

CHAPTER III

YAGNYA
OR THE
SACRIFICIAL FIRE

Yagnya or the Sacrificial Fire

Though yoga has nothing to do with *yagnya*, many say that a *mantra's* efficacy is enhanced when *yagnya* or sacrificial fire, is performed. It is said that a *mantra* for health eliminates toxic negative energy from the body, which is consumed and destroyed for good by the fire in front.

Yagnya occupied the most important position in the Vedic life. The Vedas are the ancient scriptures of India, which take their name from *vidya*, meaning knowledge. True to their meaning, these scriptures contain truth regarding all aspects of the universe – its origin, nature, content, science, alchemy, topography as well as its animate and inanimate objects. It is said that, all that has already been known and all that which will ever be known are contained in the Vedas. The profoundness of Vedic

knowledge has baffled all and sundry. For instance, thousands of years before science discovered the earth to be round and that it goes around the sun, Vedas had proclaimed it.

In India, the Vedic words are considered the ultimate and in the past, its recommendations were never discarded. People followed them unquestioningly. They led their lives in accordance with the Vedas, which were supposed to fulfill all their desires – material as well as spiritual, and in the end leave the world with contentment. The Vedas had classified human desires into four:

1. *Artha* or wealth
2. *Dharma* or proficiency in one's chosen line of work
3. *Kama* or passion
4. *Mokshya* or liberation

In order to achieve these systematically, the Vedas had divided the lifespan of an individual – which was supposed to be a hundred years according to these scriptures – into four phases, and a specific lifestyle was recommended for each phase.

The first quarter was to be spent in the Guru's abode and acquire professional skills as well as spiritual knowledge. The second phase, which began at the age of twenty-five years, was meant to fulfill all the material desires without neglecting the worldly duties. In the third quarter, people were expected to withdraw from active life and retire to the jungle to pursue spiritual goals. They were supposed to lead a simple life and look after their own needs. During this phase, people did not cut off their social ties and returned to their families intermittently. But in the last twenty-five years or till their death, they were required to renounce the world completely and live alone in a hut. This speaks volumes of their physical and mental superiority. To live away from home, hospital, doctors and an attendant at that age

is unthinkable for people of today. The Vedic routine followed by people in ancient times must be greatly responsible for their extraordinary strength, endurance and courage.

Yagnya was the central practice of the Vedic routine. The main features of a *yagnya* are *mantras*, the fire and the oblations or offerings that go into it. The beneficial effects of a *yagnya* have now been scientifically established. For instance, the vapour produced by burning various materials, has medicinal properties that cure many ailments of the performer and the onlooker. One of the common *yagnya*, which everybody is recommended to perform twice a day is the *Gayatri*. It is believed that, apart from bestowing the right knowledge, it energises the body and eliminates all diseases. The *mantra* is also said to negate the ill effects of disharmonious and destructive sounds that attack an individual from various sources. Cancer patients can benefit greatly by performing this *yagnya*. This should be performed in the morning and *Mahanritunjaya Yagnya* in the evening.

The procedure for *yagnya* is rather elaborate but nowadays learned priests have shortened the *Gayatri Yagnya* for the benefit of ordinary people. It is argued that, this *mantras*

is so powerful that by simply reciting it, one can attain the desired objectives. With the fire in front, it can be infallible and the other paraphernalia can be dispensed with.

Gayatri Yagnya: the necessary steps

- After taking a bath in the morning, ideally at sunrise, spread a small rug on the floor with the sealed edges towards the north and the south.
- Sit facing the north.
- Place the *yagnya* pot in front with a few pieces of firewood in it.
- Keep some *ghee* (clarified butter) and a long spoon in a vessel.
- To count the number of *mantras*, keep 108 beads in a cup and a plate to hold the counted ones.
- Keep some water in a copper glass with a copper spoon in it.
- Take a spoonful of water in your right hand and cover it with your left hand.
- Repeat the *Gayatri Mantra* 3 times mentally and state the purpose of doing the *yagnya* and sprinkle the water around you.



