

# LINGAPUJA

**ILLUSTRATED**



**BY  
VIMALA CHANNABASAPPA**

**BASAVA SAMITHI  
WASHINGTON, D.C. & VIRGINIA CHAPTER  
VEERASHAIVA SAMAJA OF NORTH AMERICA**

# LINGAPUJA

**ILLUSTRATED**



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Vimala Channabasappa  
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## FOREWORD

December 26, 2011

It is with a great pride and humility, I am writing a few words about this online version of the book “**Lingapuja Illustrated**” which was written and illustrated by the late Mrs. Vimala Channabasappa. Mrs. Channabasappa has brilliantly explained the concept of the Linga Puja with straightforward explanations and simple illustrations to make this valuable information accessible to Veerashaivas at all age levels. The practice of Lingapuja is a central practice of the Veerashaiva religion and a daily way of life for millions of adherents around the world.

As a Veerashaiva, it is important to understand the rituals and their symbolic meanings when he or she is doing Lingapuja. This simple, graphic version with hand-drawn illustrations by Mrs. Vimala Channabasappa is appropriate for both the very young and not so young Veershaivas. The illustrations provide an easy to follow guide for the young and the accompanying text provides a deeper understanding of their symbolic meaning for adults and parents. All the steps shown in the book and their meanings were reviewed by a number of our learned swamijis in India for their accuracy and authenticity before the book was originally published. This book is an excellent tool and resource for parents to teach their children the complete and proper way of doing Lingapuja.

“**Lingapuja Illustrated**” was first printed 20 years ago with the foresight and generosity of the VSNA Detroit chapter. Since then a whole new generation of Veerashaivas have come of age with children of their own. Along with more newly arrived Veerashaivas from India, they are trying hard to keep their culture and tradition and to pass on their

religious heritage. In a land where scholarly swamijis and mathas are scarce, they are hungry for available information and resources to help themselves and their children to understand and practice the fundamental aspects of Veerashaiva life. It is the right time, then, to reprint this valuable resource for our community.

Due to the internet revolution, the younger generation automatically looks to the internet for their information and communication needs. The social web is a powerful tool for communication, enlightenment and sharing. Millions of people have information at their finger tips. There cannot be a better way than providing information through the wonderful tool like the internet for the benefit of wider audience. Therefore, this online version of “**Lingapuja Illustrated**” is an extremely beneficial resource for Veerashaivas everywhere.

Finally, I would like to commend Mr. Deepak Kenkeremath here for his commitment and interest in putting his late mother’s book on the VSNA Washington, D.C. and Virginia Chapter’s web site. While he has been true to the original book, he has edited the text slightly for grammar and ease of reading.

I hope and trust that putting this online version of “**Lingapuja Illustrated**” will help millions of Veerashaivas to preserve and practice this great religion.

**Girija Angadi**

President, Basava Samithi

VSNA Washington, D.C. & Virginia Chapter

## PREFACE 1990

Lingapuja, or the daily ritualistic worship of the Ishtalinga, is a key aspect of Veerashaivism and is requirement of all devotees. As such, it is important that we teach our children to understand and perform Lingapuja at the earliest age possible. **LINGAPUJA ILLUSTRATED** is designed to assist the younger generation of Veerashaivas to perform Lingapuja daily.

The bare essentials of the Lingapuja procedures are presented here without compromising the form or the basic rituals which include the Astavaranas. The pictorial depiction of the different steps in performing the Puja is clear and simple. Even pre-school children should be able to follow the pictorial instructions. Written directions further explain the rituals in detail. All directions are in English, except for titles and essential terms. The one and only Mantra given is the most important Shadakshara Mantra required to be chanted by every Veerashaiva. The final praise to Mahadeva is also something very common to Veerashaivas. No other complicated Mantras are included.

However, even with the help of this book, parents may want to teach their children of different ages and different levels of comprehension in a gradual way, from the simplest to the more involved and difficult steps. I recommend the following:

Stage I – up to 6 years in age: Vibhuti, Bhasmadharna, Abhisheka, Vastra, Asana, Vibhuti fo Linga, Namaskara.

Stage II – Ages 6 to 12: Jalashuddhi to Nirmalya.  
Also the Final Praise.

Stage III – 12 years of age and older: Jalashuddhi to the Final Praise.

Older children may learn different Mantras and Vachanas to accompany the various steps of the Puja from other books or their parents. Later, each individual may follow the path to Shiva according to his/her level of interest and spiritual advancement.

I hope this book fulfills the needs of all Veerashaiva children, especially those outside India. I wish to dedicate this book to the children, the future of the Veerashaiva community.

I wish to thank Dr. Hulbanni, president of the Veerashaiva Samaja of North America, for taking the lead to publish this book. My thanks to Dr. Basavaraj, Dr. Shailaja Sundaresh, Mrs. Nancy Depew, Nayanatara Swamy and many others for their constructive suggestions. My sincere thanks to Dr. Gangadhar Kori for his willing support and help in so many ways. May Lord Shiva bless them all with peace and prosperity.

**OM SATYAM SHIVAM SUNDARAM**  
**Vimala Channabasappa**

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## EXPLANATIONS

Many parents in the Veerashaiva Samaja of North America have expressed the critical need to explain the significance of **Lingapuja** and the different rituals associated with it to their children. In our own childhood, we were told *how* to do the puja and not *why* we do it. Therefore, we are sometimes at a loss to give answers to our inquisitive children as to the meaning of each of the rituals. To bridge this gap, I shall try to explain here *“What is Lingapuja? Why, when and where we do it?”* The text describes *“How to do Lingapuja.”*

I have kept these explanations separate from the main text so as not to complicate the following of the puja instructions. Depending on their individual situation, parents may want to disseminate as much information to the children as they feel desirable at the proper time.

**LINGA** is the visible symbol of the Supreme Lord (Para Brahman). To a Veerashaiva, the Linga is at once the real body of Parashaiva and Parashakti combined, a mass of the highest luster, eternal bliss, highest knowledge, a source of the universe, the unbroken aggregate of the Vedas, and the visible symbol of the invisible Chaitanya existing in all beings. Veerashaivas believe that a person will never be polluted as long as the Linga is worn on the body because Linga is the fire which burns all impurities.

**LINGAPUJA** is the worship of God the infinite in the finite form of Ishtalinga. It is an expression of our reverence and love towards God. It is a process by which we invite the presence of God in our mind and in our daily life. It is getting in touch with the God within each of us so as to help us become better persons. As part of Shivayoga, it is aimed at Aikya or the final union of Jeevatma (individual soul) with Paramatma (Universal soul).

In practice, puja is the adoration of Linga with different kinds of offerings, treating Ishtalinga as you would treat your most beloved and revered friend and quest. You do all the nice, pleasant things for the Linga, like offering fragrant sandalwood paste, beautiful flowers, incense, auspicious light, Mantras and songs in His praise. These offerings are called Upacharas. The prescribed number of Upacharas are in groups of eight, sixteen, thirty-two or forty-eight (to be performed as time and place permit). Commonly-used number of Upacharas are eight (Ashtavidha Lingarchana) or sixteen (Shodashopachara). However, one offering more or less is not crucial. Puja can be as simple or as elaborate as you would want it to be. What is important is that you do Lingapuja and offer your prayers to God at least once a day. When all the puja items are not available, use as many as you can find. At least bathe the Linga with water, apply Vibhuti, concentrate your thoughts on God in the form of Linga, say Om Namah Shivaya, and do Namaskara. If nothing else,

you can think of God with devotion, say Om Namah Shivaya and bow to Shiva at any place, any time.

Lingapuja is to be performed daily, preferably in the morning after bathing, at home in the puja-room; when not at home, do it in a clean, quiet place. By doing Lingapuja in the morning you will be starting the day in a calm and pleasant state of mind. The Ashtavaranas, namely Guru (spiritual master), Linga (emblem of God), Jangama (traveling spiritual guide), Vibhuti (sacred ash), Rudrakshi (a berry sacred to Shiva), Mantra (sacred syllables), Padodaka (consecrated water) and Prasada (blessing in the form of flowers or food) are considered as eight aides to the spiritual development of a Veerashaiva. We do not stop doing puja if one or more of the Ashtavaranas are missing. For instance, if Rudrakshi is not available, we should do puja without it instead of not doing puja at all. Also, remember that Linga represents both Guru and Jangama for everyday puja. Most important is our devotion and prayers said in sincerity. We must concentrate completely on God and surrender ourselves to His care.

**UPACHARAS:** Explanations to each one on the puja rituals are not always available and are subject to different interpretations. Some steps need no explanation. I would like to present the significance of some of the Upacharas.

**JALASHUDDI** means purifying or consecrating water. The Mantras indicate that water from the seven great rivers of India (namely Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri

are offered for the puja. When you write ॐ in the water with a Vibhuti-coated finger, the water is believed to become both Mantrodaka (sacred water) and Bhasmodaka. If you add a flower to the water, it also becomes Pushpodaka. After it is poured over the Linga, it water is also considered Lingodaka or Linga-padodaka.

**VIBHUTI** means “welfare,” “dignity,” “prosperity,” and “superhuman power.” Vibhuti denotes all these aspects of God. When the devotees wear Vibhuti, or Bhasma (sacred ash) on their forehead or body it denotes control of greed and avarice, purity of thought, and submission to God.

**RUDRAKSHI** literally means the “eye of Rudra (Shiva).” Rudrakshi used in puja are the dried berries from the tree *Elaeocarpus ganitrus* (scientific name). As a Yogi, Shiva wears a Rudrakshimala (garland of Rudrakshi). Rudrakshi is one of the Ashtavaranas prescribed for Veerashaivas/Lingayatas. The wearing Rudrakshi reminds us to look for Shiva in our mind and heart.

**SHATKONA** is a six-sided star, known as Shambhavi Mudra. Marking our palm with Shatkona and Om is to establish the field of devine energy in our palm. The six Shaktis (energies) represented by the Shatkona are Chitshakti, Parashakti, Adishakti, Ichchhashakti, Jnanashakti, and Kiryashakti. Panchakona (five-sided star) represents the fivefold principles of Shiva.

**ASANA** literally means “seat.” By offering our palm as a seat to the Linga you are welcoming God into your life.

**AKSHATA** is the unbroken rice grain used in puja. It indicates welfare, good luck and perfection.

**PATRI & PUSHPA** are leaves and flowers. Bilva leaves are sacred to Shiva and are considered very important for puja. However, in the absence of Bilva leaves, Bilva paste obtained by gringing the shell of a Bilva fruit on a grind-stone may be applied (like Gandha) to Linga. Flowers are offered as a token of respect and as a recognition of God's gift of beauty.

**DHOOPA** is incense, as are Udinakaddi or Udabatti. The burning of Dhooपा symbolizes the creation of good feelings by the burning of undesirable thoughts, such as anger.

**GHANTA** is a bell. Sounding the bell is to invite the Divine spirits and to scatter away the evil spirits.

**ARATI** is the waving of lamps. It signifies a prayer for the light of knowledge and good luck.

**JAPA** means to concentrate on God by chanting His name.

**KARPURA DEEPA** is lighted camphor. It denotes selfless service. Just as camphor burns without leaving any residue, karpura deepa symbolizes service without expecting any reward or praise.

**DRISHTI YOGA** is uniting with Linga through vision. Yoga means union. Shiva Yoga is the striving of an individual to unite with Shiva. It is the contemplation of the Supreme Spirit through deep meditation. Drishti is "seeing" or "vision."

**OM NAMAH SHIVAYA** means Salutation to Shiva. Chanting this Mantra denotes total devotion to God. It is said to remove danger and fear. It is considered to be a pathway to spiritual realization.

**NAIVEDYA** is the offering of food to God. It reminds us that whatever we possess is by the grace of God and we offer it to Linga with a sense of gratitude.

**PRASADA** is the receiving of God's blessings.

**NAMASKARA** means salutation. It also implies reverence and devotion to God.

**NIRMALYA** is the removal of the remains of the puja ritual, such as the used flowers, akshata, etc.

**APRA SNANA** means second bathing for Lingodaka.

**CHIDBHASMA** is Vibhuti symbolizing pure consciousness.

**TEERTHA SWEEKARA** is the receiving of holy water. It symbolizes the assimilation of Shakti, or divine power, in Linga into our mind and body. It also signifies humility.

