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**THE RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL SYMBOLISM OF THE
PRELIMINARY RITUALS PRECEDING WORSHIP OF
PRADHANA DEVA (MAIN DEITY) IN THE HINDI SPEAKING
COMMUNITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

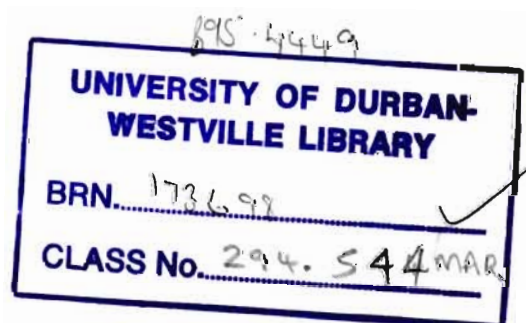
By

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**Dedicated to the loving memory of my father,
the late Mr. Tika Maraj, my first guru.**

Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues (***Bhagavad Gita 3.21***)

STUDENT DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research, and it has not been submitted to any other University previously.

Signature of Student: _____

A. Maraj

Date: _____

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OBJECT OF STUDY

The *Vedas* have constituted the source of Hindu thought and religion for over five thousand years. It is generally accepted that the *Vedic* seers who perceived the truth in a spiritually conditioned state, did not intend the hymns containing these truths to be utilized merely in *yajnas*, sacrifices. They were the outpourings of realized souls who had experienced the reality and nature of things. The *Vedas* attempted to portray through divinely inspired hymns, the nature of the world, of man and more importantly of God. Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan (1977 : 74), traces the intellectual maturation of the Hindus through the phases of animism, anthropomorphism and finally its culmination in the principle of monism. Ritualistic worship developed subsequent to the compilation of the *samhita*. The *samhita* is the compilation of the hymns into the various recensions. There exist four such *samhitas*, the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda* and the *Atharva Veda Samhitas*.

The burning desire to unravel the mysteries of creation and the Creator filled the minds of the inquiring intelligentsia with anguish because the comprehension of an Absolute Unchanging and Formless Reality, is not attainable overnight. The masses, however, put into practice the *karma - kanda*, ritualism, of the *Vedas* as formulated by the acknowledged *vedic rishis* (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 123).

The mind of man is subservient to the five senses and the ego-mind. Hence an external ritualistic system of worship together with its various components offered the sacrificer, *yajamana*, the same result, liberation, as those engaged in an intellectual pursuit of the Ultimate Truth. A strict set of principles and injunctions governing the performance of rituals were laid down in the liturgical portions of the *Veda*, viz. the *Brahmanas*. The various components of the ritual, preceding the worship of the *Pradhana Deva*, main deity, aim to condition the mind of the worshipper to receive the Divine vibrations (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 101).

The system of preliminary ritual employed at present is cloaked in a web of mystery and antiquity. The development of liturgical scriptures coupled with the firm entrenchment of the *brahmanic* tradition lent impetus to the gradual rise of a highly proficient and orthodox priesthood. The *brahmin* priest during the *Brahmanic* era (1000-1500 BC) became the pivotal figure in any sacrifice. The systematic chanting of the *Vedic mantras*, hymns, the use of appropriate *mudras*, hand gestures, and the worship of the preliminary deities in a prescribed manner and in a specific direction, subsequently led to the alienation of the sacrificer from the *purohita*, priest, and from the ritual itself. This was a result of the monopoly imposed on the knowledge of the *Vedas* by the *brahmins* (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 126).

The major object of this study will be to trace the development of the rituals from the *Vedas* through the *sutras* to their present form in the *karma-kanda paddhatis*, manuals of rituals. The writer has envisaged the need for such a study, to elucidate this often misunderstood and misinterpreted ritual discipline of Hinduism. The study of rituals and its implications are often overlooked by Indologists. A careful examination of Hindu tradition and practices reveal that the majority of South African Hindus depend on rituals to forge a relationship with God. Therefore an indepth study of the ritualistic tradition is necessary to provide an accepted interpretation, both of symbology and philosophy to satisfy the questions posed by society. The writer hopes that this study will enable society to better acquaint itself with the importance and meaning of the preliminary rituals in Hindu worship.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To trace the emergence of ritualistic worship and the status it commanded during the *Vedic* period.
2. To examine its decline during the *Upanishadic* era and its re-emergence subsequently.
3. To trace the consistency of the rituals from the *Vedas* through the *grihya sutras* to their present form in the *karma-kanda paddhatis*.

4. To study the significance and purpose of the preliminary rituals including the appendages.
5. To make a significant contribution to the study of ritualistic worship and to Hinduism and religion in general.

1.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF RITUALISM

The ritualistic tradition as expounded in the *shastras*, scriptures, is not regarded as an exchange of honorific gifts between the worlds of man and gods, neither is it regarded as symbolic representative of an already concretized reality. Unlike Staal (1979) the *brahmin* ritualistic did not view the sacrifice to be meaningless activity done for its own sake or as a ritualized realm of anti-reality. Rather the ritual is the workshop in which all reality is forged (Smith 1989 : 54).

The study of ritualism has to take into account one fundamental *Vedic* assumption that, that which is natural is inherently defective. According to Silburn (1955) the natural is the chaotic, the disorganised, the unformed. Thus the cosmos is not a universal whole of ordered parts but rather the product of a secondary act, a ritual act that lends structure and order to a chaotic creation. Smith (1989 : 51) further concludes:

For the Vedic priests and meta-physician, ritual activity does not symbolize, dramatize reality; it coconstructs, integrates, and constitutes the real. Ritual forms the naturally formless, it connects the inherently disconnected, and it heals the ontological disease of unreconstructed nature, the state towards which all created things and being perpetually tend

Ritual rites and acts are inherent in most societies from primitive to modern. The discerning feature however, is that unlike the rites and acts of other societies, the ritualism of the Hindu finds its source at the initiation of creation.

The *Purusha Sukta* (*Rig Veda* 10.90.1.6) describes the first act of ritual in which the created cosmos was manifest through the sacrifice.

When Gods prepared the sacrifice with Purusha as their offering. Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn, summer was the wood.

They l'alm'd as victim on the grass Purusa b'orn in the earliest time. With him the deities and all Sadhyas and Rishis sacrificed.

From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat was gathered up. He formed the creatures of the air, and animals both wild and tame.

From that great general sacrifice Richas and Sama hymns were b'orn: Therefrom were spells and charms produced; the Yajus had its birth from it.

From it were horses b'orn, from it all cattle with two rows of teeth: From it were generated kine, from it the goat and sheep were b'orn.

When they divided Purusa how many portions did they make? What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?

The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the R'ajanya made. His thighs became the Vaisya, from his feet the Sudra was produced.

The moon was gendered from his mind, from his eye the sun had birth; Indra and Agni from his mouth were b'orn and Vayu from his breath.

Forth from his navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from his head; Earth from his feet and from his ear the regions. Thus they formed the worlds.

Seven fencing sticks had He, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared; When the Gods offering sacrifice, bound, as their victim, Purusa.

Gods sacrificing, sacrificed the victim. These were the earliest holy

*ordinances. The mighty ones attained the height of heaven, there where
the Sadhyas, Gods of old, are dwelling.*

Thus ritualism as propounded in the *kalpa sutras* exercised a marked influence on *Vedic* society (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 125).

1.4 METHODOLOGY

It is imperative that a study of any discipline should be undertaken within a specific theoretical framework.

Any academic subject requires a 'methodology' to reach its conclusion: it must have ways of producing and analysing data so that theories can be tested, accepted or rejected. Without a systematic way of producing knowledge the findings of the subject can be dismissed as guesswork, or even as common-sense made to sound complicated. Methodology is concerned with both the detailed research methods through which data is collected, and the more general philosophies upon which the collection and analysis of data is based (Haralambos 1990 : 698).

The writer employed the Qualitative research methodology, where:

The focus is on the currently observed phenomena but the findings are contextualised within a social, cultural and historical framework (Conradie 1992 : 186).

The purpose of phenomenology attempts to understand the nature and purpose of ritualism rather than merely describe them. The phenomenological approach is a widely used research method in the study of religion. It must be understood that these methods overlap other disciplines such as Sociology and Anthropology.

The German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) propounded two principles in the Phenomenological school, the epoche and eidetic versions. The epoche is

designed to achieve objectively in the study and the eidetic principle is the one of structured empathy (Smart 1983 : 16). It assists us in understanding the beliefs of others.

We have to comprehend the structure of another's world, and in general we have to try to understand the structures of belief inside the head of the believer (Sooklal 1990 : 7).

The method of symbolic interactionism was also emphasized in the study. This theory operates on the basis that humanity utilises symbols reflexively in order to interpret reality. Among other things symbolic interactionism examines the relationship between social worlds and the overall symbolism which lends a degree of coherence to society as a whole (Mouton 1988 : 6). Since the writer was largely involved in interpreting symbology employed in the rituals, the symbolic interaction theory aided the comprehension of various levels of symbology.

The writer made use of the various participant observation techniques while conducting the field work for the study. At times the writer was a full participant in which case he participated fully in the ritual. The limitations of this practice is that the writer could not pose questions to the participants nor could he gain clarity regarding the interpretation of various symbols and practices.

The writer was also a "participant as observer" in which the writer observed the practice of the rituals as well as being involved in the *pujas*. It was known to the participants of the ritual that the writer was studying and observing them.

Use was also made of the "observer as participant" technique, where the writer posed questions to the participants. However contact and activity were limited in the observation.

The writer also employed unstructured informal interviews with both priests and participants to establish clarity and interpretation.

Since the historical development of rituals was also examined, primary and secondary source material were analysed. Interpretations and commentaries based on these sources were also examined.

1.5 CONCLUSION

The writer is a bona fide Hindu priest, affiliated to the *Sanathan Dharma Purohit Mandal*, a council of *Hindi Sanathani*- orthodox priests. His many hours of engaging in ritual sacrifices, *yajnas*, has enabled him to gain a deep and philosophical understanding of the principles of ritualism and its significance.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RITUALISM

2.1 ABSTRACT

Scholars of Indology have always been divided on the subject of ritualism. Most of the argument revolves around the belief that the system of rituals employed in the *Vedas* stem from the inability of the laity to comprehend the sublime truths of the *Vedic* seers. Others maintain that ritualism emanated as a logical development of *Vedic* knowledge. The subscribers to this policy maintain that the *Vedas* took into consideration those sectors of society who were intellectually inclined and those who had a lesser understanding of philosophy. This chapter will attempt to illustrate that the ritualistic system was not borne out of confusion but introduced by the *rishis*, seers, of the *Vedic* era (circa 3000 B.C.) to cater for all the needs of society. The seers did not impose any one type of knowledge on society but offered them numerous alternatives to develop their intellect and to satisfy their spiritual aspirations.

2.2 THE VEDIC AGE

It is a commonplace of psychology that thinking is conducted under the pressure of practical needs (Griswold 1971 : 80). *Vedic* society (circa 3000 B.C.) was involved in an uncertain existence that fluctuated between extreme prosperity and chaos. Being largely an agricultural society, their sustenance depended wholly on the natural elements. The natural elements were thus classified into two categories, those that were beneficial e.g. sunshine and rain and those that were hostile e.g. frost, and strange powers such as fungus that were responsible for destruction of crops and death. The seeds of animism and naturalism were sown and nourished by the willingness of *Vedic* society to attribute to these forces godly and demonic qualities respectively (Griswold 1971 : 88).

The compilation of the *Vedic* hymns is attributed to the *Vedic* persons appreciation and awe of his natural surroundings. Orthodox scholars such as *Sayana* (14th Century A.D.) however, maintain that the *Vedas* are *aparaushaya* ie. 'not made by man'. Their theory

rests on the belief that the knowledge of the *Vedas* is eternal and emanated from the Cosmic Intelligence. At the initiation of a new time cycle, *kalpa*, spiritually evolved *rishis* were used as mediums to realize the vast treasure of *Vedic* wisdom. They subsequently became the seers of the various *mantras* and *suktas* (Radhakrishna 1977 : 78).

Radhakrishnan (1977 : 78) notes the following:

They knew what it was to love nature, and be lost in the wonders of dawn and sunrise, those mysterious processes which effect a meeting of the soul and nature. To them nature was a living presence with which they could hold communion. Some glorious aspects of nature became the windows of heaven through which the divine looked down upon the godless earth. The moon and the stars, the sea and the sky, the dawn and the nightfall were regarded as divine. This worship of nature as such is the earliest form of Vedic religion.

However, *Vedic* society now defied the constraints imposed upon it by mere animism and naturalism. Their quest to identify and comprehend the totality of God manifested itself in anthropomorphism through which the physiology and mentality of the numerous deities were fashioned on the basis of humanities own experience. The individual needed a God to guide him in his daily endeavours to comfort him when in distress and a friend to whom he could communicate his feelings (Oldenberg 1993 : 23). The *Rig Veda* (160,4) records this anguish as:

He was indeed among the Gods the severest workman, who produced the brilliant ones (heaven and earth) that gladden all things, he who measure the two bright ones by wisdom and establishes them on ever lasting supports.

Indra, *Agni* and *Soma* the presiding deities of rain, fire and the energising liquid from the *soma* plant respectively, were subsequently extolled as the guardians of the creation. The gods *Varuna* and *Mitra* rose in ascendancy and assumed the mantle of creator. *Varuna*, because of his expansive form was sublimated:

as with a robe, with all the creatures thereof and their dwellings (*Rig Veda* 7. 41).

Varuna now assumed the position of a moral God to the extent that:

He is merciful even to him who has committed sin (*Rig Veda* 7. 87.

7).

The *Vedic* laity (circa 3000 B.C.) had reached a situation where the large host of *devas* tended to confuse and obstruct the search for an unchanging reality. The hoard of deities were each in turn extolled and sublimated as the highest manifestation of God. This unique phenomena was designated henotheism, by Max Müller (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 90). At this junction in the development of *Vedic* religion the question posed was:

To what God shall we offer our oblation? (*Rig Veda* 10 121).

2.3 THE EMERGENCE OF THE VEDIC RITUAL

Arising from this quagmire of despondency there arose the system of ritualism. The ascendancy of the ritual was cemented because the philosophical speculation of the *Vedic* intelligentsia was beyond the grasp of the laity.

This sector of the community were engrossed in their agricultural pursuits and their efforts were concentrated in providing for their families. The *grihasta*, householder, constituted the majority of the population and cold speculation was not helpful in providing for "empty stomachs" (Interview: R.R. Maharajh). The realized souls of the *Aryan* culture identified this problem of the need for a consistent God and the ritualistic aspect of the *Vedic* religion which existed in its seed form in the *samhita* was developed to satisfy the spiritual aspirations of the

masses. Humanity was encouraged to sacrifice to the gods to procure material well-being and to express their state of consciousness (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 124). The *Vajasneyi Samhita* (111:50) reiterates this belief:

He offers a sacrifice to the devas with the text: Do thou give to me and I will give to thee, do thou bestow on me and I will bestow on thee.

The ritualistic system gained momentum when the process of creation was attributed to the act of *yajna*, sacrifice, where both the Gods and the *rishis* sacrificed the Supreme *Purusha* to initiate the scheme of created things. .

*With purusa as the oblation, gods performed sacrifice. Spring was its butter, summer the woods, and Autumn was its invocation.
With that purusa, the first of beings, Consecrated on grass, the gods sacrificed, The risis of old and the risis that followed (Rig Veda 10.90.1).*

2.4 THE BRAHMANAS (10 - 6 CENTURY B.C.), SRAUTA AND GRIHYA SUTRAS

The divinely ordained ritualistic system was implemented with the introduction of the *Brahmanas*. The *Brahmanas* are large volumes of liturgy concerned with the performance of rituals. It encompassed even the minutest detail such as the utensils to be used in the sacrifice. So intricate and systematic was this discipline of knowledge that a highly proficient priesthood belonging to the *brahmin* caste were deployed in overseeing and performing the ritual. During the *Brahmanic* period, *Vishnu* rose in prominence. He is regarded as the support of the universe and the *Shatapatha Brahmana* alludes to Vishnu as the personification of the sacrifice. *Brahmanaspathi* assumed the title of lord of hymns and the organizer of the sacrifice. By offering sacrifices dedicated to these

prominent deities humanity endeavoured to seek immortality like the gods (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 124).

The *Brahmanas* constitute the work portion i.e. *Karmakanda* of the *Vedas* and stress that by the performance of the various *Vedic* rituals, humanity could reach the lofty sphere of God. Each *Veda* has a principle *Brahmana* assigned to it. The *Brahmanas* gave rise to *Brahmanism* which was to hold sway over *Vedic* society. The *Mimamsa* system of philosophy sought its validity in the *Brahmanas*. The practise of *Uttar* and *Purva Mimamsa* by the sage Jaimini complimented the *Brahmanas* and added impetus to the entrenchment of ritualism (Oldenberg 1993 : 11). Gonda (1980 : 23) on the complexity of the *Brahmanas*:

From a considerable variety of rules and directions it is sufficiently apparent that the authorities were almost continuously aware of the necessity to define and arrange the elements of a ritual in such a way as to form a harmonious whole. Every detail had, in principle, to be significant and to suite the purpose of the rite.

The *Brahmanas* gave rise to both the *Srauta* and *Grihya Sutras* which enshrined communal ritual and domestic ritual respectively. The *Grihya Sutra* enjoined upon the householder various rites and sacraments to enable him to cross the ocean of life (Smith 1989 : 120).

The *Brahmanas* themselves were very difficult to understand because of the extensive attention to detail. Even the learned could not grasp the meaning and interpretations of the various injunctions. There was a need for the large host of injunctions to be arranged in a logical way to aid the practitioner of the rituals (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 128). Various Rishis such as *Katyayan*, *Latyayana* and *Jaimini* simplified this knowledge through the use of aphorisms outlining the injunctions and knowledge in a palatable form. The *srauta* ritual was performed

by kings and wealthy nobleman for the establishment of godliness, *dharma*, and for the advancement of their kingdoms (Smith 1989 : 123).

The *grihya sutras* are a more personalised treatise on the rituals and are centred around the household.

the grihya rituals are those done with regard to the home. The word 'home' here is used in three senses : rituals concerning the wife, those concerning the domicile, and rituals concerning the stage in life (asrama i.e. householdship) (Asvalayan Grihya Sutra 1.1.1).

2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF AGNI

Agni served as a messenger in the ritual and is the mediator between humanity and God. One must not overlook the importance and significance of *Agni* in the development of ritualism.

Agni is only subordinate to *Indra* in *Vedic* literature. The *Rig Veda* describes *Agni* as emanating from the heaven in the form of lightning. *Matarishvan* was said to have transferred the fire from the heavenly regions to the *Bhrigu* clan for safe keeping. The physical description of *Agni* is consistent with the attributes of physical fire. He has a long tawny beard and the rousing flames are symbolic of the sharp jaws and teeth. *Agni* promoted the fostering of unity and is one of the leading *devas* in the *Vedic* pantheon (Oldenberg 1993 : 26).

Agni enjoyed this exalted position because all oblations were consigned to the fire which transferred the essence of the oblation to the domain of the *devas*. *Agni* therefore became the mediator between the earthly and heavenly spheres, between the patron and the Absolute Reality.

2.6 THE FORM OF THE VEDIC RITUAL

The *Vedic* rituals used three ingredients as the principle oblations viz. vegetables, *isti*, animal, *pasu*, or human, *purusamedha* (Whillier 1989 : 41). The ritual was further divided into two broad categories, the domestic rites, *grihya*, and public, *srauta*. This classification was based on the desired effect of the ritual and by the number of priests and fires employed e.g. *garphatya* and *ahavaniya*. The rites themselves are of two types, those that are obligatory, *nitya*, and those that are occasional, *kamya or naimittika*. All rites have a purpose, *yajnanta* for the sacrificer which dictated the ritual practice, the offerings to be used and the time at which it should be performed (Whillier 1989 : 41). Sivaraman (1989 : 91) notes:

Sacrifice has great power (prabhava) in this world and others, the purpose of sacrifice being to generate, harness and direct the power to specific ends. The notion that speech in conjunction with the sacrifice generates affective power is central to Vedic ritual.

2.6.1 THE SACRIFICIAL INGREDIENTS AND THE PURIFICATORY RITES

In the *Vedic* sacrifice much attention was paid to the selection of the sacrificial offerings. This practice rests on the belief that there is a subtle principle that permeates all that is edible. This principle was referred to as *medha* (*Shathapatha Brahmana* 5.1.37, hereafter abbreviated as S.B.) the essence of sacrificial oblations. The rishis ordained that this *medha* existed in greater proportions in foods such as rice, barley, milk and in animals such as the goat and horse and was worthy to be used in sacrifices. It is then concluded that the gross form of the food was not the essential object of the oblation but the extract of *medha*. This was achieved by the various purificatory rites and acts that served to highlight and accentuate this principle of *medha* (Sharma 1989 : 34).

The purificatory rites involved the extension of the *yajamana's* inner force, consciousness, existing in the depths of his heart. He was instructed to dwell and to introspect on this transcendental state of being, extending it over a day, a fortnight, a month, a season, a half a year and finally a full year which is symbolic of the totality of the perpetual recurrence of Eternal Time (S.B. 1.6.3.36). As Staal (1961 : 67) notes:

The sacrifice can now be interpreted as one of the modes of the human being which constitutes being. The ontological interpretation enables us to see how it was possible that such importance was attached to the ritual act. The transformation and consecration which is effectuated through sacrifice, is not a transformation from one being to another but the constitution of being itself.

Smith (1989 : 101) further notes that:

The soma sacrifice is depicted as a ritual of "self-perfection" (atma-samskṛti) and is regarded as a "work of art" (śilpa). The sacrificer "fashions (samskṛate) his own self in a rhythmical way through the ritual chants that are likened to seeds being poured into the womb. In the ritual the priests construct and perfect (samskṛyanti) a "heavenly self" (dāiva atman) for the sacrifices. The relationship between the constructive ritual activity and the atman thus constructed is recognised by the sacrificer, who knows, "This, my (new, heavenly) body is made perfect (samskṛiyate) by that (sacrifice), the body of mine is procured by that (ritual)."

It is evident that the *Vedic* sacrifice transcended the level of petitioning God for material well being. The sacrifice emphasised the need for spiritual perfection.

The purificatory rites being terminated, the *yajamana* now embarks on the ritual lighting and establishing of the sacrificial fire, the *agnyadhana*. The *Brahmanas* enjoin the *yajamana* to engage in this rite on the new moon day in the month of

Vaishakha, April-May, or whenever he felt the need to offer a sacrifice. The fire was chumed by producing friction between two pieces of stick. The *Agni* was established in the three hearths, *kunds*, and was then allowed to develop by the chanting of prescribed hymns. The lighting of the fire is symbolic of the *yajamana* lighting the inner fire called *vaisvanara* which unfolds through the *kundalini chakras*, yogic centres in the spine of a being, resulting in the attempt to establish the cosmic presence in one's self (*S.B.* 11.2.12).

