



Dear Yagya Friends,

We are off to a busy start this year with new programs; Ati Rudra and Sahasra Chandi rituals, and the 10 day yagya programs that are now performed by 11 priests. Not only does this add to the power of all our yagyas, but it marks a new level of activity as we offer affordable yagya programs that are rarely available, even in India.

Astrologically we are entering an interesting time as Jupiter has just moved into Taurus and Saturn has backed up into Virgo. The good news is that Jupiter will be projecting his energy onto Saturn the entire time that planet is in Virgo and that will go a long ways towards softening Saturn's restrictive impact.

Generally, the time Saturn is retrograde is a time of reflection, consideration and exploring new directions in one's personal life. It is common to feel dissatisfied and an unwillingness to accept situations that are no longer supportive. But, take your time in making changes. Saturn returns to his usual forward motion on June 25th and that is the time when lasting progress will once again be supported.

In June, we will be focusing on Lakshmi yagyas. After all you'll need resources to pay for all the new plans you're going to be setting into motion!

In July, to honor Guru Poornima, we are organizing a recitation of the entire 10,000 verses of the Rig Veda. This yagya will take place in Rameshwaram - at the famous temple complex associated with Rama, Sita and Hanuman.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter. If you have suggestions or comments, I'm always interested in hearing them.

Very best regards,

Ben Collins



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Upcoming Yagya Programs

June 2012

Lakshmi and Navagraha Yagya

10 Day Lakshmi and 20 day Navagraha Yagyas
to develop abundance and balance the influence of the 9 planets



Lakshmi is more than money; she is abundance in all forms, family, wealth, happiness and enlightenment. The Rig Veda contains the auspicious and revered Sri Sukta; the primary long form mantra for Lakshmi. This month our pundits will repeat Sri Sukta 1008 times over the course of the 10 day yagya, culminating in a large temple abhishekam yagya in Kanchipuram.

The Navagraha (9 planets) deliver our karmas, but they also are a means of balancing and alleviating those karmas. In June we are including a Navagraha intensive 20 day yagya. Each day our priests will focus on the planet of that day (Moon-Monday, Mars-Tuesday, etc) with 108 repetitions of the complete vedic mantra for that planet. The day concludes with the performance of homam (the vedic fire ritual) for Ganesha, Navagraha, and Lakshmi.

July 2012

Complete recitation of Rig Veda at the Sringeri Shankar Mutt's temple in Rameshwaram



The Rig Veda is the oldest and longest of the four Vedas, containing 10,000 verses. Recitation of this ancient text is considered to be one of the best yagyas, because so many powerful mantras and instructions for rituals are contained within it.

Our pundits will join pundits from the Sringeri Shankaracharya's Mutt in Rameshwaram, a sacred site associated with the story of the Ramayana and Rama, Sita, and Hanuman. All 20 priests will perform this vedic recitation on your behalf.

The Vedas contain a verse that sums up the benefits of these yagyas:

“In the heavens be peace, to the sky and earth,
to the waters be peace, to plants and all trees,
to the Gods be peace, to Brahman be peace,
to all Men be peace, again and again
-peace also to me!”

Hanuman Temple Yagya - April 2012

The April yagyas focused on Dharma - the natural laws that govern life and spiritual evolution. They are personified in the form of Hanuman - the son of Vayu the wind god, and devoted assistant to Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu.

Our Abishekam Yagya was performed in a temple just outside of Kanchipuram in south India.





In Tamil Nadu, every temple has a festival form of the deity, generally made of skillfully cast bronze as you see above. During various festivals the deity is taken out of the temple and paraded through the streets, something that would not be possible with the large granite murti as seen on the right.

Here you see the temple decorated with a new silk dhoti and a beautiful handmade garland - compliments of the Puja.net participants.





***Ram dware tum rakhvare, Hoat na agya binu paisare.
Sub sukh lahai tumhari sarna, Tum rakshak kahu ko dar na***

You are the sentry at the door of Shri Ram.
No one can enter without your permission,
The comforts of the world lie at your feet.
Your devotees enjoy life's pleasures and feel
fearless under your benign Protection.

Ati Rudra Yagya

Our Ati Rudra program will take 11 months to complete. It requires the performance of a total of eleven Maha Rudra rituals; each one requiring eleven priests to perform Rudra Abishekam eleven times a day for eleven days - for eleven months. This results in a total of over 14,641 recitations of Sri Rudram, the famous hymn from the Rig Veda.