**HUUGADA PAVUDA** is the cloth covering for Linga.

**GUNDUGADIGI/KARADIGE** is the container for Linga.

**VEERASHAIVA/LINGAYATA** is a person who wears Linga on his body and worships Shiva in the form of Linga devoutly.



**D O**

**L I N G A P U J A**

**D A I L Y**

**“I worship the Linga**

**So that sins of the body, speech, and thought  
Knowingly or unknowingly committed by me,  
Will be removed;**

**So that my physical, causal, and subtle bodies  
will be purified;**

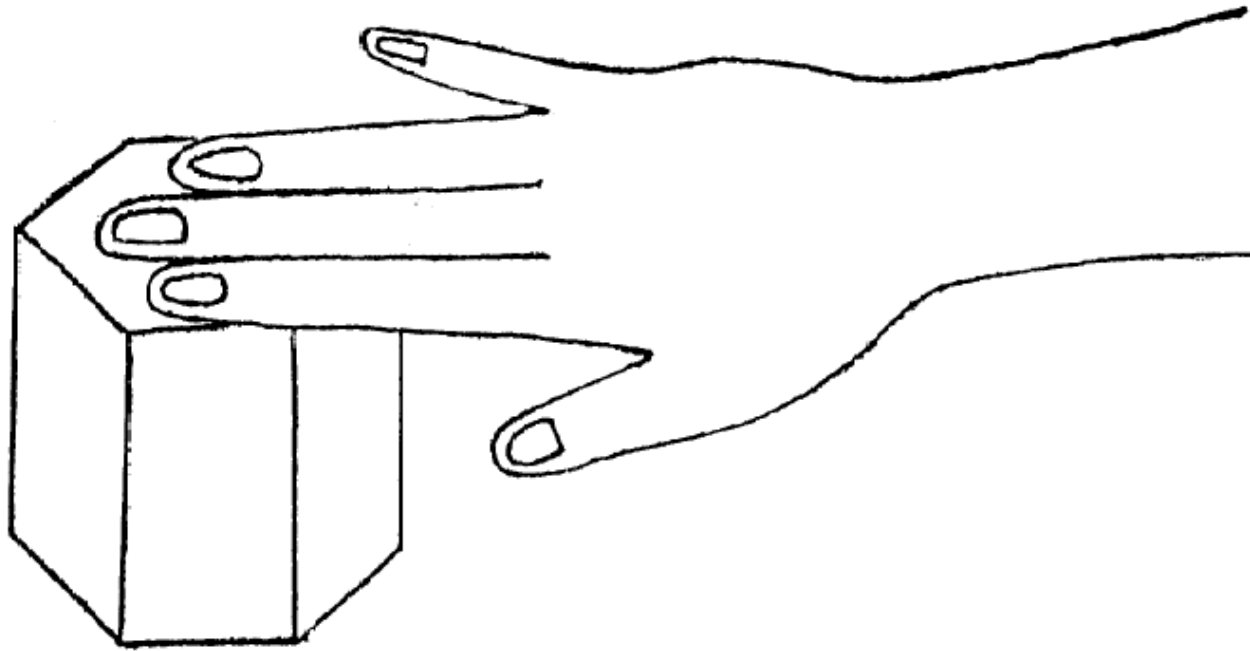
**So that the blessings of the Guru, Jangama and the Linga  
Will be upon me;**

**So that I will find  
Truth, Goodness, Beauty and Bliss everlasting.”**



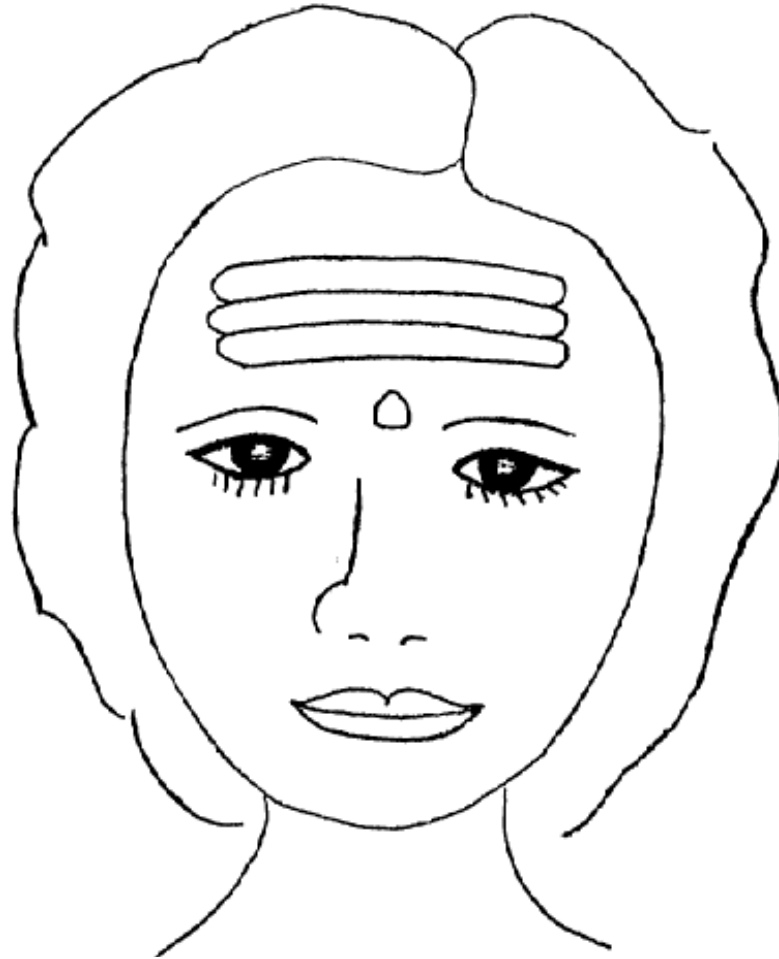
## JALASHUDDHI

Rub tip of middle finger on top of Vibhuti. Write ॐ with the Vibhuti-coated middle finger tip in the fresh water to be used in the Puja. This sanctifies the water. Sprinkle a few drops on your head and on the Puja utensils.



## **VIBHUTI or BHASMA**

Coat the inside of the middle three fingers of your right hand with Vibhuti by rubbing them on top of the Vibhuti block. Wearing Vibhuti denotes purity of mind and submission to God.



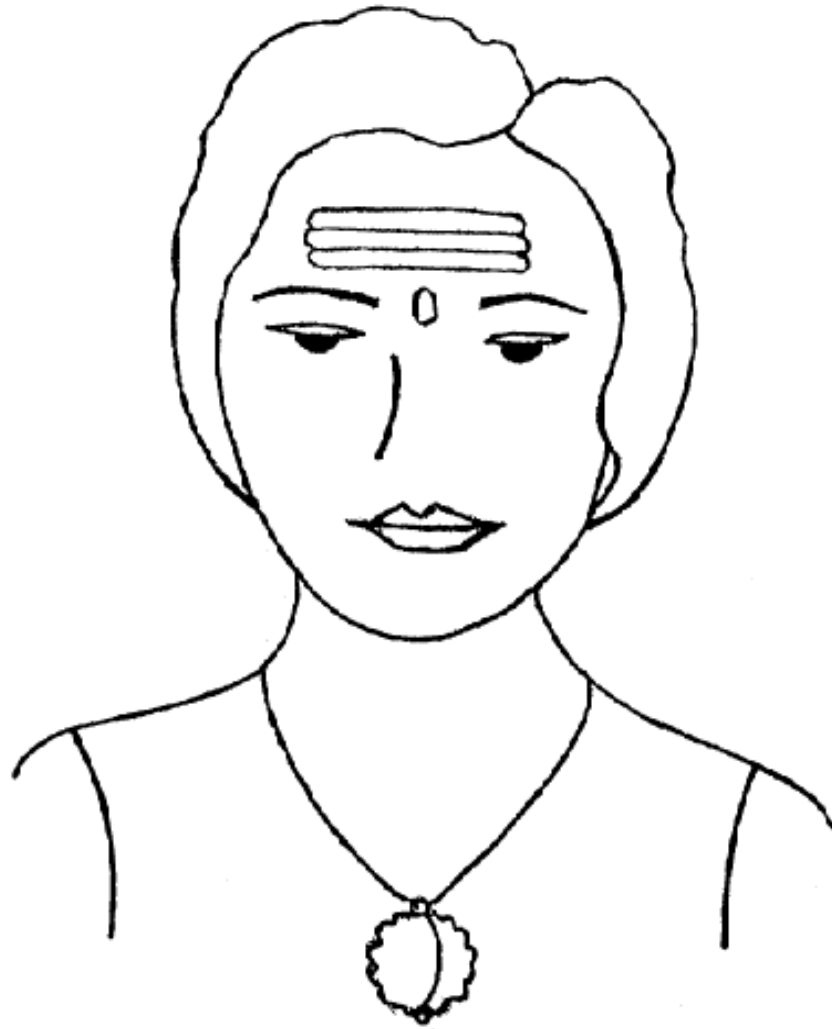
## **BHASMADHARNA**

With Vibhuti-coated middle fingers of your right hand, apply Vibhuti on your forehead from left to right. Using the tip of your middle finger, apply a dot of Vibhuti between your eyebrows --- the center of knowledge.



## **SARVANGA VIBHUTI**

Also apply Vibhuti to both sides of the wrists, arms, and upon the heart.



## **RUDRAKSHI**

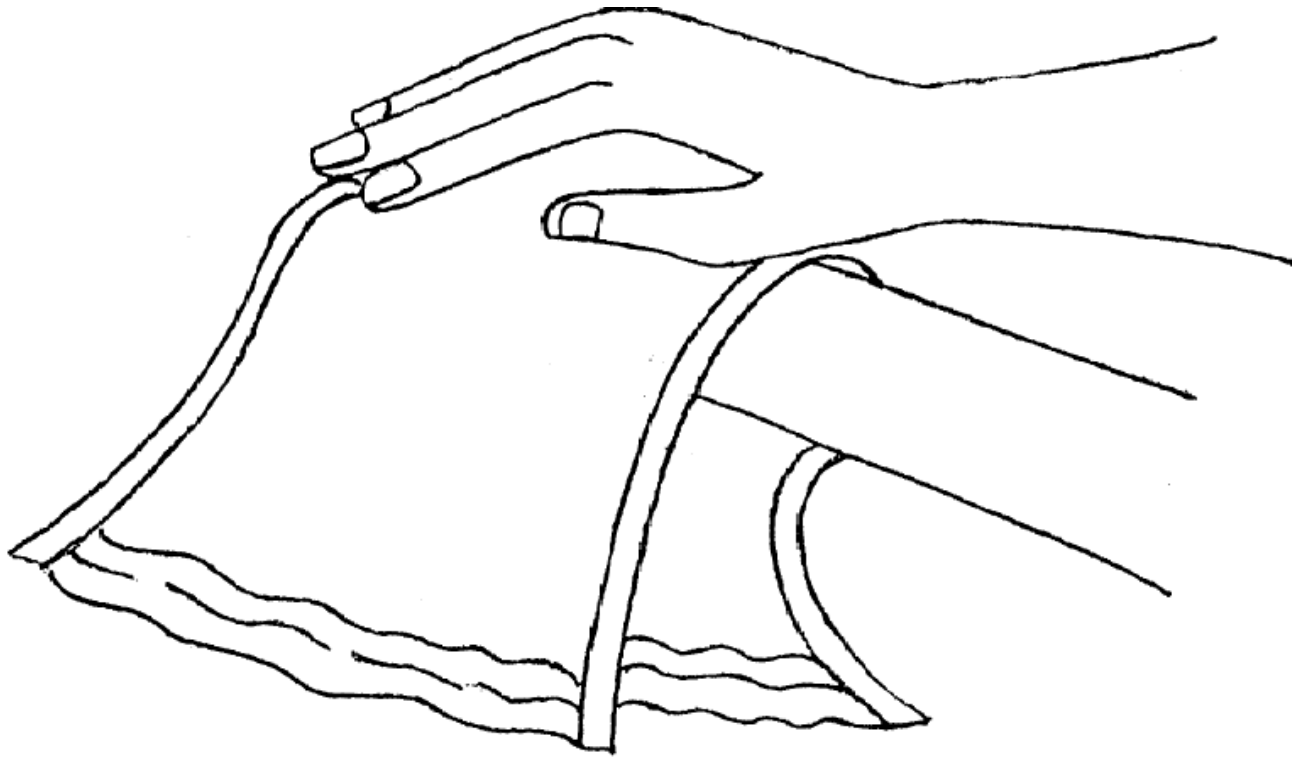
Wear either 108, 32, or at least 1 Rudrakshi on a string around your neck.



