

Meaning and Significance of Worship

Based on the worship of Sri Ramakrishna



Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama
Yadavagiri, Mysore - 570 020

Revered Swami Vishnumayananda,
with respectful pranam.

Sw. Muktidananda

28/5/200

Mysore

Meaning and Significance of Worship

Vidyartha

Based on Sri Ramakrishna Pūjā

To see God everywhere is the highest worship . . . The worship is not at all an external affair. It is almost wholly internal . . . Real worship is not done till devotion overflows from the heart and tears roll down from the eyes for a glimpse of God . . . A true devotee takes God's name with every breath, is filled with sincere devotion and offers flowers, leaves and water to God without any selfish motive, saying : 'O Mother Divine, worship and prayer are nothing but opportune moments to call on you.'

SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA
(*The Apostle of Sri Ramakrishna
to the South p.74*)

Meaning and Significance of Worship

Based on Sri Ramakrishna Pūjā

Mantras as per the book '*Worship of Sri Ramakrishna*'
by Swami Hitananda

Meaning and explanation
by

Swami Achalananda

A Disciple of Swami Yatishwarananda

Articles in Appendix
by

Swami Prameyananda

Swami Bhajanananda

Compiled by

Swami Muktidananda

Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala, Mysore



Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama

Yadavagiri, Mysore 570 020

Meaning and Significance of Worship—with meaning and significance of mantras, mudras and associated rituals.

First Edition : 2007

Published by
The President
Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama
Yadavagiri, Mysore 570 020

ABOUT THE COVER PAGE

The picture on the front cover symbolizes the concept of worship based on the idea देवो भूत्वा देवं यजेत (devo bhūtvā devam yajeta)—only when the worshipper divinizes himself, he is entitled to worship the Divine. The two images of the worshipper—normal and illumined—depicted in the picture symbolize the worshipper getting the divine body (Divya Śarīra) in the course of the puja after the Bhūta Śuddhi, which is a preliminary procedure to purify and divinize the gross and subtle bodies before starting the actual worship of the deity.

Printed by
Sri Shakti Electric Press, Jayanagar, Mysore 570 014

Preface

This hand book on Pūjā as practised in Ramakrishna Math centres in general and Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore in particular is the outcome of the earnest desire to have clear ideas regarding the meaning and significance of the mantras, mudras and procedures. And the content of this book is the result of knowledge imparted by Rev. Swami Achalanandaji who had taken a series of classes on this subject held for about four months in the year 1985. An attempt was made to organize his explanation and insights given informally into a systematic notes enriched with pictures, summary charts of chronology reference which serve as useful guide to the novices to understand puja better. The Mantras of the puja and the procedure are based on the book “*Worship of Sri Ramakrishna*” by Swami Hitanandaji. Swami Muktidanandaji has given so much of time and energy in taking down the notes from Swami Achalanandaji and giving this book a final shape, with meticulous care and deep understanding.

Swami Achalanandaji was a scholar in Sanskrit and had traditional knowledge of the ritualistic worship. He had considerable mastery over Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta literature. He had received initiation from Swami Yatishwaranandaji. He took sanyasa after his retirement from the government service, and lived at our Ashrama at Ulsoor (Bangalore), and Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education (RIMSE), Mysore, for the rest of his life. He passed away at RIMSE itself in the year 1991.

The ‘Science of Worship’ by Rev. Swami Prameyanandaji

Maharaj, and the two editorial articles of the *Prabuddha Bharata* of May and June 1980—‘*Worship as a Spiritual Discipline*’ by Rev. Swami Bhajananandaji are very illuminating and should be read in this connection. So is the section ‘*Ramakrishna as a Priest*’ taken from Rev. Swami Nikhila-nandaji’s introduction to his translation of ‘*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*’. We have therefore appended these articles to this book.

We earnestly hope that this effort will serve a useful purpose in conveying to the interested devotees, brahmacharins and monks of Ramakrishna Order the significance and meaning of Puja, so that worship becomes more meaningful and spiritually beneficial.

We are grateful to Rev. Swami Prameyanandaji Maharaj and Swami Bhajananandaji Maharaj for allowing us to include their valuable articles which have enriched this book. We are thankful to all the monastic brothers and devotees who helped in data feeding, proof reading and in giving valuable suggestions. We also thank reverentially Swami Gautamanandaji, the President, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, for allowing us to publish this book from our centre, and promising to take it over for publishing the subsequent editions.

Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama
Mysore

SWAMI NITYASTHANANDA
President

Contents

Preface	...	5
Introduction	...	8
A Word with the Worshipper	...	11
WORSHIP OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA	...	13
Successive Steps of Puja	...	129
Mudras or Poses of the Hands	...	136
Appendices		
1. Sri Ramakrishna as a Priest		
—Swami Nikhilanandaji	...	146
2. The Science of Worship		
—Swami Prameyanandaji	...	149
3. Worship as a Spiritual Discipline		
—Swami Bhajananandaji	...	163
4. Durga Pūjā		
—Swami Bhajananandaji	...	195

Introduction

Puja, ritualistic worship, forms a part of the process of Upasana. The literal meaning of the word 'upasana' is to sit near. It is the process of practising the proximity of God and of progressively feeling his presence till one merges in Him. Dhyana—contemplation and intense meditation are also part of the same process. While Dhyana is a purely internal and mental act, puja or worship, includes some performance of external acts as also chanting of certain mantras and the like. As we all know Japa and Dhyana, which are purely mental, form an important part of the Puja.

These acts of worship and the contemplation and meditation accompanying them are performed in accordance with certain methods prescribed by the scriptures. To serve the purpose for which they are performed, these scriptures prescribe methods based on the experience of the wise elders and that is their validity and sanction. Till the proximity and its progressive closeness culminating in the union of the individual with the universal spirit becomes a realized fact, the contemplation of such proximity is just based on imagination. But contemplation in accordance with scriptural injunction has this advantage over imagination "running riot": It is based on the actual experience of the wise elders who have trodden the path before us, while the latter could be just a fictitious projection of our own ignorant mind.

These acts and contemplation have to be done with faith to serve the purpose for which they are performed. Faith is the belief in the words of the scripture and of the preceptor, the Guru. This faith does not yield the result by itself, but follow-

ing the precepts with faith does. Faith gives steadfastness to the method and persistence in the action.

If one has to receive the full benefit of the formal worship with rituals, one must have, in addition to faith, some understanding of the meaning of the mantras he is chanting and the significance of the acts he is performing so that these may be done with the proper attitude of mind. Puja done with faith and understanding produces a state of mind in which the proximity of the Divine is felt at least as long as the puja lasts. Repetition of this day after day results in the memory of the state lingering long after the puja is over and finally it becomes an abiding memory. This requires everyday renewal; but once the proximity has been experienced as a fact, its memory can never be lost and this very memory accelerates the progress towards the union with the Self.

The methods taught by the scriptures are very many and all of them are valid and valuable for their followers. To us the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, he is the embodiment of the ultimate truth, the form in which we like to contemplate God, the Ishta-devata. He is also the way to reach that God, the ultimate Guru; and our immediate Guru is the one who has shown us the way to Him. That is why in meditation we merge our own form in the Guru and Him in the Ishta.

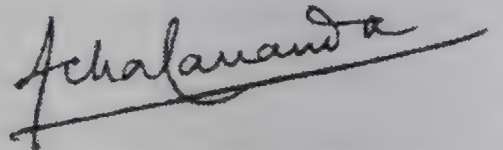
We worship Him therefore as the embodiment of the Divine. The method of worship is given in the book "*Worship of Sri Ramakrishna*" by Swami Hitananda. In these notes an attempt has been made to explain the meaning of the mantras given in the aforementioned book as well as the significance of the actions, and also to indicate with what attitude of mind all this should be done. What is said here is based on the memory of some passages retained while studying the subject sometime in the past. It has not been possible to quote from memory all

passages from the sastras in support of all the statements made here.

The explanations given here are illustrative and do not claim to be exhaustive or exclusive. The readers are therefore welcome to supplement or replace them by other explanations gathered from their own reading or from instructions of competent persons, so long as such explanations help us to feel and practice the presence of God and thus lead us towards our goal of *atmano moksha* and *jaggadhita*.

That the explanations given here can serve this end can be verified by practice.

May He bless our effort and guide it aright '*tanno hamsah prachodayat*' is the prayer of—

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Achalananda' in a cursive style, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

SWAMI ACHALANANDA

A Word with the Worshipper

If worship is to become real to us, we first ought to know the meaning and purpose of the mantras and ritualistic actions involved at different stages of worship.

In these explanatory notes on the worship of Sri Ramakrishna, an effort has been made to explain the meaning and significance of the mantras, ritualistic actions and materials involved in the worship, so that even a novice who does not know Sanskrit, is able to understand the meaning and purpose of worship at all stages.

The main objectives of puja are (i) to feel the presence of God (ii) to achieve concentration of mind and (iii) to bring about the transformation of consciousness.

Worship becomes meaningful only when the worshipper has a clear understanding of and faith in the science of subtle sound vibration of mystic syllables, *beeja* mantras and their related symbolism, based on which great seers (*mantra-draṣṭāra*) established various rituals. As he progresses in worship, the worshipper will gradually be able to attain concentration and absorption in it, culminating in the transformation of his consciousness. Of course, this transformation also depends on other important factors like the worshipper's intensity of faith, purity of mind and devotional fervour.

Some practical hints to the worshipper :

1. In order that puja becomes joyful and elevating, the worshipper should resort to a certain amount of conscious imagination with an alert mind and intense awareness coupled with the aspiration to feel the presence of the deity and other gods and goddesses being worshipped.

2. Puja should be performed with a calm, prayerful attitude. An intimate loving relationship with the deity should be maintained throughout the puja and all through the day, even during other activities.

3. The worshipper should feel himself filled with holiness in the sanctified atmosphere of the shrine, the abode of the Lord. During the worship he must try to maintain the transparent, pure and luminous individuality of a *bhakta* and be aware of the effulgent presence of the Lord in the lotus of his heart as well as in the image he worships.

4. Effort should be made to keep all unconscious murmurs of the mind at bay by chanting every mantra and performing every ritual with great fervour and by understanding their meaning, in the manner most pleasing to the Lord. Thus the thought process, the chanting of mantras, ritualistic actions and the will should get focussed in one direction, towards the Lord. This will make worship really meaningful and absorbing.

The important stages in Puja that we go through are:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Purification | 2. Divinization |
| 3. Consecration | 4. Invocation of the Lord |
| 5. Offerings to the Deity | 6. Self-surrender |

The worship of Sri Ramakrishna followed in our ashramas is a simplified form of tantrik worship which can be practised by any devotee at any place of worship. This concept of worship is developed on the principle *devo bhūtvā devaṃ yajeta*—The Divine is to be worshipped by oneself becoming divine—and this can be experienced gradually by following sincerely the various procedures and practices prescribed in the course of worship. As we advance in our spiritual sadhana, puja will become more meaningful and joyful.

SWAMI MUKTIDANANDA

Worship of Sri Ramakrishna

1. Prayer

Begin the worship with the japa of the *iṣṭa-mantra* and then recite the following prayer with folded hands.

ॐ सर्वमङ्गलमाङ्गल्यं वरेण्यं वरदं शुभम् ।
नारायणं नमस्कृत्य सर्वकर्माणि कारयेत् ॥

*Om sarvamaṅgalamāṅgalyaṁ vareṇyaṁ varadaṁ
śubhaṁ;*

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya sarvakarmāṇi kārayet.

At the beginning of worship pray to God as all-auspicious and, therefore, the Source of all auspiciousness. Auspiciousness is something that has a positive effect on the worshipper's mind. Contemplation on auspiciousness or the pleasing nature of God neutralizes any possible obstruction during puja.

ॐ सर्वमङ्गलमाङ्गल्यम् who is all-auspicious (therefore the source of all auspiciousness); वरेण्यम् the most desirable; वरदम् the bestower of the desire of one's heart; शुभम् auspicious; नारायणम् to Narayana; नमस्कृत्य bowing down to him; सर्वकर्माणि कारयेत् let all actions be performed.

‘After prostrating to Narayana, who is all-auspicious, most excellent and the bestower of the highest good, let all actions be performed.’

Self-surrender is one of the important aspects, nay, the main purpose of worship. Hence the word *namaḥ* is significant here.

नारायणम् नारा is related to नर or it means man himself; अयनम् home or abode; नारा अयनं यस्य सः नारायण One whose abode is in man; so this refers to God in man or God as man.

Alternatively, it can mean one who has his home in water¹, which is a symbol for bliss. So the Lord is one who abides in bliss or as the embodiment of bliss itself. When commencing the puja the worshipper should feel that the Sri Ramakrishna's image before him is the supreme Lord Narayana Himself.

2. Ācamana (Sipping Water) ॐ विष्णुः (three times)

There are great powers operating in our life: *ādhibhautika*, *ādhidaivika* and *ādhyātmika*; physical, divine and spiritual. The worshipper should sanctify himself so that these powers can have a positive influence on him. By sipping water uttering a mantra and touching the limbs, we invoke the divine aspect, the presiding Deity, to purify them. This is the *ādhidaivika* aspect of purification.

Sip the water gently using *dhenu karna-mudrā*, chanting *Om viṣṇuḥ*. Repeat the process three times. Now pass the back of the thumb from right to left over the lips and wash the hand. Touch the lips with index finger, middle finger and ring finger joined together. Touch the nostrils with the thumb and the index finger. Touch the right and left eyes, and the left and right ears with the thumb and the ring finger. Touch the navel with the thumb and the little finger. Wash the hand again. Touch the chest with the palm. Touch the head, and right and left shoulders with all the fingers joined together.

The purpose of sipping water (or touching water, or just washing the hand on certain other occasions of puja) is to remind oneself of the purifying effect of water. Here it is meant for the purification of the mouth, without which sacred mantras

1 नरादुत्पन्नतत्त्वानां सङ्ग्रहे नारसंज्ञके ।

अयनं तस्य यदभूत् तस्मान्नारायणः स्मृतः । । सात्वततन्त्रम् 2-34

should not be uttered. The utterance of the name of Lord Vishnu is to remind oneself of the all-pervading God. It is for the same purifying purpose that we touch the different parts of the body in continuation of this act of *ācamana*.

3. Purification :

Washing the hands again, chant with folded hands

- (i) ॐ तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः दिवीव
चक्षुराततम् ।

*Om tadviṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padaṁ sadā paśyanti
sūrayaḥ divīva cakṣurātataṁ.*

- (ii) ॐ अपवित्रः पवित्रो वा सर्वावस्थां गतोऽपि वा ।
यः स्मरेत् पुण्डरीकाक्षं स बाह्याभ्यन्तरः शुचिः ॥

*Om apavitraḥ pavitro vā sarvāvasthāṁ gato'pi vā;
Yaḥ smaret puṇḍarīkākṣaṁ sa bāhyābhyantaraḥ śuciḥ.*

(i) तद् That; विष्णोः of the all-pervading Lord; परमं पदम् the supreme abode; सदा always; पश्यन्ति (they) see; सूरयः the sages (the wise ones); दिवि in the sky (heaven); चक्षुराततम् wide-open eye; इव like

The sages always see the supreme abode of the Lord like a wide open eye (sun) in the sky (heaven). The significance of this verse is that we should always be aware of the presence of the Lord who is watching all our actions.

(ii) अपवित्रः Impure; पवित्रः pure; वा or; सर्वावस्थाम् any conditions; गतः + अपि he may be in (even in that condition); यः who; स्मरेत् remembers; पुण्डरीकाक्षम् the lotus-eyed Lord; सः He; बाह्याभ्यन्तरः outside and inside; शुचिः (is) pure.

‘Whether a person is physically or mentally pure or impure, clean or unclean, in whatever condition he may be, he becomes pure within and without when he remembers the Lord.’

The significance of this verse is that one should cultivate strong faith in the fact that by just remembering the Lord one becomes pure, irrespective of any external circumstances. Thus one gets sanctified and becomes fit for the worship of the Lord.

4. *Kuśāṅguli-dhāraṇa* (Putting on the ring of the sacred *kuśa* grass)

The sacred *kuśa* ring is a symbol of purity, a kind of protective amulet worn by the worshipper, during puja to remind him of the code of conduct of a worshipper which he has to observe all through the worship.

- (i) ॐ देव तत्प्राकृतं चित्तं पापाक्रान्तमभून्मम ।
तन्निःसारय चित्तान्मे पापं हूं फट् च ते नमः ॥

*Om deva tatprākṛtaṁ cittam pāpākṛāntamabhūnmama;
Tanniḥsāraya cittānme pāpaṁ hūṁ phaṭ ca te namaḥ.*

- (ii) ॐ सूर्यः सोमो यमः कालो महाभूतानि पञ्च च ।
एते शुभाशुभस्येह कर्मणो नवसाक्षिणः ॥

*Om sūryaḥ somo yamaḥ kālo mahābhūtāni pañca ca;
Ete śubhāśubhasyeha karmaṇo navasākṣiṇaḥ.*

देव O God; तत् that; प्राकृतम् unenlightened; चित्तम् mind; पापाक्रान्तम् corrupted by sin; अभूत् became; मम mine; तत् therefore; निःसारय drive away; चित्तात् from the mind; मे my; पापम् sin; ते नमः salutation to you; हूं फट् sounds made to drive away intruders.

‘O God, my unenlightened mind has been corrupted by sins. Therefore, drive that sin away from my mind. I prostrate before you.’

The significance of the first verse is regarding the primary

self-forgetfulness or absentmindedness. With its natural tendency towards external objects, our mind generally lacks awareness. In this verse the worshipper prays to God to drive away that self-forgetfulness or absentmindedness from his mind, that is, to restore his original pure state of mind and keep it steady. *Hūm* and *phat* are sounds intended to drive away intruders, that is, thoughts other than those of God.

सूर्यः the sun; सोमः the moon; यमः death, the controller and judge; कालः time; महाभूतानि the great elements; पंच five; च and; एते these; शुभाशुभस्य of good and bad; इह here; कर्मणः of actions; नव nine; साक्षिणः witnesses.

‘The sun, the moon, the God of death, time and the five great elements—these are the nine witnesses of all our actions, good or evil.’

Worship has two aspects: (i) Individual and (ii) Cosmic.

Here the individual aspect refers to the Chosen Deity that we worship, and the cosmic aspect refers to His universal dimension. Hence the presence of various deities is invoked to sanctify the atmosphere and attend the worship of the Lord.

The second verse is the continuation of the thought in the first verse under *Ācamana*. In that verse the sun was visualized as God’s open eye in heaven (sky) witnessing all our actions. In this verse the thought of doing everything in the presence of God is carried further by mentioning eight other witnesses, some of whom are always present, day or night. These eight witnesses are the moon, the God of death, time and the five great elements (earth, water, light, air and space).

This verse signifies the vaster impact of our actions—good or bad—as contrary to our limited way of thinking.

5. *Puṇyāhavācana* (Declaring it an auspicious day)

Taking some rice in hand, utter the following mantra,
 ॐ कर्तव्येऽस्मिन् (श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्य / श्रीशारदादेव्याः /
 श्रीविवेकानन्द-स्वामिनः) शुभजन्मतिथिनिमित्तक-
 श्रीरामकृष्णपूजाकर्मणि ॐ पुण्याहं भवन्तो ब्रुवन्तु । ॐ
 पुण्याहम् । (three times)

*Om kartavye'smin (śrīrāmakṛṣṇasya/ śrīsāradādevyāḥ /
 śrīvivekānanda-svāmināḥ) śubha-janma-tithi-nimittaka-
 śrīrāmakṛṣṇa-pūjā-karmaṇi om puṇyāham bhavanto
 bruvantu.*

While ringing the bell scatter the rice three times, repeating *Om puṇyāham*. Again, take some rice in hand, utter the following mantra:

ॐ कर्तव्येऽस्मिन् (श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्य / श्रीशारदादेव्याः /
 श्रीविवेकानन्दस्वामिनः) शुभजन्मतिथिनिमित्तक-
 श्रीरामकृष्णपूजाकर्मणि ॐ स्वस्ति भवन्तो ब्रुवन्तु । ॐ
 स्वस्ति । (three times)

*Om kartavye'smin (śrīrāmakṛṣṇasya/ śrīsāradādevyāḥ /
 śrīvivekānanda-svāmināḥ) śubhajanma-tithinimittaka-
 śrīrāmakṛṣṇa-pūjākarmaṇi om svasti bhavanto bruvantu.*

While ringing the bell scatter the rice three times repeating *Om svasti*. Once again, take some rice in hand and utter the following mantra:

ॐ कर्तव्येऽस्मिन् (श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्य / श्रीशारदादेव्याः /
 श्रीविवेकानन्दस्वामिनः) शुभजन्मतिथिनिमित्तक-
 श्रीरामकृष्णपूजाकर्मणि ॐ ऋद्धिं भवन्तो ब्रुवन्तु । ॐ
 ऋद्ध्यताम् । (three times)

*Om kartavye'smin śrīrāmakṛṣṇasya śrīsāradādevyāḥ
 śrīvivekānanda-svāmināḥ śubhajanma-tithi-nimittaka-
 śrīrāmakṛṣṇa-pūjākarmaṇi om ṛddhiṁ bhavanto*

bruvantu.

While ringing the bell scatter the rice three times repeating
Om rddhyatām.

(i) कर्तव्ये to be performed; अस्मिन् in this; श्रीरामकृष्णपूजाकर्मणि the act of worshipping Sri Ramakrishna; ॐ पुण्याहम् Yes, it is an auspicious day; भवन्तः you (respected person); present during the puja. ब्रुवन्तु please say; स्वस्ति all is well.

(ii) स्वस्ति all is well; स्वस्ति let everything go on well and peacefully.

(iii) ऋद्धिम prosperity; ऋद्ध्यताम् may it prosper.

It is a prayer for the cooperation of all the forces in creating a holy atmosphere during worship.

(iv) ॐ स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।
स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्योऽरिष्टनेमिः स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ॥

*Om svasti na indro vṛddhaśravāḥ svasti naḥ pūṣā
viśvavedāḥ;*

*Svasti nastārksyo'riṣṭanemiḥ svasti no
br̥haspatirdadhātu.*

(iv) वृद्धश्रवाः इन्द्रः May Lord Indra of ancient fame; स्वस्ति be auspicious; नः to us; विश्ववेदाः May the all-knowing or supremely rich; पूषा sun, god of earth (the nourisher) स्वस्ति be propitious; नः to us; अरिष्टनेमिः may the destroyer of evil; तार्क्ष्यः Garuda; स्वस्ति नः be well disposed towards us; बृहस्पतिः Brihaspati; स्वस्ति दधातु नः ensure our welfare.

This is the mantra for invoking blessings from various gods such as Indra, Sun, Garuda and Brihaspati.

Then chant with folded hands:

ॐ सूर्यः सोमो यमः कालः सन्ध्ये भूतान्यहः क्षपाः ।

पवनो दिक्पतिर्भूमिराकाशं खचरामराः ।

ब्राह्म्यम् शासनमास्थाय कल्पध्वमिह सन्निधिम् ॥

*Om sūryaḥ somo yamaḥ kālaḥ sandhye bhūtānyahaḥ
kṣapāḥ;*

Pavano dikpatirbhūmirākāśaṁ khacarāmarāḥ;

Brāhmyaṁ śāsanamāsthāya kalpadhvamiha sannidhim.

सूर्यः Sun; सोमः moon; यमः the god of death; कालः सन्ध्ये the dawn and the dusk; भूतानि the elements; अहः day; क्षपा night; पवनः wind; दिक्पतिः the Lord of the quarters; भूमिः the earth; आकाशम् the heaven above; खचराः those who can move in space freely; अमराः the immortal ones; ब्राह्म्यम् by Lord Brahmā's; शासनम् order; आस्थाय following; कल्पध्वम् make; इह here; सन्निधिम् presence.

‘May the Sun, Moon, Yama, sandhya, elements, day and night, wind, the Lord of quarters, earth, sky and celestial beings, be present here following Lord Brahmā's order.’

The chanting of the above verse is done with folded hands to invoke the presence of nine witnesses mentioned in the earlier mantra and also other deities like immortal celestial beings to watch and protect the performance of the worship.

The participation of the devotees assembled during the puja has been sought to affirm that the day is auspicious—स्वस्ति and so on, which they are supposed to repeat along with the worshipper.

6. Saṅkalpa (Resolve)

Take the following ingredients (*kuśa* grass, sesamum, tulasi, myrobalan, sandal paste, flower and water) in the kushi and keep it on the right palm. Then sit in *vīrāsana* facing the east or north, and chant the following:

ॐ विष्णुरोम् तत्सदद्य ... मासे...राशिस्थे भास्करे... पक्षे ... तिथौ ... यथासाध्य विधिना श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्य भक्ताश्रित-जन-हृदयेषु नित्य-लीलाभाव-विकासनाय निखिल-जनगण-मध्ये तन्माहात्म्य-यशोवृद्धये तत्प्रीतये च यथाशक्ति गुर्वादि नानादेवता पूजापूर्वकम् श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्य / श्रीशारदादेव्याः / श्रीविवेकानन्दस्य/ शुभ-जन्म-तिथिपूजानिमित्तक-सर्वदेवदेवी-स्वरूप-श्रीरामकृष्ण-पूजनं तदीय-श्रीचरणाश्रितोऽहं करिष्ये ।

Om viṣṇurom tatsadadya ... māse ... rāśisthe bhāskare ... pakṣe ... tithau yathā-sādhya-vidhinā śrīrāmakṛṣṇa devasya bhaktā-śrita-jana-hṛdayeṣu nitya-līlābhāva-vikāsanāya nikhila-janagaṇa-madhye tan-māhātmya-yaśovṛddhaye tatprītaye ca gurvādi nānā devatā-pūjā-pūrvakaṁ śrīrāmakṛṣṇasya / śrīśāradādevyāh / śrīvivekānandasya/ śubha-janma-tithi-pūjā nimittaka sarva-deva-devī-svarūpa-śrī-rāmakṛṣṇa-pūjanam tadīya-śrī-caraṇāśrito'-ham kariṣye.

विष्णुः ॐ pervading Lord; तत् सत् is the name for the infinite Brahman, to be remembered at the beginning of worship. Then the place and time are to be mentioned according to the local custom; श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्य of Lord Sri Ramakrishna; and भक्ताश्रितजनहृदयेषु persons depending on Him; नित्य-लीलाभाव-विकासनाय for the manifestation of His eternal sportive mood; निखिल-जनगण-मध्ये among all people; तन्माहात्म्य-यशोवृद्धये for the progressive enhancement of His glory and fame; तत्प्रीतये च and to acquire His eternal love; गुर्वादि-देवता-पूजा-पूर्वकम् preceded by the worship of guru and other deities; सर्वदेवदेवी-स्वरूप-श्रीरामकृष्ण पूजनम् the worship of Sri Ramakrishna, who is the essence of all gods and goddesses; श्रीचरणाश्रितोऽहम् depending entirely on His holy feet, I; करिष्ये : will perform.

‘I will perform the worship of Sri Ramakrishna, who is

the essence of all gods and goddesses, depending entirely on his holy feet. This is done so that his eternal sportive mood may become manifest in the hearts of his attendants, devotees and persons who depend entirely on him, and for the progressive enhancement of his glory and fame among all people.'

Now keep the *kushi* upside down in the northeast corner and scatter rice on it, chanting the following mantras while ringing the bell.

ॐ यज्जाग्रतो दूरमुदैति दैवं तदु सुप्तस्य तथैवेति ।

दूरङ्गमम् ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरेकं तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

*Om yajjāgrato dūramudaiti daivaṁ tadu suptasya
tathaiveti dūraṅgamam;*

Jyotiṣāṁ jyotirekaṁ tanme manaḥ śivasankalpamastu.

यत् which; जाग्रतः of the waking person; दूरमुदैति goes far; दैवम् deity (effulgent mind); तत् + उ that indeed; सुप्तस्य of the sleeping person; तथा एव is likewise; इति thus; दूरङ्गमम् which goes far; ज्योतिषाम् ज्योतिरेकम् the one light of lights; तत् that; मे to my; मनः mind; शिवसंकल्पम् full of auspicious resolve; अस्तु may it be.

'The mind of a waking person travels very far. So does that of a sleeping person. The mind is thus a far-reaching light of all lights. Therefore, may my mind be full of auspiciousness and good resolve.'

Now chant with folded hands:

ॐ सङ्कल्पितार्थाः सिद्ध्यन्तु सिद्धाः सन्तु मनोरथाः ।

भक्तिज्ञानोदयाय अयमारम्भः शुभाय भवतु ॥

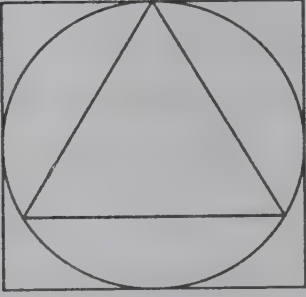
*Om saṅkalpitāṛthāḥ siddhyantu siddhāḥ santu
manorathāḥ;*

Bhakti-jñānodayāya ayam-ārambhaḥ śubhāya bhavatu.

संकल्पितार्थाः the purpose resolved upon; सिद्ध्यन्तु may they succeed; मनोरथाः what the mind has desired; सिद्धाः सन्तु may they be achieved; भक्तिज्ञानोदयाय for the awakening of devotion and knowledge; अयम् this; आरम्भः work being commenced; शुभाय for good; भवतु may it be.

‘May the purpose resolved upon be successful; may the mind achieve what it wishes for; may this action that is being commenced be for good; that is, may it awaken devotion and knowledge.’

7. Sāmānyārghya Sthāpanā



This process is for consecrating in a general way the water to be used for worship. On the floor, to the left, draw with the right ring finger (after dipping it in water) a triangle, a circle around it and then a square around both. The significance of the diagram will be explained under *viśeṣa-arghya* (in pages X, XI). Worship this diagram with flowers besmeared with sandal paste saying—

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे आधारशक्त्यादिभ्यो नमः । फट् ।

om ete gandhapuṣpe ādhara-śaktyādibhyo namaḥ. phat.

Wash the *kosha* and *kushi* with water uttering the mantra *phat*. Then place the *kosha* on the diagram and fill it with water uttering *Namaḥ*. Uttering *Om*, place the *arghya* at the tip of the *kosha*. Touch the water with *aṅkuśa-mudrā*, and thereby invoke the *tīrthās* from solar orb into the water.

ॐ गङ्गे च यमुने चैव गोदावरि सरस्वति ।

नर्मदे सिन्धु कावेरि जलेऽस्मिन् सन्निधिं कुरु ॥

*om gaṅge ca yamune caiva godāvare sarasvatī;
narmade sindhu kāveri jāle'smin sannidhiṁ kuru.*

Now in the water put flowers touched with sandal paste as well as some rice. Chant ॐ while showing the *avagunṭhana-mudrā*; chant ॐ while showing the *dhenu-mudrā*; and chant ॐ ten times while covering it with *matsya-mudrā*. In this verse the presence of all the sacred rivers is invoked in the consecrated water.

The *avagunṭhana-mudrā* is for unveiling the object before us. The veils of ignorance are removed by this act so that we perceive the sacred water of all the holy rivers, in the water of the *sāmānya-arghya* vessel. By repeating the sound ॐ the veil of ignorance is being rent asunder. The *aṅkuśa-mudrā* is for invoking holy water from the *sūrya-maṇḍala*. *Aṅkuśa* means the goad that controls the elephant.

The *dhenu-mudrā* stands for the udder of the celestial cow, Kāmadhenu, whose milk is the nectar of immortality and fulfils all desires. Here it is the symbol of immortality, which is being invoked into the *sāmānya-arghya* by uttering the *bīja-mantra* ॐ. *Amṛta* stands for the *amṛta-tattva* and the process is termed as *Amṛtī-karaṇa*.

Matsya-mudrā

The body of the fish is supposed to be made of the same substance (water) in which it lives. In this case the fish is considered to live in the sea of the nectar of immortality. So the fish is identical with this substance. The worshipper should imagine himself to be such a fish while showing the *matsya-mudrā* and contemplate on his identity with the *amṛta* of the *sāmānya-arghya*, uttering the mantra *Om*.

Use of water as purifying all kinds of impurities around

आपः पुनन्तु पृथिवीं पृथिवी पूता पुनातु माम् ।

पुनन्तु ब्रह्मणस्पतिर्ब्रह्मपूता पुनातु माम् ॥

यदुच्छिष्टमभोज्यं यद्वा दुश्चरितं मम ।

सर्वं पुनन्तु मामापोऽसतां च प्रतिग्रहं स्वाहा ॥

(Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad, XXX.1,2)

Āpaḥ punantu prthivīm prthivī pūtā punātu mām;

Punantu brahmaṇaspatirbrahmapūtā punātu mām.

Yaducchiṣṭamabhojyaṁ yadvā duścaritaṁ mama;

Sarvaṁ punantu māmāpo'satāṁ ca pratigrahaṁ svāhā.

May this water cleanse my physical body, which is made of earthly substances. Thus purified, may the earthly body purify me, the soul within. May this water purify the guardian of the Vedas, my preceptor. May the Vedas taught by the purified teacher purify me (or may the supreme purify me). My defilement on prohibited food and misconduct, if any, and the sin accruing from the acceptance of the gifts from the persons disapproved by scriptures —from all these may I be absolved. May the waters purify me. Hail!

तद्यथा महामत्स्य उभे कूले अनुसञ्चरति पूर्वं

चापरं चैवमेवायं पुरुष एतावुभावन्तावनु-

सञ्चरति स्वप्नान्तं च बुद्धान्तं च ॥ बृहदारण्यकोपनिषत् 4.3.18

As a great fish swims alternatively to both the banks (of a river), so does this infinite being move to both the dream and waking states.

We may remember in this connection an incident that was related by Sri Ramakrishna. It happened during one of his visits to Kamarpukur. One day He happened to be sitting in meditation and people around were trying to talk to him.

An old lady of the place who had known Him as a boy and was herself practising meditation happened to come in. She looked at him and remarked to the others: 'He is now like a fish in the sea of Ananda. Why do you disturb Him?' At that moment Sri Ramakrishna was actually in that mood. This is an effort to get into that particular mood of Ananda during the worship.

Now the consecrated water of *sāmānya-arghya* has become not only the water of the sacred rivers but also the symbol of the bliss and immortality of the infinite Lord and hence most worthy of being used for His worship.

8. *Dvāra-devatā-pūjā* (worship of the deities of the door)

Chanting the following mantra sprinkle a little water towards the door. ॐ द्वारदेवताभ्यो नमः । Then offer a flower touched with sandal paste towards the door reciting the following mantra:

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे द्वारदेवताभ्यो नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe dvāradevatābhyo namaḥ.

Offer a flower touched with sandal paste towards the southwest corner saying,

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे ब्रह्मणे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे वास्तुपुरुषाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe brahmaṇe namaḥ.

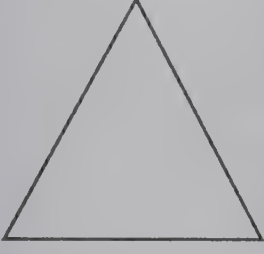
Om ete gandhapuṣpe vāstupuruṣāya namaḥ.

The reverential offering and salutations to the doorkeepers of the Lord's dwelling place, which is the temple itself or any place of worship, are being done here.

Further the creator Brahmā and the deity presiding over the building (Vāstu-puruṣa) are also worshipped through subsequent mantras.

9. Māṣabhaktabali

Write a triangle on the floor with red chandana. Offer flowers with following mantras.



ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे मण्डलाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे भूतादिभ्यो नमः ।

om ete gandhapuṣpe maṇḍalāya namaḥ.

om ete gandhapuṣpe bhūtādibhyo namaḥ.

Now keep a small steel cup containing curd, turmeric, rice, sindhoora and black grams on the red triangle. Offer the flower with sandal paste on the vessel with following mantra.

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे माषभक्तबलये नमः ।

om ete gandhapuṣpe māṣabhaktabalaye namaḥ.

Sprinkle water with following mantra.

ॐ एष माषभक्तबलिः भूतादिभ्यो नमः ।

om eṣa māṣabhaktabaliḥ bhūtādibhyo namaḥ.

Now with folded hands, chant the following mantra.

ॐ भूताः प्रेताः पिशाचाश्च ये वसन्त्यत्र भूतले ।

ते गृह्णन्तु मया दत्तं बलिमेनं प्रसाधितम् ॥

ॐ पूजिता गन्धपुष्पाद्यैः बलिभिस्तर्पितास्तथा ।

देशादस्माद्विनिःसृत्य पूजां पश्यन्तु मत्कृताम् ॥

om bhūtāḥ pretāḥ piśācāśca ye vasantyaatra bhutale

te grhṇantu mayā dattaṁ balimenam prasādhitaṁ

om pūjitā gandhapuṣpādyaiḥ balibhistarpitāstathā

deśādasmādviniḥsṛtya pūjāṁ paśyantu matkṛtām

The bhūta, preta, piśācās—the different spirits which dwell on earth, receive the offerings offered by me. Being satisfied by the offering of gandha, puṣpa and the food, let the spirits stay away from this place of worship and observe the puja

done by me from a distance.

10. *Bhūtāpasāraṇa* (Driving away the evil forces)

Chant ॐ अस्त्राय फट् by touching the vessel containing puffed rice, grass, darbha, white chandana and rice.

Then scatter the rice on all sides with *nārāca-mudrā*, chanting the following mantras while ringing the bell.

ॐ सर्वविघ्नानुत्सारय हूं फट् स्वाहा ।

ॐ अपसर्पन्तु ते भूता ये भूता भुवि संस्थिताः

ये भूता विघ्नकर्तारस्ते नश्यन्तु शिवाज्ञया ॥

Om sarvaviṅhnān-utsāraya hūm phaṭ svāhā;

Om apasarpantu te bhūtā ye bhūtā bhuvi sansthitāḥ;

Ye bhūtā viṅhnakartāraste naśyantu śivājñayā.

नाराच arrow. The finger held in that particular form signifies the releasing of the arrow. The scattering of rice through this mudra is meant to destroy and drive away the forces of evil. So also is the purpose of ringing the bell while scattering rice.

विघ्नानुत्सारय drive away all obstructions; अपसर्पन्तु may they go away; ते भूता: those forces (creatures); ये भूता: which creatures; भुवि on earth; संस्थिता: are found; ये भूता: which creatures; विघ्नकर्तारः causing obstacles; ते नश्यन्तु may they perish; शिवाज्ञया by the command of Shiva.

‘May all the evil forces found on earth go far away. May those evil forces which cause destruction be destroyed by the command of Shiva.’

11. *Bhūmi-śuddhi* (Purification of ground)

Taking a little water in the right palm allow it to seep and fall on the ground through the gaps in between the fingers of the fist while chanting

ॐ रक्ष रक्ष हूं फट् स्वाहा ।

Om rakṣa rakṣa hūm phaṭ svāhā.

By this act we are sanctifying the ground of worship by sprinkling on it the consecrated water of the *sāmānya-arghya* and chanting the above mantra. We may recall that whenever sinful people came and sat near Sri Ramakrishna, he used to sanctify the place where they had sat after they left by sprinkling Ganges water.

12. Āsana-śuddhi (Purification of the seat)

In front of the asana on the right hand side, draw a triangle on the earth after dipping the right ring finger in water. Then worship it with a flower touched with sandal paste.

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे आधारशक्त्यादिभ्यो नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe ādhāraśaktyādibhyo namaḥ.

Now crossing hands touch the asana and chant the following mantra:

ॐ अस्यासनोपवेशनमन्त्रस्य मेरुपृष्ठऋषिः सुतलं छन्दः कूर्मो देवता आसनोपवेशने विनियोगः ।

Om asyāsanopaveśanamantrasya meru-prṣṭhaṛṣiḥ sutalam chandaḥ kūrmo devatā āsanopaveśane viniyogaḥ.

Now with folded hands chant:

ॐ पृथ्वि त्वया धृता लोका देवि त्वं विष्णुना धृता ।

त्वं च धारय मां नित्यं पवित्रं कुरु चासनम् ॥

Om pṛthvi tvayā dhṛtā lokā devi tvam viṣṇunā dhṛtā;

Tvam ca dhāraya mām nityam pavitraṁ kuru cāsanam.

पृथ्वि O earth; त्वया by you; धृता are supported; लोकाः all the world; देवि O Goddess; त्वं you; विष्णुना by the Lord; धृता are supported; त्वं च you also; धारय please support; माम् me; नित्यम् constantly; पवित्रम् : sanctify; कुरु : please do; च आसनम् : the seat

also.

‘O earth, all the worlds are supported by you and the Lord Himself supports you. Kindly support me constantly and sanctify this seat.’

Then the seat is worshipped and thought of as the holy lotus (कमलासनाय नमः)

Now draw over the *āsana* a small triangle using water and worship it with a flower touched with sandal paste, saying

ॐ ह्रीं एते गन्धपुष्पे आधारशक्तये कमलासनाय नमः ।

Om hrīṃ ete gandhapuṣpe ādhāraśaktaye kamalāsanāya namaḥ.

ह्रीं Stands for the power of the Infinite. According to Vedic tradition, before any mantra is recited we should mention its rishi (seer), *chandās*, *devatā* and the purpose for which it is used. The above verse is a mantra for consecrating the seat on which the worshipper sits.

13. *Guru-praṇāma* (Salutation to the guru)

With folded palms kept near the left ear, say

ऐं गुरुभ्यो नमः ।

Aim gurubhyo namaḥ.

Then raise the hands a little higher and say,

ऐं परमगुरुभ्यो नमः ।

Aim paramagurubhyo namaḥ.

Then raise the hands a little higher and say,

ऐं परापरगुरुभ्यो नमः ।

Aim parāparagurubhyo namaḥ.

Then raise the hands still higher and say,

ऐं परमेष्ठिगुरुभ्यो नमः ।

Aim paramēṣṭhigurubhyo namaḥ.

Then keep the hands near the right ear and say,

ॐ गं गणेशाय नमः ।

Om gaṁ gaṇeśāya namaḥ.

Then keep the hands near the chest and say,

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om aiṁ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Four generations of gurus in the *guru-parampara* are remembered and saluted to seek their blessings. Thereafter Lord Ganesha and the *iṣṭa-devatā* residing in the heart centre and the object of our worship, are being saluted by making pranams at the right and left side of head and near the centre of the chest, respectively.

14. *Kara-śuddhi* (Purification of Hands)

Uttering हसौ , take in the right hand a small red flower touched with sandal paste and crush it saying, आं हूं फट् स्वाहा. Then smell the flower saying ऐं . Whirl the flower saying क्लीं. Taking the flower in *nārāca-mudrā* throw the flower in the northeastern corner saying फट् .