Why perform this yagya? On a personal level, it is difficult to imagine a more powerful and focused way to dissolve difficult karmas, promote balance in life, protect health, and advance spiritually. In Rudram, there is a line that is repeated several times:

Tesagm sahasrayojane vadhanvani tanmasi
“Please take all my troubles 10,000 miles away”

After Rudram is recited, the priests recite Chamakam. Seetharama Shastry, our Chief Priest in Kanchipuram, explains “This vedic mantra requests Rudra (Shiva) to give us everything and anything that a human could possibly want; every material possession, every form of happiness, family harmony, and leading to complete spiritual enlightenment. “



The ritual requires eleven kalasha pots filled with water and sitting on a bed of rice.



All pujas and yagyas require large quantities of fresh flowers.



The leaves of the bilva tree are a traditional offering to Shiva and they have to be picked carefully from the thorny branches of the tree.



The kalasha pots are decoratively wrapped in thread.



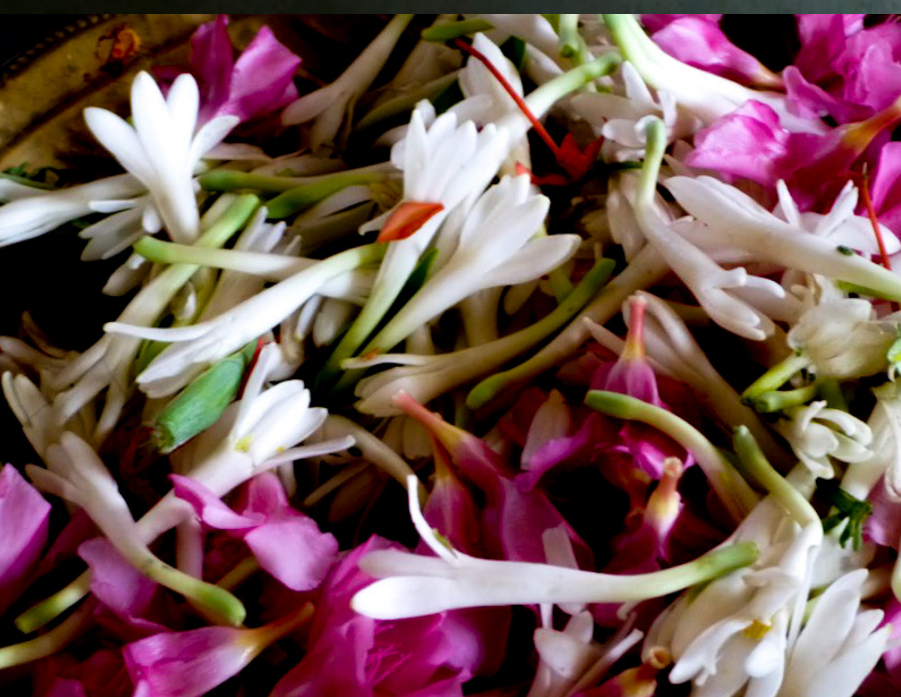




There are eleven traditional offerings used in the Rudra Abhishekam.

- Sesame oil
- Pancha gavya (five ingredients from the cow)
- Pancha Amrita
(a sweet drink with 5 ingredients)
- Ghee
- Milk
- Yogurt
- Honey
- Sugar Cane Juice
- Coconut
- Fruit/Lime juice
- Sandalwood paste mixed in water
- Tumeric

And flowers, betel leaves, fruit and coconuts.





*Parino rudrasya hethur varnakthu pari
tweshasya Durmathiragayo.
Ava sthira madavadbhayasthanushva
meedvasthokaaya thanayaya mrudaya.*

“Oh, mind always think,
of Rudra who stays in the lotus of my heart,
Think of Rudra who is young,
of Rudra who is powerful in eliminating enemies,
of that Rudra who is as fearful as a lion,
And of Rudra who is full of fame and reknown.

Rudra, you who are being praised,
Please give everlasting happiness to
this mortal body,
And let your chief soldiers,
remove our enemies.”