## **ABHISHEKA**

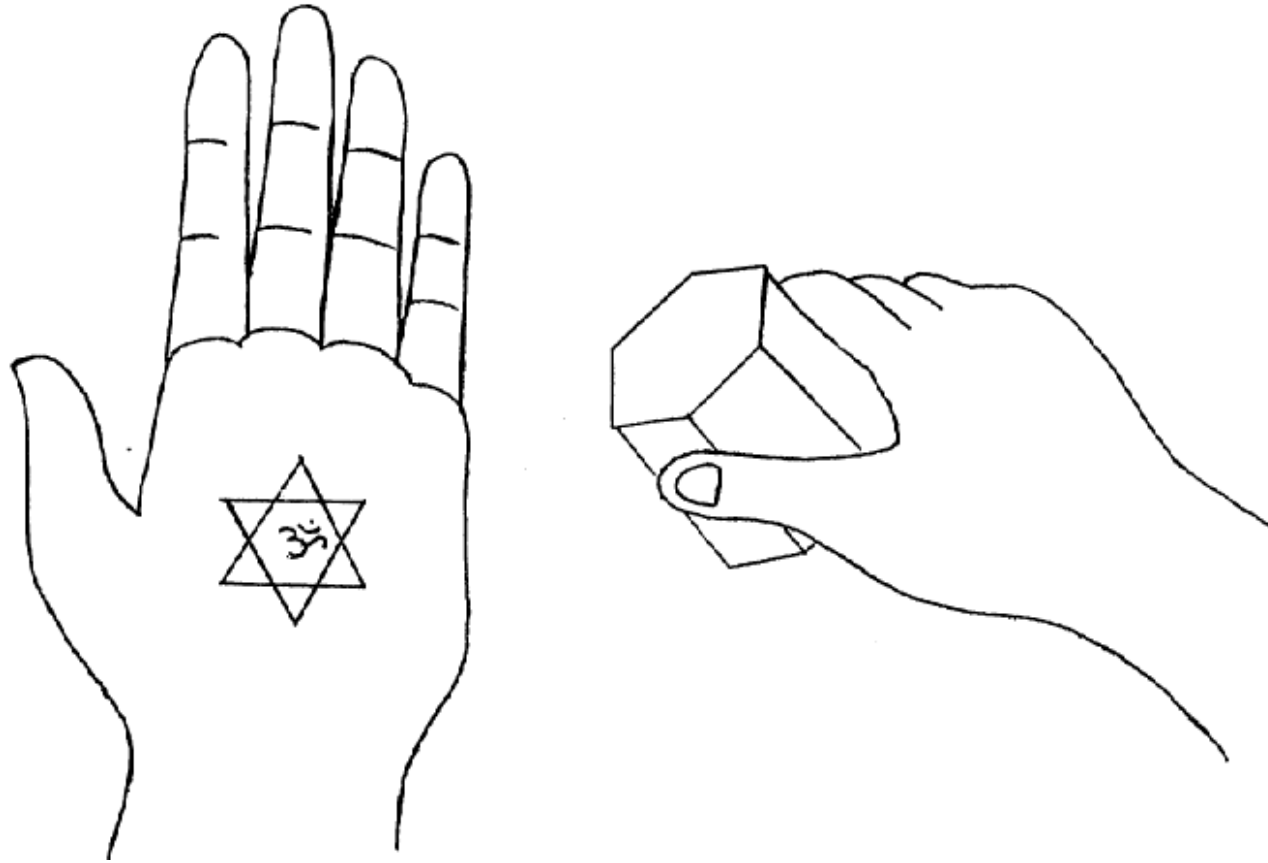
Pour sanctified water in a stream over the Linga held in the center of your left palm as shown. You may hold down the Linga with the middle finger so that the Linga won't fall.





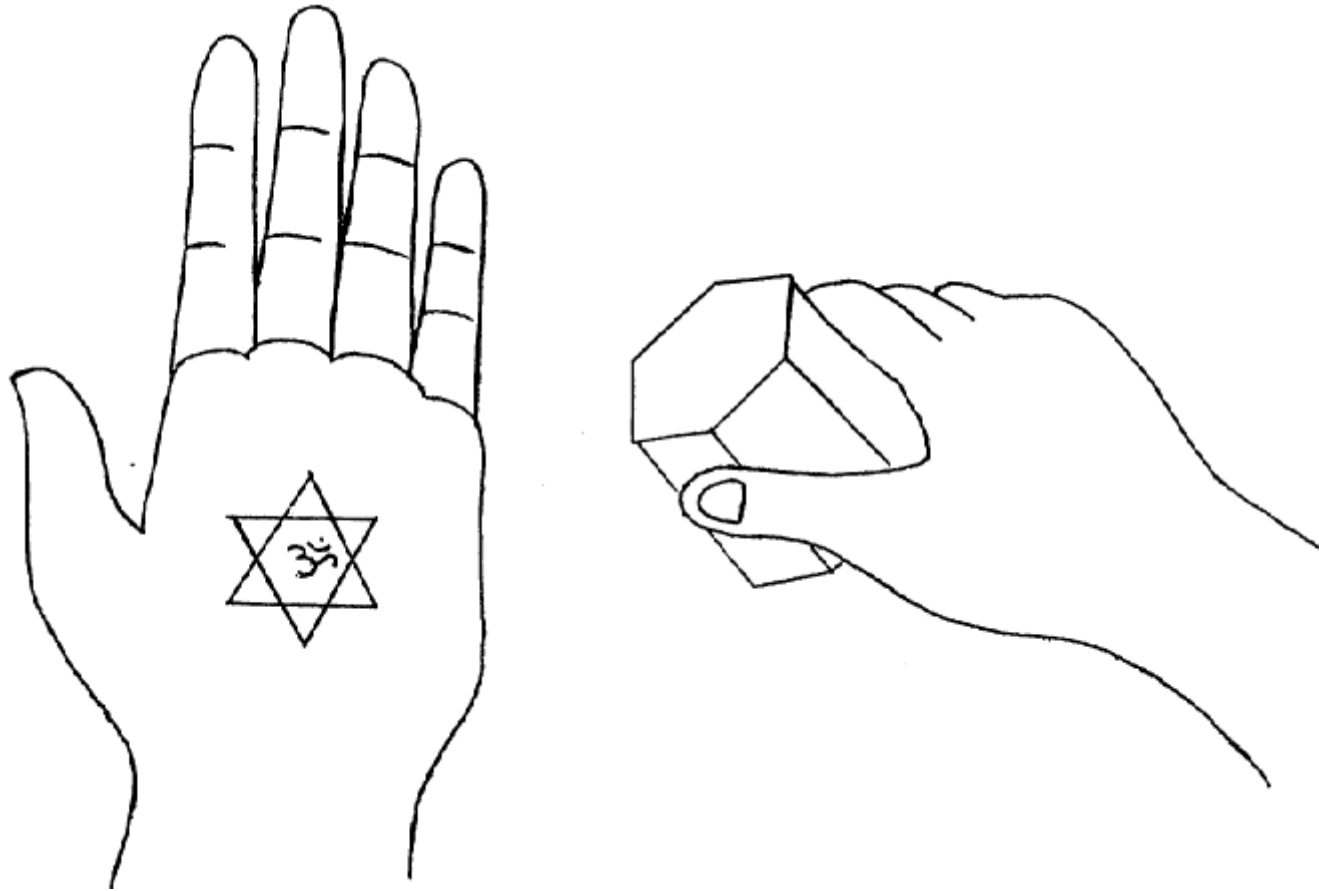
## **VASTRA**

Wipe Linga and your hands with the Vastra (towel reserved for Puja only).



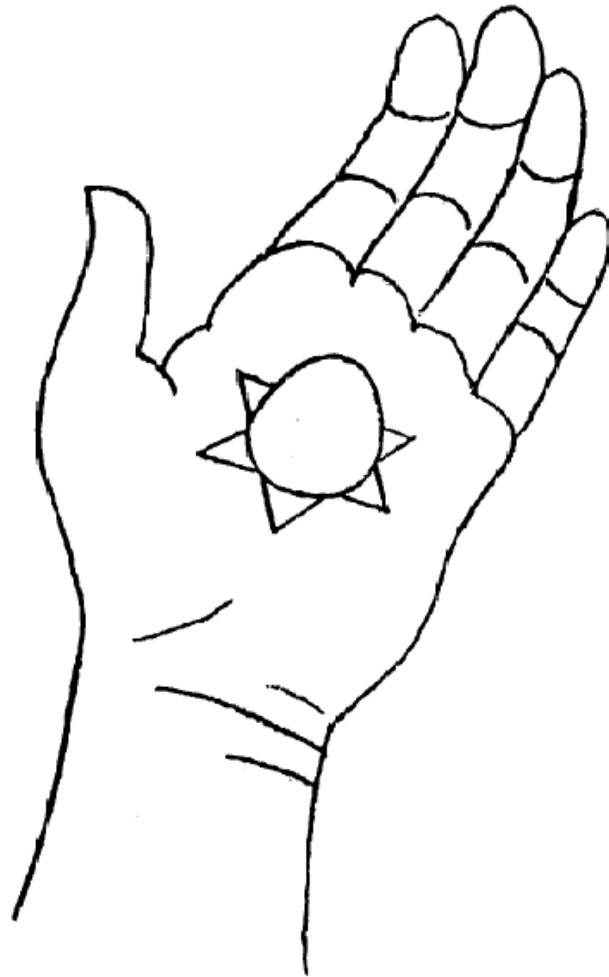
## SHATKONA & OM

With the edge of the Vibhuti draw a six-sided star (a triangle pointing upwards, overlaid with a triangle pointing downwards) on you left palm. Write ॐ in the center.



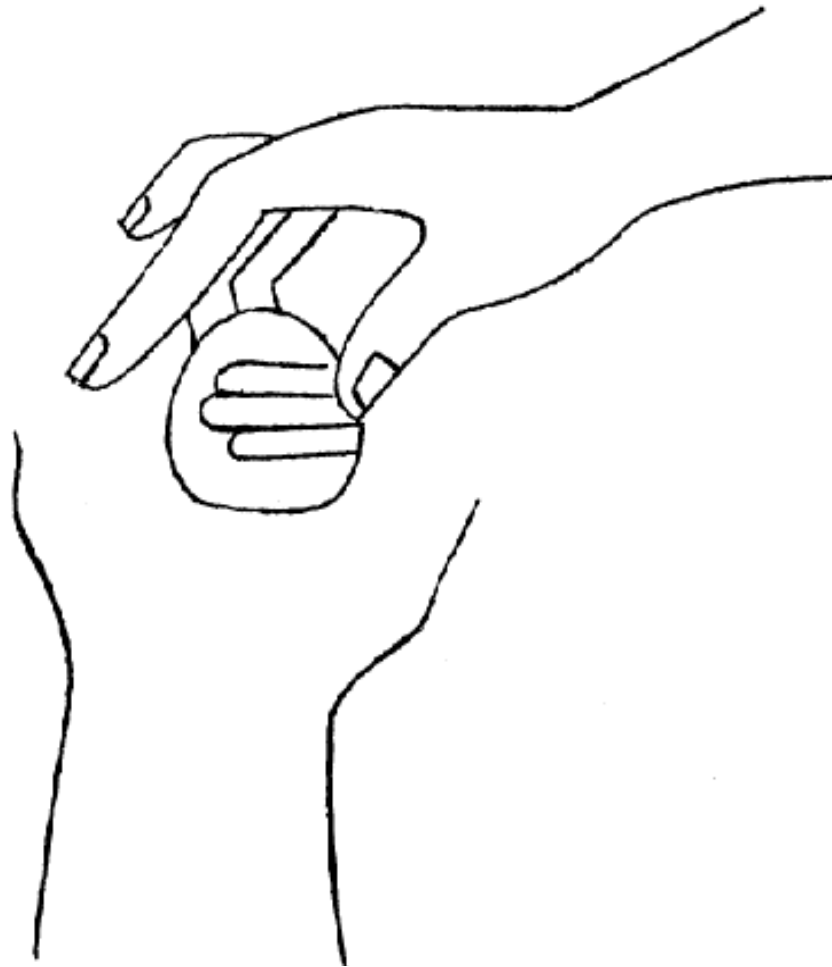
## PANCHAKONA & OM

Alternately, draw a five-sided star and ॐ on your left palm with Vibhuti.



