Comprehensive Guide to Ṣoḍaśa Upacāra Puja

1. Preparation
2. Perform Ācamana
3. Invoke Gaṇapati (Vighna-Nivāraṇa)
4. Ring the Bell or Damaru (Optional)
5. Light the Deepam/Diya (Lamp)
6. Take Sankalpa
7. Kalasha Puja
8. Perform Ṣoḍaśa upacāra (Sixteen-fold Offerings)
    - 8.1. Dhyānaṁ
    - 8.2. Āvāhanaṁ
    - 8.3. Āsanaṁ
    - 8.4. Pādyaṁ
    - 8.5. Arghyaṁ
    - 8.6. Ācamanīyaṁ
    - 8.7. Snānaṁ
    - 8.8. Vastraṁ and ābharaṇaṁ
    - 8.9. Yajñopavītaṁ
    - 8.10. Gandhaṃ/Kuṃkuṃ
    - 8.11. Puṣpaṃ
    - 8.12. Dhūpaṃ
    - 8.13. Dīpaṃ
    - 8.14. Naivedyaṁ (Offering Food)
    - 8.15. Nīrājanam
    - 8.16.Pradakṣiṇa & Namaskāram
9. Samarpana
10. Kshama Prarthana

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

This detailed guide provides a set of steps to do Ṣoḍaśa upacāra puja for Bhagwan Paramashiva. Adapt it according to the devata you wish to worship.

General notes:

- **Recommended:** Use copper, brass, or silver utensils wherever possible. Avoid steel, iron, or other base metals.
- **Maintain purity:** Ensure physical and mental cleanliness; wear clean clothes.

Materials Required:

- Asan (mat or cloth used only for sadhana)
- Achamana patra (vessel containing the water required for achamana)
- Pancha Patra & Uddharini
- Water
- Panchamritam (optional)
- Bhog / Naivedhyam
- Flowers
- Diya / Lamp
- Wick
- Oil or Ghee
- Incense
- Akshatas
- Camphor
- Bell / Damaru (optional)

1. Preparation

- Choose a quiet, clean space dedicated to sadhana.
- Please ensure that you have the essential items / material with you before you start sadhana.
- Sit on an asan, facing east or north.
- Place the devata's photo/vigraha before you.

2. Perform Ācamana

1. Purify the water

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

Touch the water with the ring finger lightly without nails touching the water and chant the following mantra.

गङ्गे च यमुने चैव गोदावरि सरस्वति । नर्मदे सिन्धु कावेरि जलेऽस्मिन् संनिधिं कुरु ॥	gaṅge ca yamune caiva godāvari sarasvati narmade sindhu kāveri jale'smin saṃnidhiṃ kuru

2. Sip a little purified water from the base of your right palm three times while chanting the following mantras. Then, with the final Vishnu nāma, release the water from your right palm into a plate or container.

ॐ केशवाय नमः ॐ नारायणाय नमः ॐ माधवाय नमः ॐ गोविन्दाय नमः	oṁ keśavāya namaḥ oṁ nārāyaṇāya namaḥ oṁ mādhavāya namaḥ oṁ govindāya namaḥ

Alternate Method: Perform ācamana by chanting *oṁ viṣṇu* three times, taking one sip of water with each chant.

3. Invoke Gaṇapati (Vighna-Nivāraṇa)

Mentally pray to Ganapati to remove the obstacles for the sadhana.

ॐ गणपतये नमः शुक्लाम्बरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम् । प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् सर्वविघ्नोपशान्तये ॥ अगजाननपद्मार्कं गजाननमहर्निशम् । अनेकदन्तं भक्तानाम् एकदन्तमुपास्महे ॥ वक्रतुण्ड महाकाय सूर्यकोटि समप्रभ ।	oṁ gaṇapataye namaḥ śuklāmbaradharaṃ viṣṇuṃ śaśivarṇaṃ caturbhujam । prasannavadanaṃ dhyāyet sarvavighnopaśāntaye॥ agajānana-padmākaṃ gajānanam-aharniśam । anekadaṃtaṃ bhaktānām ekadantam-upāsmahe॥ vakratuṇḍa mahākāya sūryakoṭi samaprabha। nirvighnaṃ kuru me deva sarvakāryeṣu sarvadā॥

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

निर्विघ्नं कुरु मे देव सर्वकार्येषु सर्वदा ॥	

4. Ring the Bell or Damaru (optional)

- Ring a bell while chanting the following sloka:

ॐ घण्ट देवताभ्यो नमः	oṁ ghaṇṭa-devatābhyo namaḥ

- For Shiva or Bhairava sadhana, you may use a damaru instead of the bell.

5. Light the Deepam/Diya (Lamp)

Diya/deepam represents the Agni tattva. It is the witness/sakshi to our sadhana. Pray to dispel the ignorance.