The hands, with which puja is to be performed, are purified by this act. Taking the flower round the head and smelling it before throwing it away also indicates the purification of the sense organs, or the *jñānendriyas* (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin).

15. *Puṣpa-śuddhi* (Purification of the flowers)

Sprinkle some water on the flowers saying, ॐ शताभिषेकं हूं फट् स्वाहा. Touching the flowers with right hand repeat the following mantra:

ॐ पुष्पे पुष्पे महापुष्पे सुपुष्पे पुष्पसम्भवे ।

पुष्पचयावकीर्णे च हूं फट् स्वाहा ॥

*Om puṣpe puṣpe mahāpuṣpe supuṣpe puṣpasambhave;
Puṣpacayāvākīrṇe ca hūm phaṭ svāhā.*

This is to purify and consecrate the flowers to make them fit for use in worship.

16. *Divya-vighna-nivāraṇa* and *Dig-bandhana*

(Removal of celestial obstacles and fencing the quarters)

Look upwards while chanting the mula-mantra

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om aiṁ sarvadevadevīsvarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

The celestial obstacles are removed by gazing at the sky. While chanting फट् clap with index finger and middle finger of the right hand joined together on the left palm at different levels. Then snap the tip of the index finger against the right thumb along eight directions overhead and also above and below while chanting the same mantra. *Dig-bandhana* is the act of erecting a fence all round the place of worship in eight directions and upward and downward directions to prevent the entry of evil forces.

17. *Bhūmi-vighna-nivāraṇa* (Removal of terrestrial obstacles)

Saying फट् strike the ground three times with the left heel. Thereby the evil forces remaining on the ground are driven out.

18. *Antarikṣa-vighna-nivāraṇa* (Removal of heavenly obstacles)

Take water in right hand from the *sāmānya-arghya* and sprinkle it upward saying, अस्त्राय फट्. This is meant to destroy the evil forces that have remained in the sky by being fenced by *dig-bandhana*.

19. *Devatā and Pūjā dravya śuddhi* (Purification of the Deity and the materials of worship)

Sprinkle water three times on the picture of the deity as well as on the articles of worship, saying ॐ ऐं फट् . Then show *dhenu-mudrā*.

The various articles of puja and the image of the Lord kept in front, in which His presence is to be invoked, are purified by the sprinkling of water from the *sāmānya-arghya* while uttering the mantra ॐ ऐं फट् . After the purification of the environment and the articles used for worship, the symbol in which the Lord's presence is invoked is also thus purified and its association with the Infinite is being recalled by showing *dhenu-mudrā* and the repetition of the *amṛta-bīja* वं.

20. *Mantra-śuddhi* (Purification of mantras)

अं ऐं अं, कं ऐं कं, चं ऐं चं, टं ऐं टं, तं ऐं तं,
पं ऐं पं, यं ऐं यं, शं ऐं शं.

ऐं is the seed sound by which we are worshipping the Lord. It is called the seed or symbol of meaningful sound. This symbol stands also for thought because thought is inarticulate word and the word is articulate thought. Thus it is the sound symbol of infinite Consciousness itself. It is also explained as being composed of the first letter of the first verse of the three Vedas.

१. ऋग्वेद *agnimīle* अ
२. यजुर्वेद *iśetvorjetvā* इ
३. सामवेद *agna āyāhi* अ

४. The *anusvāra* of ऐं *bija* stands for shakti (अं + एं = ऐं). It can be interpreted that the knowledge of the Vedas, which is the totality of knowledge, is contained in seed form in this sacred sound ऐं .

The infinitely variegated world is basically a world of

names and forms, which are inseparable and co-existent. So names bring to mind forms also. And it is a world of names, that is, sounds. All sounds are basically contained in the Sanskrit alphabet, which thus becomes the symbol of the whole universe. And it is from the alphabet that all the mantras are emerged.

ॐ, the symbol of infinite consciousness between the letters of the alphabet, is an attempt to see the whole universe as the manifestation of infinite Consciousness, of which the *iṣṭa-devatā* is the symbol. Through this contemplation of the *bīja-mantra* ॐ the mind as the instrument for chanting the mantra is purified, by getting focused on the Infinite. Hence this process is called purification of the mantra.

Normally, in day-to-day life, the various letters of the alphabet are associated with all kinds of mundane expressions. Now by associating the key letters of the alphabet with the ॐ *bīja-mantra*, which is the symbol of infinite divine Consciousness, we are purifying and divinizing the letters of the alphabet by imparting to them the divine vibrations of ॐ .

21. *Vahni-prākāra-cintā* (Imagining a circle of fire)

Saying ॠ sprinkle water on all sides and imagine that fire is surrounding you. This is a continuation of the process of erecting the protective barrier commenced in the act of *dig-bandhana* earlier. The fence erected there to keep out all intruding thoughts and evil forces is here visualized as a wall of fire, which reduces all intruding evil to ashes. Sri Thakur had an actual vision of this while doing puja.

22. *Deha-mārjana* and *ātma-rakṣā* (Purification of the body and protection of one's self)

Saying the following *mūla-mantra* pass both the hands

over the body from head to feet and then again from feet to head.

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om aim sarva-devadevi-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

This is to purify the body by chanting the *mūla-mantra* and waving hands over the body from top to bottom. This is done three times to purify the gross, subtle and causal bodies.

Ātma-rakṣā: Now we are invoking the Divine Mother Durga, the protecting principle, to protect us by the following mantra.

Now keep the hand on the chest and chant the following mantra:

ॐ दुर्गे दुर्गे रक्षिणि स्वाहा ।

ॐ आं हूं फट् स्वाहा ।

om durge durge rakṣiṇi svāhā.

om ām hūm phaṭ svāhā.

23. *Prāṇāyāma* (Control of the vital forces through Breath control)

4	16	8	
↑	↑	↑	saying the mantra ऐं
पूरक	कुम्भक	रेचक	

The breath of life is closely associated with the mind. It is easy to observe that when the mind is peaceful the breath is slow and steady. When the mind is agitated the breath becomes fast and shallow. It is therefore thought possible to control the mind by controlling the breath. This is what the process of *prāṇāyāma* attempts. Another aspect of *prāṇāyāma* is this:

breathing is normally an involuntary process and goes on whether we are conscious of it or not. A conscious effort to regulate the breath requires the diversion of the attention of the mind from other activity to this. So it serves as a means to withdraw the mind from external objects for watching and regulating the breath and later on for watching the mind itself. The process of *prāṇāyāma* is described below.

Folding the right forefinger and the middle finger as in a fist, close the right nostril with the right thumb. Then repeating *Aim* or *Om* 16 times, inhale through the left nostril. This process is called *pūraka*.

Then closing the left nostril (with the ring finger and the little finger of right hand) repeat the same mantra 64 times. This is known as *kumbhaka*.

Then releasing the right thumb alone, exale through the right nostril, repeating the mantra 32 times. This is known as *recaka*.

Repeat the process by inhaling through the right nostril closing the left with the same two fingers, then holding the breath by closing the right nostril with the right thumb; and exhaling through the left, releasing the last two right fingers, but keeping the same counts 16, 64 and 32, respectively, as before.

Again repeat the process as before starting with the left nostril, keeping the same count. Thus, with a cycle of three repetitions, or three *pūraka*, three *kumbhaka* and three *recaka*, one *prāṇāyāma* is done.

If this is found difficult, reduce the number of repetitions of the *prāṇāyāma* to one fourth of the number, or 4, 16 and 8 times respectively.

24. *Bhūta-śuddhi* (Purification of the elements constituting the body)

ॐ भूतशृङ्गाटात् शिरः सुषुम्नापथेन

जीवशिवं परमशिवपदे योजयामि स्वाहा ।

ॐ यं लिङ्गशरीरं शोषय शोषय स्वाहा ।

ॐ रं सङ्कोचशरीरं दह दह स्वाहा ।

ॐ परमशिव सुषुम्नापथेन मूलशृङ्गाटमुल्लसोल्लस ।

ज्वल ज्वल प्रज्वल प्रज्वल सोऽहं हंसः स्वाहा ।

Om bhūtaśṛṅgātāt śiraḥ suṣumnā-pathena

jīvaśivam paramaśivapade yojayāmi svāhā.

Om yaṁ liṅgaśarīraṁ śoṣaya śoṣaya svāhā.

Om raṁ saṅkocaśarīraṁ daha daha svāhā.

*Om paramaśiva suṣumnāpathena mūlaśṛṅgāṭam-
ullasollasa.*

Jvala jvala prajvala prajvala so'haṁ haṁsaḥ svāhā.

The process of *bhūta-śuddhi* is based on the following:

Infinite energy enters into the human body at the top of the skull at the *sahasrāra* as the *parama-śiva*. From there it descends through the *suṣumnā* differentiating itself at the different centres as chakras; at the आज्ञा centre as thought, at the *viśuddha* as speech, at the *anāhata* as feeling, at the *maṇipūra* as assimilation of nutrition; at the *svādhiṣṭhāna* as the reproductive energy; and at the *mulādhāra* as the energy of excretion.

In spite of the differentiation the residual energy is also infinite, and dwells in the *mulādhāra* as the *jīva-śiva* (individual consciousness). The *mulādhāra* is in the form of a *śṛṅgāṭa*, an equilateral tetrahedron.

The process is to lead this *jīva-śiva* back to union with the *Parama-śiva*. It is being done here conceptually or by

imagining it as happening. By constantly repeating this mode of practice, it will actually happen some day when the worshipper is sufficiently purified by this contemplation.

From the भूतशृङ्गट (at the मूलाधार); शिर to the head; सुषुम्ना-पथेन through the channel; जीवशिवम् individual con-sciuousness; परमशिवपदे with the परमशिव; योजयामि स्वाहा I unite.

The *susūmnā* is the central channel for the flow of psychic energy. *Susūmnā* is flanked by the *idā* on the left and *pingalā* on the right. These lateral channels are supposed to cross over and meet at three points forming three knots. The first knot is below the navel and is called the *brahma-granthi*. The second knot is below the heart and is called the *rudra-granthi*. The third knot is between the eyebrows and is called the *viṣṇu-granthi*. This is described in *Lalitā Sahasranāma* in the following verses:

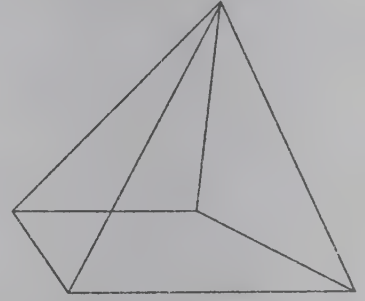
ॐ मूलाधारैकनिलया ब्रह्मग्रन्थिविभेदिनी ।
 मणिपूरान्तरुदिता विष्णुग्रन्थिविभेदिनी ॥
 आज्ञाचक्रान्तरालस्था रुद्रग्रन्थिविभेदिनी ।
 सहस्राराम्बुजारूढा सुधासाराभिवर्षिणी ॥
 तटिल्लतासमरुचिः षट्चक्रोपरिसंस्थिता ।
 महाशक्तिः कुण्डलिनी बिसतन्तुतनीयसी ।

Om mūlādhāraikanilayā brahmagranthivibhedinī;
maṇipūrāntaruditā viṣṇugranthivibhedinī.
ājñācakrāntarālasthā rudragranthivibhedinī;
sahasrārāmbujārūdhā sudhāsārābhivarṣiṇī.
taṭillatāsamaruciḥ ṣaṭcakroparisaṁsthitā;
mahāśaktiḥ kuṇḍalinī bisatantutanīyasī.

ॐ यं लिंगशरीरं शोषय शोषय स्वाहा । = O Vāyu (यं), dry up, dry up the *liṅga-sarīra*. यं is the *bīja-mantra* for Vāyu, which is the

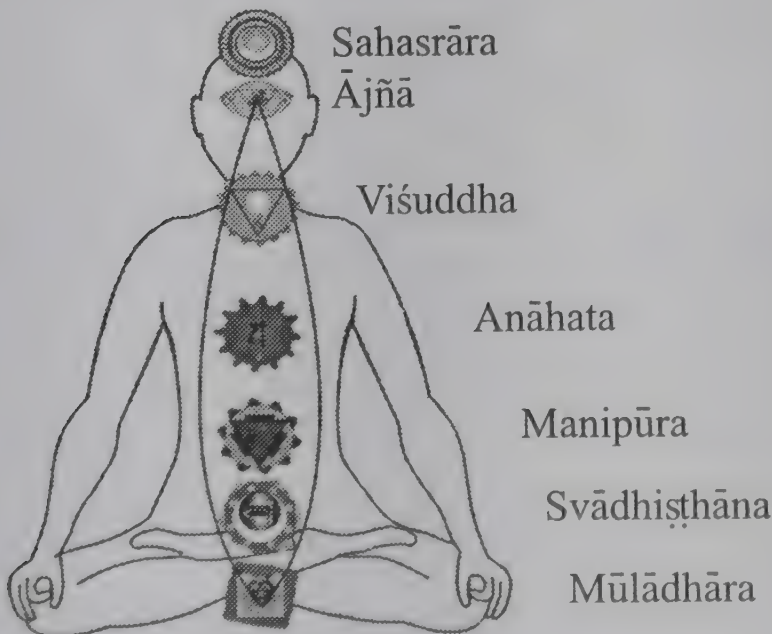
energy generally perceived through the sense of touch. The *liṅga-śarīra* consists of two elements, the *sūkṣma-śarīra* and the *kāraṇa-śarīra*. The *sūkṣma-śarīra* is the combination of the five faculties (senses) of perception (*jñānendriyas*) and five faculties of action (*karmendriyas*) and five *tanmātras*, the five elements earth, water, fire, air and ether in their most subtle forms and then *manas* and *buddhi*. The *kāraṇa-śarīra* is the cause of the *sūkṣma-śarīra*. It is *avidyā*, the principle of limitation, which causes an apparent limitation of Consciousness (*cit*) and Being (*sat*).

The infinite *Sat-cit-ānanda*, or Being, Consciousness and Bliss, or Paramaśiva, when apparently limited by the *liṅga-śarīra* is known as the individual consciousness, or *jīva-bhāva*.



To unite with or to become *liṅga-śarīra* the *jīva* has to lose its limitation, which is caused by the *liṅga-śarīra*. We are now to conceive this as having dried up and disappeared.

रं सङ्कोचशरीरं दह दह स्वाहा = O fire, burn up, burn up, this *saṅkoca-śarīra*. रं is the sound symbol for fire, which stands



for both light and heat. *saṅkoca-śarīra* is the gross body in which individualized consciousness is seen to manifest. We are now invoking fire to burn up the gross body with all its impurities.

At this stage this destruction of the physical body is also conceptual. But this concept is necessary and preliminary to the concept of the rising of a pure celestial body in which the worshipper continues the worship.

ॐ परमशिव O Paramaśiva; सुषुम्ना-पथेन Through the *susūmnā* path; मूल शृंगाटम् the शृंगाटम् at the meeting point मूलाधार; उल्लस उल्लस make it blossom, make it blossom; ज्वल ज्वल illumine, illumine; प्रज्वल प्रज्वल illumine brightly; सोऽहम् (सः + अहम्) He I am; अहम्+ सः I am He.

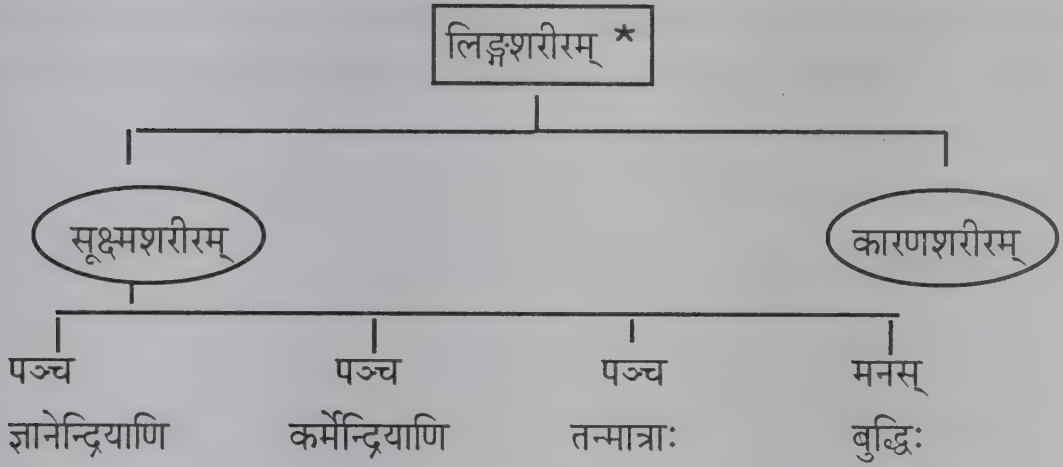
Now the worshipper conceives the Paramaśiva as descending up to the *mūlādhāra*, creating a new celestial body and entering into it as the pristine, luminous, pure jiva, which clearly retains its sense of identity with Paramaśiva throughout the subsequent process of worship.

The *jīvabhāva* to be maintained at this stage is—a pure, transparent individuality of a bhakta, individual consciousness apparently separated from absolute infinite Consciousness, who is to be adored and worshipped subsequently by retaining a celestial luminous body, as pure and divine as the Lord Himself. This is primarily an attempt to actualize the principle of *devo bhūtvā devam yajet* at this state of puja. Through the subsequent process of *nyāsa* this new celestial body is further consecrated and identified with the Divine through mystic sound symbols and letters of the Sanskrit alphabet and letters of the name of the particular deity to be worshipped. The identification with the *iṣṭa-devatā* is to be deepened through the subsequent *nyāsa*.

The interpretation of *bhūtaśuddhi* and the ‘so’ham haṁsaḥ’

mantra as explained in the book *Worship of Sri Ramakrishna* by Swami Hitanandaji (pages 56 to 59) is as follows:

Placing the back of the right palm over the left palm on the lap, imagine that the *jīvātman* (individual self) residing in



the heart like an unflickering flame in a windless place, is brought to the *mūlādhāra* and merged in the *kuṇḍalini*. Then awaken the slumbering *kuṇḍalini* through the uttering of the *bīja-mantra* हूं ; repeating सोऽहं (I am He), raise the *kuṇḍalini* along with the *jīvātman*, through the *susumna* canal, by contracting the *mūlādhāra* (the lower part of the abdomen). Merge the *kuṇḍalini* thus roused, with the *paramātman* (dwelling in the pericarp of the thousand-petalled, drooping lotus of the *sahasrāra*), after piercing successively the four-, six-, ten-, twelve-, sixteen- and two-petalled lotuses of the *cakras*; *mūlādhāra*, *swādhīsthāna*, *manipūra*, *anāhata*, *viśuddha*, and *ājña*, respectively (see the figure). Imagine also that therein are merged the twenty-four cosmic principles, as also speech, hand, foot, the organ of evacuation, the generative organ (the five organs of action); eyes, ear, nose, tongue, skin (the five organs of knowledge); earth, water, light, air, sky (the subtle elements); mind, intellect, ego; and *prakṛti*. Then,

* लिङ्गशरीरम्, सूक्ष्मशरीरम् are said to be one and the same according to some school of thought.

meditating on the *vāyu-bīja* यं in the left nostril, fill the body with air by inhaling through that nostril while repeating यं 16 times. Closing both the nostrils, perform *kumbhaka*, repeating 64 times. During *kumbhaka*, think of the *pāpa-puruṣa* (personification of sin) of black complexion and brown eyes, residing to the left in the region of the stomach, in accordance with the following description:

वामपार्श्व-स्थितं पापपुरुषं कज्जलप्रभम् ।

ब्रह्महत्याशिरस्कञ्च स्वर्णस्तेयभुजद्वयम् ॥

सुरापानहृदायुक्तं गुरुतल्पकटिद्वयम् ।

तत्संसर्गिषदद्वन्द्वमङ्गप्रत्यङ्गपातकम् ॥

उपपातकरोमाणं रक्तश्मश्रुविलोचनम् ।

खड्गचर्मधरं क्रुद्धमेवं कुक्षौ विचिन्तयेत् ॥

Vāmapārśvasthitam pāpapurusaṁ kajjalaprabham;

Brahmahatyāśiraskañca svarṇasteyabhujadvayam.

Surāpānahrdayuktam gurutalpakaṭidvayam;

Tatsaṁsargipadadvandvamaṅgapratyaṅgapātakam.

Upapātakaromāṇam raktaśmaśruvilocanam;

Khaḍgacarmadharam kruddhamevaṁ kuṣṣau vicintayet.

One should think of the Papa-purusha (personification of sin) in the heart as residing in the left portion of our body, having the hue of dark collyrium, his head being made of sin accrued by killing a brahmin, his two shoulders made of sins accrued by stealing gold, his heart being made of sin accrued by consuming liquor, his two hips being made of sin accrued by sharing the same bed with one's Guru's wife, his two feet are made of sin accrued by associating with other great sinners, every part of his body is made of sins, his every pore is made of minor sins; He has bloodshot eyes and a reddish-brown moustach; He is wielding a shield and a sword and appears angry.

Then, imagine that the subtle body, along with the *pāpa-puruṣa*, has been dried up, and exhale (रेचकः) through the right nostril, repeating ॐ 32 times. Again, meditating, in the right nostril, on the *agnibīja* ॐ and repeating the same 16 times, fill the body with air. Closing both the nostrils, perform *kumbhaka* repeating the same *bīja* 64 times. During this time, imagine that the subtle body along with the *pāpa-puruṣa*, is completely burnt up. And exhaling through the left nostril (रेचकः) while repeating the same *bīja* ॐ 32 times, throw out the ashes of the burnt-up *pāpa-puruṣa* along with the exhaled air.

Now meditating on the *candra-bīja* in the left nostril, inhale through that nostril, repeating the same 16 times. During this process, think that moon is present on your own forehead. Then closing both the nostrils, perform *kumbhaka*, while repeating the *varuṇa-bīja* ॐ 64 times. During this time, think that through the nectar (in the form of the fifty alphabets of the Sanskrit language), emanating from that moon, the whole body has been made anew, and has become divine.

Now repeating the *prthvi-bīja* ॐ (the *bīja-mantra* associated with the earth) 32 times, and thinking the body to be strong as adamant, exhale through the right nostril.

Thereafter, uttering the mantra हंसः, think that the *jīvātman*, along with the *kuṇḍalini* merged in the *paramātmān*, as well as the twenty-four cosmic principles have again manifested in their respective places, having passed through the *suṣumna* canal.

25. *Vyāpaka-nyāsa* (Total consecration)

Do the *nyāsa* as said before saying, ॐ आँ हूं फट् स्वाहा.

Think that your body, mind and speech have been purified and also think that you have got a new body. This *nyāsa* is done to confirm this idea of coming into being of a celestial

body. The utterance of the mantra ॐ आँ हूं फट् स्वाहा and the passing of the hand over the body three times is to reaffirm its total purity at the level of five *kośas*: *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya*.

26. *Jīva-nyāsa* (Consecration of self)

Now in the new divine body instal the Chosen Deity and think 'So'ham, I am He.'

Then touching the chest with *lelihāna-mudrā* chant the following mantra, thinking of yourself as the Chosen Deity

ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रों यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हौं हंसः

श्रीरामकृष्णदेवतायाः प्राणा इह प्राणाः ।

ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रों यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हौं हंसः

श्रीरामकृष्णदेवतायाः जीव इह स्थितः ।

ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रों यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हौं हंसः

श्रीरामकृष्णदेवतायाः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि ।

ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रों यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हौं हंसः

श्रीरामकृष्णदेवतायाः वाङ्मनश्चक्षुस्त्वक्-श्रोत्र-
घ्राण-प्राणा इहागत्य सुखं चिरं तिष्ठन्तु स्वाहा ।

*Om am hrīm krom yaṁ raṁ laṁ vaṁ śaṁ ṣaṁ saṁ haum
haṁsaḥ;*

śrīrāmakṛṣṇadevatāyāḥ prāṇā iha prāṇāḥ.

*Om am hrīm krom yaṁ raṁ laṁ vaṁ śaṁ ṣaṁ saṁ haum
haṁsaḥ;*

śrīrāmakṛṣṇadevatāyāḥ jīva iha sthitaḥ.

*Om am hrīm krom yaṁ raṁ laṁ vaṁ śaṁ ṣaṁ saṁ haum
haṁsaḥ;*

śrīrāmakṛṣṇadevatāyāḥ sarvendriyāṇi.

*Om am hrīm krom yaṁ raṁ laṁ vaṁ śaṁ ṣaṁ saṁ haum
haṁsaḥ;*

*śrīrāmakṛṣṇadevatāyāḥ vāñ-manaś-cakṣu-tvak-śrotra
ghrāṇa-prāṇā ihāgatya sukhaṁ ciraṁ tiṣṭhantu svāhā.*

Leliḥāna means a snake. See Appendix 4, page 184 for this posture which resembles a snake protruding its divided tongue. Kuṇḍalini is imagined as a coiled snake, which helps the jīvātman unite with the paramātman. That is the reason why this posture is shown here in jīva-nyāsa.

Earlier, through *bhūta-śuddhi* the worshipper had already assumed a divine body. Now the process of *jīva-nyāsa* is done to invoke the presence of the Chosen Deity. This is accomplished by uttering certain mystic syllables followed by the invocation of the *iṣṭa-devatā*, divine prana, jiva and all the sense organs, thus confirming the living presence of the Chosen Deity in the heart of the worshipper. While chanting these mantras the worshipper should feel that in response to his invocation, the *iṣṭa-devatā* has graciously condescended to come and reside in the altar (lotus) of his heart, illumining it with His radiant divine brilliance.

27. *Mātrkā-nyāsa* (Consecration of the alphabet)

Chant with folded hands

ॐ अस्य मातृकामन्त्रस्य ब्रह्म ऋषिः गायत्री छन्दः देवी
मातृका सरस्वती देवता ।

*Om asya mātrkāmantrasya brahmā ṛṣiḥ gāyatrī chandah
devī mātrkā sarasvatī devatā.*

Of this मातृकामन्त्र, ब्रह्म is the ऋषि (seer), गायत्री is the meter (छन्द), the Divine mother of all learning, Sarasvati, is the deity, the consonant sounds are the seeds, the vowel sounds are the powers, and the unmanifest principle (maya or *avyakta*) is the hinge, or connection between the two. This is used to

consecrate the basic sound for the fulfilment of all desires.

(हल् = व्यंजन (बीज), अच् = स्वर (शक्ति), कीलकं = अव्यक्त (माया).

हलो बीजानि स्वराः शक्तयः अव्यक्तं कीलकं
सर्वाभीष्टसिद्धये लिपिन्यासे विनियोगः ।

*Halo bījāni svarāḥ śaktayaḥ avyaktaṁ kīlakaṁ
sarvābhīṣṭhasiddhaye lipinyāse viniyogaḥ.*

Touch the head with *tattva-mudrā*, saying ॐ ब्रह्मणे ऋषये नमः।

Touch the mouth with *tattva-mudrā*, saying ॐ गायत्री छन्दसे नमः।

Touch the chest with *tattva-mudrā*, saying ॐ मातृका सरस्वत्यै
देवतायै नमः।

Touch the navel with *tattva-mudrā*, saying ॐ हल्भ्यो बीजेभ्यो नमः।

Touch the feet with *tattva-mudrā*, saying ॐ स्वरेभ्यो शक्तिभ्यो नमः।

Touch all parts of the body with *tattva-mudrā*, saying ॐ
अव्यक्त कीलकाय नमः।

The deity is conceived of as having two forms: an auditory (heard) and a visual form. The mantra is the form of the deity perceived by the ear, while the *rūpa* is the form perceived by the eye. The two are again identical as they are the two forms of the same Deity, the difference being only in the means of perception. Having identified himself with the visual form of Deity, the worshipper is now trying to identify himself with the auditory form. *Nyāsa* literally means 'to keep' or 'to consecrate'. Now certain parts of the body are touched by *nyāsa* on uttering certain sounds, thereby identifying that part with those sounds, and finally the whole body with all the sounds of the alphabet in general (*varṇa-maya-śarīra*).

All words are made up of sounds and all sounds are included in the basic sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet. That is why these sounds are called *mātrka*, the mother, or the matrix,

from which all creation emanates.

Therefore identifying oneself with the *mātrka* is the same as identifying oneself with God as sound, or the *varṇa-maya-sarīra* of God. Further, this process of identification is continued in two states: *kara-nyāsa* and *aṅga-nyāsa*.

28. *Kara-nyāsa* (Consecration of the hands)

Touch the thumb with the index finger, saying:

अं कं खं गं घं ङं आं अङ्गुष्ठाभ्यां नमः ।

Aṁ kaṁ khaṁ gaṁ ghaṁ ṅaṁ āṁ aṅguṣṭhābhyāṁ namaḥ.

Touch the index finger with the thumb, saying:

इं चं छं जं झं ञं ईं तर्जनीभ्यां स्वाहा ।

Īṁ caṁ chaṁ jaṁ jhaṁ ñaṁ īṁ tarjanībhyāṁ svāhā.

Touch the middle finger with the thumb, saying:

उं टं ठं डं ढं णं ऊं मध्यमाभ्यां वषट् ।

Uṁ ṭaṁ ṭhaṁ ḍaṁ ḍhaṁ ṇaṁ ūṁ madhyamābhyāṁ vaṣaṭ.

Touch the ring finger with the thumb, saying:

एं तं थं दं धं नं ऐं अनामिकाभ्यां हूं ।

Ēṁ taṁ thaṁ daṁ dhaṁ naṁ aim anāmikābhyāṁ hūṁ.

Touch the little finger with the thumb, saying:

ओं पं फं बं भं मं औं कनिष्ठाभ्यां वौषट् ।

अं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं क्षं अः करतलपृष्ठाभ्याम्
अस्त्राय फट् ।

Om paṁ phaṁ baṁ bhaṁ maṁ aum kaniṣṭhābhyāṁ vauṣaṭ.

*Aṁ yaṁ raṁ laṁ vaṁ śaṁ ṣaṁ saṁ haṁ kṣaṁ aḥ
karatalapṛṣṭhābhyāṁ astrāya phaṭ.*

Touch successively the palm and the back of the left hand with the right forefinger and the middle finger joined together; then clap at the palm with these two fingers.

By performing *kara-nyāsa* the hands are consecrated, identifying the fingers, palms and the back of the hand with the different sounds of the alphabet. Thus the hands become full of the *matrkā-varṇa*.

29. *Aṅga-nyāsa* (consecration of the different limbs/organs)

Touch the chest with the index finger, the middle finger and the ring finger of the right hand joined together, saying:

अं कं खं गं घं ङं आं हृदयाय नमः ।

Aṁ kaṁ khaṁ gaṁ ghaṁ ṅaṁ āṁ hṛdayāya namaḥ.

Touch the head with the index finger and the middle finger of the right hand joined together, saying:

इं चं छं जं झं ञं ईं शिरसे स्वाहा ।

Īṁ caṁ chaṁ jaṁ jhaṁ ñaṁ īṁ śirase svāhā.

Touch the tuft of hair on the head with the thumb of the right hand, saying:

उं टं ठं डं ढं णं ऊं शिखायै वषट् ।

ūṁ ṭaṁ ṭhaṁ ḍaṁ ḍhaṁ ṇaṁ ūṁ śikhāyai vaṣaṭ.

Touch the shoulder joints with all the fingers joined together, saying:

एं तं थं दं धं नं ऐं कवचाय हूं ।

Em taṁ thaṁ daṁ dhaṁ naṁ aim kavacāya hūṁ.

Touch all the three eyes with the forefinger, the middle finger and the ring finger joined together, saying:

ॐ पं फं बं भं मं औं नेत्रत्रयाय वौषट् ।

Om paṁ phaṁ baṁ bhaṁ maṁ auṁ netratrāyāya vauṣaṭ.

Touch successively the palm and the back of the left hand with the right forefinger and the middle finger joined together; then clap at the palm with these two fingers.

अं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं लं क्षं अः करतलपृष्ठाभ्याम्
अस्त्राय फट् ।

*Am yaṁ raṁ laṁ vaṁ śaṁ ṣaṁ saṁ haṁ laṁ kṣaṁ aḥ
karatalapṛṣṭhābhyām astrāya phaṭ.*

Here, by placing the consecrated hands on the different parts of the body with the appropriate sounds, the whole body is consecrated and transformed into *mātrkā*.

30. *Antarmātrkānyāsa* अन्तर्मातृकान्यास (consecration of the Inner Body)

Taking a flower in hand, in कूर्ममुद्रा, meditate uttering the following mantra :

ॐ आधारे लिङ्गनाभौ हृदयसरसिजे तालुमूले ललाटे
द्वेपत्रे षोडशारे द्विदशदले द्वादशार्धे चतुष्के ।
वासान्ते बालमध्ये डफकठसहिते कण्ठदेशे स्वराणाम्
हं क्षं तत्त्वार्थयुक्तं सकल-दलगतं वर्णरूपं नमामि ॥

*Om ādhāre liṅganābhau hr̥dayasarasije tālumūle lalāte
dwepatre ṣoḍaśāre dwidaśadale dwādaśārdhe catuṣke |
vāsānte bālamadhye ḍaphakaṭhasahite kaṇṭhadeśe swarāṇām
haṁ kṣaṁ tattvārthayuktaṁ sakala dalagataṁ varṇarūpaṁ
namāmi ॥*

Touching the *Viśuddha-Cakra* in the throat (sixteen petalled)

अं नमः, आं नमः, इं नमः, ईं नमः, उं नमः, ऊं नमः,
ऋं नमः, ॠं नमः, लृं नमः, ॡं नमः, एं नमः, ऐं नमः,
ओं नमः, औं नमः, अं नमः, अः नमः ।

*aṁ namaḥ, āṁ namaḥ, iṁ namaḥ, īṁ namaḥ, uṁ namaḥ, ūṁ
namaḥ, ṛṁ namaḥ, ṛīṁ namaḥ, ṡṛṁ namaḥ, ṡṛīṁ namaḥ, eṁ*

namah, aini namah, om namah, ouri namah, ari namah, ah namah

Touching the *Anāhata-Cakra* in the heart (twelve petalled)

कं नमः, खं नमः, गं नमः, घं नमः, ङं नमः, चं नमः,
छं नमः, जं नमः, झं नमः, ञं नमः, टं नमः, ठं नमः ।

karī namah, kharī namah, garī namah, gharī namah, ñarī namah, carī namah, charī namah, jarī namah, jharī namah, ñarī namah, tarī namah, tharī namah

Touching the *Maṇipūra-Cakra* in the navel (ten petalled)

डं नमः, ढं नमः, णं नमः, तं नमः, थं नमः, दं नमः, धं नमः, नं नमः, पं नमः, फं नमः ।

ḍarī namah, ḍharī namah, ṇarī namah, tarī namah, tharī namah, darī namah, dharī namah, narī namah, parī namah, pharī namah,

Touching the *Swādiṣṭhāna-Cakra* in between the navel and the base of the spine (six petalled)

बं नमः, भं नमः, मं नमः, यं नमः, रं नमः, लं नमः ।

barī namah, bharī namah, marī namah, yarī namah, rarī namah, larī namah,

Touching the *Mūlādhāra-Cakra* at the base of the spinal column (four petalled)

वं नमः, शं नमः, षं नमः, सं नमः ।

varī namah, śarī namah, ṣarī namah, sarī namah,

Touching the *Ājñā-Cakra* in the forehead (two petalled)

हं नमः, क्षं नमः ।

harī namah, kṣarī namah

31. *Bāhyamātrkānyāsa* बाह्यमातृकान्यास (consecration of the Outer Body)

Taking a white flower in hand, in कूर्ममुद्रा, meditate, uttering the following mantra :

ॐ पञ्चाशल्लिपिभिर्विभक्तमुखदोः पन्मध्यवक्षःस्थलां
 भास्वन्मौलिनिबद्धचन्द्रशकलामापीनतुङ्गस्तनीम् ।
 मुद्रामक्षगुणं सुधाढ्यकलशं विद्यां च हस्ताम्बुजैः
 बिभ्राणां विशदप्रभां त्रिनयनां वाग्देवतामाश्रये ॥

*Om pancāśallipibhirvibhaktamukhadoh panmadhyavakṣasthalām
 bhāsvanmoulinibaddhacandraśakalāmāpīnatuṅgastanīm ।
 mudrāmakshagunam sudhāḍhyakalaśam vidyām ca hastāmbujaiḥ
 bibhrāṇām viśadaprabhām trinayanām vāgdevatāmāśraye ॥*

Thereafter, touching the different parts of the body as detailed below, with the respective mudras mentioned therein, repeat the corresponding mantras. If it is found difficult to do this with different mudras, then only tattwa-mudra, or even a flower may be used.

<i>With the</i>	<i>Touching</i>	<i>Utter</i>
Middle & ring finger	Forehead	अं नमः
Fore, middle & ring finger	Face	आं नमः
Thumb & ring finger	Right eye and left eye	इं नमः ईं नमः
Back of the thumb	Right ear and left ear	उं नमः ऊं नमः
Little finger & thumb	Right and left nostril	ऋं नमः ॠं नमः
Fore, middle & ring finger	Right cheek	लृं नमः
	Left cheek	लृं नमः
Middle finger	Upper & lower lip	एं नमः
Ring finger	In the region of the Upper and lower row of teeth	ऐं नमः औं नमः औं नमः
Middle finger	Head	अं नमः
Ring finger	Inner portion of mouth	अः नमः

With the little finger, ring finger and middle finger of the left hand joined together, touch the shoulder, elbow, wrist, knuckle and the tips of fingers of the right hand (the joints of right hand) uttering the respective mantra:

कं नमः खं नमः गं नमः, घं नमः ङं नमः

kaṁ namaḥ, khaṁ namaḥ, gaṁ namaḥ, ghaṁ namaḥ, ṅaṁ namaḥ

Repeat the same process, with left and right interchanged, uttering respectively, the following mantra:

चं नमः छं नमः जं नमः झं नमः ञं नमः

cam namah, cham namah, jam namah, jham namah, ñam namah

In a similar manner, touch with the right little finger, middle finger and ring finger joined together, the hip, knee, ankle, the join of the fingers with the foot, and the tips of fingers, of the right leg, uttering respectively, the following mantra:

टं नमः ठं नमः डं नमः ढं नमः णं नमः

ṭam namah, ṭham namah, ḍam namah, ḍham namah, ṇam namah

Repeat the same process, for the left leg, the respective mantras being:

तं नमः थं नमः दं नमः धं नमः नं नमः

taṁ namah, thaṁ namah, daṁ namah, dhaṁ namah, naṁ namah

Now touch the different parts of the body as detailed below uttering the mantras mentioned therein :

With	Touch the	Utter
Little, Middle & Ring finger	Right side of the body	पं नमः
	Left side of the body	फं नमः
	Back	वं नमः
Thumb, Middle, Ring and little finger	Navel	भं नमः
All the fingers	Stomach	मं नमः
Right palm	chest	यं नमः
Right palm	Right shoulder	रं नमः
Right palm	Neck	लं नमः
Right palm	Left shoulder	वं नमः
Right palm	From the chest to the tips of the right hand	शं नमः
Right palm	From the chest to the tips of the left hand fingers	षं नमः
Right palm	From the chest to the tips of the right leg	सं नमः
Right palm	From the chest to the tips of the left leg	हं नमः

Right palm	From the chest to the stomach	ॐ नमः
Right palm	From the chest to the face	क्षं नमः

32. Samhāramātrkānyāsa संहारमातृकान्यासः (Consecration of the outer body in the reverse way)

Meditate, repeating the following mantra:

ॐ अक्षस्रजं हरिणपोतमुदग्रटङ्कं विद्यां करैरविरतं दधतीं त्रिनेत्राम् ।

अर्धेन्दुमौलिमरुणामरविन्दसंस्थां वर्णेश्वरीं प्रणमत स्तनभारनम्राम् ॥

*Om akṣasrajaṁ harīṇapotamudagraṭaṅkaṁ vidāyāṁ
karairavirataṁ dadhatīm trinetraīm ।*

*ardhendumoulimaruṇāmaravindasaṁsthāṁ varṇeśvarīm
praṇamata stanabhāranamrām ।*

Then repeat the same process of touching the different parts of the body as in the बाह्यमातृकान्यासः, but now in the reverse way, i.e., start from the last item mentioned in the बाह्यमातृकान्यासः, and end at the first.

33. Varṇanyāsa वर्णन्यासः (consecration of the body by placing different letters of the Sanskrit alphabet at the various places of the body)

With *tattwa-mudra*, perform the following न्यासः-

Touching	Utter
Chest	अं आं इं ईं उं ऊं ऋं ॠं लृं लृं नमः
Right hand	एं ऐं औं औं अं अः कं खं गं घं नमः
Left hand	उं चं छं जं झं ञं टं ठं डं ढं नमः
Right foot	णं तं थं दं धं नं पं फं बं भं नमः
Chest	मं यं रं वं लं वं शं षं सं हं ऌं क्षं नमः

34. Gandhādi arcana (Worship with sandal paste and so on)

All the articles like sandal paste used in worship are also forms of God only. This has to be borne in mind and they are to be worshipped before being offered to Him. The worship is of the article itself, of God as the presiding deity of the

article and also of God—in this case Sri Ramakrishna and the attendant deities as the recipient (*sampradāna*) of the article in the worship. This process is for reminding us that the worshipper, the object used in worship and the Deity that are worshipped are all the manifestation of one and the same divine principle.

Sprinkle water three times on the *puṣpa-pātra* containing article like flowers and sandal paste.

ॐ एतेभ्यो गन्धादिभ्यो नमः । (3 times)

Om etebhyo gandhādibhyo namaḥ.

Then taking a flower with sandal paste, touch the *puṣpa-pātra*, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतेभ्यो गन्धादिभ्यो नमः ।

(Worship of the article itself)

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etebhyo gandhādibhyo namaḥ.

and put it in the *tāmra-kunḍa*.

Then worship with flowers touched with sandal paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय विष्णवे नमः ।

(Worship of the presiding deity of all articles, Lord Viṣṇu)

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etadadhipataye devāya viṣṇave namaḥ.

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्संप्रदानेभ्यः पूजनीयदेवेभ्यो नमः ।

(Worship of the deities who are the recipients of the articles)

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etatsampradānebhyāḥ pūjanīya-devebhyo namaḥ.

35. *Sūryārghya*

Before worshipping the *iṣṭa-devatā*, other deities are worshipped as *parivāra-devatā*.

