராகாராம் ஸமுத்ரதநயாம் ஜயாம்| நமாமி மம்களாம் தேவீம்  
 விஷ்ணுவக்ஷஃஸ்தலஸ்திதாம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 விஷ்ணுபத்நீம் ப்ரஸந்நாக்ஷீம் நாராயண ஸமாஸ்ரிதாம்| தாரித்ர்யத்வம்ஸிநீம்  
 தேவீம் ஸர்வோபத்ரவவாரிணீம்| ஸ்வாஹா|  
 நவதுர்காம் மஹாகாளீம் ப்ரஹ்மவிஷ்ணுஸிவாத்மிகாம்|  
 த்ரிகாலஜ்ஞாநஸம்பந்நாம் நமாமி புவநேஸ்வரீம்| ஸ்வாஹா|

## 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.

நமஸ்தேஸ்து மஹாமாயே ஸ்ரீபீடே ஸுரபூஜிதே| ஸம்கசக்ரகதாஹஸ்தே  
மஹாலக்ஷ்மி நமோஸ்துதே|| ஸ்வாஹா|  
நமஸ்தே கருடாருடே டோலாஸுரபயம்கரி| ஸர்வபாபஹரே தேவி மஹாலக்ஷ்மி  
நமோஸ்துதே|| ஸ்வாஹா|  
ஸர்வஜ்ஞே ஸர்வவரதே ஸர்வதுஷ்டபயம்கரி| ஸர்வதுஃகஹரே தேவி  
மஹாலக்ஷ்மி நமோஸ்துதே|| ஸ்வாஹா|  
ஸித்திபுத்திப்ரதே தேவி புக்திமுக்திப்ரதாயிநி| மம்த்ரமூர்தே மஹாதேவி  
மஹாலக்ஷ்மி நமோஸ்துதே|| ஸ்வாஹா|  
ஆத்யம்தரணிதே தேவி ஆதிஸக்தி மஹேஸ்வரி| யோகஜ்ஞே யோகஸம்பூதே  
மஹாலக்ஷ்மி நமோஸ்துதே|| ஸ்வாஹா|  
ஸ்தூலஸூக்ஷ்மமஹாரௌத்ரே மஹாஸக்தி மஹோதரே| மஹாபாபஹரே தேவி  
மஹாலக்ஷ்மி நமோஸ்துதே|| ஸ்வாஹா|  
பத்மாஸநஸ்திதே தேவி பரப்ரஹ்மஸ்வரூபிணி| பரமேஸரி ஜகந்மாதஃ  
மஹாலக்ஷ்மி நமோஸ்துதே|| ஸ்வாஹா|  
ஸ்வேதாம்பரதரே தேவி நாநாலம்காரபூஷிதே| ஜகத்ஸ்திதே ஜகந்மாதஃ  
மஹாலக்ஷ்மி நமோஸ்துதே|| ஸ்வாஹா|