

## Doing A Fire Ritual by Oneself

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### Objections to Ritualism

When it comes to performing rituals on a regular basis, many people of this age have objections or reservations. On the two *extremes*, one sees the following viewpoints:

- (1) All that is there in this universe is Brahman only. All one needs to do is to *realize* that *all* is Brahman. What is the use of an external ritual in realizing this internal truth?
- (2) The ritual is very important and needs to be done properly and perfectly. Then things will magically happen. Instead of doing it with errors, one is better off not doing a ritual altogether.

The first viewpoint based on a misunderstanding of Vedanta trivializes external rituals and the second viewpoint based on a misunderstanding of Aagamas takes external rituals too seriously and that creates a fear of even taking one up. The result in either case is that one stays away from performing rituals. What we need is a balanced approach.

### On “All is Brahman”

#### *Pretension vs True Realization*

Knowing and being are different. Knowing intellectually that all is Brahman does not mean that that understanding drives one’s instincts, thoughts and actions.

To give an analogy, one watching a movie may get scared when a scary scene comes, feel sad when a sad scene comes and so on. Even if one intellectually knows that it is just a movie, still one may end up getting scared in a scary scene. Only after the understanding that “it is just a movie” becomes perfectly ingrained in one’s consciousness can one watch the movie without such reactions. That requires practice.

Though all is indeed Brahman as Veda and Upanishads declare, one’s individualized consciousness perceives a field of duality and experiences various opposites such as happiness and sadness, pleasure and pain, knowledge and ignorance, good and bad, *etc.*

A mere statement of the fact that all is Brahman or a mere intellectual understanding that pleasure and pain are both Brahman does not necessarily make one view, experience or react to

pleasure and pain in the same way. Then one is not free. There is no use in pretending as though one is free.

One is free only when the understanding that all is Brahman becomes *perfectly ingrained* in one's very consciousness and guides all of one's instincts, thoughts and actions. What blocks one from it is the conditioning accumulated over many lives in the field of duality. One needs to use the tools within the field of duality to overcome that conditioning. That requires practice.

### *Not Empty Symbols*

Rituals are symbols, but not empty symbols. They serve a purpose. They slowly ingrain the desired understanding on the consciousness and rid it of its conditioning. Just as a person whose leg is fractured uses a walking stick while the leg cures, one focuses the mind on rituals while the consciousness cures from its conditioning. Ritual is like a walking stick.

Field of duality may be dismissed by some as an illusion. However, it is the only reality that a normal mind perceives. It cannot be dismissed. Tools within it should be used for navigating it and prepare oneself for oneday realizing the "one essence" behind the field of duality.

### *Karma and Jnana (not "karma vs jnana")*

As Maharshi Vasishtha tells at the beginning of "Yoga Vaasishtham", **action** and **knowledge** are the **two wings** with which the bird of individualized consciousness (limited self) flies into the infinite sky of unlimited Self. A bird with a single wing cannot fly stably and will fall down. Though today's scholars make the mistake of seeing karma and jnana as two alternative paths, they are actually two aspects of a single path. Both are needed for spiritual progress.

To give an analogy, a person who keeps walking a mountain path, but not realizing that reaching the top of the mountain is the goal, may end up walking around the mountain forever. Similarly, if one engages in actions without correct knowledge (that all is Brahman), then one may become attached to the actions and to their fruits and keep performing them forever.

On the other hand, one who keeps staring at the top of the mountain without walking will remain at the base of the mountain. Similarly, if one knows that all is Brahman, but does not engage in the right actions, that intellectual knowledge does not get ingrained in one's consciousness firmly and deeply enough to remove one's conditioning completely and make one enlightened.

To give another analogy, a person who engages in karma that is not driven by jnana is like a blind person who keeps running fast when a forest fire approaches. He may run into the fire. On the other hand, a person who has jnana (that all is Brahman) but does not engage in right karma (actions) is like a person without legs who can see the forest fire coming at one, but unable to run and save oneself. To save oneself from the forest fire (samsara), one needs both eyes (jnana) and legs (karma).