First *arghya* is offered to Sūrya, the sun. Take some water and a red flower touched with red sandal paste, rice and *dūrvā* grass in the *kushi*. Then lifting the *kushi* with both the hands, chant,

ॐ नमो विवस्वते ब्रह्मन् भास्वते विष्णुतेजसे ।

जगत्सवित्रे शुचये सवित्रे कर्मदायिने ॥

Om namo vivasvate brahman bhāsvate viṣṇutejase;
Jagatsavitre śucaye savitre karmadāyine.

ॐ नमो विवस्वते Salutation to the Bright One; ब्रह्मन् The great one; भास्वते Shining one; विष्णुतेजसे Whose light is all-pervading; जगत्सवित्रे the creator of the world; शुचये the pure one; सवित्रे the creator (Sun god); कर्मदायिने who gives all activities.

Offer the *arghya* by placing it on the vessel in front, saying,

ॐ एष अर्घ्यः ॐ श्रीसूर्याय नमः ।

Om eṣa arghyaḥ om sūryāya namaḥ.

With folded hands chant the following mantra:

ॐ जपाकुसुमसङ्काशं काश्यपेयं महाद्युतिम् ।

ध्वान्तारिं सर्वपापघ्नं प्रणतोऽस्मि दिवाकरम् ॥

Om japākusumasaṅkāśaṁ kāśyapeyaṁ mahādyutim;
dhvāntāriṁ sarvapāpaghnaṁ praṇato'smi divākaram.

ॐ जपाकुसुमसंकाशम् He is the colour of the red hibiscus; काश्यपेयम् descendant of *Kaśyapa ṛṣi*; महाद्युतिम् of great brilliance; ध्वान्तारिम् the enemy of darkness; सर्वपापघ्नम् the destroyer of all sins; दिवाकरम् the maker of the day (the sun); प्रणतोऽस्मि : I prostrate before him.

36. *Gurvādi-pūjā* (Worship of the guru and others)

After worshipping, with flowers and sandal paste, worship guru, *Gaṇeśādi Pancadevatās* and *Bāṇeśwara Śiva* separately, with five or ten articles. The procedures are as under.

(a) **Sri Guru Puja** (Worship of the Guru) : Meditate on the ever-compassionate form of the Guru as seated on the twelve-petalled white lotus below the thousand-petalled lotus in the head, and mentally worship with sandal paste, flowers, incense, light and offerings of fruits and sweets etc.

Then, take a white flower with *kūrma-mudra*, meditate, saying:

ॐ ब्रह्मानन्दं परमसुखदं केवलं ज्ञानमूर्तिम्
द्वन्द्वातीतं गगनसदृशं तत्त्वमस्यादिलक्ष्यम् ।
एकं नित्यं विमलमचलं सर्वधीसाक्षिभूतं
भावातीतं त्रिगुणरहितं सद्गुरुं तं नमामि ॥

*Om brahmānandaṁ paramasukhadaṁ kevalaṁ
jñānamūrtim
dvandvātītaṁ gaganasadrśaṁ tatvamasyādilakṣyam;
Ekaṁ nityaṁ vimalamacalaṁ sarvadhīśākṣibhūtaṁ
bhāvātītaṁ triguṇarahitaṁ sadgurum taṁ namāmi.*

ब्रह्मानन्दम् who is of the bliss of Brahman; परमसुखदम् giver of the supreme Bliss; केवलं ज्ञानमूर्तिम् the very embodiment of supreme Knowledge; द्वन्द्वातीतम् beyond all dualities; गगनसदृशम् all-pervasive as the sky; तत्त्वमस्यादिलक्ष्यम् : characterized by the *mahāvākyas* like 'That thou art' (तत्त्वं असि); एकं नित्यम् eternal one; विमलमचलम् pure and unmoving; सर्वधीसाक्षिभूतम् witness of all intelligence; भावातीतम् beyond all conceptions; त्रिगुणरहितम् devoid of the three gunas; सद्गुरुं तं नमामि : I bow down to that true guru.

Worship the deity by uttering the following mantras:

ऐं एष गन्धः श्रीगुरवे नमः ।

ऐं इदं सचन्दनपुष्पं श्रीगुरवे नमः ।

ऐं इदं सचन्दनबिल्वपत्रं श्रीगुरवे नमः ।

ऐं एष धूपः श्रीगुरवे नमः ।

ऐं एष दीपः श्रीगुरवे नमः ।

ऐं इदं सोपकरणनैवेद्यं श्रीगुरवे नमः ।

aim eṣa gandhaḥ śrīgurave namaḥ.

aim idaṁ sacandanapuṣpaṁ śrīgurave namaḥ.

aim idaṁ sacandanabilvapatraṁ śrīgurave namaḥ.

aim eṣa dhūpaḥ śrīgurave namaḥ.

aim eṣa dīpaḥ śrīgurave namaḥ.

aim idaṁ sopakaraṇanaivedyaṁ śrīgurave namaḥ.

Salute the deity with folded hands chanting,

ॐ अखण्डमण्डलाकारं व्याप्तं येन चराचरम् ।

तत्पदं दर्शितं येन तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

Om akhaṇḍamaṇḍalākāraṁ vyāptaṁ yena carācaram;

Tatpadaṁ darśitaṁ yena tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ.

I bow down to the guru, who pervades the whole world of sentient and insentient beings like an endless circle.

(b) *Gaṇeśa-pūjā* (Worship of Lord Ganesha) : Take a red flower in *kūrma-mudra* and meditate on the deity, uttering the following verse.

ॐ खर्वं स्थूलतनुं गजेन्द्रवदनं लम्बोदरं सुन्दरं

प्रस्यन्दन्मदगन्धलुब्धमधुपव्यालोलगण्डस्थलम् ।

दन्ताघातविदारितारिरुधिरैः सिन्दूरशोभाकरं

वन्दे शैलसुतासुतं गणपतिं सिद्धिप्रदं कामदम् ॥

Om kharvaṁ sthūlatanum gajendravadanaṁ

lambodaraṁ sundaraṁ

prasyandan-madagandha-lubdha-madhupavyāloḷa

ganḍa-sthalaṁ;

Dantāghāta-vidāritārirudhiraiḥ sindhūra-śobhākaraṁ

vande śaila-sutāsutaṁ gaṇapatiṁ siddhi-pradaṁ kāmadaṁ.

खर्वम् short-statured; स्थूलतनुम् with a stout body; गजेन्द्रवदनम् having the face of an elephant; लम्बोदरम् large-bellied; सुन्दरम् beautiful; प्रस्यन्दन्मदगन्धलुब्धः : bees hankering for the fragrance; मधुपव्यालोलगण्डस्थलम्: of the rut exuding from his temples are hovering round His cheeks; दन्ताघातविदारितारिरुधिरैः : His tusks are red with the blood of enemies slain; सिन्दूरशोभाकरम् by them and appear to be decorated with *sindūra* वन्दे शैलसुतासुतं गणपतिं सिद्धिप्रदम् I salute Lord Ganapati, the son of the daughter of the mountains (Pārvati), कामदम् : who gives all success and fulfils all desires.

Worship the deity by uttering the following mantras,

गं एष गन्धः गणेशाय नमः ।

गं इदं सचन्दनपुष्पं गणेशाय नमः ।

गं इदं सचन्दनबिल्वपत्रं गणेशाय नमः ।

गं एष धूपः गणेशाय नमः ।

गं एष दीपः गणेशाय नमः ।

गं इदं सोपकरणनैवेद्यं गणेशाय नमः ।

Gaṁ eṣa gandhaḥ gaṇeśāya namaḥ.

Gaṁ idaṁ sacandana-puṣpaṁ gaṇeśāya namaḥ.

Gaṁ idaṁ sacandana-bilvapatraṁ gaṇeśāya namaḥ.

Gaṁ eṣa dhūpaḥ gaṇeśāya namaḥ.

Gaṁ eṣa dīpaḥ gaṇeśāya namaḥ.

Gaṁ idaṁ sopakaraṇanaivedyaṁ gaṇeśāya namaḥ.

Salute the deity with folded hands chanting,

ॐ देवेन्द्रमौलिमन्दारमकरन्दकणारुणाः ।

विघ्नं हरन्तु हेरम्बचरणाम्बुजरेणवः ॥

एकदन्तं महाकायं लम्बोदरं गजाननम् ।

विघ्ननाशकरं देवं हेरम्बं प्रणमाम्यहम् ॥

Om devendra-mauli-mandāra-makaranda-kaṇāruṇāḥ;

*Vighnaṁ harantu heramba-caraṇāmbuja-reṇavaḥ.
Ekadantaṁ mahākāyaṁ lambodaraṁ gajānanam;
Vighnanāśakaraṁ devaṁ herambaṁ praṇamāmyaḥam.*

रेणवः May the particles of dust; चरणांजु from the lotus feet of; हेरम्ब Heramba (Ganesha); विघ्नं हरन्तु remove all obstructions; ॐ देवेन्द्रमौलिमन्दारमकरंदकर्णारुणाः They (particles of dust) are pink from the droplets of nectar, falling from the *mandāra* flowers which adorn the head of Devendra, the king of the gods.

वक्रतुण्ड महाकाय कोटिसूर्यसमप्रभ ।
निर्विघ्नम् कुरु मे देव सर्वकार्येषु सर्वदा ॥

*vakratuṇḍa mahākāya koṭisūryasamaprabha
nirvighnaṁ kuru me deva sarvakāryeṣu sarvadā ॥*

(c) *Śiva-pūjā* (Worship of Shiva) : Take a white flower in *kūrma-mudrā* and meditate on Shiva uttering the mantra,

ॐ ध्यायेन्नित्यं महेशं रजतगिरिनिभं चारुचन्द्रावतंसं
रत्नाकल्पोज्ज्वलाङ्गं परशुमृगवराभीतिहस्तं प्रसन्नम् ।
पद्मासीनं समन्तात् स्तुतममरगणैर्व्याघ्रकृत्तिं वसानं
विश्वाद्यं विश्वबीजं निखिलभयहरं पञ्चवक्त्रं त्रिनेत्रम् ॥

*Om dhyāyennityaṁ maheśaṁ rajatagirinibhaṁ
cārucandrāvataṁsaṁ
ratnākālpojvalāṅgaṁ paraśu-mṛga-varābhīti-hastaṁ
prasannaṁ;*

*Padmāsīnaṁ samantāt stutam-amaragaṇair-
vyāghrakṛttiṁ vasānaṁ
viśvādyaṁ viśvabījaṁ nikhila-bhayaharaṁ
pañcavaktraṁ trinetraṁ.*

ध्यायेन्नित्यम् one should meditate constantly on; महेशम् the great Lord; रजतगिरिनिभम् who is like the silver mountain; चारुचन्द्रावतंसम् carrying the beautiful moon on His head;

रत्नाकल्पोज्ज्वलांगम् whose body is brilliant with jewel ornaments;
 परशुमृगवराभीतिहस्तम् He carries in His hands the axe, the deer (मृगमुद्रा)
 and the symbol of freedom from fear and the granting of boons;
 प्रसन्नम् gracious; पद्मासीनम् He is seated on the lotus; समन्तात् always;
 स्तुतममरगणैः praised by the groups of deities; व्याघ्रकृत्तिं वसानम् wearing
 a tiger skin; विश्वाद्यम् : who was there before creation of the
 universe; विश्वबीजम् the seed of the universe; निखिलभयहरम् the
 destroyer of all fear; पञ्चवक्त्रम् Having five faces; त्रिनेत्रम् three-
 eyed.

After meditating thus, bathe the deity, uttering the follow-
 ing mantra, accompanied by the ringing of the bell.

ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।

उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात् ॥

*Om tryambakam yajāmahe sugandhim
 puṣṭivardhanam;*

Urvārukamiva bandhanān-mṛtyormukṣīya māmṛtāt.

Then do the worship as before, but with the following mantras.

ॐ नमः शिवाय एष गन्धः शिवाय नमः ।

ॐ नमः शिवाय इदं सचन्दनपुष्पं शिवाय नमः ।

ॐ नमः शिवाय इदं सचन्दनबिल्वपत्रं शिवाय नमः ।

ॐ नमः शिवाय एष धूपः शिवाय नमः ।

ॐ नमः शिवाय एष दीपः शिवाय नमः ।

ॐ नमः शिवाय इदं सोपकरणनैवेद्यं शिवाय नमः ।

Om namaḥ śivāya eṣa gandhaḥ śivāya namaḥ.

*Om namaḥ śivāya idaṁ sacāndana-puṣpaṁ śivāya
 namaḥ.*

*Om namaḥ śivāya idaṁ sacandanbilvapatraṁ śivāya
 namaḥ.*

Om namaḥ śivāya eṣa dhūpaḥ śivāya namaḥ.

Om namaḥ śivāya eṣa dīpaḥ śivāya namaḥ.

Om namaḥ śivāya idaṁ sopakaraṇa naivedyam śivāya namaḥ.

And so on, similarly, up to *naivedya*, offerings. Prostrate before the deity. Then worship with a flower touched with sandal paste, uttering the mantra

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे अष्टमूर्तिभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ ह्रीं एते गन्धपुष्पे गौर्यै नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe aṣṭamūrtibhyo namaḥ.

Om hrīm ete gandhapuṣpe gauryai namaḥ.

Then recite

ॐ नमः शिवाय शान्ताय कारणत्रयहेतवे ।

निवेदयामि चात्मानं गतिस्त्वं परमेश्वर ॥

*Om namaḥ śivāya śāntāya kāraṇa-traya-hetave;
nivedayāmi cātmānaṁ gatistvaṁ parameśvara.*

ॐ नमः शिवाय I salute Shiva; शान्ताय who is peaceful; कारणत्रयहेतवे the source of three causes; च and; आत्मानम् I; निवेदयामि offer myself to you; परमेश्वर O supreme Lord; गतिस्त्वम् You are the only refuge.

(d) *Sūrya-pūjā* (Worship of the Sun)

Take a red flower in hand in *kurma-mudrā* and meditate on the deity, saying,

ॐ रक्ताम्बुजासनमशेषगुणैकसिन्धुं

भानुं समस्तजगतामधिपं भजामि ।

पद्मद्वयाभयवरान् दधतं कराब्जैः

माणिक्यमौलिमरुणाङ्गरुचिं त्रिनेत्रम् ॥

*Om raktāmbujāsanam-aśeṣaguṇaikasindhurṁ
bhānurṁ samastajagatām-adhipaṁ bhajāmi;
Padmadvayābhayavarān dadhataṁ karābjaiḥ
māṇikya-maulim-aruṇāṅgaruciṁ trinetram.*

भजामि I salute; समस्तजगतामधिपम् the Lord of all the worlds; भानुम् the sun; रक्ताम्बुजासनम् who is seated on a red lotus; अशेषगुणैकसिन्धुम् who is the ocean of all good qualities; कराब्जै in his hands; दधतम्: he holds; पद्मद्वयाभयवरान् : two lotuses and the symbol of deliverance from fear and granting of boons. माणिक्यमौलिम् : He is crowned with rubies (red stone); अरुणांगरुचिं त्रिनेत्रम् : His body is orange in colour and he has three eyes.

Worship the deity by uttering the following mantras:

ॐ एष गन्धः श्रीसूर्याय नमः ।

ॐ इदं सचन्दनपुष्पं श्रीसूर्याय नमः ।

ॐ इदं सचन्दनबिल्वपत्रं श्रीसूर्याय नमः ।

ॐ एष धूपः श्रीसूर्याय नमः ।

ॐ एष दीपः श्रीसूर्याय नमः ।

ॐ इदं सोपकरणनैवेद्यं श्रीसूर्याय नमः ।

Om eṣa gandhaḥ śrīsūryāya namaḥ.

Om idaṁ sacandana-puṣpaṁ śrīgurave namaḥ.

Om idaṁ sacandana-bilvapatraṁ śrīgurave namaḥ.

Om eṣa dhūpaḥ śrīgurave namaḥ.

Om eṣa dīpaḥ śrīgurave namaḥ.

Om idaṁ sopakaraṇa-naivedyaṁ śrīgurave namaḥ.

Salute the deity with folded hands chanting,

ॐ जपाकुसुमसङ्काशं काश्यपेयं महाद्युतिम् ।

ध्वान्तारिं सर्वपापघ्नं प्रणतोऽस्मि दिवाकरम् ॥

Om japākusumasaṅkāśaṁ kāśyapeyaṁ mahādyutim;

Dhvāntāriṁ sarvapāpaghnaṁ praṇato'smi divākaraṁ.

नमः सवित्रे जगदेकचक्षुषे ।

जगत्प्रसूतिस्थितिनाशहेतवे ।

त्रयीमयाय त्रिगुणात्मकारिणे ।

विरिञ्चिनारायणशंकरात्मने ॥

*namaḥ savitre jagadekakakṣuṣe |
jagatprasūtisthitināśahetave ||
trayīmayāya triguṇātmakāriṇe |
virīñci -nārāyaṇa-śaṅkarātmane ||*

Salutations to the Sun-god who is the very eye of the world, is responsible for the creation, evolution and destruction of the world, who is the embodiment of the three Vedas, is the seed of three gunas (sattva, rajas, tamas), is of the form of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

(e) *Nārāyaṇa-pūjā* (Worship of Narayana) : Take a white flower in *kūrma-mudrā* and meditate on the deity, saying,

ॐ ध्येयः सदा सवितृमण्डलमध्यवर्ती

नारायणः सरसिजासनसन्निविष्टः ।

केयूरवान् कनककुण्डलवान् किरीटी

हारी हिरण्मयवपुर्धृतशङ्खचक्रः ॥

*Om dhyeyaḥ sadā savitr-maṇḍala-madhyavartī
nārāyaṇaḥ sarasijāsana-sanniviṣṭaḥ.
Keyūravān kanaka-kuṇḍalavān kirīṭī
hārī hiraṇmayavapur-dhṛta-śaṅkhacakraḥ.*

नारायणः ध्येयः सदा Narayana is to be always meditated upon as; सवितृमण्डलमध्यवर्ती being in the center of the sun's disc; सरसिजासनसन्निविष्टः seated on a lotus; केयूरवान् He has golden ornaments on his shoulders; कनककुण्डलवान् golden earrings; किरीटी crown; हारी a number of necklaces; हिरण्मयवपुः His body is made of gold (light); धृतशङ्खचक्रः He holds the conch and the chakra (wheel).

Worship the deity by uttering the following mantras,

ॐ नमो नारायणाय एष गन्धः नारायणाय नमः ।

ॐ नमो नारायणाय इदं सचन्दनपुष्पं नारायणाय नमः ।

ॐ नमो नारायणाय इदं सचन्दनतुलसीपत्रम् ॐ नमस्ते बहुरूपाय
विष्णवे परमात्मने स्वाहा नारायणाय नमः।

ॐ नमो नारायणाय एष धूपः नारायणाय नमः ।

ॐ नमो नारायणाय एष दीपः नारायणाय नमः ।

ॐ नमो नारायणाय इदं सोपकरणनैवेद्यं नारायणाय नमः ।

Om namo nārāyaṇāya eṣa gandhaḥ nārāyaṇāya namaḥ.

*Om namo nārāyaṇāya idaṁ sacandana-puṣpaṁ
nārāyaṇāya namaḥ.*

*Om namo nārāyaṇāya idaṁ sacandana-tulasī-patram om
namaste bahurūpaya viṣṇave paramatmane svāhā
nārāyaṇāya namaḥ.*

Om aim eṣa dhūpaḥ nārāyaṇāya namaḥ.

Om aim eṣa dīpaḥ nārāyaṇāya namaḥ.

Om aim idaṁ sopakaraṇanaivedyaṁ nārāyaṇāya namaḥ.

Salute the deity with folded hands chanting,

ॐ त्रैलोक्यपूजित-श्रीमन्सदाविजयवर्धन ।

शान्तिं कुरु गदापाणे नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

Om trailokyapūjita śrīmān-sadāvijayavardhana;

Śāntiṁ kuru gadāpāṇe nārāyaṇa namo'stu te.

त्रैलोक्यपूजित worshipped by all the three worlds; श्रीमन् O glorious one; सदाविजयवर्धनः always enhancing victory; गदापाणे carrying a mace in your hand; नारायण O Narayana ; नमोऽस्तु ते salutation to you; शान्तिं कुरु grant peace.

After worshipping Narayana, worship Sri Lakshmi and Sri Saraswathi with flowers and sandal paste, uttering the following mantras:

ॐ श्रीं एते गन्धपुष्पे लक्ष्मीदेव्यै नमः ।

ॐ ऐं एते गन्धपुष्पे सरस्वत्यै नमः ॥

Om śrīm ete gandhapuṣpe lakṣmīdevyai namaḥ ।

Om aim ete gandhapuṣpe sarasvatyai namaḥ ॥

(f) *Jaya-durgā-pūjā* (Worship of Jaya-durgā or Kauśikī):

Take a red flower in kurma mudra and meditate on Jaya-durga, saying,

ॐ ह्रीं कालाभ्राभां कटाक्षैररिकुलभयदां मौलिबद्धेन्दुरेखां

शङ्खं चक्रं कृपाणं त्रिशिखमपि करैरुद्वहन्तीं त्रिनेत्राम् ।

सिंहस्कन्धाधिरूढां त्रिभुवनमखिलं तेजसा पूरयन्तीं

ध्यायेद् दुर्गां जयाख्यां त्रिदशपरिवृतां सेवितां सिद्धिकामैः ॥

Om hrīm kālābhrābhāṁ kaṭākṣair-arikulabhayadāṁ
maulibaddhendurekhāṁ

śaṅkhaṁ cakram kṛpāṇaṁ trīśikhamapi karair-udvahantīm
trinetram;

Siṁha-skandhādhirūḍhāṁ tribhuvanamakhilam tejasā
pūrayantīm

dhyāyed durgāṁ jayākhyāṁ tridaśaparivṛtāṁ
sevitāṁ siddhikāmaiḥ.

ध्यायेद् दुर्गां जयाख्याम् Durgā, known as Jayā, should be meditated upon; त्रिदशपरिवृताम् surrounded by the gods (त्रिदश); सिद्धिकामैः सेविताम् worshipped by all who desire success; कालाभ्राभाम् she is of the colour of the dark cloud; कटाक्षैररिकुलभयदाम् Her glances put fear into the hearts of enemies; मौलिबद्धेन्दुरेखाम् the crescent moon is tied to Her hair; शङ्खं चक्रं कृपाणं त्रिशिखमपि करैरुद्वहन्तीम् in Her hands She carries the conch, the wheel, the sword and a flaming fire. त्रिनेत्राम् She has three eyes; सिंहस्कन्धाधिरूढाम् mounted on the shoulder of a lion; त्रिभुवनमखिलं तेजसा पूरयन्तीम् filling all the three worlds with Her brilliance.

Worship the deity by uttering the following mantras, [हीं = sound symbol for Shakti, the infinite Power]

ॐ ह्रीं एष गन्धः जयदुर्गायै नमः ।

ॐ ह्रीं इदं सचन्दनपुष्पं जयदुर्गायै नमः ।

ॐ ह्रीं इदं सचन्दनबिल्वपत्रं जयदुर्गायै नमः ।

ॐ ह्रीं एष धूपः जयदुर्गायै नमः ।

ॐ ह्रीं एष दीपः जयदुर्गायै नमः ।

ॐ ह्रीं इदं सोपकरणनैवेद्यं जयदुर्गायै नमः ।

Om hrīm eṣa gandhaḥ jayadurgāyai namaḥ.

Om hrīm idaṁ sacandana-puṣpaṁ jayadurgāyai namaḥ.

Om hrīm idaṁ sacandana-bilvapatraṁ jayadurgāyai namaḥ.

Om hrīm eṣa dhūpaḥ jayadurgāyai namaḥ.

Om hrīm eṣa dīpaḥ jayadurgāyai namaḥ.

Om hrīm idaṁ sopakaraṇa-naivedyaṁ jayadurgāyai namaḥ.

Salute the deity with folded hands, chanting

ॐ सर्वमङ्गलमाङ्गल्ये शिवे सर्वार्थसाधिके ।

शरण्ये त्र्यम्बके गौरि नारायणि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

Om sarvamaṅgalamāṅgalye śive sarvārthasādhike;
Śaraṇye tryambake gauri nārāyaṇi namo'stu te.

सर्वमङ्गलमाङ्गल्ये you confer auspiciousness on all that is auspicious; शिवे O most auspicious one; सर्वार्थसाधिके you bring success to all our activities; शरण्ये you are the refuge; त्र्यम्बके गौरि O three-eyed daughter of the mountain; नारायणि sister of नारायण; नमोऽस्तु ते salutations to you.

(g) *Bāṇeśvara-śiva-pūjā* (Only where there is a Shivalinga for worship) : Take a white flower in *kūrma-mudrā* and meditate

on the deity, saying,

ॐ ऐं प्रमत्तं शक्तिसंयुक्तं बाणाख्यं च महाप्रभम् ।

कामबाणान्वितं देवं संसारदहनक्षमम् ॥

शृङ्गारादिरसोल्लासं बाणाख्यं परमेश्वरम् ।

एवं ध्यात्वा बाणलिङ्गं यजेत्तं परमं शिवम् ॥

*Om aim pramattam śaktisamyuktaṁ bāṇākhyam ca
mahāprabham;*

Kāma-bāṇānvitam devaṁ saṁsāraṁ dahanakṣamam.

Śṛṅgārādirasollāsaṁ bāṇākhyam paramēśvaram;

Evaṁ dhyātvā bāṇaliṅgaṁ yajettaṁ paramaṁ śivaṁ.

प्रमत्तम् intoxicated with joy; शक्तिसंयुक्तम् united with His power (Shakti); बाणाख्यम् called *Bāṇa* (egg-shaped); च and; महाप्रभम् of great brilliance; कामबाणान्वितम् containing the arrow of *kāma*, yet unaffected by it. संसार-दहनक्षमम् : capable of destroying the bondage of transmigratory existence; शृङ्गारादिरसोल्लासम् from whom blossom all emotions like love; परमेश्वरम् : the supreme Lord. (*Bāṇa* is the name of an Asura.)

While ringing the bell bathe the deity with the water from the *kosha* by means of the *kushi* and chant the following mantra,

ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।

उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात् ॥

Om tryambakaṁ yajāmahe sugandhiṁ puṣṭivardhanam;

urvārukamiva bandhanānmṛtyormukṣīyamāmṛtāt.

ॐ त्र्यम्बकम् (Shiva) having three eyes; यजामहे : we worship; सुगन्धिम् : fragrant; पुष्टिवर्धनम् makes us grow through nourishment; उर्वारुकमिव : like cucumber; मृत्योः बन्धनात् मुक्षीय free us from the bondage of death; मा अमृतात् : not from immortality.

Worship the deity by uttering the following mantras:

ऐं एष गन्धः बाणेश्वरशिवाय नमः ।

ऐं इदं सचन्दनपुष्पं बाणेश्वरशिवाय नमः ।

ऐं इदं सचन्दनबिल्वपत्रं बाणेश्वरशिवाय नमः ।

ऐं एष धूपः बाणेश्वरशिवाय नमः ।

ऐं एष दीपः बाणेश्वरशिवाय नमः ।

ऐं इदं सोपकरणनैवेद्यं बाणेश्वरशिवाय नमः ।

aim eṣa gandhaḥ bāṇeśvaraśivāya namaḥ.

aim idaṁ sacandanapুষ्पam bāṇeśvaraśivāya namaḥ.

*aim idaṁ sacandanabilvapatram bāṇeśvaraśivāya
namaḥ.*

aim eṣa dhūpaḥ bāṇeśvaraśivāya namaḥ.

aim eṣa dīpaḥ bāṇeśvaraśivāya namaḥ.

*aim idaṁ sopakaraṇanaivedyaṁ bāṇeśvaraśivāya
namaḥ*

Offer the flowers smeared with sandal paste to the copper vessel. Chant with folded hands:

ॐ नमः शिवाय शान्ताय कारणत्रयहेतवे ।

निवेदयामि चात्मानं गतिस्त्वं परमेश्वर ॥

om namaḥ śivāya śāntāya kāraṇatrayahetave;

nivedayāmi cātmanam gatistvaṁ parameśvara.

गौरी-पीठः

ॐ ह्रीं एते गन्धपुष्पे गौर्यै नमः ।

पुनः प्रणामः

ॐ बाणेश्वराय नरकार्णवतारणाय

ज्ञानप्रदाय करुणामय-सागराय ।

कर्पूरकुन्द-धवलेन्दु-जटाधराय

दारिद्र्य-दुःखदहनाय नमः शिवाय ॥

Gaurī-pīṭhaḥ

Om hrīm ete gandhapuṣpe gauryai namaḥ.

Punaḥ praṇāmaḥ.

*Om bāṇeśvarāya narakārṇava-tāraṇāya
jñāna-pradāya karuṇā-maya-sāgarāya;
Karpūra-kunda-dhavalendu-jaṭādharāya
dāridryaduḥkha-dahanāya namaḥ śivāya.*

ॐ बाणेश्वराय नरकार्णवतारणाय O Lord बाणेश्वर who takes us across the sea of नरक ; ज्ञानप्रदाय who is the bestower of knowledge; करुणामय-सागराय who is an ocean of compassion; कर्पूरकुन्दधवलेन्दुजटाधराय who wears in His matted locks the moon as white as camphor or as the *kunda* flower; दारिद्र्य-दुःखदहनाय नमः शिवाय burn up the grief of poverty. I bow down to Lord Shiva.

37. *Anyā-devatā-pūjā* (Worship of other deities and different aspects of creation)

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे आदित्यादि नवग्रहेभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे इन्द्रादि दशदिक्पालेभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे मत्स्यादि दशावतारेभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे काल्यादि दशमहाविद्याभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे सर्वेभ्यो देवेभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे सर्वाभ्यो देवीभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे अकारादि पञ्चाशद्वर्णेभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे प्रतिपदादि तिथिभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे कृष्णपक्षाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे शुक्लपक्षाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे अमावस्यायै नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे पूर्णिमायै नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe ādityādi-navagrahebhyaḥ namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe indrādi-daśadikpālebhyaḥ namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe matsyādi-daśāvatārebhyaḥ namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe kālyādi-daśamahāvidyābhyaḥ
 namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe sarvebhyaḥ devebhyaḥ namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe sarvābhyaḥ devībhyaḥ namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe akārādi-pañcāśad-varṇebhyaḥ
 namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe pratipadādi-tithibhyaḥ namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe kṛṣṇapakṣāya namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe śuklapakṣāya namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe amāvasyāyai namaḥ.
 Om ete gandhapuṣpe pūrṇimāyai namaḥ.

Here the various units of time are worshipped to remind us that time is the most obvious symbol of God.

38. Pīṭha-nyāsa (Placing of the various deities accompanying the ishtadevata in one's own body)

In special worship, न्यासः has to be performed for all the deities (पीठदेवताः) accompanying the ishtadevata. Touching the different parts of the body with मृगमुद्रा utter the corresponding mantras:

Touching	utter
Chest	ॐ आधारशक्तये नमः । ॐ प्रकृत्यै नमः । ॐ कूर्माय नमः । ॐ अनन्ताय नमः । ॐ पृथिव्यै नमः । ॐ सुधाम्बुधये नमः । ॐ मणिद्वीपाय नमः । ॐ चिन्तामणिगृहाय नमः । ॐ पारिजाताय नमः । ॐ कल्पवृक्षाय नमः । ॐ मणिवेदिकायै नमः । ॐ रत्नसिंहासनाय नमः । ॐ मणिपीठाय नमः ।

On all sides
of the central
seat of the
Ishtadevata
(the Heart)

Right Shoulder ॐ धर्माय नमः ।

Left Shoulder ॐ ज्ञानाय नमः ।

Left Thigh ॐ वैराग्याय नमः ।

Right Thigh ॐ ऐश्वर्याय नमः ।

Face ॐ अधर्माय नमः ।

Left side ॐ अज्ञानाय नमः ।

Navel ॐ अवैराग्याय नमः ।

Right side ॐ अनैश्वर्याय नमः ।

Chest ॐ अं अनन्ताय नमः । ॐ पं पद्माय नमः ।
ॐ आं आनन्दकन्दाय नमः । ॐ संविन्नालाय नमः ।
ॐ प्रकृतिमयपत्रेभ्यो नमः । ॐ विकारमयकेसरेभ्यो नमः ।
ॐ तत्त्वमयकर्णिकायै नमः । ॐ अं अर्कमण्डलाय
द्वादशकलात्मने नमः । ॐ उं सोममण्डलाय षोडशकलात्मने
नमः । ॐ मं वह्निमण्डलाय दशकलात्मने नमः । ॐ सं सत्त्वाय
नमः । ॐ रं रजसे नमः । ॐ तं तमसे नमः । ॐ आं आत्मने
नमः । ॐ अं अन्तरात्मने नमः । ॐ पं परमात्मने नमः ।
ॐ ह्रीं ज्ञानात्मने नमः ।

Likewise, beginning from the eastern side of the lotus of the heart up to the ईशानकोणः (north-east), perform न्यासः of पीठशक्ति's (place the पीठशक्ति's in the different positions of the lotus), uttering :

ॐ आं प्रभायै नमः । ॐ ई मायायै नमः । ॐ ऊं जयायै नमः । ॐ एं
सूक्ष्मायै नमः । ॐ ऐं विशुद्धायै नमः । ॐ ओं नन्दिन्यै नमः । ॐ औं
सुप्रभायै नमः । ॐ अं विजयायै नमः ।

Touching the middle of the lotus : ॐ अः सर्वसिद्धिदायिन्यै नमः ।

Mr̥ga-mudra is the sign of the deer. The deer is a very fast-moving animal and therefore is a symbol of the mind. *Mr̥ga-mudrā* is the visual symbol of the restless mind and means that the mind symbolized by the deer should be held without movement. *Pīṭha-devatā* is the presiding deity of the seat on which the Lord will be invoked to sit. So the Lord as the *pīṭha* is the *pīṭha-devatā* and the power of this *pīṭha-devatā* is the *pīṭha-śakti*. Hence *pīṭha-devatā* and *pīṭha-śakti* are being worshipped first.

39. *R̥ṣyādi-nyāsa* (Dedication of the rishis)

Chant with folded hands:

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः

इत्यस्य मन्त्रस्य ब्रह्म ऋषिः, गायत्रीछन्दः, सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपः
श्रीरामकृष्णो देवता, ऋष्यादिन्यासे विनियोगः ।

*Om aiṁ sarvadevadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ
ityasya mantrasya brahmaṛṣiḥ gāyatrī-cchandaḥ
sarvadevadevī-svarūpaḥ śrīrāmakṛṣṇo devatā
r̥ṣyādinnyāse viniyogaḥ.*

Touch the top of the head with *tattva-mudrā*, chanting

ॐ ब्रह्मणे ऋषये नमः ।

Touch the mouth with *tattva-mudrā*, chanting

ॐ गायत्रीछन्दसे नमः ।

Touch the heart with *tattva-mudrā*, chanting

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Tattva-mudrā is the symbol of clarity, and hence called *vyākhyāna-mudrā*. It means analysing an idea by breaking it down into small units so that everything is clearly understood. So by touching the head, mouth and heart with *tattva-mudrā*

during *ṛṣyādi-nyāsa* we are invoking the presence of the rishi, ब्रह्म in the head, *chandas* (Gayatri) in the mouth, and *iṣṭadevatā* Sri Ramakrishna in the heart.

40. *Kara-nyāsa* (Consecration of the hands)

ऐं अङ्गुष्ठाभ्यां नमः ।
 रां तर्जनीभ्यां स्वाहा ।
 मं मध्यमाभ्यां वषट् ।
 कं अनामिकाभ्यां हूं ।
 ष्णं कनिष्ठिकाभ्यां वौषट् ।
 ऐं रामकृष्णः करतलपृष्ठाभ्याम् अस्त्राय फट् ।

Aim aṅguṣṭhābhyāṁ namaḥ.
Rāṁ tarjanībhyāṁ svāhā.
Maṁ madhyamābhyāṁ vaṣaṭ.
Kṛṁ anāmikābhyāṁ hūṁ.
Ṣṇāṁ kaniṣṭhābhyāṁ vauṣaṭ.
Aim rāmakṛṣṇaḥ karatalapṛṣṭhābhyām astrāya phaṭ.

41. *Aṅga-nyāsa* (Consecration of the limbs)

ऐं हृदयाय नमः ।
 रां शिरसे स्वाहा ।
 मं शिखायै वषट् ।
 कं कवचाय हूं ।
 ष्णं नेत्राभ्यां वौषट् ।
 ऐं रामकृष्णः करतलपृष्ठाभ्याम् अस्त्राय फट् ।

Aim hrdayāya namaḥ.
Rāṁ śirase svāhā.
Maṁ śikhāyai vaṣaṭ.
Kṛṁ kavacāya hūṁ.
Ṣṇāṁ netra-trayāya vauṣaṭ.
Aim rāmakṛṣṇaḥ karatala-pṛṣṭhābhyām astrāya phaṭ.

Here for *aṅga-nyāsa* and *kara-nyāsa* the sound symbols of the *iṣṭa-mantra* are used. The purpose, as explained earlier, is to consecrate and divinise the body and limbs with the particular *iṣṭa-mantra*.

42. *Vyāpaka-nyāsa* (Total consecration)

Chanting the following mantra, gently pass the hands over the body, from head to the foot and back again from foot to head.

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः

The purpose of waving the hands over the body along with chanting the *mūla-mantra* of the *iṣṭa-devatā* three times is for the total purity and divinisation at the three levels of gross body, subtle body and causal body. By this the worshipper further becomes mentally ready and completely fit for meditating on the Lord in his heart centre and then inviting the Lord into the sacred flower held in *kūrma-mudrā* and then placing Him on the holy seat at the *puṣpa-kunḍa* during the subsequent process of puja.

43. *Dhyāna and Mānasa-pūjā* (Meditation and mental worship)

Take a flower touched with sandal paste. Holding it near the heart in *kūrma-mudrā* meditate on Sri Ramakrishna, chanting the following verse from the *Gītā* (2.58):

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः ।

इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

Yadā saṁharate cāyaṁ kūrmoṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ;
Indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyas-tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā.

The *kūrma-mudrā* is the symbol of tortoise. The tortoise is a symbol of the ability to withdraw the faculties into oneself, which has to be done during meditation. The *kūrma-mudrā*

symbolizes this. Further, in the Bhagavata narration of the *kūrma-avatāra* one gets the impression of the tortoise as an allegoric representation of the ultimate Reality, which validates itself and all other valid evidence. The mountain Mandara represents *pramāṇa* evidence, with which *vicāra*, represented by the churning of the ocean of experience, becomes possible. When the validity of evidence itself is questioned, it is found to sink as the mountain did, unless it can rest on something which itself does not need any validation. This self-evident principle does not require validation and is represented by the huge tortoise which was able to hold up the mountain on its back and itself remain floating in water without the need of any other support. The tortoise is thus a symbol of the ultimate reality and of deep meditation. The *kūrma-mudrā* is to take the mind to that reality through meditation. The worshipper should cultivate and hold this frame of mind during the ensuing *dhyāna*.

ॐ हृदयकमलमध्ये राजितं निर्विकल्पं
सदसदखिलभेदातीतमेकस्वरूपम् ।
प्रकृतिविकृतिशून्यं नित्यमानन्दमूर्तिं
विमलपरमहंसं रामकृष्णं भजामः ॥

*Om hrdayakamalamadhye rājitaṁ nirvikalpaṁ
sadasad-akhila-bhedātītam-ekasvarūpam;
Prakṛti-vikṛti-śūnyaṁ nityam-ānandamūrtiṁ
vimala-paramahaṁsaṁ rāmakṛṣṇaṁ bhajāmaḥ.*

ॐ हृदयकमलमध्ये राजितम् shining inside the heart (middle);
निर्विकल्पम् unchanging; सदसदखिलभेदातीतम् beyond all distinctions
of real and unreal, good and evil; एकस्वरूपम् : the one essence;
प्रकृतिविकृतिशून्यम् bereft of the idea of origination and modification;
नित्यम् eternal; आनन्दमूर्तिम् the embodiment of Bliss; विमलपरमहंसं

रामकृष्णं भजामः the spotless swan Supreme Reality, Sri Ramakrishna, we adore.

निरुपममतिसूक्ष्मं निष्प्रपञ्चं निरीहं
गगनसदृशमीशं सर्वभूताधिवासम् ।
त्रिगुणरहितसच्चिद्ब्रह्मरूपं वरेण्यं
विमलपरमहंसं रामकृष्णं भजामः ॥

*Nirupamam-atisūkṣmaṁ niṣprapañcaṁ nirīhaṁ
gagana-sadṛśam-īśaṁ sarva-bhūtādhivāsam;
Triguṇa-rahita-saccid-brahmarūpaṁ vareṇyaṁ
vimala-paramahaṁsaṁ rāmakṛṣṇaṁ bhajāmaḥ.*

निरुपमम् Beyond comparison; अतिसूक्ष्मम् extremely subtle; निष्प्रपञ्चम् beyond the manifold universe; निरीहम् without desire (इह); गगनसदृशम् comparable to space; ईशम् Supreme Lord; सर्वभूताधिवासम्: dwelling in all beings; त्रिगुणरहितसच्चिद्ब्रह्मरूपम् Brahman absolute existence – consciousness without the three gunas; वरेण्यम् excellent; विमलपरमहंसम् रामकृष्णं भजामः : the spotless swan supreme, Sri Ramakrishna, we adore.

वितरितुमवतीर्णं ज्ञानभक्तिप्रशान्तीः
प्रणयगलितचित्तं जीवदुःखासहिष्णुम् ।
धृतसहजसमाधिं चिन्मयं कोमलाङ्गं
विमलपरमहंसं रामकृष्णं भजामः ॥

*Vitaritum-avatīrṇaṁ jñāna-bhakti-praśāntīḥ
praṇaya-galita-cittaṁ jīva-duḥkhāsaḥiṣṇuṁ;
Dhṛta-sahaja-samādhim cinmayaṁ komalāṅgaṁ
vimala-paramahaṁsaṁ rāmakṛṣṇaṁ bhajāmaḥ.*

वितरितुमवतीर्णम् He has come down among men to spread; ज्ञानभक्तिप्रशान्तीः knowledge, devotion and peace; प्रणयगलितचित्तम् His heart is melting with Love; जीवदुःखासहिष्णुम् He is unable to bear the suffering of souls. धृतसहजसमाधिम् : He stays spontaneously

in samadhi; चिन्मयं कोमलाङ्गं Consciousness embodied in a soft, tender body. विमलपरमहंसं रामकृष्णं भजामः the spotless swan supreme, Sri Ramakrishna, we adore.