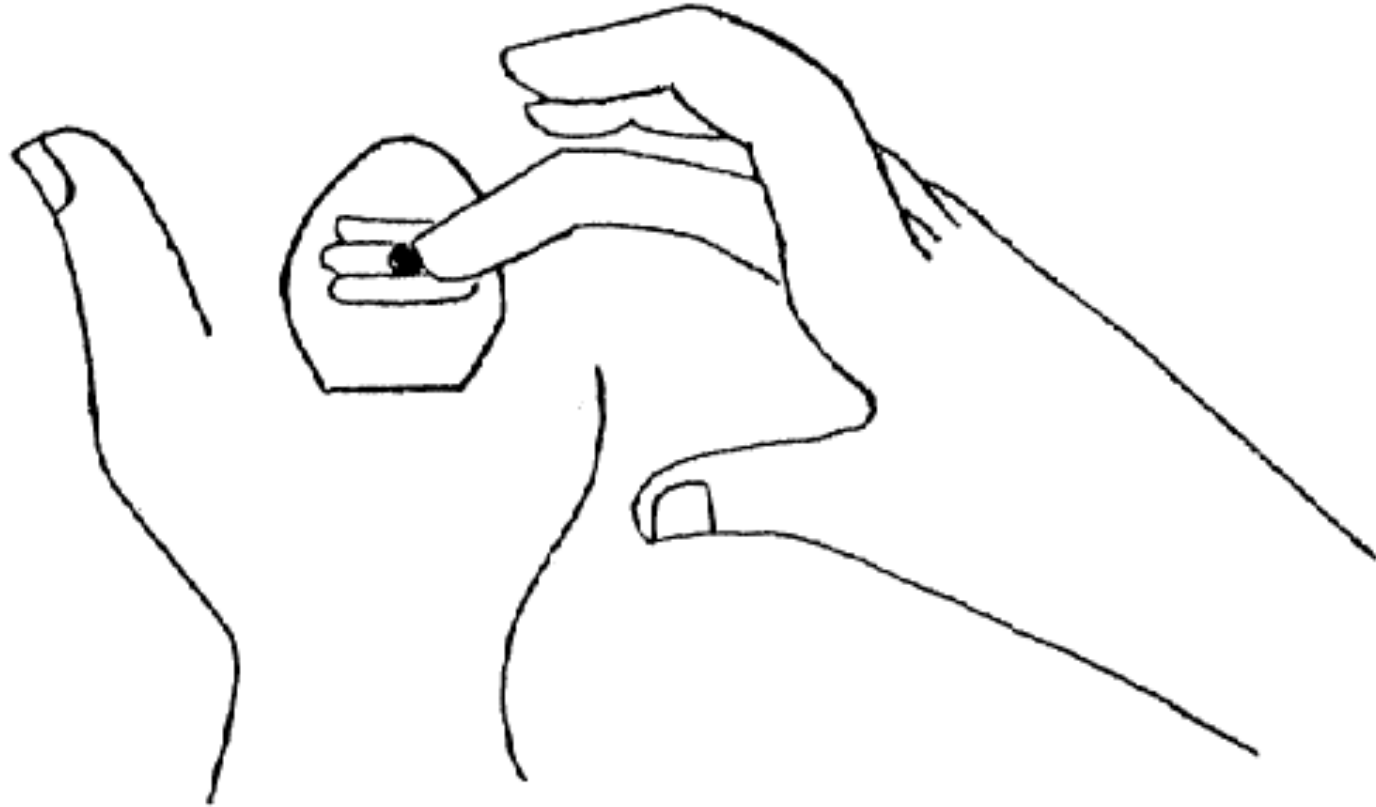
## ASANA

Place Linga upon the star on your left palm. Making sure that the Jalahari is pointing to your right side. (Jalahari is indicated either by an  $\text{ॐ}$  , or a small nick in the side of the Linga.)



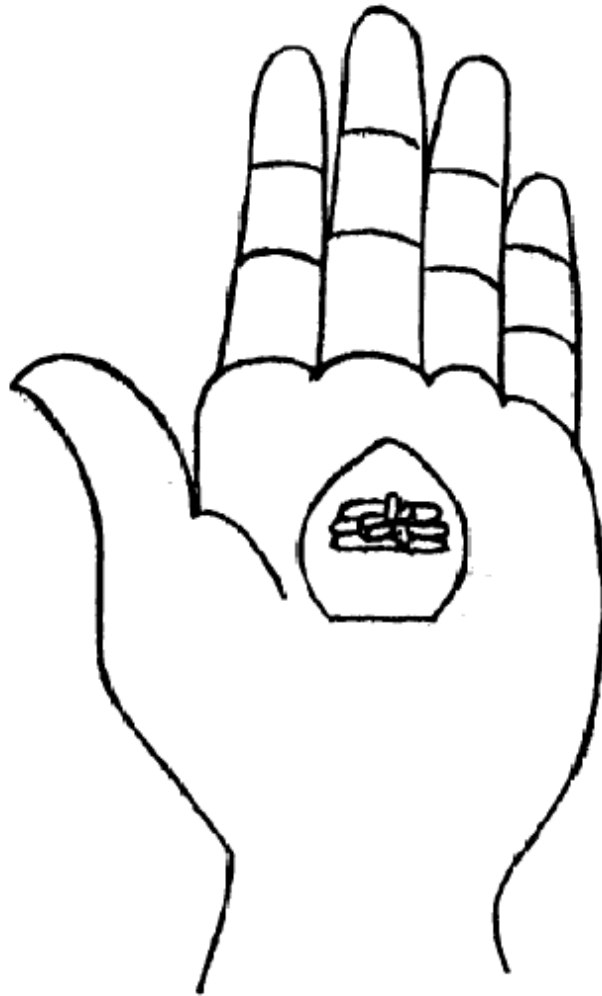
## **VIBHUTI FOR LINGA**

Using thumb, middle finger, and ring finger apply three lines of Vibhuti around Linga in a circular motion. (Alternately, Vibhuti may be applied to the Linga with the three middle fingers in the same way you apply Vibhuti on your forehead.)



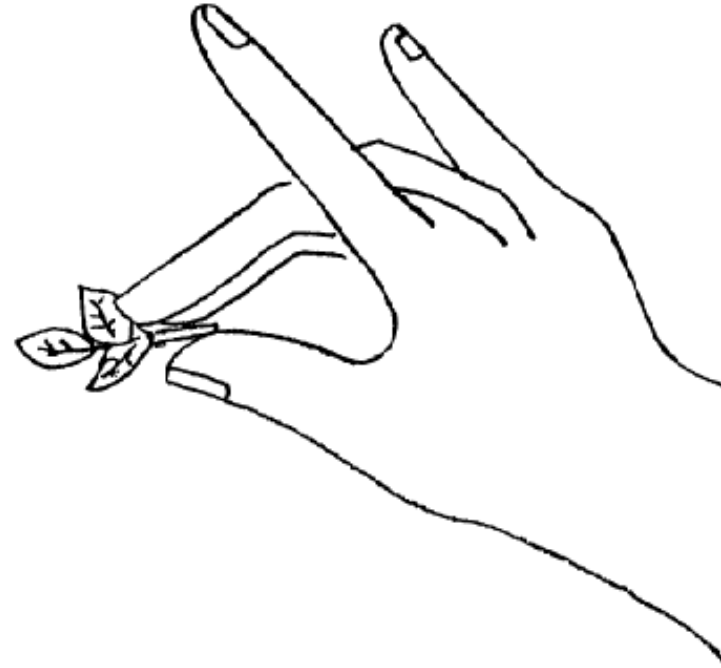
## **GANDHA**

Dip your right middle finger in Gandha (sandalwood paste). Apply a dot of Gandha in the center, to the face of Linga.



## AKSHATA

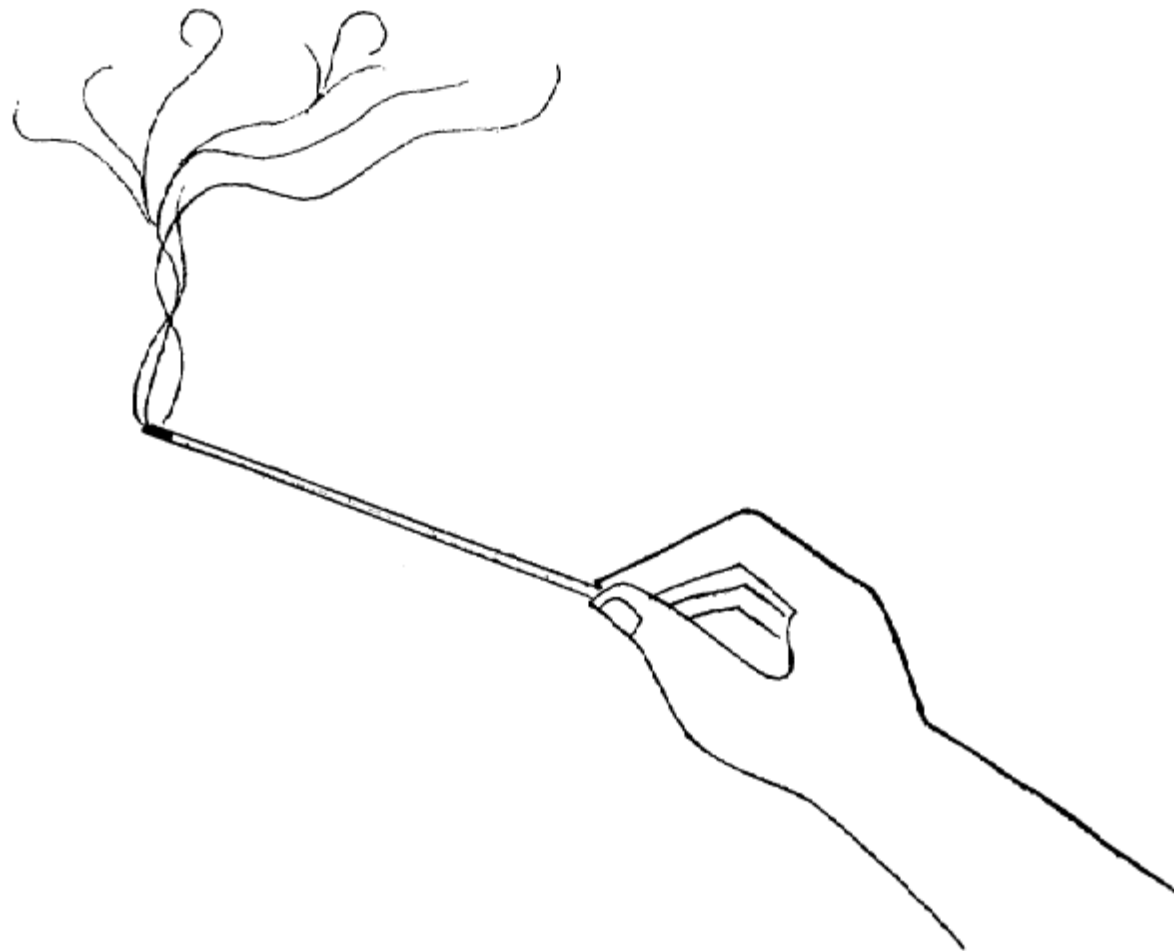
Apply two to five grains of Akshata (raw, unbroken rice) over Gandha dot.