Sri Rudram
10.9

Sahasra Chandi Yagya

Traditionally, the deep silence of the Ati Rudra (Shiva) Yagya is balanced by the performance of the Sahasra Chandi yagya for the active (shakti) form of the goddess. "Sahasra" means one thousand, and "Chandi" refers to the form of the goddess as described in the ancient 700 verse mantra called Chandi Path or Durga Saptashati. On one level this mantra tells the story of a time when the gods were weak and at the mercy of numerous demons. So they pooled their energy to create a goddess who contained the power of all the gods. She is known as Chandi and her mantra is well known to empower those for whom it is recited, to overcome even the most severe obstacles.

In our Sahasra Chandi program, the Chandi path mantra is recited by three priests every day, with a fire yagya performed every 10 days.



Prior to the recitation of Chandi Path, a goddess puja is performed. Here the pundit is invoking the presence of the goddess in the kalasha pot.



The nine planets (Navagraha) are invoked and their blessings are requested for the successful conclusion of the yagya.



The puja continues with the offering of the sacred thread.



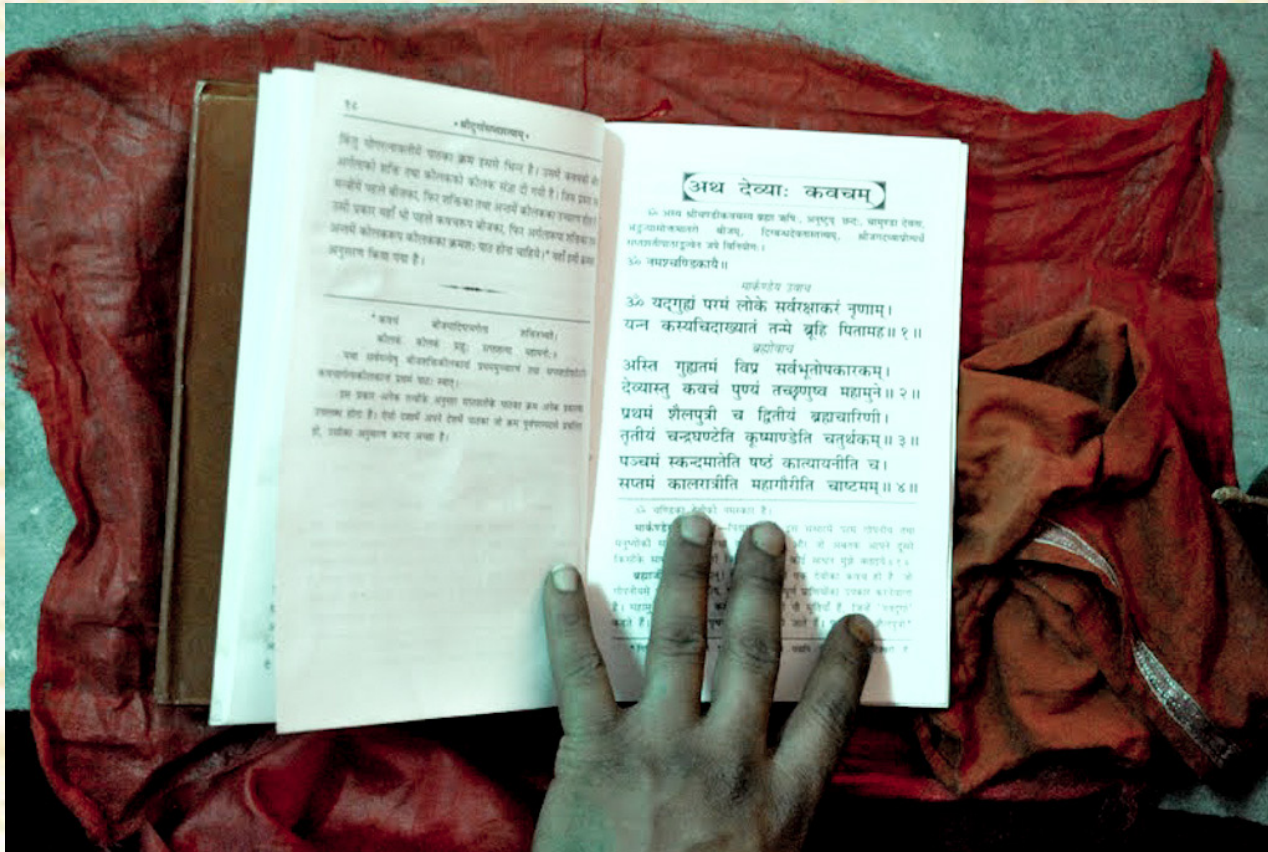
Additional offerings are made to the goddess (center) and the Navagraha (left)



Fruit is a traditional offering during pujas.