2.7 THE PRINCIPLE VEDIC SACRIFICES

The principle *Vedic* sacrifices are outlined as follows:

2.7.1 AGNIHOTRI

The *yajamana* together with his consort used the fire as the medium of transporting their oblations to the confines of the heavenly spheres. They proceeded to offer the oblations into the fire, *agnihotra*. This practise of *agnihotri* is repeated throughout the aspirant's life. He was compelled to make offerings of milk, rice and other cereals to *Aditya* and *Prajapathi* in the mornings and to *Agni* and *Prajapathi* in the evenings. The *Agnihotri* symbolises the sun god *Suryanarayana*, who is associated with *Yama*, the lord of death. This analogy was arrived at because all life forms living below the sun are subject to death. The gods who dwelled beyond the solar system were untouched by the mysteries of death. By performing the fire sacrifice, *agnihotri*, every morning and evening the sacrificer ascends to the abode of the gods beyond the sun. The power, *tejas*, of the soul manifests itself as the *suryanarayana* and *Agni*. The upward mobility of these two luminaries is symbolic of the souls quest for freedom and immortality, *moksha*, a state of being which is enshrined in the realm of the *devas*, *luminaries* (*Rig Veda* 10.88.67).

Much importance is attached to the process of *Agnihotri*. *Prajapathi*, the guardian of this particular sacrifice was dismembered and proceeded to command *Agni* thus:

Put me back together (S.B. 6.1.2.17).

Agni obeys and through the performance of the *agnihotri* ritual *Prajapathi* was reconstructed to his former self by *Agni*.

2.7.2 THE DARSAPURNAMASA - FULL AND NEW MOON SACRIFICE

Having successfully completed the *Agnihotri*, the sacrificer now embarks on the next set of obligatory rites, the *Darsapurnamasa*, full and new moon sacrifices, which commences on the full or new moon days. It is constituted of two parts, the *purnamasa* and the *darsa* both of which include a number of principle and secondary rites. This sacrifice is accomplished with the assistance of four *Vedic* priests viz. the *adhvaryu*, *brahma*, *hota* and *agnidh* (Sharma 1987 : 35). The functions of the various priests are explained below:

The *adhvaryu* was in charge of preparing the sacrificial ground including the construction of the altar, *vedi*, the placing of the sacrificial vessels, the fetching of wood and water, the securing and immolation of sacrificial animals, the lighting of the fire and the offering of ingredients into the fire. In fact the entire manual portion of the ritual was entrusted to the *adhvaryu*. He and his assistants were in charge of the body of the sacrifice. They chanted the hymns of the *Yajur Veda* while discharging their duties and they had to be conversant with the *Shatapatha Brahmana* (Macdonald 1896 : 5).

The *hotar* or *hotri* are probably one of the most important functionaries in the ritual together with the *brahman*. He was not involved in any manual part of the ritual. The *hotri* had to recite the sacrificial hymns of the *Rig Veda* paying particular attention to the difficult rules of pronunciation and accentuation. A *hotri* was one who had mastered the *Rig Veda* (Macdonald 1896 : 5).

The *udgatri* or the *Sama Veda* singer were to chant the hymns of the *Sama Veda* in a loud melodious voice.

The *brahman* was the supervisor and general controller of the sacrifice. He commanded all the other priests. He was expected to correct the mistakes committed by the others. He took an active part only during the *soma yajna*. His place and function were substituted by the *sadasya* who performed the same function as a *brahman* (Macdonald 1896 : 6). The *agnidh* is an assistant to the *adhvaryu* (Macdonald 1896 : 6).

The *srauta* rituals were arranged according to a hierarchy. The simple rites are attempted first and the more complex rituals are consigned to the end:

The subsidiary acts are linked with the principle ones enjoined in the same content by prakarana which means a mutual desire to be united with each other. The principal offerings of a sacrifice produce the result only when they are duly accompanied by the subsidiary rites, and hence they look for the latter. On the other hand the subsidiary rites, which cannot produce the main result independently, become fruitful by subserving the purpose of the principal offerings. This mutual desire unites the principle and the subsidiary components of sacrifice, which, as a whole, leads to the desired results (Chakrabarti 1980 : 126).

The *purnamasa* and the *darsa* are the faculties of speech and the mind respectively (*S.B.* 11.2.4.7). Thus, nutritious and wholesome foods constituted the sacrificial offerings to the physical body. This in turn is transformed into *urk*,

the essence of corn, water and herbs (*Vajesneyi Samhita* 1.8.3.4). This essence is assimilated into the vital fire of *prana*, breath, which nourishes the mind. This vital fire is exemplified as speech, *vak*, which through its constant activity covers the mind with its own self generated tendencies and impressions. This conditioning of the mind by *vak*, *speech*, is the aim of the *darsa purnamasa* (*S.B.* 11.12.3). This sacrifice elevates the vital breaths in the body, and directs them to the soul so that the real identity of the soul is rediscovered and this purity is channeled to the shelter of the "Super-soul" in which it manifests perfection (Sharma 1986 : 35).

2.7.3 CATURMASYA - QUARTERLY SACRIFICES

Next of the obligatory rites is the *caturmasya* which is performed as suggested by its designation, every four months, the quarterly sacrifices. Four sacrifices constitute this *yajna*. Rites or offerings are made on the full moon days of the first, fourth, and ninth months of the year. The fourth offering is made on the first day of the waxing moon which heralds the beginning of the first month which is subsequently the first day of the lunar year viz. February and March (Sharma 1986 : 35).

By engaging in this ritual the sacrificer incorporates the form of *Prajapathi* into his being. *Prajapathi* was enforced in the *Vedic* era as the epitome of immortality. This depiction is finalized when the year over which he presides is said to be the manifestation of immortality. *Prajapati* reflected:

I have emitted the counterpart of myself, the year. And therefore they say, "Prajapati is the year", for he emitted it as a counterpart of himself (S.B. 11.1.6.13).

Through the first series of rituals, the sacrificer establishes in himself the right arm of *Prajapathi*, similarly, the right thigh, left thigh and the left arm of the deity is incorporated into the sacrificer, through the remaining three sacrifices. Thus the sacrificer through the four fold assimilation of the vitality of *Agni* can establish within himself the Eternal being as *Prajapathi* (*S.B.* 11.5.2.1.8).

2.7.4 THE PASUYAGA

Upon completion of the *caturmasya* rites, the sacrificer proceeds with the *pasuyaga* which is performed bi-annually at intervals of six months. In this sacrifice, the heart, marrow and omentum of the sacrificial animal is offered into the ritual fire as the principle oblations. Through the medium of this sacrifice the *yajamana* absorbs the essence, *medha*, of the sacrifice and converts the period of one year into *amritayu*, immortal life (Sharma 1986 : 36).

The gods offered man as sacrificial victim. The sacrificial quality (medha) passed out of the offered man. It entered the horse then the horse became fit for sacrifice and they dismissed him whose sacrificial quality had passed out of him. He (the former man, now devoid of the sacrificial quality) became a defective man (kimpurusa). They offered the horse, and the sacrificial quality passed out of the offered horse. It entered the cow ... It (the former horse) became the white deer. They offered the cow, ... The sacrificial quality entered the ram. It the former cow became a gayal. They offered the ram ... The sacrificial quality entered the goat ... It (the former ram) became the camel. It (the sacrificial quality) stayed the longest in the goat, therefore the goat is the pasu most used as the sacrificial victim (Aitareya Brahmana 2.8).

The *pasuyaga* developed at a time when the understanding of natural phenomena was not fully comprehended. The wrath of the elements were interpreted as being the manifestation of the *devas'* anger. Storms claimed

thousands of lives. Thus it was declared that the *deva* in his anger devoured man and his civilization to quench his anger. *Vedic* society utilized the animal in the sacrifice as a substitute for human lives. This sacrifice was meant to appease the *deva* (Interview: R.R. Maharajh).

2.7.5 THE SOMA SACRIFICE

The *soma* sacrifice which *spanned* a whole year was attempted after the completion of the *pasuyaga*. It consisted of sacrifices in which cereals are offered, those in which animals are offered and those in which the libations of *soma* are offered. In this sacrifice *soma* is regarded as the principle sacrifice. This ingredient of *soma* which pervades all three *lokas* viz. *prithivi*, earth, *antariksa* atmosphere, and *dyu*, space, is extremely energising (*S.B.* 3.9.9.12). It is obtained from the *asana* herb. It is also referred to as *dodhana* and *usana*. The sacrificer by drinking the remnant of the *soma* awakens in himself the dynamic *amritbhava*, nectar like quality, in the form of the annual cycle and this incarnation of a specific time period in the sacrificer's self is known as being established in the state of *Prajapathi* in the form of *annada*, the eater of foods (*S.B.* 1.6.3.37).

2.7.6 THE CAYANYAGA - THE PILING OF THE FIRE ALTAR

At the termination of the *soma yaga* the *yajamana* is now at liberty to undertake the *cayanyaga*, the piling of the altar, the process through which the sacrificer is identified with *vayu*, immanent in all creation. By offering this sacrifice the sacrificer develops and perceives the eye of knowledge, *jnanachaksu* (*S.B.* 6.1.1.5).

The *cayanyaga* is the construction of five fire altars next to each other in the north, south, east and west. The fifth fire is placed in the uppermost hearth dedicated to *prajapathi*. Collectively they represent a hawk with outstretched wings. The hawk represents the faculty of intelligence and corresponds to the *avahaniya* fire to the east. The eyes, mouth, head, ears, the principle of the soul and speech of the sacrificer corresponds to the head, wings, soul and tail of the hawk. The five piles represent its hair, skin, flesh, bone and marrow. By attempting these rituals the sacrificer seeks immortality and union with *Prajapathi* and he fuses the various limbs with vigour and longevity and gains the abode of *Prajapathi*. The vital breath assumed the hawk form by performing the *cayanayaga* and rose to the sphere of *Prajapathi* to become one with him. Assuming this hawk-form *Prajapathi* created the *devas* while the gods in the form of the hawk acquired immortality (Sharma 1986 : 37). the explicit purpose of the sacrifice is described as:

The religious condition of the sacrifices thus also describes a curve symmetrical to the one traced by the victim. He begins by rising progressively into the religious sphere, and attains a culminating point whence he descends again into the profane. So each one of the creatures and objects that play a part in the sacrifice is drawn along as if in a continuous movement which, from entry to exit, proceeds along through opposing slopes (Smith 1987 : 105).

2.7.7 THE PURUSMEDHA - HUMAN SACRIFICE

The *purusmedha* terminates the series of obligatory rites. The sacrificer surrenders the entire self to the mercy of *Prajapathi* and declares the intentions of merging in the glory and solace of the Super Consciousness, *Virat Purusha*. Since man is the supreme created being he is considered the best sacrifice and is honoured as food for the *Virat Purusha* (*S.B.* 13.6.3.10). However, these human offerings are not killed but sent away with great honour after having the

paryagrikarana samskara performed. This is the carrying of the sacrificial fire around the victim and by the process of inhalation he absorbs the fire within him and retires to a life of seclusion to contemplate on the Self and to merge with the Supreme Reality (*S.B.* 13.6.2.20).

2.8 LATER RITUAL DEVELOPMENTS - THE UPANISHADIC PERIOD (1000 - 300 B.C.)

Many scholars especially the contemplators of the *Upanishads* were deeply disturbed by the dominance of *brahmanism* which held sway over a large sector of the populace. The *Vedic* sacrifice was criticised for its elaborate attention to detail. The subscribers to the philosophy of the *Upanishadic* seers feared that the state of religion would degenerate into a host of cold mechanical actions. However, their fears were unfounded due to a gross misconception of the purpose of the rituals. The *rishis* who codified the manuals of rituals did not intend for the rituals to be an end in themselves but rather intended for them to be used as a stepping stone to cross to the safe precincts of self- realization. The selection of the hymns and the various appendages of the rituals were used to condition and still the mind of the laity in anticipation of the Divine presence. Even the *Upanishads* themselves though professing to teach the attainment of *brahmavidya*, were not entirely emancipated from the influence of the rituals. This is demonstrated in the *Katha Upanishad* (1.15) one of the most respected *Upanishad* in the Hindu scriptural cannon as follows:

Yama then explained to him that fire sacrifice, the source of the worlds, what bricks are required for the altar, how many and how they are to be placed

The ritual is not reduced to the act of cold bargaining with God rather it is the attempt by the *yajamana*, sacrificer, to become one with the ritual through

inculcation of the right attitude. It is declared in the *Rig Veda* (5.81.1) that the sacrifice in which the spiritually awakened mind is harnessed attains to harmony and reaches up to God, in the harmonious synthesis of the world itself for God is the immanent lord of the world. It was an attempt to attain *brahmabhava* or the state of *Brahman*. This indeed dispels any doubt about the intentions of the ritual (Sharma 1986 : 38).

The popularity of the *Puranas* such as the *Vishnu*, *Brahmanda* and *Vayu Puranas* (circa 900 A.D) highlighted the importance of the lesser deities of the *vedas*. *Indra*, *Varuna* and *Mitra* now faded into obscurity. *Vishnu*, *Ganesha*, *Skanda*, *Shiva* and other deities rose in popularity. The *Bhakti* movement coupled by the large influence of the *Alvar* and *Nayanar* saints (circa 9th Century A.D) served to establish the worship of these gods. The *Vedic* ritual especially the *srauta* tradition came under severe criticism from all fronts. Realized souls such as *Gautama the Buddha* were particularly severe in his criticism of the animal sacrifice, *pasuyaga*. He abhorred the rigid manuals of worship. It was inevitable that the sacrifice would have to be reformed or die a slow death (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 128).

The *vedic* ritual was too extensive and expensive for the laity to conduct. The large host of priests who were employed and the ingredients utilized, meant that only the affluent could gain access to the sacrifice and to the services of the priests. Many sectors of the community began to doubt the *pasuyaga* and labelled it repulsive. With the passage of time the *Brahmanas* themselves advised against the sacrifice of animals (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 125).

The prominence of *Vishnu*, *Shiva*, *Shakti* *Ganesha* and *Surya* gave rise to various independent sects within the broad framework of Hinduism during the 4th-5th Century A.D. These sects were termed *Vaishnavas*, *Shaivas*, *Shaktas*, *Ganapathas* and *Sauryas* respectively. Each system of belief revered their presiding diety as the highest and only manifestation of the Supreme Reality. This

tendency had a marked influence on the religious scriptural development and various scriptures harboured a bias towards one deity or the other. e.g. the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Srimad Bhagwatam* are considered *Vaishnavite* scriptures while the *Shiva Purana* and the *Linga Purana* are largely *Shaivite* in character. The worship of these deities became highly specialized and the *Agamas* were formulated to instruct the people on the ritual ceremonies to be conducted to each deity (Interview : Tewary).

The preliminary rituals associated with the popularly worshipped deities as we know it today had its beginning in the *agama* form of worship and was developed in the books termed *padadhtis*, formulas of worship, by schooled *acharyas*. The *tantras* also had a significant bearing on the modern day ritual and much of the tantric practices e.g. the *sodasupacara*, sixteen offerings, are extracts from the *Tantra Shastras* (Interview: Shukla).

The *tantric* ritual is based on two beliefs: that the self is potentially divine and can be developed illimitably and that the Absolute whose inherent nature is joy, *ananda*, is the ultimate attainment. Thus on the one hand we have the self aspiring towards liberation and on the other is the goal. In between is the intermediate phase of reaching for the goal through an effective means - this is the ritual. Ritual has come to be defined as a link connecting the individual psyche with the universal noumena (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 125). *Tantra* offers an operational model for psychic liberation and outlines an effective *modus operandi* within its defined conspectus and ritual therefor should be considered a key factor of psychic evolution (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 125).

The tantra has definite symbolic meaning. All rituals are performed as symbolic acts which have the power to alter the consciousness and when the ritual is efficient, they become sources of manifestation of that power. Ritual is much

more than mere obeisance to a deity. It is in fact unification, and internalisation of the personal and specific towards the Timeless, Abstract and Universal (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 126).

2.9 SAMSKARAS

Perhaps the most significant factor that has helped to entrench *Brahmanism* and the ritual was the introduction of the sacraments, *samskaras*. Pandey (1969 : 17) enumerates the importance of the sacraments as follows:

all of these rituals aim not only at the formal purification of the body but at sanctifying, impressing, refining and perfecting the entire individuality of the recipient.

The most important of the sixteen sacraments is the *upanayan*, investiture of the sacred thread, in which the young boy (not older than ten) is invested with the sacred thread *yajnopavit* and is introduced to the station of *brahmachari*, student. This education encompasses both religious and secular tuition. He is now referred to as a *dvij*, twice born. His first birth being the biological one whereas the second birth is achieved through the process of several ritualistic rites. The entire ceremony is a reflection of the natural birth procedures. At the outset the aspirant is smeared with a yellow paste, tumeric, and is instructed to remain in silence in a secluded place. This is symbolic of the gestation period and the yellow paste represents the embryonic fluid.

First he is born from his mother and father, then, when he to whom the sacrifice inclines sacrifices, he is born a second time, and when he dies, when they put him into the (cremation) fire and he arises again, he is born a third time. Thus, they say, a man is born three times (S.B. 11.2.1.1).

The sacraments governing conception, birth, marriage to the last rites are punctuated with rituals that serves to reinforce the philosophical tendencies of the particular *samskara*. The departed souls are also reunited with the manes by the performance of the various rituals associated with the *antyeshti*, last rites (Interview: Shukla).

2.10 CONCLUSION

In the broad framework of the *Vedic* knowledge, the system of rituals occupy an important place. So dominant and influential was this discipline of the scriptures that a whole period was designated after it viz. the *Brahmanic* era. However it must be borne in mind that the popular misconception of the ritual being a selfish bargaining with God is incorrect. It is in fact, after close perusal of the *Vedic* rituals, an attempt to seek identity with the Absolute Consciousness, a phenomena that was later expounded in the Upanishads in more philosophical terms.

CHAPTER 3

THE PRELIMINARY PREPARATIONS EFFECTING THE PATRON (YAJAMANA)

3.1 ABSTRACT

The *vedic* ritual is not practical in the South African context because of the many complexities of the ritual and also due to the lack of qualified personnel to supervise the ritual. The local priest rely heavily on the *prayogas* and *padhatis*, interpretations of the *kalpa sutra*, to perform and officiate the various *pūjas*, prayers. This chapter examines the preparations that take place within and without the *yajamana*, sacrificer, and his family. The construction and the significance of the altar is also examined.

3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRIEST

In the South African context the preliminary rituals that are observed before the *Pradhana Deva*, main deity, is worshipped varies from priest to priest. The lack of suitably qualified priests has led to the misinterpretation of several *shastric*, scriptural, injunctions (Interview : Shukla). Any ritual initially begins with the selection of the priest to oversee the ritual. The *Shatapatha Brahmana* (3.9.3.3) declares that a priest should be well versed in scripture, be of a pleasant disposition, have some knowledge of astrology and be of sober habits. This careful selection of the priest is necessary because the entire effect of the ritual is likened to a heaven bound cart.

The *Shatapatha Brahmana* (1.9.3.27 and 4.4.2.1) further reveals:

The sacrificial spoons are said to be the yokemates and the metres of

the ritual utterances are equated to harnessed cattle that draw the sacrifice to the world of the gods.

Another illustration is when the sacrifice is likened to a boat transporting the *yajamana* from the earthly to the heavenly shores.

The priest are its spars and oars, the conveyances to the heavenly worlds. If there is one blame worthy priest, even that one only would make it sink. And truly every sacrifice is a heavenly-bownd ship. One ought to keep a blame worthy priest away from the sacrifice. The captain of the ship is the priest who offers the milk oblation (S.B. 4.2.5.10; 2.3.3.15).

The priest who officiates a ceremony is termed a *purohita* (Griswold 1971 : 48). They are also referred to as *manusya devas* or human gods. This reference arose out of the exalted position that the priest enjoyed during the *Bramhanic* era (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 126). The *brahmin* priest assumed much importance, as it was thought that only the priests could comprehend the meaning of the rituals which were steeped in symbolism and language which had to be interpreted in a specific manner (Radhakrishnan 1977 : 126).

The priest commanded great respect and was lauded for their learning (Interview : P.R. Maharaj). The *Shathapatha Brahamana* (11.22.6) states:

Verily there are two kinds of gods; for the gods themselves assuredly are gods, and then the priests who have studied and teach vedic lore are the human gods.

Another factor that influenced the domination of the priestly class was the necessity for the preservation of the *Vedas* (Oldenberg 1993 : 212). Thus, the *brahmin* had to follow his vocation with added zeal. They imposed on themselves severe conditions as revealed in the law codes of *Manu*:

A Brahmin unlearned in holy writ is extinguished in an instant like dry grass on fire.

The priest in training should control his passion and imbibe from his preceptor knowledge of the scriptures. Radhakrishnan (1977 : 127) notes that a professional priesthood is always demoralising, however, those who were true to their calling, condemned the ostentation and hypocrisy of the selfish priest. The priest who possessed the *Vedic* lore became the accredited intermediaries between gods and men and the dispensers of the divine grace. The *yajamana*, the man for whom the rite is performed, stands aside, (Oldenberg 1993 : 208).

It is imperative that the priest be versed with the mechanics of the ritual as well as the religio-symbolic significance implied in the ritual, so that he may lead the performer from the mundane to the spiritual and effect a tangible change in the consciousness of the patron (Interview : Tewary).

There are two kinds of gods. For the gods (are gods) and the Brahmins who have studied and teach are human gods (manusya devas). The sacrifice of these (sacrificer) is divided in two. Oblations or sacrifice to the gods and sacrificial fees are sacrifices to the human gods, the Brahmins who have studied and teach, with oblations one pleases the gods, with sacrificial fees one pleases the human gods, the Brahmins who have studied and teach. Both kinds of gods when pleased, place him in a condition of well being (S.B. 2.2.2.6).

The dominance and importance of the priest is exemplified in the *Aittriya Brahmana* (7.19) where it is recorded that the sacrifice departed from the gods and ran away with the demons. Therefore the sanctity of the sacrifice had to be vested to the custodians of *dharma*, righteousness.

