

Thanthric Pooja

beginner's Guide

A step by step explanation of Thanthric Pooja

By

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Introduction

This small note was prepared when I was in Houston.

Most of the devotees who came to the my temple were not familiar with Thantric system of temple worship.

This note was prepared to make them understand what was going on during a ritual.

This is the common format of the pooja of all Deities.

Only the Manthra and 'Sankalpa' get changed in different Poojas.

Thanthric Pooja

In any Thanthric Pooja, one can see the demonstration of chief principles of Thanthra. According to Thanthra, God [Parama Purusha] is beyond form and name; It is the essence and totality of existence. It can not be invoked or installed in its wholeness. When we invoke or install it, it becomes a Deity [Vishnu, Siva, Durga, Ayyappa etc] showing some characteristics of God depending upon the nature of mantras used and 'sankalpas' the person who performs them has at the time of invocation.

At the time of Pooja, using mantras and rituals particular to a Deity, Thanthri invokes the Almighty God in that particular form. For example, while performing invocation during a Vishnu Pooja, Thanthri uses one set of mantras and rituals to invoke God in the form of Vishnu. While performing invocation during a Siva Pooja, he uses another set of mantras and rituals to invoke God in the form of Siva. In modern language, we can say that through the complex rituals of Thanthric Pooja, a powerful and a particular field of God's vibration is created.



The 'Padmam' used in the Pooja, is a seat for Deity. Padmam is actually a symbolic representation of Brahmanda (Universe) itself. Avahana of Deity (Invocation) is the simplified version of Pratishta (Installation).





While performing any Thantric Pooja, priest first elevates himself through some rituals, which have their roots in Raja Yoga and then invokes within himself Deity consciousness. Then he purifies all the pooja materials. In the second stage, he transfers the Deity consciousness from his body to the Padmam. After invoking Deity into this Padmam, the Deity is treated as an honored guest throughout the pooja .

There are many stages involved in any Thantric Pooja

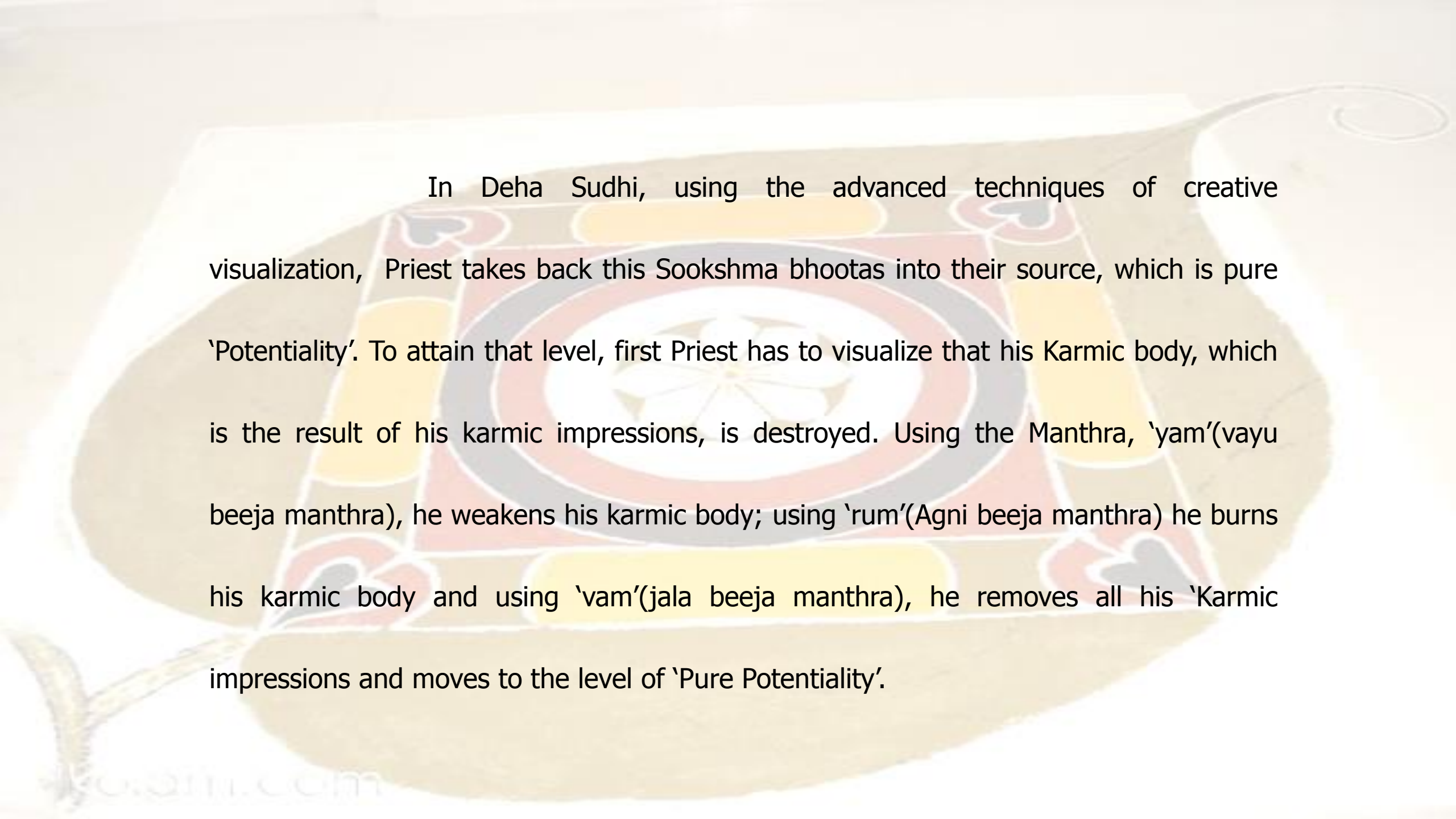
Deha Sudhi (purification of the mind-body mechanism):