## **PATRI & PUSHPA**

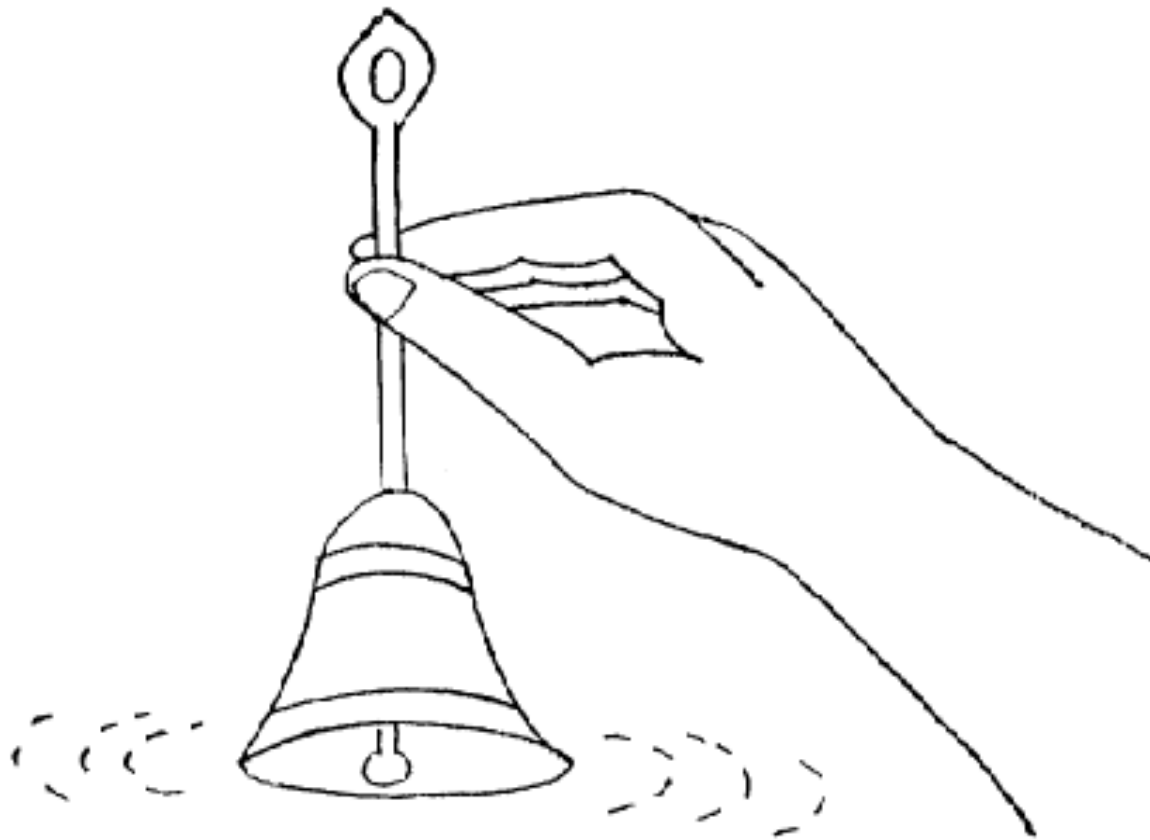
Using thumb, middle, and ring fingers put flowers and Bilva leaves on top of Linga.





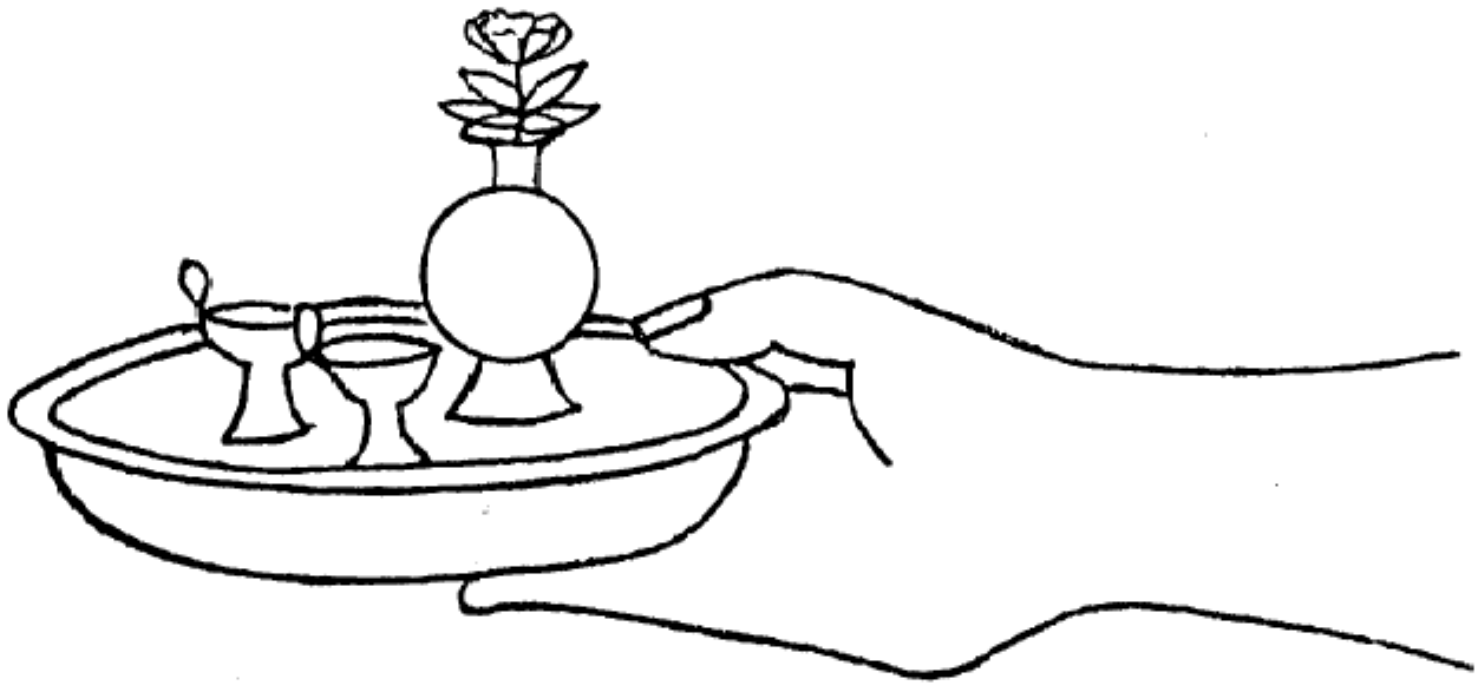
## **DHOOPA**

Wave lighted incense stick before the Linga.



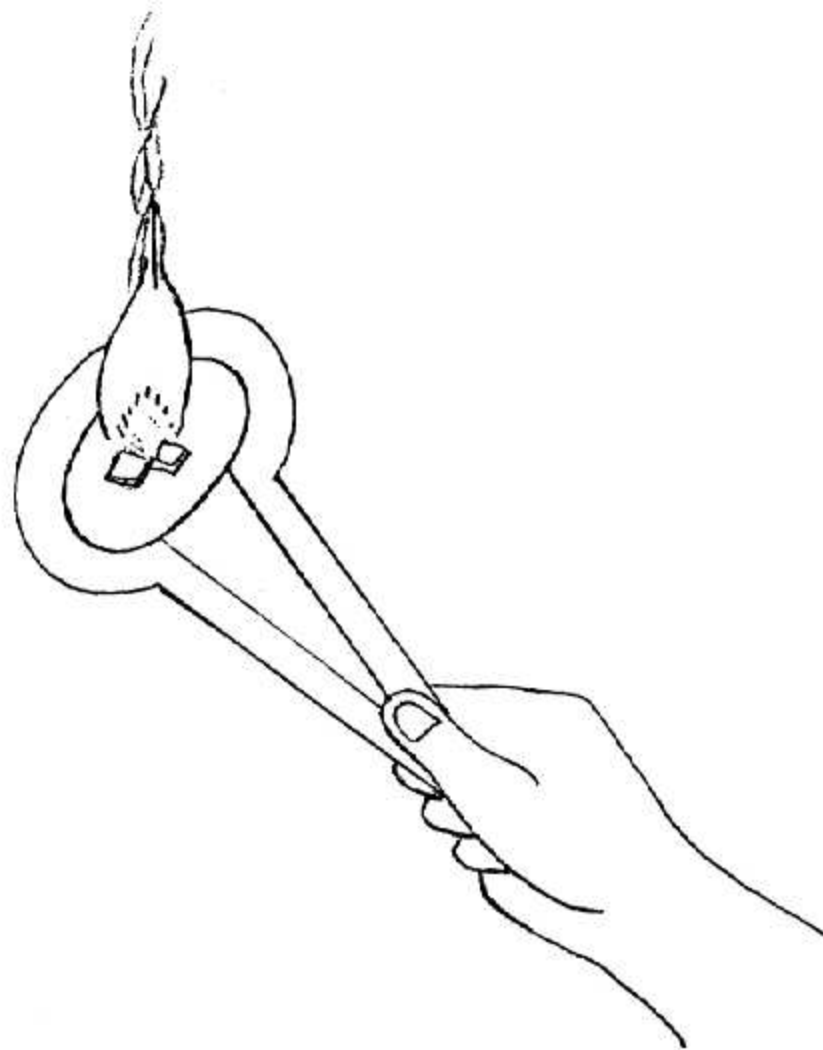
## **GHANTA**

Sound the bell using a rattling motion.



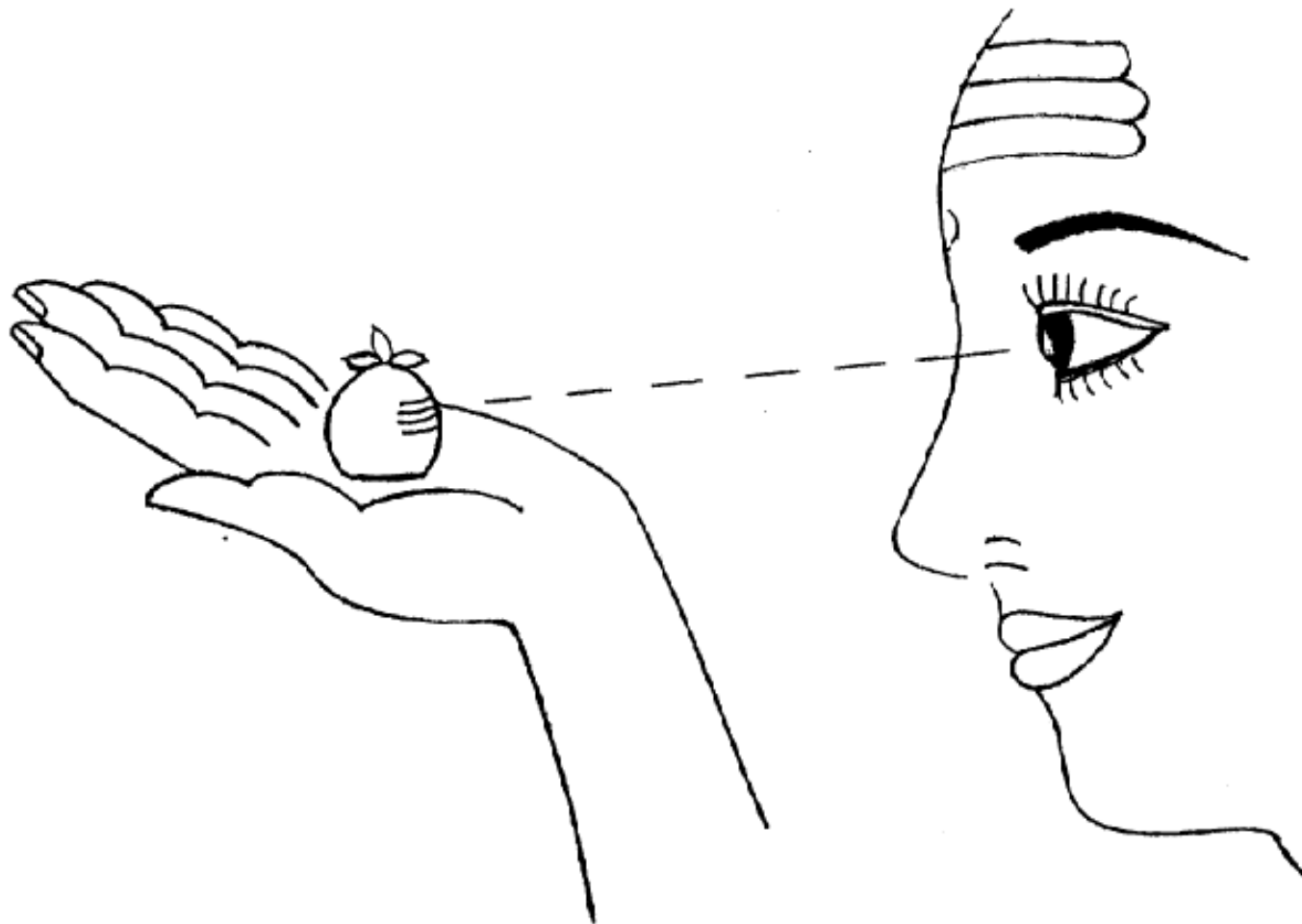
## ARATI

Gently wave Arati lamps in a clockwise up-and-down motion before the Linga.