Thus, actions in the field of duality, with the knowledge that all is Brahman forming the backdrop for all those actions, are needed to overcome the conditioning. Karma and jnana work hand in hand.

### *Internal vs External Cosmos*

One may say that rituals such as yajna are supposed to be performed in the inner cosmos that is within one, rather than the outer cosmos. Intellectually, it is an attractive position to take. But, how can one perform actions in a space that one is unable to perceive or identify with?

Only after Kundalini is awakened and the senses are turned inwards can one perceive the inner cosmos. Until then, talking about inner cosmos is meaningless.

Most people are unable to perceive and control their inner cosmos and their identification is only with the outer cosmos, to be more specific with the part of the outer cosmos that can be perceived by one's *external* senses.

### **Perfect Ritual Syndrome**

The notion that a ritual needs to be proper and perfect, stops many people from performing external rituals. Rituals are not bribes to gods. Rituals in the outer cosmos are meant for causing slow transformation in the inner cosmos through resonance.

We compared ritual earlier to a walking stick used while the fractured leg gets cured. Whether the stick is made of teak wood or oak wood is not that important. Whether the stick is gold-plated or not is not that important. The key is to use *some* stick that is strong enough and to walk in such a way that there is no stress on the fractured leg. Similarly, a lot of details about the ritual are not that important. The key is to do *some* ritual that engages the mind enough and to do it with such an attitude that it aids in weakening the conditioning of the mind over time.

There are many factors that contribute to the effectiveness of something, but they are all not equally important. Suppose eating certain number of calories, certain amount of protein *etc* is recommended everyday and one does not have access to such a balanced meal. Will one starve indefinitely waiting for a perfect meal or will one just eat whatever is available? Suppose one needs to drink 8 cups of water every day and a person lost in a desert has access to only 2 cups. Will one remain thirsty and wait till 6 more cups are found or will one drink the 2 cups that are available? Suppose one's breathing is imperfect. As one learns and tries to improve one's breathing, will one stop breathing or will one continue to breathe faultily?

Though people do not consider spiritual sadhana to be as fundamentally important as food, water and air, it in fact is as important if not more. The purpose of the physical body we sustain by giving it food, water and air is to help us progress spiritually and become enlightened. Body is a servant that carries us as we try to climb the hill of enlightenment.

Thus, any rituals that enable one to progress spiritually should be performed to the best of one's ability without waiting for "perfection". In fact, ritual perfection is an end target and should not become an excuse for not doing a ritual.

In rituals performed for spiritual upliftment and dharmik material goals, errors do not block one or cause harm, as some are afraid.

## **How Rituals and Mantras Work**

Mind, by nature, is pre-occupied with the limited self and with so many things related to it. When one engages in a ritual with a deity and a mantra, one tries to focus the mind on the deity or the mantra. One's focus with the mantra increases gradually, as one performs a ritual with a mantra regularly.

Conditioning of one's mind is a direct result of the actions performed by one's free will in the *past*. One is constantly *reaping* the *fruits* of the *previous* actions of one's own free will and those fruits, desirable or undesirable, form the backdrop in which one's free will is forced to perform *current* actions. One's conditioning places limitations on what one's free will can do *now*.

With good mental focus on a mantra or a ritual, one overcomes some conditioning and reduced conditioning means more possibilities for current action by one's free will. Though rituals do not make things happen magically, they free one from more and more conditioning and empower one's free will more and more.

The ultimate goal, however, is that oneday one's mind should cease to think of thousand things and should be filled with the sound of the mantra or a seed thought or an image one visualized. Except the mantra or deity, there should be no other object being contemplated by the mind. If (when) such a yoga (oneness) with the mantra occurs, one will experience a kind of bliss that is modulated by the mantra or the deity used.

It is Brahman that manifests as all objects, including oneself and even the deities. However, mind perceives infinite objects and keeps contemplating so many objects continuously. Such an over-activity of the mind is non-conducive to overcoming the field of duality and seeing the underlying Brahman in all. If mind calms down and has a union with just one object, it is far closer to seeing the underlying Brahman in all.