This is the first stage. Two processes are involved in detailed Deha Sudhi. The first one is Bhootasamharam (bringing back all the elements of creation into their pure potentiality). Second is Bhootasrushti (again creating the elements in their purified form).

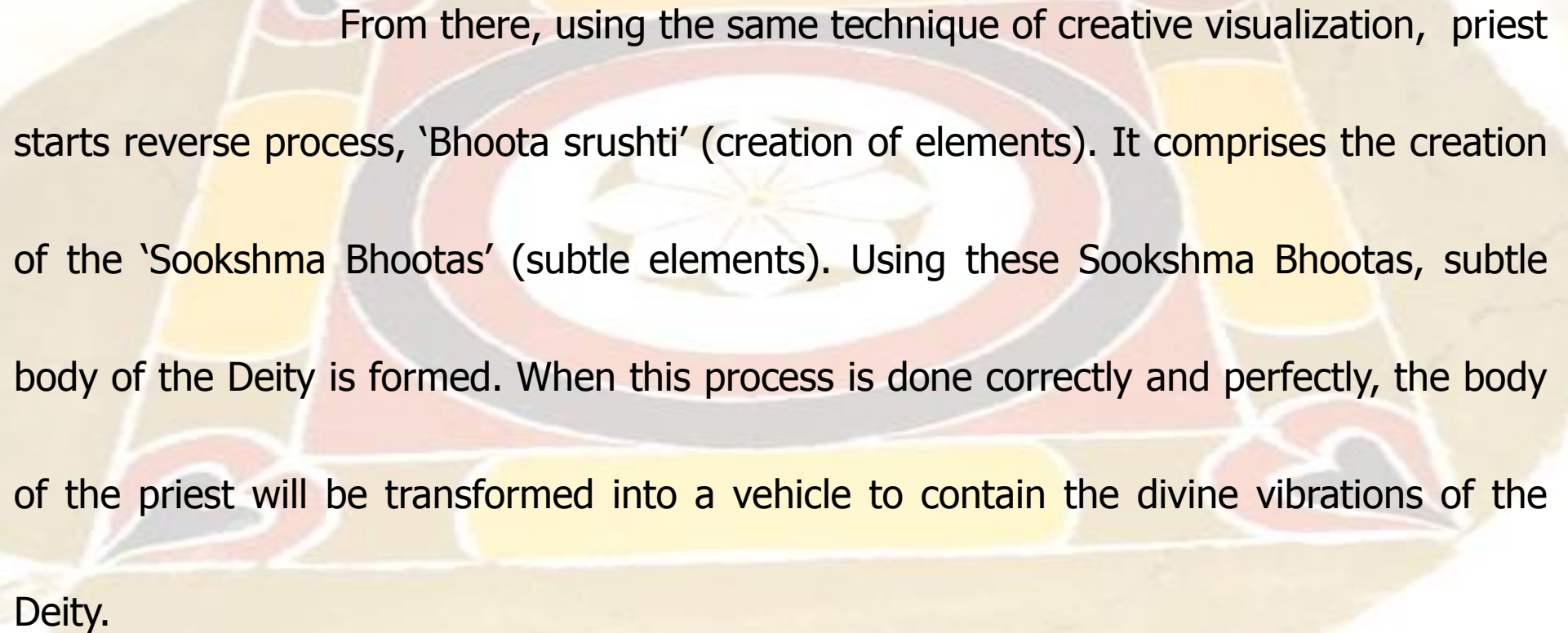


A little bit of imagination is helpful to understand this process. Imagine that our body is decomposed. We get basic elements like carbon, oxygen, etc. Imagine that they are also split. Then we can reach the realm of atoms. Again imagine that atom is also split. Then we may reach the invincible field of quantum. If we can take this quantum field back into its source, Thanthra says, we can reach the level of 'Sookshma bhootas' (subtle elements).





In Deha Sudhi, using the advanced techniques of creative visualization, Priest takes back this Sookshma bhootas into their source, which is pure 'Potentiality'. To attain that level, first Priest has to visualize that his Karmic body, which is the result of his karmic impressions, is destroyed. Using the Manthra, 'yam'(vayu beeja manthra), he weakens his karmic body; using 'rum'(Agni beeja manthra) he burns his karmic body and using 'vam'(jala beeja manthra), he removes all his 'Karmic impressions and moves to the level of 'Pure Potentiality'.