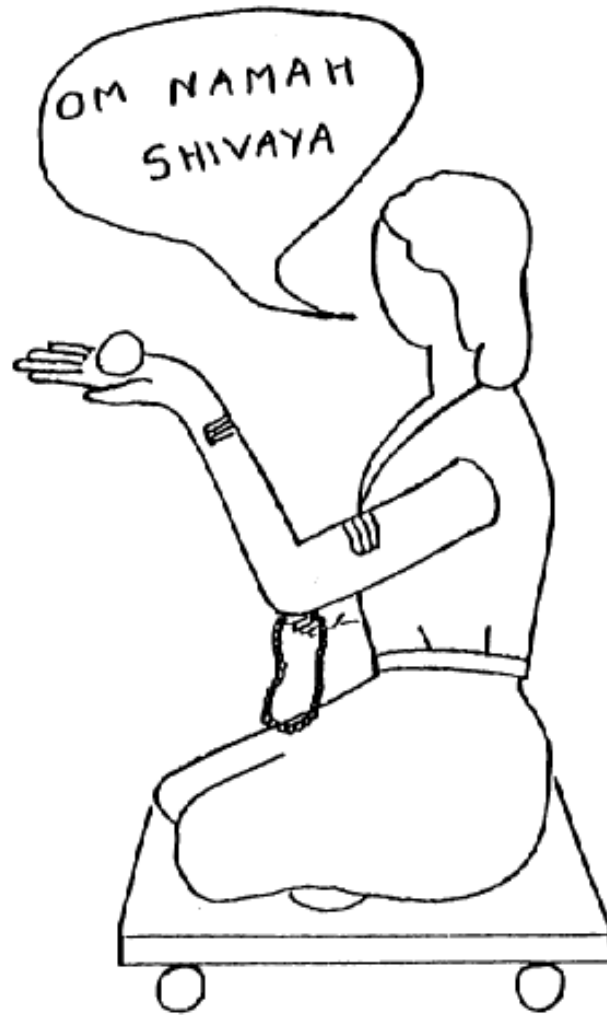
## **KARPURA DEEPA**

Light a Karpura (camphor) piece in a metal camphor-holder and wave before the Linga.



## **DRISHTI YOGA**

Bring the Linga on your palm to your eye level. Focus your eyes and thoughts upon the Linga.



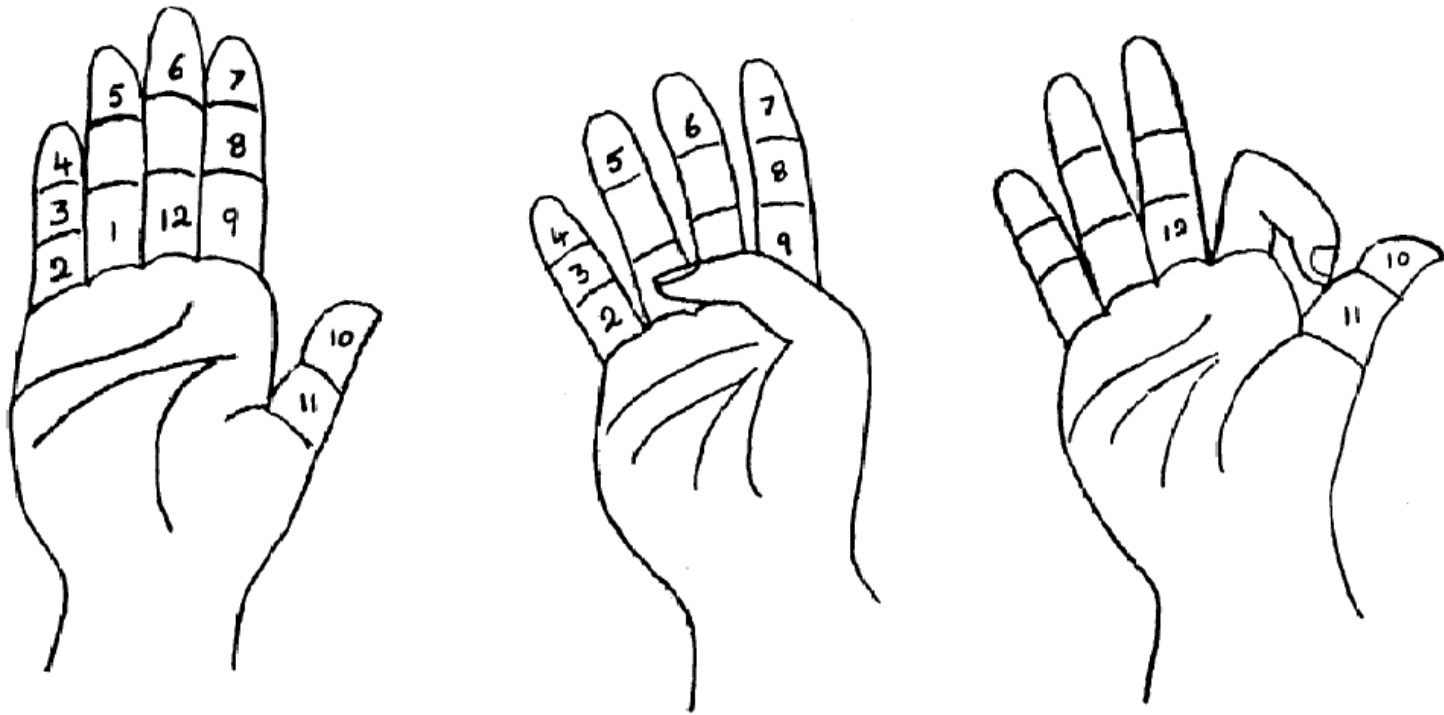
## MANTRA

While focusing on the Linga, softly say "**OM NAMAH SHIVAYA**" Mantra twelve times and meditate. (In the beginning say the Mantra only once. Over a period of time you may want to increase the number of times that you will repeat the Mantra.)

ॐ नमः शिवाय

ॐ नमः शिवाय

Om Namah Shivaya



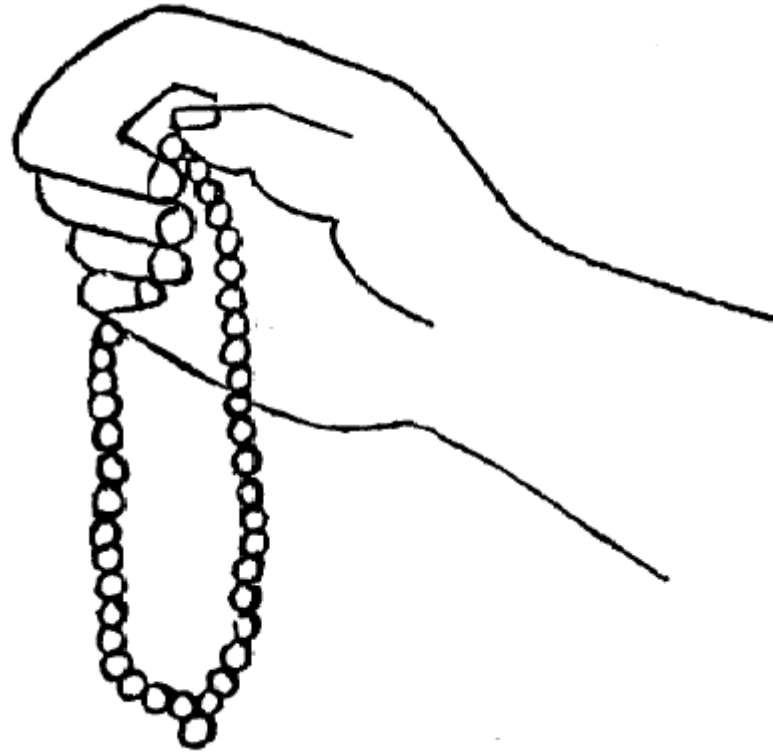
## JAPA VIDHI

The above pattern is prescribed to assist in counting the Mantra twelve times:

Starting from the No. 1 position in the diagram, count clockwise with the tip of your thumb until you reach the No. 9. Continue counting No. 10 and No. 11 with the pointer finger. Resume counting with the thumb. End on the bottom of the middle finger. With each count, say "**OM NAMAH SHIVAYA**" once.

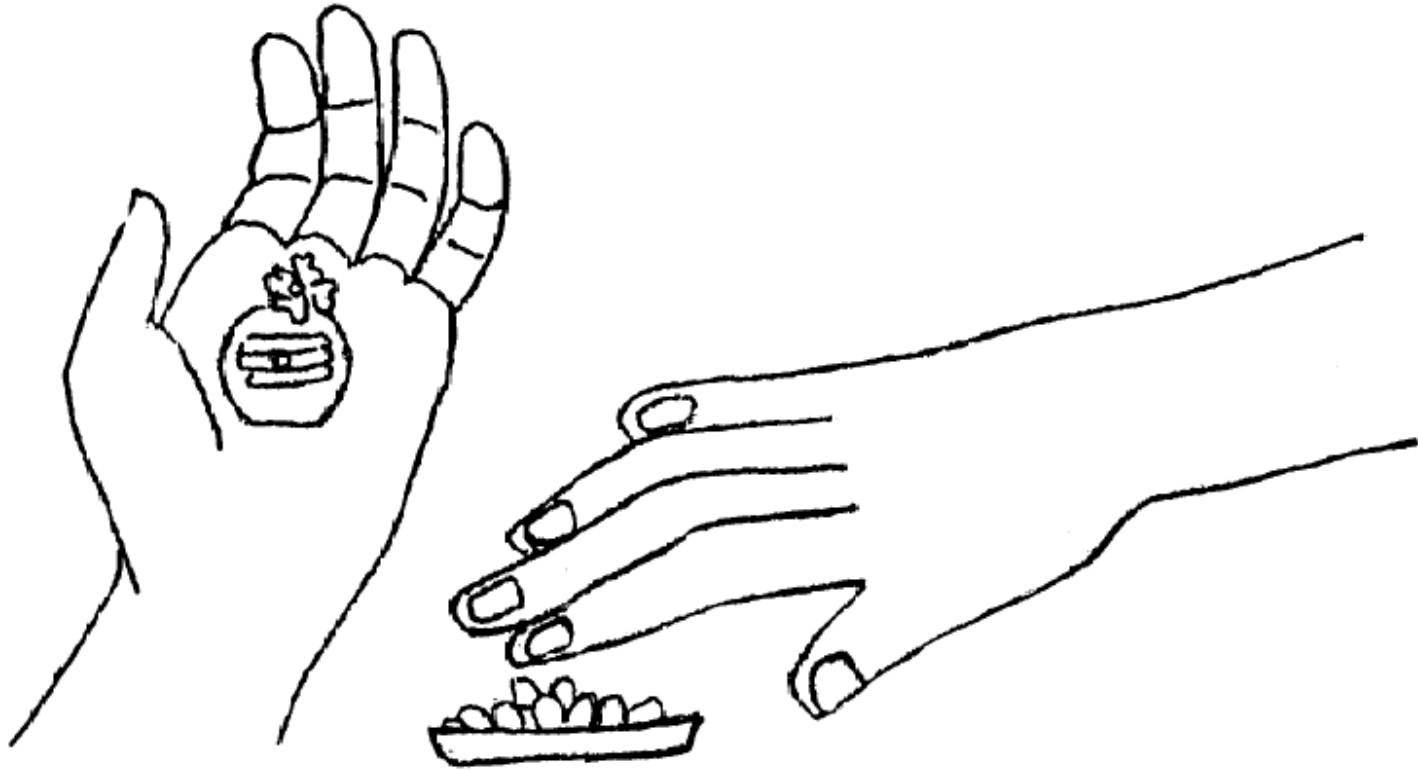
To count 26 times: Go around one more in the same pattern, continue for two more counts, ending on the bottom part of the little finger.





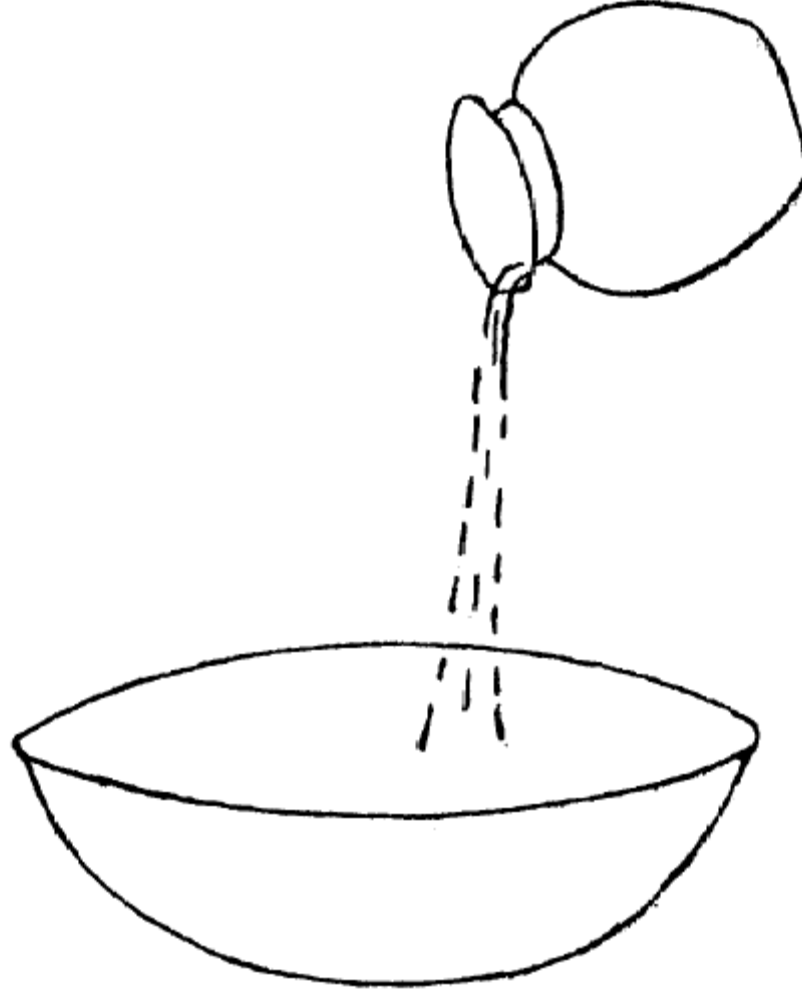
## **JAPAMALA**

“OM NAMAH SHIVAYA” Mantra may be uttered 51 times, 108 times, or 1000 times with the help of the Japamala (counting beads), preferably made of Rudrakshi. Start with the bead next to Shikhamani or top bead. (Shikhamani is the bead tied so that it will protrude.) Every time you repeat the Mantra, move one bead towards you until you reach the Shikhamani. Stop on the Shikhamani.