Mantra or ritual is like a pole to which the monkey of mind is tied. The nature of the monkey is to jump here and there. When it is tied to the pole, it will still jump but in a small area around the pole. After jumping around the pole for a long time, monkey may become tired and stop jumping around. Similarly, mind may stop thinking about various objects of its field of duality. Mantra is just an instrument, an anchor for the mind.

It is possible to use any combination of sounds as a mantra and obtain union with it, *i.e.* achieve the state where mind reverberates with it and with no other thoughts. However, the exact dual experience when mind reverberates with that mantra will vary from one mantra to another. It is wise to use one of many mantras that have already been tested by our seers.

## How to Get Focus

One can get focus through practice. How densely a mind is conditioned will determine how difficult it is for the mind to focus on one object, such as a mantra or a deity or a ritual. The more effective one's meditation, the better one's focus becomes. The better one's focus, the more effective one's meditation becomes.

This can be said differently. Unless one's focus is good, meditation is not effective. Unless one does effective meditation, one will not get good focus. This is an "egg first or chicken first" scenario. One can keep meditating to the best of one's ability and wait to break through into the groove.

## Use of External Fire

Fire is called "pāvaka", *i.e.* the one that purifies. Fire purifies whatever it comes in contact with.

It is interesting to note that fire ritual is an ancient practice and several religions taught worshipping gods in fire. Hindus adhering to Vedas as well as Tantras and Aagamas worship fire. Some Buddhists worship fire. Zoroastrians worshipped fire. Native American traditions and Incan traditions worshipped fire. Some ancient Greco-Roman civilizations also worshipped fire and made offerings to gods in fire.

Mind has infinite abilities and resonates to its company. When one spends much time with a film buff, the film buff within one becomes strong and gets activated. When one spends much time with a politics buff, the politics buff within one becomes strong and gets activated. Mind resonates to its company. Similarly, spending much time with an external fire rekindles the internal fire. When the internal fire burns strongly, it burns unneeded conditioning and weaknesses. It burns weakly in most people, but external fire can activate it over time.

RigVeda 1.77.1 says about Agni: "yo martyeṣu amṛtaḥ ṛtāvā". Fire is the imperishable essence within perishable objects, *i.e.* immortal essence within mortals, and it is a representation of the divine Will and rhythm (ṛtam).

The fire within a mortal is immortal and this immortal fire devours and purifies perishable objects, qualities and conditioning which are present within a mortal and which make one a mortal. By slowly reducing perishable objects within one, such as conditioning, to ashes, strengthened internal fire removes conditioning and obstacles and purifies one. That increases one's focus on mantra.

In a fire ritual, fire represents Brahman. Play of the fire represents Shakti. Those two are inseparable. Offerings in fire represent the conditioning that one is trying to overcome. Actions in the outer cosmos (macrocosm) resonate in the inner cosmos (microcosm) and facilitate an internal transformation over time.

While the elements of earth and water are corrupted with impurities in Kali yuga, the element of fire remains pure always and has a direct resonating influence on one's internal fire. When one invokes god in a normal idol or a kalasha, one is projecting energy from one's own inner cosmos and the success of the ritual is dependent on one's own internal purity. In case of fire, the external fire brings energy of its own to the table. That is why fire is considered a living representation of god on earth and fire ritual considered superior to other rituals. Fire ritual is the sadhana of rishis. It is one ritual that was utilized by various religious traditions of the world.

## **Japa vs Homa**

In Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna said, " yajñānām japayajño'smi", *i.e.* I am japa among all sacrifices. Some people use this line to suggest that japa (meditation) is superior to homa/yajna. Let us put that in perspective.

In the line just above that line, Sri Krishna also said, "I am Om among all mantras". However, do we only meditate with the *supreme* mantra "Om" and leave all other mantras?

What Krishna described as "I" is the Supreme Self. It is akin to the pinnacle of a mountain. Though sitting on the pinnacle is the final goal of climbing a mountain, one needs to first climb its slope using various kinds of gear.

