

## The Significance of Maha Ganapathi Homam

### What is Homam

Homam is a fire ritual. It is also known as homa or havan or yajna (yagya) or yajana. In homam, divine presence is invoked into fire using specific procedures. Then materials are offered into fire, along with sacred chants (mantras). The offerings are destined to reach gods. It is worth noting that fire ritual is an ancient practice.



### Why Homam

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

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

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

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

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

After one performs homam for a long enough time, one's naadis are cleared of the obstructions and one's bhootaagni burns brightly. At that juncture, all sadhanas performed by one, including

regular meditation, become much more effective. If bhootagni can accommodate divine presence to a larger degree, the meditation becomes more effective.

The goal of all spiritual sadhana is to cleanse oneself of all the internal impurities. When one burns all of one's major karmas, one becomes karmically very light. Nadis in the sookshma sareera are all clear and energy can freely flow anywhere. One is untouched by the internal enemies kaama (desire), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (delusion), mada (wantonness) and maatsarya (jealousy) then. When one sees all as god, nothing can make one angry or jealous or deluded.

When the wrong mental conditioning drops, nothing excites one and nothing saddens one. One stays in a state of bliss always. Despite the changing nature of the external work and appearance, one is in the same state internally. The goal of all spiritual sadhana is to reach that state. Whether through jnaana (knowledge and wisdom) or through bhakti (devotion and surrender) or both, one has to burn the karmas and impurities blocking one from reaching that state.

Homam facilitates this process quickly by burning various karmas which have created various layers of conditioning and thereby obstructing spiritual progress.

A lot of Hindu rituals involve invoking divine presence in an idol or a water pot (kalasha) and offering worship to the idol/pot. One of the best mediums for sadhana is fire. One of the Sanskrit words for "fire" is "paavaka", which means "the one that purifies". Fire is by definition pure and purifies everything that it comes in touch with. Homam is the most apt sadhana for most spiritual aspirants in this Kali yuga, especially as the Kali deepens. Some people have unfounded fears of making mistakes during homam and being punished for them and hence do not take advantage of the fantastic practice of homam.

Apart from the personal benefits, there are universal benefits of homam.

#### What is special about Shri Ganapathi

Ganapathi homam is performed to beget happiness, prosperity and good health. Anyone is desirous of praying to any God to remove any obstacles in any of his plan/ work/Business /action and also to be victorious in his deeds always pray to Lord Ganesha. Ganapathi homam can be performed to please Kethu and hence anyone who has Kethu dasa or bhukthi or wishes to appease Kethu can participate in the homam. Performing Ganapathy Homam once every year gives prosperity, health and wealth. As per ganesh puran many types of ganapathi homam can be done: Mahaganapathi Homam, Asthadravya Ganapathi Homam, Sahasra modaka Ganapathi Homam. Performing Maha



ganapathi homam during sankata hara chathurthi is deemed very special.

To perform Ganapathy Homa the following materials are essential. Ghee, Modhaka (a kind of sweet prepared with coconut, gur and rice flour or wheat flour), durva (a kind of grass). Mahaganapathi Homa is performed with Ashta Dravya (a mixture of eight materials) 1.Coconut, 2.Banana, 3.Honey, 4.Sugarcane, 5.Ghee, 6.Modhaka, 7.Jaggery, 8.Puffed rice. During Sankatahara Chathurthi apart from ghee, all varieties of flowers, fruits, sweets, etc., which may count up to 108 dravyas (materials) can be used.