Prajapati emitted the sacrifice and after the sacrifice the Brahman power and the ksatra power were emitted. After them were emitted

these creatures who eat sacrificial oblations and those who don't. The brahmins are those who eat sacrificial oblations, the Rajanyas (kshatriyas), vaishyas and sudras those who don't, the sacrifice departed from them the brahman power and kshatra power followed after it, each with their own weapons. The weapons of the brahman are the horse chariot, armour and bow and arrow. The sacrifice escaped, recoiling, from the kshatras weapons and the kshatra did not catch it. The brahman followed it, caught it, and restrained it, standing from above caught, restrained from above, and recognizing its own weapons, (the sacrifice) returned to the brahman. Therefore even now the sacrifice finds support in the brahman and in the Brahmins.

In South Africa, the limited body of priests have made large strides from their humble beginnings. Classes to promote the proficiency and ethics of the priesthood are already established. One such institution is the *Shree Luxmi Narayan Purohita Patshala* in Durban at which instructions pertaining to the priesthood are administered under the guidance of priests such as H.R. Maharaj (Interview : H.R. Maharajh).

This school believes that a priest should not only possess knowledge of the *karmakanda*, ritualism, but should also be conversant with all aspects of Hinduism. Lectures and workshops are held where popular scriptures such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are critically examined. *Pundit* Maharajh maintains that all *purohitas* should be well versed in *sanskrit* in order to facilitate correct pronunciation. Presently there are some twenty *purohitas* undergoing instructions at the school. These *purohitas* offer their services to the community without stipulating a *dakshina*, sacrificial fee (Interview : H.R. Maharajh).

3.3 ASTROLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Upon deciding to offer a *puja*, prayer of thanksgiving, the aspirant contacts his family *purohita* to establish a day on which the ritual will take place. This is done with the help of the *pancanga*, almanac, which outlines the *muhurat*, a time of extreme auspiciousness. There are numerous astrological implications regarding the fixing of a *muhurat*.

The strict adherence to the astrologically declared time does not necessarily apply in South Africa. The South African Hindu plies his labour in a highly industrialized society. More often than not, both spouses have to work. Prayers and *pujas* are undertaken largely during weekends or on public holidays. However there are isolated incidents of people still adhering to the practice of establishing a *muhurat*, auspicious times.

Astrology is not merely fortune telling which is a common misnomer, but in fact part of the *Vedic* sciences. It is referred to as *jyotisha* which constitutes part of the *vedangas*, *vedic* appendages. *Jyotisha* encompasses:

- predictive astrology,
- the mathematical basis viz. astronomy,
- the symbolic sciences.

The individual contains the twelve *rashis*, zodiacs, in his physical composition. Man is constructed in the image of *Vishwarupa*, Heavenly Father. This similarity between man and God is the basis of astrology because the fluctuations in one system will effect the changes in the other. Hence planetary motion causes *karmic* changes in humanity's subtle astral body, *sukshma-sharira* (Vedavyas 1975 : 457).

The whole of 'time' is contained in man. The twelve zodiacs are compressed in Man as *yogic* time, internal time. This *yogic* time is a reflection of Universal time. It lies within the *sushumna nadi* in the spinal chord and houses the six *yoga* centres, *chakras* or *kundalini yoga* which are ruled by the planets and signs of the zodiac. They are the internal planets of man and serve the same purpose as planets in the external universe (Vedavyas 1975 : 458).

Each *chakra* possesses a positive and negative half. This gives us twelve *rashis* of the zodiac. The sun and the moon govern night and day. These satellites are the *chandra nadi* on the left side of the body, *ida nadi* and the *surya nadi* on the right side, are referred to as *pingala nadi*. Thus the right and left are the day and night of the year cycle (Vedavyas 1975 : 40).

The six *rashis* associated with each semi circle of the night and day rule the bright and dark fortnights, *shukla* and *krishna - paksha*, of the lunar months. They also govern the northern course, *uttara ayana*, and the southern course, *dakshina ayana*, travelled by the sun for six months interval each in the year (Vedavyas 1975 : 467).

Thus it is observed that the World Form of *Purusha*, *Kala Purusha*, is reflected in man like a tree reflected in the seed (Vedavyas 1975 : 464). Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 21) conclude that:

The forces governing the cosmos on the macro-level govern the individual in the micro-level. According to the tantra, the individual being and universal being are one. All that exists in the universe must also exist in the individual body.

It is necessary to consult a *jyotishee*, an adept at the science of *jyotisha*, to gauge whether the constellations and positioning of the *rashis* and planets are compatible with the disposition of the internal cosmos of man. This will influence the mental condition of the sacrificer and it may occur that the *yajna* will be

performed in vain because the sacrificer's mental condition, equated to cosmic discord will not allow him to concentrate on the task at hand (Interview : Shukla).

3.4 HYGIENE

Personal hygiene and purity of both the individual and his premises has to be maintained to encourage the fostering of purity which is the basis of consciousness (Interview : S.J. Maharajh). A precondition for the performance of puja is that the devotee has been fasting ie. has not eaten before the deity (Abbot 1932 : 509). Those sacrificers who eat meat refrain from this habit. Although the animal sacrifice was sanctioned by the *Brahmanas* it was only applicable to a particular era. The *Rig Veda* advocates that non violence is the highest manifestation of religion. The taking of a life is never compatible with the noble dictates of *bhakti*, devotion. The *Shatapatha Brahmana* (1.2.3.7) adds:

the sacrificial quality (medha) left the goat, it entered this earth. They searched for it by digging. They found it as those two, rice and barley vishi and yava. Thus even now they find those two by digging. And, further, these lowly victims, these vegetable pasus are said to possess as much potency (virya) as all the sacrificial pasus would have.

The *yajamana* abstains from meat and other intoxicants for a minimum period of one week. Swami Praphupada (1984 :257) opines that:

Real ahimsa means not checking anyone's progressive life. The animals are also making progress in their evolutionary life by transmigrating from one category of animal life to another. If a particular animal is killed, then his progress is checked. If an animal is staying in a particular body for so many days or so many years and is untimely killed, then he has to come back again in that form of life to complete the remaining days in order to be promoted to

another species of life. So their progress should not be checked simply to satisfy one's palate. This is called ahimsa.

During the week leading to the eventual ritual it is advisable for the performer of the ritual to reflect and introspect on his life and accomplishment thus far. The individual should atone for errors and misdeeds. The ritual does not only dwell on the external performances of rites and acts but also encompasses mental purification. The *yajamana* is made to reflect on his spiritual progress and growth through the external performances of rituals (Sharma 1989 : 29).

3.5 THE AIM OF THE RITUAL

Through the preliminary ritual, man enacts his active and conscious participation in this systematic process of purification. The *Shatapatha Brahmana* (7.1.2.2.1) and (7.1.2.2.3) notes:

The mystic fire on the sacrificial altar is a liberating force. Through its agency man is forced from the impurities accumulated in the pursuit of solely selfish interest, and is made capable of feeling the pulsation of the infinite in himself.

Realising his place in the created order, man is obliged to sacrifice in thankful recognition for all that life has offered him (Sharma 1989 : 30). The ritual is a process through which the patron forges an identity with the Supreme Self, the Undecaying Absolute which is achieved by renouncing his moral identity through the act of sacrifice. The *yajamana* seeks to develop within himself the power to rise from his earthly abode to the powerful higher world (*Rig Veda*: 18.1.61).

Ritualism as practiced in the South African context is burdened by the inability of both the priesthood and the sacrificer to attach a definite interpretation to the ritual observance. The lack of teachers coupled with the inability of the South

African priests to arrive at an acceptable interpretation of rituals has further entrenched this situation. Therefore the sacrificer does not view the *puja*, prayer, as a heaven bound vehicle with the specific purpose of establishing him firmly in the state of *brahmabhava*, state of *Brahman* (Sharma 1989 : 38). The *yajamana* views the ritual as an obligatory practice set down by the patriarch of the family. However, there is a great re-awakening and resurgence among the Hindu youth to understand the symbolism and purpose of the ritual (Interview : P.R. Maharaj).

According to Bühnemann (1988 : 29) the term *puja*, prayer, is used to denote a ritual of worship of a *murti*, image, or an aniconic form of deity as well as of any other object which is considered as possessing special power and being sacred. *Puja* may be of a simple nature were the offering of traditional items such as tumeric, *kumkuma*, flowers, sandalwood paste etc. The elaborate *puja* requires the offering of a sequence of services, *upcharas*, accompanied by the recitation of *vedic* or *puaranic* mantras (Bühnemann 1988 : 29). Thieme (1939 : 792) describes the etymology of *puja* as the honouring of a guest. Thieme (1939 : 114) also assigns the following meaning to the word *puja* :

- To honour a guest or a newcomer with hospitable reception, to receive and to entertain.
- To honour a god or guest in a manner customary for the arriving guest.
- To honour objects like weapons with flowers regarding them as gods.

3.6 THE SACRIFICIAL REQUIREMENTS

The *yajamana* now purchases the *samagri*, sacrificial ingredients, to be utilized in the sacrifice. The type of ingredients and quantity will vary according to the *Pradhana deva*, main deity, being worshipped and also according to the scale of

the *yajna*. The religious symbolic use of the various ingredients is analysed in Chapter Five of this study. Great care is exercised in the purchase and handling of these ingredients because the ingredients are to be used in the service of the Lord.

Upcharas or services according to *Rameshwara* in his commentary on the *Parashuramakalpasutra* (1979 : 138) is described as :

causing a special comfort that is produced by the offered item.

The *Upcharas* are offered in the following numbers: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 27, 29, 32, 36, 38, 64, 72 to 108 (*Vishvakesena - Samhita* 20.209). The standard number of *upcharas* are determined at five and sixteen, the latter being more popular. The number five as well as sixteen are considered symbolic numbers, both signifying completeness. If an object consists of five or sixteen parts it is considered complete (Gonda 1965 : 115) The *upcharas* are offered according to one's means, *yathashakthi*. However the sacrificer is urged to offer only the best (*Manusmriti* 11.30). Care should be exercised in selecting the ingredients to be used as *upcharas*. They should be perfect and unspoiled (Bühnemann 1988 : 66). Garments should be untear, flowers fresh and not smelt at before and grains unbroken (*Mantramahodadhi* 22.90).

When the dawn of the appointed day arrives, the females of the house together with the large host of relatives that have assembled engage in the preparation of *prasada*, food offerings. It is customary to invite family and friends as this affords those assembled an opportunity to participate in the prayer and subsequently develop the self. The preparation of *prasada* normally takes place outside on an open fire. A vessel of water is placed near the fire. This is done to ensure that constant purity is maintained throughout the preparations. Various types of jars are mentioned in rituals. The single jar is mentioned as early as the *vedic* period (Dange 1987 : 50). During the *vedic* sacrifice it was necessary to establish a jar

of water alongside the sacrificial fire named the *garhapatya* or the domestic fire (Dange 1987 : 50). The fire and water jar constitute a ritual couple (S.B. 1.1.1.8). The water jar being the woman and fire the man. The whole idea was the gain of progeny (Dange 1987 :51).

The ladies tending the fire and the various preparations, engage in these processes without shoes. Shoes are considered an impurity not because of the fact that it is more often than not made from leather but rather due to the fact that it normally traverses unhygienic places which renders it impure (Interview : Dwivedi). The removal of one's shoes when entering a place of worship or when preparing offerings is done to inculcate a sense of humility in the person involved. Even the preparations preceding the rituals tend to condition the sacrificer so that he may approach the altar in humility and submission (Interview : Shukla).

This emphasis on absolute purity and cleanliness also extends to the mental faculty. Those associated with the ritual should encourage godly thoughts and should be in a *sattvic* spirit. The *Bhagavad Gita* (2.56) states:

One who is not disturbed in mind emits the three fold miseries or elated when there is happiness and who is free attachment, fear and anger is called a sage of steady mind.

These pre-conditions are necessary because the thought that one harbours in one's mind is transmitted through the hands into the *prasad*. If evil crosses the mind during the sumptuous preparations then the food designated for the deity is contaminated (Interview : Shukla). The vessel of water placed near the fire serves as a deterrent to these evil thoughts because water has the quality of purifying and is used extensively in the ritual (Interview: Shukla). Numerous civilizations regard water as a purificatory agent. Water is used in sipping, sprinkling and bathing. Perhaps the mythological origin of the *Ganges* has some bearing on the importance of water in the rituals. The *Ganges* emanated from the feet of Lord *Vishnu* and is directly associated with the Lord and divinity.

By utilising water, especially *Ganges* water, the user of the sacrificial water hopes to imbibe the qualities of God and also seeks God's protection through the agent of water (Interview : Shukla). Eliade (1959 :132) notes:

All waters, therefore, in virtue of the pristine privilege of the origin, do after invocation of God attain the sacramental power of sanctification; for the Spirit immediately supervenes from the heavens and rests over the waters.

Water therefore, has the ability to wash away sins, purify and regenerate, the exact purpose for which the sacrificer undertakes the ritual. This reconstruction of the individual in the Divine image is initiated by the use of water to obliterate the lower self (Eliade 1959 : 131).

The *Rishis* have always advocated the fostering and development of *Sattvic*, pure thoughts. The *Bhagavad Gita* (15.18) declares:

Those who are established in Sattvas rise to higher regions (such as heaven).

The seed of correct knowledge will not germinate in a mind wracked by evil and unpleasant thoughts. A pure and stable mind is a prerequisite to comprehend the totality of God (Interview : Tewary).

3.7 MURTI PUJA - WORSHIP OF THE DEITY

The philosophy underlying the elaborate preparations for the ritual hinges on the theory that God from the *Nirguna*, Impersonal, form exercises compassion and mercy on the subjects, thus manifesting in one of the many *Saguna*, Personal, forms, to receive the worship of the devotees. This theory is sanctioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* (4.8) in which *Sri Krishna* informs *Arjuna*:

*For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and
for the establishment of Dharma, I am born from age to age.*

God, although omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent in the form of *Satchidananda*, Absolute Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, manifests in numerous roles for the benefit of the devotee who long to view the Supreme Reality. This desire to see the Lord must be nurtured in the heart of the devotee and subsequent to this fostering of extreme devotion the Lord in compassionate consideration reveals Himself. The *Kathas*, religious stories, are resplendent with accounts of individuals who had the *darsan*, vision, of the Lord due to the intensity of their devotion (Interview Shukla).

The sacrificer treats and respects the appointed deity with the same ceremony that one would afford distinguished guests. In India, villagers paid tribute to their kings by washing his feet, hands and offering him water to drink. This was done in appreciation of the long distance travelled by the king. The water served as a welcome refreshment after a tedious journey. It is customary to offer a visitor water first as an expression of one's hospitality (Interview: Shukla). A *thilak*, dot, is then placed on the monarch's forehead, usually a bright red one, symbolic of the *rajo guna*, activity, that is inherent in the make-up of kings. He is then adorned with a garland and is subject to the offering of *arati*, the waving of a light. This is in recognition of his supremacy and sovereignty over the populace. This entire procedure is termed *raja upacara*, offerings that are made to a king (Interview : Shukla).

The devotee, charged with extreme devotion offers to the image of God various offerings in recognition of the image being the *raja- di- raja*, king of all kings. In the services intended for the king the following services are offered umbrella, chowry, music, swing, fan, water, sandals, sound of conch, songs, instrumental music, dance, elephant and horse (*Agni Purana* 245.1).

The ritual utilises the *murti*, image, as pivotal to the ritualistic tradition. In the *Bhagawad Purana* (11.27.12) injunctions declare that a *murti* can be constructed from the following material: stone, wood, metal, clay, painted, sand, jewels, gold, silver, copper and brass. *Murtis* prepared from jewels are considered the best while those made of clay are the most inferior. Different benefits are ascribed to the worship of *murtis* prepared from different materials (*Pujaprakash* 1913 : 24).

Due to humanity's material involvement in this temporal existence, the individual has not yet developed the feeling of *vairagya*, dispassion. Hence it is extremely difficult for the individual to conceptualise a formless God. The *Bhagavad Gita* (12.5) notes:

The path of those who have their mind attached to the unmanifest is more rugged.

Man requires a form through which he can channel his emotions and requests without worrying about the complexities involved in contemplating on a formless God. This phenomena does not pose a problem to the Hindu who is accused of "idol" worship. To the ignorant the various forms of God manifest in the *murti* will only be an idol but for the devout Hindu the image is infused with the presence of God, after undergoing a series of ritualistic ceremonies

It may appear strange that a system of ritual, steeped in a tradition that implore the *yajamana* to express and accentuate the principle of *atman*, self, has to rely on an external image, *murti*. The *Rig Veda* (164.46) echoes:

The Truth is one, the wise refer to it variously.

The devotee prays to the *shakti*, power, of God that is housed in the image. This is validated by the fact that the image is later submerged in water and is returned to its subtle state. Thus the essence of God is valued more than the physical

presentation (Interview : Dwivedi).

Murtis are distinguishable as movable, *chala*, ie. those which can be lifted up and carried to another place, and immovable ones, *achala*, *sthira*, ie. those which are fixed on a pedestal and cannot be moved once they have been installed (Bühnemann 1988 : 48). The *murti* is infused with life in a ceremony called *pranapratishtha*, without which the *murti* is considered nothing but a lifeless object, unfit to receive worship. By the *pranapratishtha* the *murti* becomes identical with the *devata* as long as the *prana* is not taken out. By the rite of *pranapratishtha* the *murti* becomes the deity itself (Bühnemann 1988 : 53).

3.8 THE PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR - VEDI

If one has to entertain God at one's home then provision has to be made for housing one's guests. This is accommodated by the construction of a shrine termed the *vedi* or *bedi*, a platform on which *vedic* rituals are performed. The construction of the *vedi* is described in the *Samaranganasuthadhara of Bhoja* (37.19), as having auspicious marks and four corners, *chathurasra*. The *vedi* also has four gates, *chathurdvara*. *Bhoja* further enjoins the aspirant to smear the *vedi* with cow dung. The *vedi* is further endowed with the holy jar, *kalasha*, and sandal paste water (*Samaranganasuthadhara* 35.13). Rice grains are also strewn over the *vedi* and in the centre a jar is placed symbolising *Brahma* (Dange 1987 : 135).

The earliest reference to the square *vedi* occurs in the *Rig Veda* where it is conceived of as a woman having four hair braids (*Rig Veda* 10.114.3). The *Rig Veda* (1.164.35) and the *Shathapatha Brahmana* (1.2.5.9) equate the *vedi* to the earth. Therefore the square *vedi* represents the earth and is a symbol of great potentiality (Dange 1987 : 136). Dange (1987 : 137) notes:

The idea is not only that the vedi is a woman, but also that it is a device for the generation of prosperity, progeny and even the desired result. Offerings in her would give birth to accomplishment.

The *Samaranganasuthadhara* mentions four types of *vedis* viz, *chaturasra*, *sabhadra*, *sridhari* and *padmini*. The respective *vedis* are used for different purposes on different occasions such as sacrifice, marriage and installing of deities (Dange 1987 : 139). The *chaturasra* is used at a sacrifice, the *sabhadra* is enjoined in the installation of a deity, the *sridhari* is prescribed in marriage and the *padmini* is prescribed in royal consecration (Dange 1987:139). *Bhoja* in the *Samaranganasuthadhara* (47.12) enjoins that:

At the four sides; at the corners, there should be four pillars; at the foot of each pillar there should be a jar filled with water.

The *srauta* rites did not require a formal structure on which the rituals were conducted. The *yajna-kund* was central to the *srauta* rituals and all offerings were consigned to the fire as oblations (Dange 1987 : 135). As the ritual underwent evolution the *havan* was relegated to a subordinate role as an appendage to the *pradhanya*, main, rite (Interview : R.R. Maharajh). Popular religion encompasses the preliminary ritual after which a *katha*, story of religious and moral significance, is read by the priest. The purposes of the *katha* is to impart a moral and ethical lesson to the *yajamana*. The *havan* is used as a medium to transport the oblations of the *yajamana* to the *deva* in thanksgiving.

The *vedis* that are used in South Africa are constructed in a variety of ways. Some utilise soil which is packed into a wooden framework while others are constructed from wood or metal.

One compulsory rite that is omitted presently is the performance of the *panchbhu samskara* the five sacraments that are performed as homage to the physical earth. The physical earth is regarded as mother because of her productivity and

her ability to provide humanity with food just as a mother makes provision for food for her family. In appreciation of this, one is obliged to pay homage to mother earth in humble submission to her generous qualities (Interview : S.J. Maharaj). As Eliade (1959 : 144) notes:

Woman, then, is mystically held to be one with the earth, childbearing is seen as a variant, on the human scale, of the telluric fertility. All religious experiences connected with fecundity and birth have a cosmic structure. The sacrality of woman depends on the holiness of the earth. Feminine fecundity has a cosmic model - that of Terra Mater, the universal Genetrix.

Humanity, in ignorance, commits grave injustices to mother earth such as pollution. In appreciation of the practical qualities of the earth, prayers are offered to mother earth where permission is sought to remove soil to construct the *vedi* (Interview : S.J. Maharaj). Traditionally, ladies accompanied by dance, songs and much merriment made their way to a stream where they offered prayer to God manifest as the Mother. After offering prayers several people are elected to dig up the soil to be used as the *vedi*. Normally the upper layer is scraped away because of the probability of it being subject to various forms of pollution. The soil is then packed in wicker baskets or any acceptable container. The procession winds its way back to the sacrificer's home (Interview : Tewary). Eliade (1959 : 145) opines:

The social and cultural phenomenon known as matriarchy is connected with the discovery of agriculture by woman. It was woman who first cultivated food plants. Hence it is she who becomes owner of the soil and crops. The magico-religious prestige and consequent social predominance of woman have a cosmic model - the figure of Mother Earth.

It is also customary to offer a prayer to *Sesa Nag*, the serpent bed of Lord *Vishnu*. In the *Bhagawad Purana* (5.25.2) it is mentioned that the entire earth

rests on the hood of *Sesa*. Any shift in weight will have a devastating effect on the maintenance of equilibrium. Before one can disturb or shift the balance of weight one has to 'inform' *Sesa*, so that he may adjust his position accordingly to facilitate the removal of soil (Interview : Shukla).

Another consideration is that numerous life forms inhabit the soil e.g. worms, insects etc. It is inevitable that some destruction will be caused to these life forms in the process of digging up the soil. In recognition of this misfortune, prayers asking for forgiveness are also offered in which the *yajamana* begs mercy for his action citing the reason that the soil is to be utilised in divine worship and the destruction of the minute life forms is not committed blatantly and without reason. The plea for forgiveness is based on the logic that lesser life forms reproduce in large numbers and the loss is compensated for during the following breeding season (Interview : S.J. Maharaj). Much importance is attached to the *vedi* as an appendage of man's physiology. The Chandogya Upanishad (5.1.8.2) notes:

The sacrificial site (vedi) is indeed his (man's) breast.