ॐ रामकृष्णाय विद्महे गदाधराय धीमहि । तन्नो देवः प्रचोदयात् । *

*om rāmakṛṣṇāya vidmahe gadādhārāya dhīmahi |
tanno devaḥ pracodayāt*

44. *Mānasa-pūjā* (Mental worship)

Mānasa-pūjā is a very important process of worship. Here the Lord is worshipped entirely in our mind. This form of worship is free from the constraints of time, space and substance, which operate in external puja. If performed with a proper attitude, the worshipper will get the full benefit of puja. Therefore it is a necessary prelude to the external services. The idea of total consecration and surrender, which has been intensified in the earlier stages, is to be maintained here also with greater intensity, if possible. This form of worship brings us into intimate contact with the Lord mentally. There is great scope for the exercise of imagination, which enables the worshipper to involve his whole mind in the puja. And the worshipper should take full advantage of this mental worship. The attitude to be maintained is this: the Lord is a beloved and honoured guest who has graciously consented to come and accept the worshipper's service. The worshipper offers the best of everything without limitations and constraint of time and space which external puja necessarily imposes. The method given through verses is only a guide; the verses are not to be repeated loudly as a mantra but understood before doing the puja. Placing the flower on the head and keeping the back of the right hand on the palm of the left on the lap, do the mental worship.

* This is the Gayathri of the deity Sri Ramakrishna

First, imagine an ocean of nectar in the lotus of the heart and within it an island of precious stones, and in the midst of it the wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpa-vṛkṣa*). Visualize the Chosen Deity as seated at the root of this tree. Then offer the lotus of the heart itself as seat (*āsana*). Then extending welcome, offer water (*pādyā*) for washing the feet; the nectar issuing from the thousand-petalled lotus in the head region (*sahasrāra*) for *arghya*; the mind, for *ācamana* (sipping) and *snānīya* (bathing), the afore-mentioned nectar; as cloth, the principle of sky; for scent, the principle of earth; flower in the form of *citta* (mind-stuff); incense in the form of *prana* (the vital breath air), light in the form of the principle of *tejas*, food; and *naivedya* in the form of the ocean of nectar.

ॐ हृत्पद्ममासनं दद्यात्सहस्रारच्युतामृतैः ।

पाद्यं चरणयोर्दद्यात् मनस्त्वर्घ्यं निवेदयेत् ॥

*Om hr̥tpadmamāsanam dadyāt sahasrāracyutāmṛtaiḥ;
Pādyam caranayordadyāt manastvarghyam nivedayet.*

The lotus of the heart should be offered as the seat of the Deity. The nectar that flows from the thousand-petalled lotus on the head should be offered for washing the feet. The mind should be offered as अर्घ्य.

तेनामृतेनाचमनीयं स्नानीयं तेन च स्मृतम् ।

आकाशतत्त्वं वस्त्रं स्यात् गन्धः स्यात् गन्धतत्त्वकम् ॥

*Tenāmṛtenācamanīyam snānīyam tena ca smṛtam;
ākāśatattvam vastram syāt gandhaḥ syāt
gandha-tattvakam.*

The above nectar should be offered for rinsing the mouth as well as for bathing. The principle of *ākāśa* (ether) should be offered as clothing and that of smell as sandal paste.

चित्तं प्रकल्पयेत् पुष्पं धूपं प्राणान् प्रकल्पयेत् ।

तेजस्तत्त्वं च दीपार्थं नैवेद्यं स्यात्सुधाम्बुधिः ॥

*Cittam prakalpayet puṣpaṁ dhūpaṁ prāṇān
prakalpayet;*

*Tejastattvaṁ ca dīpārthaṁ naivedyaṁ syāt
sudhāmbudhiḥ.*

The heart should be offered as flower, the life-breaths as incense, the principle of fire as light, the ocean of nectar as food offerings.

अनाहतध्वनिर्घण्टा वायुतत्त्वं च चामरम् ।

सहस्रारं भवेच्छत्रं शब्दतत्त्वं च गीतकम् ॥

Anāhata-dhvanir-ghaṇṭā vāyutattvaṁ ca cāmaram;

Sahasrārāṁ bhavec-chatraṁ śabdatattvaṁ ca gītakam.

The following mantras depict the principle of unstruck perennial sound to be understood as the bell; that of the air as cāmara; and the actions of the sense organs as also the vagaries of the mind as dance.

नृत्यमिन्द्रियकर्माणि चाञ्चल्यं मनसस्तथा ।

सुमेखलां पद्ममालां पुष्पं नानाविधं तथा ॥

अमायाद्यैर्भावपुष्पैरर्चयेद्भावगोचरम् ।

अमायमनहङ्कारं अरागममदं तथा ॥

अमोहकमदम्भं च अद्वेषाक्षोभकौ तथा ।

अमात्सर्यमलोभं च दशपुष्पं विदुर्बुधाः ॥

Nṛtyam-indriya-karmāṇi cāñcalyaṁ manasastathā;

Sumekhalāṁ padmamālāṁ puṣpaṁ nānāvidhaṁ tathā.

Amāyādyair-bhāvapuṣpair-arcayed bhāvagocaram;

Amāyam-anahaṅkāraṁ arāgam-amadaṁ tathā.

Amohakam-adambhaṁ ca adveṣa-kṣobhakau tatha;

Amātsaryam-alobhaṁ ca daśa-puṣpaṁ vidurbudhāḥ.

I offer the tumult of the sense-organs, fickleness of the mind, and also lotus garland together with ten symbolic flowers viz., amāya etc.

Flowers representing different dispositions of mind should be offered to the deity to attain different spiritual moods. The absence of deceit, egotism, desire, haughtiness, delusion, vanity, hatred, excitement, jealousy and avarice—these are called the ten flowers.

अहिंसा परमं पुष्पं पुष्पमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।

दयापुष्पं क्षमापुष्पं ज्ञानपुष्पं च पञ्चमम् ॥

*Ahiṁsā paramaṁ puṣpaṁ puṣpaṁ-indriya-nigrahaḥ;
Dayā-puṣpaṁ kṣamā-puṣpaṁ jñāna-puṣpaṁ ca
pañcamam.*

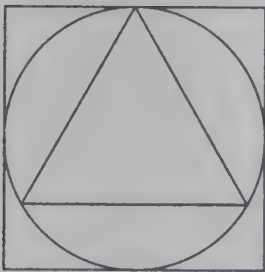
Non-violence is the supreme flower; control of the senses is another. Then there are the flowers of compassion, forgiveness and knowledge. These are five other flowers.

इति पञ्चदशैर्भावपुष्पैः सम्पूजयेच्छिवम् ।

Iti pañcadaśair-bhāvapuṣpaiḥ sampūjayet śivam.

Thus, Śiva is to be worshipped mentally by these fifteen flowers concretised by the right type of imagination.

45. Viśeṣa-arghya-sthāpana (Special arghya)



To the left of the *kosha* draw the following diagram with the right ring finger dipped in water.

Intelligence (*buddhi*) is conceived and mentally perceived as light. Light (*vahni*) is therefore the symbol of intelligence. Light illumines the gross objects of creation just as intelligence is the power of Consciousness (*caitanya*), which manifests everything in the universe including the physical light.

Physical light is in three forms: as the sun, moon and fire

- | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------------------------|
| i) Fire | = | light on earth |
| ii) Sun | } | lights in the sky or heaven |
| iii) Moon | | |

Fire and sun have both heat and light, but the moon is pure light without heat. These are *vahni-maṇḍala*, *arka-maṇḍala*, *sūrya-maṇḍala*, *soma-maṇḍala* and *candra-maṇḍala*—*maṇḍalas* in the ascending order of subtlity and importance that we are invoking in the *pīṭha* supported by the *ādhāra-śakti* in the *viśeṣa-arghya*, which supports the *viśeṣa-arghya-pātra* (conch), which in turn contains the *viśeṣa-arghya* in the form of water in which we invoke the presence of deity.

Purpose of *Viśeṣa-arghya*

The *Viśeṣa-arghya* symbology can be explained as follows:

The divine presence has to be invoked in every object used in worship so that the mind perceives no distinction between these objects and the deity worshipped with them. This has been done in a general way by consecrating the *sāmānya-arghya* and the sprinkling of all the puja articles with that consecrated water. Now the divine presence in the particular form of Sri Ramakrishna (in which we are worshipping and with which we are identifying all objects) is being invoked through the consecration of the *viśeṣa-arghya*.

(a) *Maṇḍala-pūjā*: Sprinkle some water from the *kosha* on the diagram. Worship this diagram with a flower touched with sandal paste, saying,

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे आधारशक्तये नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe ādhāraśaktaye namaḥ.

Utter ॐ . Wash the tripod stand and keep it on the diagram and worship the stand with flower touched with sandal paste, saying,

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे मं वह्निमण्डलाय दशकलात्मने नमः ।

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe maṁ vahnimaṇḍalāya daśakalātma-
ne namaḥ.*

Ādhāra-śakti

The first step in the consecration is the invocation of *ādhāra-śakti*. The real *ādhāra-śakti*, the real support and basis (substratum) of everything, is the Infinite and the Absolute itself. But in normal usage in practical life (*vyavahāra*), we see the earth as the basis of everything. The earth is thus the symbol of ultimate support. The earth itself appears to be supported by water because it is surrounded by it in an overwhelming measure. A little further reflection shows us that water itself is supported by energy (gravitational force). This is symbolized by the *maṇḍala* in the drawing in which the square, the circle and the triangle are symbols of the earth, water and fire (energy) respectively. In this mandala we invoke the presence of the *ādhāra-śakti*, the ultimate support, as a supporting power.

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे मं वह्निमण्डलाय दशकलात्मने नमः ।

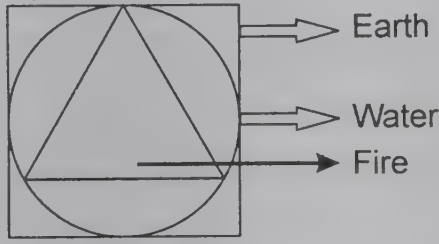
*Om ete gandhapuṣpe maṁ vahnimaṇḍalāya daśakalātma-
ne namaḥ.*

Vahni-maṇḍala

Next we place the washed support (tripod stand) of the conch on this *maṇḍala* and in that stand we invoke the *vahni-maṇḍala* energy perceived as fire. In this form (*vahni-maṇḍala*) the energy is perceived as both heat and light with a naturally greater emphasis on light. So this aspect is invoked in the

viśeṣa-arghya-pīṭha and worshipped. This *vahni-maṇḍala* is conceived of as made of ten parts (*daśa-kalātman*): धूम्रार्चि, ऊष्मा, ज्वलिनी, ज्वालिनी, विस्फुलिङ्गिनी, सुश्री, सुरूपा, कपिला, हव्यवहा, कव्यवहा *dhūmrārci, ūṣmā, jvalinī, jvālinī, viṣphulinginī, suśrī, surūpā, kapilā, havyavahā, kavyavahā* (*vide Ādiparva of Mahābhārata*).

Arka-maṇḍala



(b) *Śaṅkha-pūjā* : Uttering फट् place the conch on the tripod and worship it, saying,

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे अं अर्कमण्डलाय द्वादशकलात्मने नमः ।

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe am arkamaṇḍalāya
dvādaśa-kalātmane namaḥ.*

The next form in which energy is worshipped is solar energy. Here also both heat and light are present. But the emphasis is more on light than on heat. This aspect is invoked in the *viśeṣa-arghya-pātra*. After this invocation the container, the conch and the vessel which is to contain the *viśeṣa-arghya* become the symbol of solar energy, which is worshipped therein. This energy is conceived as composed of twelve parts. The sun in each one of the solar months being considered as one of the parts. So the twelve parts correspond to the twelve months. Hence the *arka-maṇḍala* is called *dvādaśa-kalātman*. तपिनी, तापिनी, धूम्रा, मरीची, ज्वालिनी, रुचिः, सुषुम्ना, भोगदा, विश्वबोधिनी, धरणी, क्षमा, प्रभा *tapinī, tāpinī, dhūmrā, marīcī, jvālinī, ruciḥ, suṣumnā, bhogadā, viśvabodhinī, dharaṇī, kṣamā, prabhā* (*vide 27th śloka in Kaulāvali*).

Repeating the *bīja* mantra ऐं , fill the conch with water and place the *arghya* on it.

(c) *Jala-pūjā (soma-maṇḍala)*

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे उं सोममण्डलाय षोडशकलात्मने नमः ।

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe uṁ somamaṇḍalāya
ṣoḍaśakalātmane namaḥ.*

Now fill the vessel with water, repeating ऐं or the *ishta* mantra five times. In this water we first invoke the presence of the *soma maṇḍala*, which represents the third kind of visible energy, which is pure illumination without heat. The cool moonlight is the symbol of this and it is considered as the highest of the three visible forms of energy. The moon, the source of this light, is composed of sixteen parts (*ṣoḍaśa-kalātman*). These sixteen parts are (i) the fifteen waxing and waning digits of the moon, seen during the bright and the dark fortnights; (ii) the sixteenth is the eternal digit of which the waxing and waning digits are only phases and which itself remains unchanged though invisible. And this sixteenth digit (*ṣoḍaśa-kalā*) represents the Absolute, the Lord Himself, unaffected by the changes of His apparent phases. The sixteen parts are named as follows: अमृता, मानदा, पूषा, पुष्टि, तुष्टि, रति, धृति, शशिनी, चन्द्रिका, कान्ति, ज्योत्स्ना, श्री, प्रीति, अङ्गदा, पूर्णा, पूर्णामृता *Amṛtā, mānadā, pūṣā, puṣṭi, tuṣṭi, rati, dhṛti, śaśinī, candrikā, kānti, jyotsnā, śrī, prīti, aṅgadā, pūrṇā, pūrṇāmṛtā* (vide 37th & 38th śloka in *Kaulāvali* and *Ullāsa*)

Invoke the waters from the solar regions, chanting and touching the water with *ankuśa-mudrā* and uttering the following mantra.

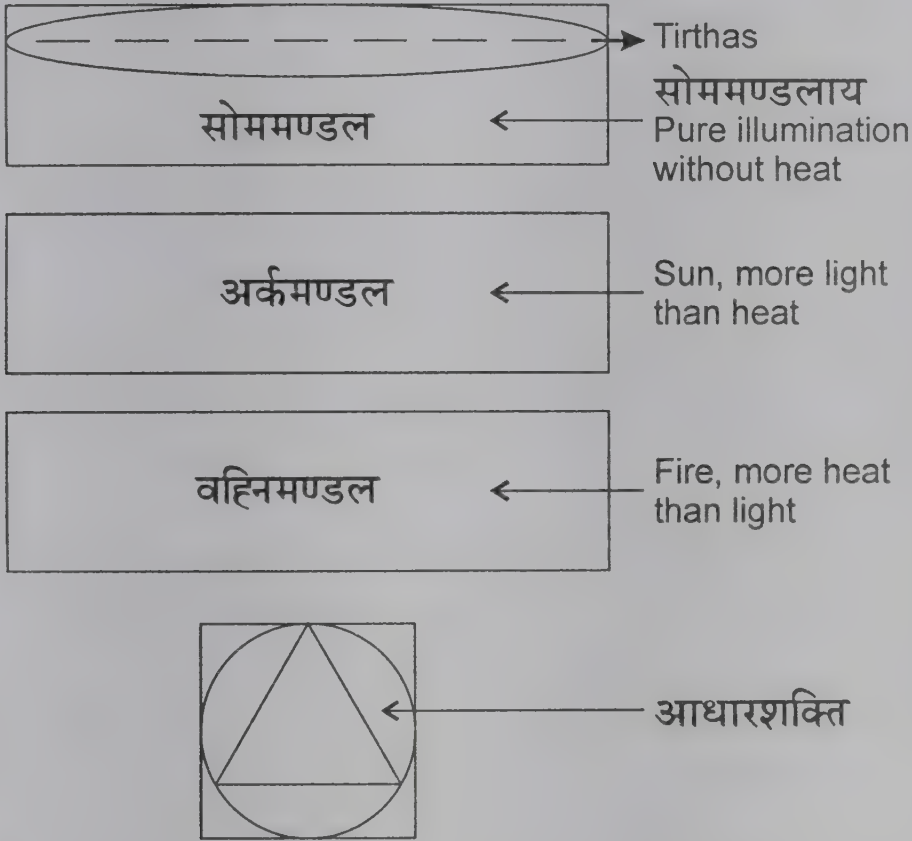
ॐ गङ्गे च यमुने चैव गोदावरि सरस्वति ।
नर्मदे सिन्धु कावेरि जलेऽस्मिन् सन्निधिं कुरु ॥

*Om gaṅge ca yamune caiva godāvari sarasvatī;
Narmade sindhu kaveri jale'smin sannidhiṁ kuru.*

(d) *Tīrtha-pūjā*: Worship the *arghya* water again with the mantra

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे तीर्थेभ्यो नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe tīrthebhyo namaḥ.



The sacred tirthas (*tīrtha* = ford, a place where a river can be easily crossed, the place that will help one to cross the river of *saṁsāra*, are invoked in this water to enhance the sense of sanctity, and into this we invoke the presence of the Lord. Before doing this, however, the six limbs or aspects of the body we imagine Him to be endowed with are now worshipped, each being worshipped as a separate *devatā*. The six *devatās* are *hṛdaya-devatā*, *śīro-devatā*, *śikhā-devatā*, *kavaca-devatā*, *netra-devatā* and *astra-devatā*. This is done by offering flowers touched with sandal paste in the *puṣpa-kunḍa* itself.

The Concept of *Viśeṣa-arghya*

Illustrated through a symbolic pictorial representation

The Supreme Lord
Ishvara, the Creator

Sri Ramakrishna
(conceived as the supreme Lord
of the Whole creation)

Tīrthas : Holy River waters
(like Ganga and Yamuna which
are most sacred)

E
P
I
T
O
M
E

O
F

T
H
E

U
N
I
V
E
R
S
E

Soma-maṇḍala

Moon (Cool and soothing light of
the lunar orb into which the Lord's
presence is invoked)

Arka-maṇḍala

Sun (represented by the conch—
the solar energy and light)

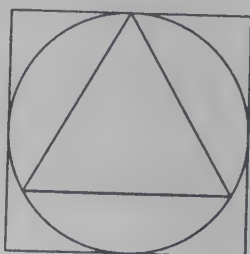
Vahni-maṇḍala

Fire (represented by the tripod
stand symbolizing the nourishing
energy principle on earth)

Earth (the land portion of the
globe)

Ādhāra-maṇḍala

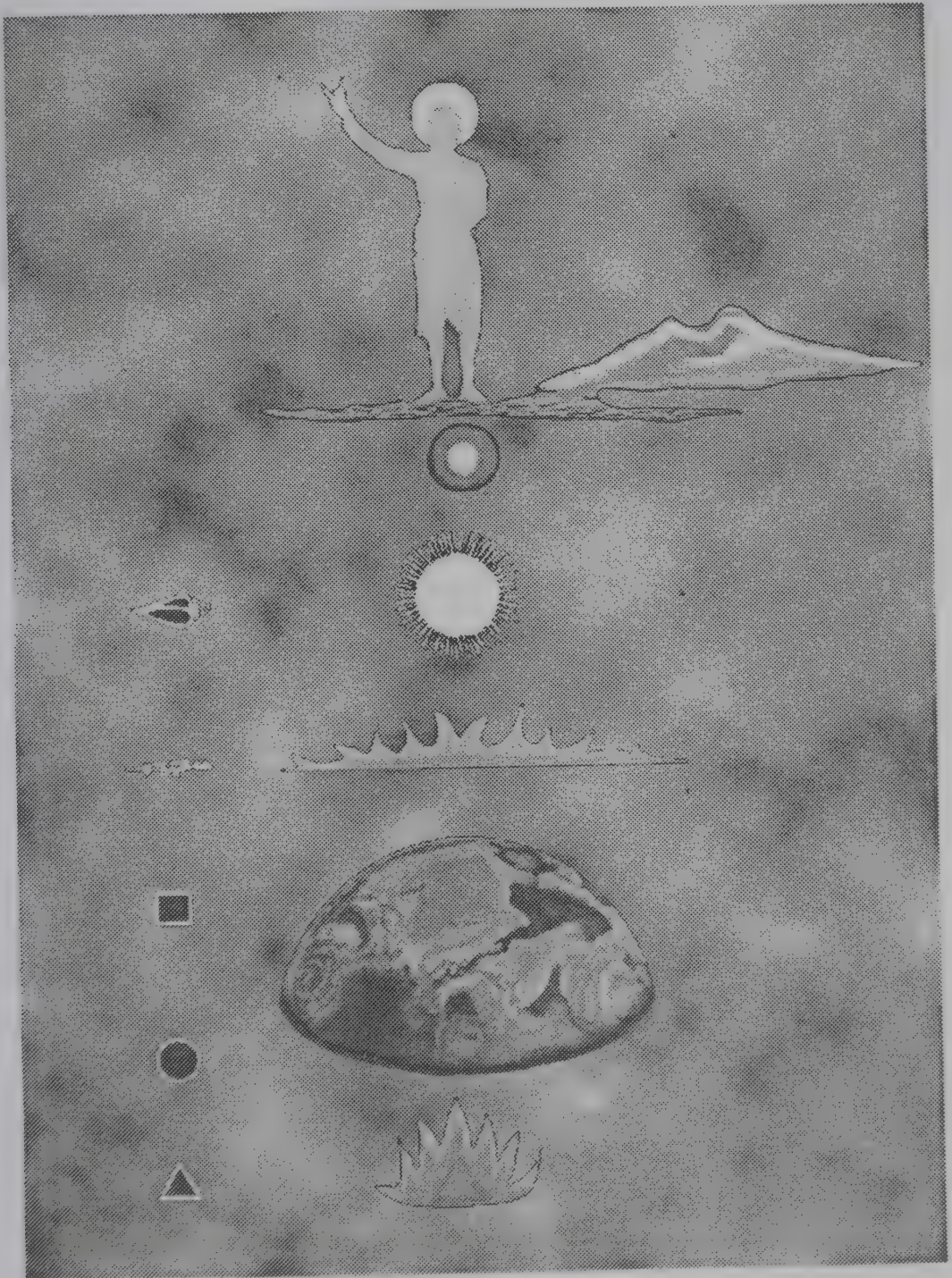
Water (represents ocean)



Fire (representing the supporting
energy principle, as the substratum
of the universe)

THE CONCEPT OF VIŚEṢĀRGHYA

Illustrated through symbolic pictorial representation



(e) *Viśeṣa-arghya-pūjā*: Then show *galinī-mudrā*, uttering the mantra वषट् . And worship the conch saying

ॐ ऐं एते गन्धपुष्पे श्रीरामकृष्णषडंगदेवताभ्यो नमः ।

Om aim ete gandhapuṣpe śrīrāmakṛṣṇa-ṣaḍaṅga-devatā-bhyo namaḥ.

Through the following *mudrās* invoke the presence of the deity in the *arghya* vessel as follows:

आवाहनी-मुद्रा	ॐ श्रीरामकृष्णदेव इहागच्छ इहागच्छ ।
संस्थापनी-मुद्रा	इह तिष्ठ इह तिष्ठ ।
सन्निधापनी-मुद्रा	इह सन्निधेहि इह सन्निधेहि ।
सन्निरोधनी-मुद्रा	इह सन्निरुध्यस्व इह सन्निरुध्यस्व ।
सम्मुखीकरणी-मुद्रा	इह सम्मुखो भव इह सम्मुखो भव ।
with folded hands	अत्राधिष्ठानं कुरु मम पूजां गृहाण ।

*Om śrīrāmakṛṣṇadeva ihāgaccha ihāgaccha,
iha tiṣṭha iha tiṣṭha,
iha sannidhehi iha sannidhehi,
iha sannirudhyasva iha sannirudhyasva,
iha sammukho bhava iha sammukho bhava,
atrādhiṣṭhānaṁ kuru mama pūjāṁ grhāṇa.*

The Lord is invoked through this mantra.

ॐ श्रीरामकृष्णदेव इहागच्छ O Lord Sri Ramakrishna, please come here; इह तिष्ठ Please sit here; इह सन्निधेहि let me feel your presence here; इह सन्निरुध्यस्व please continue to stay here; इह सम्मुखी भव please be here facing me; अत्राधिष्ठानं कुरु, मम पूजां गृहाण please take your seat here and accept my puja.

Now worship the deity invoked in the conch with a flower touched with sandal paste, saying

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om aiṁ sarvadevadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Then covering the *arghya* with *matsya-mudrā*, repeat ten times the *bīja-mantra* ऐं . Then clap at the left palm by means of the middle and fore fingers of the right hand three times at three levels, each slightly higher than the other, uttering the mantra फट् . Now above the *viśeṣa-arghya* show *dhenu-mudrā*, *yoni-mudrā* and *paramī karaṇa mudrā*.

Now mix some water from the *viśeṣa-arghya* to the *kosha* using the *kushi*. Then while uttering the *mūla-mantra* sprinkle this water all over the articles of worship as well on your head.

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

*Om aiṁ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāyanamaḥ.*

Worship Bāṇeśvara Śiva with the following mantras:

ॐ ह्रीं एते गन्धपुष्पे पीठदेवताभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ ह्रीं एते गन्धपुष्पे पीठशक्तिभ्यो नमः ।

Om hrīm ete gandhapuṣpe pīṭhadevatābhyo namaḥ.

Om hrīm ete gandhapuṣpe pīṭhaśaktibhyo namaḥ.

Now we try to feel the presence of the deity in the *viśeṣa-arghya* by repeating the mantra and showing the *matsya-mudrā*. The atmosphere is purified by clapping the hands and uttering फट् three times. Further, by the *dhenu-mudrā* the Lord's presence is felt to immortalize everything (*amṛtī-karaṇa*). By showing the *yoni-mudrā* the mind is reminded of the fact that God is the source (*viśva-yoni*) of everything including the worshipper. *Paramī karaṇa mudrā* implies that He is the supreme and there is nothing higher than Him. This completes

the process of invocation.

The sprinkling of the water on the worshipper and all the objects used in the worship is to intensify the feeling of the identity of everything with the Lord in the particular form of Ramakrishna.

46. *Kara-nyāsa* (Consecration of the Hands)

ऐं अङ्गुष्ठाभ्यां नमः ।

रां तर्जनीभ्यां स्वाहा ।

मं मध्यमाभ्यां वषट् ।

कूं अनामिकाभ्यां हूं ।

ष्णं कनिष्ठिकाभ्यां वौषट् ।

ऐं रामकृष्णः करतलपृष्ठाभ्यां अस्त्राय फट् ।

Aim aṅguṣṭhābhyāṁ namaḥ.

Rām tarjanībhyāṁ svāha.

Maṁ madhyamābhyāṁ vaṣaṭ.

Kṛṁ anāmikābhyāṁ hūṁ.

Ṣṇaṁ kaniṣṭhābhyāṁ vauṣaṭ.

Aim rāmakṛṣṇaḥ karatalapṛṣṭābhyāṁ astrāya phaṭ.

47. *Aṅga-nyāsa* (Consecration of the Limbs)

ऐं हृदयाय नमः ।

रां शिरसे स्वाहा ।

मं शिखायै वषट् ।

कूं कवचाय हूं ।

ष्णं नेत्राभ्यां वौषट् ।

ऐं रामकृष्णः करतलपृष्ठाभ्यां अस्त्राय फट् ।

Aim hrdayāya namaḥ.

Rām śirase svāhā.

Maṁ śikhāyai vaṣaṭ.

Kṛm kavacāya hūm.

Ṣṇaṁ netrābhyām vausaṭ.

Aim rāmakṛṣṇaḥ karatala-prṣṭhābhyām astrāya phaṭ.

48. *Punar-dhyāna* (Again meditation)

Take a flower smeared with sandal paste in *kūrma-mudrā* and chant the following dhyana verse.

ॐ हृदयकमलमध्ये राजितं निर्विकल्पं

Om hr̥daya-kamala-madhye-rājitaṁ nirvikalpaṁ

Hold the flower near the chest with the same *mudrā*, think of the effulgent form of the deity and place the flower on the yantra or on the *Bāṇeśvara Śiva* in front.

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om aim sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

49. *Ṣodaśopacāra-pūjā* (Worship with the sixteen Items)

Before offering any object in worship, the object itself is sanctified and worshipped. This is to remind the worshipper that the object is also the Lord in that form and not different from Him.

This is done in three steps.

1. The object itself is worshipped
2. Vishnu, the all-pervading Principle, is being worshipped in the object as identical with it and as the presiding deity (*Adhipataye devāya namaḥ*)
3. Sri Ramakrishna is worshipped as identical with the object and as the recipient of the objects (*sampradānāya*)

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om aim sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

(a) *Āsana*: Take a small seat made of silver or cloth and place it over a stand. Sprinkle water on it three times from the *kosha* uttering वं एतस्मै रजतासनाय नमः. Now worship it with flowers smeared with sandal paste, chanting

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे रजतासनाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣṣe rajatāsanāya namaḥ.

Om ete gandhapuṣṣe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave namaḥ.

Om ete gandhapuṣṣe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva-devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Chant with folded hands:

ॐ सर्वभूतान्तरस्थाय सर्वभूतान्तरात्मने ।

कल्पयाम्युपवेशार्थमासनं ते नमो नमः ॥

Om sarva-bhūtāntarasthāya sarva-bhūtāntarātmane;

Kalpayāmy-upaveśārtham-āsanam te namo namaḥ.

सर्वभूतान्तरस्थाय to you who is within every creature; सर्वभूतान्तरात्मने who is the innermost essence of every creature; उपवेशार्थम् for sitting; आसनम् a seat; कल्पयामि I am offering (imagining); ते नमो नमः salutations to you;

Sprinkle water from the *kosha* and offer the *āsana* to the deity by chanting the following mantra.

ॐ ऐं इदं रजतासनं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः।

Om aim idam rajatāsanam sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Touching the right hand with the left hand, lift the *āsana*

with the right thumb and index finger. Place the *āsana* to the left side of the deity thinking that the deity has accepted it.

(b) *Svāgatam* (welcome the deity with folded hands)

ॐ यस्य दर्शनमिच्छन्ति देवाः स्वाभीष्टसिद्धये ।

तस्मै ते परमेशान स्वागतं स्वागतं प्रभो ॥

*Om yasya darśanam-icchanti devāḥ svābhīṣṭa-siddhaye;
tasmai te parameśāna svāgatam svāgatam prabho.*

देवाः the deities or gods; स्वाभीष्टसिद्धये for attaining all these desires; इच्छन्ति wish to have; यस्य दर्शनम् whose vision; तस्मै ते to you who are such; परमेशान O supreme ruler; प्रभो O Lord; स्वागतं स्वागतम् welcome, welcome.

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्ण देव स्वागतं
सुस्वागतं ते ।

*Om aiṁ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇa deva
svāgatam susvāgatam te.*

(c) *Pādyam* (water for washing the feet) : Take some water in the *kushi*, add *agaru*, sandal, *aparājita* or any other flower to it and place it on the stand. Sprinkle water on it three times saying वं एतस्मै पाद्याय नमः. Then worship this water with flowers touched with sandal paste with the following mantras.

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे पाद्याय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe pādyaaya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva-
devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Chant with folded hands

ॐ यद्भक्तिलेशसम्पर्कात्परमानन्दसम्लवः ।

तस्मै ते परमेशान पाद्यं शुद्धाय कल्पये ॥

*Om yad-bhaktileśa-samparkāt-paramānanda-samplavaḥ;
Tasmai te parameśāna pādyam śuddhāya kalpaye.*

यद्भक्तिलेशसम्पर्कात् By coming in contact with whose devotion; परमानन्दसम्लवः we are immersed in a flood of supreme Bliss; तस्मै ते to you who are such; परमेशान O supreme ruler; शुद्धाय to the pure one; पाद्यम् water for washing the feet; कल्पये I offer.

Touching the right hand with the left hand, lift the *kushi* containing water and offer it to the deity, saying ॐ ऐं एतत् पाद्यं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः, and think that you are washing the deity's feet.

(d) *Arghya*: Take *viśeṣa-arghya* in the hands and chant the following mantra.

ॐ दूर्वाक्षतसमायुक्तं बिल्वपत्रं तथा परम् ।

शोभनं शङ्खपात्रस्थं गृहाणार्घ्यं महेश्वर ॥

*Om dūrvākṣata-samāyuktam bilvapatraṁ tathā param;
śobhanam śaṅkhapātrastham grhāṇārghyam maheśvara.*

महेश्वर O great Lord; बिल्वपत्रम् This bilva leaf; दूर्वाक्षतसमायुक्तम् along with grass and grains of unbroken rice; तथा परम् and other articles; शोभनम् which are all auspicious; शङ्खपात्रस्थम् placed in this conch vessel; अर्घ्यम् *arghya*; गृहाण please accept.

Uttering the mantra pour some water from the conch on the deity.

ॐ ऐं एषोऽर्घ्यः सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय स्वाहा ।

Om aiṁ eṣorghyaḥ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya śrī-rāmakṛṣṇāya svaha.

Get up from your seat and touch the head of the deity with the *arghya* and place it in front of the deity. Then prostrate full length.

(e) *Ācamanīyam*: Take some water from the *sāmānya-arghya* in the *kushi* and worship it with flowers by keeping it on the metal plate. Sprinkle water three times, uttering

वं एतस्मै आचमनीयोदकाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai ācamanīyodakāya namaḥ.

Then worship it with flowers touched with sandal paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे आचमनीयोदकाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe ācamanīyodakāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etadadhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva-
devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Then chant with folded hands the following mantra.

ॐ मन्दाकिन्यास्तु यद्वारि सर्वपापहरं शुभम् ।

गृहाणाचमनीयं त्वं मया भक्त्या निवेदितम् ॥

Om mandākinyāstu yadvāri sarvapāpaharaṁ śubham;

Gṛhāṇācamanīyaṁ tvaṁ mayā bhaktyā niveditaṁ.

Thereafter pour the water over the *yantra* in front by chanting the following mantra, imagining that you are offering water to the deity for washing the mouth.

ॐ ऐं इदम् आचमनीयोदकं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय स्वधा ।

*Om aim idam ācamanīyodakam sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya svadhā.*

(f) **Madhuparka:** In a small cup made of silver or bell metal, add pure honey to fill one half. Then add small quantities of ghee, curd, sugar and Ganga water, to fill the other half. This mixture is known as *madhuparka*.

Take *madhuparka* in a small cup and worship it by placing it on the metal plate. Sprinkle water three times uttering

वं एतस्मै मधुपर्काय नमः ।

Vam etasmai madhuparkāya namaḥ.

Then worship with flowers touched with sandal paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे मधुपर्काय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe madhuparkāya namaḥ.

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya

śrīviṣṇave namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva-
devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Then chant the following mantras with folded hands:

ॐ सर्वकल्मषनाशाय परिपूर्णसुधात्मकम् ।

मधुपर्कमिमं देव कल्पयामि प्रसीद मे ॥

*Om sarva-kalmaṣa-nāśāya paripūrṇa-sudhātmakam;
Madhuparkam-imam deva kalpayāmi prasīda me.*

Then again sprinkle water over it and offer it to the deity, imagining that the deity is graciously accepting the offering.

ॐ ऐं एष मधुपर्कः सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय
स्वधा ।

*Om aiṁ eṣa madhuparkaḥ sarvadevadevī- svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya svadhā.*

(g) *Punar-ācamanīyam*: Take some water from the *kosha* into the *kushi* and place it over the metal plate on the stand. Now worship it with flowers touched with sandal paste. Sprinkle water three times uttering

वं एतस्मै पुनराचमनीयोदकाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai punar-ācamanīyodakāya namaḥ.

Then worship it with flowers touched with sandal paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे पुनराचमनीयोदकाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣṭe punar-ācamanīyodakāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣṭe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣṭe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva- devī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Then chant the following mantras with folded hands:

ॐ उच्छिष्टमप्यशुचिर्वा यस्य स्मरणमात्रतः ।

शुद्धिमाप्नोति तस्मै ते पुनराचमनीयकम् ॥

*Om ucchiṣṭamapy-aśucirvā yasya smaraṇa-mātrataḥ;
Śuddhim-āpnoti tasmai te punar-ācamanīyakam.*

I offer ācamanīya to you, by the remembrance of which all impurities get transformed into purity.

Thereafter sprinkle water again and offer it to the deity.

ॐ ऐं इदं पुनराचमनीयोदकं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय स्वधा ।

Om aim idam punar-ācamanīyodakam sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya svadhā.

(h) **Gandha-tailam** (Scented oil): Take a small quantity of scented oil in the *kushi* and sprinkle water on it three times, saying

वं एतस्मै गन्धतैलाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai gandhatailāya namaḥ.

Then worship the oil in the cup with flowers touched with sandal paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे गन्धतैलाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe gandhatailāya namaḥ.

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya

śrīviṣṇave namaḥ.

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Now chant the following mantra with folded hands.

ॐ स्नेहं गृहाण स्नेहेन लोकानां हितकारक ।

सर्वलोकेषु शुद्धस्त्वम् ददामि स्नेहमुत्तमम् ॥

Om snehaṁ grhāṇa snehena lokānām hitakāraka;

Sarvalokeṣu śuddhatvam dadāmi snehamuttamam.

लोकानां हितकारक O you (God) who are ever doing good to all the worlds; स्नेहं गृहाण accept this oil. स्नेहेन with good will; त्वम् you; सर्वलोकेषु शुद्धः you are the purest in all the worlds; स्नेहमुत्तमम् excellent oil; ददामि I am offering.

Now offer the scented oil to the deity by pouring it on the Shivalinga, uttering the mantra

ॐ ऐं इदं गन्धतैलं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय निवेदयामि ।

*Om aim idam gandhatailam sarvadevadevīsvarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya nivedayāmi.*

(i) **Snānīyam (Water for bathing)** : Take pure water mixed with scent, sandal paste, flowers and tulasi in the *kushi* and sprinkle water on it, saying

वं एतस्मै स्नानीयोदकाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai snānīyodakāya namaḥ.

Then worship this water with flowers touched with sandal paste, repeating the following mantras

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे स्नानीयोदकाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe snānīyodakāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva
devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Chant the following mantra with folded hands:

ॐ इदं सुशीतलं वारि स्वच्छं शुद्धं मनोहरम् ।

स्नानार्थं ते मया भक्त्या कल्पितं प्रतिगृह्यताम् ॥

*Om idam suśītaṁ vāri svacchaṁ manoharam;
Snānārthaṁ te mayā bhaktyā kalpitaṁ pratigrhyatām.*

इदम् This; स्वच्छम् clear; शुद्धम् pure; मनोहरम् attractive; सुशीतलम् cool; वारि : water; स्नानार्थम् for your bath; मया भक्त्या कल्पितम् offered by me with devotion; प्रतिगृह्यताम् kindly accept.

Now sprinkle some water from *sāmānya-arghya* on it, uttering

ॐ ऐं इदं स्नानीयोदकं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय निवेदयामि ।

*Om aim idam snānīyodakaṁ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya nivedayāmi.*

Thereafter, ringing the bell, pour the water on the *yantra*, imagining that you are bathing the deity. While doing this, chant the following Vedic mantras:

ॐ सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ।

स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वा अत्यतिष्ठद्दशाङ्गुलम् ॥

*Om sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt.
Sa bhūmiṁ viśvato vṛtvā atyatiṣṭhaddaśāṅgulam.*

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः The person (the Spirit) has a thousand heads; सहस्राक्षः a thousand eyes; सहस्रपात् a thousand feet; सभूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वा He surrounded the earth all over; अत्यतिष्ठद्दशाङ्गुलम् and exceeded it by tens (that is, beyond our understanding).

ॐ अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम् ।

होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥

*Om agnimīle purohitaṁ yajñasya devamṛtvijam;
hotāraṁ ratnadhātamaṁ.*

अग्निमीळे I praise fire; पुरोहितम् the fire in the east, the chief

priest who secures for the performer the result of the sacrifice; यज्ञस्य देवम् the visible shining deity of the sacrifice; होतारम् (ऋत्विजम्) the invoking priest in the sacrifice (also the priest of the gods); रत्नधातमम् the best bestower of the jewel like the results of the sacrifice. This is the first mantra of the *Rig Veda*.

ॐ इषेत्वोर्जेत्वा वायवस्थो पायवस्थ देवो वः सविता
प्रार्पयतु श्रेष्ठतमाय कर्मणे ।

*Om iṣetvorjetvā vāyavastho pāyavastha devo vaḥ savitā
Prārpayatu śreṣṭhatamāya karmaṇe.*

त्वा I invoke you (Lord); इषे for food; ऊर्जे and strength; वायवस्थः you are in the winds; देवः सविता may the God; प्रार्पयतु impel or inspire; वः me; श्रेष्ठतमाय कर्मणे to the most excellent offering.

This is the first mantra of the *Yajur Veda*.

ॐ अग्न आयाहि वीतये गृणानो हव्यदातये ।

निहोता सत्सि बर्हिषि ॥

*Om agna āyāhi vītaye gṛṇāno havyadātaye;
nihotā satsi barhiṣi.*

अग्न O fire; आयाहि please come; वीतये to consume the offering; हव्यदातये and to convey the offering to the gods; गृणानः being praised by me; सत्सि please sit; बर्हिषि on the dharba; निहोता as the invoking priest (*hotā*). This is the first mantra of the *Sama Veda*.

ॐ शन्नो देवीरभिष्टय आपो भवन्तु पीतये ।

शं योरभिस्रवन्तु नः ॥

*Om śanno devīrabhiṣṭaya āpo bhavantu pītaye;
Śaṁ yorabhisravantu naḥ.*

देवी- आपः May the deity of the water; शन्नो confer happiness

on us by removing our sins; अभिष्टय May they give us the results of our sacrifices; पीतये भवन्तु May they become fit for drinking; शं नः May they confer joy on us by removing our disease; यो अभि May they ward off the other diseases; स्रवन्तु नः May they purify us by showering on us.

(j) **Vastram (cloth):** Take a cloth and place it over the metal plate and sprinkle water three times on it, uttering वं एतस्मै वस्त्राय नमः and worship the cloth with flowers touched with sandal paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे वस्त्राय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe vastrāya namaḥ.

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave namaḥ.

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva-devīśvarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Then chant the following mantras with folded hands:

ॐ मायाचित्रपटाच्छन्ननिजगुह्योरुतेजसे ।

निरावरणविज्ञाय वासस्ते कल्पयाम्यहम् ॥

Om māyā-citrapatācchanna-nijaguhyorūtejase;

Nirāvaraṇa vijñāya vāsaste kalpayāmyaham.