*Om* is the supreme of all mantras being the source of all and similarly meditating and absorbing consciousness in the Supreme (japa) is the supreme sacrifice. However, it requires purification and preparation by engaging in other kinds of mantras and sacrifices (homa).

When one does homa, one is engaging in external actions and at least some minimal awareness of body will be left. One is unlikely to reach a samadhi (absorption in the Supreme). On the other hand, when a perfectly purified person does japa (*i.e.* sits still and contemplates on the mantra), one may overcome awareness of the body and other pre-occupations of the mind and reach samadhi. From that point of view, japa is superior for reaching the final goal.

However, to purify oneself and prepare oneself for it, one may need different kinds of sadhana and homa is far more effective than japa as a sadhana that purifies one.

## **Doing Rituals by Oneself**

### *Dharma Shastra Guideline*

Manu Smriti was the authority for Satya yuga for dharma matters. For Treta yuga, Goutama smriti was the authority for dharma matters.. Maharshi Parasara, father of Veda Vyasa, is said to be the dharma shastra authority in Kali yuga. A classic dharma shastra called "Parasara Madhveeyam" says that a ritual such as homa performed in one's name by one's own disciple is 100 times more powerful than a ritual performed in one's name by a priest; a ritual performed in one's name by one's own progeny is 100 times more powerful than a ritual performed in one's name by a disciple; and, a ritual performed by oneself is 100 times more powerful than a ritual performed in one's name by one's progeny.

In other words, a ritual such as homa performed by oneself is 1,000,000 times more powerful than a ritual performed in one's name by a priest! The bottomline is that one is on one's own as Kali deepens and priests will be limited in their ability to give a material and spiritual uplift to others.

### *Need of Regularity*

Just as a twenty course meal eaten once every six months does not give much energy to one, a "big" homa or another ritual done once every six months or a year does not boost one's spiritual or material pursuits. Just as a small bowl of rice and dal (lentil soup) eaten *everyday* gives more energy to one, a small 20-30 minute homa done everyday gives a boost to one's spiritual evolution.

### *Wise Tradeoffs*

Doing a short homa daily or weekly requires wise tradeoffs.

Suppose the president of the country is visiting one for lunch with 100 associates. One can invite all the 100 associates of the President by name and seat them in the room individually, following various protocols. Then one can exchange long pleasantries with the President and then offer lunch.

Suppose one is in a hurry and has very little time. If one still invites all the 100 associates by name and seats them in the room individually following the protocol and does not have enough time to let the President eat lunch in the end, is it a wise tradeoff? Or is it wiser to invite all the 100 associates together and seat them together by violating the protocol and use that time to let the President eat in peace?

Similarly, is it wise if one exchanges long pleasantries and gives very little time to eat? Or should one cut short on the pleasantries and give more time to eat?

In a fire ritual, making offerings to the main deity is the primary part. Various upacharas (services) done to the deity before the offerings commence are secondary. Various preliminary and final steps and offerings to associate deities are tertiary. If one has a few hours for the fire ritual, one can do everything given in scriptures leisurely. If one has only 20-30 minutes, one needs to make wise tradeoffs and maximize the benefit. It is far better than doing nothing.

### **What Homa Can Do**

Homa activates the internal fire by resonance and burns one's conditioning. Depending on the density of conditioning, it can empower one's free will, give calmness and clarity, speed up spiritual progress, or even give experience of god.

When blockages are removed, self-awareness (Kundalini) rises from the physical realm (mooladhara chakra) and mind experiences unlimited. Allness (also referred by some as the great

void and by some as the seed of all) is the final goal and is atop the sushumna nadi. Deities are close approximations and they reside in the sushumna nadi. All lokas (worlds or realms of consciousness) are also in sushumna nadi.

### *Optimizing the Experience*

In order to optimize the experience, one should not eat anything in the one or two hours before homa. One should also stick to vegetarian food. Eating meat or eating just before homa will make the digestive fire burn strongly and this will limit the amount of energy left for the internal fire needed for burning conditioning. After all, one may notice that the fire in brain that facilitates thinking and digestion of ideas slows down immediately after a heavy meal, as digestive fire uses up a lot of energy.