From there, using the same technique of creative visualization, priest starts reverse process, 'Bhoota srushti' (creation of elements). It comprises the creation of the 'Sookshma Bhootas' (subtle elements). Using these Sookshma Bhootas, subtle body of the Deity is formed. When this process is done correctly and perfectly, the body of the priest will be transformed into a vehicle to contain the divine vibrations of the Deity.

Samkhupooranam:

(Purification of water and other materials used for pooja):

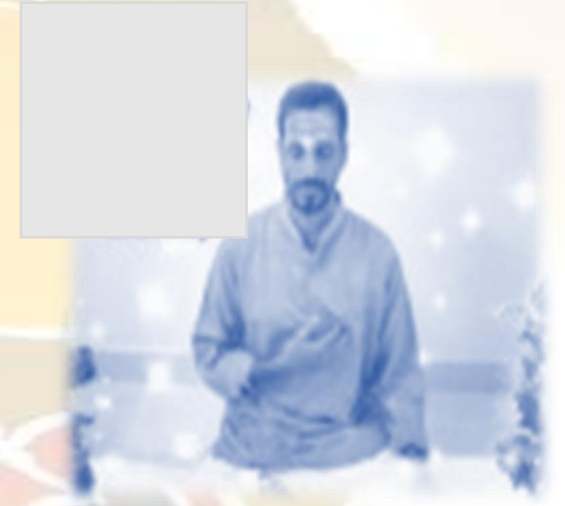
In Kerala, two special vessels, known as 'Kindi' (they are the transformation of 'Kamandulu' of the ancient saints) are used. A 'Samkh' (conch) is also used. The meaning of 'Kham' is sky and in Indian Numerology, 'Samkham' is an infinite number which is higher than ` lakh' and crores. As a whole, conch symbolizes infinity. It is into this infinity, the water is poured and purified. And when it is done, the water becomes purified enough to be used for pooja.