मायाचित्रपटाच्छन्ननिजगुह्योरुतेजसे Your great secret spiritual brilliance is covered by the veil of maya; निरावरणविज्ञाय you are pure knowledge without any covering; ते to you; अहम् I; वासः कल्पयामि offer this cloth;

Thereafter sprinkling some water on it offer it to the deity, placing it to the left of the deity.

ॐ ऐं इदं वस्त्रम् सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय निवेदयामि ।

*Om aim idam vastram sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya nivedayāmi.*

(k) **Uttarīya (Upper cloth):** Place the upper cloth on the metal plate. Sprinkle water on it three times uttering

वं एतस्मै उत्तरीयाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai uttarīyāya namaḥ.

and worship it with the flowers touched with sandal paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे उत्तरीयाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe uttarīyāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva- devī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Then chant the following mantras with folded hands:

ॐ यमाश्रित्य महामाया जगत्सम्मोहिनी सदा ।

तस्मै ते परमेशाय कल्पयाम्युत्तरीयकम् ॥

Om yamāśritya mahāmāyā jagatsammohinī sadā;

Tasmai te parameśāya kalpayāmyuttarīyakam.

यमाश्रित्य based on whom; महामाया the great maya; जगत्सम्मोहिनी deludes the whole world; सदा always; तस्मै ते परमेशाय to you the great Lord; उत्तरीयकम् the upper cloth; कल्पयामि I offer.

Then offer it to the deity by sprinkling some water on it, saying

ॐ ऐं इदं उत्तरीयं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय निवेदयामि ।

*Om aim idam uttarīyaṁ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya nivedayāmi.*

(I) **Ābharanam (Ornaments):** Take a silver or golden ring, place it on the metal plate, and sprinkle water on it three times, saying

वं एतस्मै रजताभरणाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai rajatābharanāya namaḥ.

and worship it with the flowers touched with sandal paste saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे रजताभरणाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe rajatābharanāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya sriviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva-
devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Then worship it with the flowers touched with sandal paste. Then chant the following mantras with folded hands.

ॐ स्वभावसुन्दराङ्गाय नानाशक्त्याश्रयाय ते ।

रजतं भूषणं तुभ्यं कल्पयामि प्रसीद मे ॥

*Om svabhāva-sundarāṅgāya nānā-śaktyāśrayāya te;
Rajataṁ bhūṣaṇaṁ tubhyaṁ kalpayāmi prasīda me.*

ते to you; स्वभावसुन्दराङ्गाय whose body is naturally beautiful;

नानाशक्त्याश्रयाय the abode of various powers; रजतं भूषणम् silver or gold ornament; तुभ्यम् to you; प्रसीद please; मे I; कल्पयामि offer.

Then offer it to the deity and keeping it to its left .

ॐ ऐं इदं रजताभरणं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय निवेदयामि ।

*Om aim idam rajatābharanaṁ sarva-devadevī- svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya nivedayāmi.*

(m) **Gandha (scent)** : Take sandal paste along with scent and other fragrant substances in a small cup or in a vilva leaf, place it on the metal plate and sprinkle water on it three times uttering

वं एतस्मै गन्धाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai gandhāya namaḥ.

Worship it with flowers and sandal paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे गन्धाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe gandhāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etatsampradānāya sarva-devadevī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

And worship it with flowers touched with sandal paste. Then chant the following mantras with folded hands:

ॐ शरीरं ते न जानामि चेष्टां नैव च नैव च ।

मया निवेदितान् गन्धान् प्रतिगृह्य विलिप्यताम् ॥

*Om śarīraṁ te na jñāmi ceṣṭāṁ naiva ca naiva ca;
Mayā niveditān gandhān pratigrhya vilipyatām.*

न जानामि I do not know; शरीरं ते your body; चेष्टाम् your activity;
नैव च नैव च I do not know at all; गन्धान् scents; मया निवेदितान् offered
by me; प्रतिगृह्य having accepted; विलिप्यताम् and smear them on
your body.

Thereafter, offer the sandal paste to the deity, by smearing
it over the Shivalinga or *yantra* in front.

ॐ ऐं एष गन्धः सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

*Om aiṁ eṣa gandhaḥ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

(n) *Puṣpa* (flower): Take a variety of fresh fragrant
flowers, smear them with sandal paste and keep them over
the metal plate. Sprinkle water three times uttering

वं एतेभ्यो पुष्पेभ्यो नमः ।

Vam etebhyo puṣpebhyo namaḥ.

Worship the flowers on the plate with flowers and sandal
paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतेभ्यः पुष्पेभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etebhyaḥ puṣpebhyo namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etatsampradānāya sarva-devadevī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Then chant the following mantras:

ॐ तुरीयवनसम्पन्नं नानागुणमनोहरम् ।

आनन्दसौरभं पुष्पं गृह्यतामिदमुत्तमम् ॥

*Om turīya-vana-sampannam nānā-guṇa-manoharam;
Ānanda-saurabham puṣpaṁ grhyatām-idam-uttamam.*

इदमुत्तमम् पुष्पम् These excellent flowers; तुरीयवनसम्पन्नम् collected from various forests; नानागुणमनोहरम् attractive because of their many qualities; आनन्दसौरभम् and having joyful fragrance; गृह्यताम् kindly accept;

Thereafter offer them to the deity.

ॐ ऐं एतानि सचन्दनपुष्पाणि सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय वौषट् ।

*Om aim etāni sacandana-puṣpāṇi sarva-devadevī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya vauṣaṭ.*

(o) **Bilva-patram (Bilva leaf)** : Take a few wet fresh vilva leaves touched with sandal paste and place them on the metal plate. Sprinkle water on them three times, uttering

वं एतेभ्यो बिल्वपत्रेभ्यो नमः।

Vam etebhyo bilvapatrebhyo namaḥ.

Then worship these leaves with flowers and sandal paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे बिल्वपत्रेभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe bilvapatrebhyo namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva-devī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Then chant the following mantras with folded hands.

ॐ तुरीयवनसंपन्नानागुणमनोहरम् ।

आनन्दसौरभं पुष्पं गृह्यतामिदमुत्तमम् ॥

Om turīyavana-sampannāṇi nānāguṇa-manoharam;

Ānanda-saurabham puṣpaṁ grhyatām-idam-uttamam.

Now offer the bilva leaves to the deity:

ॐ ऐं एतानि सचन्दनबिल्वपत्राणि सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय वौषट् ।

*Om aiṁ etāni sacandana-bilvapatrāṇi sarva-devadevī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

(p) *Tulasī-patram (Tulasī leaf)* : Take a few wet, fresh *tulasī* leaves, touch them with white sandal paste, place them on the metal plate and worship them with flowers touched with sandal paste, uttering the following mantras.

ॐ नमस्ते बहुरूपाय विष्णवे परमात्मने स्वाहा ।

ॐ ऐं इदं सचन्दनतुलसीपत्रं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om namaste bahurūpāya viṣṇave paramātmāne svāha.

*Om aiṁ idam sacandana-tulasīpatram sarva-devadevī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Offer them to the deity.

(q) *Dhūpa (Incense)* : Placing lighted incense sticks on the metal plate, sprinkle water on them three times, uttering

वं एतस्मै धूपाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai dhūpāya namaḥ.

Worship them with flowers and sandal paste, saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे धूपाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe dhūpāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya
śrīviṣṇave namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etatsampradānāya sarvadeva-
devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Then chant the following mantras with folded hands:

ॐ वनस्पतिरसो दिव्यो गन्धाढ्यः सुमनोहरः ।

आग्नेयः सर्वदेवानां धूपोऽयं प्रतिगृह्यताम् ॥

*Om vanaspatiraso divyo gandhāḍhyaḥ sumanoharaḥ;
āghreyaḥ sarvadevānāṁ dhūpo'yaṁ pratigrhyatām.*

धूपोऽयम् This incense; वनस्पतिरसो which is produced from herbs;
दिव्यो celestial; गन्धाढ्यः having a rich perfume; सुमनोहरः most
attractive; सर्वदेवानां आग्नेयः fit to be enjoyed (smelt) by all the
gods. प्रतिगृह्यताम् please accept.

Then offer it to the deity by waving the incense sticks up
to the nose of the deity, uttering the following mantra:

ॐ ऐं एष धूपः सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

*Om aiṁ eṣa dhūpaḥ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Now ringing the bell with the left hand, wave the incense
sticks with the thumb pressed near the middle of middle finger
and ring finger of the right hand; along with this chant the
Gayatri mantra of the deity,

ॐ रामकृष्णाय विद्महे गदाधराय धीमहि तन्नो देवः

प्रचोदयात् ॐ ।

Om rāmakṛṣṇāya vidhmahe gadādhārāya dhīmahi tanno devaḥ pracodayāt om.

(r) **Dīpa (Light)** : Placing lighted lamp sticks on the metal plate, sprinkle water on them three times, uttering
वं एतस्मै दीपाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai dīpāya namaḥ.

Worship them with flowers and sandal paste saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे दीपाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe dīpāya namaḥ.

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave namaḥ.

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva-devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Then chant the following mantras with folded hands.

ॐ सुप्रकाशो महादीपः सर्वतस्तिमिरापहः ।

सबाह्याभ्यन्तरज्योतिर्दीपोऽयं प्रतिगृह्यताम् ॥

Om suprakāśo mahādīpaḥ sarvatas-timirāpahaḥ;

Sabāhyābhyantara-jyotir-dīpo'yaṁ pratigrhyatām.

प्रतिगृह्यताम् kindly accept; दीपोऽयम् this light; सुप्रकाशो महादीपः a big flame of great brilliance; सर्वतस्तिमिरापहः which destroys darkness all round; सबाह्याभ्यन्तरज्योतिः which illumines both inside and outside.

Then offer it to the deity by waving the lights up to the eyes of the deity, ringing the bell and chanting the Gayatri mantra of the deity.

ॐ ऐं एष दीपः सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om aiṁ eṣa dīpaḥ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāma-kṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

(s) *Naivedyam* (Food offering) : Sprinkle water three times on the *naivedya* and say

वं एतस्मै सोपकरणनैवेद्याय नमः ।

Vam etasmai sopakaraṇa naivedyāya namaḥ.

Sprinkle water again saying फट् . The food is made pure by this mantra. Show *avagunṭhana-mudrā* to the deity saying हूं . By this *mudra* and mantra remove the veil covering the food. Protect it by showing *cakra-mudrā*. Perhaps this is meant for driving away evil from the vicinity and for the protection of the offering. Dry up all defects and impurities by uttering यं ; and burn them by uttering रं . Show *dhenu-mudrā* uttering वं and imagine that the offering has become nectarine.

यं – दोषशोषणे (evil is dried up); रं – दोषदहने : hostile forces are burnt to ashes; and वं – अमृतकरणे – nectarising: धेनुमुद्रा : offering becomes nectar;

Covering the food with *matsya-mudrā* mentally repeat the *mūla-mantra* ten times

ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om aiṁ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Now join the right thumb and ring finger together and sprinkle water, uttering

ॐ ऐं इदं सोपकरणनैवेद्यम् सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय निवेदयामि ।

Om eṁ idaṁ sopakaraṇa-naivedyaṁ sarvadeva-devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya nivedayāmi.

Take water in the *kushi* and offer it at the vessel in front, saying

ॐ अमृतोपस्तरणमसि स्वाहा ।

Om amṛtopastaranamasi svāhā.

O nectar, you are the receptacle on which the food is being placed. Now chant the following mantra with folded hands:

ॐ नैवेद्यं विविधं देव शर्करादिविनिर्मितम् ।

मया निवेदितं भक्त्या गृहाण परमेश्वर ॥

*Om naivedyam vividham deva śarkarādi-vinirmitam;
Mayā niveditam bhaktyā grhāṇa parameśvara.*

O Supreme Lord, please accept this food that I am offering with devotion and which is of various kinds, made of sugar and other delicious things. Then show *grāsa-mudrā* with the left hand and *prāṇādi-pañca-mudrā* with the right. Utter

प्राणाय स्वाहा— (अंगुष्ठ अनामिका कनिष्ठिका)

अपानाय स्वाहा— (अंगुष्ठ तर्जनी मध्यमा)

व्यानाय स्वाहा— (मध्यमा अनामिका अंगुष्ठ)

उदानाय स्वाहा— (अंगुष्ठ तर्जनी मध्यमा अनामिका)

समानाय स्वाहा— With all fingers

prāṇāya svāhā — aṅguṣṭha anāmikā kaniṣṭha

apānāya svāhā — aṅguṣṭha tarjanī madhyamā

vyānāya svāhā — madhyamā anāmikā aṅguṣṭha

udānāya svāhā — aṅguṣṭha tarjanī madhyamā

anāmikā

samānāya svāhā.

These are the five manifestations of vital energy, or the breath of life, to which the food is offered by different mudras.

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्महविः ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।

ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥

*Brahmārpanam brahma haviḥ brahmāgnau
brahmaṇā hutam;*

Brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma-karma-samādhinā.

Now perform japa as much as possible. During this time think that the deity is graciously accepting the offered food. Then take water in the *kushi* and offer it at the vessel, saying

ॐ अमृतापिधानमसि स्वाहा ।

Om amṛtāpidhānam-asi svāhā.

O nectar, you are the lid covering the food.

(t) *Pānīyam* (**Drinking water**) : Place a glass of pure drinking water in front of the deity and sprinkle water on it three times, uttering

वं एतस्मै पानार्थोदकाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai pānārthodakāya namaḥ.

Worship the water with flowers and sandal paste, saying,

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे पानार्थोदकाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe pānārthodakāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etatsampradānāya sarva-deva- devī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Then chant the following mantras with folded hands.

ॐ समस्तदेवदेवेश सर्वतृप्तिकरं परम् ।

अखण्डानन्दसंपूर्णं गृहाण जलमुत्तमम् ॥

*Om samasta-devadeveśa sarva-tr̥ptikaram param;
akhaṇḍānanda-sampūrṇam gr̥hāṇa jalam-uttamam.*

‘O Lord of all gods, accept this excellent water, which is most satisfying and full of supreme Bliss.’

Offer the water to the deity by sprinkling water of the *sāmānya-arghya* on it, saying

ॐ ऐं इदं पानार्थोदकं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय निवेदयामि ।

*Om aim idam pānārthodakam sarva-devadevī- svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya nivedayāmi.*

(u) *Punar-ācamanīyam* (Again water for rinsing the mouth) : Take some water from the *kosha* into the *kushi* and place it on the metal plate, on the stand. Sprinkle water three times uttering

वं एतस्मै पुनराचमनीयोदकाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai punar-ācamanīyodakāya namaḥ.

Then worship with flowers touched with sandal paste saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे पुनराचमनीयोदकाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय
श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe punar-ācamanīyodakāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya
śrīviṣṇave namaḥ.*

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva-

devī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Then chant the following mantra with the folded hands.

ॐ उच्छिष्टमप्यशुचिर्वा यस्य स्मरणमात्रतः ।

शुद्धिमाप्नोति तस्मै ते पुनराचमनीयकम् ॥

Om ucchiṣṭamapy-aśucirvā yasya smaraṇa-mātrataḥ;

Śuddhimāpnōti tasmai te punar-ācamanīyakam.

Then offer it to the deity saying,

ॐ ऐं इदं पुनराचमनीयोदकं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय स्वधा ।

Om aim idaṁ sopakaraṇa-naivedyaṁ sarva-deva-devī-

svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya svadhā.

(v) **Tāmbūlam (Betel roll)** : Sprinkle three times a little quantity of *arghya* water on the betel roll (prepared with betel-leaf, lime, catechu, betelnut, cardamom, cinnamon and clove) and utter

वं एतस्मै ताम्बूलाय नमः ।

Vam etasmai tāmbūlāya namaḥ.

Place it on a small plate by the side of the water tumbler. Then worship the betel with flowers and sandal paste saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे ताम्बूलाय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe tāmbūlāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave
namaḥ.*

Om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva devī-

svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Then chant the following mantras with folded hands.

ॐ फलपत्रसमायुक्तं नानागुणमनोहरम् ।

मया निवेदितं भक्त्या ताम्बूलं प्रतिगृह्यताम् ॥

*Om phala-patra-samāyuktaṁ nānāguṇa-manoharam;
Mayāniveditaṁ bhaktyā tāmbūlaṁ pratigṛhyatām.*

‘Please accept this betel roll consisting of betel nut and leaves and made fragrant by camphor and such things, which I am offering with devotion.’

Thereafter offer it to the deity, sprinkling *sāmānya arghya* water on it, saying

ॐ ऐं इदं ताम्बूलम् सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय
निवेदयामि ।

*Om aim idaṁ tāmbūlaṁ sarva-devadevī-svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya nivedayāmi.*

(w) *Mālyam* (garland) : Take a beautiful garland made of fragrant flowers and touch it with sandal paste. Place the garland on the metal plate and sprinkle water on it three times, uttering

वं एतस्मै पुष्पमाल्याय नमः ।

Vam etasmai puṣpa-mālyāya namaḥ.

Worship the garland with flowers and sandal paste saying

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे पुष्पमाल्याय नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे एतत्सम्प्रदानाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय नमः ।

Om ete gandhapuṣpe puṣpa-mālyāya namaḥ.

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe etad-adhipataye devāya
śrīviṣṇave namaḥ*

*om ete gandhapuṣpe etat-sampradānāya sarva-deva-devī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

Chant with folded hands saying

ॐ सूत्रेण ग्रथितं माल्यं नानापुष्पसमन्वितम् ।

श्रीयुक्तं लम्बमानं च गृहाण परमेश्वर ॥

Om sūtreṇa grathitaṁ mālyaṁ nānāpuṣpa-samanvitaṁ;

Śrīyuktaṁ lambamānaṁ ca gṛhāṇa parameśvara.

‘O Supreme Lord, please accept this beautiful garland and pendant (for your neck) made up of many flowers, held together by the string.’

Sprinkle some water from the *sāmānya-arghya* and offer the garland to the deity, chanting the mantra

ॐ ऐं इदं माल्यं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय

निवेदयामि ।

*Om aim idaṁ mālyaṁ sarvadevadevī-svarūpāya
śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya nivedayāmi.*

After the offering decorate the deity with the offered garland.

(x) *Puṣpānjali*: Take in both the hands some flowers and bilva leaves, both smeared with sandal paste, and offer them to the deity, uttering the mantra three or five times.

ॐ ऐं एष सचन्दनपुष्पबिल्वपत्राञ्जलिः सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय

श्रीरामकृष्णाय वौषट् ।

*Om aim eṣa sacandana-puṣpa bilva-patrānjaliḥ sarva-
devadevī-svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya vouṣat.*

Smearing of the flowers and leaves to be offered to the Lord with sandal paste is symbolic of offering them with love and self-surrender. The worshipper should bear in mind this point while offering the flowers, etc. to the Lord with the mantra 'sa chandana ...'. The following lines from a song mentioned in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (page 921) illustrate this point.

'Then, in my mind, from forest and from grove I shall gather Thee red hibiscus flowers, and scenting them with the sandal paste of Love shall lay them at thy Holy feet.'

Puṣpāñjali during special puja: Offer with both hands flowers and bilva leaves touched with sandal paste, chanting the following mantra:

ॐ ऐं एष सचन्दनपुष्पबिल्वपत्राञ्जलिः साङ्गाय सावरणाय
सशक्तिकाय सपार्षदाय सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय
नमः।

*Om aim eṣa sacandana-puṣpa-bilva-patrāñjaliḥ sāṅgāya
sāvaraṇāya saśaktikāya sapārṣadāya sarva-deva-devī-
svarūpāya śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.*

This offering of flowers and bilva leaves smeared with sandal paste is made to Sri Ramakrishna, who is the essence of all the gods and goddesses, along with their attendant deities, (*aṅgās*) surrounding deities (*āvaraṇas*), His powers (*śakti*—the Holy Mother) and His immediate disciples (*pārṣadas*).

50. Āvaraṇa-devatā-pūjā: (Worship of other deities eternally accompanying the Chosen Deity)

During special worship, after doing the *daśopacāra*, *ṣoḍaśopacāra* or *pañcopacāra pūjā*, offer flowers with sandal paste by chanting the following mantras:

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे श्रीरामकृष्णषडङ्गदेवताभ्यो नमः ।

*om aim ete gandhapuṣpe śrīrāmakṛṣṇa-śaḍaṅga-devatābhyo
namah.*

51. Śārādādevi and Vivekānanda Pūja:

ॐ ऐं ह्रीं एते गन्धपुष्पे सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपिण्यै
श्रीशारदादेव्यै नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे विवेकानन्दादि-श्रीरामकृष्णपार्षदेभ्यो नमः ।

ॐ एते गन्धपुष्पे श्रीरामकृष्णावरणदेवताभ्यो नमः ।

*Om hrīm ete gandhapuṣpe Sarva-deva-devī-svarūpiṇyai
śrīśārādādevyai namah.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe vivekānandādi-śrīrāmakṛṣṇa-
pārṣadebhyo namah.*

*Om ete gandhapuṣpe śrīrāmakṛṣṇāvaraṇa-devatā-bhyo
namah.*

52. Pūjāphala and Japa-samarpaṇam

Then do japa of the *mūla-mantra* 108 times or more and offer the japa by pouring water on the floor from the right palm with *goyoni-mudrā* while chanting the following mantra:

ॐ गुह्यातिगुह्यगोप्ता त्वं गृहाणास्मत्कृतं जपम् ।

सिद्धिर्भवतु मे देव त्वत्प्रसादान्महेश्वर ॥

*Om guhyāti-guhya-goptā tvaṁ grhāṇāsmatkṛtaṁ
japam;*

Siddhirbhavatu me deva tvat-prasādān-maheśvara.

गुह्याति गुह्यगोप्ता त्वं You are the protector of the greatest secrets.
गृहाणास्मत्कृतम् जपम् Please accept the japa that I have done. सिद्धिर्भवतु
मे देव त्वत्प्रसादान् महेश्वर May success come to me by your grace, O
supreme ruler.

53. *Praṇāmah*

Thereafter, chant the following mantra and prostrate before the deity.

स्थापकाय च धर्मस्य सर्वधर्मस्वरूपिणे ।

अवतारवरिष्ठाय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः

*sthāpakāyaca dharmasya sarvadharmasvarūpiṇe
avatāravarīṣṭhāya rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ*

O Ramakrishna, founder of religion universal and the embodiment of all world religions! To Thee, the noblest of Divine Incarnations, I offer my salutations.

(During special worship, worship Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda separately.)

Finally, prostrate yourself full length and surrendering yourself completely to the Lord, repeat

एतत्कर्म श्रीरामकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ।

etatkarma śrīrāmakṛṣṇārpaṇamastu

54. *Ārātrikā*

During special worship, after offering the food, there should be *Ārātrikā* with the following items.

A lamp with five or more wicks, camphor, a conch containing water, a cloth or handkerchief, a flower and a chowrie (*cāmara*).

Draw a triangle to the left of the *sāmānya-arghya*, keep the lighted lamp on the triangle, and sprinkle water saying फट् . Then worship it with water from the *arghya*, saying

वं एतस्मै नीराजनदीपमालायै नमः ।

Vam etasmai nīrājana-dīpa-mālāyai namaḥ.

Worship again with water from *arghya* saying,

एतदधिपतये देवाय श्रीविष्णवे नमः ।

एतत्संप्रदानाय ॐ ऐं सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय

नमः ।

etad-adhipataye devāya śrīviṣṇave namaḥ.

etat-sampradāṇāya om aiṁ sarva-deva-devī-svarūpāya

śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Offer it by sprinkling a drop of water from the *arghya*, saying

ॐ ऐं एष दीपमालायै सर्वदेवदेवीस्वरूपाय श्रीरामकृष्णाय

नमः ।

Om aiṁ eṣa dīpamālāyai sarva-deva-devī-svarūpāya

śrīrāmakṛṣṇāya namaḥ.

Then perform *ārātrika* with the lighted lamp in the right hand, standing near the seat and ringing the bell with the left hand. While doing the *ārātrika* repeat mentally either the *mūla-mantra* ऐं or the Ramakrishna Gayatri (ॐ रामकृष्णाय विद्महे गदाधराय धीमहि तन्नो देवः प्रचोदयात्) or some hymn.

Wave the different items around as follows:

Lamp – four times before the feet of the deity, twice before the navel, three times before the face and seven times before the whole body.

Camphor – Five or seven times round the whole body

Conch filled with water – Nine times round the whole body. Pour down a little water after every three rounds.

Cloth, flower and chowrie – Thrice round the body.

Wash your hand after doing arati with every item. After the *ārātrika* prostrate yourself before the deity.

Conclude with fire offering (*homa*), the process of which is described in page X of this book.

Homa can also be performed before the rice offering.

Ārātrika*

Vesper service in the Hindu tradition is called *ārātrika*. Another name for it is *nīrājana*. Popularly known as *ārati*, it is a ritual meant to please and honour the deity by waving light, a conch filled with water, a piece of cloth, a flower, and a fan before an image of the Deity. The glory of *ārātrika* is sung by the scriptures in the following words :

The worship of God—even if it is defective due to incorrect procedure or faulty utterances of mantras—becomes fruitful when Arati is performed before the Deity.

Whoever worships the Lord through the *ārati*-ritual is blessed with a long life both here and hereafter.

Even to see the *ārātrika* is highly beneficial, says the scripture:

Whoever witnesses with devotion the *ārātrika* performed before the Supreme Lord is reborn seven times under favourable circumstances and then attains to the highest Goal.

Ārātrika is not an indispensable part of any worship, unlike *prāṇāyāma*, *nyāsa*, *ācamana* and other purificatory rites. In fact, it is more reasonable to say that *ārātrika* is in itself a complete, symbolic worship of God. If we observe the procedure adopted in the Hindu form of worship, we find that after completing the preliminaries, the Deity is invoked and invited to sit before the worshipper and then worshipped and served with flowers,

* Excerpts from Swami Prameyanandaji's article in the book *Worship of Sri Ramakrishna* by Swami Hitananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1999), pp.36-45.

sandal paste, incense, lights, and food offering. It is clear that the Deity is served and honoured as if He or She were a human being. We see the same idea—superimposition of the human on the divine—in the *ārātrika* ritual too. ‘The process called *ārātrika*,’ says Swami Nirvedananda, ‘appears to emphasize the glory of the Lord after He has been entertained in a human way. *Ārātrika* seems to be a kind of symbolic worship.’

It is said in the *Kālottara Tantra* that the following items are to be waved before the Deity in the given order: first, light (cotton wicks soaked in ghee), then water (in a conch), then a clean cloth, then the leaves of the mango or the asvattha tree, ending with a full prostration (*sāstāṅga-praṇāma*). But it is permitted by scriptures to substitute a bilva leaf, a flower, camphor light, incense and chamara for mango leaves or aśvattha leaves.

The procedure is to light the cotton wicks of the lamp and place it in front on a triangle drawn on the floor, and then offer it to the deity by sprinkling on it consecrated water. The wicks must be of odd-number (one, three, five, etc). After the lamp is consecrated and offered, the worshipper stands up and waves the lamp before the deity with the right hand, while ringing the bell with the left hand. The worshipper does japa or chants the hymn of the deity mentally during *ārātrika*. The scripture also instructs how the waving of lights is to be done: begin with the deity’s feet (4 times), and then move upwards to the navel (2 times), the face (once), and finally the whole body (7 times). The general practice, however, is to wave the light around the face of the deity not once but three times.

The goal of *ārātrika* is the same as the goal of any worship: obtaining the grace of God by pleasing Him, and the merging of the worshipper and the worshipped into the one Supreme

Self. What do the five items—light, water, cloth, flower, and fan—normally used for *ārātrika*, stand for?

These appear to stand for the five elements (*bhūtas*), namely, fire, water, ether, earth and air. The cloth, having numerous pores, symbolizes ether; and smell, being the special property of earth, the latter is best represented by a flower. The whole universe represented by its elementary constituents is thus offered symbolically to the Lord by way of His worship. What a majestic form of worship of the all-pervading One is prescribed for lifting up the devotee's mind from the humanized view of the Lord to the supercosmic view!

The five elements (*pañca-bhūtas*) are the basic constituents of the universe. These *bhūtas* are earth, water, fire, air and ether. They are the symbols of the *kārya* Brahman, or the manifested Reality in the form of the universe. To reach Parabrahman, or the Supreme Reality, it is necessary to transcend the limitations of this *kārya* Brahman in the form of the universe. By offering the *pañca-bhūtas* at the feet of the deity through the Aratrika ritual, the worshipper merges himself into the cosmic, all-pervading aspect of the Deity. That is the fulfilment to which *ārātrika* is supposed to bring the worshipper.

Ārātrika can also be performed with only the lighted lamp, without using the other items. This too has a meaning. The *Padmapurāṇa* says that the Supreme Self is self-effulgent like light:

Thou art the Light. Thou art the sun, the moon, the lightning and the golden stars. Thou art the Light of all lights. It is Thou who existest in the form of the light of the lamp.

In *Haribhakti-vilāsa* (8.137) it is said that when beautifully arranged lights are waved before the Lord, all the effects of *tamas* (such as lust and anger) and all the effects of ignorance (such as egoism) are overcome and, when these are fully destroyed, how can there be rebirth (and consequent suffering)? The light of knowledge which destroys the darkness of ignorance inspires in a natural way the mind of the worshipper to attain the knowledge of the Supreme Self. It is, of course, well known that with the attainment of this knowledge the complete destruction of all suffering takes place. The seeker gets permanently liberated from the bondage of relative existence.

The Vaishnava tradition gives another beautiful interpretation of the *ārātrika* ritual. We are presented with a charming picture of the Lord sporting on this earth as the child Krishna. He has been out since the morning, grazing the cows in fields. Now it is almost twilight, the 'cow-dust' hour. An anxious Yashoda is waiting at the doorstep, straining her eyes to see whether her beloved child is on his way back. Just at the twilight hour, the divine Child returns.

Darkness has begun to set in and it is difficult to see Krishna's face clearly. So the first thing Yashoda does is to light the lamp and look at the enchanting face of her darling child to her heart's content. She waves the lamp around him to check if his tender body has been hurt or has been smeared with the dust and dirt of the woods. Then she gives him a good wash with cool scented water. Next she wipes him dry and clean with a piece of soft cloth. She then decorates her Gopala with fragrant flowers and garlands. Decoration over, she gazes at him lovingly, with one-pointed attention. Simultaneously, Yashoda fans her Child with a *cāmara* to

remove his fatigue. Then, all on a sudden, she perceives in the divine Child the presence of the Supreme Lord, the primal Cause of all creation, and overwhelmed with devotion, respect and awe, she falls at His lotus feet and salutes Him.

The important point to note here is that, no matter with what attitude the *ārātrika* is performed or with what items, self-surrender at the feet of the Deity is the true end of Aratrika.

***Homa* (Fire-worship)**

This is an essential and ancient ritual in Tantrik Puja as well as Vedic *yajña*. It is a very ancient belief and practice that any offering like ghee to a Deity should be offered to fire. Even the Vedas testify to this ancient belief: 'Fire is the mouth of the deities', 'Fire is the stomach of the deities.' There are several such utterances. It is noteworthy that although the procedures of Vedic *homa* and Tantrik *homa* vary, there is no fundamental difference between them.

Homa is ordinarily threefold: gross, subtle and transcendental. Each of these is subdivided into two classes: external and internal. Whatever be the nature of the Homa, its purpose is to obliterate all differences. Articles like fire, wood, flowers, fruits, etc. when offered into fire, get transformed, into fire by getting burnt in it. Homa thus reduces everything to one indistinguishable entity. Philosophically speaking, 'It must be constantly remembered that whatever is consumed by the sense organs is simply an oblation in the fire of the inner Self and is not meant for sensate enjoyment.' This idea becomes strong when the Homa is performed according to the scriptural injunctions. The aspirant then feels the divine Presence everywhere when he pours oblations into fire, the mouth of the deity. 'The ladle, the oblation, the fire, the act of sacrificer,

and the sacrificer himself—all this appears to him as verily Brahman.'

Visarjana: Withdrawing the deity into oneself

The *iṣṭa-devatā*, who was objectified for purposes of worship, is now withdrawn and reinstalled into one's heart. This is done by smelling a flower held in *saṁhāra-mudrā*.

Visarjana has also a deeper meaning. It signifies the withdrawl of the aspirant's mind from the thought of an awakened divine Presence outside of him. This is achieved by immersing the Divinity outside in the Ganga of divine knowledge within, merging in it one's own identity as well. The external *visarjana* is only a symbol of the internal *visarjana*. The manifestation of the Deity outside and its withdrawl inside are only mental projections of the aspirant. Really speaking, *visarjana* finds expression only in the mind of the aspirant.

Mudrā: Finger-poses

These are essential in Tantrik Puja. *Mudrā* is defined as that which pleases the deities and which destroys the accumulated evil tendencies. Appropriate mudras have to be shown, according to scriptural directives, at the time of worship and while offering food to a deity. By this, the deity becomes pleased. As already stated, one of the primary objectives of worship is to please the deity.

Japa-samarpaṇa and Praṇāma:

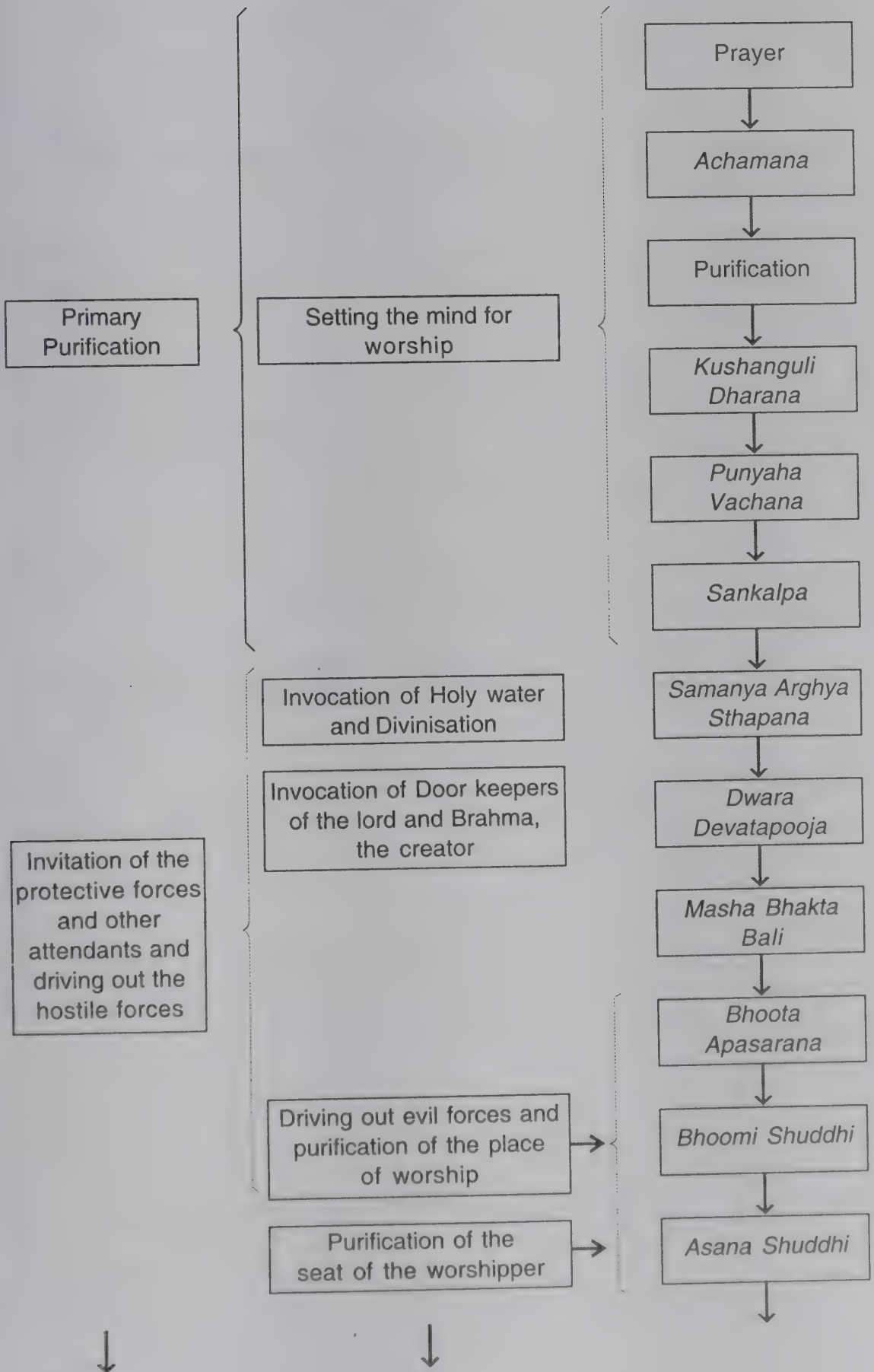
Surrendering the fruits of Japa, and Prostration

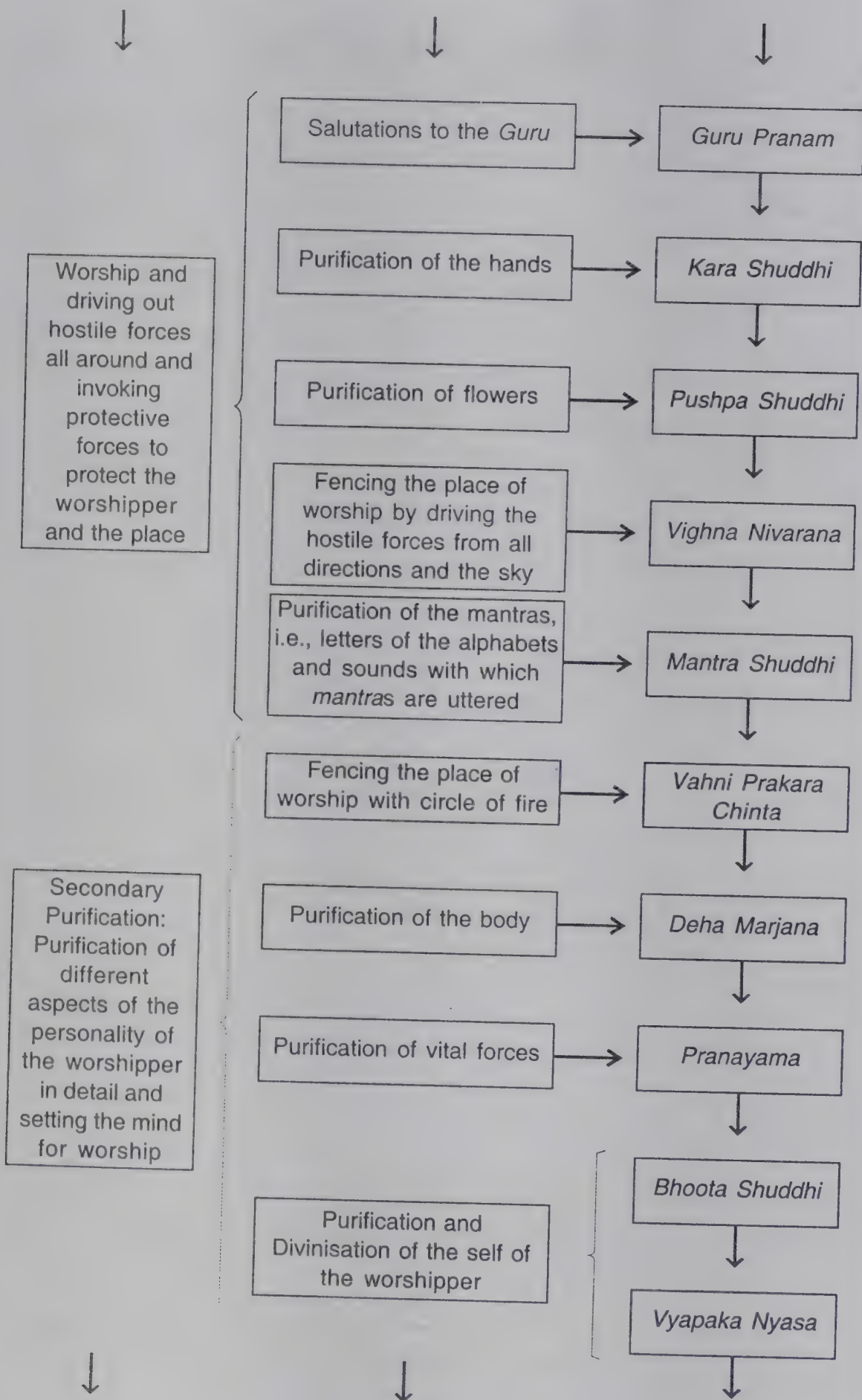
These are the final acts of worship. After repeating the *mūla-mantra* as much as possible, the aspirant is enjoined to

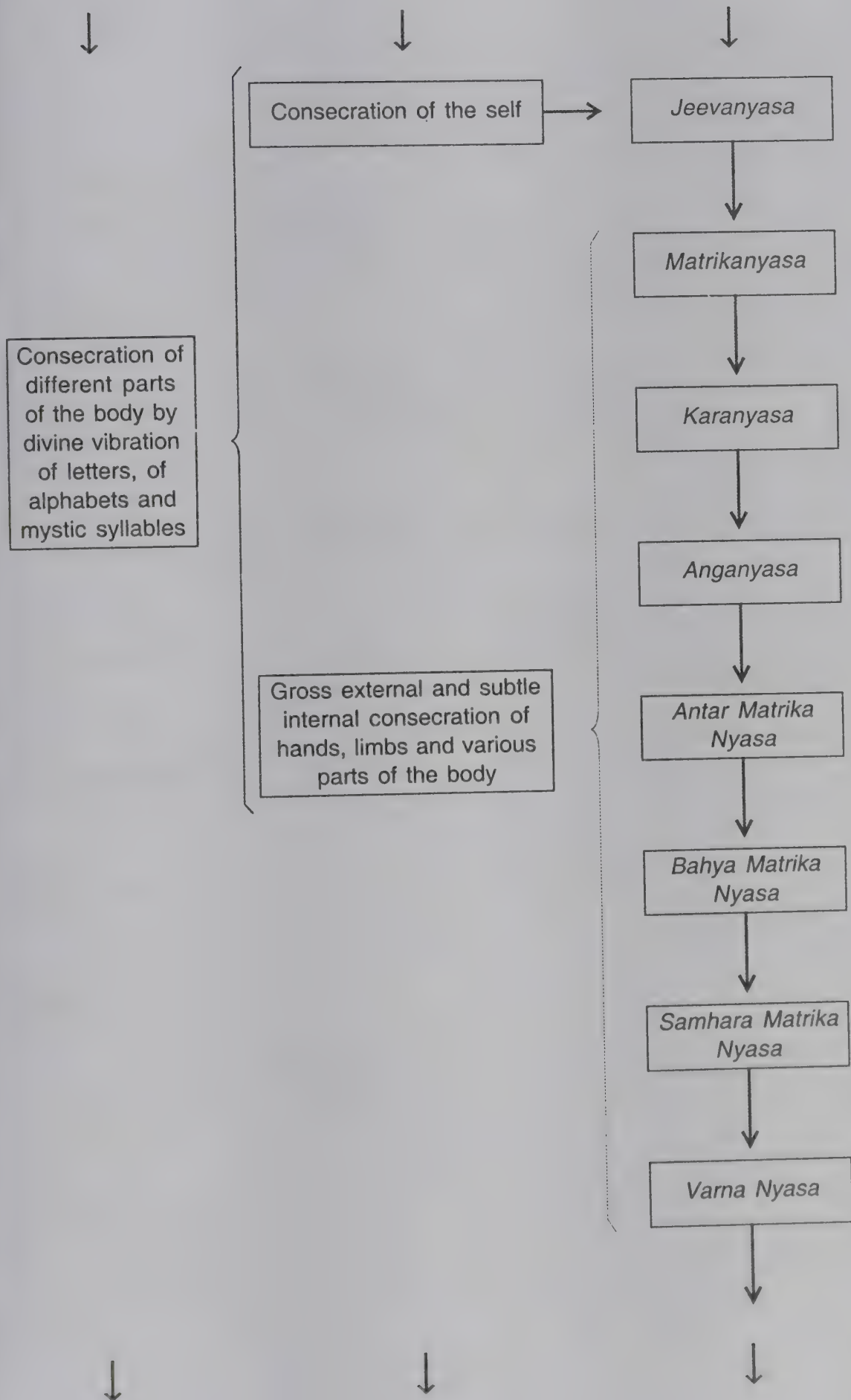
offer the fruits of japa to the deity with the following prayer: 'O Lord! Be gracious enough to accept my offering of japa; may I attain success (in my spiritual endeavour) by your grace.' After this prayer, the aspirant does not possess anything he can call his own. He attains supreme satisfaction after having surrendered his body, mind and soul to the deity. Then he prostrates before the deity. 'The wise men, the knowers of Truth, say that pranama signifies complete self-effacement before the deity. It is the offering of the self at the feet of the deity after renouncing one's own will, desires, and egotistic tendencies.'