During homa, one should visualize to the best of one's ability that god is in fire and receiving one's offerings and removing one's conditioning.

After homa is done, a local maximum in one's level of purity is created. One can sit still with a straight back and closed eyes and meditate for a while.

### *Can Non-Brahmanas Do Homa*

Today's rigid caste system is flawed. Varna (caste) shows one's aptitude and attitude. Brahmana is one who pursues knowledge and liberation. Kshatriya is one who pursues power and authority over others and uses it to protect others. Vaisya is one who deals with others tactfully and pursues money and uses it to serve society. Sudra is one who pursues hard work and serves others. One gets father's caste as that is what one is exposed to as one grows up, but one gets one's own varna later on.

Brahmarshi Viswamitra was born as a kshatriya, but became a brahmana. Maharshi Valmiki was a shudra who became a brahmana. There are many such examples.

If one does homa on a regular basis for spiritual progress and for dharmik material results that enable one's spiritual progress, then one *will* eventually *become* a brahmana.

### *Is Guru Needed*

If one receives a mantra or a procedure from the mouth of a master, it is analogous to a millionaire opening a bank account in his son's name with a high starting balance. The son is lucky, as he is starting off with a big balance. Similarly, some of the siddhi (attainment) the master has in the mantra or procedure is transferred to the disciple even as one starts out.

If one does *not* receive a mantra or a procedure from the mouth of a master, it is analogous to starting off with a zero bank balance. While it is useful to start off with a positive balance, it is neither necessary nor sufficient. There are sons of millionaires who used up the millions earned by parents and reduced them to zero, while there are some self-made men who made millions

purely with self-effort. Similarly, one taught by the greatest guru can fall while one not taught by a guru can reach the ultimate. While it is desirable to have a guru, it is by no means compulsory.

### *Can Women Do Homa*

Though gross bodies of men and women are different, their subtle bodies are identical. The need of purifying the subtle body is identical. Women can also do homa.

Here is a clear reference in Ayodhya Kanda of Valmiki Ramayana about queen Kausalya doing a homa and making offerings in fire with hymns:

vardhayitvaa prahRSTaaH taaH pravishya ca gRham striyaH |  
nyavedayanta tvaritaa raama maatuH priyam tadaa || 2-20-13

kausalyaa api tadaa devii raatrim sthitvaa samaahitaa |  
prabhaate tu akarot puujaam viSNoh putra hita eSiNii || 2-20-14

saa kSauma vasanaa hRSTaa nityam vrata paraayaNaa |  
agnim juhoti sma tadaa mantravat kRta mangalaa || 2-20-15

pravishya cha tadaa raamaH maatur antaHpuram shubham |  
dadarsha maataram tatra haavayantiim hutaashanam || 2-20-16

*Meaning:* Then those delighted women greeted Rama with good word of success, quickly entered the house and informed Kausalya about the lovely arrival of Rama.

At that time, Kausalya, having spent the whole night with steadfastness, was performing Dawn worship to Vishnu, for the welfare of her son.

Appearing auspicious in a white silk saree, Kausalya was, as part of her daily rituals, making offerings in Holy Fire, by reciting hymns.

Then Rama entered mother's auspicious quarters and saw her making sacrificial offerings in holy fire there.

If Lord Rama's mother could do a homa as personal sadhana, why not the women of today?

Also, Bala Kanda of Valmiki Ramayana says that every citizen of Ayodhya performs homa and it does not specify males only.

However, there is a reason for the traditional bias against women doing homa and other serious rituals such as Gayatri mantra japa. Intense spiritual practices can awaken Kundalini (self-awareness) and make it flow in the nadis (channels in which awareness flows) through chakras (realms of consciousness). While that is desirable normally, Kundalini flow in a pregnant lady has the potential to harm a fetus if the soul in it is unprepared. Of course, if the soul is prepared, it can result in the birth of a siddha also.

However, practically speaking, Kundalini awakening does not happen in 99.9999% people. Even if it happens in a pregnant lady, it is not necessarily a bad thing as explained above.

So, using that point to have an outright ban on women doing homa is unwise.