Atma Aradhana:

(The process of worshipping the Deity consciousness created in the body):

Here priest turns the conch to face his body and does the pooja. For a person, who is ignorant of the principle behind this, it may appear as an act of barbarism (worshipping one's own body). We need to understand that he is not worshipping his body here; instead, the Deity consciousness which has already been created in his body is being worshipped here.



Ganapathy Pooja:

In Manthra yoga, Ganapathy is the presiding Deity of 'Mooladhara Chakra, where 'Kundalini Sakthi' is situated. That's why before starting any Pooja Ganapathy is worshipped.

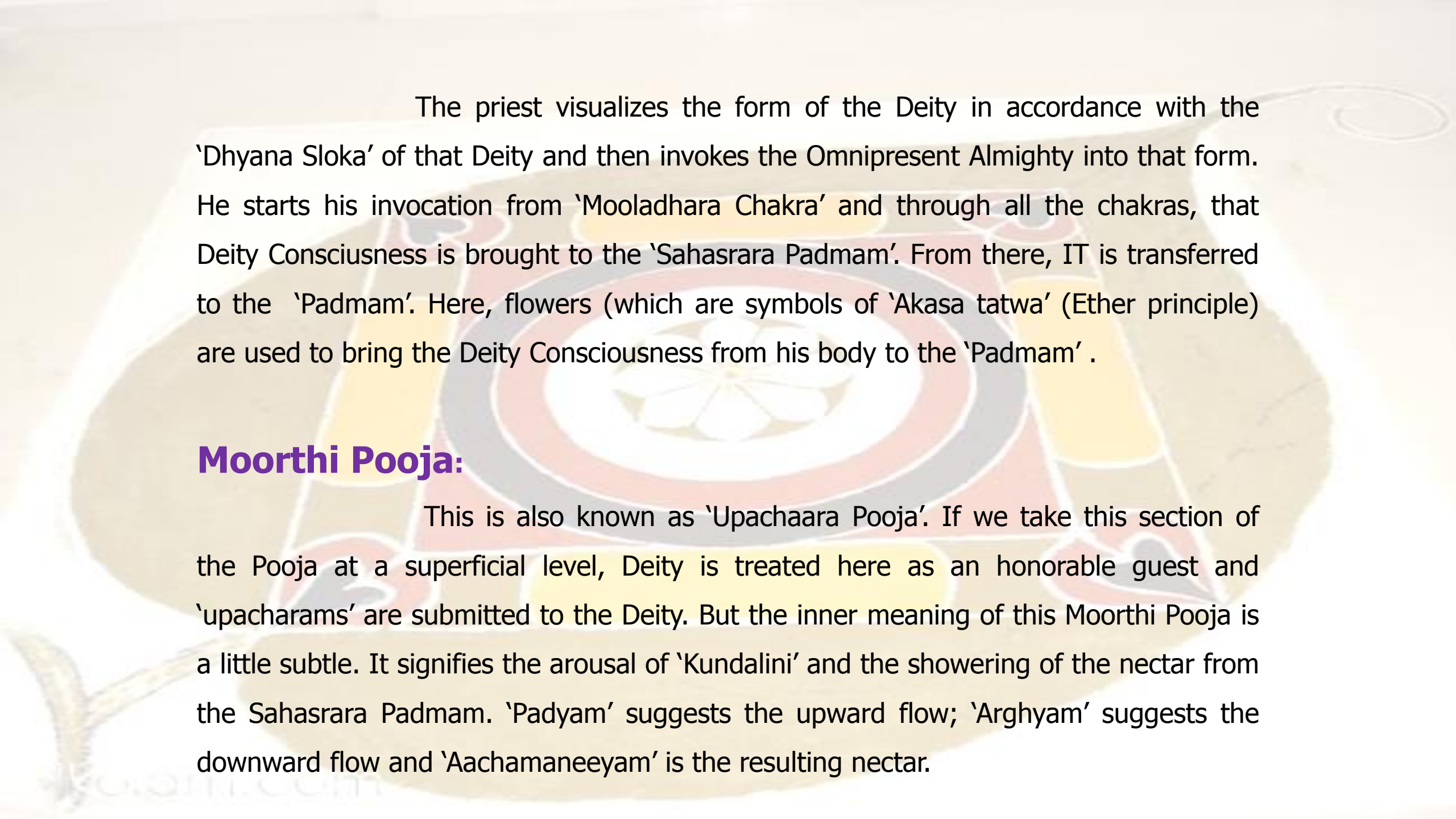


Peedha Pooja:

Here, with the help of some mantras, priest creates a subtle platform (gross platform is the 'Padmam', which has already been created.) for the Deity.