The breast and the chest cavity houses the heart in which the *atman* resides. The principles of *Advaita Vedanta*, non dualistic theory, of *Sankara* (788 A.D.) maintains that the *atman*, self, though negligible in quantity displays the same attributes as God in totality. Just as the heart houses and is a support for the soul the physically constructed *vedi* is a support for the Super - soul, *Brahman*. The physical *vedi* is constructed as a shrine and a throne for the king of all kings. In humble submission to the Lord as the Creator, Perserver and Destroyer, the *murti* is elevated to a level above the *yajamana*, this physical elevation is symbolic of the Lord and servant hierarchy (Interview: Tewary).

A square or rectangular framework normally constructed from wood is erected on the ground. Soil is packed into this framework and levelled to form an even platform. An elected person who is gifted in art now proceeds to decorate the

vedi with bright powder. Intricate patterns as well as *aums* and *swastikas* adorn the *vedi*. Thus, the altar duly constructed, represents the *sinhasan*, or the royal throne bedecked in all its finery.

Bamboo stems with the upper foliage intact are driven into the four right angles and one is fixed in the centre of the *vedi*. A piece of white or red cloth is draped over the foliage and fastened to the bamboo stems by pieces of cloth or string. This constitutes the canopy that will protect the Lordship from the elements. Garlands and flowers are strewn on the alter to beautify and brighten the sacrificial site (Interview : P.R.Maharaj).

It is also traditional to establish four *kalashas*, vessels, in the four corners of the *vedi*. A brass or copper vessel, *lotta*, is filled with water, five mango leaves are placed half submerged in the water, on top of which a saucer filled with rice is placed. A clay lamp complete with *ghee* and wick is lit and placed on the saucer. The four *kalashas* represent the illuminated knowledge of the four *Vedas* viz. the *Rig Yajur, Sama* and *Atharva Vedas*. Other arguments contend that the four lamps of the *kalashas* represent the four *purushartas* viz. *dharma, artha, kama, moksha*, and symbolises the *yajamana's* quest to live within the precincts of righteousness (Interview : Shukla).

The four *kalashas* also represent the four stations of life, *asramas*, that man has to pass through viz. *brahmachari*, student, *girhasta*, householders, *vanaprashtha*, semi retirement, and *sanyasa*, renunciate.

The latter two systems of *purusharta* and *asrama* were devised by the *rishis* to enable man to live a fulfilled life while not forgetting his ultimate goal in life, that of *moksha*, liberation. The four lamps serve as a temporary reminder to the *yajamana* of his duty and purpose in life (Interview : Tewary).

In the various encounters between the *devas*, gods, and the *danavas*, demons, each faction fought for supremacy. One such example from the *Vishnu Purana* was the churning of the ocean in which the two opposing forces were involved. A great battle raged regarding the sharing of the immortality giving nectar or ambrosia, *amritam*, that the churning yielded. However the *devas* managed to outwit the *danavas* and gained immortality. This accounts for the great animosity that exists between the forces of good and evil. Whenever offerings are made to the *devas*, there the *danavas* also converge, to steal the offerings and to render the sacrifice invalid (Interview : R.R. Maharajh). The lighting of the clay lamps is meant to scare-off any uninvited guests that may pose an obstacle to the *puja*, prayers, as these *danavas* are afraid of fire and light because of its association with the illumined knowledge of the *Vedas*. The lamps affords the *yajamana* protection from any evil influence from the four quarters (Interview : Dwivedi). The knowledge of the *Vedas*, symbolised as light, is also necessary to drive away evil thoughts that occasionally hinder the individual.

3.9 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ALTAR AND THE TEMPLE

There is no scriptural evidence from the *Vedic* era to suggest the existence of formal temples. Worship and ritual were offered on a communal or individual basis. With the development of sectarian worship and with the ascendancy of the traditions of *Vishnu*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*. Numerous "houses of God" , temples, were constructed, housing the various images, *murtis*, of the Divine. The temple during the *Gupta Dynasty* assumed a very important role in the lives of the villagers. It was used as a medium to worship God, it was utilised as a meeting place to discuss important issues affecting the village. It was also used for social gatherings eg. dance, sketches from the scriptures and as a *gurukul*, school. However the paramount purpose was to house the image of God. The construction of the *vedi* and the canopy is an attempt to reconstruct the temple or domicile of the Lord at the *yajamana's* house (Sooklal 1986 : 39).

This reconstruction of the temple is also a reflection of the spiritual journey that one undertakes at a temple, viz. the progression from the without to the within and from the profound to the sacred (Sooklal : 1986 : 40)

As one progresses to the interior of the *garbhagriha*, sanctum sanctorium, one proceeds from the dark inter-mediate chambers until finally one comes to the deity in the *garbhagriha* enshrined in effulgent light. The aspirant too has to delve deep within himself, transcending worldly limitations and introspect and reflect on the Self. He realizes the purity and the nature of his Self and the dawning of light as realization is symbolic to beholding the *murti* in the deep confines of the temple. The construction of the shrine and *vedi* is utilized for a similar purpose. (Sooklal 1986 : 42).

As Eliade (1959 : 63) notes:

It opens communication between the cosmic planes (between earth and heaven) and makes possible ontological passages from one mode of being to another.

An alternate method of constructing the altar is also utilized by some devotees. Each deity invoked in the preliminary rites is worshipped separately and therefore requires its own altar. The *vedi* discussed earlier is used collectively for all the *devas* (Interview : P.R. Maharajh). The sacrificer constructs three wooden platforms called *chaurang* or *chowki*. They are placed as follows. The *vedi* dedicated to *Ganesha* and the *Shodas matruka*, sixteen altar devis, is placed on the south eastern quadrant. It is covered with a red cloth upon which an *ashtadal*, eight leaved lotus, is designed using whole wheat grains. On the same *vedi* sixteen lumps of grain representing the sixteen goddesses are arranged. The alter dedicated to the *Pradhana devata* is placed in the east and is decorated according to the *devata* being worshipped. In the north eastern quadrant another alter is placed representing the nine *grahas*, planets. The nine planets are

represented by lumps of rice. The choice, size and colour of the *vedi* is an individual choice and more often than not is an expression of one's devotion.

After establishing the *vedi* the housewife now commences to prepare the *tharees*, trays, with *prasad* for the *devatas*. *Tharees*, trays, are laden with sumptuous preparations. Fruit is also included. Great care is taken not to contaminate the offerings that are intended for the Lord. The correct procedure is to cover the offerings with a silk cloth or a 'net' to ward off insects and pests. This is also prescribed because an evil or hungry gaze is also capable of contaminating the *prasad* (Interview : Shukla). These *tharees* are set on the *vedi*. The *yajaman* now awaits the arrival of the priest. Only *sattvic* or pure food is offered to the Lord e.g. nuts, raisins and sweetmeats. The *Annamaya*, food sheath, of the body influences the capabilities and functioning of the *Manomaya*, mind sheath. The Hindu belief is that:

the body is an assemblage of five koshas, in order of decreasing density. They are, first, the tangible physical body (annamaya); the second is life breath, the sheath of vital air (Pranamaya); the third and fourth sheaths, still more subtle, are the cognitive processes (Manomaya and Vijnanamaya); finally, the sheath of bliss (Annamaya), the subtlest of all, is identified with the eternal element of joy in man (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 136).

Thus, with the consumption of wholesome and *sattvic* foods, the *yajamana* is encouraged to think and act pleasantly. It must be noted that the food is offered in thanksgiving by the *yajamana* (Interview : Shukla).

3.10 CONCLUSION

The preparations that take place before the commencement of the sacrifice is most important as it sets the tone and inculcates the right attitude, *bhava*, in the *yajamana's* mind. The mind is now fertile and tilled to receive the divine seed of

knowledge of the Lord. The *vedi* provides the support for the reception of the deity, similarly the mind which is the metaphysical *vedi* provides the support for the progression of the soul. During the ritual the *yajamana*, patron, is encouraged to dwell mentally on the significance and philosophy accompanying the ritual. The patron is afforded the opportunity with the assistance of the priest to effect a change his consciousness.

CHAPTER 4

THE PURIFICATORY RITES

4.1 ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the purificatory rites that are enunciated in the scriptures and as practiced in South Africa. These rites are very important as they serve as an external reminder of the *yajaman's* internal purity.

4.2 THE BATH

The *yajamana* and his wife take their seats at the altar after having a bath. This bath rids the body of physical impurities. As the *Manu Dharmasutra* (5.135) notes,

oily exudations, seminal fluids, blood, dandruff, urine, faeces, ear, nailparings, phlegm, tear, concretions of the eyes and sweat are the twelve impurities of the human frame. Of these, the first six are purified by earth and water and the remaining six merely by water.

Further, the *Yajnavalkya Dharmasutra* notes that the devotee is compelled to commence washing first the left foot and then the right. Thereafter he commences to bathe the upper torso. The act of bathing purifies the *yajamana* externally and this external purification is extended to the interior of the sacrificer. The bath heralds the process of metamorphosis. In *puja*, prayer, this involves a two-fold procedure of purification in which the defilements of the mundane body are removed followed by the reconstruction of the worshipper in the Divine Image. The act of bathing is a denial of the mundane body and an assertion of the spiritual self (Wheelock 1991 : 103). The taking of bath is an important means for outer purification. Gonda (1979 : 120) on the aim of purification:

The ultimate motive for purification is not liberation from actual dirt - although it can contribute to what is nowadays called hygiene - ; it is release from evil and at the same time the induction of good power.

After executing the morning bath, the *yajamana* seats himself at the altar with his consort sitting on his right. The status of the female in the ritual is not a subordinate one, in fact the prayer of the *grihasta*, householder, is not complete without the participation of his wife. As the *Taittiriya Brahmana* (3.7.5.11) notes,

They two (husband and wife) become yoked like oxen in the sacrifice

During the ritual the right half of the male is pure while the left of the female is pure. By the wife being seated on the husband's right, they constitute one person. The two pure halves merge to form an individual, that is a combination of both male and female components. This is validated by the paradigm of the *Shiva-Shakti* theory. The fusion of *Shiva*, male, and his potency, *Shakti*, results in the manifestation of the Whole. The wife is designated the term *Ardhangani*, the other half of man. In the station of marriage, the participants undergo mental, physical and self union and are constantly reminded of the oneness of their future existence (Interview : Shukla). It is observed that the role of the female is not a subordinate one, the wife is also accorded the opportunity to establish herself in the state of bliss. The *Taittiriya Brahmana* (3.3.3.3) further declares that a sacrifice without the wife is no sacrifice at all and that her presence in the ritual assures effective cosmic reproduction (Leslie 1992 : 24).

The custom of binding the wife to the husband with a piece of cloth is as ancient as the *Vedas* (Leslie 1992 : 21). The chord is said to tie the wife to her husband in the yonder world (Leslie 1992 : 25). Hinduism emphasises the importance of beholding the Reality as whole. Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 15) note:

Central to Tantra's teaching is the concept that Reality is unity, an indivisible whole. It is called Shiva - Shakti, Cosmic consciousness.

Shiva and its creative power, Shakti, are eternally conjoined; the one cannot be differentiated from the other, and Cosmic Consciousness is endowed with the essential potential of self-evolution and self-involution. It is only in the relative plain that Shiva - Shakti are looked upon as separate entities.

The *purohita*, priest, sits on the north facing the south. Most of the local priests have misinterpreted this injunction due to the lack of qualified priests and consistent interpretation of the injunctions. The *Brahmanitya karma sammuchaya* (1986 : 40) declares

let the Brahma take up his seat facing the north.

All rituals require a supervisor to oversee the rituals. In the absence of the *brahman*, the *purohita* should establish on a *tharee*, tray, a beetlenut which represents the *brahman*. At no time should the *purohita* occupy the place of the *brahman* which would denote disrespect. The *brahman* is usually a silent priest. He has an association with *brahman* which also implies silence. The function of the *brahman* during the *vedic* sacrifice was to defeat death by assuming the impurity of the patron through the consumption of ritual food and the acceptance of honoraria. The *brahman* emerged as a central figure in the developed ritual without a specific functionary role, but because of his knowledge which allowed him to oversee in silence the specific tasks of other functionaries. He follows the ritual mentally as the *bhisaj*, healer, correcting errors committed during the course of the ritual (Whillier 1989 : 42).

In South Africa the *brahman* has been confused with the *purohita*. The *purohita* or family priest is generally the person who oversees the entire *puja*, prayer. Due to the evolution of the ritualistic system, the *purohita* substituted for all the *vedic* priests (Interview : Shukla).

A very logical explanation also refutes this popular misconception about the seating of the *purohita*. The right hand is always utilized in the ritual. The only time the left hand is used is during *namaskaar*, homage. If the *purohita* establishes his seat facing north and the *yajaman* sits facing the east, then, the *purohita* will be forced to hand over the sacrificial ingredients using his left hand. This will render the ritual impure (Interview : Shukla). The *Parashkar Grihyasutra* (1.16.20) instructs that all rites are to be performed with the right hand.

The *yajaman* and his consort sit facing the east. The east is the abode of the *devas*. By facing the east the sacrificer is reminded not only of his personal spiritual ambition but the purpose of the ritual also, that is, to obtain immortality and dwell in the abode of the *devas* (*Brahmanitya karma Samsuchaya* 1986 : 383). Of the points of the compass or regions of the universe the east is, also in the *veda*, the most auspicious. It is the quarter of the gods and that is why we offer to them while standing with our faces towards the east (*S.B.* 3.1.1.2.6).

4.3. AACHMANA - SIPPING OF WATER

The rites that follow constitute purification and sanctification. The first steps of deconditioning a heavily imprinted and programmed attitude towards one's body consists of a hypothetical transformation of the gross body into the subtle body, so that the obstacles besetting it are lifted. The body is mobilised by physical training and the use of bodily postures in order that it may emerge from the inert state and become cosmicised, purified and sanctified in the image of the divinity. The purification may operate on the mental level when the impurities obstructing the subtle bodies are removed by rituals such as *nyasa* and *aachmana* (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 127). Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 136) further note:

It is possible to be alienated from the body - to be unaware of its potencies, to reject and negate it completely - but its fullest appreciation will call for an awareness of it as a fact of nature.

Since the body is the link between the terrestrial and cosmic, it is as if were a "theatre", in which the psycho-cosmic drama is enacted. A positive and receptive attitude towards the body is a precondition to sadhana. The adept must identify with his body and transform it, for his body is the concrete expression of his psyche characterized by its own rhythm and structure. As a material extension of psychic expression the body glows, radiates and animates in the joy of being itself.

The *purohita* instructs the *yajamana* to sip water held in the palm of the right hand, thrice (S.B. 1.7.4.17). Water is sipped thrice in recognition of the three levels of consciousness viz. the worlds of God, nature and the soul. Ritual actions with water such as sprinkling, *aachmana* should take place three times (*Kaushika* - *Sutra* 8.6). The priest recites the following *mantra*, hymn:

Om! salutation to the principle of *atma*
 Om! salutation to the principle of knowledge
 Om! salutation to the principle of *Siva* (*Brahmanityakarma*
Sammuchaya 1986 : 323).

Vidyarnava (1975 : 113) states that:

The Soul, Nature and God are the three Eternal entities in a manifested universe. The Souls, or *Jivatmas* are innumerable - from the highest *Devas* to the lowest mortals, all *Jivas* belong to the category of *Atma*. Man is such an *Atma*. This is the conscious axis of the universe. On the form or matter side, we have *Prakriti* or *Mahamaya* - the object of knowledge, the *Vidya*. All the *Vidya* or Science depends upon the knowledge of Nature, the *Mula Prakriti*. As the Knower is *Atma*, so the Known is *Vidya* or *Prakriti* or *Ahita Tattva*. The third is God, or *Siva-ttva* controlling both, establishing relations between them.

The sipping of water is an attempt to realize the three distinctions in the universe and to attain *moksha*, liberation, by inculcating the right knowledge to

differentiate between the worlds of God, soul and nature (Vidyarnava 1975 : 113).

The *aachmana* ceremony is reputed to be of great importance to the Hindus. It is to be performed after every impure act. This also includes the thought processes. The individual is imperfect and is bound to perform some impure acts due to ignorance, *avidya*. Even the wise have to answer the call of nature which renders the physical body impure. Therefore by the rite of *aachmana* the individual counter-acts the state of impurity (Interview : P.R. Maharaj).

There are numerous ways of performing *aachmana*. The portion of the palm nearest to the root of the thumb is called the *brahmatirtha*, sacred place of *Brahma*, and is used in the worship of the *devas*. Water, enough to submerge a pea is held in the "cup" of the palm and is sipped from the *brahmatirtha* for internal purification (Vidyarnava 1975 : 36).

4.4. ANGSPARSH - PURIFICATION OF THE VARIOUS ORGANS OF PERCEPTION

During rituals different rites are performed among which, *angsparsh*, the ritual projection of divinities and elements into various parts of the body by the adept, is extremely important. The *angsparsh* is accompanied by *mudras* or finger gestures. The patron adopts the attitude that the mantra-sounds or forces are working to stimulate the nerve currents for the proper distribution of energies through the whole body. The patron projects the power of the divinities and at the same time touches the different parts of the body in order to symbolically awaken the vital forces lying dormant (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 29).

Water is held in the palm of the left hand, the ring finger and the thumb of the right hand are joined at the tips. The ring finger is immersed in the water held

in the left palm and the *yajamana* and his wife touch the lips, nostrils, eyes, ears, shoulders, knees and finally the water is sprinkled over the entire body.

Relevant hymns have been translated from the manual of rituals entitled *Brahma Nitya karma Sammuchiye* (16th edition 1986) compiled by *Shastri Durga Shankar Umashankar Takar* based on the hymns of the *Shukla Yajur Veda-Madyandhina Shaka*, recension. Hereafter abbreviated as *B.S.*

The priest recites the following *mantras*, hymns, for the purpose of *angsparsh*:

May the powers of speech be purified
May the breath be full of vigour
May the eyes see divine things
May the ears hear divine things
May there be strength in the arms
May there be strength in the legs
May all the appendages of the body be free from disease
(*B.S.* 1986 : 422).

Parts of the body are sensitized by placing the fingertips and palm of the right hand on various sensory awareness zones. This is accompanied by *mantra*, the powerful resonance of which will gradually project the power of divinity into the individual's body. The flesh must be awakened from its dormancy and this rite places the divinity into the various organs of the body (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 136).

On the profane level, the sacrificer implores the *devas* to instill vigor and creativity into the various organs and appendages so that they may be used in the *deva's* service.

The *Vishnu Purana* (7.5.23) enumerates nine methods of devotion to God.

- *Sravan* - the listening of kathas and accounts of God's goodness
- *Kirtana* - singing the praises of God thereby invoking extreme emotion.
- *Smaran* - contemplation
- *Padasevan* - serving at the feet of the Lord
- *Arcana* - worship through the use of rituals
- *Vandana* - worship by bowing the head in humble submission
- *Dasya* - worship where the devotee assumes the status of a servant and regards the Lord as the master.
- *Sakhya* - devotion in which the Lord is regarded as a friend.
- *Atmanivedan* - devotion in which the Self is offered.

Even in *bhakti*, devotion, the aspirant is afforded a choice. According to his psychology and level of devotion, the devotee is able to choose one of the methods that appeals to him. Hinduism does not subscribe to any dogma, but allows the individual to assess his spiritual progress and to adjust his method of application. The alternate interpretation is that the sacrificer identifies with the world of the *devas* and by touching the various bodily parts, is in fact, the process of identifying and merging his appendages with that of the *devas*. The sacrificer systematically renders each portion e.g. the hand, immortal like that of the *devas*. The act of *angsparash* is an attempt by the patron to ritualise the power of the divinity into each part of the individuals body in order to form a protective circuit and activate the energy centres of the aspirants body (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 169).

The aim of any sacrifice, is to point out the way to realization and liberation. The ritual, though punctuated by rites and acts, is in fact, reminding the sacrificer of his true identity, i.e. the immortality of the Self. As Wheelock (1991 : 102) notes

The purification and cosmicization of ritual components covers everything from the individual worshipper sadhaka whose body becomes an image of the deity in both transcendent and manifest form.

4.5 APPLICATION OF THE CHANDAN - SANDALWOOD DOT

A *thilak*, dot, is applied on the forehead of both the sacrificer and his wife. The application of the dot is an ancient practice that is performed by child and renunciate alike. *Chandan* composed of sandal wood possesses certain medicinal properties. When made into a paste, it has a cooling and soothing effect on areas effected by burns, leprosy and other skin irritant related ailments (Interview : Shukla).

A balanced temperemant is pivotal in a sacrifice. One has to be of a pleasant disposition in order to reap the full benefits of a prayer. By wearing the *chandan thilak*, the *yajamana* is compelled to bring under control the emotion of anger. Once anger manifests itself in large proportions in the mental make-up of the individual, it results in the destruction of the faculty of discriminative thinking (*Gobhila Grihyasutra* 3.1.25). Anger goads one onto the path of irrational behaviour (Interview: S.J. Maharaj).

Vishwamitra, the famed sage, had accumulated numerous merits through his austerities and was on the brink of obtaining the status of *brahma rishi*, the highest in the hierarchy of renunciates. However, he negated all his merits through the destructive anger that he possessed (Interview : Shukla).

The shape of the *thilak* differs according to the *Ishta*, personal, deity worshipped. This is divided into two broad categories, those who belong to the *Vaishnava* and those who belong to the *Shaiva* traditions respectively. The *Shaivas* use *bhasma*, ashes, which is applied in three horizontal lines on the forehead. This is termed the *tripundara*. The three lines represent the three *gunas* of *sattvas*,

rajas and *tamas*, representing purity, activity and inertia respectively. The application of the triple lines denotes the spiritual journey that the devotee undertakes. At the beginning he is possessed of *tamas*, as he realizes the distinction between God and the world, he transcends the level of inertia and advances to *rajas*, activity. Finally when *brahma vidya*, knowledge of the Self is realized he occupies the realm of *sattvas*, purity, (Interview : R. R. Maharajh).

The *Vaishnavas* use a *thilak* that is U shaped. This represents the feet of *Vishnu* and is symbolic of the *padasevan*, worship at the feet of the Lord, form of worship signifying the servant, *dasa*, of Lord *Vishnu* or his incarnations (Interview : Tewary). The *thilak* also represents the "third eye" of *Shiva*, symbolic of knowledge. In Hindu iconography, *Shiva* is depicted as having a third eye in the middle of the forehead. This is symbolic of the eye of intuition. By developing the right attitude, man, through the dawn of knowledge is able to distinguish between the worlds of God, soul and nature. By realizing that he is spirit in nature and that the Self is not effected by the temporal processes, man disassociates with *samsara*, the everturning wheel of birth, death and rebirth. The wearer of the *thilak* is prompted to acknowledge the permenance and beauty of the Self. It is also an aid in trying to distance oneself from the material world and to adopt the emotion of *vairagya*, dispassion (Interview : Dwivedi).