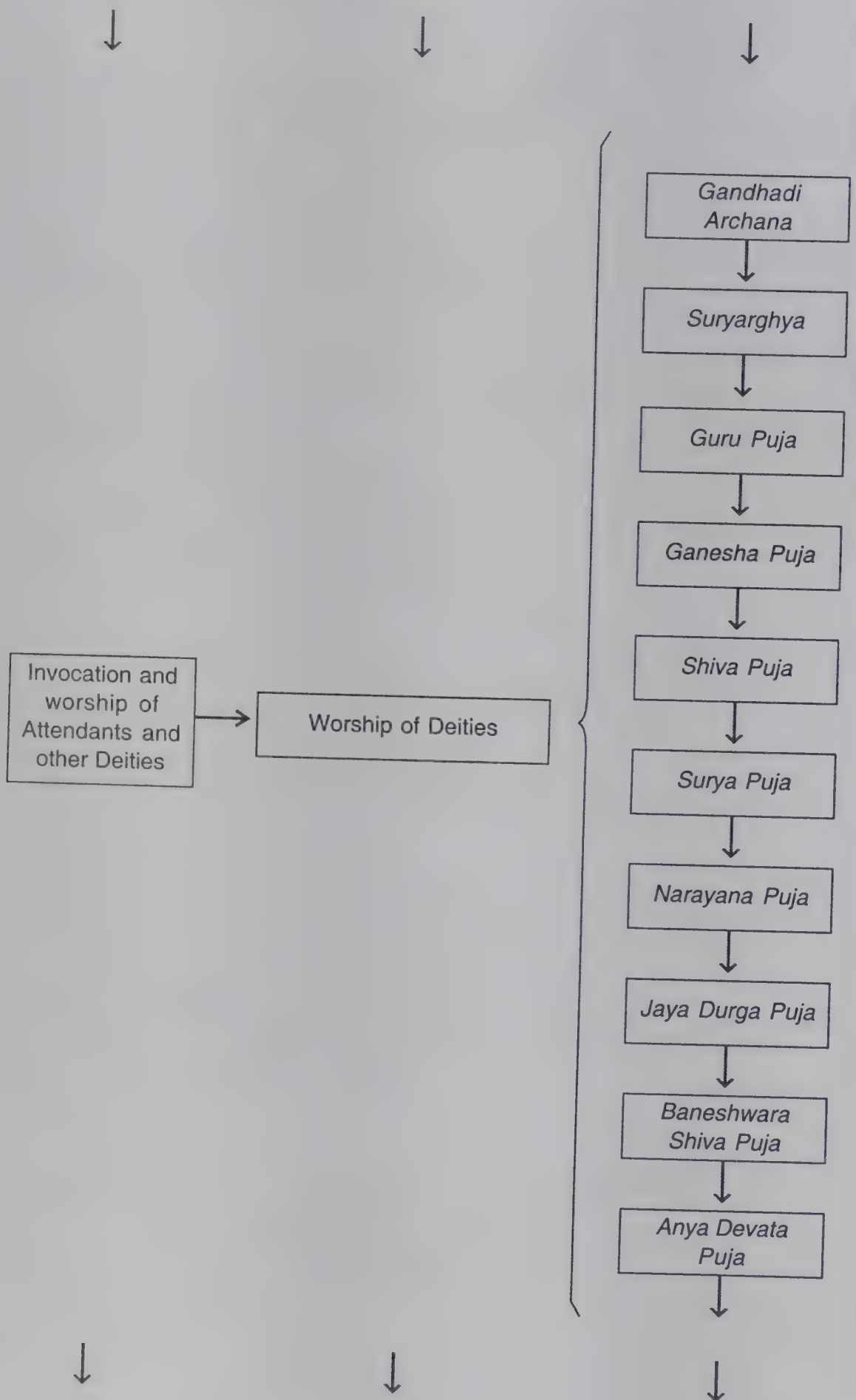
Successive Steps of Puja

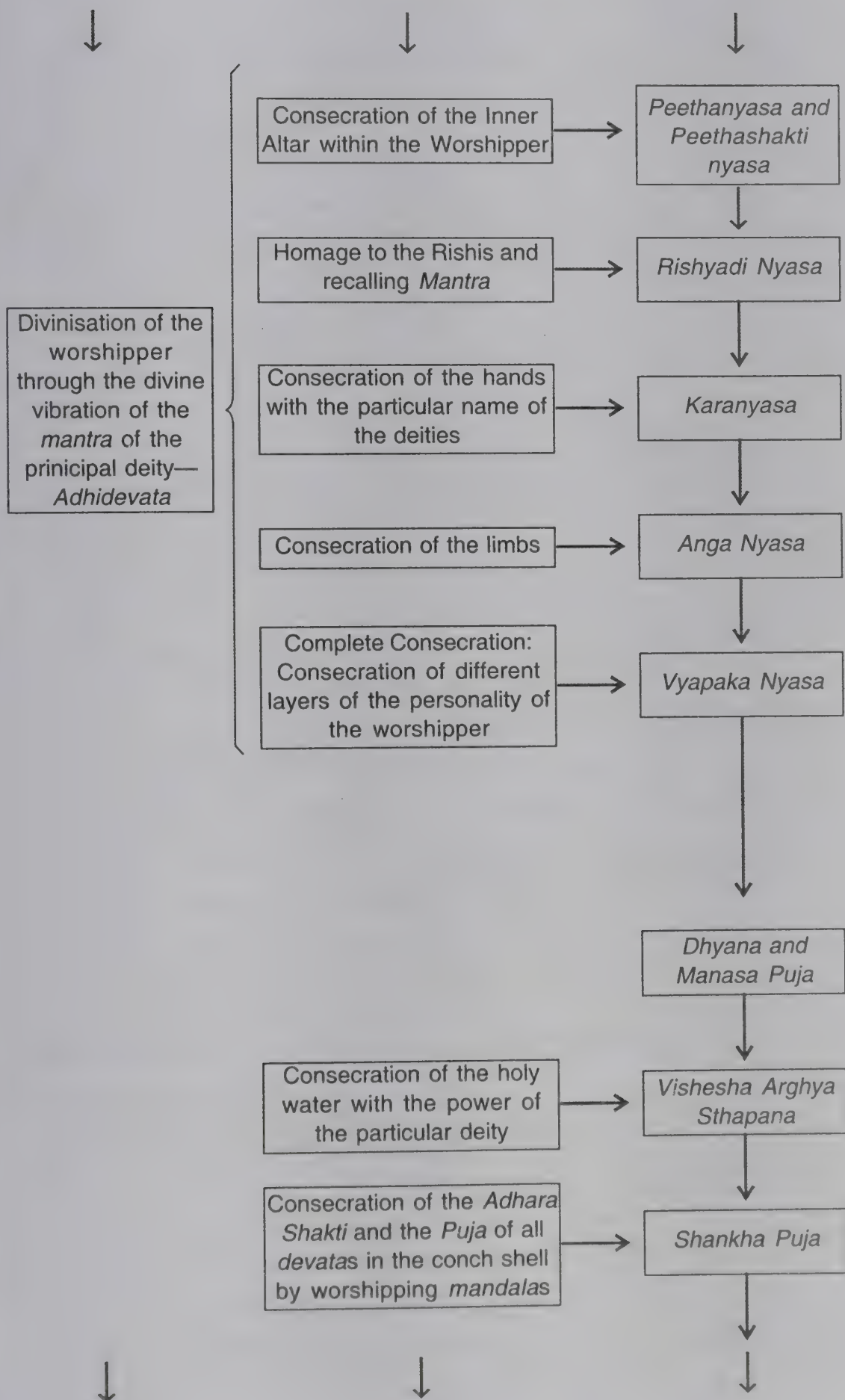
FLOWCHART

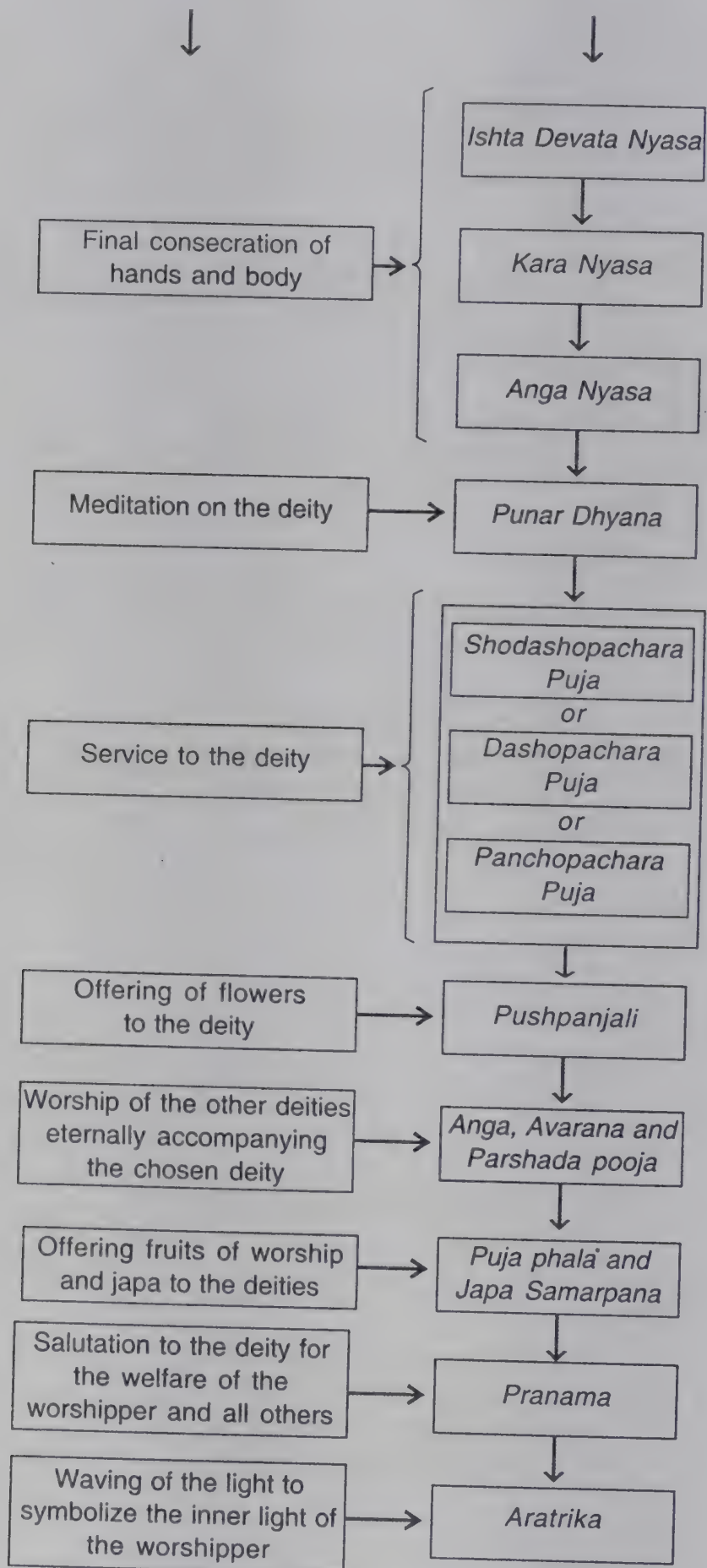












Daśopacāra and Pancopacāra Pūjā

(Worship involving ten and five articles)

Following are the successive steps to be followed while performing **Daśopacāra Pūjā**.

Prayer – Ācamana – Sāmānyārghya sthāpana – Dwāra Devata pūja – Bhūtāpasaraṇa – Bhūmiśuddhi – Āsana śuddhi – Guru praṇām – Kara śuddhi – Puṣpa śuddhi – Divya vighna nivāraṇ – Digbandhana – Bhūmi vighna nivāraṇa – Antarikṣa vighna nivāraṇa – Devatapūja – Dravya śuddhi – Mantra śuddhi – Vahniprākāra cinta – Dehamārjana – Ātmarakṣa – Prāṇāyāma – Bhūtaśuddhi – Vyāpaka nyāsa – Jivanyāsa – Mātrikānyāsa – Karanyāsa – Aṅganyāsa – Gandhādi arcana – Sūryārghya – Gurvādi pūja – Bāṇeshwar Shiva pūja – Pītha nyāsa – Pītha śakti nyāsa – R̥ṣyādinyāsa – Karanyāsa – Aṅganyāsa – Vyāpaka nyāsa – Dhyāna – Mānasapūja – Viśeṣārghya Sthāpana – Pītha Pūja – Karanyāsa – Aṅganyāsa – Punardhyāna – Daśopacāra :

(1) Pādyā (2) Arghya (3) Ācamanīya (4) Snānīya,

(5) Gandha (6) Puṣpa (7) Dhūpa (8) Dīpa, (9)

Naivedya (10) Punarācamanīya

Puṣpānjali – Āvaraṇa Pūja – Japa – Japa Samarpaṇa – Praṇāmamantra – Prayer.

Following are the successive steps to be followed while performing **Pancopacāra Pūjā**.

Prayer – Ācamana – Sāmānyārghya sthāpana – Karanyāsa – Aṅganyāsa – Dhyāna – Karanyāsa – Aṅganyāsa – Punardhyāna – Pancopacāra :

(1) Gandha (2) Puṣpa-patra (Bilva or Tulsi), (3)

Dhūpa (4) Dīpa (5) Naivedya

Puṣpānjali – Japa – Japa samarpaṇa – Praṇāma Mantra – Prayer.

Mudras or Poses of the Hands*

Certain poses of the hand which are pleasing to all the Devatas, and by means of which all the burdens of sins are destroyed, are known as *mudras*. Mudras are used during worship, japa, meditation, invoking of the Deity, installing of the Deity, offering of *naivedyam* etc.

Doubtless, each mudra has a definite significance, which one may try to discover by careful and reverential thought. An attempt is made below to highlight briefly the significance of some of the important mudras.

1. Ankusa mudra :

Folding the right palm as in a fist, stretch only the middle finger. Now folding the fore-finger, touch with it the nearer end of the middle joint of the middle finger.



By means of this mudra, which resembles an *ankusa* (goad), the three worlds may be attracted.

2. Avagunthana mudra:

Closing the left palm as in a fist, stretch the fore-finger; with the palm downward, move the outstretched fore-finger along a semi-circle in the clockwise direction.



This mudra is used for

* Excerpts from the book *Worship of Sri Ramakrishna* by Swami Hitananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1999), pp.187-200.

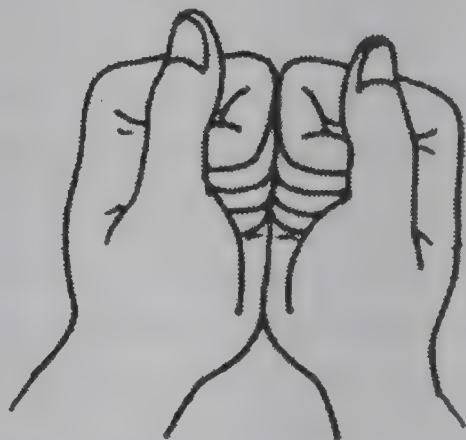
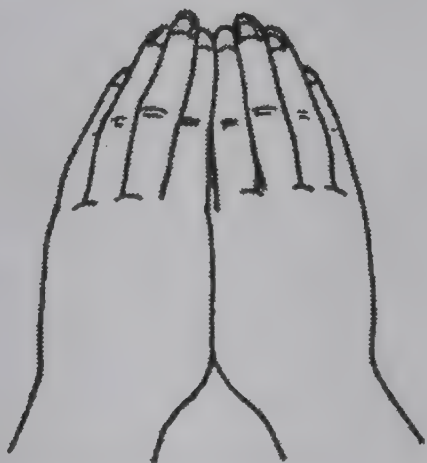
protecting items of offering during worship, from evil influences, by covering them as it were with a subtle envelope.



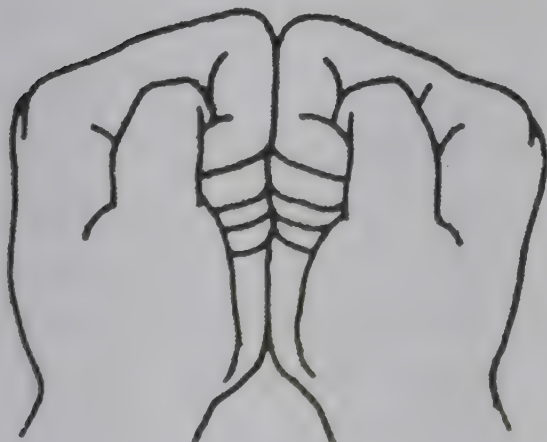
3. Aavahanyadi mudra : These mudras are five in number, and are as follows :

(i) **Avahani Mudra :** Joining the palms and touching the main joints of the ring fingers with the respective thumbs, wave them gently up and down.

(ii) **Samsthapani Mudra :** When the palms in the above Mudra face downwards, one has the Samsthapani mudra.



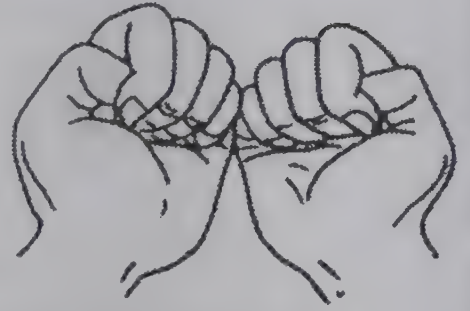
(iii) **Sannidhapani Mudra :** Join the fists of both the hands as shown in the above figure.



(iv) **Sannirodhani Mudra :** In this Mudra, thrust the thumbs into the respective fists.

(v)Sammukhikarani Mudra:

In the Sannirodhani Mudra, join the fists horizontally, with the palms facing upwards.



The *Avahanyadi Pancha-mudras* are used at the time of invoking (*Avahana*) of a Deity. These five Mudras respectively signify: (1) reverentially and lovingly welcoming the Deity and beseeching the Deity to : (2) install Himself in front of the worshipper, (3) be manifestly present, (4) be firmly established in His seat, (5) face the worshipper benignly for accepting the worship.

4. Kurma Mudra : Join the tips of the forefinger and the thumb of the left palm (making it face upwards) with those of the little finger and the forefinger respectively of the prone right palm, and stretch the right thumb slightly upwards. Then fold the last three fingers of the left hand on the back of the right hand, and fold the tips of the middle and ring fingers of the right hand between the thumb and the forefinger of the left hand facing down. The back of the right hand should be curved up like the back of a tortoise.



This mudra is used during Dhyana (meditation) on the Deity. The significance of this mudra is that just like a tortoise which when it withdraws its limbs inside, will not bring them out even if he be cut to pieces, the Deity should be firmly established in the worshipper's heart, wherein the Deity is meditated upon. This is the idea behind taking the flower in

hand with *kurma mudra* while performing Dhyana—the Deity brought out from the heart is as it were, well preserved in a casket and taken towards the *yantra* or Baneswar Siva (symbol of the Deity) in front, without breaking the *kurma mudra*.



5. Galini mudra :

Placing the right palm over the left, join the right little finger with the left thumb and vice versa. Ensure also that the forefinger, middle finger and the ring finger of the right

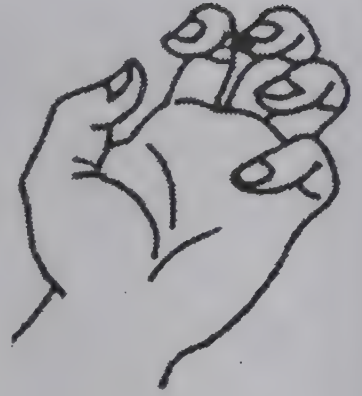
hand are joined respectively to the ring finger, middle finger and forefinger of the left, in a straight line, as shown in the figure.

This mudra is used in the installation of special arghya (vishesharghyasthapanam). As one would see from the procedure for the vishesharghyasthapanam, this mudra is to be shown after invoking, in the water of the conch, the celestial waters of the solar regions, and before the Deity is invoked in the water of the conch. Through this mudra, it is as if the worshipper minutely observes, as through a microscope, the water taken in the conch, in order to rid it of impurities.

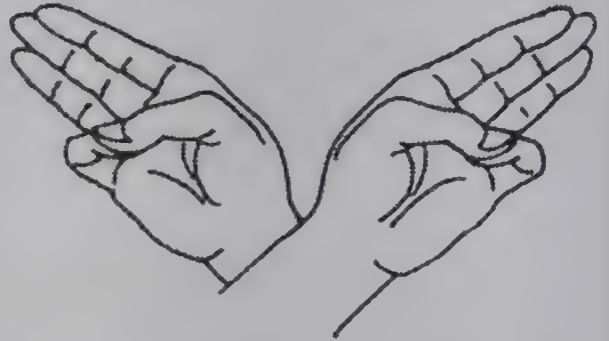


6. Goyoni Mudra : Close the right palm loosely as in a fist, keeping the center hollow, with the fist facing upwards, and the thumb thrust into the fist.

7. Grasa Mudra : Upwards, stretch the fingers apart in the form of the petals of a half-blossomed lotus.

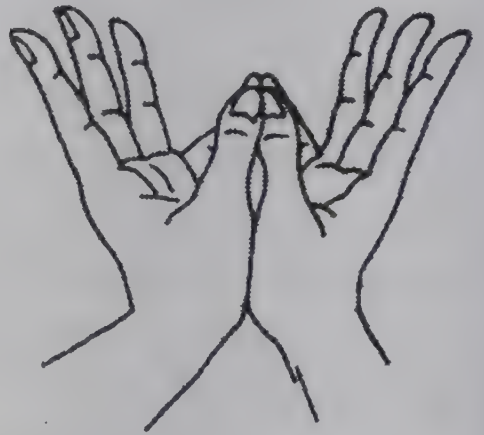


8. Chakra Mudra : At the center of the right thumb place the tip of the right little finger and at the center of the left thumb place the tip of the left little finger, and stretch all the other fingers straight. Then keep the two hands crossed, as shown in the figure alongside.



This mudra is used for Abhirakshanam, i.e., protection of naivedyam etc.

9. Jwalini Mudra : Join the wrists of both the hands and stretch the fingers out. Then join the two thumbs together and the little fingers together. Then join these at the center of the palms. This mudra is used during Homa at the time of lighting the fire.



Through this mudra is indicated the Sapta Jihvas—seven tongues of fire: Refer Mundaka Upanishad, 1.2.4.

10. Tattwa Mudra : Join the thumb and the ring finger of the right hand. A similar procedure for the left hand is also used in certain situations, for Tarpanam



etc. during Kali puja. With the right hand, this mudra is mainly used for the purpose of Nyasah etc.



11. Dhenu Mudra : Crossing the fingers of both the hands, join the tip of the little finger of one hand with that of the ring finger of the other, and the tip of the forefinger of one hand with that of the middle finger of the other. Keep the thumbs of both the hands joined together.

This Mudra represents the udder of the celestial cow Kamadhenu, whose milk is considered Amrutham (nectarine). By showing this Mudra, the worshipper makes the items of worship (offerings etc) nectarine, hence this Mudra is also called Amruteekarana Mudra.



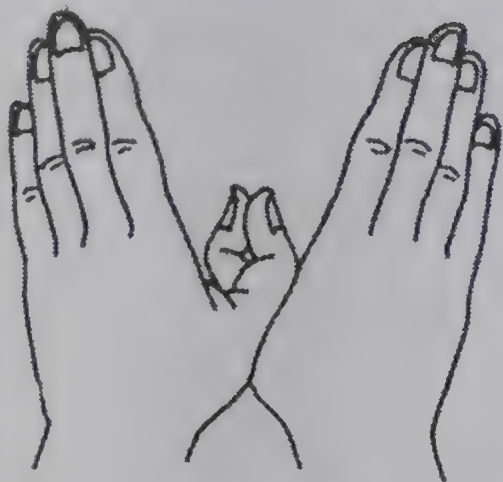
12. Naracha Mudra : Join the tips of the thumb and fore-finger of the right hand and stretch the other fingers upwards. Place this hand (wherein the Mudra has been formed) near the right shoulder.

This Mudra is used at the time of Bhutaapasaaranam (removal of evil spirits). The idea behind this Mudra is that the worshipper is as it were picking arrows (for destroying evil influences) from out of the quiver hung at the back of the right shoulder.

13. Paramikarana Mudra : Join the two thumbs and keeping the other fingers together, stretch them outwards.

This Mudra is intended for making its object whole. It is used just before the beginning of the actual worship. Before

worship, Anganyasa called Samaleekaranam is performed, and during Samaleekaranam one splits up as it were the indivisible Principle and places it in different parts of one's own body. Then one takes that Principle (the Supreme Lord) from one's heart and places it



in front of oneself for purposes of worship. At that time, this Mudra is shown with the idea that it is again made whole: that is to remind oneself that it had been whole (Purnam) and Indivisible all the time, and the diversity of duality is imagined only for the purposes of worship.

14. Pranadi panchamudra : (i) Prana Mudra : Join the tips of the thumb, the ring finger and the little finger of the right hand, with the other fingers stretched upwards.



(ii) Apana Mudra : Join the tips of the thumb, forefinger and the middle finger of the right hand, with the other fingers stretched straight.



(iii) Vyana Mudra : Join the tips of the thumb, ring finger and the middle finger of the right hand, with the other fingers stretched straight.





(iv) **Udana Mudra** : Join the tips of the thumb forefinger, middle finger and ring finger of the right hand, with the little finger stretched straight.

(v) **Samana Mudra** : Join the tips of all the fingers.



While showing these Mudras, the left hand should be kept in the posture of Grasa Mudra and with these five Mudras one should move the right hand outward from inside this cup-like left hand. These Mudras are used at the time of offering Naivedyam to the Deity, and the idea is that the worshipper is as it were feeding the Deity with his own hands.



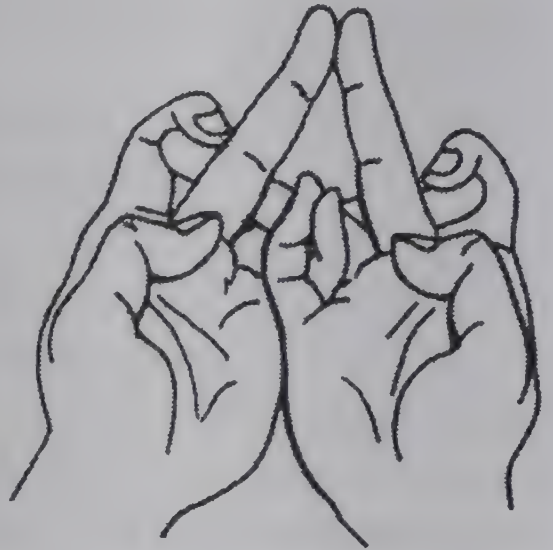
15. Matsya Mudra : Placing the left palm over the back of the inverted right hand, move the thumbs like the fins of swimming fish, keeping the other fingers stretched straight.

This Mudra is used mainly for the purpose of doing *japa* of some specific mantras during puja, keeping count on the fingers of the right hand. At this time, the right hand should be kept covered, which is what this Mudra essentially accomplishes.

16. Mriga Mudra : Just as in Vyana Mudra, join the tips of the thumb, the middle finger and the ring finger and stretch the other two fingers straight upwards. This Mudra which

resembles the face of a deer (Mriga) is used for performing Peethanyasa, for giving oblations of bilva leaves during Homa, etc.

17. Yoni Mudra : Interlocking the little fingers, press the tips of the ring fingers against the tip of the forefinger of the other hand. Stretch both the middle fingers so as to touch each other at the tips. Place the tips of the thumbs at the roots of the middle fingers of the respective hands.



18. Lelihana Mudra : Keeping the right palm inverted, stretch the forefinger, middle finger and the ring finger downwards. Keeping the tip of the thumb at the root of the ring finger, stretch the little finger alone upwards. This Mudra is used during Jeevanyasa.



19. Samhara Mudra : With the hands back to back, the



left palm facing downwards, lock the four fingers of the right hand other than the thumb with the corresponding fingers of the left. Then turn the whole thing, stretching the tips of the forefingers so as to form a pair of pincers. Grasping a flower with the tips of the forefingers, bring it near the nostril and smelling the flower, imagine that the Deity has entered your heart. Then turn the hands in the reverse way, thereby breaking the Mudra.

Appendix 1

Sri Ramakrishna as a Priest*

Born in an orthodox Brahmin family, Sri Ramakrishna knew the formalities of worship, its rites and rituals. The innumerable gods and goddesses of the Hindu religion are the human aspects of the indescribable and incomprehensible spirit, as conceived by the finite human mind. They understand and appreciate human love and emotion, help men to realize their secular and spiritual ideals, and ultimately enable men to attain liberation from the miseries of the phenomenal life. The source of light, intelligence, wisdom, and strength is one alone from whom comes the fulfillment of desire. Yet, as long as a man is bound by his human limitations, he cannot but worship God through human forms. He must use human symbols. Therefore Hinduism asks the devotees to look on God as the ideal father, the ideal mother, the ideal son, or the ideal friend. But the name ultimately leads to the *Nameless*, the form to the formless, the word to Silence, and the motion to serene realization of Peace in Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. The gods gradually merge in one God. But until that realization is achieved, the devotee cannot dissociate human factors from his worship. Therefore the Deity is bathed and clothed and decked with ornaments. He is fed and put to sleep. He is propitiated with hymns, songs and prayers. And there are appropriate rites connected with all these functions. For instance, to secure for himself external purity, the priest bathes himself in holy water and puts on a holy cloth. He purifies the mind and the sense organs by appropriate medi-

* Excerpts from the Introduction to *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by 'M' translated by Swami Nikhilananda.

tations. He fortifies the place of worship against evil forces by drawing around it circles of fire and water. He awakens different spiritual centres of the body and invokes the Supreme Spirit in his heart. Then he transfers the supreme spirit to the image before him and worships the image, regarding it no longer as clay or stone, but as the embodiment of Spirit, throbbing with Life and Consciousness. After the worship, the Supreme Spirit is recalled from the image to Its true sanctuary, the heart of the priest. The real devotee knows the absurdity of worshipping the Transcendental Reality with material articles—clothing That which pervades the whole universe and the beyond, putting on a pedestal That which cannot be limited by space, feeding That which is disembodied and incorporeal, singing before That whose glory the music of the spheres tries vainly to proclaim. But through these rites the devotee aspires to go ultimately beyond rites and rituals, forms and names, words and praise, and to realize God as the All-pervading Consciousness.

Hindu priests are thoroughly acquainted with the rites of worship, but few of them are aware of their underlying significance. They move their hands and limbs mechanically, in obedience to the letter of the scriptures and repeat the holy mantras like parrots. But from the very beginning the inner meaning of these rites was revealed to Sri Ramakrishna. As he sat facing the image, a strange transformation came over his mind. While going through the prescribed ceremonies, he would actually find himself encircled by a wall of fire protecting him and the place of worship from unspiritual vibrations, or he would feel the rising of the mystic kundalini through the different centres of the body. The glow on his face, his deep absorption, and the intense atmosphere of the temple impressed everyone who saw him worship the deity.

Ramkumar wanted Sri Ramakrishna to learn the intricate worship of Kali. To become a priest of Kali one must undergo a special form of initiation from a qualified Guru, and for Sri Ramakrishna a suitable Brahmin was found. But no sooner did the Brahmin speak the holy word in his ear than Sri Ramakrishna, overwhelmed with emotion, uttered a loud cry and plunged into deep concentration.

Mathur begged Sri Ramakrishna to take charge of the worship in the Kali temple. The young priest pleaded his incompetence and his ignorance of the scriptures. Mathur insisted that devotion and sincerity would more than compensate for any lack of formal knowledge and make the Divine Mother manifest Herself through the image. In the end, Sri Ramakrishna had to yield to Mathur's request. He became the priest of the Kali temple. In 1856 Ramkumar breathed his last. Sri Ramakrishna had already seen more than one death in the family. He had realized how impermanent is life on earth. The more he was convinced of the transitory nature of worldly things, the more eager he became to realize God, the Fountain of Immortality.

The Science of Worship*

Swami Prameyananda

The term 'Science' is used only to emphasize that worship (Puja) is a spiritual discipline which follows a highly scientific procedure. If we make a rational study of the theory on which it is based, we will observe that it is logical at every stage, with a well-planned sequence of various steps. A spiritual aspirant can attain his cherished objective in life and supreme spiritual fulfillment through worship duly performed according to the prescribed scriptural injunctions.

The basic philosophy of the science of worship has been delineated beautifully and clearly in a few expressive words by Swami Saradananda in his monumental work *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*. Although his delineation is aphoristic, it is so transparent that it does not stand in need of any further explanation. Swami Saradananda writes: 'When you sit to worship a particular Deity, you have to think at the very outset that the coiled-up power *Kundalini* is raised up to the thousand-petalled lotus, Sahasrara, in the head and that you have become identified with the Paramatman in non-dual consciousness. Then you should think that you become separated from Him and assume the nature of a Jiva again, and that the supreme light of Paramatman becomes condensed, and manifests itself in the form of the Deity to be worshipped; and that, you have projected the Deity out from within you and then sat down for worship.'¹

* Excerpts from the book *Worship of Sri Ramakrishna* by Swami Hitananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1999), pp.36-45.

Puja is defined in the Kularnava Tantra as that act which quells the waves of Karmic flow resulting from past births, puts an end to the cycle of births and deaths, and offers complete fulfillment². The 'complete fulfillment' is in the sense of achievement of the desired object—namely, total self-surrender of the devotee to the Diety, of the worshipper to the worshipped. The complete or cherished fruit of worship, its very culmination, consists in the loss of the worshipper's self-identity in the Worshipped. In this context we are reminded of the incident of Shodasi Puja in the concluding stage of Sri Ramakrishna's momentous spiritual practices. Every reader of his life knows that Sri Ramakrishna concluded his wonderful and varied spiritual practices, spread over twelve long years, with the worship of the Primordial Powers (adya-sakti) as Shodasi, invoking Her in the body of Sri Sarada Devi. While describing the culmination of that wonderful worship, Swami Saradananda writes: "The worshipper lost in Samadhi (Transcendental Consciousness), became completely merged and identified with the Goddess, who too was lost in Samadhi."³ Here indeed is the fulfillment of the science of worship. This Sadhana of Sri Ramakrishna re-authenticates the science of worship and augurs well for its glorious future in the lives of men.

The aim of worship is clearly brought out in another definition of Puja: 'Puja is the oneness of the worshipper and Isvara.'⁴ The supreme result of this feeling of oneness of the worshipper and the Worshipped is verily the realization of the true nature of the Self (atmopalabdhii) or the attainment of Brahman (brahmopalabdhii). And Puja is one of the most useful steps in the achievement of this ideal. The supreme objective of all actions like Puja etc. is the realization of the Self or the attainment of Brahman. This is clearly indicated

in the Gita as well: 'Knowledge-sacrifice (jnana-yajna) is superior to the sacrifice performed with external articles, because all actions like sacrifice, worship etc., finally culminate in Knowledge (jnana)⁵.'

Needless to say, there is no difference between complete knowledge (purna-jnanam) and the attainment of Brahman. The Devi Bhagavata says that worship is of two kinds: external and internal. The external worship is itself divided into two streams, Vedic and Tantrik.⁶ In the comprehensive and integral framework of the Indian spiritual thought structure, both the streams—Vedic and Tantrik—are closely intermingled from very ancient times. As a matter of fact, 'Yajna' of the Vedas and the 'Puja' of the Tantras have equivalent connotations, and the primary aim of both is the same. 'From ancient times, the Vedic philosophic truths and the Tantrik rites like worship etc. have been conjoined and have thus been fulfilling each other—each compensating for the other's limitationsOn certain auspicious occasions, the performance of both the (Vedic) Yajna as well as (Tantrik) Puja becomes essential. Yajna is a special contribution of the Vedas; Puja, of the Tantras. Vedas and Tantras are complementary to each other.'⁷ The Vedic tradition is founded on the Vedas and the Upanishads, while the innumerable Tantrik scriptures form the basis of the Tantrik tradition. Needless to say, there is no real difference between Brahman, the supreme principle of the Vedas, and Sakti which is the supreme principle of the Tantras. The Puja performed in accordance with the Tantrik injunctions is called Tantrik Puja, while that done according to the Vedic rules is known as Vedic Puja.

Apart from the general distinction, there are several other types of divisions among the Pujas—*Sadhara* (with a basis), *Niradhara* (without a basis), *Nitya* (performed daily),

Naimittika (performed on special occasions), *Kamya* (performed with desires), *Sattvika* (unostentatious, i.e., without much external paraphernalia), *Rajasika* (sophisticated and pompous), *Svabhavika* (natural) etc. However, the subject of our present discussion is the two aspects of worship—external and internal.

External worship is referred to in the *Mahanirvana Tantra* as lower than the lowest (*adhamadhama*): ‘The highest spiritual discipline is the practice of Brahman-consciousness. The next is meditation. Chanting of hymns and Japa are low disciplines, and *lower than the lowest* is external worship with the help of an image⁸. The term ‘lower than the lowest’ is not used here in a derogatory sense. On the other hand, it is a tacit acknowledgement that the external worship is a clear and specific step for attaining the goal of spiritual striving, based on the qualifications of the aspirant. There is a possibility of misconception in regard to the meaning of the above-quoted statement if the true import of this scriptural declaration is not correctly understood. ‘There are two aspects of worship—external and internal. Each is of equal value. Some people imagine that mental worship is superior to external worship, and only the less qualified spiritual aspirants perform the external worship. This is not true’....In fact, total worship is a combination of both internal and external ones.’⁹

In any practice, secular or spiritual, differences in the competence of the aspirants cannot be denied. This is all the more true in the field of spiritual practice. The scriptural injunctions in regard to practice vary according to the aspirant’s taste, capacity for comprehension, and fitness. Sri Ramakrishna says: ‘People worship God according to their tastes and temperaments. The mother cooks the same fish differently for her children, that each one may have what suits his

stomach.¹⁰ Although the knowledge or attainment of Brahman is the Supreme goal, worship, Upasana etc. are enjoined in the scriptures as aids to the gradual attainment of this goal according to the differences in the qualification of the aspirants. 'Men at the first stage of spiritual development have to make use of something external, and when the inner self becomes purified they turn to more abstract conceptions.'¹¹ 'The impurity of the aspirant's mind gets eliminated to the extent he progresses in worship. A kind of ethereal peace and bliss gradually envelops his heart....Then he gets established in Truth and Power, the mantras he utters become awakened—charged with the power of Consciousness—and the penetrating power of his subtle intelligence (*dhi* or *medha*) to grasp finer truths continues to grow as he earnestly persists with the utterance of the awakened mantras. He then attains the real fruit of worshipping the Supreme Lord, namely, the "peace that passeth understanding" and self-fulfilment.'¹² At this stage no separate spiritual discipline called 'worship' exists for the Sadhaka. His whole life is then converted into an unceasing Puja: 'Whatever I do, O Lord, is nothing but Your worship.'¹³ This is what is known as spontaneous, natural worship. This spirit of natural worship finds a beautiful expression in one of the verses of *Saundarya Lahari* of Sri Sankaracharya: 'O Mother of the Universe! May my prattle be a Japa of your name, the movements of my hands etc. be the mudras (finger poses) used in your Puja, my wanderings be your circumambulation, my eating be the oblation offered for your sake, my lying down to sleep be prostration at your feet; let my acceptance of all the pleasant things through my senses of sight, taste, smell, touch etc. be with the awareness of surrender unto you who are the embodiment of Consciousness. Let all my doings be thus acts of unceasing worship.'¹⁴

Ramprasad, a great mystic of Bengal, has composed a song expressive of the same idea: 'Know you are prostrating to the Mother when you lie down to sleep, and that sleep is nothing but meditation on the Mother. When you eat, think you are pouring oblation for the Mother's sake. All the sounds you listen to are but the mantras of the Divine Mother, for Mother Kali, the Embodiment of Sabda Brahman, reveals Herself through every possible utterance of any sound. Ramprasad cries out in sheer joy: Mother verily resides in every particle of the universe ; when you roam around the city, think that you are circumambulating Mother Syama.'