Moorthi kalpana and Avahana:

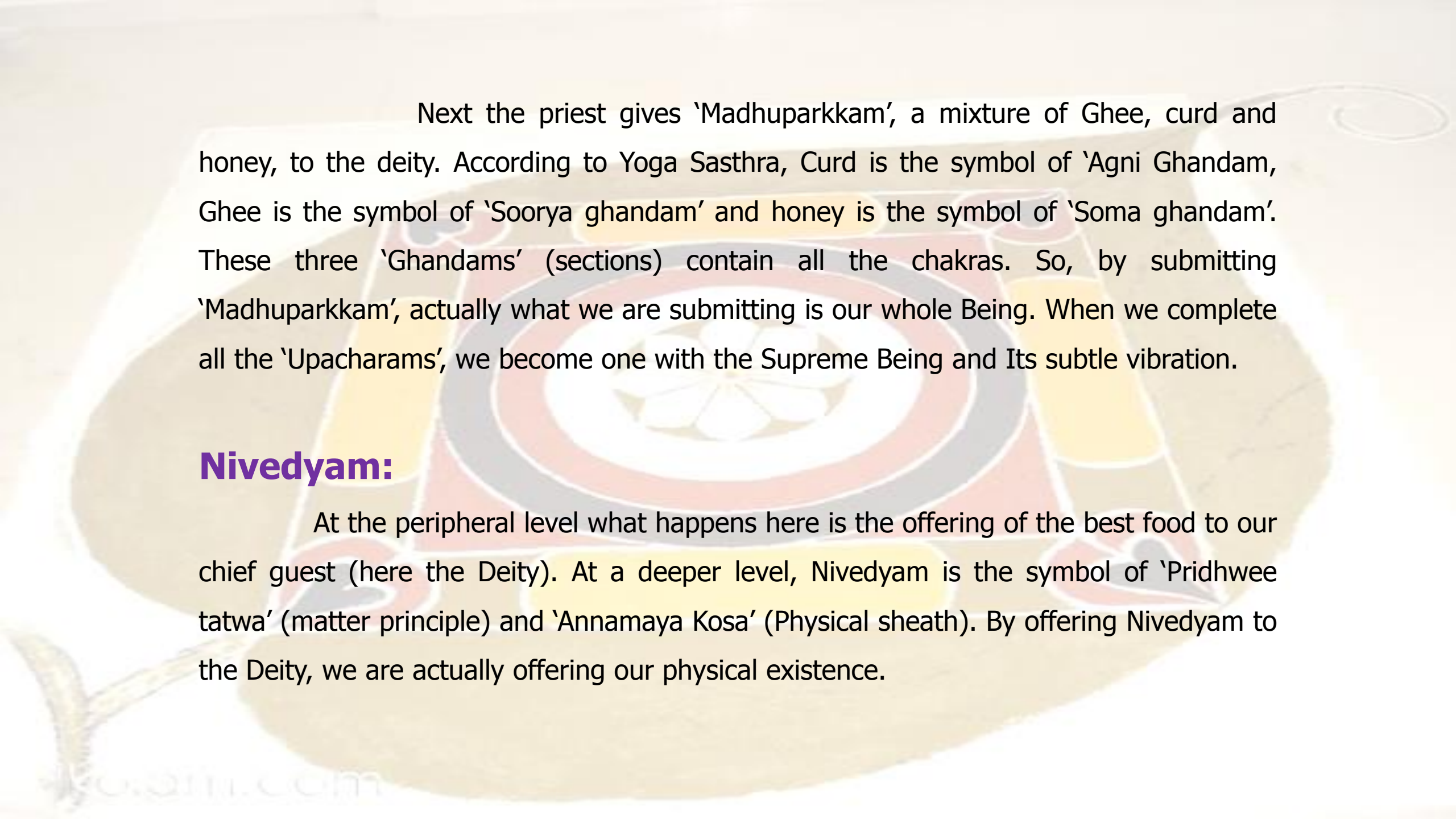
The meaning of the word 'Kalpana' is visualization. Modern psychology says that if we can visualize something very powerfully and continuously, it will be materialized soon. The same concept, a far more advanced and systematic one than the techniques of Modern Psychology, is used here to do the invocation.