4.6 THE KUSHA RING

A ring made from the *kusha* grass is placed on the ring finger of the right hand. This serves numerous purposes. The importance and significance of the *kusha* grass needs to be examined. During the churning of the ocean, the *devas* and the *asuras*, forces of evil, were arrayed against each other, fighting for the right to claim the *amritam*, ambrosia. During this churning, a little of the nectar fell on the *kusha* grass, rendering it pure (*Srimad Bhagwatam* 1.7).

The wearer of this *kusha* ring is encouraged to practice purity of thought and deed not only during the duration of the sacrifice but also during his entire existence.

The ring is fastened at the top by a knot. This knot represents the bond between the sacrificer and the Lord of the sacrifice. The *danavas*, demons, upon seeing the *kusha* grass are frightened- off from the vicinity of the sacrificial ground. The *danavas* do not approach anything associated with Lord *Vishnu*. The sacrificer learns through this account that he should stay away from evil practices (Interview: R.R. Maharajh). The *Manava Grihyasutra* (2.2.2) indicates that the *kusha* grass is used for the purposes of purification. Further the *Atharva Veda - Parishista* (28.1.3) makes note that the *kusha* ring is to be worn of the fourth finger of the right hand. In making oblations the *anamika*, nameless, finger is to be covered with the *kusha* grass.

4.7 TYING OF THE RAKSHA SUTRA

The *purohita*, priest, proceeds to tie the *raksha sutra*, bond of protection, around the left wrist of the female and the right wrist of the male. The *raksha sutra* affords the participants protection from any evil influences (Gonda 1980 : 145). It is argued by both Radhkrishnan (1977) and Griswold (1971) that the *Aryan* incorporated many of the indigenous practices and rites into their religion in order to ensure the continuation of their civilization. The *dasyu's*, aborigines, rituals revolved around the worship and propitiating of deities to protect them (*dasyus*) against goblins and evil spirits. The *raksha sutra* could have been incorporated into the *Aryan* culture as an amulet against evil. The *Rig Vidhana* (4.18.2) indicates that the *sutra* which serves as a protective amulet was fastened on the wrist.

The *Raksha sutra* according to local priests represents the bond between the soul and the Supersoul. It is yet another attempt to emulate the *vedic* objective of identifying with the world of the *devas* and an expression of immortality. (Interview: S.J. Maharaj)

The external purificatory rites convey a deeper meaning than their symbology. The five senses and the ego-mind, inevitably confuses the individual regarding the immortality of the self. The purificatory rites are an attempt to coax the *yajamana* through outward symbols into destroying and warding off the *danavas*, demons, that exist within the individual. These *danavas* manifest themselves in the body as greed, temptation, sloth and other *tamasic* qualities. By defeating these demons, the sacrificer is at peace to undertake the ritual in a physically and mentally stable state (Interview : P.R. Maharaj).

4.8 THE SANCTIFYING OF THE SEAT

The *purohita* draws a triangle, using water, on the left of the *yajamana's* seat. This triangle represents the *yonī*, female reproductive organ, and is used as a representation of mother earth. It also signifies the creative and regenerative powers of the Earth (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 55). This appendage of the ritual concerns the sanctifying of the *yajamana's* seat, *aasan*. The *purohita* recites the following hymn (B.S. 1986 : 215):

Om! Hail to the force that sustains the whole universe
Om! Hail to the force that keeps the worlds in their orbits
Om! Hail to the endless force
Om! Hail to the terrestrial force (Vidyarnava 1979 : 39).

With each set of utterances, the participants offer white rice, flowers and *kumkuma*, a red powder, in the triangle. *Kumkuma* is red, the colour of blood, considered one of the three life-giving colours and one having the magical power

of increasing vitality and improving health (*S.B.* 3.8.18.22). White rice represents the principle of abundance and purity. The colour white is said to be auspicious and favourable (*Varaha Grihya Parishista* 6.13). The flower symbolically implies the creative ability of the Lord (Interview : R.R. Maharajh). The seat of the *yajamana* is duly sanctified by the exaltations paid to the various forces that help maintain *ritam*, cosmic harmony. The casual observer may be perplexed by the *yajamana's* acknowledgement of apparent insignificant detail. The individual realizes that natural catastrophes can disrupt normal functioning and stability of the earth. Various extra-terrestrial forces are responsible for maintaining stability in the universe. If these forces were not present then there would be cosmic chaos. This is nothing else but the Lord's marginal potencies which ensure that there is complete co-ordination in the world of nature. In appreciation of the Lord's mercy and benovelence the individual is obliged to pay his respects and adoration to the various sustaining forces (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 18).

After sanctifying the seat, the *yajamana* pays homage to the earth with the following hymn (*B.S.* 1986 : 316):

*O Earth! all creatures are upheld by thee
 O Devi! thou art support by Vishnu support me then
 O goddess and sanctify my seat. (Vidyarnava 1979 : 140).*

4.9 MANTRAS (HYMNS) - THE LINK BETWEEN RITUAL ACTION AND INTENTION

The ritual operates on three levels viz. the external enactment of the rites, the symbolic interpretation and the philosophy arrived at. These three levels of comprehension are connected by the use of *mantras*, hymns. Coward (1991 : 172) notes:

The meaningfulness of mantras is not merely intellectual, this meaning has power (shakti). Mantras have the power to remove ignorance (avidya), reveal truth (dharma), and realize release (moksha).

Because of the power inherent in *mantras* for both human inference and divine truth, great care must be given to the correct use of words (Coward : 1991 : 172). *Mantra* is the catalyst that allows the sacred potential of the ritual setting. The *Vakapadiya* (1.62) notes:

It is with the meanings conveyed by words that actions are connected

The *mantra* is utilized to invoke a preliminary sense of transformation aimed at making the concrete elements viz. the site, utensils, the participants and the offerings fit for divine service (Wheelock 1991 : 98). *Mantras* are used predominantly to pay homage to the God. The patron and the priest depend largely on the use of *mantras* to make known their spiritual intentions (Wheelock 1991 : 111). Wheelock (1991 : 111) classifies the use of *mantras* as follows:

- Invocation - involves the summoning of the deity to receive the worship of the patron.
- Praise - involves the offering of praise. The most prevalent way of doing this is to recite the deities worshipful characteristics.
- Petition - those utterances that express the desires underlying the motivation for the service to God.

The writer has envisaged the need to present translations of the *mantras*, hymns, that accompany the ritual to illustrate the relationship between the action and the patron's intention i.e. asserting the *sattvic*, purity, nature of the Self.

4.10 THE SHANTI - PEACE HYMNS

The priest now commences to chant the *shanti*, peace, *hymns*. Use is made of either the *Bhadra Suktam* of the *Yajur veda* or the *Shakradaya Stuti* of the *Devi Mahatmayam*. These hymns propitiate and praise the *devas* as the custodians of cosmic harmony, *ritam*, and as the administrators of justice. Lavish praise is heaped on the world of the *devas*. Although the *devas* are invoked to help the sacrificer in his worldly pursuits, the general welfare of the world is also considered. The *yajamana* prays for peace and prosperity not only for his individual salvation but for the welfare of all humanity.

Realisation of the *atman*, the express aim of the ritual can be obtained by systematically focussing the consciousness on a stimulus. As Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 146) note:

To identify oneself with the Divinity, to merge in the object of contemplation, to have a unitive experience, presupposes several categories or techniques of physiological and spiritual exercise transforming our ordinary consciousness into a qualitatively different realm of experience, in order to dispel terrestrial impulses and open new mental doors to the awareness of union.

The *Yoga Sutra* of *Patanjali* in the second aphorism describes yoga as the:

inhibition of the modification of the mind.

Meditation implies one pointed attention on a single stimulus in order to achieve perfect autonomy over variously directed, discontinuous and diffused attention. In daily life the mind dwells on a variety of stimulus, thus the mind is at the mercy of these inner disruptive forces. Meditation is a censorship of this mental flux and is achieved by focusing ones awareness on a specific stimulus (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 147). As soon as the waves have stopped and the lake has

become quiet, we see the bottom. Similarly the mind, when it is calm, we see what our own nature is. We do not mix ourselves with the modification of the mind, but remain our own selves.

A common aid to meditation is to concentrate ones attention on mantras or to percieve the Divinity within the consciousness of the patron. Meditation operates as a craftsman or sculptor building minutely detailed mental images (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 150). The patron concentrates on each aspect of the Divinity, imagining that he is being transformed into the Divinity. The energy that is able to effect the transformation is called the *kundalini shakti*. According to Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 151):

The Kundalini is the microcosm form of the universal energy or more simply the vast storehouse of static, potential psyhic energy which exists in latent form in every being.

The *kundalini* is desribed as lying coiled at the base of the spine called the *muladhara chakra*, root centre. The *chakras* are desribed as lotuses each with a different colour and number of petals. This indicates the rate of vibration of the particular *chakra*. Mental contemplation on mantras is a conscious attempt by the patron to establish himself in the state of *Brahma*.

The priest instructs the patron to still the mind and to contemplate on the Supreme as the priest commences to recite the *Bhadra Suktam of the Yajur Veda*:

May we be blessed with (obtain) noble thoughts from all sides, which are everlasting, invincible and endowed with progress, so that the Lord of the Universe, granting us advancement, may protect us.

Let us be impelled to meditation on Devas and driven to charity. Let us make every effort to win their friendship. May they give us a long life span.

We invite those viz. the Sun, Mitra (the first Aditya) Aditi (the mother of the gods) Dakṣa, Ayaṃ (one of the groups of ancestors) Varuṇa, the Moon, the Divine physicians, by means of Ancient Hymns. May they and Sarasvatī, the bestower of Prosperity (Auspiciousness) grant us happiness.

May the Wind bring us happiness (Peace) producing medicines. May mother Earth, Father Sky, and the Plant which produces the Soma juice, bring that Medicine. O Sun, you are one of elevated (high) position - listen to my appeal.

We appeal to You, the Lord of the Universe, the Bestower of wisdom, the maintainer of the immovable and the moveable, by Whose instigation all creatures gain consciousness and with satisfaction experience joy, so that the Earth, the symbol of non-violence may become the one to increase our wealth and be our Protector.

May Indra the Bestower of Fame give us success and may Pura the Lord of Wealth give us progress, may the Sun the speed of the wheels of whose chariot none could lessen (stop) and may Brihaspati bring us success.

May the Marutganas (Devotees of Maruta) (attendants of Maruta) provided with speedy horses, the recipients of our Sacrifice, may Maru Whose effulgence is like that of the Sun, and may the Multitude of Devas, all come here in their Glory (Majesty/Capability).

O Devas in your multitudes, worthy of worship, may we singers of hymns, hear words which produce happiness (peace/success); may we see events which are auspicious with our eyes, may we be endowed with healthy bodies and may we enjoy a full life span as ordained by the Devas.

O Devas, when you give us old age, then it is a span of about one hundred years. At that time let our sons also become fathers. Do

not let Death overtake us at an early age.

The Sky, the Firmament, mother, father, son, all the Devas, all nations (all those who have been created) are All forms of Aditi (mother of the Gods).

May THAT PEACE which pervades Heaven and the Sky, the Earth, Water, Medicines, Trees, Plants (Shrubs). All the Devas, THAT PEACE which pervades PEACE, be mine by YOUR Grace.

O Lord, by means of That FORM of yours which you wish to maintain us, by means of That Same Form, become the CAUSE of success for my off springs and for my animals, become the Dispeller of Fear and disease.

The recitation of the *Bhadra Suktam* dispells all doubts about the objectives of the ritual. The individual does not only strive for personal liberation but must also take into account the society in which he lives. The hymn reinforces this idea by the use of the pronoun 'we'. The sacrificer implores the *devas* to aid and guide all humanity onto the path of *dharma* (Interview : R.R. Maharajh).

It is interesting to note that the *suktam* does not begin by petitioning God for material wealth. It commences with a passionate plea for the accumulation and fostering of 'noble thoughts' - thoughts that have emanated from the scriptures and the seers. The *purohita* implores the *devas* of the *suktam* to develop the virtues of charity, wisdom, happiness, peace and non-violence in society. Selfish requests are not tolerated, the homogenous functioning of society is far more important (Interview : R.R. Maharajh).

Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 132) on the subject of *mantras* conclude that:

Mantra is primarily a concentrated thought form composed of nuclear syllables based on the esoteric properties believed to be inherent in sound vibrations.

Mantras, whether recited audibly or inaudibly run through most of the rituals like an uninterrupted symphony. The power of a *mantra* lies in a set of interconnected factors: its pattern of sound waves and the mode of its proper intoning. A *mantra* has the ability to activate vibration channels and produces certain superconscious feeling states which aid the patron in his spirituality. The very sound of a mantra or a combination of them has the capacity to arouse the Divine forms or the energies. By repetition of *mantra*, vibrating rhythms are created in the body to awaken the psychic forces (Interview : Shukla).

It may become difficult for the *yajamana*, patron, to identify with the metaphysical concepts that the *Vedic* hymns elaborate. The mantras allude to the three distinctions viz. God, the world and the Self. One has to possess a knowledge of the subject in order to comprehend the message of the hymn. The chanting of *puaranic* hymns however, through the emphasis on *bhakti*, devotion, is able to accentuate the aspect of *bhakti* in the devotee. This is achieved by allowing the patron to dwell mentally on the worshipful characteristics of the deity (Wheelock 1991 : 113). The *Shakradya Stuti* (see appendix - 1), praise to the Goddess Durga, enshrined in the *Markandeya Purana* lends itself to the system of *bhakti*, devotion, associated with the ritual. The praise of *Durga* mentions the inability of the individual to comprehend the nature of God and implores the devotee to accept God through the medium of devotion (Interview : R.R. Maharajh).

The *Shakradya Stuti* or homage to the goddess *Durga*, is selected because of its profound statements on the Hindu religion. It discusses inter alia the creation of the universe which was undertaken by the Intelligence of the cosmos and initiated by the *shakti*, goddess. She is described as the embodiment of *prakriti*, nature. Those who are able to discern the three states, God, soul and nature are able to obtain immortality like the gods.

This *stuti*, hymn, is regarded as a praise of the attributes of God in one of a variety of manifestations. Besides being used as a propitiatory hymn it also conveys to the reciter and the listener the basic tenets of Hinduism i.e. the immortality of the Self. This is another intrinsic quality of the ritual. It endeavours to educate humanity about this philosophy of Hinduism. The priest while leading the *yajamana* through the sacrifice should point out the philosophy and belief system of Hinduism (Interview : Shukla).

4.11 WORSHIP OF THE GURU

The *guru stotra*, praise of the teacher, is recited next. The spiritual master or preceptor occupies a very important place in the life of a Hindu. The teacher is one who is well schooled in the scriptures and one who is an adept at one or more of the four prescribed systems of *yoga* viz. *karma*, *jnana*, *bhakti* and *raja yoga*. The *guru* has realized the highest state of consciousness. From this unassailable position the *guru* is able to guide his disciples onto the path of realization and liberation. One may gain mastery over the *vedas* and all the *Upanishads* but this knowledge is useless if it is not applied correctly. The *guru* is able to channel this knowledge towards liberation (Sooklal 1990 : 180). The primary concern of the *guru* is to initiate the aspirant into the correct application of methods commensurate with his temperament and competence. Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 128) describe the role of the *guru* as:

Just as an unknown journey becomes easier with the help of a competent guide, in the same manner the best way to commence the spiritual journey is with the help of the guru.

The patron has to endure a long and arduous process of training and guidance for the gradual unfolding of his potentialities. The *guru* has already lived through the discipline and has experienced the various stages of spiritual development in his own life. The interaction between teacher and pupil commences with the

initiation of the pupil with the mantra imparted by the *guru*. The relationship between the teacher and aspirant is not one of dogmatic instruction. The *guru* sometimes indicates the ways and means along the path by his silence or casual words. The aspirant must discover for himself what he needs (Interview : Shukla). It is to this guru that a Hindu pays his respects with the following salutations:

Salutations to that glorious Guru who has shown to me that Supreme Being, who in the form of a sphere of unbroken glory pervaded this universe of the moving and non-moving being.

Salutations to that glorious Guru who, when my sight was blinded by the darkness of ignorance, restored to it the light of knowledge and truth.

Salutations to the glorious Guru: for Guru is Brahma, He is Vishnu, and even the Lord Mahadeva is He: nay, the Guru is even the Supreme Brahman Itself.

Salutations to that glorious Guru who has revealed to me that Highest State which pervades all that is fixed or moving, all that exists, whether animate or inanimate.

Salutations to the glorious Guru who has shown me that Supreme All-Intelligence that pervades the three Lokhas (physical, astral and mental) with all that moves and stays therein.

Salutations to the glorious Guru whose lotus feet are bedecked with the crest jewels of all Revelations, and who is the sun that makes the bud of veda nta to blossom.

Salutations to the glorious Guru who is Intelligence Itself, the Eternal, the Calm above space, untouched by pollution, and above the Bindu (mental), Nada (Arupa) and Kala (Nirvana).

Salutations to the glorious Guru who controls the Jnana Sakti, who is adorned with the garland of Japas and from whom proceed both

worlding and spiritual welfare.

Salutations to the glorious Guru who, by giving the knowledge of the Self, turns up the bonds of the accumulated Karmas of many a birth.

Salutations to the glorious Guru, the water sanctified by the touch of whose feet dries up the ocean of unreal existence, and reveals the real latitude.

There is no Tattva higher than the Guru, there is no Tapas higher than the Guru there is nothing higher than Tattvajnana: Salutations therefore to that glorious Guru.

My Lord is the Lord of the universe, my Guru is the Guru of the universe, my Self is the Self of all creatures: Salutations to that glorious Guru.

The Guru is the beginning, the Guru is the end, and even eternity is He; the Guru is the highest divinity: Salutations, therefore, to that glorious Guru.

Thou art verily my mother, Thou art the father, indeed, my friend also art Thou and companion as well. Thou, indeed, art my learning, and possessions, too, art, Thou, Thou art my all in all, O Lord, Thou art the God of gods.

The *guru* or spiritual master is able to lead the aspirant from the profane to the sacred. After experiencing the nature of *Brahman* the *guru* is equipped to guide the student in holy writ and lore. The *guru* moulds the students into contemplators and *sadhakas*. By contemplating on the guru the aspirant hopes to emulate the *guru's* achievement of realizing *Brahman* (Sooklal 1990 : 181).

4.12 SALUTATIONS TO THE DEVATAS

The *yajamana* propitiates the *devas* to bless him and his immediate family with longevity and good health so that he may live his life in the service of God. The *Ishta Devata*, personal diety, is also contemplated upon. The *rishis* realized that each individual operated on different psychic planes and have differing understanding of reality. God is perceived differently by different people. *Shri Krishna* informs *Arjuna* in *Bhagavad Gita* (7.11.5)

*Arjuna, behold presently in hundreds and thousands. My
multifarious divine forms, of diverse colours and different shapes.*

The concept of the personal diety was developed to allow people a choice in the selection of their Absolute. A particular diety may appeal to an individual and the individual bases his entire spiritual life around the *Ishta devata* (Interview : Shukla). The choice of the *Ishta devata*, chosen diety, or the Divine aspect which is in consonance with the patron's personality so that by concentrating on it the patron will be in rhythm with that diety while attaining unity (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 132).

The *purohita*, priest, requests the patron to contemplate on the *Ishta devata*, personal diety, while the following hymns are recited:

Salutation to the noble great leader of the troops (= Ganesha).

Salutation to Lakshmi and Narayana (= Vishnu).

Salutation to Uma and Mahesvara (= Shiva).

Salutation to Sachi and Indra.

Salutation to father and mother.

Salutation to the favourite deities.

Salutation to the deities of the family.

Salutation to the deities of the village.

Salutation to the deities of the place.

Salutation to the deities of the house.

Salutation to the deities of the nine heavenly bodies beginning with the sun.

Salutation to all Gods.

Salutation to all Brahmins.

Salutation to the deities presiding over this rite.

May there be no obstacle (B.S. 1986 : 19) (Bühnemann 1988 : 110).

The family diety *kula deva* is associated with the traditional worship of the family and normally occupies the highest status in the *yajamana's* shrine. The family diety is normally propitiated to steer the members of the family on the path of *dharma*, righteousness.

The family diety is considered the head of the family even above the authority of the father. In times when the safety of the family is threatened the diety is called upon to dispell fears. The village also has an appointed diety, *grama deva*, who stands guard over all the occupants of the village. The diety affords the inhabitants protection against calamities.

Tribute is also paid to the sacrificer's mother and father. They too are respected as manifestations of the Divine. They are indeed shelters during the formative years. To them, the parents, the hindu also pays homage. A Hindu is encouraged to worship first his mother, his father, his guru and then God because it is stated in the *Rig veda* that mother, father and the guru possess similar qualities as the *devas* and should be regarded and respected as such (Interview : Shukla).

It should also be noted that the consorts of the various *devas* are mentioned first. This again reiterates the respect that is accorded to the female and the importance of motherhood.

4.13 MANGAL ACHARAN - RECITATION OF AUSPICIOUS HYMNS

During the course of offering homage at a temple, one will have to observe the ritual of having to sound the bell. This ritual enables the yajaman to shut out worldly sounds and encourages him to meditate on the Divine vibrations. The sounding of the bell heralds the start of the spiritual journey. The recitation of the auspicious hymns serve a similar purpose in preparing the sacrificer to undertake the spiritual journey. These hymns set the tone of the sacrifice and serve notice on the performer to dwell on the Bliss of God (Interview : Shukla).

The *mangalacharan* is recited by the priest as follows:

The one with a handsome face and the one with a single tusk, the brown one and the one with elephant's ears, the one with a protruding belly and the gigantic one, the destroyer of obstacles, the Lord of the troops, the one with a smoky banner, the supervisor of the troops, he who has the moon on his forehead, has an elephant's face: For him who would recite or hear these twelve names.

When introducing a boy to learning and in the marriage ceremony, while entering, also while departing, in a battle and in danger, for him there is no obstacle. For the quenching of all obstacles, one should meditate, on the God who wears a white garment, who has the colour of the moon, has four arms, whose face is complaisant.

Auspiciousness of everything auspicious, gracious one, who accomplish all things, protector of the needy, Tryamlaka, Gauri, Narayani, salutation to you.

For those, in whose heart the Lord, the alode of welfare, Hari, stays, there is never inauspiciousness in any undertaking. Lord of Laksmi, I recall the pair of your feet, that only, is the auspicious moment, that only is a good day, that only is the power of the stars, the power of the moon, that only is the power of magic, the power of fate. For those, in whose heart Janardana stays, who is dark like

the blue lotus, there is gain, for there is victory. How could there be defeat for them ?