## *Ugra devatas vs Soumya devatas*

Those who are interested in doing homa to an ugra devata (fierce deity) such as Chandi or Narasimha should remember one thing.

Suppose there is a basket containing fruits [results of one's previous actions]. A deity is akin to someone who takes out rotten fruits from the top of the basket, throws them in trash can and extracts a nice fruit that is stuck under them in the basket.

A soumya devata (gentle deity) is akin to a gentle person who removes the bad fruits slowly and reaches out for the nice fruit gently. The spillage of bad fruits on the floor is minimal.

An ugra devata (fierce deity), on the other hand, is akin to an aggressive person who removes the bad fruits in a hurry so that the nice fruit can be extracted faster. This may result in some spillage of bad fruits on the floor.

Worship of ugra devatas gives good results faster, but there can be some suffering before that. Of course, this suffering is a result of one's own bad karmas from the past. But, if one wants to go slow, one should worship soumya devatas. This is true for any sadhana, but it is more prominent in a sadhana such as homa that works fast.

### *“I Still Have Responsibilities”*

Some people say that they still have some responsibilities and not ready for serious spiritual sadhana. This fear stems from a misunderstanding that equates spiritual progress with external *sannyasa* or renunciation. Influence of traditions that came during Kali yuga that over-emphasize external renunciation may have created this misunderstanding.

Spiritual progress and realization are not anti-dharma. One *must* fulfill one's dharma and pay off kaarmik debts, before one becomes self-realized. Spiritual progress does *not* take one away from one's responsibilities in the world, but will enable one to fulfill those responsibilities *better*!

One spends a high percentage of one's time and energy worrying about what is not in one's control and engaging in inconsequential actions. With spiritual progress, one learns to shed unnecessary baggage, use one's time and energy more effectively, focus on what one can control and engage in actions that have a consequence.

## **Different Styles of Fire Ritual**

Maharshi Parasara taught various types of homa as remedies to various horoscopic problems in his Jyotisha magnum opus “Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra”. He did not specify how to establish fire and how to do the initial and concluding portions. He only mentioned the main mantra to be used in pradhana homa (core offering). He specifically said that one could start fire and do homa using the method taught by one's gurus and use the mantra given by him for pradhana homa. This shows that the differences in procedure are not that important and the main mantra used in pradhana homa is the key.

Today, different styles of homa known as Vedic methods and Aagamic/Tantrik methods are popular.

### *Parable: Vedic vs Aagamic Homa*

Notions that so and so fire ritual is sanctioned by Veda and so and so aagamic/Tantrik fire ritual is not sanctioned by Veda can be put in perspective using a parable.

Once there were many people who lived near the sea [Brahman]. They regularly sat by the sea and enjoyed the sight and sound of the sea [absorbed in Brahman most of the time]. They described the sea in some nice cryptic poems [Veda].

As people started living a little away from the sea [less spiritually evolved], someone had to put together some instructions on how to reach the sea. He said, “keep walking towards east” and the instructions grew with time. People faithfully followed the instructions [rituals].

People started moving further and further inland and started living in a landlocked desert far away from the sea. This generation had never seen a pool of water like a lake, let alone a sea. They faithfully performed the ritual of walking towards east, but did not find sea. They debated endlessly whether one had to walk one mile or two miles or three miles and formed different schools of thought. Some walked their chosen distance, found a tree or a building or some interesting object and even became satisfied that that was sea!

Then came some great person, whose instincts led him to take a horse instead of walking and ride it for a long distance [use of other tools]. He did find the sea after a few months. He put together newer instructions to reach the sea, which included riding a horse [new āgama and tantra].

People performing the old rituals objected to this and said “but then this horse thing is not granted by the book of sea. This is a new path and different from the ‘pure’ sea ritual” [pure Vedic ritual]. By now, people did not even understand what the cryptic poems of the original “book of sea” mean, but they simply believed that those poems taught the old “pure” sea rituals (pure Vedic rituals) that they were used to. They were blissfully unaware that the original instructions were meant for someone already close to sea and the newer instructions came from someone who actually saw the sea and knew where they currently lived and how to get to the sea from there!