The priest visualizes the form of the Deity in accordance with the 'Dhyana Sloka' of that Deity and then invokes the Omnipresent Almighty into that form. He starts his invocation from 'Mooladhara Chakra' and through all the chakras, that Deity Consciousness is brought to the 'Sahasrara Padmam'. From there, IT is transferred to the 'Padmam'. Here, flowers (which are symbols of 'Akasa tatwa' (Ether principle) are used to bring the Deity Consciousness from his body to the 'Padmam' .

Moorthi Pooja:

This is also known as 'Upachaara Pooja'. If we take this section of the Pooja at a superficial level, Deity is treated here as an honorable guest and 'upacharams' are submitted to the Deity. But the inner meaning of this Moorthi Pooja is a little subtle. It signifies the arousal of 'Kundalini' and the showering of the nectar from the Sahasrara Padmam. 'Padyam' suggests the upward flow; 'Arghyam' suggests the downward flow and 'Aachamaneeyam' is the resulting nectar.



Next the priest gives 'Madhuparkkam', a mixture of Ghee, curd and honey, to the deity. According to Yoga Sasthra, Curd is the symbol of 'Agni Ghandam, Ghee is the symbol of 'Soorya ghandam' and honey is the symbol of 'Soma ghandam'. These three 'Ghandams' (sections) contain all the chakras. So, by submitting 'Madhuparkkam', actually what we are submitting is our whole Being. When we complete all the 'Upacharams', we become one with the Supreme Being and Its subtle vibration.

Nivedyam:

At the peripheral level what happens here is the offering of the best food to our chief guest (here the Deity). At a deeper level, Nivedyam is the symbol of 'Pridhwee tatwa' (matter principle) and 'Annamaya Kosa' (Physical sheath). By offering Nivedyam to the Deity, we are actually offering our physical existence.

Here the Deity is visualized as having three forms. The gross form, the subtle form and a causal form. First the essence of the Nivedyam is submitted to the gross form of the Deity. Then the priest visualizes that Amruth (Nectar) is created out of that. Next, the nectar is submitted to the subtle form of the Deity. Again the priest visualizes that Moola Prakruthi is created out of that. Finally, that Moola Prakruthi is submitted to the Ultimate causal form of the Almighty.

In another level, it also symbolizes the upward movement of the aroused 'Kundalini' (Serpent power).



Prasanna Pooja:

Superficially, prasanna pooja is nothing but pleasing the Deity with prayers. Here, in this prayer section, priest uses many Veda mantras for 'pushpanjali' or 'Archana'. In other Agama pooja systems like Saiva agama and vaishnava agama, Veda Manthras are used abundantly while doing 'Shodasopachara pooja' But in Thantric pooja, while doing 'Upachara pooja', 'Beeja mantras' and 'Mudras' (Particular hand gestures or positions) are used more . Only in the Prasanna Pooja, Veda mantras are used in abundance.

The real significance of Prasanna Pooja is a little spiritual. After 'Nivedyam', 'Kundalini' reaches 'Sahasrara Padmam' and then showering of the nectar happens. Prasanna Pooja symbolizes the process of showering Nectar. That is why in Kerala temples, at the time of Prasanna Pooja, door of the Sanctum Sanctorum is kept closed. After Prasanna Pooja, priest opens the door and sprinkles Nectar (Theertham) on devotees.



Layamgam:

At peripheral level it is the act of saying goodbye to Deity, who has been present throughout the Pooja. But at a deeper level, layamgam symbolizes the dissolution of the special field of vibration which has been created in the beginning of the Pooja.

Udwasanam:

Priest then takes the Devi consciousness back into his body and let it dissolve into his being.