For success in all undertakings and objects I first praise Vinayaka, the teacher, the sun, Brahman, Vishnu, Shiva, Saraswati. Salutation to that Lord of the troops who is worshipped by gods and demons and is the remover of all obstacles for achieving the desired objects. May the three gods, the Lords of the three worlds, Brahman, Shiva and Vishnu, grant us success in all undertakings (B.S. 1986 : 70) (Bühnemann 1988 : 112).

Contemplation encourages the *yajamana* to introspect and to reflect on God. The chanting of the hymns in a rhythical manner encourages the mind to dwell in the realm of bliss. The sacrificer is encouraged to contemplate on the form and name of the various deities. During the *satya yuga*, inception of time, man had to undergo severe physical and mental austerities to comprehend the totality of God. In the *kali yuga*, iron age, contemplation of God guarantees the individual liberation. The *Bhagavad Gita* (12.6.7) states:

Those who constantly meditate on me with single minded devotion, these Arjuna, I speedily rescue from the ocean of birth and death

4.14 THE SANKALPA OR DECLARATION OF INTENT

The *purohita* instructs the *yajamana* to hold some water in the palm of the right hand. This is termed the *sankalpa* or declaration of intent. The priest acts as the mediator between the *yajamana* and the deity worshipped. The priest offers the sacrifice on behalf of the sacrificer and has to therefore brief the *devata* about the *yajamana's* intention. The priest is the link between the world of the sacred and the profane.

The priest declares the *sankalpa* as follows:

On this holy day in my humble way, with as much preparation as possible, in order to gain the fruits designated in the revealed texts (Śruti), the remembered texts (Smṛti), and the traditional texts (Purāṇa), and in order to obtain sons, grandsons, wealth, knowledge, victory, success, fortune, life and all other wished for things in this as well as in future births, and in order to propitiate the deity Siddhivinayaka (Ganeśa). I shall perform the worship of Gaṇapati reciting verses from the hymn to Puruṣa and from texts of the tradition, while performing the giving of water (arghya), etc. - here the sixteen upasāras or "ways of service" to be performed during the ritual are listed (Courtright 1985 : 178).

The *sankalpa* signals the attitude of the patron to establish himself in the state of *Brahman*. The *sankalpa* is a conscious effort to deny the individuals lower existence. This is achieved by the resolve of the patron to orientate his psyche towards the self. As Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 192) conclude:

The pilgrimage of the ego from its incipient potential state to self-actualisation - an unwinding of the inner energies to expand, to be, to become - is a slow gradual process which begins at the very advent of spiritual life.

4.15 THE DHEEGBHANDAN - CLOSING OF THE CARDINAL QUARTERS

The closing of the quarters is an external enactment of the patron's resolve to shut out from his life any evil influence of both thought and deed. The priest recites the following hymns:

let all those elementals go away, the elementals, that on Earth do dwell and the elementals that obstacles raise, may they be destroyed by the command of Shiva. May I be protected from inauspiciousness from all sides and may my

sacrifice continue uninterrupted (B.S. 1986 : 31).

The pledge of the *danavas* and the other forces of evil to disrupt the sacrifice has resulted in the sacrificer symbolically closing the cardinal points from any unwanted attack. Great care is exercised in maintaining the purity of the sacrifice. This practice of *dheegbhandan* could also have been influenced by the indigenous people who feared that the world of the evil spirits could assume the ascendancy and subject the entire universe to their rule. By gaining access to the ritual and by overthrowing the *devas*, the *danavas* are able to exert their authority (Interview : S.J. Maharaj).

To counteract this, the sacrificer prays to the guardian diety of each quarter to prevent any illegal entry by these dark forces. White rice is offered to the cardinal directions in request that the presiding deities being pleased by the sacrificers tribute, closes the direction to any evil. Each quarter has a diety assigned to it eg. the *Devi Mahatmayam* : *kavach* verse twenty nine states that *Varahi*, a manifestation of the goddess, protects the south.

The *Shiva* and *Linga Puranas* refer to the village diety as *kshetrapaal*, the guardian of the village (Interview : Shukla). He is a valliant warrior who has his sword drawn to slay the enemies of the village. He, *kshetrapaal*, rose in prominence during the *Puranic* era when the populace of India were subject to invasions by foreign forces. This did not effect only the individual but the entire community. The inhabitants gathered at the boundary of the village to offer worship to this warrior so that being pleased *kshetrapaal* would offer protection against evil forces. This tradition is still practiced in most parts of India as well as in South Africa (Interview : S.J. Maharaj).

Also associated with the warding off of evil is the rite of striking the left heel thrice on the earth. This destroys any evil or malicious thoughts that someone might harbour against the sacrificer. Philosophically the sacrificer destroys all ungodly

qualities that exist in the three realms viz. earth, heaven and the intermediate spheres (Interview : R.R. Maharajh).

4.16 THE SANCTIFYING OF THE SACRIFICIAL WATER

Mitramishra in the *Pujaprakash* (1913 : 14) mentions that the *kumbha kalasha*, vessel, can be used to invoke all the deities during a festival. The vessel which is the seat of the universe is of great importance in many *pujas*. It is never kept empty, but is always filled, *puṇakalasha*, with auspicious objects while *vedic mantras* are recited. Gonda (1980 : 131) declares that:

The Puṇakalash is a symbol of plenty and welfare.

Bosch (1960 : 112) further notes that the *kalasha* :

is believed to fulfill the desires of its owner and produces various treasures.

The sacrificer holds, rice, flower and *kumkuma* in his hand. After the priest has invoked the presence of the auspicious waters, rice, flower and *kumkuma* are offered into a vessel containing water. The priest recites, the following *mantra*.

*Om O Ganga! O Yamuna! O Godavari!
O Sarasvati! O Narmada! O Sindhu!
O Kaveri! approach and enter this water (B.S. 1986 : 33).*

Whatever water exists in the tiraths (holy place) are drawn up by the powerful rays of the sun. O! Sun let your rays penetrate this water and let the power of all the tiraths dwell in yonder water (B.S. 1986 : 33).

In order for a sacrifice to be legitimate, the sacrificer would have to collect the

waters of the *Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Sarasvati, Narmada, Sindhu* and *Kaveri* rivers to constitute the sacrificial water that is used extensively in the ritual for the purposes of purification and bathing of the various images of God. These rivers are considered auspicious because of their divine origins (Interview : Shukla). Since it is difficult for South Africans to travel to these various holy places, the various manuals of worship overcame this obstacle by turning their attention to the sun. The sun draws up the water of all the places and merges them. The sacrificer appeals to the sun god, *Surya Narayana* to allow the rays to enter the water. This command is symbolically effected by the use of the *ankusha mudra*. The *ankusha* is the instrument that is used by the driver of the elephant to goad the animal. By bending the extended index finger of the right hand the sacrificer points this finger to the sun and then places it into the vessel of water, thereby signalling to the sun's rays the point of entry. The visiting of holy spots or *tirathas* are encouraged to enable the pilgrim to imbibe the vibrations and qualities of the particular spot. Waters drawn from these spots assure one immortality (Interview : R.R. Maharajh).

Thereafter the sacrificer pays tribute to *Varuna*, the presiding diety of water and the sea, to bless and sanctify the water so that it may be used in the ritual.

The following mantra is recited:

Salutations to the crystal bodied and white hued one who holds the noose in his hand and rides atop the crocodile. O Bringer of Auspiciousness! I salute you (B.S. 1986 : 34)

The presence of the four *vedas* are also invoked in the vessel with the following hymn:

O Rig veda , Yajur veda , Sama veda and Atharva veda please reside in the four quadrants of the vessel. In the water exists Varuna also (B.S. 1986 : 34).

The knowledge of the *Vedas* charges the water with a divine aura. This knowledge is symbolically invoked by sprinkling the patron with the water (Interview : Shukla).

The *yajamana* removes some water from the vessel and places it in his left hand. He is instructed to hold a flower in his right hand. The priest commands him to immerse the flower in the water held in the palm of the left hand and to sprinkle the water contained in the flower on the sacrificial ingredients and on the participants. The following *mantra* is recited:

Whether pure or impure, in whatever condition one may be, he who meditates on the Lotus eyed, becomes cleansed within and without
(B.S. 1986 : 34).

According to the *shastras*, water has the property to purify the sacrificial ground and the *yajamana*. However, it is stressed by the above hymn that by merely sprinkling water in a mechanical way does not ensure purity. - By contemplating on the form of *Vishnu* one obtains the state of physical and mental purity. This refutes the notion that the ritual is an external enactment only. The various hymns have been carefully selected to make a marked impression on the psychology of the sacrificer (Interview : R.R. Maharajh).

Water indeed is a natural symbol of purification and has been used in many religions as a means of removing uncleanness either ritual or moral. Purification means release from evil and the induction of good (Gonda 1980 : 125). Very often water is sprinkled on or around a person or object. By besprinkling something one makes it sacrificially pure, *Medhya*. Water also protects against evil (*S.B.* 3.5.4.17).

4.17 OBESIENCE TO THE LAMP AND THE SUN

The ritual requires a heavenly witness to the actions of the sacrificer. This is achieved by the establishment of a lamp made from a wick which is immersed in clarified butter. This is housed in a clay lamp or any convenient vessel. The lamp serves as a symbolic witness to the ritual (Interview : Shukla). The priest chants the following *mantra*:

O light, who is established on the earth, you are in the form of a deva. You bear testimony to this sacrifice from its inception. Burn without interruptions O! light for the entire duration of this ritual -
(B.S. 1986 : 35).

The lamp or *deepak* is a substitute for the *brahman* or *sadasya* who was the silent witness during the *vedic* rituals. The South African priest due to the lack of knowledgeable priests rely on the silent lamp to oversee the ritual (Interview : R.R. Maharajh).

The sun is the eye of the world and is regarded as the source of energy. Many ancient civilizations e.g. the Incas have revered the sun as an attribute of God, this is also the same with Hinduism. The sun is responsible for the process of photosynthesis which ensures an abundant supply of vegetable food. No human can substitute the function of the sun. The individual is enjoined to perform the *suryopasthan*, offering to the sun, during his daily prayer (Interview : Shukla).

The priest recites the following *mantra*.

We have gone, out of the encircling darkness and have seen the high heaven, and the divine sun full of great light in the sky.

His heralds bear him up aloft, the God who knoweth all that lives, Suraya that all may look on him. The brilliant Presence of the gods hath risen, the eye of Mitra, Varuna and Agni. The soul of all

*that moveth not or moveth, the sun hath filled the air, earth and
heaven. That eye (of the universe), the beloved of the Gods, the
brilliant (sun) arises in the East (Rig Veda 1.115.1.)*

The individual also worships the light as the remover of ignorance. The individual's plea is for the destruction of ignorance. Not secular ignorance but spiritual ignorance. *Sankara* (788 AD) maintains that the Self is beyond bondage. It is through ignorance and humanities arrogance that the Self is apparently confused with the physical world. With the introduction of light, the illuminated knowledge of the scriptures, that the individual is able to discriminate between the mundane and spiritual (Interview : P.R. Maharaj).

4.18 CONCLUSION

It is concluded that all of the purificatory rites serve as an external reminder to the sacrificer of the internal purity of the Self. It also involves an ontological change from the profane to the sacred and the remembered of the *atman* and its true purpose ultimately i.e. the attainment of *moksha*. The *vedic* ritual is performed so that the sacrificer can obtain immortality like the Gods. Although the form of the ritual has changed the emphasis remains the same. The ritual is not a random grouping of rites with no purpose or intention but has been systematically thought out by the *rishis* to unfold the mysteries of the Universe and of God to the laity.

CHAPTER 5

THE WORSHIP OF GANESHA

5.1 ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines the ritual worship of *Ganesha*, the elephant headed deity. The worship of *Ganesha* is an attempt by the patron to establish within himself the spirituality of the self. This is also arrived at by the establishment of the *kalasha*, which is a representation of the *Brahmanda*, universe. The preliminary ritual encourages the *yajamana*, patron, to contemplate and dwell on the *âtman*, self. This is achieved by the devotee transforming his physical and mental bodies into likeness with the *deva* being worshipped.

5.2 IMPORTANCE OF GANESHA

The priest and the participants undertake the worship of the *deva Ganesha* or *Ganapathi*. The development of the Vedic deity *Ganesha* into a "fully fledged" God during the *puaranic* era is indeed interesting, considering the fact that He is mentioned only once in the *vedic* literature. The *Rig Veda* (11.12.1) includes an invocatory hymn addressed to a *deva* named *Ganapathi*:

*We call upon you, upon the hosts, the leader of the hosts'
(Ganapathi).*

In the *Taittiriya Brahmana* (10.15) reference is made to a *deva* having a "trunk", "one with an elephant head" and "one having a tusk". These descriptions of *Ganesha* during the *vedic* era are compatible with the developed *Ganesha* of the *Puranas*. *Ganesha* or the elephant headed god is closely associated with the world of knowledge. His physical appearances is equated to the *Aum*, the symbol of Wholeness. All knowledge begins with the inclusion of the syllable

Aum. To comprehend *Aum* is to comprehend the glory of God and bliss. All *vedic* hymns begin with the recitation of the *Aum*. Therefore *Ganesha* became synonymous with the *Aum*. Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 133) describe the attributes of the *Aum* as follows:

Om, the most powerful of all sounds, is the source of all mantras and a key to realization. It is made up of three sounds, a, u, m, which symbolically represent the three ultimate tendencies or gunas - creation, preservation, dissolution - and encompass all the knowledge of the different planes of the universe. It is referred to as the "quintessence of the entire cosmos", "monarch of all sounded things", "mother of vibrations" and "key to eternal wisdom and power".

Society is always advised about the ultimate aim in life, that of gaining immortality like the gods. They were encouraged to acquire the "right knowledge" that would unlock the doors to self realization. However, this acquiring of the right spiritual knowledge was riddled with difficulties because of the complexities involved in studying the literature. The pursuers of this soul freeing knowledge worshipped and propitiated the *deva Ganapathi*, the custodian of spiritual knowledge, to allow them the opportunity of realizing this knowledge by removing all obstacles that might impede them during the study of the scriptures (Interview : Shukla).

The *Skanda Purana* (2.4.17.47) confirms the origin of *Ganesha*. He is the son of *Shiva* and *Parvathy*. *Shiva*, the ascetic, and his wife were childless due to *Shiva's* continuous sojourns into the depths of the woods to perform austerities. *Parvathy* created a son called *Ganesha*. He was a sturdy and handsome youth who stood guard while *Parvathy* took her bath. Once, when *Shiva* returned from *tapasya* he demanded that he be let in. *Ganesha* was firm in his resolve and refused the irate *Shiva* entry. This infuriated *Shiva* who severed the head of *Ganesha*. *Parvathy* upon discovering this became very disturbed and chastised *Shiva* by informing him that the youth was their son. *Shiva* now became

repentant and travelled in a northerly direction where he spotted a handsome elephant. He decapitated the elephants and joined the head to *Ganesha's* body. Before *Parvathy* could protest, the head was completely fused with the body. Because of the injustices committed to *Ganesha*, *Shiva* declared that the deity *Ganesha* would be the creator and destroyer of obstacles and he would be the first deity to be propitiated in all ritual (*Skanda Purana* 2.4.17.47).

Ganesha has an elephant head. The elephant has always been associated with order and dignity. In battle, the elephant played a major role as the bearers of great warriors. *Ganesha* stands guard at the gates leading to the world of the *devas*. Statues of elephants are normally seen at the entrance of temples serving as guardians and bearers of the devotees to the abode of the *devas*.

The duty of the guardian figure is to protect the purity of the inner shrine, he must keep out those who would seek to desecrate it. To the devotee seeking entry into the inner sanctum, the guardian of the threshold is the first obstacle to overcome. If one approaches the shrine and pays homage to the guardian, indicating sincerity, and offers the appropriate gestures of supplication to the deities inside, then the guardian will grant entry. But if one is insincere or neglects the guardian in haste to reach the inner sacred world, then the guardian will place obstacles in the devotees path and will render worship fruitless. The guardians stand on the threshold between the profane world outside the shrine and the sacred territory inside (Courtright 1985 : 27).

The *yajamana* has to first offer his obeisances to the guardian deity *Ganesha* before he can proceed to pay homage to the *pradhana deva*, main deity. In iconography, *Ganesha* is depicted as either sitting, standing or dancing. He lacks one tusk, the missing tusk is also the source of various myths. Once the sage *Vyasa* decided to tabulate the epic, the *Mahabharata*. He was in deep contemplation because the act of thinking and writing would have posed a hinderance to the flow of thoughts. He then approached *Ganesha* to be the

scribe. *Ganesha* accepted the task declaring that he would continue the process of writing as the sage recited the scripture. During the exercise the nib of the pen that *Ganesha* was using broke, without hesitating to think, the elephant headed god, broke off his tusk and continued writing using the tusk as a substitute for the pen. This represents the sacrifices that the devotee has to undergo in order to realize divine knowledge (Courtright 1985 : 25). The beauty of an elephant is judged by the size and nature of its tusk. By breaking off a tusk, symbolises that one should not become attached to worldly qualities that create a superficial facade. *Ganesha* made the ultimate sacrifice so that society could benefit from the knowledge of the *Mahabharata*. The aspirant should shun all worldly impressions and should free himself from the ravages of ego (Interview : Dwivedi).

Ganesha is four armed. In the one arm he holds a hatchet, in the other he holds a goad, sometimes he is also depicted as holding the noose. One hand is held in an assuring gesture to the devotee and is called the *varadahastamudra* and one hand holds sweetmeats called *modakas* of which *Ganesha* has a great fondness. A serpent girdle circles his pot belly and a crescent moon adorns his forehead (Interview : S.J. Maharaj).

Ganesha's trunk is powerful and is capable of great destruction. However only the evil need fear the trunk. To the devoted, it is a source of refuge and assurance. The hatchet represents the destruction of illusion. The goad represents the logic that is responsible for the establishment of righteousness. The noose is a symbolic representation of the restraint of the passions and desires that pose a stumbling block to most salvation seeking individuals (Interview : Tewary).

The patron, *yajamana*, has to be conversant with the various episodes and accounts associated with the particular deity in order to understand the analogies inferred. *Purohitas* should be conversant with the mechanics as well as the symbology and philosophy of the various appendages in order to instruct the

yajamana, on the symbology and philosophy accompanying the ritual. During the course of a *puja*, prayer, the *yajamana* should be made aware of these various accounts of *Ganesha* and their intentions. Through explanation the priest is able to effect a tangible change in the patron.

5.3 RITUAL WORSHIP OF GANESHA

An image of *Ganesha* is placed on a *trebhanee*, circular copper plate. The priest instructs the *yajamana* to contemplate on the form of *Ganesha*. The sacrificer implores *Ganesha* to allow him entry into the world of the *devas*. He further summons *Ganesha* to remove any impediments during the duration of the sacrifice. *Ganesha* is also referred to as *Vigneshwara* the remover of obstacles. The first step of the ritual is initiated by contemplation called *dhyana*, contemplation. Although the *yajamana* has the benefit of the deity in front of him, he realizes that the deity is used as a vehicle to aid concentration (Interview : Tewary).

Having conceptualised the divine form of *Ganesha* the *yajamana* commences to invite the deity to the sacrifice, to receive worship. The *yajamana* realizes that God is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. However, due to his involvement in worldly activities, the sacrificer has not as yet developed the faculties of contemplation through which he can comprehend the true nature of God therefore the spirit of the *deva* is localized in the image. The priest recites the following mantra for the purpose of *dhyana*:

O Ganesha, I invite you, the son of Mother Parvathy and Shiva, the three eyed Lord of success and wisdom, the bestower of goodness. Father of fathers, the four handed lord of the people, adorned with a garland of snake, armed with divine weapons, the noose, goad and axe. I invoke you for worship, and for the protection of my sacrifice. Be present (come hither) and

accept my prayer while you protect my sacrifice (B.S. 1986 : 315).

Ganesha is offered a seat on the *tharee*, tray. This is symbolic of the devotee offering the Lord a seat in his heart. By the Lord taking residence in one's heart, the individual is transformed spiritually. The devotee's life now centred on God. The aim of Hinduism is to prepare the individual for liberation. This can be achieved by fostering extreme devotion. The heart is normally associated with the emotion of love. By guiding and nourishing this divine love one is drawn closer to God. The priest chants the following *mantra*:

*This Purusha is all that yet hath been and all that is to be.
Though Lord of immortality yet through matter He evolves (that
the jivas may get their karmaphala, the fruition of actions) (Rig
Veda 10.90.2).*

The seat is offered to *Ganesha* by the yajamana sprinkling a bit of white rice on the image of *Ganesha*. The white rice extends the invitation and intentions of the sacrificer.

The deity remains an inanimate image until the necessary rites have been performed. The rite of *prana pratishta*, instilling of life, has to be performed so that the image becomes infused with the presence of *Ganesha* enabling the participant to offer worship to the deity. The *pratishta* is only performed for *murtis* that are newly purchased. If continuous use is made of one *murti*, image, then there is no need to perform this appendage of the ritual because it would have been performed when the *murti*, image, was first used in a ritual (Interview : Shukla).

The importance of *prana pratishta* is confirmed in the *Chandogya Upanisad* (5.1.7, 12, 13) where the five senses quarrel among themselves as to which of them is superior, *sreyas*. Unable to resolve their dispute, they approach *Prajapathi* who tells them:

He, who upon departing from the body, leaves it looking the worst, he is best among you. Speech, eye, ear, and mind then left the body; but, however limited it became after losing one of the senses, it remained alive because it still had breath (prana). Then, prana prepared to depart, tearing up the other senses as a spirited horse might tear out its tethering stakes. They ten all gathered around him, saying, Stay with us. Don't leave. You are the best among us. Then all senses took their firm support (pratistha) in prana.

It is commonly accepted that the *prana* is an attribute of the *atman* and is identified as the *atman* (Interview : R.R. Maharajh). By regulation of the breath, *pranayam*, one is able to dwell on the rhythmic inhalation and exhalation that exclaims *so aham*, "that I am". This is an appreciation of the theory that the *atma* is tantamount to *paramatman* (Interview : R.R. Maharajh).

The *pratistha* is performed by the *yajamana* touching the image of *Ganesha* with a few blades of *durva*, grass. This ceremony is important and therefore human contact is discouraged. The *durva* serves as a conductor through which the *prana* is transmitted through the chanting of the divine hymns. Flower is also used as a conductor (Interview : Shukla). The priest recites the following hymn:

*All this proclaims His greatness, but greater than this
is the Purusha. All creatures are one fourth of him, three fourths eternal life
in heaven (Rig Veda 10.90.3).*

Sankara (788 AD) has proclaimed that in the ultimate analysis, there exists no multiplicity of pluralism. By dwelling on the principle of *prana* the *yajaman* endeavours to realize the *atman*. Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 122) note that:

*In the cosmic hierarchy, however, Prana is neither the ultimate nor
is it a radical construct; it is a derivative of an ultimate reality.
Though the universe evolves out of the interacting forces of two*

principles. in the ultimate analysis both these emanate from the One. Behind the entire phenomenal world, matter and thought, there is the Eternal One, without a second. This monistic principle is all - pervasive: all things, physical and biological, are finite versions of the One. The nature of that reality is described in voluminous terminology, negating all attributes and relations, yet its real nature eludes description.