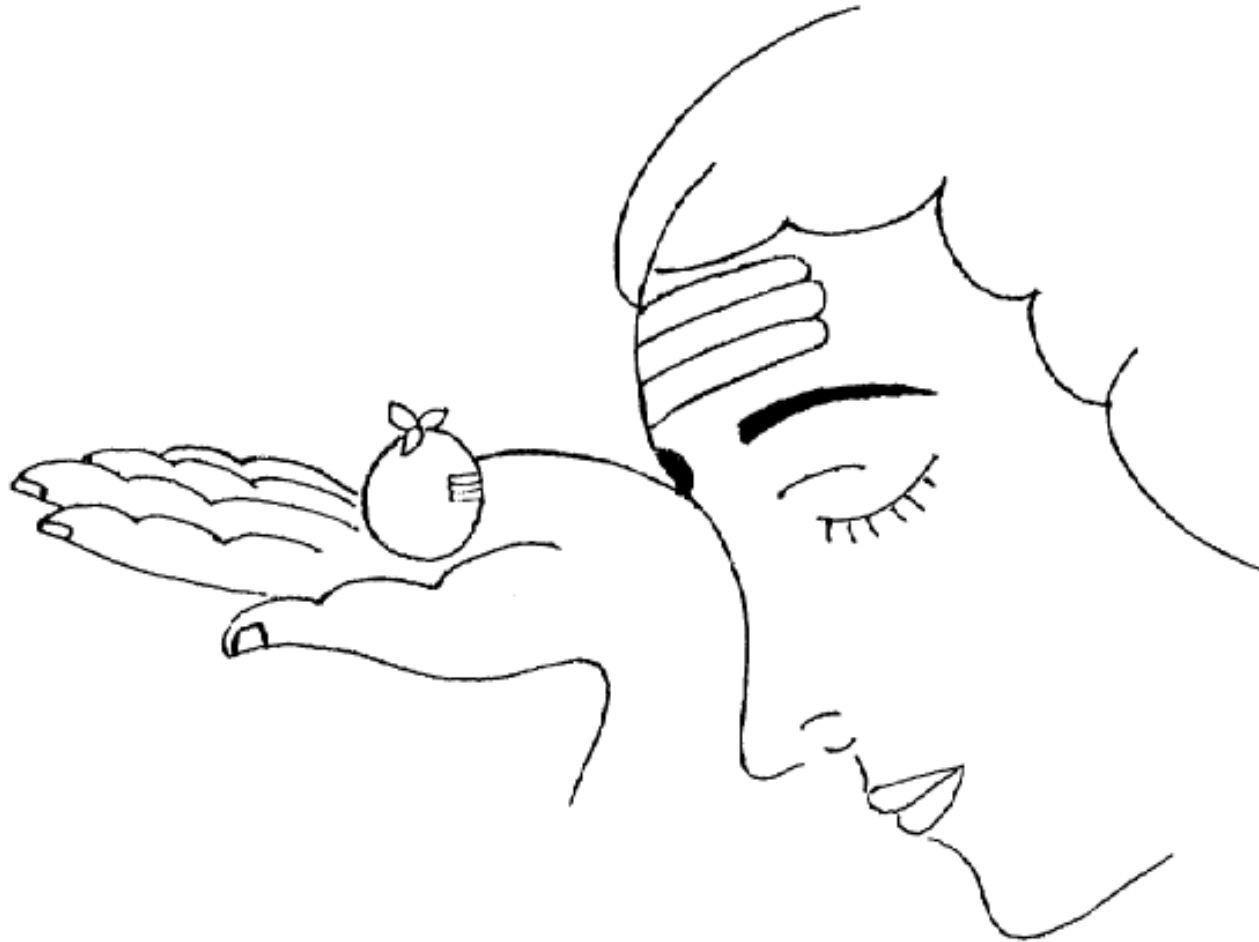
## NAIVEDYA

In a small plate arrange a few raisins. Wave your palm over the raisins and towards the Linga, indicating offering of food. (After completion of Puja, you may eat the raisins as Prasada.)



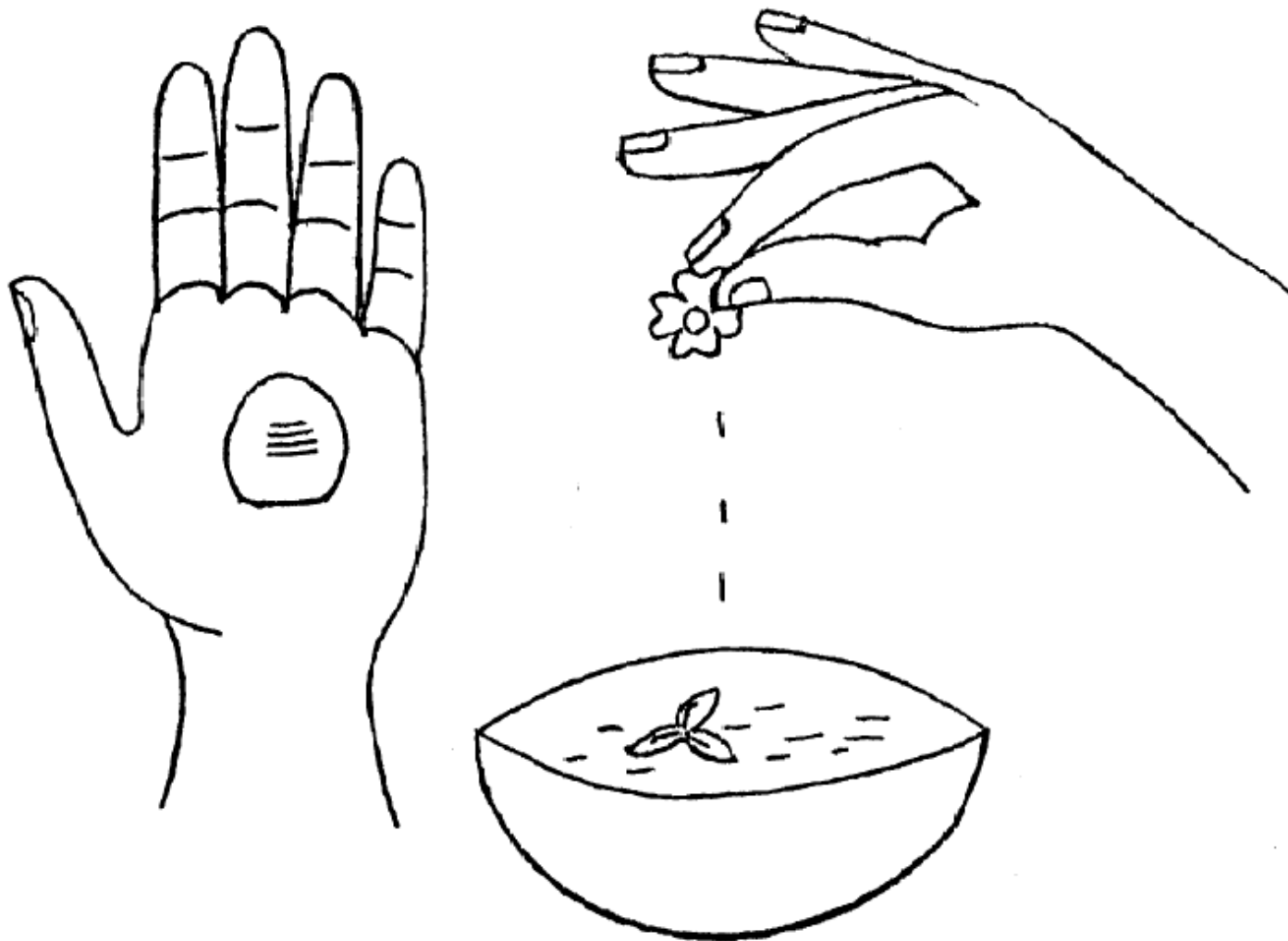
## **ACHAMANA**

After Naivedya, offer water by pouring some water from the jar into the Majjanasali (bowl).



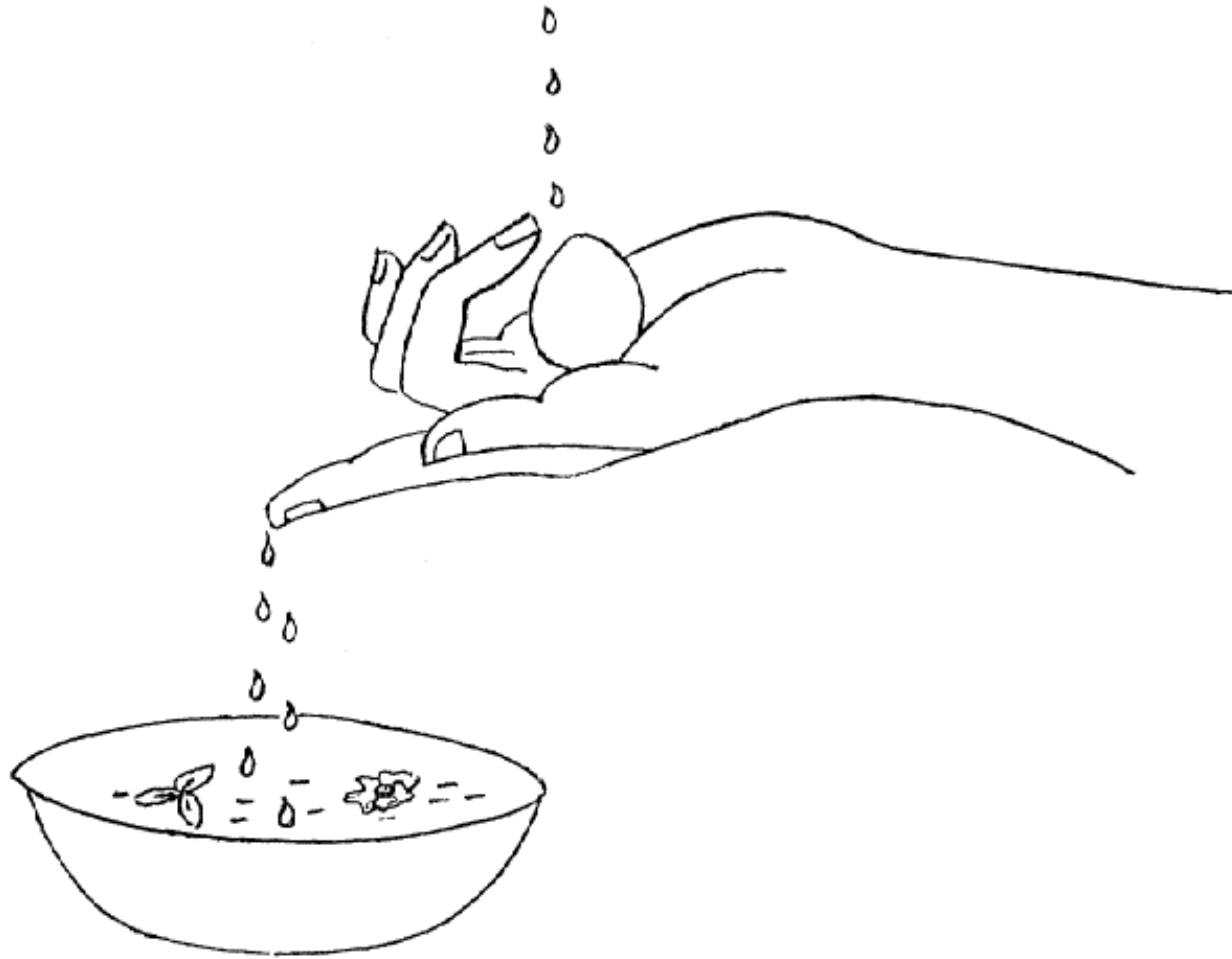
## **NAMASKARA**

Bow to Linga by touching your forehead to palm area next to Linga.