The final offering of flowers.



The Text of Chandipath contains 700 verses and takes around an hour to recite in its entirety.



The presence of the goddess is invoked in the heart space of each pundit.



***OM Eim Hrim Klim Chamundayei Vicche Namaha
(OM I'm Hreem Kleem Chah-moon-dah-yea Vee-chei Nah-ma-ha)
OM and salutations to She who is radiant with power and wisdom.***

Go (cow) Puja - honoring Lakshmi in the form of the cow

One of our participants wanted to arrange for a special to honor and protect cows, both in their own country and in India as well. This is a traditional puja that is performed to attract the abundance of Lakshmi, because the cow is the most complete image of abundance.

Not only does every great Rishi have his own wish fulfilling cow, but the gods are frequently pictured as living on a cow (Kama Dhenu).



Anna Daan - an offering of food.

Varanasi is considered to be Shiva's city and Parvati, his wife assumed the form of Annapurni - the goddess of food to take care of people as they pursued enlightenment on the banks of the Ganga.

Offering food to those who are deserving is a form of puja/yagya and one which our group in Varanasi under the guidance of Pandit Mishra-ji has arranged for our sponsors many times.

The cost is close to that of a 1 priest yagya and is available at any time. It is a different approach to yagya - and the traditional texts say that one who feeds others in this life, need not worry about having enough to eat in any future life.



One Priest Mrityunjaya Yagya

Many of our participants have small private yagyas performed to eliminate obstacles, or to address specific problem areas of life. The following illustrate the different steps in the yagya performance, in this case a mrytunjaya yagya for health and peace of mind.



First, Ganesha is invoked and mantras are recited. Then the Rudra Abishekam begins with the offering of flowers.



Milk is poured over the Shiva Lingam as Sri Rudram is chanted.



Then curd (yogurt) is offered.



Honey is offered by pouring it over the lingam.



Sacred ash (vibhuti) is offered



The juice of a fresh coconut is offered



The lingam is washed with clean water.



The lingam is dressed in a clean cloth.



A flower garland is placed around the lingam.



Various powders are sprinkled on the garland to add to its beauty.



Incense is offered to the lingam.



Milk is poured over the lingam and the flower garlands



The remaining milk is poured over the lingam.



Fruit and betel nuts and leaves are offered.



The light from a ghee lamp is offered.



Rice is offered.



The mantra asking for the protection of the deity is recited while performing this mudra.



The last mantras asking for Shiva's blessings are recited.



Mrytunjaya mantra is recited 108 times while the counting mala is hidden from view.



The sacred yagya fire is lit.



Offerings of wood are made into the fire while mantras are chanted.



The mantra recitation continues while offerings of ghee are made.



The final ghee offering.



Flowers are offered.



A whole coconut is offered.



The very last offering of flowers is placed in the fire.



The pundit completes the performance of the Rudra Abishekam and Homam and bows down offering the final prayers on behalf of the yagya sponsor.

***Tryambakam yajaamahe sugandhim pushtivardhanam,
Oorvaaru kamiva bandhanan mruthyo rmuksheeya maamruthaath.***

We salute and respect,
Him who is naturally scented,
Him who looks after his devotees by mercy,
And Him who has three eyes.
And pray and request,
To move us away from the catch of death,
Like the cucumber from its stalk,
And firmly put us in the path of liberation.

***Yo Rudro agnair yo apsu ya oushadeeshu,
Yo Rudro viswa bhuvanaa aavivesa tasmai Rudraaya namo astu.***

Let our salutations be offered to that Rudra,
Who is in fire,
Who is in water,
Who is in plants and trees,
And who is in everything in the world.

***Thamushtuhi ya swishu sudhanwaa yo viwasya kshayathi beshajasya,
Yashwamahe soumanasaaya rudram namobhir devaasuram duvasya***

Pray and salute him,
Who has the best arrows,
Who has the best bow,
Who is the home of medicines,
That cure all the world's diseases,
And who destroys asuras.
We salute that Rudra,
For making our minds pure.

These are a few of the concluding verses of Sri Rudram.



vidya-vinaya-sampanne brahmane gavi hastini suni caiva
sva-pake ca panditah sama-darsinah

“Self realized sages behold with an equal eye a learned
and humble Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, or a dog.”
-Bhagavad Gita