Prana is considered the source of all the manifestation of various forces. All forces in the universe, all motion, attraction even thought are only different manifestations of *prana*. In the human body its gross manifestation is the life breath. *Prana* then is a vital bio-motion force which governs and manipulates the functions of the body (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 122).

5.4 THE BATHING OF THE IMAGE

The sacrificer now bathes the image of *Ganesha*. *Ganesha* is the divine visitor to the home of the *yajamana* and the rituals viz. bathing, elevates the *deva* above the mundane. The water coming into contact with the divine body is transformed into the waters of the holy places, *tirthas*. In order for the individual to realize liberation, he is urged to visit the various places of pilgrimage. However, the less fortunate cannot afford this but by bathing the image of Ganesha he creates the *tirtha* within his vicinity (Interview : Shukla).

The institution of pilgrimage to holy places is an ancient and continuous religious tradition of the Hindus. Pilgrimage provides for the individual to engage in the purification of the soul and the attainment of objectives related to the problems of the mundane world. Pilgrimage not only means the physical act of visiting holy places, but implies moral and mental discipline. In fact without the latter, pilgrimage in the physical sense has little significance in the Hindu tradition (Bhardwaj 1973 : 2). The priest recites the following mantra for the purpose of

bathing the image of *Ganesha*.

With three fourths the Purusa went up; one-fourth of him again was here. Thence he stronde out to every side over what eats not and what eats.

From him Viraj was born; again a Person from Viraj was born. As soon as he was born he spread, eastward and westward over the earth.

When Gods prepared the sacrifice with Purusa as their offering. Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn, summer was the wood.

They balmed as victim on the grass Purusa born in the earliest time. With him the deities and all Sadhyas and Rishis sacrificed (Rig Veda 10.90.4,5,6,7).

The bathing of the image is an attempt by the *yajamana* to wash away the veil of ignorance that hinders the *yajamana's* spiritual progress. Water is a symbol of purity and impresses upon the *yajamana* the need for purity. The mind must entertain pure thoughts of God to release the Self from the veil of *samsara*, illusion.

The *yajamana* bathes the image with the *panchamritam*. This is a mixture of milk, curds, honey, *ghee* and sugar. It can be offered together as a mixture or each ingredient can be offered separately. The bath of *panchamritam* also purifies the body because the ingredients themselves are a source of purity being *sattvic* in nature. After offering the *panchamritam* five times, the residue is collected in a vessel and is now called *charana amritam*, that which has washed the feet of the Lord. The liquid becomes charged with the vitality and aura of God due to it being used as the bathing ingredient. This mixture is sipped by all present after the ritual in order to cleanse their minds and to release them from *samsara*, illusion (Interview : Shukla). The *panchamritam* is offered with the

following hymn:

*From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat was gathered
He formed the creatures of the air, and animals both wild and
tame (Rig Veda 10.90.8).*

Ghee is considered very important in the ritual (*S.B.* 3.9.3.26). It is described as a thunderbolt (*S.B.* 7.2.3.4). It is also described as the life sap, essence, of the universe (*S.B.* 13.2.1.2). It is the fiery energy, *tejas*, sweetness and is amritam, the drink of immortality (*Aitareya Brahmana* 2.2.4). *Ghee* mixed with milk, curds, honey and sugar is eaten (*Manava Grhyasutra* 1.13.4). It is drunk to ward off misfortune. Offering, anointing oneself with the remains and eating the rest is considered beneficial to the attainment of speech and intellect (*Rig Vidhana* 2.9.1).

It is interesting to note that the offerings of water and *panchamritam* are made in multiples of five. The ritualistic tradition has an explicit function, in that it draws the *yajamana's* attention to the basic tenet of Hinduism. The body exists relatively and is composed of the *panch maha bhutas*, five elements, viz, earth, water, energy, air and space (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977 : 55). It was the intention of the seers to highlight this temporary existence of the body and to channel the aspirant to develop the divine qualities of the self. The offering of water and *panchamritam* besides creating the aura of the holy spots, announces this stark reality, that the attention of the aspirant should not dwell on the bodily form but rather on the divine *atman*.

The *yajamana* offers a flower to the feet of *Ganesha* and removes the same. The individual anoints the heart, eyes, and head with the sanctified flower. The flower which has been transformed as a conductor of Gods' attributes is applied to the eyes, head and heart. These three centres are very important in the process of cognising God. The eye has to be free from the veil of ignorance in order to form the right perception of God. The head which houses the brain is

only able to perceive God once logic is able to govern. The head is also the seat of discrimination. One can either choose to remain a "slave" in the temporal process or to direct the thoughts towards God consciousness. The heart has always been the controller of emotions. The devotee is encouraged to love all and to develop that attitude where he sees God in everything. These three organs of perception are aided in this task by the grace, *prasada*, of *Ganesha* (Interview : Shukla).

The *abhishek*, continuous flow of water, is performed on the image of *Ganesha*. The priest recites the *Shri Ganapathi Atharvashirsha* (See Appendix - 2), which promises the performer various spiritual benefits.

The *Ganapathi Atharvashirsha* is an introduction to the primary belief system of the fundamental principles of Hindu philosophy, ie. the goal of establishing oneself in the state of *brahmabhava*. The listener of this hymn is encouraged to contemplate the nature of Brahman, the attributeless one. The simple act of bathing the image of the deity , *Ganesha*, imparts to the *yajamana* the subtle truths of the *Upanishadic* tradition. God is the material and efficient cause of the universe. Through His marginal potency, *shakti*, He initiates the scheme of creation, yet he remains unaffected by this extension.

5.5 THE RITUALS OFFERED AFTER THE BATHING OF THE IMAGE

The image is removed from the *threbanee*, tray, in which the *abhishek* was conducted. The image is wiped using a clean piece of cloth or a towel. The *yajamana* places the image on a new tray and the subsequent rituals are performed. The devotee in treating the deity as a guest must now offer the image of *Ganesha* clothing. Two pieces of raw cotton or specially sewn garments are draped over the *murti*. The first piece represents the *vastra* or the lower apparel, *dhoti*. The second piece represents the *upavastra* or the upper apparel, *dupata*. A *yajnopavit*, sacred thread, is also offered.

Clothing is one of the essential needs in the material world. Society has always been fond of external appearances and the impression that clothes create. The individual begins to cover the soul and its attributes, that of being free, with layers and layers of self inflicted illusion. Simplicity is a hallmark of the wise. By draping the *murti* with clothing we are encouraged to remove these layers of illusion that have confused us in the past. By developing a sense of humility and gentleness the individual sees no plurality in the world (Interview : Tewary). The clothing is offered with the following hymns:

*From that great general sacrifice Richas and Sama hymns were
born: Therefrom were spells and charms produced; the Yajus had
its birth from it (Rig Veda 10.90.10).*

A sandalwood paste *thilak* is placed on the forehead of *Ganesha*. This denotes the respect that the devotee extends to *Ganesha*. This reinforces the relationship that exists between God, *Ganesha*, and the worshipper. The devotee, *yajamana*, regards God as the master and considers himself to be the servant. The application of the thilak confirms this. Only through the grace, *prasada*, of God can one progress to self realization. The *thilak* is applied with the hymn:

*From it were horses born, from it all cattle with two rows of
teeth: From it were generated kine, from it the goat and sheep
were born (Rig Veda 10.90.11).*

White rice is offered on the image of *Ganesha*. White rice is a symbol of purity and abundance. The sacrificer here prays for the abundance of food not only for himself but for all of humanity. Man exists through God's grace. The individual has to exercise discrimination in utilising the products of creation. Constant prayers of thanks giving are offered regularly so that the devotee is placed in a condition of well-being. Society is only capable of contemplating such issues as salvation and consciousness if they are physically tendered and nourished. The right type of foods, rich in *sattvic*, pure, qualities should be consumed because

the food is responsible for the development of the brain and the quality of thoughts that it produces (Interview : Shukla). The *Bhagavad Gita* (17.8) advocates the consumption of nourishment as follows:

Foods that promote longevity, intelligence, strenght, health, hapiness and delight, which are sweet, bland, nourishing and agreeable are dear to the Sattvic type of man.

The *annamaya kosha*, gross body, influences the composition of the *vijnanamaya*, subtle body. It is the ability of the *vijnanamaya maya kosha* of comprehending the true purposes of one's existence that renders it important. This realization can only dawn if the *vijnanamaya kosha* receives wholesome food via the *annamaya kosha*. White rice is offered with the following *mantra*:

*When they divided Purusa how many portions did they make?
What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his
thighs and feet? (Rig Veda 10.90.12)*

The priest instructs the *yajamana* to offer flowers at the feet of the image of *Ganesha*. This is the representation of the devotee surrendering his self at the feet of the Lord. The flower because of its beauty and fragrance is considered the best offering to be made to any deity .

Shri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* (9.26) instructs *Arjuna*.

Whosoever offers to me with Love, a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, I appear in Person before that disinterested devotee of purified intellect and delightfully partake of that article offered by him with love.

The *yajamana* places sprigs of turf near the image. *Ganesha* is especially fond of grass because it is directly connected to the *durva* grass on which the

amritam had fallen during the churning of the ocean (Interview : Shukla).

Grass has tremendous regenerative properties. It is capable of quick and expansive growth. The symbology implied here is that one's love for God and for fellow man should also spread like the growth of grass and encompass everybody. The turf is offered with the priest reciting:

The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya made. His thighs became the Vaisya, from his feet the Sudra was produced (Rig Veda 10.90.13).

The *yajamana* adorns the *murti* with *sindoor*, vermillion, as well as other coloured powders. The powders represent the aungents offered to the deity. The coloured powders are considered the 'make-up' of the Lord (Interview : P.R. Maharaj). It is observed that these powders are brightly coloured. They represent the desires of man. In an effort to realize God, the sacrificer, sacrifices his desires at the feet of the Lord. Free of desires and ego the devotee is now free from the shackles of illusion to comprehend the totality of God. (Interview : P.R. Maharaj). The powders are offered with the hymn:

The Moon was gendered from his mind, from his eye the Sun had birth; Indra and Agni from his mouth were born and Vayu from His breath (Rig Veda 10.90.14).

The *yajamana* proceeds to offer the *deepa*, lights, and *dhupam*, incense, to the image. The light, *deepa* or *chiraag*, has always been a symbol of illumination and knowledge. It represents the illuminated knowledge of the *Vedas* and the quest for immortality. By offering the light the *yajamana* reiterates the *Vedic* prayer:

Lead me from darkness unto light.

The darkness referred to is the dark world of ignorance that distances the aspirant from the path of realisation. *Ganesha* is the guardian deity of *Vedic* studies and if he is propitiated accordingly, he grants the student access to the world of the *vedic* hymns and *sutras*. The *deepa*, light, which symbolises the illuminated knowledge of the *vedas* is the goal of the student. Once the individual has acquired the *Vedic* wisdom, he now puts this knowledge into practice and the path to realization is simple (Interview : R.R. Maharajh).

The *dhupam* is associated with sensual pleasure. If one becomes too engrossed in sensual pleasure, then one may lose sight of the purpose in life, *moksha*. The lighting of the incense signifies the *yajamana's* endeavours to control the senses. The incense gives off a soothing fragrance and this is also used to create a atmosphere of serenity and to ward off evil.

Sattvic, pure, food such as sweetmeats and fruit are offered at the feet of *Ganesha*. This is later removed and consumed as blessed offerings termed *prasad*. It is sanctified by being in close proximity to the Lord. This offering of food also symbolises the surrendering of the fruits of action at the feet of the Lord. Selfless service or *nishkaam karma*, selfless service, is advised in the *Bhagavad Gita* (3.19) as a means of attaining salvation:

*Therefore, always efficiently do your duty without attachment.
Doing work without attachment, man attains the Supreme.*

The five vital breaths, *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* and *samana* are invoked to digest the essence of the food, *medha*. Three offerings of water are made which are used for the purposes of rinsing the mouth, washing the hands and water to aid digestion. Thereafter beetleleaf and beetlenut are offered to the deity to aid the process of digestion and to cleanse the mouth of food particles and odours. This is offered with the hymn:

Forth from his navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from his head; Earth from his feet and from his ear the regions. Thus they formed the worlds (Rig Veda 10.90.14).

Money is surrendered at the feet of *Ganesha*. The sacrificer prays for the increase in prosperity and on the sublime level, the sacrificer indicates the surrendering of materialism.

The *yajamana* offers *arthi*, the waving of lights containing five wicks. This is a final acceptance of the temporary nature of the patron. The physical body is composed of five elements viz. ether, air, water, fire and earth. The five wicks symbolise these five elements or *mahabhutas*. By waving the *arthi*, the patron acknowledges his acceptance of the temporary physical body. *Arthi* is offered with the hymn:

Seven fencing sticks had lie, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared; When the Gods offering sacrifice, bound, as their victim, Purusa (Rig Veda 10.90.15).

The final offering is the mantra *pushpanjali* or the offering of flower at the feet of the Lord *Ganesha* as an act of final surrendering unto the Lord. The flower is offered with the hymn:

Gods sacrificing, sacrificed the victim. These were the earliest holy ordinances. The mighty ones attained the height of heaven, there where the Sadhyas, Gods of old, are dwelling (Rig Veda 10.90.16).

The worship of *Ganesha* concludes with the recitation of prayers by the priest:

Hear, O Parvati, what this son of yours will become. He will be like me in might, heroism and compassion. This son of yours will become one just like me because of these qualities. He will make obstacles that last until death for those evil and impious ones

who hate the Veda and dharma. And those who fail to pay homage to me and Vishnu, the supreme lord, they will go to great darkness by the obstacles laid before them by this lord of obstacles. In their houses there shall be quarrels without end.

Because of the obstacles your son make everything perish utterly. For those who do not worship, who are intent upon lies and anger, and are committed to fierce savagery, he will create obstacles. He will remove obstacles from those who revere the traditions, knowledge and teachers. Without worshipping him, all actions and laws will become obstructed (Skanda Purana 1.2.2.7.14)

5.6 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KALASHA

The *purohita* now instructs the *yajamana* to establish the *kalasha*. The *kalasha* is a vessel, *lotta*, in which water, is filled. To this water is added sandalwood paste, tumeric powder, a pinch of soil, beetle nut, a coin and turf. Five mango leaves are half immersed in the water. On top of the vessel a coconut is placed. This constitutes the *kalasha* (Dange 1987 : 50). The *kalasha* conveys great significance to the sacrificer. It in fact represents the entire *Brahmanda* or creation.

The water that is contained within the *kalasha* represents the ocean, and the water that constitutes one of the major elements. The waters of the seven rivers, viz. *Ganga*, *Yamuna*, *Godavari*, *Sarasvati*, *Narmada*, *Sindhu* and *Kaveri* are also resident in the vessel.

The pinch of soil that is placed in the pitcher represents the seven continents. The coin, tumeric and beetlenut represent the rich source of wealth that the earth yields. The coin is symbolic of the mineral and material prosperity that the earth contains. The tumeric plant provides a natural antiseptic that is widely used in Indian households to combat minor ailments. It also serves cosmetic purposes

viz. it aids in accentuating the complexion of the skin. The tumeric represent the collective medicinal properties of the *ayurvedic* herbs and roots (Interview : Shukla). The turf represents the vast abundance of flora that covers the world. The beetlenut represents the fruits of procreation.

The mango leaves represents the patron and the five senses. Although one exists in this mundane world, one should not loose track of one's true spiritual being. The leaf, half immersed, signifies that, the portion of the leaf that remain without is in fact the patron existing in this mundane world. The portion that exists within the container conveys the message that although one is engaged in this temporal world, one should still be submerged in the Bliss of God. The leaves serve a similar symbology as the lotus in Hindu philosophy. Mookerjee and Khanna (1977 : 68) note:

The lotus is a symbol of the unfolding of the self and expanding consciousness, which cuts through psychic opacity and ultimately raises the aspirant from the dark depths of ignorance to the radiant heights of inner awakening. Just as lotus plants grow in the "darkness of mud" and gradually blossom out to the surface of the water, unsullied by the mud and water which nourished them, so the inner self transcends and transforms itself beyond its corporeal limits uncorrupted and untarnished by illusion and ignorance.

This state of equilibrium is achieved by bringing under control the five senses that constantly hamper the patron in spiritual progress. *Shri Krishna* instructs *Arjuna* in the *Bhagavad Gita* (111:7):

He who controlling the organs of sense and action by the mind and remaining unattached, undertakes the Yoga of action through those organs, Arjuna he excels.

A coconut, with a *swastika* inscribed on it is placed on top of the *kalasha*. The coconut symbolises the patron. The coarse, hairy exterior of the coconut is the

layers of ignorance that cloud and veil humanity's attempt to attain liberation. This external covering of the coconut is extremely difficult to remove and symbolises the difficulty that humanity experiences in being divorced from worldly events. We constantly cover the immortality of the soul with worldly experiences thereby suppressing the instinctive nature of the soul viz. to be free and merged in the glory of God. However, once humanity transcends the mundane existences, then the purity and effulgent light of the self is revealed. This boundary that the aspirant has to transcend is difficult for one engrossed in mundane activities and is represented by the hard covering that surrounds the kernel. Once this boundary is traversed then the purity, represented by the white of the kernel, is realized.

By offering prayers to the *kalasha* the patron is thankful for the bounty that the Lord has offered him. The sacrificer also acknowledges the role played by the *trimurti*, trinity, viz. *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* in shaping this world. The auspicious jar, *ghata* or *kalasha*, has become a symbol of the human body (Dange 1987 : 49). The earliest reference to the *kalasha* is traced to the *Rig Veda* (3.32.15) in which mention is made of a salutation to *Indra* by his votaries:

His kalasha is filled; Hail !

The filled jar is a mark of prosperity and happiness. Mango leaves or betel leaves usually accompany the arrangement of the *kalasha*, these symbolise the fresh generation of vegetation and progeny (Dange 1987 : 50). The *Skanda Purana* (11.2.11.56) enjoins one to cast a glance at the filled jar prior to going out for daily business. The *Vaman Purana* (14.36) further records that one should touch the jar of water before embarking on any business, for this assures success.

Dange (1987 : 52) opines further:

The jar, then is the symbol of the creative waters that are seen as

seen in the bowl of the earth.

Further, the *Shiva Purana* (4.39.9.) describes the arrangement of a gold *kalasha*, during *Shivarathri*, in which the images of *Shiva* and *Parvathy* are established. Several other jars are placed behind the principle one. All the *kalashas* are covered with auspicious clothes. This arrangement represents the symbolic marriage of *Shiva* and *Parvathy*, while the other *kalashas* represents the gods (Dange 1987 : 53). Dange (1987 : 53) further notes:

It was believed to be endowed with life, to indicate that it was filled not only with water, milk or ghee, but also with gold or gem. To make the concept complete, the jar was covered with a piece of cloth, and it was tied at the neck with a chord, which stood for the sacred chord, and in certain cases the sacred chord is actually tied. In some cases a couple of jars indicated the god and goddess.

The *Varaha Purana* (22.43) indicates that the seven oceans attended the marriage of *Shiva* and *Parvathy* in the form of the seven jars. The jar is also a symbol of the earth and it is said in the *Brahma Purana* (72.26) that *Shiva* gave the jar to *Brahma* in the form of the earth, placing water in it to represent the oceans (Dange 1987 : 54). Dange (1987 : 54) concludes further:

The jar symbolised the cosmic womb of creation in an important aspect. This concept is seen transplanted in actual ritual also.

The *Agni Purana* (92.36) names the various *kalashas* as follows: *subhadra*, *vibhadra*, *sunanda*, *pushpanandaka*, *jaya*, *vijaya*, *purana*, *nidhi - kumbha*, *padma*, *mahapadma*, *shankha*, *makara* and *samudra*. These are to be placed on various occasions and at various quarters (Dange 1987 : 53). Thus, from creation to the end of life, the *kalasha* was symbolic of the receptacle of life. During life it symbolised auspicious occasions and was used in customary rituals with this belief. It symbolised growth and prosperity (Dange 1987 : 55).

In worshipping the *kalasha*, the *yajamana* establishes his status in the scheme of life. The patron is able to differentiate between the worlds of God, nature and the self. The individual pays homage to the *kalasha* with the priest reciting the following hymns.

*Visnu resides at the mouth of the pitcher, Rudra in the neck.
Brahma at its base, and the group of the mother goddesses in the
middle. All oceans and the earth with its seven continents reside
in its belly. The Rg Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and
Atharva Veda, along with their appended texts (vedangas) are in
the vessel. In it is the gayatri chant with Savitr as its deity
which gives prosperity and peace. May these who remove all sins
come here for worship. O Ganga and Yamuna, Godavari and
Sarasvati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri (the seven mother/river
goddesses, be present in this water) (B.S. 1986 : 53).*

Varuna together with his consort and vehicle, *vahana*, are invoked. *Varuna* is the presiding deity of water. Flower, rice and *kumkuma* are offered to the *kalasha*.

The *swasti punyah vachan* or utterances of prosperity are performed whereby the material welfare of the sacrifice is consolidated. It is an accepted fact that material wealth is indeed necessary for the efficient functioning of the household. However, the householder realizes that it is much more honourable to petition the Lord to provide for the totality of humanity and not just for the individual. The patron prays that society will be free from disease and famine and that due to a stable environment the society will be steadfast in spirituality (Interview : Shukla).

Sanctified water from the *kalasha* is removed and placed in the *pancha patra*, water vessel. The priest instructs the wife of the *yajamana* to proceed to the left side of her husband. The *purohita* now prepares to perform the *abhishek*, sprinkling of water. The wife when having her meal and during the *abhishek*

advances to her husband's left. However, during all other undertakings she is seated on her husband's right (Interview : Shukla)

The *abhishek* is performed so that the bonds that exist between the couple are solidified and reinforced by the holy waters. The couple pray for peace, prosperity, compatibility of intentions and good health. The *abhishek* is also performed to negate acquired *karma*. The sacrificer addresses God in the form of *apas* or water which has the ability to wash away impurities. Vidyarnava (1979 : 39) notes that:

It shows that man by his repentance and remorse feels himself one with his God, and so entitled to ask favours from Him. It also contains prayer for the purification of the mental body.