A traditional havan kund is made of earthen bricks and is decorated with alpana.

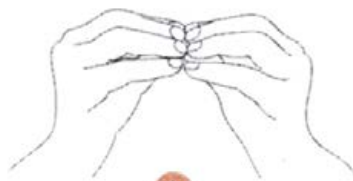


A smaller havan kund made of copper for home worship.

*Om Bhurbhuvah Swaha
Tatsavitur varenyam
Bhargo devasya dheeh mahidhiyo
Yonah prachodayat.*

- Practice the second stage of *Nadisodana Pranayama* 8 times, but only in 1 direction, that is, inhale from the left and exhale from the right.
- Concentrate on the naval centre during inhalation, on the heart centre during retention and on the eyebrow centre during exhalation.
- Practice the following *mudras* and gestures as shown in the pictures one after the other.
- These *mudras* connect the *prana* of the body with the cosmic one and ensure its smooth flow in the physical plane.

Gayatri Yantra



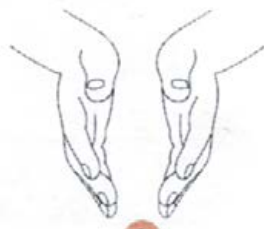
1

Sumukham



2

Samputam



3

Vittam



4

Visttam



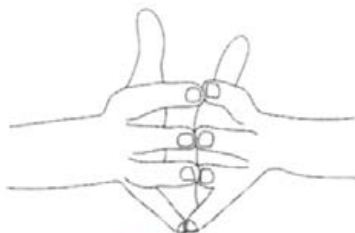
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Dvi Mukham Mudra



6

Tri Mukham Mudra



7

Chatur Mukham Mudra



8

Panch Mukham Mudra



9

Shan Mukham Mudra



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Adho Mukham Mudra



11

Viapkarjali Mudra



12

Shakatam Mudra



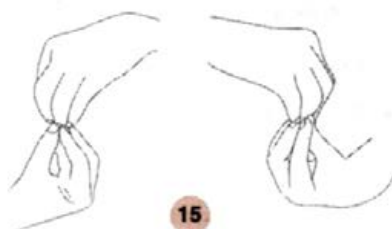
13

Yampasham Mudra



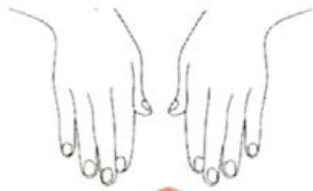
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Granthitam Mudra



15

Chormukhookam Mudra



16

Prilambam Mudra



17

Mustikam Mudra



18

Matsyam Mudra



19

Kurmam Mudra



20

Varahkam Mudra



21

Shinghkrant Mudra



22

Mahakrant Mudra



23

Murgdharam Mudra



24

Palavam Mudra

- Light the fire.
- Recite the *mantra* adding *swaha* in the end.
- Pour a spoonful of *ghee* into the fire while saying *swaha*.
- Take a bead from the cup, and place it on the plate without discontinuing the *mantra* recitation.

- Continue the process till the cup of beads is empty.
- Practice the following *mudras*.



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Surbhi Mudra



26

Gyan Mudra



27

Veiragya Mudra



28

Yoni Mudra



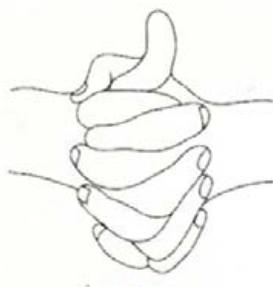
29

Shankh Mudra



30

Pankaj Mudra



31

Linga Mudra



32

Nirvan Mudra

- Pray for good health.
- Put out the fire.

Mahamritunjaya Yagnya has also been made simpler. One only needs to recite the *mantra* before a fire and pour *ghee* into it while saying *swaha* at the end. For this *yagnya*, one should face the east.