Worship, then, has two aspects: external and internal. And a complete Puja should comprise both these aspects. This is what the scriptures say: 'Mental worship must accompany every act of external worship.'¹⁵ A general idea about mental worship can be had from the instructions given in the Mahanirvana Tantra on the internal worship of Adyakali, the Primordial Power worshipped as the Divine Mother: 'Offer the heart-lotus as the seat for the Divine Mother, the nectar originating from the Sahasrara in the head as the water for washing Her feet; and for Arghya, offer your mind. Offer the same nectar for Her bathing (*snaniyam*) and for drinking (*paniyam*). Offer the Akasa-tattva (the principle of ether) as the cloth to the Divine Mother, and the Gandha-tattva (the principle of earth) as the sandal-paste. Imagine the Citta (mind-stuff) to be the flower offered to the Devi, and Prana (the vital energy) as the incense. Think of tejas (the principle of the fire) as the light waved before the Mother, and the ocean of nectar as *naivedya* (the food-offering). The *anahata dhvani* (the unstruck mystic sound heard by Yogis in deep meditation) is the bell (rung during worship) and the Vayu-tattva (the principle of air) is the *chamara* used for fanning the Mother. All the actions of

the senses and the restlessness of the mind are the dances (performed to please the Deity). A variety of flowers (as mentioned below) should be offered to the Mother for attaining one's cherished object. Offer the following ten flowers, viz., lack of ignorance, lack of pride, detachment, non-bragging, absence of delusion, absence of arrogance, lack of hatred, unagitated composure, lack of envy, absence of greed. Apart from these are, five more flowers: The supreme flower of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and the flowers of sense-control, compassion, forbearance, and knowledge. These fifteen flowers of divine virtues should be used to worship the Devi.¹⁶

Worship is bound to yield its desired fruit. 'But if the worshipper suffers from any physical deformity or if the worship is performed without faith and the meticulous observance of all injunctions, then all the results of the worship cannot be obtained. Sometimes even contrary result may occur. Thus the accessories needed for a particular worship must be collected with care, though this might involve great effort. One should try to bring together all those causes whose combination produces the particular result.¹⁷' It is not the fault of the science of worship if the desired fruit is not attained; rather the fault is with the non-observance of the injunctions of worship. 'Desiring mastery over the science of Chemistry, if somebody bathes three times daily, eats sparingly and performs Japa of the *bija-mantra* in solitude, is there any hope of his ever attaining his desired objective?As the proverb goes, "For a marriage ceremony, the specific mantra appropriate to the occasion must be repeated (and not any other)"....After performing the worship without *sraddha*, without properly observing the rules, without chanting the mantras correctly, and without giving the *daksina* (fees) to the priest etc., if one complains saying, "Why did I not get the fruit of the worship?",

how meaningless that would be!¹⁸ Therefore, it is absolutely essential that whatever formalities are enjoined for a particular Puja are followed meticulously and with great faith and care.

If one carefully studies the scriptural injunctions in regard to these formalities, one would observe that each of them has a special significance. And if one performs the worship with sufficient knowledge of their significance, then the charm of the worship is also enhanced. It is said in the scriptures: 'The knowledge of the significance of an act is a part of its performance. Without this knowledge, true or real performance (of worship etc.) is not possible.'¹⁹ Thus when an action is performed after knowing its significance, then the worshipper's devotion to and faith in it become naturally strong. Then the action does not appear to be merely a mechanical, dry ritual. On the other hand, one gets the firm conviction that it is the support for one's success in spiritual life. If the worshipper can feel and realize the real spirit and the inner significance of the ritual, he can then understand its need and relevance. Then the real significance of the mantras, of the offerings like *naivedya*, etc. and of the various parts of the Puja like *nyasa*, *pranayama*, *bhutasuddhi*, *dhyana* etc., become clearly revealed to him and he can feel in his heart of hearts that it is God-realization that is the supreme objective towards which all these are oriented.

Needless to say, a knowledge of the meaning of the mantras is also as important as that of the ritual, if one wishes to achieve his desired objectives. He who recites the mantras with full knowledge of their meaning, obtains all the fruits of worship. It is only logical that if the worshipper understands the meaning of the mantras, he knows what he is seeking from the Deity. He realizes intensely how profound extensive and charming the meaning of the mantra is. It is thus beyond

doubt that in a meaningful worship it is absolutely necessary that the worshipper is aware of the meaning of both, the mantras as well as the rituals.

For the attainment of success in worship, the manifestation of the experiences corresponding to the various parts of the rituals is also a singular necessity. From the very outset the worshipper should become imbued with the spirit of the inner objective of the worship. The dictum of the scriptures too points to this: *devo bhutva devam yajet*. 'Worship the Deity, thinking yourself to be the very embodiment of the Deity Itself.' 'As is one's thinking, so will be one's success', *yadrsi bhavana yasya, siddhir bhavati tadrsi*. The aspirant attains to Godhood by constantly thinking of God.

Everything in its real nature (*svarupa*) is Brahman. But its real nature, being hidden due to different coverings, remains unmanifest. Meditation on the real nature of things can pierce through the outer coverings and fix the aspirant's mind on their real essence. That is why during the Puja the worshipper is asked to concentrate his mind on his own real nature as divine consciousness. The scriptures enjoin the worshipper to think of not only himself as divine, but also of all the paraphernalia of worship as such. If all the accessories used during the Puja are looked upon as divine, they become purified and their innate divinity gets unfolded.²⁰

From a superficial point of view the various rites connected with worship and its various limbs often appear irrelevant and meaningless. But discriminative thought would reveal that all of them are indeed pregnant with meaning—right from the injunction on the worshipper to enter the worship-room with pure thoughts upto the final prostration, through the different stages of sitting on the worshipper's seat with a settled will, *acamana* (washing of the mouth), the various

purificatory rites, *nyasa* (placing the various Sanskrit alphabets on different parts of the body), offering of various articles to the Deity etc. None of these is irrelevant or meaningless. All the rituals are so carefully thought out and scientifically arranged that they gradually lead the worshipper to the Supreme goal of worship, viz., the identity of the worshipper with the Worshipped.

Although the general philosophical principle behind worship is our present theme, and in this connection it is only the scriptural background of Puja that has been somewhat elaborately discussed thus far, one should nevertheless clearly bear in mind that worship is primarily a spiritual discipline (*sadhana*), and for success in this *sadhana*, just as every part of it should be perfect, even so all the rites ought to be tinged with devotion, faith and loving attachment to the Deity. In fact, it is this last mentioned attitude or feeling that is the chief requirement in Puja. It is said in the Gita: 'Whosoever with devotion offers Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, that I accept—the devout gift of the pureminded.'²¹

The same idea is beautifully expressed in a song by a certain Vaishnava aspirant: 'Whoever offers to the Lord the *tulasi*-leaf of the mind besmeared with the sandal-paste of Bhakti, does not need to rub the sandal-wood against the stone. Never is worship possible with merely basketful of flowers; everyone performs worship with flowers, but it is the bee that enjoys the honey'.

To offer the *tulasi*-leaf of the mind and the sandal-paste of Bhakti at the feet of the Chosen Deity—in this alone lies the fulfillment of worship.

Knowing the meaning of a ritual is a part of its performance, and no ritualistic action is possible without knowing its meaning.²² An attempt is made here to determine the

significance of some of the ritualistic practices that normally occur during a Puja, in the context of the scriptural statement mentioned above. The meaning and purport of some of the common practices are briefly discussed below.

The term *artha-jnana*, 'knowledge of the meaning', refers to both the meaning of the rituals as well as the meaning of the mantras. The inner meaning of every ritual and the meaning corresponding to each of the mantras must be known to the worshipper. Before entering into the subject, let us make a few general remarks at the outset. If we look at any specific practice associated with Puja in isolation, it becomes impossible to comprehend its real import. Such a piecemeal study can only produce a distorted understanding. It should be remembered that the real purpose of each act of ritual is to be found only in the context of the whole. All the ritualistic acts in Puja, from beginning to end, are an integral part of a well thought-out, planned activity. It is not always possible for everyone to determine exactly the why and wherefore of all the ritualistic injunctions in Puja. This however doesn't in any way hamper the inner import of those rituals. In such cases the scriptural injunctions are to be accepted as the supreme authority. The Gita says: 'He who abandons the commandments of the scriptures and lives as his desires prompt him, attains neither spiritual perfection, nor worldly happiness, nor liberation.'²³

Let us have a quick look at some of the experiences Sri Ramakrishna had when he performed worship at Dakshineswar. Although these experiences came to him at different periods of his life, we mention them here all together:

'The Master used to say that at the time of performing *Anganyasa*, *Karanyasa*, etc. he actually saw the letters of the mantras in bright colours set in the body. He actually saw the

Coiled Power (*Kundalini*) going up in the form of a snake through the Susumna to the Sahasrara. He felt that the parts of his body left behind by that power, at once became still and insensitive and dead to all appearance. Again, when according to the prescribed method of worship he uttered the mantra *ram*, sprinkled water all round himself and imagined a wall of fire existing around the place of worship, he actually saw an impassable wall of fire with a hundred tongues spread out, protecting the place of worship from all obstacles.’²⁴

‘At the time of performing *sandhya* and worship [said the Master] I used to think, according to scriptural prescription, that the *Papapurusa* within had been burnt up. Who knew then that there was actually *Papapurusa* within the body and that it could be actually burnt and destroyed? A burning sensation came on the body from the beginning of the Sadhana. I thought, ‘What is this disease?’ It increased by degrees and became unbearable. Various kinds of oils prescribed by physicians were used; but it could by no means be alleviated. One day, while I was sitting under the Panchavati, I saw that a jet-black person with red eyes and a hideous appearance come reeling, as if drunk, out of this (*showing his own body*), and walked before me. I saw again another person of placid mien, in ochre-coloured dress, with a trident in his hand come out similarly from the body, vehemently attack the other and kill him. The burning sensation in the body decreased for a short time after I had that vision. I suffered from that burning sensation continually for six months before the *Papapurusa* was burnt up.’²⁵

‘Formerly when he offered cooked food etc. to the Mother, he used to see an extraordinary ray of light coming out beaming from Her eyes, touching all the offered articles, taking their essential parts and withdrawing itself again into Her eyes.’

Several such instances could be cited. Now to return to our main topic. The first instruction with regard to worship is that the worshipper, after finishing his ablutions and daily routine of prayers etc., should enter the worship-room, bow before the deity in prostration, and sit facing the north or the east.

This instruction, namely, of facing the north or the east, is significant. These directions have been indicated only in a symbolic sense. The sun is a symbol of knowledge and it rises in the east. The thought of the east therefore quite naturally stimulates the mind with the feeling of the rising of the sun of knowledge. Just as the compass-needle always points northward, our mind too must always point towards God. When the northern direction is mentioned, the thought of Godward-orientation of the mind arises quite naturally. These, therefore, appear to be the reasons why one is advised to face the north or the east during worship, meditation or similar other spiritual practices.

REFERENCES

1. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, Tr. Swami Jagadananda, Chennai Sri Ramakrishna Math, IV.1.
2. पूर्वजन्मानुशमनाज्जन्ममृत्युनिवारणात् ।
सम्पूर्णफलदानाच्च पूजेति कथिता प्रिये ॥—*Kularnava Tantra*, 17.70
3. *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, I.20.
4. योगो जीवात्मनोरैक्यं पूजनं सेवकेशयोः ॥—*Mahanirvana Tantra*, 14. 123.
5. श्रेयान् द्रव्यमयाद्यज्ञाज्ज्ञानयज्ञः परन्तप ।
सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते ॥—*Gita*, 4. 33.
6. द्विविधा मम पूजा स्याद् बाह्या चाभ्यन्तरापि च ।
बाह्यापि द्विविधा प्रोक्ता वैदिकी तान्त्रिकी तथा ॥—*Devi Bhagavatam*, 7.39.3.
7. Dr. Mahanamabrata Brahmachari, *Candi Cinta* (Bengali) p. 9.
8. उत्तमो ब्रह्मसद्भावो ध्यानभावस्तु मध्यमः ।
मनुनिर्जपाऽधमो भावो वह्निःपूजाऽधमाधमा ॥—*Mahanirvana Tantra*, 14. 122

9. *Candi Cinta*, p. 125-26.
10. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai) 189.
11. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama) 3: 362.
12. Brahmarshi Satyadev, *Puja-Tattva* (Bengali), p. 13-14.
13. यद्यत् कर्म करोमि तत्तदखिलं शम्भो तवाराधनम् ।
14. जपो जल्पः शिल्पं सकलमपि मुद्रा विरचनम् । गतिः प्रादक्षिण्यं भ्रमणमशनाद्याहुतविधिः ।
प्रणामः संवेशः सुखमखिलमालार्षणदृशा । सपर्यापर्यास्तव भवतु यन्मे विलसितम् ।
—Sri Sankaracharya, *Saundarya-Lahari*, 27.
15. सर्वासु बाह्यपूजासु अन्तः पूजा विधीयते ।
16. *Mahanirvana Tantra*, 5. 143-49.
17. Swami Saradananda, *Bharate Sakti Puja* (Bengali), p. 76.
18. Ibid., p.6-7
19. अर्थज्ञानस्य कर्मानुष्ठानाङ्गत्वं न हि अर्थज्ञानमन्तरेण अनुष्ठानं सम्भवति ।
—*Mimamsa Nyayaprakasa*
20. सर्वेषां देवता दृष्ट्या जायते शुद्धतापि च । —*Gandharva Tantra*, 13, 3, 5.
21. पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहतमश्रुमि प्रयतात्मनः ॥ —*Gita*, 2. 26.
22. अर्थज्ञानस्य कर्मानुष्ठानाङ्गत्वं न ह्यर्थज्ञानमन्तरेण अनुष्ठानं सम्भवति । —*Mimamsaa Nyayaprakasa*.
23. यः शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः ।
न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् ॥ —*Gita*, 16.23.
24. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Chennai : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1952) II.5.13. pp. 132-33.
25. Ibid, II. 7.10, pp. 148-49.
26. Ibid, II. 7.4, p. 143.

Appendix 3

Worship as a Spiritual Discipline*

Swami Bhajanananda

I

Place of worship in spiritual life

We have seen that prayer, worship and meditation (*dhyāna*) are the three steps or stages in the path of bhakti and that prayer, when intensely done, gradually merges into meditation.¹ But few people are capable of praying with such intensity as to convert it into meditation. For most people who follow the path of devotion, an intermediate discipline is necessary in order to attain and sustain the state of meditation. This intermediate discipline is worship.

By worship we mean not only external ritualistic worship but also mental worship, *japa*, *stuti* (adoration), even work done as service to the Lord. In other words, by worship we mean the cultivation of a worshipful attitude—an attitude of offering everything to God. Since human nature is self-centred, this attitude of giving develops only slowly. The natural tendency of the mind is to be always at the receiving end. That is why asking, or prayer, comes first. It is only when, as a result of prayer, the soul starts receiving grace in the form of faith, love and strength that it can truly start offering everything including itself to God.

In other words, worship needs a certain degree of prior qualification and inner training. It is because many people attempt worship without first acquiring this competence that

* From Prabuddha-Bhārata, May 1980 P. 149 and Prabuddha-Bhārata, June 1980 P. 159.

it degenerates into mummery and priestcraft, and seems to lead the worshipper not an inch forward on the spiritual path. Especially in the case of priests doing ritualistic worship in temples and churches, the saying 'the nearer to Church, the farther from God' seems to be true. But those who have practised prayer for a long time find worship a great help in unfolding their spiritual potential. As pointed out earlier, worship in later Hinduism got united with meditation to form a composite discipline called *upāsanā*. Concentration became a test of the intensity of one's devotion, and meditation came to be looked upon as a higher stage of worship. But here we propose to study worship as an independent discipline.

Nature of worship—Sacrifice

Worship is a special kind of I-Thou relationship between the soul and God characterized by sacrifice, adoration, sacredness and cult. In the *Bhāgavatam* the great devotee Prahlada enumerates nine marks of devotion: 'Listening to the stories of the Lord, singing His glories, constant remembrance of the all-pervading Lord, serving Him in His devotees, ritualistic worship, constantly saluting the Lord, doing all work for His sake, friendship with the Lord, and complete self-surrender.'² These could as well be taken as an accurate description of the nature of worship. If classified, these nine characteristics could be reduced to sacrifice, adoration, sacredness and cult which distinguish worship from all other disciplines.

There can be no worship without sacrifice. Sacrifice is not just giving. It implies two things. One is giving without expectation of return. Whatever we offer in worship must be for love, and not for barter. Secondly, sacrifice means self-denial. It must entail some loss to the ego. It is not what we offer that matters but how we offer it. As Sri Krishna points

out in the *Gītā*, God is pleased even with a leaf, flower or water if it is offered with true love (*bhaktyupahṛtam*).³ The same idea is contained in the story of the 'widow's mite' in the Bible.⁴

The word used in ancient Hinduism to mean sacrifice was *yajña*. But *yajña* meant not merely offering something to a Personal God. It meant defining the individual's relationship with the cosmos at different levels. Hindu scriptures (the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* and *Manu Smṛiti*, for instance) enjoin five great sacrifices (*pañca-mahā-yajña*) as the daily duty of every person: *brahma-yajña*, *deva-yajña*, *pitṛ-yajña*, *bhūta-yajña* and *manuṣya-yajña*.⁵ So great was the importance attached to these duties that Manu goes to the extent of stating that those who do not perform them are not alive although breathing.

What distinguishes man from animals is knowledge. The ultimate cause of all human misery is lack of knowledge. It is through knowledge that man realizes God and attains supreme peace. Therefore it is imperative that knowledge should be kept in circulation in human society. Every man has a duty to impart knowledge to others and this is *brahma-yajña*.

Offering things to gods and goddesses (*devatoddeśena dravya-tyāgaḥ*) is *deva-yajña*. During the Vedic period all offerings were made to the fire, which was regarded as the mouth of the gods.⁶ Later on, the faith that gods directly accept offerings became traditional. Propitiating the departed spirits of one's ancestors through special rites like *śrāddha*, *tarpaṇa* and charitable acts undertaken in their name is *pitṛ-yajña*. Feeding animals and looking after them with kindness is *bhūta-yajña*.

Though according to *Manu* *manuṣya-yajña* means serving guests (*atithi*), every form of service to fellowmen should be

included under it. Human needs are so varied and social life is so complex that there exist innumerable ways of rendering service to others. In modern times Swami Vivekananda has revived the ancient ideal of service and, by raising it to the level of worship, has converted it into a spiritual discipline and a powerful tool for social change. He focused the attention of people on the service of the poor and the downtrodden.

From a spiritual point of view, the basic idea behind sacrifice is selflessness. The greatest obstacle to spiritual progress is selfishness. Giving up selfishness is the true meaning of sacrifice.

What is the cause of selfishness? The ego. Enquiry into the nature of the ego led ancient sages to the discovery that all selves are parts of one Supreme Spirit, who indwells in all beings. The great teachers of bhakti taught that the best way to get rid of egotism and selfishness was to surrender oneself to the will of the Supreme Self or God. Moreover, the very word sacrifice implies a certain amount of deprivation and suffering, and has meaning only to a person who regards worldly goods as real and valuable. A person who looks upon the world as unreal or impermanent and who is therefore bent on renouncing it does not feel that giving up is a sacrifice. Thus, as the idea of renunciation and knowledge of the real nature of the self spread, the concept of sacrifice gave way to that of self-surrender to God. (A similar change in the attitude towards sacrifice took place in Christianity but along entirely different lines, as we shall see later on). This psychological change in worship can be traced in the *Bhagavadgita*. In its first six chapters, especially in the fourth chapter, the emphasis is on sacrifice. But in the next six chapters, the emphasis is more on self-surrender. However, the idea of 'giving' is

common to both sacrifice and self-surrender, and has always remained as a basic characteristic of worship.

Nature of worship—adoration

The second characteristic of worship is *āradhanā* or adoration. This may be expressed through rituals, praise (*stuti*), hymnody (*kīrtana*), etc. What is adoration? Adoration is love plus reverence. Love becomes bhakti only when it is sublimated by the highest reverence for the Supreme Lord. Reverence comes from knowledge of God's transcendental nature and supernatural glories (*māhātmya-jñāna*). It is this *māhātmya-jñāna* that distinguishes love for human beings from love for God. Even the poor and illiterate Gopis of Vraja, whose love for Krishna is said to mark the acme of devotion, were fully aware of their Beloved's transcendental nature. In one of their prayers, well known as 'Gopi-gitam', these cowherd women tell Krishna, 'You are not a mere son of a milkmaid, you are the inner Self and Witness indwelling in all beings.'⁷ Without this awareness of the divine nature of the Lord, their love for Him would be in no way better than that of a paramour, remarks Narada.⁸

Adoration forms an important part of Christian and Islamic worship. St. Ignatius Loyola bases the whole of his *Spiritual Exercises* on his fundamental maxim: 'Man is created for this end—to praise, renounce, and serve the Lord his God.' And the influential seventeenth-century mystic Berulle has laid down the rule that man's true relation to God lies solely in adoration and adherence, and that these two attitudes of the soul cover the whole range of inner life. Indeed, so great was the importance given to adoration in the medieval church that the monks spent most of their time in the choir singing praises of God from morning to night.

In Hinduism adoration takes the form of chanting the names of the Lord. This is not vain repetition, for each name stands for a particular attribute of God. The well-known *sahasra-nāmas* ('thousand names') about Vishnu and Lalita are a perfect device for compressing a vast account of divine attributes and glories in an amazingly small compass. *Saṅkīrtana*, or group singing, of divine names popularized by Sri Chaitanya has for its main purpose remembrance and adoration of the Lord. Nowadays there is an overemphasis on meditation. But when we study the lives of the great saints of India we find that almost all of them spent most of their time singing the glories of the Lord.

Nature of worship—sacredness

A third characteristic of worship is sacredness. Everything connected with worship is sacred, and worship itself imparts sanctity to the worshipper and the articles of worship.

The Hindu concept of sanctity has three aspects. The *ādhibhautika*, or physical aspect consists in cleaning everything connected with worship by the liberal application of water accompanied by the chanting of mantras. According to Hindu belief every object and every organ in the body has a divine form or presiding deity (*adhidevatā*). By invoking the deities of the bell, lamp, conch, flowers, water, etc these articles get sanctified. This is the *ādhidaivika* aspect of sacredness. The *ādhyātmika*, or spiritual, aspect of sacredness is associated with the doctrine that the Atman, or real Self, of man is eternally pure and self-luminous, and sin and impurity affect only the mind. A major part of Hindu worship is devoted to the symbolic purification of mind so that the Atman may manifest itself in all its intrinsic lustre and glory.

Nature of worship—cult

The fourth characteristic of worship is the cult. In popular understanding cult is associated with sectarianism and fanaticism. Sociologists use the term to mean man's symbolic response to the idea of the holy. For a spiritual aspirant cult means entering into a relationship with a god, goddess, avatar or the supreme Godhead regarded as a Person. Whereas every other religion offers only one cult, Hinduism offers a large number of cults. In fact, worship in Hinduism means adoption into the spiritual family of a god or a goddess.

It should, however, be remembered that it is not easy to enter into an intimate personal relationship with an intangible, unknown spiritual being. It needs not only purity and faith but also a certain transcendence of the self over the physical body. Without at least a vague or rudimentary awareness of oneself as spirit, it is not possible to look upon the Deity as one's own or regard oneself as belonging to a spiritual family.

Again, this relationship is based on the worshipper's psychic make-up. There must be some similarity between the adorer and the adored. A worshipper of Shiva must have some attributes of Shiva in him, and a worshipper of Vishnu must have some attributes of Vishnu in him. Each man must choose that deity who is the perfect embodiment of those attributes which are present in him at least in an incipient form. This is the rationale of the concept of *iṣṭa-devatā*, or Chosen Ideal. The cultic division of Hinduism into *śākta*, *śaiva*, *vaiṣṇava* and other sects have for its basis typological differences in human temperament.

Cult expresses itself in two ways: myth and ritual. Myths are sacred stories about gods, goddesses and avatars. The *Devī Māhātmya*, or *Candī*, tells us about the life of the Divine

Mother; the *Bhāgavata* tells us about the life of Krishna; the New Testament tells us about the life of Jesus Christ; and so on. Some of these stories may be historically true, but the others are not false, for they have a mystic reality and undeniable spiritual validity. Without myth it is impossible to enter into a deep, personal relationship with the Deity.

A ritual is a symbolic act that expresses a mystic relationship between man and Deity. Ritual is a kind of sacred language. Man is not only a knower but also a doer. He can express his feelings through words as well as through actions, perhaps more eloquently through the latter. However, religious rituals are not artificially coded. Like music and dance, ritual too springs spontaneously from a deeper layer of consciousness where man touches the divine harmony of the rhythms of life. Says Susanne Langer in her celebrated book, 'Ritual is a symbolic transformation of experience that no other medium can adequately express. Because it springs from a primary human need, it is spontaneous activity.'⁹

Functions of worship

As a spiritual discipline, the primary function of worship is to prepare the mind for higher meditation. It should be remembered that *dhyāna*, or meditation, is only the third stage in the process of concentration. The earlier two stages are *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of mind from sense objects) and *dhāraṇā* (fixing the mind at a centre of consciousness). We have shown that prayer is the bhakta's way of practising *pratyāhāra*. In the same way, worship may be regarded as the bhakta's way of practising *dhāraṇā*. The will that is detached through prayer gets fixed or focussed on a divine form through worship. When the will is fixed on a higher plane, thoughts flow in that direction. When this process lasts longer, it

becomes *dhyāna*, or meditation. Thus worship gives a good training in focussing the will at a higher plane.

Secondly, worship strengthens the 'I-Thou' relationship with God. 'I- Thou' relationship can also be established through prayer and meditation. But worship creates a special relationship with God characterised by self-surrender and service, which please Him greatly. Sri Ramakrishna's parable illustrates this point. A poor tenant farmer goes to see his landlord taking with him a pumpkin as a gift. The master asks him, 'What do you want?' The farmer replies, 'I don't want anything. I came just to see you.' Seeing the poor man's unselfish love, the landlord is highly pleased and makes him sit beside him. If, however, without the permission of the landlord, the tenant had attempted to occupy a seat near the master, he would have been driven out by the servants. In the same way, when God is pleased with the devotion of the devotee, he makes him sit near Him. This sitting near, or *upāsana*, is meditation. Sri Ramakrishna says God's grace is necessary for the practice of meditation. And this grace comes through prayer and worship.

The individual is in dynamic contact with the cosmos at different levels, and the abundance of life is flowing into him in the form of food, material comforts, knowledge, etc. If he tries to retain all these and allows his mind to cling to them, it becomes impure. But by giving to others all that are in excess of his personal needs he purifies his mind. A true devotee accepts all good things as coming from the divine source and offers them to his fellow beings as service to the indwelling God. This is the bhakta's way of practising renunciation. Service to others done as worship is as purifying and liberating as renunciation. What is important in spiritual life is not how many things you have given up but how much of egotism you

have given up. The ego blocks the channel of communication with the universal stream of life. It alienates the soul from the Supreme Spirit and produces spiritual impoverishment. Worship reduces the ego and clears the channel for the free flow of divine grace.

Higher training for the will, establishing a close relationship with the Deity, purification of mind—these are the primary functions of worship. The ultimate purpose of worship, however, is the direct vision of the Deity. All worship is based on the basic belief that one can contact the Divine through it.

Worship has in addition several sociological functions which, from a spiritual point of view, may be regarded as secondary. One is the sanctification of social institutions. The relation between the husband and wife is sanctified by the marriage ritual. A Hindu may have reverence for Christ, but he does not become a Christian unless he undergoes the ritual of baptism. Many of the annual festivals observed by people are purely social functions, but they acquire sanctity and meaning by association with worship. Another secondary function of worship is social cohesion. Common worship gives people identification with their community, though it is also true that differences in worship are one of the major causes of disharmony in society as a whole. Yet another function of worship is that it gives a sense of security and well-being to people. When examinations are imminent, children with coconuts in their hands make a beeline to the nearest Ganesha temple. When faced with difficulties, adults rush to temples and churches with offerings. Indeed, for millions of people worship gives solace and confidence to face the problems of life, and is the only door to transcendent Reality.

Laws of worship

Worship in Hinduism is based on three fundamental principles. The first principle is deification of the worshipper. True worship of the Spirit is possible only by the Spirit. True love is possible only between beings of similar nature. A dog's love for man cannot be equated with a man's love for a man or a woman. In order to love or worship a god or a goddess, man should become a god or a goddess himself. All souls are parts of one Supreme Spirit, and the difference between men and gods lies in the degree of manifestation of the light of spiritual consciousness in them. The very word *deva* (god) literally means 'the shining one'. Being free from ignorance, the light of Atman shines brilliantly in the gods and goddesses. Man too, by removing ignorance, can manifest this inner light and attain the nature of gods. That is why Swami Vivekananda says each soul is potentially divine.

This is a very ancient Hindu idea. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says, worship without Self-knowledge will reduce man to the position of cattle (*paśu*): 'He who adores another god thinking, "He is different from me, and I am different from him", does not know. As is an animal (to man), so is he to the gods. As many animals serve a man so does each man serve the gods.'¹⁰ The same Upanishad later on repeats six times a statement which has become the bedrock of Hindu worship: *Devo bhūtvā devānām apyati* ('Becoming a god he merges in the gods').¹¹ In other words, man should acquire an element of divinity in order to worship the Divine. That is why Sri Ramanuja holds that in order to qualify for the practice of bhakti yoga, one should first gain a vision of one's own true inner self—*Ātmāvalokana* as he calls this experience.

It should be mentioned here that deification (*theosis*) of man is an accepted doctrine in Catholic and Eastern Churches,

but they restrict it to only those who are baptised in these churches. It is also based on different theological premises.

How does man acquire divinity? This question takes us to the second fundamental principle of worship known as the '*yathā kratu*' principle. It is enunciated in a famous *Chandogya* passage, which may be translated as 'As is one's will, so does he become.'¹² *Kratu* means aspiration or creative will. If we intensely strive for an ideal, we will attain it. By constantly thinking that we are divine we gradually become divine. By constantly meditating on a god or goddess we acquire his or her attributes. A man's destiny is determined by his soul's intense aspiration. Wishful thinking or daydreaming is not enough. The will must be powerful enough to transform one's character and consciousness. The practice of making *saṅkalpa* (sacramental intention) before the beginning of a ritual, the purificatory rite called *bhūta-śuddhi* and other practices are based on the '*yathā kratu*' principle.

The third principle of worship concerns the power of invocation. From the early Vedic period there has survived the belief that gods and goddesses respond to the fervent call of a pure and devout heart. Later on the idea developed that the all-pervading Divine could be invoked in a specially consecrated image.

The principle of invocation has found two kinds of not-very-healthy application. One is the idea of delegated worship—the belief that worship can be done through a priest who acts as a proxy for the real worshipper called the *yajamāna*. The benefit of the worship goes not to the priest but to the *yajamāna*. The countless temples in India and the institution of priesthood owe their existence to this belief. In Christianity priesthood derives its authority from the belief in apostolic

succession. A doctrine similar to the above-mentioned Hindu belief is held by the Catholic Church. It is called *ex opere operato* ('from the work wrought') according to which the effect of worship is independent of the capacity of the priest. That is, whatever be the character of the priest, the sacrament that he administers will have its own effect on the recipient.

The second trend, which the principle of invocation has led to, is the belief that man could control psychic powers by invocation with the help of appropriate mantras. From this arose black magic, which, though once restricted to primitive communities, is now being practised by thousands of people in the so-called civilized Western countries. It is not necessary for our purpose to go deep into this weird phenomenon. But it should be stated that modern researches into ESP and psychic phenomena have proved the possibility of a 'psycho-technology' which, like the scientific technology, could be used for the welfare or destruction of human beings.

Types of worship

Among the great religions of the world Hinduism and Christianity give the greatest importance to worship. Islam strictly prohibits ritualistic worship but encourages a worshipful attitude. In fact the daily *namaz* or *salah* is more an act of worship or adoration than a prayer. In Buddhism the Mahayana division gives some importance to worship. Some scholars even claim that Tantric worship in India was first developed by Mahayana Buddhists.

Islam allows only worship of God, and prohibits worship of anyone else including the Holy Prophet. In Christianity the Catholic Church makes a distinction between two types of reverence. 'Latria' is true worship accorded only to the Trinity. 'Dulia' is veneration paid to the saints recognized by the

Church. A third type called 'hyperdulia' or higher veneration is reserved only for the Blessed Virgin as the Theotokos or Mother of God. The Protestant churches permit only the worship of God and reject the rest as idolatry. In Hinduism the Vedantic doctrine of the unity of the individual spirit with Brahman blurs the distinctions between man and God. Not only does it worship several gods, goddesses and avatars, but it also allows freedom to worship the guru, saints and sages, sometimes even with all ritualistic splendour.

Hindu worship is of four types: ritualistic, vocal, mental and manual. The popular notion of ritualistic worship is that through it God will be propitiated and will fulfil one's worldly desires. In this sense it is nothing but *kāmya-karma* (work done with desire), and all great teachers have discouraged spiritual aspirants from following it. But ritualistic worship can also be done purely as a spiritual discipline, and it is in this form that we are interested here. Vocal worship consists of chanting of hymns (*stotra*) and the singing of devotional songs nowadays called bhajan. Repetition of a mantra (*japa*) and visualization of the Deity (*bhāvanā*) come under mental worship. Manual worship is doing all work as service (*kaiṅkarya*) to the Lord. We shall next discuss these disciplines of worship in detail. It is however, important to remember that all these forms of worship are primarily spiritual disciplines and are intended to shift the focus of one's life from the ego to the Divine.

REFERENCES

1. See the April 1980 Editorial, *Prabuddha Bharata*.
2. *Śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam pādasevanam;
Arcanam vandanam dāsyam sakhyam ātma-nivedanam.*

—*Bhāgavatam*, 7.5.23.

3. *Bhagavadgītā*, 9.26.
4. Mark, 12.42; Luke, 21.2,
5. Cf. *Manu Smṛti*, 3.70,71.
6. *Agnirmukhaṁ prathamam devātnām*. —*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.4.8
7. *Na khalu gopikā-nandano bhavān-akhiladehinām-antar-ātmadr̥k*. —*Bhāgavatam*, 10.31.4.
8. *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra*, 1.23,24.
9. Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), p. 52.
10. *Atha yonyām devatāmupāste, anyosāvanyoahamasmīti, na sa veda, yathā paśurevaṁ sa devānām*. —*Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.4.10.
11. *Ibid*, 4.1.2-7.
12. *Atha khalu kratumayaḥ puruṣo yathākratur-asmlloke puruṣo bhavati...* —*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.14.

II

Worship in the Vedic period

Worship plays an important part in a spiritual aspirant's life. It reduces his selfishness, gives a higher direction to his energies and takes his soul nearer to God. We have already seen that worship is a special form of 'I-Thou' relationship between the soul and God, characterised by adoration, surrender, sacredness and cult.¹ Worship in Hinduism has a long history going back to the very beginning of Vedic culture. During this period so many changes took place in the theory and practice of worship that the present modes of worship bear little resemblance to those of the Vedic period.

In Vedic times worship was known as *yajña*, or sacrifice. In order to live well and long, man needed the help of gods.

These gods had to be propitiated by offering them milk, clarified butter, cakes, etc. It was at first thought that Fire was the mediator or priest who conveyed the offerings to gods. In fact, the very first line of *R̥g Veda* praises Agni as the priest (*agnimīle purohitam*) for man who could not approach the gods directly. It was believed that this kind of sacrifice secured for the sacrificer's material prosperity here, and a place in heaven hereafter.

This is the popular understanding of Vedic sacrifice and the one propagated by Western scholars. Perhaps this view might have prevailed even during the Vedic period among the unenlightened masses. But innumerable passages in the Samhita and Brahmana portions of the Vedas clearly indicate that even in those primeval times a higher, mystic meaning of *yajña* was known to at least an elite class of enlightened sages. In fact, it was this mystical interpretation of sacrifice that later on led to the development of various contemplative techniques called *upasanas* or *vidyas*.

The various changes that took place in the interpretation of sacrifice can be traced in the Brahmanas (the part of Veda dealing with rituals). Even at a very early stage the idea of substitution entered sacrifice. It came to be believed that material offerings (like milk) were offered as substitutes for one's own self. And it was thought that along with the burnt offering, the human body of the sacrificer was mystically consumed, and a new divine body prepared to serve him in heaven. In some of the elaborate fire sacrifices of a later period, a human idol made of solid gold was placed at the bottom of the fire altar, and over it were placed one above the other three perforated bricks. The gold man represented the divine body and the three perforated bricks stood for the three worlds

(*bhūh*, *bhuvaḥ*, *suvaḥ*) through which the soul had to pass on its way to the fourth, the realm of immortal life.

In the meantime, philosophical speculation was going along three lines. One was the search for the common source of the power of all gods, and this led to the realization of a supreme, primordial being known as Hiranyagarbha, Viśvakarman or Prajāpati. The second line of speculation was about the nature of the world. Life was found to consist of continually self-renewing cycles, and this led to the understanding that the world was governed by a moral order which constituted a basic harmony or rhythm called *ṛtam*. The third line of speculation was about the nature of man. The human personality was found to consist of various faculties like the mind, the sense organs, *vāk* (speech), *dhī* (intuition), *prāṇa* (vital air), and behind all these stood the Atman supporting and illumining them.

The practical effect of these speculations about the nature of God, world and soul was the identification of *yajña* with the cosmos. Each individual sacrifice came to be looked upon as a miniature replica of the vast cosmic phenomena. Just as an architect or a ship-builder first makes a model of the house or ship, the ancient Vedic sages used sacrifices as a model to study the mysteries of creation and participate in them. The well-known hymn called 'Puruṣa Sūkta' conceives the creation of the whole universe as the result of a grand sacrifice in which the Puruṣa or Cosmic Soul (identified with the Hiranyagarbha) offers himself as an oblation. As a result of this self-immolation, the Puruṣa becomes dismembered, and all his separated limbs and organs become the various objects of the universe. The creation of the Virāṭ or the universe by the self-sacrifice of the Hiranyagarbha was thought to be eternally going on. This view led to the belief (found in the

‘Agnicayana’ portion of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*) that the actual *yajña*, or fire ritual, was a symbolic repetition of the ancient archetypal cosmic sacrifice.²

The last stage in the evolution of the idea of sacrifice was the identification of the individual worshipper with Prajāpati (Hiraṇyagarbha). The fire itself was identified with Prajāpati, and *yajña* became a symbolic act of uniting one’s self with the Cosmic Self. Gradually, this idea of the unity of the worshipper and the Supreme Spirit took the form of a meditation. Later on, the two—ritual and meditation—got completely separated, and meditation became an independent discipline.

The attempt to approximate *yajña* to cosmic sacrifice led to the designing of very large and complex altars, and sacrifice began to assume gigantic proportions. However, this did not endure for long. In the books composed during the fifth and sixth centuries BC echoes of protest against Vedic ritualism are heard, and in another century or two the entire Vedic sacrificial system vanished from India.

Worship in the post-Vedic period

The total disappearance of Vedic religion, especially the sacrificial system, is one of the unsolved puzzles of India’s cultural history. Whatever be the reasons for this, two events had a decisive influence on it. One was the development of the path of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*) as a direct path to realization of Brahman. Even in the Brahmanas, and more definitely in the Aranyakas, we find mental sacrifices replacing external rituals. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the mental activities of a human life lasting for a hundred years are conceived as 36,000 fires, each fire standing for a day’s activities.³ A similar idea appears in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*,

where man himself is called a sacrifice.⁴ Sri Shankara finally established on philosophical basis the earlier belief that these mental sacrifices were as effective as external rituals. The Upanishads further developed new contemplative techniques called *Upāsanās*, or *vidyas* (based on the method of *iti*, or affirmation), and *nididhyāsana* (based on the method of *neti*, or negation). All this made external rituals unnecessary. The rise of Buddhism and the popularisation of Patanjali's Yoga and, at a later stage, the emergence of the Tantras also contributed to the downfall of Vedic sacrifices.

The second event was the growth of the *Bhāgavata* cult and the writing of the *Gītā*. The tremendous influence exerted on Hinduism by Sri Krishna through his teachings has perhaps not yet been adequately assessed. The doctrine of bhakti that he taught opened the way for a direct 'I-Thou' relationship between man and God, and converted all life-activities, including secular work, into worship. These changes along with the ideas of the Tantras that were gaining ground in the Middle Ages led to the structuring of a new system of ritualistic worship called puja, which almost completely replaced the old Vedic *yajña*.

Doctrinal basis of puja

Puja differs from *yajña* not only in its external form but also in its basic philosophy. The first basic doctrine behind puja is the priesthood of man. In Vedic sacrifice Agni (Fire) was the priest who mediated between man and gods. Man could not directly approach the gods with offerings. What was needed was a divine assurance that God accepted offerings directly from His devotees. This was given by Sri Krishna in the *Gītā*: 'When a pure-hearted devotee offers with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I accept that loving offering.'⁵

This divine promise made the fire ritual unnecessary. Every man became a priest of God.

The second fundamental presupposition behind puja is that the Deity could be invoked in an image. During the Vedic period certain *pratīkas* (symbols) were used for mental concentration but never used for external worship. But in the post-Vedic puja, a three dimensional idol, or *vigraha* (literally, that which enables the mind to 'grasp' Reality), is used. This may be a *śaligrāma* or *liṅga* or an anthropomorphic image called *pratimā*. In Vedic rituals only an invitation (*āvāhana*) was extended to gods. But in puja there is an invocation (*āvāhana*) of the presence of the Deity in the image. That the all-pervading divine Power could be 'infused' in an image is an important belief in post-Vedic Hinduism. Such divine images are not merely aids to concentration but are repositories of power. According to Sri Ramanuja, in the properly consecrated images God manifests Himself in His special aspect called *arca*.

Image worship led to temple worship. The temple completely replaced the Vedic altar in post-Vedic Hinduism, though scholars have pointed out the close similarity between the temple and the sacrificial hall (*yajñaśāla*) in their basic design. Temples have given a social dimension to worship in Hinduism. Though Hinduism did not develop a universal 'church', temples have served to foster the notion that worship is not only an individual's private affair, but an act of public adoration in which every member of the community gets an opportunity to participate directly or indirectly.

The third philosophic concept which distinguishes puja from Vedic *yajña* is the doctrine of divinisation of the worshipper. In the Vedic period the popular belief was that

through sacrifice man could reach the world of gods. But gradually this gave way to the belief that man could acquire an element of divinity in this life and only then could he become eligible for worship. True love, and hence true worship, are possible only when there exists a close similarity in the nature of the worshipper and of the worshipped. The Vedantic doctrine of the Atman as the real Self, which is pure, self-luminous and blissful, makes man potentially divine. An important function of worship is to bring out this hidden divinity. This is symbolically done through certain rituals called *bhūta-śuddhi* and *nyāsa*. Though to a beginner all this is nothing but imagination, to an advanced *sādhaka* divinisation of the subtle body is a matter of actual experience.