5.7 WORSHIP OF THE SIXTEEN ALTAR GODDESSES

The sixteen *devis* who protect the *yajnas*, enclosure, are propitiated. They are summoned to afford the *yajnas* protection from evil. The priest recites the mantra:

Gaurie, Padma, Sachi, Medha, Savitri, Vijaya, Jaya, Devsena, Swadha, Swaha, Matra, Lokmataru, Dhriti, Pushti, Thushhti, Atmana, kuldevata, I offer you prayers, please be pleased and protect my sacrifice (B.S. 1986 : 329).

The evil that the scriptures speak of is the tussle between the forces of good and evil that hankers to dominate the mind of the individual.

5.8 WORSHIP OF THE PRIEST

The priest is regarded as an incarnation of God, *manushya deva*, because of his schooling in the *vedas* and the rituals. The priest is the practioner of the rituals and without him the ritual will not be able to proceed. The general consensus among the South African Hindi community is that the priest or *purohita* plays an important role in the disseminating of knowledge and spiritual guidance. Many householders consult a priest when a baby is born, to determine the suitability of the time of birth, when moving into or building a new house and when purchasing a vehicle. (Interview : P.R. Maharaj).

The sacrificer places a *thilak* on the *pundit's* forehead. The patron also offers white rice and flower on the forehead of the priest with the following *mantra*:

Om! Salutation to the Brahmanya Deva, to the well wishes of the worlds (Go) and Sages (Brahmana) to the well wishes of the whole universe, to Krishna, to Govinda, all Hail, all Hail
(B.S. 1986 : 337).

5.9 SALUTATION TO THE SUN AND THE NINE PLANETS

As noted in Chapter Two, the nine planets are symbolically resident in the physical body. It is believed that the planets in certain combinations effects the lives of the individual (Interview: R.R. Maharajh). The priest instructs the *yajmana* to place white rice in the left palm. With every invocation the *yajmana* is to offer a few grains on the beetlenut that is placed in the three, tray. The beetlenut represents the nine planets. Commonly areca nuts represent deities (Bühnemann 1988 : 48). The planets are supplicated with the following hymns:

Salutations to Surya, Chandra, Bhoma, Bhuda, Brihaspati, Shukra, Shani, Rahu and Ketu. Please assemble here to

receive my worship. Let Brahma, Vishnu (the lord of the Moon), Shiva (Slayer of Tripura), the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, the ascending and the descending nodes, let all (the celestial) remove all obstacles and shower blessings onto me (B.S. 1986 : 345).

The nine heavenly bodies viz. the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, the ascending node and the descending node of the moon are highly respected and venerated as deities. They influence the destinies of humanity according to good and evil aspects in the individual's horoscope. The *navagrahas* are propitiated especially when one is passing through a bad period in one's life caused by unfavourable constellations. They are pacified at the commencement of an *anushtaan*, ritual, so that the sacrificer may derive the benefits of the ritual. Their prayers also remove diseases associated with them (Bühnemann 1989 : 4). The *navagrahas* are pacified by the following rituals:

- Pacification rites
- Religious observances and ritual worship
- Ritual repetition of mantras (japa) and recitation of hymns of praise
- Special tantric practises (Bühnemann 1989 : 3)

The aim of the *grahamakh*, *graha* - pacificatory rites, is to establish cosmic harmony, *ritam*, both in the cosmos and within the individual. A calm disposition is conducive to the divine vibrations of God (Bühnemann 1989 : 4).

The *Matsya Purana* (93.81) notes:

Just as armour protects from the blows of an arrow, a pacification rite protects from the stroke of fate.

The *grahas* are worshipped so man may acknowledge his position in the universe and realize the enormity of God's capabilities (Bühnemann 1989 : 8). The supplication of the planets marks the termination of the preliminary rituals. The patron now proceeds to invoke the *pradhana*, main deity for the purpose of worship.

5.10 CONCLUSION

A close perusal of the various appendages of the rituals discussed thus far indicates distinctly that the ritualistic tradition sought only to reinforce the theory of pure identity between the soul and God. Through various external enactments, this principle is arrived at in a tangible way where the aspirant is not left at the mercy of confusing and conflicting views but is lead from the profane to the sacred, from the external to the internal and from the mundane to the Divine. The priest is most definitely the captain of the heaven bound ship. The priest provides the stimuli that is able to effect changes in the individual's psyche. *Mantras* and their meanings coupled with a detailed account of the symbolic rites affords the patron the opportunity to realise the express aim of the ritual viz. a means of obtaining release from the mortal coils.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 ABSTRACT

This chapter endeavours to illustrate that the preliminary rituals and the sacrifice in general emphasise the patron's gradual realization of the Self and the individuals position in the scheme of creation. The ritual is dependant on extrnal rites which are charged with symbology. The priest leads the patron from the profane to the sacred, pointing out the symbology and the underlying philosphy so that the *yajamanas* may effect a positive change in their consciousness.

6.2 THE OBJECTIVE OF RITUALS

The vedic ritual after the Sixth Century B.C. found its logical culmination in the monistic thought represented in the *Upanishads* (Heesterman 1985 : 39). The *brahmanic* insistance on identity between *Brahman* and *atman* provided the gateway for this transition in thought. During this period the sacrifice was interiorized. According to Heesterman (1985 : 39) ritualistic thought:

Had to advance to its logical conclusion that is the interiorization of the ritual

The ritual enactment is developed internally establishing the patron in the bliss of *Brahman*. According to Smith (1989 : 94)

The patron develops the identity of the Self proportionally to the progress of the ritual.

Wheelock (1991 : 117) notes further:

The puja (ritual prayer), postulates the ultimate unreality of all distinctions and seeks to affirm the eternal truth of the worshipper's identity with the deity.

The devotee utilizes the ritual to strive for *moksha*, release. The ritual and the preliminary rites involve the immolation of the lower nature of the individual, signalling the rebirth of the Self. Through the ritual process, the *yajamana* is not led through a host of contradicting mechanics, but is directed unto the path of contemplation and Bliss (Sharma : 1989 : 29).

The purpose of the ritual i.e. to lead the devotee to *Moksha* has been relegated to the background by most of the South African Hindi community who perceive the preliminary rituals as a means of petitioning God for earthly rewards and for the purposes of avoiding calamities. Petitions and thanksgiving are secondary purposes for the performance of rituals.

The primary purpose of the ritual is to allow the patron to realize the potential of the self (Interview : R.R. Maharajh). The *Bhodayana Dharma Sutra* (2.10.18.8) notes:

After the Brahmadhana (the ritual in which the sacrificial fires are interiorized) the sacrificer himself has within him the sacrificial fires. The inhalation (prana) is the garhapatya fire, the exhalation (apana) is the anvaharyapacana (the dakṣiṇa) fire, the circulation in the body (vyana) is the ahavaniya fire, and the cerebral circulation (samana) is the sathya and avasathya fires. These five fires are in the self (atman). He offers in the self alone.

The scriptural injunction on sacrifice has not been eradicated. It assumed added importance during the second century B.C. in the form of the five great sacrifices. As early as the *Shatapatha Brahmana* (11.5.6.1) and the *Taittiriya Aranyaka*

(2.10) mention is made of the *mahayajnas* by which the householder acquits himself of his ritual obligations to the gods, the ancestors; the spirits, his fellow human beings and *Brahman* (Smith 1989 : 208). The *Bhodayana Dharma Sutra* (2.6.11.2.6), *Shatapatha Brahmana* (11.5.6.2) and the *Taittiriya Aranayaka* (2.10) note that:

He should daily offer an oblation into the fire with the exclamation swaha! even if it is done only with a stick of wood. That fulfills the sacrifice to the gods. He should daily offer an oblation to the ancestors with swadha! even if it is only a vessel of water. That fulfills the sacrifice to the ancestors. Daily he should pay respect to the spirits even if it is only by offering them some flowers. That fulfills the sacrifice to the spirits. Daily he should give food to the Brahmins, even if it is only some roots, fruit and vegetables. That fulfills the sacrifice to humans. And everyday he should recite a portion of the Vedas, even if it is only the syllable "om". That fulfills the sacrifice to Brahman.

The *mahayajnas* represent a minimalistic form of the *vedic* ritualism as a whole for householders with limited means. Kane (1968 : 98) notes further:

Everyman could not afford to celebrate the solemn srauta rites prescribed in the Brahmanas and Srauta Sutras. But every one could afford a fuel-stick to fire that was deemed to be the mouth of the great Gods of Heaven and thus show his reverence and devotion to them.

It is observed that the sacrifice or ritual viz. the preliminary rituals serves as a minimal requirement to reach realization. It is a practical way of reaching *moksha* and is a suitable substitute for the *Vedic* sacrifice. The *mahayajnas* and the preliminary rituals obligatory practices for humanity so that the individual is periodically reminded of his obligation i.e. realizing release and establishing *dharma*, righteousness (Interview : Shukla).

6.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SANATHANI PRIESTS

Indentured labourers from India were brought to South Africa primarily for their labour in the sugar plantations of Natal. There was an absence of suitably qualified priests and *vidwaans*, learned men. The few *brahmins* who accompanied these labourers relied on their various family traditions and thus the tradition of the *karmakaand*, ritualistic worship, was passed down from father to son. (Interview : R.R. Maharajh). The cultural boycott enforced by India against South Africa impeded the exchange of ideas and learned *acharyas*, teachers, on the subject of ritualism (Interview : R.R. Maharajh). This has impacted negatively on the development of ritualistic knowledge among the body of South African priests. The priesthood is seen as a lucrative alternative to supplement one's income. At present there are no minimum qualification necessary for the induction of a *sanathani*, orthodox, priest, the term *purohita*, aid to the family, has lost its significance because the *pandits*, priests, do not possess the necessary scriptural knowledge to lead the patron to self realization. The levels of interpretation of the ritual is expounded by Smith (1989 : 203) as follows:

The projection of the sacrifice from its ritual confines into various aspects of human life and of the world at large begins of course in the Vedas itself. The theory of ritual centres on the notion that ritual is not only the activities of the priest (the adhyayajna) (level of understanding) but is also the means for explaining the workings of the cosmos (the adhidevata level of meaning, 'relating to the cosmos' and the human self (the adhyatma level of meaning, 'relating to the self, the microcosmos).

The priest has to inculcate a sound knowledge of the theory and philosophy of the preliminary rituals in order to effect a change in the ontological state of the patron. Gandhi (1961 : 296) notes.

We have to offer up our weaknesses, our passions, our narrowness.

Thus the preliminary rituals assume the proportions of a heaven bound cart with the patron as the passenger and the priest as the captain. The current bad reputation of *karmakanda* is also due to some common defects in the performance of the rituals that one can frequently witness, and in the attitude of many devotees as well as priests, who often let the *puja* degenerate into a purely mechanical performance owing to repeated performance. Over-importance attached to outer purity - which is achieved through bathing and wearing of pure garments - and to formal elements sometimes goes together with negligence of the appropriate mental attitude. Against these tendencies some authorities have emphasized the importance of mental purity and devotion, *bhakti*, declaring that worship without devotion is as good as not offered. This aspect has particularly been stressed by followers of the bhakti movement who have included puja as one of their spiritual practices (Bühnemann 1988 : 80).

6.4 THE INFLUENCE OF THE RITUAL ON SOCIAL PRACTICE

The rituals viz. the preliminary rituals, is responsible for the maintaining of culture and tradition. The various pujas, prayers, ensures that Hindu society maintains its cultural identity (Interview : Shukla). The *Bhadra Suktam* discussed in Chapter Four of this study pleads for the homogenous functioning of society. The adherence to the ritualistic tradition has ensured that *samskaras*, sacraments, such as the wedding, naming ceremony and the funeral rites are still performed till this day. The ritual also allows the society an opportunity to express their devotion (Interview : Shukla).

The scriptural injunction regarding the practice of rituals is continued in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Bhagavad Gita* (3.11) enjoins the individual to practice the following:

*Foster the gods through this (sacrifice); and let the gods foster you.
Thus fostering one another disinterestedly you will attain the highest goal.*

The *Bhagavad Gita* has come to be recognised as the Primary Hindu scripture superceding even the *vedas* (Interview : Shukla). The injunctions of the *Gita* are respected by the devotee and the insistence on rituals by the *Gita* serves to establish that the ritual is not an obsolete path to God.

Various appendages of *vedic* ritual are associated with the worship of the image of God (*Asvalayaa Grihya Sutra* 1.1.5). The ritual *puja* to the image of *Ganesha*, *Vishnu*, *Shiva* and the *Goddess* or one of their incarnations has come to replace the *vedic yajna* although it incorporates within itself many rites from the *vedic yajna* (Smith 1989 : 214).

Thus the preliminary rituals is a legitimate path for the individual to establish a connection between God, the world and the self, as Wheelock (1991 : 106) notes.

*The effect of the sacrifice upon the yajamana is seen as causing him
to ascend to heaven so that momentarily, he becomes Godlike.*

The preliminary rituals are a legitimate means of establishing the patron in the state of *brahmabhava*. Correct application and appreciation of the preliminary rituals, results in an efficient method of obtaining release. If applied correctly, the preliminary rituals have the ability to eradicate ignorance and to amplify the purity of the self.

Appendix - 1

Shakradaya Stuthi

The Rsi said: When that most valiant but evil-natured Mahisasura and the army of that foe of the devas were destroyed by the Devi, Indra and the hosts of devas uttered their words of praise, their necks and shoulders reverently bent, and bodies rendered beautiful with horripilation and exultation.

To that Ambika who is worthy of worship by all devas and sages and pervades this world by her power and who is the embodiment of the entire powers of all the hosts of devas, we bow in devotion. May she grant us auspicious things!

May Candika, whose incomparable greatness and power Bhagavan Visnu, Brahma and Hara are unable to describe, bestow her mind on protecting the entire world and on destroying the fear of evil.

O Devi, we bow before you, who are yourself good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous, and ill-fortune in those of the vicious, intelligence in the hearts of the learned, faith in the hearts of the good, and modesty in the hearts of the high-born. May you protect the universe!

O Devi, how can we describe your inconceivable form, or your abundant surpassing valour that destroys the asuras, or your wonderful feats displayed in battles among all the hosts of gods, asuras and others?

You are the origin of all the worlds! Though you are possessed of the three gunas you are not known to have any of their attendant defects (like passion)! You are incomprehensible even to Visnu, Siva and others! You are the resort of all! This entire world is composed of an infinitesimal portion of yourself! You are verily the supreme primordial Prakriti untransformed.

O Devi, you are Svaha at whose utterance the whole assemblage of gods attains satisfaction in all the sacrifices. You are the Svadha which gives satisfaction to the manes. Therefore you are chanted (as Svaha and Svadha in Sacrifices) by people.

O Devi you are Bhagavati, the supreme Vidya which is the cause of liberation, and great inconceivable penances (are the means for your realization). You (the supreme knowledge) are cultivated by sages desiring liberation, whose senses are well restrained, who are devoted to Reality, and have shed all the blemishes.

You are the soul of Sabda-brahman. You are the repository of the very pure Rk and Yajus hymns, and of Samans, the recital of whose words is beautiful with the Udgitha! You are Bhagavati embodying the three *veda* s. And you are the sustenance whereby life is maintained. You are the supreme destroyer of the pain of all the worlds.

O Devi, you are the Intellect, by which the essence of all scriptures is comprehended. You are Durga, the boat that takes men across the difficult ocean of worldly existence, devoid of attachments. You are Sri who has invariably taken her abode in the heart of Visnu.

You are indeed Gauri who has established herself with Siva.

Gently smiling, pure, resembling the full moon's orb, beautiful like the splendour of excellent gold was your face! Yet it was very strange that, being swayed by anger, Mahisasura suddenly struck your face when he saw it.

Far strange it is that after seeing your wrathful face, O Devi, terrible with its frowns and red in hue like the rising moon, that Mahisasura did not forthwith give up his life! For who can live after beholding the enraged Destroyer?

O Devi, be propitious. You are Supreme. If enraged, you forthwith destroy the asura families for the welfare (of the world). This was known the very moment when the extensive forces of Mahisasura were brought to their end.

You who are always bounteous, with whom you are well pleased, those (fortunate ones) are indeed the object of esteem in the country, theirs are riches, theirs are glories, and their acts of righteousness perish not; they are indeed blessed and possessed of devoted children, servants and wives.

By your grace, O Devi, the blessed individual does daily all righteous deeds with utmost care, and thereby attains to heaven. Are you not, therefore, O Devi, the bestower of reward in all the three worlds?

When called to mind in a difficult pass, you remove fear for every person. When called to mind by those in happiness, you bestow a mind still further pious. Which goddess but you, O Dispeller of poverty, pain and fear, has an ever sympathetic heart for helping everyone?

The world attains happiness by the killing of these (foes); and though these (asuras) have committed sins to keep them long in hell, let them reach heaven by meeting death eventually at the battle (with me) - thinking thus, that you, O Devi, certainly destroy our enemies.

Don't you reduce to ashes all asuras by mere sight? But you direct your weapons against them so that even the inimical ones, purified by the missiles, may attain the higher worlds. Such is your most kindly intention towards them.

If the eyes of the asuras had not been put out by the terrible flashes of the mass of light issuing from your sword or by the copious lustre of your spearpoint, it is because they saw also your face resembling the moon, giving out (cool) rays.

O Devi, your nature is to subdue the conduct of the wicked; this your peerless beauty is inconceivable for others; your power destroys those who have robbed the devas of their prowess, and you have thus manifested your compassion even towards the enemies.

What is your prowess to be compared to? Where can one find this beauty (of yours) most charming, (yet) striking fear in enemies? Compassion in heart and relentlessness in battle are seen, O Devi, O Bestower of boons, only in you in all the three worlds!

Through the destruction of the enemies all these three worlds have been saved by you. Having killed them in the battle-front, you have led even those hosts of enemies to heaven, and you have dispelled our fear from the frenzied enemies of the devas. Salutation to you!

O Devi, protect us with your spear. O Ambika, protect us with your sword. protect us by the sound of your bell and by the twang of your bow-string.

O Candika, guard us in the east, in the west, in the north and in the south by the brandishing of your spear. O Iswari!

Protect us and the earth with those lovely forms of yours moving about in the three worlds, as also with your excludingly terrible forms.

O Ambika, protect us on every side with your sword, spear and club and whatever other weapons your sprout-like (soft) hand has touched.

Appendix - 2

Ganapathi Atharvasira

Homage to Lord Ganesha. Om, Reverence to Ganapati. You are indeed the visible. "That Thou Art" (tattvamasi). You indeed produce the universe. You indeed sustain it. You indeed destroy it. You indeed are the all pervading reality. You are the manifestation of the eternal self (atman). I speak what is fitting. I speak the truth. I describe your form. I listen to (the description of) your qualities. I give you my worship. I devote myself to your study. From the west, the east, the north, the south, from above, from below, from where ever calamity may come during your worship, please give me protection.

You are the essence of sound. You are pure consciousness (cit). You are pure bliss (ananda). You are brahman. You are the form of truth, consciousness, and bliss (saccidananda). You are the visible Brahman. You are knowledge (jnana) and insight (vijnana). This entire world is born from you. Through you this entire world is maintained. Through you this entire world is dissolved. This entire world returns to you again. You are earth, water, fire, air, and space. You set the places for the four classes (varna).

You are beyond the three qualities (guna i.e. sattva, rajas and tamas). You are beyond the three states of consciousness (i.e., waking, dream and dreamless sleep). You are beyond the three bodies (i.e. corporal, subtle, and blissful (sthula, suksma, ananda- maya). You continually dwell in the sacral plexus at the base of the spine (muladhara cakra). You embody the creative power. Yogins constantly meditate on you. You are Brahma. Visnu and Rudra (Siva). You are Agni. Vayu, and Surya. You are Candrama. You are earth, space, and heaven. You are the manifestation of the mantra "Om".

Having uttered the first letter of the word gana, ga, then I utter the nasal sound na which follows and appears beautifully like the crescent moon. This is your form. The ga forms the initial letter, the a forms the middle letter and the na forms the final letter. To utter this sound (i.e. gam) is to utter all sounds together.

I give recognition to the one having the single tusk. I meditate on the one having the twisted trunk, that trunk which inspires me. To him who holds the single tusk, your hands; the upper right holds the noose, the upper left holds the goad, the lower left holds an elephant's tusk, the lower right gestures blessing, to him whose colour is red, whose belly is large, whose ears resemble a grain-winnowing basket, whose garments are red, upon whom sandal paste is applied, to him to offer my worship (puja) with red flowers.

He is the deity who renders compassion to those who are devoted to him. He is the one who gave birth to these worlds. He is imperishable. He was produced before this universe was formed. He is beyond the principles of spirit and matter (purusa and prakrti). Whoever meditates on Him will become the most excellent yogin among yogins.

Homage to the leader of the gana of the gods. Homage to the lord of the divine group. May my praises go to him who is the premier lord, who has the large belly, and the single tusk. To the one who destroys obstacles, the son of Siva, to the one whose sight brings blessings, may my praises be offered repeatedly.

Whoever studies this Atharvasira will obtain the whole of Brahma in this age (kalpa). He will realize all happiness. He will not receive affliction from any calamity. He will obtain freedom from the five great sins (i.e. murdering a Brahmin, drunkenness, adultery, stealing and associating with evil persons). Whoever recites this in the evening becomes free from sins committed during that day. Whoever recites this in the morning becomes free from the sins committed during the previous night. Hence, whoever recites this text morning and evening becomes

free from all sins, and obtains the goals of right conduct (dharma) success (artha) sensual enjoyment (kama) and release (moksa).

One should refrain from teaching this Atharvasirsa to anyone who lacks faith in it. Whoever teaches it only for money commits the highest sin. One who recites this Atharvasirsa one thousand times will find all his desires fulfilled.

Whoever, along with this Atharvasirsa, performs the rite of bathing the image of Ganapati become a good orator. Whoever utters this on the fourth day of each half of the month (caturthi) while fasting becomes well-endowed with knowledge (vidya). This text was told by the Atharvan sage, and through it one recognizes the veil covering brahman and becomes fearless. Whoever offers durva grass (to Ganesa) obtains the riches of Vaisravana (Kubera). Whoever offers parched grain becomes honoured and endowed with wisdom. Whoever offers one thousand modukas gains the fruit of his undertakings. Whoever offers burning wood with clarified butter obtains all happiness and gains all worthwhile things.

Whoever teaches this Atharvasirsa to eight Brahmins attains vital power like that of the sun. Whoever utters this during a solar eclipse in a sacred place obtains the power of the fulfillment of mantra. He becomes free from great obstacles. He becomes free from great fault. He becomes free from great sins. He gains all knowledge. This is, indeed, the Veda. This is the Upanisad. May it be auspicious! (Courtright 1985 : 252)

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