## **NIRMALYA**

Using thumb and pointer finger remove flowers and leaves off the Linga and drop them into the Majjanasali.  
(Later empty the Majjanasali at the base of a living plant.)



## APARA SNANA

Wash Linga once more. Dry with Vastra.



## **CHIDBHASMA**

Again apply Vibhuti to Linga with your thumb, middle, and ring finger (or with your three middle fingers).



## **PADODAKA OR TEERTHA**

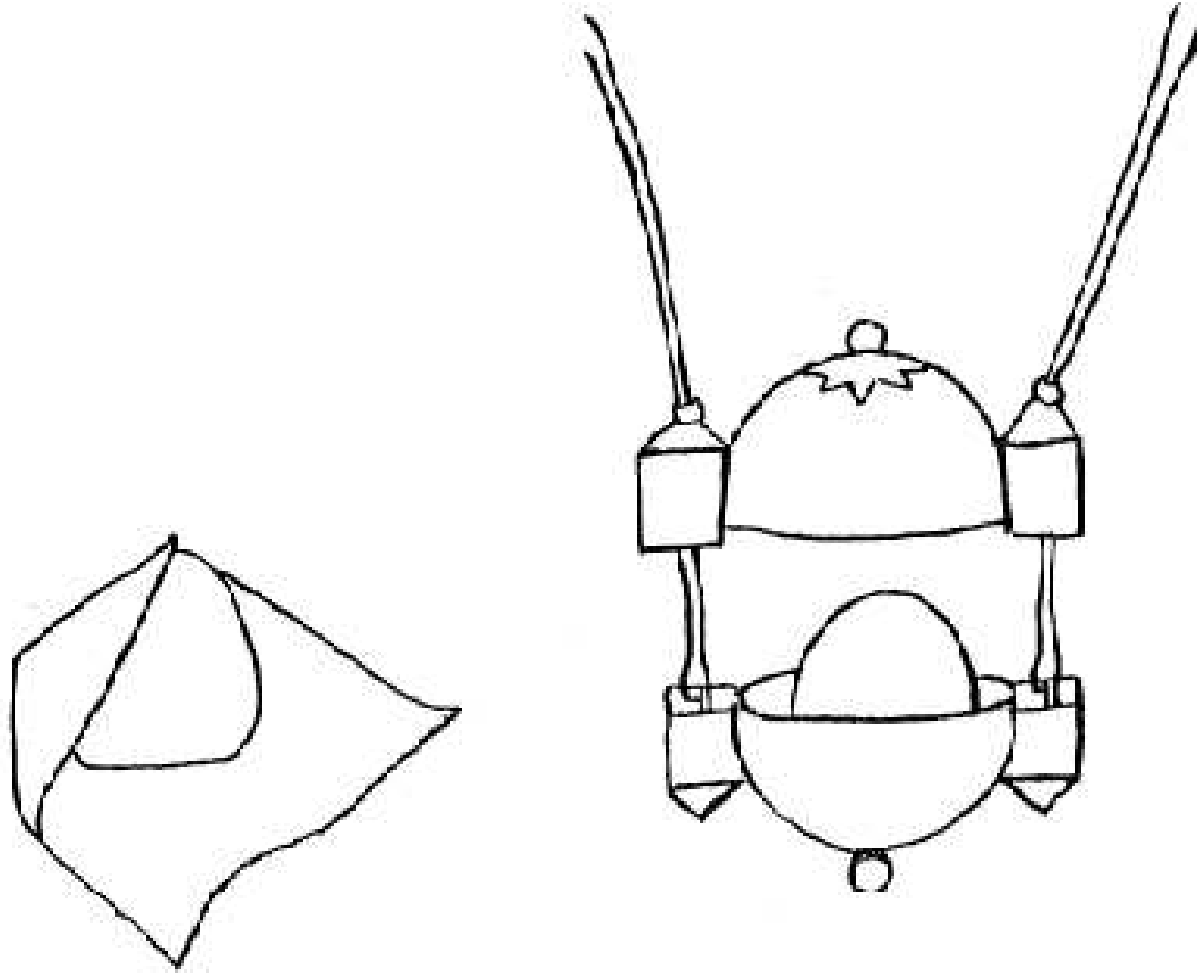
Pour some water over Linga to consecrate the water and collect it under Linga on your palm.





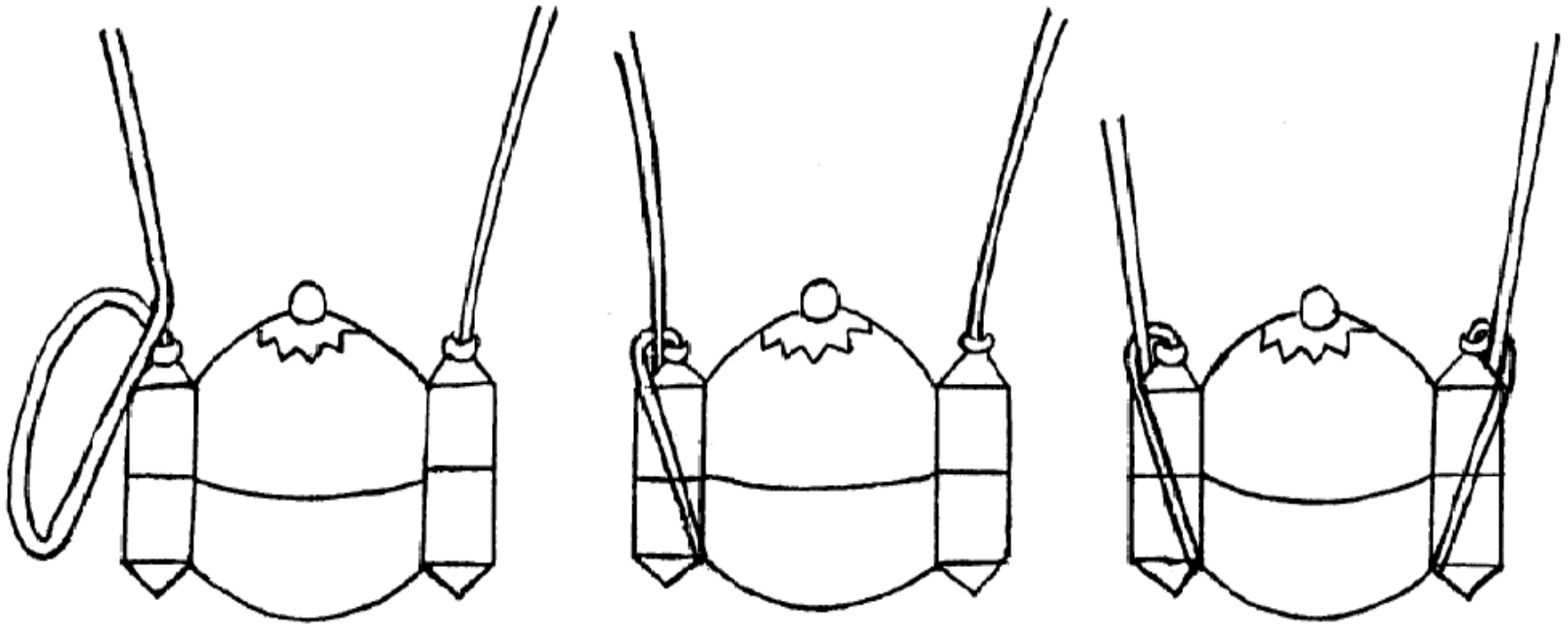
## **TEERTHA SWEEKARA**

Holding Linga with your right hand, sip Teertha (water consecrated by Linga).



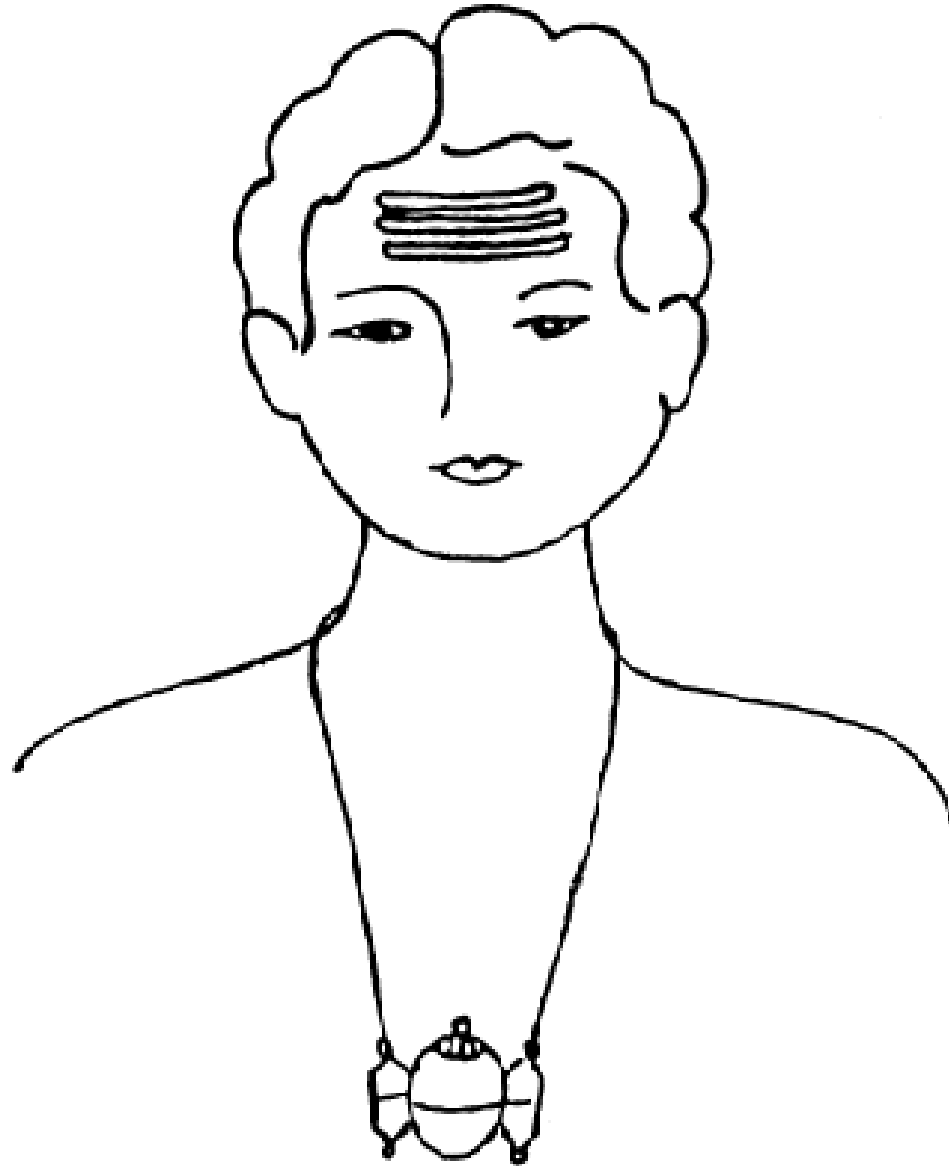
## HUDUGADA PAVUDA

Dry Linga and place it on the Hudugada Pavuda (new cloth approximately 2" x 2" in size, reserved for Linga). Fold the four tips of the Pavuda towards the top center to cover Linga. Place the Hudugada Pavuda and Linga together in the lower half of the Gundagadigi/Karadige.



## **GUNDAGADGI OR KARADIGE**

Slide the top part of the Gundugadigi/Karadige over the bottom half and secure them together by forming a know with the Shivadara (thread holding the Gundugadigi) over each side.



## LINGAYATA

Wear the Linga-enshrined Gundagadigi around your neck so that Linga will be next to your heart.

JAYA NAMAH  
PARVATIPATI  
HARA HARA MAHADEV

**Final prayer**

At the end of puja, loudly say “Jaya Namah Parvatipati Hara Hara Mahadev.” (Glory to Parvati and Shiva)

## **Notes:**

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