The fourth basic concept on which puja is based is the doctrine of service and self-surrender to God. In Vedic *yajña* the main idea was sacrifice. In puja the idea of service (*upacāra* or *kainkarya*) takes its place. Here again, the influence of Sri Krishna is clearly seen. In the *Gītā*, he identifies sacrifice with all life-activities and advises Arjuna to do all work as worship: ‘O son of Kunti, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation, whatever you give in charity, whatever austerity you practise—do all that as an offering to Me.’⁶ In puja, service (*upacāra*) of the Deity is done with five, ten, sixteen or more articles like water, flowers, leaves, incense, light, food, etc.

Priesthood of man, invocation of divine Presence in an image, divinisation of the worshipper and service—these are the fundamental principles on which puja is based and which distinguish it from Vedic *yajña*. An important point to note here is the role of *mantras* and *mudrās* (gestures) in worship. The whole system of puja is based on the implicit belief that

these have an intrinsic power to produce changes in the worshipper's consciousness and in the objects around him.

Puja rituals

The principles of puja mentioned above which developed during the post-Vedic period were incorporated into a new set of scriptures known as the Āgamas. All the major sects—the Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava—have their own Āgamas. Though the actual rites show minor variations from sect to sect, and even from region to region, there is a common basic pattern. Hindu rituals were perfected by the Tantras, and the most systematic form of worship was developed in Bengal. In other parts of India too the influence of Tantra is seen in rituals, but there greater use of hymns and Vedic mantras is made.

The normal daily puja consists of six steps: preparations, purifications, divinisation of the worshipper, invocation in the image, service to the Deity and conclusion. Every ritual act is followed or preceded by the utterance of a mantra.

Preparations

Before the puja proper begins certain preparations are made. The ground is washed or wiped clean and the vessels, including a lighted lamp, are arranged on it. The various articles of worship like water, sandal paste, flowers, etc. are kept ready for use near the worshipper, who squats on the ground facing east or north.

The very first ritual is *ācamana*, or purification of the mouth, without which the sacred mantras should not be uttered.

Then the worshipper makes the *saṅkalpa*, or sacramental intention. This is a declaration of the purpose of the worship,

which may be worldly prosperity or liberation. This connects the will to the act of worship, which thus becomes a conscious, self-directed, goal-oriented discipline.

The next step is the consecration of the water to be used in worship by invoking in it the presence of the seven holy rivers of India from the solar orb. This consecrated water, called *sāmānya-arghya*, is used for all the remaining rituals. The worshipper then salutes the various deities and the line of teachers.

Purification

Everything relating to the Deity is sacred, and every object connected with puja must be separately sanctified by ritual purification. The removal of various psychic obstacles and the expulsion of evil spirits are also parts of the purificatory process.

Divinisation of the worshipper

The worshipper must symbolically destroy his *pāpa-puruṣa* (sinful self) and let his pure, self-luminous, true self shine forth. For this the worshipper first does *prāṇāyāma* to purify his subtle body. Then follows an important ritual called *bhūta-śuddhi*. In this the worshipper meditates on the *kuṇḍalinī* power as rising from the base of the spine to the head where it gets united with the light of the Supreme Spirit. He now imagines that his impure gross and subtle bodies are dried up and burnt by this mystic fire. Then he thinks that he is putting on a new divine body, free from all taints of sin, created out of his luminous true Self.

After *bhūta-śuddhi* the worshipper invokes the divine Presence in the heart of the new ethereal body. The Deity thus invoked inside is then worshipped mentally.

Invocation in the image

The worshipper has now acquired a divine body and feels the divine Presence in his heart. He has now to infuse divine power into all his limbs and organs. This is done by a process called *nyāsa*, which literally means 'laying hands on'. The worshipper, chanting certain mystic syllables, touches various parts of his body. This gives him the necessary power and fitness to do the next ritual called *āvāhana*, or invocation of the Deity in a metal image or a stone emblem or a flower. In this process the worshipper imagines that the Deity who is seated in his heart comes out through his breath onto the flower in his hand which is then followed by the infusion of power called *prāṇa-pratiṣṭha* in the image through special invocatory *mudrās* (gestures).

Thus, puja involves double invocation—first in the heart of the worshipper and then in the image.

Upacāra, or Service

Then follows the worship proper in which ten or more articles like water, sandal paste, etc. are offered to the Deity, who is treated as an honoured guest.

Concluding rituals

The conclusion of puja is marked by a special offering of handfuls of flowers called *puṣpāñjali*, after which the worshipper surrenders himself and the fruit of his worship at the feet of the Deity. In temples this special offering of flowers may be repeated at other times also by the priest at the request of devotees.

In private worship the final ritual act is *visarjana* or *udvāsana* in which the Deity is requested to return to his or

her celestial abode, or back to the worshipper's heart.

No puja becomes complete without the joyful sharing of *prasāda*, the offered sacramental food, by the devotees. It is held that worship without distribution of *prasād* becomes ineffectual. *Prasāda* is considered so sacred that it should be treated with respect, and holding it in hand one is not expected to salute another person. Partaking of *prasāda* is done not merely to gain a psychological sense of participation in worship. Its main purpose is to purify the body and mind, as the root-meaning of the word indicates. The word also means Grace, and so partaking of *prasāda* is an act of accepting divine blessings.

It is believed that when food materials are offered to the Deity, some changes take place in the subtle elements constituting them. How this takes place is a mystery. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says: 'The gods do not eat or drink; just by seeing this nectar they become satisfied.'⁷ Sri Sarada Devi used to say that when she offered food to the Lord, she saw a ray of light coming from the eyes of the Deity and touching the offered materials. The observation of the Holy Mother accords well with the accepted tradition.

Puja is not the only form of worship practised in modern Hinduism. There are other forms of worship like the *homa*, the *sandhyā*, the *āratrikam*, etc.

The *Homa*

At present a few orthodox people here and there in India still faithfully follow the ancient Vedic rituals like the *agnihotra* and one or two other types of sacrifice. But in the mainstream of Hinduism Vedic *yajña* is no longer in vogue. The only fire ritual which is still widely performed on special occasions is the *homa*. Sabarasvamin defines *homa* as a fire

sacrifice in which there is an abundance of oblation.⁸ *Homa* rites now prevalent have been influenced by Tantricism and are associated with the worship of Gaṇeśa, Rudra, Candī and other Deities. The Deity to be worshipped is first identified with fire and the oblations are then offered to the fire.

The *Sandhyā*

Another form of Vedic worship which is still surviving, though modified by theistic ideas of a later age, is the *sandhyā*. It was once regarded as the unavoidable daily obligatory duty of every twice-born. But at present not many among them practise it. The busyness of the modern man is often pointed out as the cause of this neglect, but the real cause seems to be that this ancient rite has lost its meaning and relevance for the modern man. We may say that there is now a need for a simplified and possibly modified *sandhyā* in modern Hinduism, which could be practised by all Hindus.

Traditional *sandhyā* consists of four main steps: purification, oblation, *gayatri* and salutations. Purification consists of four ritual acts: purification of mouth (*ācamana*), purification of the vital airs (*prāṇāyāma*), purification of body (*mārjana*) and sin eradication. Of these the last one is the most important; it is often called *agha-marṣaṇa* or *prāśana* (sometimes these terms denote separate acts and mantras). It is an auto-suggestive prayer in which the worshipper tells himself that the sins he had committed till then have left him, and whatever purity still lingering within is being offered into the light of the Atman. The worshipper thus renews his self—replaces the old sinful self with a new radiant self. This self-renewal enables him to face the day-to-day problems of life with a clear and fresh mind.

The second step in *sandhyā* is *arghya-pradāna*, the offering

of an oblation of water to the Sun, the highest visible symbol of the Supreme Spirit, the creator and sustainer of life. The third step is the repetition of the Gayatri mantra at least twelve times. The Gayatri has been given different interpretations by Śankara, Sāyaṇa, Uvvaṭa, Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara and others. But all are agreed that it is a prayer for the awakening of the dormant faculty of intuition (*dhī*) in man. When repeated with intense faith, concentration and perfect continence, this sacred prayer reveals its power by illumining the heart of the aspirant. The fourth and last step in *sandhyā* is to offer salutations to all the gods and goddesses and to surrender oneself to the Supreme Spirit. If non-essential details are omitted, the whole *sandhyā* rite will not take more than fifteen minutes, but its purifying, relaxing, uplifting effects last for hours.

The Ārātrikam

Popularly known as *ārati*, this is at present a very common form of worship. A simple ritual of waving a lighted lamp before the Deity, it is a symbolic act of the soul's self-surrender to God. Often five articles are waved in *ārati*, namely, light, water, cloth, flower and *cāmara* (fan), which are said to symbolize the five elements—fire, water, ether, earth and air, respectively. Of these, the waving of light is the most solemn act. Devotees believe that it is when this waving of light is performed that there takes place a special manifestation of divine Presence in the image. The pious feel a sort of direct communion with the Divine at this time.

Though the puja rite includes the waving of light, the *ārātrikam* is an independent rite performed mainly at dawn and dusk, and in temples at other times also. It is the only ritual in which there is collective participation. Puja is conducted as a private act of devotion. But the *ārati* is

essentially meant as an act of public adoration and participation.

Vocal worship

God can be worshipped not only through rituals but also through hymns and songs. These were popular even during Vedic times. The *Sāma-Veda* was meant to be chanted in adoration and praise. Later on great teachers like Śrī Śaṅkara composed hymns called *stotra* or *stava*; these are now recited by millions of people as a form of worship. Whole books have been written—the *Chandi*, the *Bhāgavatam* and several books in the local languages—the recitation of which is regarded as a form of worship. To the same group belongs the class of devotional literature called *sahasra-nāma* (thousand names of God). Japa or the repetition of a single mantra, belongs to the field of meditation or contemplation, but the basic attitude behind it is one of worship.

Saṅkīrtana and bhajan are two most popular forms of vocal worship in modern times. In *saṅkīrtana* a group of people loudly chant the names of God or mantras in chorus. Bhajan is the singing of devotional songs either by one person or by a group of people. These songs composed by great saints may express different ideas but are sung in front of the Deity as a form of worship.

Work as worship

An account of Hindu worship cannot be concluded without mentioning the concept of work as worship. The Upanishads speak of the whole universe as projected and sustained by Brahman. The *Gītā* teaches that God is the Prime Mover, the immovable cause of all movements. Individual karma is only a part of this cosmic movement. When work is

done with this understanding and the surrendering of its fruit to the Divine, it becomes worship. 'And through this worship,' says the *Gītā*, 'man may attain perfection.'⁹ This great teaching, which for centuries had only limited application, was revived in modern times by Swami Vivekananda, who transformed it into a powerful tool for accelerating social change.

Work becomes worship only when the worker realizes that God is immanent in creation. Though the Advaita Vedanta speaks about the illusoriness of the world, what is implied by this is that everything in the world derives its being by the irradiation of Brahman: *Tasya bhāsa sarvam idam vibhāti* ('By its light all this shines').¹⁰ This makes the basic attitude of the Hindu towards the world one of worship. But, as Sri Ramakrishna says, though God is in all beings, there are differences in the manifestation of His glory in different beings. Ancient Hinduism, recognizing these differences, made certain mountains, rivers, trees, animals and of course holy men as special manifestations and made them objects of worship.

What Swami Vivekananda did was to change the whole perspective. Ancient Hinduism stressed objective difference. Swamiji stressed subjective unity. Whatever be the differences in the objective world, the enlightened sage sees the same Supreme Spirit shining through all—the rich and the poor, the saint and the sinner, man and woman. This view of life, which for centuries remained restricted only to a small number of illumined souls, was made the common philosophy of ordinary people by Swamiji.

However, Swami Vivekananda gave special emphasis on service to the poor. Why did he do this? Not because there is

a greater manifestation of God in the poor and the downtrodden, but because their needs are greater, and also because it is a more unselfish form of service. 'He who has more of this unselfishness,' says Swamiji, 'is more spiritual and nearer to Shiva. . . . And if a man is selfish, even though he has visited all the temples, seen all the places of pilgrimage and painted himself like a leopard, he is still further off from Shiva.'¹⁰ The main obstacle to spiritual progress is selfishness. As long as millions of people live in utter poverty and ignorance, it is selfishness to neglect them.

Spiritual life is a larger life; it means participation in the mystery and joy of divine life. Work done as worship enlarges the self and converts life into yoga. In the rapidly changing modern Hindu society this idea is fast gaining ground as an individual spiritual technique and a social philosophy.

This does not, however, mean that the other forms of worship are superstitions and are to be discarded. To do all work as worship is not easy. Asks Swami Vivekananda: 'Ordinary mankind driven everywhere by false desire, what do they know of work? The man propelled by his own feelings and his own senses, what does he know about work?'¹² In order to convert work into worship a worshipful attitude must be created first. Without a transcendental focus for the will, without a higher direction given to one's feelings and energies, work may increase a person's bondage and delusion and may even drag him to the level of the animal. The nearer we approach God, the farther we move from animal instincts and the more human our actions and reactions become. As a means of leading the worshipper closer to God by divinizing him and sublimating his feelings, rituals and image worship have a significant place in the life of every spiritual aspirant

including those who give greater importance to work as worship.

Swami Vivekananda himself did not condemn ritualistic worship—rather he supported it—but he pointed out that purity and unselfishness were the foundations of spiritual life, and these are difficult to acquire without some form of social service. What he did was to enlarge the scope of worship. Spiritual life is the transformation of the total life of the aspirant. If worship is restricted only to rituals and certain devotional exercises, its transforming power will remain limited. It is only when even normal secular work is also converted into worship that the whole life gets transformed into divine life.

Finally, it should be remembered that the main purpose of worship is to reduce egotism and establish an everlasting relationship with God. This may be done through any one or more (it does not matter which) of the techniques mentioned above. Once this is accomplished, the whole life of the aspirant becomes *unbroken worship*.

REFERENCES

1. See the first part of this article.
2. Cf. Julius Eggling, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Part IV, Introduction; in *The Sacred Books of the East* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), vol. 43.
3. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 10.4.3.
4. Puruṣo vāva yajñah, *Chandogya Upanishad*, 3.16.1.
5. Bhagavad-Gītā, 9.26.
6. Ibid., 9.27.
7. Na vai devā aśnanti na pibante tadevamṛtaṁ drṣṭvā
trpyanti.
—*Chandogya Upanishad*, 3.6.1-3.9.1
8. Iṣṭiryāgaḥ. Sa eva secanādhiko homaḥ. —Śabara on
Mīmāṃsa Sūtra, 6.8.7

9. Gītā, 18.46
10. Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 2.2.10.
11. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), vol. 3, p. 43.
12. Complete Works, vol. 2 (1976), p. 149.

Durga Puja

Swami Bhajanananda

I : GENERAL INFORMATION

The Glory of Autumn

Autumn (*Sharat*) is regarded as one of the best seasons in India. The sun is on his southward journey and, as his blazing rays begin to slant, the subcontinent feels freedom from the oppressive heat of summer months. The monsoon has infused new life into trees, shrubs, creepers, herbs, grass, moss and lichen; and Gaia, the Earth Goddess, shows herself off in her richly embroidered green apparel of lush vegetation everywhere.

In the villages there is a look of plentitude and peace. The granaries are full with freshly garnered grain, the fields offer large open spaces with cattle grazing here and there, and along the borders of fields you can see rows of white and light pink *kashphool* (flowers of a kind of tall grass) tassels waving triumphantly in the breeze. Overhead, the sky is deep blue with an occasional white cloud sailing across lazily to an unknown destination. A kind of mystic silence pervades the air, broken only by the laughter of children playing here and there.

It is as if Nature has prepared herself for the advent of the Divine Mother. Indeed, which other season can be a better one to welcome the Divine Mother than autumn? And Durga Puja is about the advent of the Divine Mother.

Worship of the Divine Mother

Worship of the Divine Mother is one of the oldest forms of worship known to humanity. In prehistoric times, God was

worshipped as the Divine Mother all over the world. Evidences of Mother Worship have been recovered in different places in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia. But it is only in India that Mother worship went beyond the framework of a cult and became a full-fledged living religion supported by an advanced theology, scriptures, rites, customs and festivals which are followed by millions of people even in modern times. And in Bengal, worship of God as Mother attained the highest form of cultural refinement and ritual sophistication, and became the dominant faith and practice of the people.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "To look upon God as Mother is the purest and the highest form of Sadhana" (*Matribhav shuddha bhav, sadhanar shesh katha*). Why did he say that? Because Mother's love is the most unselfish and unconditional form of human love. For a child, mother is all sufficient: apart from giving birth, she provides everything that the child needs—nourishment, protection, warmth, comfort, training, education. To look upon God as Mother is to make God all-sufficient in one's life. It is a very natural, intimate and purest form of relationship.

Mother Worship in India

Worship of God as Mother has prevailed in India from prehistoric times. It was perhaps in vogue in Mohenjodaro-Harappa civilization. In the Rig Veda, there is a wonderful hymn known as *Devi-Suktam* (which is chanted during Durga Puja days) in which the Divine Mother declares that She moves with the Rudras, Vasus, Adityas, and all other gods, that She is the power of all gods, that She is the Queen of the world, and so on.

It is, however, in the *Devi-Mahatmya*, popularly known as the *Chandi*, that worship of the Divine Mother assumes an

independent, supreme status. Although Chandi forms a part of *Markandeya Purana*, it is treated as an independent scripture. For devotees of the Divine Mother, especially in Bengal, Kerala and some parts of Tamil Nadu, Chandi is regarded as the most sacred and valued scripture. It was composed sometime between the 6th and 9th centuries AD.

Another authoritative book on Shakti worship is *Devi-Bhagavatam*. Between the 6th and 16th centuries a class of Shakta scriptures known as the Tantras (believed to be 63 in all) came into existence. The Tantras became popular in three areas, namely Bengal, Kerala and Kashmir, which form the three angles of a geographical triangle.

Worship of the Divine Mother is prevalent all over India - from Kanyakumari (famous for its Kanyakumari temple) to Kashmir (Kshirbhavani temple) and from Rajasthan (Amba temple) to Kolkata (Kalighat temple). In fact, there is hardly any large area in India which does not have a Devi temple. Great heroes of the past worshipped the Divine Mother. Sri Rama is said to have worshipped Durga before killing Ravana. Shivaji, the great Maratha king, was a votary of Bhavani. Guru Govind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, is also said to have been a worshipper of Mother Durga.

Different Forms of Divine Mother

Although the Divine Mother is only one, Her manifestations are many. During the early centuries of the Christian Era, the Divine Mother was worshipped as an independent and Supreme Goddess. She was mostly pictured as riding a lion (*Simha-vahini*). This is the image of Durga we find in the Chandi where she appears as Chamundeshvari and Mahishasura-mardini.

In later centuries, the Divine Mother came to be regarded

as the spouse of God Shiva. Here again, there were two schools. In one school, the Divine Mother and Shiva are regarded as equal in power. This school, known as "Samya", is the more common one, especially in South India. In the other school, known as "Kaula", the Divine Mother Kali is regarded as the dynamic principle and Shiva as the passive principle. This school is most prevalent in Bengal, and also in Kashmir and Kerala.

The Divine Mother is regarded as having "Ten Great Wisdom Forms" (Dasha-mahavidya). These ten Goddesses are:

1. Kali
2. Tara
3. Tripura Sundari
4. Bhuvaneshwari
5. Bhairavi
6. Chhinnamasta
7. Dhumavati
8. Bagalamukhi
9. Matangi (Saraswati)
10. Kamala (Lakshmi)

Navaratri and Durga Puja

The nine days from the first day after the new moon (known as Mahalaya) in the Indian month of Ashwin to the 9th day constitute the festival of Navaratri which is observed all over India. During this period, the Divine Mother is worshipped in some form or other. The majority of Hindus who cannot conduct such worship at home visit Mother's temple in their locality after taking bath and putting on new clothes. The tenth day is known as Dassera. In the northern parts of India, on this day the life of Rama (known as *Ramlila*) is enacted in public. In many parts of India, on this day weapons, imple-

ments, instruments, etc are worshipped. [In Bengal, this worship of tools and implements takes place on another special day known as Vishwakarma Puja.]

It is during this period of Navaratri that Durga Puja is celebrated in Bengal. The celebration of Durga Puja is a unique feature of the socio-religious culture of Bengal. In no other part of India does the worship of Durga affect the lives of the people so deeply as it does in Bengal. Festivities begin from Mahalaya and go on for nearly a month. During this period, people put on new clothes, worship the Divine Mother at any of the beautiful Durga pandals put up in different parts of the city or town, and enjoy feasts.

The most striking aspect of Durga Puja is the image of the Divine Mother as Mahishasura-mardini. Here the Divine Mother is seen as having ten arms, each wielding a weapon. [Hence She is described as Dasha-prahara-dharini.] Once the image is consecrated, and the Deity is invoked in it, it undergoes a transfiguration. It is no longer a clay image but the living Goddess, radiating power, knowledge, love and joy, the benign Mother of the Universe who has come to bless Her children and to assure them of Her love, help and protection.

Another prominent feature of Durga Puja celebration is the gorgeous Pandal or Durga dalan in which the worship is conducted. Durga Puja is meant for public worship, in which a large number of people participate. Its rituals and paraphernalia are quite expensive. Formerly only kings and aristocratic families could afford to celebrate such public worship. But in modern times Durga Puja is done through organized community effort. People of a locality or street form a celebration committee, take collections and put up the imposing pandal.

Who first started this kind of public celebration of Durga

Puja? The generally accepted view is that it was Kamsa-narayan, king of Tahirpur in Rajshahi District (now in Bangladesh), who first started the present style of public celebration of Durga Puja around the year 1600.

Commingling of Legends

What is the mythological basis of Durga Puja? Several mythological legends have commingled to form the basis of Durga Puja. These are mentioned below:

1. Before fighting Ravana, Sri **Ramachandra** was advised by Narada to propitiate Devi Durga. According to Hindu mythology, during the six months of the sun's southward journey the gods remain asleep. (They remain awake during the six months when the sun moves northward.) So Rama had to awaken the Goddess first. This is why the first ritual in Durga Puja is the awakening (*bodhan*) of Durga. This legend is found in the Ramayana in Bengali written by Krittivas. In some other Puranas it is mentioned that, when Rama wanted to propitiate Devi, it was Brahma who did the awakening.

The present-day Durga Puja is, thus, a commemoration of the first Durga Puja performed by Sri Rama.

2. The second legend is about the coming of **Devi Uma** from Her abode in Kailash to the home of her parents—Himavat and Menaka. She comes riding a lion. In the Vedas, Uma is first mentioned in the Kena Upanishad where She is described as Uma Haimavati. It is a popular belief in Bengal that Uma comes and stays with the people for three days. A whole set of songs, known as Agamani, describing the homecoming of Uma has come into existence. These songs are sung during the days preceding Durga Puja. These songs serve to spiritualize Hindu mother's love and concern for their

married daughters.

3. The third legend is about **Sati** Devi. Although neither Sati nor Uma is mentioned in the Chandi, in the *mool-mantra* used in Durga Puja, Sri Durga is addressed as *Daksha-yajna-vinashini*, “The Destroyer of Daksha’s sacrifice.”

Daksha was one of the Prajapatis or Creators of the Universe. He had eight daughters, of whom the eldest was Sati. Against her father’s wish, Sati married the great God Shiva who was an ascetic wearing matted hair and leading an unconventional life on Mount Kailash. After some years, the roving Rishi Narada reached Kailash and gave the news that Daksha was going to conduct a big sacrifice to which all gods and goddesses were invited, except Sati and Shiva. Although uninited, Sati went to see her father. But Daksha spoke insultingly of Shiva and, unable to bear the insult, Sati fell down dead. Shiva was naturally enraged; and his anger burnt to ashes Daksha and his sacrifice, and then Shiva began a dance of destruction. But the gods intervened and Shiva finally returned to His meditation in Mount Kailash. Sati was reborn as Parvati who, after years of intense tapas, got Shiva as Her husband once again.

The *mool-mantra*, *Daksha-yajna-vinashinyai*, refers to the destruction of Daksha’s sacrifice mentioned above. It is, however, quite obvious that this great Mantra has some deeper mystic, esoteric meaning far beyond the mythological significance.

4. The most important legend which is central to Durga Puja is about **Durga**, and forms the theme of Chandi. The word Durga literally means one who “protects like a fort” or one who “destroys the evil consequences” of our actions (*durgati-nashini*). In the Chandi, Durga is mostly referred to simply as Devi, the Goddess, and occasionally as **Ambika**.

She is an independent, supreme Goddess, not the consort of any male God.

As already mentioned, the **Chandi** is one of the oldest scriptures on Mother Worship. It was obviously composed before the sectarian divisions of Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism entered Hinduism. Hence Devi is referred to in this book as the Power of Vishnu and also addressed as Narayani repeatedly.

Durga in Chandi

The Chandi is divided into three parts. In the first part Devi appears as Mahamaya which is described as *yoga-nidra* of Vishnu. That is to say, Mahamaya is the power of Tamas which makes people lethargic, indolent and sleepy. Under the influence of this cosmic delusive Power, Lord Vishnu went to sleep. At that time two demons by name Madhu and Kaitabh came out of the ears of Vishnu and attacked Brahma, the Creator God. Brahma then praised the Divine Mother as Mahamaya or Yoga-nidra. Pleased with the propitiation she withdrew herself from Vishnu's body. Vishnu now woke up and killed Madhu and Kaitabh.

In the second part Devi appears as Mahishasura-mardini and is also called Chandika. The story goes that when a powerful demon by name Mahishasura was the king of the Asuras (demons), they attacked the Devas (gods) and vanquished them. The defeated gods went to Shiva and Vishnu and complained about the atrocities of Mahishasura. Hearing this, Vishnu, Shiva and other presiding Deities became angry. The rays of their anger combined to form a supremely powerful and dazzlingly bright female Being—the Devi known also as Chandika and Ambika. Seeing the dazzling brightness of the Devi, Mahishasura first sent his army to attack Her. But the

Divine Mother exterminated them all. Then Mahishasura, who had the form of a buffalo, himself attacked Her. Devi at once jumped upon his body, pressed his neck with her foot, struck his chest with her spear, and finally cut off his head. The gods being extremely relieved and pleased, praised the Devi, and their praise takes up the rest of the second part of Chandi.

In the third part of the book, Devi appears first as Parvati and then, out of her form, there arises another form known as Kalika. But she continues to be referred to as Ambika. The third part narrates another valorous act of the Divine Mother. Once upon a time two brothers, Shumbha and Nishumbha became lords of the three worlds, and the gods lost everything. Coming to know of the beauty of Kalika, they sent word to her asking her to come to them. When she spurned their order, they at first sent two demons, Chanda and Munda, to capture her. Seeing them, Ambika became angry and out of that anger there issued forth a terrible form known as Kali who fought with the demons. Finally Kali cut off the heads of Chanda and Munda. She thus came to be called Chamunda.

Now Shumbha and Nishumbha themselves rode in their chariots and attacked Ambika and Kali. After a protracted battle Ambika herself destroyed Shumbha and Nishumbha.

Significance of Chandi

The image of Durga as Mahishasuramardini epitomizes the Chandi. To understand the significance of the image we have to understand the significance of the Chandi.

The gory scene depicted by the image of Durga, and the blood-curdling descriptions of a warrior Goddess exterminating hordes of evil doers drenching the earth with blood, may be enigmatic and repulsive to some people, especially to those

who are outside the Shakta tradition of Hinduism. A matured and realistic understanding of the Divine in the context of the real situations in human life and society is necessary to understand the true significance of Chandi. The basic significance of Chandi may be briefly stated as follows.

1. The main purpose of Chandi is to glorify Shakti. Shakti is the dynamic aspect of the ultimate Reality known as Brahman. Shakti is generally regarded as the feminine principle. The feminine principle has two aspects: a lower, seductive aspect, and a higher, maternal aspect. It is the higher maternal aspect that is glorified in the Chandi, and in the Shakta tradition in general. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: *Jini Brahmatini Shakti, tini i Ma* "He who is Brahman is Shakti, and He himself is the Mother of the Universe."

A mother has three main functions: to give birth, to nourish, to care and protect. It is the third aspect that is highlighted in the Chandi. God is not a disinterested spectator of the drama of human life. She is an active participant. She protects people from dangers. Think of the cosmic figure of a Divine Mother towering over millions of people guarding them from dangers, punishing evil doers. Well, you can see this image of the Cosmic Mother in the Chandi.

2. The second purpose of the Chandi is to depict the reality of evil. Vice, wickedness, cruelty, injustice, suffering—all these are as much real as virtue, love, compassion, cooperation etc which humanity has idealized and dreamed about from time immemorial. Dharma and Adharma, virtue and vice, are two inseparable aspects of reality, and we have to accept both.

We generally tend to associate Godhead only with love and compassion. We forget that Godhead has also an aspect of power, terror and destruction. It was this destructive aspect of Godhead that Sri Krishna revealed to Arjuna through the

Vishwarupa Darshana revelation. What we find in the Chandi is the same terrible aspect, but associated with the Eternal Feminine.

Mahishasura, Shumbha, Nishumbha and other characters portrayed in the Chandi are of course mythological, but this does not make them irrelevant in the present-day world. Do we not find similar, or even worse, types of people in modern times? Political leaders who commit mass genocide, terrorists who bomb crowded trains, buses and market places, serial murders, rapists et cetera, about whom we read in newspapers—are these people in any way better than the demons described in the Chandi? As a matter of fact, Chandi assumes greater reality and relevance in the contemporary world than at any other time before.

Chandi is not a book of romance. Nor does it promise a utopian world. On the contrary, it wakes us up from our futile dreams and situates us right in the midst of the terrible realities of the present-day world which we very often fail to face.

3. The third message of the Chandi is the empowerment of women. In recent years there is a lot of talk about empowerment of women, especially in rural and tribal areas in India. The Chandi shows to what heights this empowerment can be raised. In all countries in all times, women have been indoctrinated from childhood to believe that they are weak, helpless and totally dependent on men. The Chandi shows how much power women can wield, how they can work independently, and face boldly even the worst challenges of life without unduly depending on men.

4. Lastly, Chandi delivers a message of hope, the assurance of divine help and succour. In spite of all the terrible happenings described in the book, there is absolutely no pessimistic tone or note of despair in the Chandi. Let troubles and difficul-

ties come, let even dire calamities occur; we have nothing to fear, for there is a God, a Mother, who protects us from all dangers or gives us the inner strength to face them. In modern times the Divine Mother, born as Sri Sarada Devi, has given us this assurance: "Always remember, there is somebody behind you ... Place your burden upon me and remain unperturbed." This is also the last message of the Chandi.

II : DURGA PUJA AT BELUR MATH

Durga Puja was first celebrated at Belur Math in 1901. Since then Durga Puja has been celebrated at Belur Math year after year, although for a few years after the first celebration in 1901, Pratima worship was not done. (In this connection it should be mentioned that Durga Puja was conducted on a small scale, without the image, by the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna during the early years of Ramakrishna Math at Baranagar.) It was Swami Vivekananda himself who started the first Durga Puja with the image at Belur Math. As a rule, Hindu Sannyasins do not conduct this kind of ritualistic worship. Why then did Swamiji start the new tradition?

One reason was to gain the acceptance of the local community for the new way of life that Swamiji and his monastic brothers were leading. The Hindu society in Calcutta had not fully accepted Swamiji's going to the West, and the rather unconventional ways of life at Belur Math which included disregard for caste rules and mixing with Western people. As a matter of fact, the celebration of Durga Puja helped to remove much of the misunderstanding and misgivings about the new monastic institution among the local people.

Another reason was Swamiji wanted to institutionalize respect for divinity of motherhood and sanctity of womanhood. Swamiji saw that one of the main reasons for the

advancement of Western people was the elevation of women in the West, and one of the main reasons for the backwardness of India was the neglect of women in this country. Worship of the Divine Mother, especially the Kumari Puja, would create the awareness of the potential divinity of women and a respectful attitude towards them.

A third reason was supernatural. A few days before Durga Puja in 1901, Swamiji had a vision of Durga Puja being done at Belur Math. More or less at that time, Swami Brahmanandaji saw in a vision Mother Durga coming across the Ganga from Dakshineshwar to Belur Math. Swamiji asked Raja Maharaj to make preparations for Durga Puja immediately, although only a few days were left to begin the Puja.

The main problem was to get a clay image for worship. Enquiries at Kamartuli (the street in Kolkata where artisans make clay images) revealed that there was a single beautiful image of Durga in a shop. The person who had ordered it had not turned up, and so the artisan agreed to sell it to the monks.

Apart from the image, a lot of other things had to be collected for the elaborate ritualistic worship. Under able direction of Swami Brahmanandaji everything was done well at short notice.

The first Durga Puja at Belur Math was conducted in a huge Pandal (decorative shed) on the open ground to the north of the old shrine. The invocatory worship on Shashthi (the 6th day of the lunar month) was on 18 October 1901. The Pujari was Brahmachari Krishnalal and the Tantradharak was Isvar Chandra Chakravarty, the father of Shashi Maharaj. Sitting under the Bel tree (which now stands in front of his temple) Swamiji sang Agamani songs welcoming the Divine Mother.

The householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and orthodox

Brahmins of nearby area had been specially invited, and thousands of people, irrespective of the distinctions of caste or religion, attended the three-day festival. On the night of Navami Swamiji sang many songs in praise of Divine Mother, some of which used to be sung by Sri Ramakrishna.

Holy Mother and Durga Puja

When Swamiji decided to celebrate Durga Puja at Belur Math, one of the first things he did was to seek the approval of Holy Mother Sarada Devi who was then staying at Bagh-bazar in Kolkata. Swami Premananda went to Mother, and Mother whole-heartedly approved the proposal. On Shashthi day She came with other women devotees and stayed at Nilambar Babu's garden house nearby. Mother attended the awakening ceremony that day and attended the Puja on all the three subsequent days.

Since Sannyasins cannot undertake this kind of ritualistic worship, Swamiji decreed that the Puja should be done in the name of Holy Mother. This became a tradition which continues to this day. Swamiji looked upon Sri Sarada Devi as the divine counterpart of Sri Ramakrishna, born for the awakening of womankind in the modern world. In a letter to Swami Shivananda written in 1894 from America, Swamiji had given expression to his conviction about the Divinity of Holy Mother as follows: "Brother, I shall show how to worship the living Durga (*Jivanta Durga*), and then only shall I be worthy of my name. I shall be relieved when you have purchased a plot of land and established there the living Durga, the Mother (i.e. Sri Sarada Devi)." The presence of Holy Mother, the Living Durga, during the Puja must have given boundless joy and satisfaction to Swamiji and the other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

Holy Mother attended the Durga Puja at Belur Math in 1912 and in 1916 and perhaps in some other years also. Each time Mother stayed for a few days and blessed Her monastic and lay children.

Agamani

As already mentioned elsewhere, several mythological legends underlie Durga Puja festival. One of these is the legend that every year during the Navaratri, Goddess Uma, who is identified with Parvati the divine consort of Shiva, comes to the home of her parents—Himavat and Menaka. In Bengal this legend has been universalized into the belief that the Divine Mother visits the homes of all her children during the three days of Durga Puja. Agamani songs are songs which vividly depict the maternal love and deep concern of Menaka for her divine daughter. They are sung to welcome Mother Uma into homes. They also reflect parents' love for their married daughters.

Swami Vivekananda was fond of Agamani songs because of the tender feelings expressed in them. On the Shashthi of the first Durga Puja at Belur Math, Swamiji sang Agamani songs such as, *Giri Ganesh amar shubhakari* etc. The tradition of singing Agamani songs continues in Belur Math. Every year from the first day (*pratipada*) after Mahalaya to the sixth day (*Shashthi*) Sadhus and Brahmacharins gather at the main temple of Sri Ramakrishna at dawn and sing Agamani songs in chorus. [At night, after Arati, they conduct Kali-kirtan.]

Chandipath

During the nine days of Navaratri the book Chandi is recited everyday morning. This recital is done along with worship of

the Goddess Chandi. In Belur Math this is done during the first five days at a corner of Natamandir and from the 6th at a corner of Durga Mandap itself.

Shashthi : the 6th day

This is a very important day when ritual preparations are made to begin the Durga Puja proper. These preparations are mainly three: *Kalparambha*, *Bodhan*, *Adhivas* and *Amantran*.

Kalparambha : This ritual is done early in the morning. It is mainly an act of making the *samkalpa* or “sacramental intention”, the firm determination to conduct the Puja properly during the three days. The ritual consists of installing the *ghata*, water-filled copper pot, at a corner of Durga mandap and offering worship to Durga and Chandi.

Bodhan: This rite is performed at the Sandhya or dusk. The word ‘Bodhan’ literally means ‘awakening’. As already mentioned elsewhere, the Hindu mythology holds that all gods and goddesses go to sleep for six months during the southward journey of the Sun. Autumn (Sharat), during which Durga Puja is done, falls in the middle of this period. Hence it is necessary to first of all awaken the deity Durga. We have already mentioned that the awakening of Durga was first done by Sri Ramachandra who wanted to propitiate the Goddess before fighting Ravana.

The ritual of Bodhan consists in installing a water-filled copper vessel at the base of the Bel (*Bilva*) tree (or, as is now done at Belur Math, keeping a branch of the Bel tree in the pot) and praying to the Divine Mother to awaken.

Adhivas* and *Amantran : These rites follow Bodhan. *Adhivas* means “invocation”. Through Bodhan the Devi has awakened: now the awakened Devi has to be invoked in the Bel tree or branch of the tree. *Adhivas* is also a ritual of

sanctification. The actual ritual consists of the following main steps.

1. Devi Durga and the Bel tree are first worshipped.
2. Twenty-six sacramental things (*mangalik dravya*) are sanctified by touching Devi Durga and the Bel tree with them.
3. To ward off evil effects, a red coloured thread is tied around the altar where Puja is done.

The above ritual is followed by Amantran which literally means "invitation". Through this rite the Devi is invited or entreated to accept the Puja the next day (*Saptami*).

After this, Devi is worshipped with five items and Arati is done to Her.

Saptami Puja

The important point to note here is that a living medium is necessary to invoke the indwelling of a deity. It is through a living medium that Divinity manifests itself. On the sixth day Divinity was invoked in the Bel tree or a branch of it. On the seventh day the Deity is invoked in a group of nine plants known as **Navapatrika**. The nine plants, which include a branch of Bel tree also, are bundled together, given a ceremonial bath, covered with an orange coloured cloth and installed on a wooden seat on the right side of the image of Durga. This is followed by *Mahasnan* (great bath) on a mirror, using various materials. After this, consecration and divinization of the image, known as *pranapratishta*, takes place. This is followed by elaborate worship of the Devi with sixteen items (*shodashopacharapuja*). The other deities, attendants and other objects associated with Devi are then worshipped. The Seventh Day's Puja is concluded with *bhog* (food offering) and *Arati* to Devi.

Ashtami Puja

As on Saptami, on Ashtami also, *Mahasnan* and *Shodasho-pacharapuja* are done. In addition, nine small pots with flags of different colours attached are installed and the Nine Shaktis are invoked in them and worshipped. After this sixty-four yoginis are worshipped. Then one crore yoginis are worshipped. This is followed by worship of Nava Durga (nine aspects of Durga) and Goddesses Jayanti, Mangala, Kali, Bhadrakali, Kapalani, Durga, Shiva, Kshama, Dhatri, Svaha and Svadha. Ashtami Puja is concluded with Bhog and Arati.

Kumari Puja : Worship of a young girl, treating her as Devi, is also a part of Ashtami Puja. Sri Ramakrishna has said that the Divine Mother manifests herself more in a pure-hearted girl and that is why Kumari Puja is done. He used to bow down before little girls looking upon them as manifestations of the Divine Mother. When Durga Puja was done at Belur Math for the first time, Swami Vivekananda worshipped several Kumaris. Now only one Kumari is worshipped. The same kinds of offerings made to the Devi are given to the Kumari also, and finally Arati is performed. Even senior monks offer flowers at her feet.

Sandhi Puja : The last 24 minutes of Ashtami and the first 24 minutes of Navami (a total of 48 minutes between the two lunar days) constitute the *Sandhi* or “Sacred Juncture”. It is considered to be a most auspicious time. At this time Durga is worshipped as Chamunda (that is, Kali who killed the demon Chanda and Munda). This Puja is considered to be the highest point in the whole Durga Puja and the most important ritual.

It is customary to perform *bali* or animal sacrifice at this sacred juncture. When the first Durga Puja was celebrated at Belur Math in 1901, Swami Vivekananda wanted to have *bali*

done. But Holy Mother prohibited it and, in obedience to Holy Mother's injunction, animal sacrifice is never done at Belur Math. Instead, a banana is 'sacrificed' as a symbolic *bali*.

Navami Puja

As in Ashtami, during Navami also *Mahasnan* and *Shodashopacharapuja* are offered to Devi. In addition, *bali* and Homa are performed. In Belur Math for *bali* white pumpkin and sugarcane are offered. The Homa (fire sacrifice) is a combination of Vedic and Tantric traditions.

Dashami Puja

In the morning a brief Puja, *Shital bhog* (cooling food offering) and Arati are first done. Then the Pujari and Tantradharak circumambulate the altar and perform the *visarjan* ritual. In this ritual the Devi, who had been invoked in the Navapatrika and consecrated Image, is entreated to return to Her celestial abode. The Divine Mother, however, dwells for ever in the hearts of devotees.

In the evening the Image of Durga along with Navapatrika is taken in procession to the river bank and immersed in the river. The water taken from the spot, known as *Shanti Jal* is sprinkled on the devotees who embrace one another as an expression of their solidarity as children of the same Divine Mother. And thus the holy Durga Puja comes to an end leaving joyous memories in the souls of people.



Rituals

It is easy to say that there is no use of *rituals* and temples and all such paraphernalia; every baby says that in modern times. But it must be easy for all to see that those who *worship* inside a *temple* are in many respects different from those who will not worship there. Therefore the association of particular temples, rituals and other concrete forms with particular *religions* has a tendency to bring into the minds of the followers of those religions the thoughts for which those concrete things stand as *symbols*; and it is not wise to ignore rituals and *symbolology* altogether.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Code No.883 Meaning and Significance of Worship **Rs.50**

Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Yadavagiri, Mysore 570 020