Slowly many new sets of instructions involving horses, chariots etc were taught and many new paths to the sea were outlined instead of just instructing people to walk towards east [evolution of mantra/tantra/yantras].

As time progressed, people started fighting too much about whose path was superior. They were foolish, not smart enough to adopt the original instructions, of either the so-called “pure” sea path or the so-called “new” path or other variations, for the changed

geography and changed times. Many followed the instructions blindly, hit roadblocks and did not reach sea. Many did not even know that “reaching the sea” was the actual goal of all their journeys. They even condemned those who actually went to sea, came back and gave updated directions for their place and time, for violating tradition.

Veda is about realizing self. Veda describes various aspects of the state of self-realization. That is why it is considered the highest knowledge. Other allied subjects throw some light on possible ways to reach that state. While definitive and absolute statements can be made on the actual state of self-realization itself, no definitive statements can be made on how to reach it. Only relative statements can be made based on deśa-kāla-pātra. The path depends on one’s current position!

Thus, Veda-Aagama is not really a conflict. It is a continuum.

### *The Simplest Method*

In fact, one can just start a fire, imagine that it is sacred and that god is in it, and meditate in front of it. That is a powerful enough sadhana. Swami Vivekananda meditated for 4-5 hours every night in front a big fire when he stayed at Dakshineswar with an ailing Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

To instill that sense of sacredness and to request Nature to facilitate better meditation, a few basic offerings in fire can be helpful.

In a simple method, the following preliminary offerings can be made (poorvangam).

**Ganapthi:** Personification of an aspect within our consciousness that helps us avoid and overcome obstacles in our lives

**Prajapati:** Creator of one's current reality & other realities

**Indra:** Controller of Sushumna nadi (the *middle* channel of *direct perception*)

**Agni:** Controller of the Pingala nadi (the *solar* channel of *reasoning*)

**Soma:** Controller of the Ida nadi (the *lunar* channel of *feeling*)

**Bhurbhuvassuvah:** The physical, mental and spiritual realms of awareness along all nadis

The following final offerings can be made (uttarangam).

**Fire:** The transformer, creates the physical reality by processing the elements through the physical senses and transforming them into physical experiences.

**Wind:** The mover, creates the mental reality to by moving the notions and concepts in the mind.

**Sun:** The shiner, shows the spiritual reality by throwing light on the divinity in everything.

**Prajapati, Vishnu & Rudra:** Every being of this universe, every object, every experience and every notion is created, sustained and destroyed by this Triumvirate.

### **Call for Action: Try Fire Ritual Yourself**

As the parable we saw before suggests, arguments about various paths are irrelevant and distracting. What is important is to pick a path and follow it. Whether one does a Vedic homa or

an Aagamic or Tantrik ritual is a secondary issue. The primary issues are whether one does ritual or some sadhana or not, how focused one is, how one's focus is improving and how one is being transformed internally. Those who already know *a* dire ritual procedure can use that. Those who do not can use the procedure taught in the manuals at the website <https://HolyFire.Yoga>.

Detailed homa manuals for a short procedure that is suitable for performing daily or weekly are available at that website. In a movement that is not affiliated to any formal organization, a few thousands of people are currently performing homa on a daily or weekly basis, in various countries around the world. These manuals are detailed. Many people who did not even light a lamp in their life and did not do any rituals before are doing daily homa using these manuals. These manuals can be used by *anybody*, irrespective of race, caste, class or creed.

Some perform Ganapathi homa, some Chandi homa, some Vishnu sahasra naama homa, some Shiva homa, some Krishna homa, some Bhairava homa and so on. Some perform a 10 minute ritual, some spend 20-30 minutes and some spend an hour or two, everyday. Slowly this movement is gaining legs and we invite anybody who has some interest to check out the manuals. In addition to various manuals, MP3 audio and youtube video are also available for a free download for the Ganapathi homa, so that interested seekers can practice the mantras and the procedure. A super-short 10 minute procedure is also available for an easy start. Some people start off with it and slowly add more and more mantras.