- Light a ghee or oil lamp.
- Chant any deepam shloka or the below mantra:

ॐ दीप देवताभ्यो नमः	oṁ deepa-devatābhyo namaḥ

Note: Use ghee for spiritual aspirations, and use sesame or mustard oil for material or worldly desires. You may use ghee in one diya and oil in another.

6. Take Sankalpa

Take a little akshata or little water in your right palm. If you know the sankalpa mantra, recite it, else mentally state your purpose in your own language. For example:
“I (your name, gothram, star) am going to perform this sadhana on this day (specify the day and tithi) for devata priti “.
Then release the akshata/water onto the ground as an offering of your resolve.

7. Kalasha Puja

Prepare a separate vessel filled with clean water for devata puja.

- To this water, add camphor, attar (fragrance), flowers, and gandham/chandanam.

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

(The shuddhikaran performed earlier was for your achaman process whereas this preparation is specifically for the devata puja)

Cover the top of the kalasha with your right hand and recite:

गङ्गे च यमुने चैव गोदावरि सरस्वति । नर्मदे सिन्धु कावेरि जलेऽस्मिन् संनिधिं कुरु ॥	gaṅge ca yamune caiva godāvari sarasvati narmade sindhu kāveri jale'smin saṃnidhiṃ kuru

Mentally invoke and pray to all the sacred rivers to be present in the water of the kalash, making it pure and fit for devata puja.

8. Perform Ṣoḍaśa upacāra (Sixteen-fold Offerings)

8.1. Dhyānaṁ

Dhyānaṁ refers to meditating on the devata before invoking them for worship. In this step, a mantra or stuti describing the devata's form and attributes is recited.

For illustration, we have chosen simple mantras dedicated to Sadashiva.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, ध्यायामि	oṁ namah śivāya, dhyāyāmi
As you chant, close your eyes, do namaskaram and visualize the devata seated before you in full splendor. Focus your mind on the devata's feet, iconography, or name, and then proceed to invoke their presence.	

After the dhyanam, chant the below mantra.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, ध्यानम् समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, dhyānaṁ samarpayāmi
Offer the fruit of your meditation at the feet of the devata. For every upacāra, you should perform samarpana, dedicating that act to the devata.	

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

8.2. Āvāhanaṁ

Āvāhanam means invocation or inviting. It is the act of respectfully requesting the devata to be present in the chosen medium such as a vigraha, trishula, vel, or kalasha for worship.

This step signifies bringing the divine presence into a physical form so that the offerings and prayers can be made directly to the invoked devata.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, आवाहयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, āvāhayāmi
Do Namaskaram and pray the devata be invoked and present while you perform the puja	

Show Avahana mudra to the devata as shown below.



8.3. Āsanaṁ

Āsanam refers to offering a seat to the devata during the puja. Just as we provide a seat to an honored guest, this step symbolizes respect and hospitality toward the divine. After invoking the devata through Āvāhanam, you mentally visualize the devata seated comfortably and chant the mantra.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, आसनं समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, āsanaṁ samarpyāmi
Show with hands and offer a seat to the devata in your puja place.	

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

8.4. Pādyaṁ

Pādyam: Offer water to wash the devata's feet as a gesture of respect and purification. Use water from the Kalasha prepared in Step 7 and chant this mantra.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, पादयोः पाद्यं समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, pādayoh pādyaṁ samarpyāmi
With an Uddharini (spoon), take a small amount of water and pour it at the feet of the vigraha/vel/trishula. If that's not possible, place it in a separate plate kept in front of the devata.	

8.5. Arghyaṁ

Offer water for washing the devata's hands, symbolizing respect and purification. Use water from the Kalasha prepared earlier and chant this mantra.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, हस्तयोः अर्घ्यं समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, hastayoḥ arghyaṃ samarpayāmi
With an Uddharini (spoon), take a small amount of water and place it at the hands of the vigraha/vel/trishula, or in a separate plate in front of the devata.	

8.6. Ācamanīyaṁ

Offer water for sipping to the devata, symbolizing internal purification. Use water from the Kalasha prepared earlier, then chant:

ॐ नमः शिवाय, मुखे आचमनीयं समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, mukhe, ācamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi
Use an Uddharini (spoon) to take a small amount of water and place it in a separate plate.	

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

8.7. Snānaṁ

Offer water for the devata's bath, symbolizing purification and respect. Use water from the Kalash prepared earlier and chant the mantra.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, शुद्धोदकेन स्नपयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, śuddhodakena snāpayāmi
With an Uddharini (spoon), take a small amount of water and gently pour it over the vigraha/vel/trishula, or place it in a separate plate as a symbolic gesture if direct bathing isn't possible.	

Optional – Pancha Amruta Snānam

Perform abhishekam using five substances: milk, curd, ghee, honey, sugar. Offer each item sequentially with devotion, chanting simple mantras:

a. Kṣīra Snānaṁ (Milk):

ॐ नमः शिवाय, क्षीर स्नानम् समर्पयामि	oṁ namaḥ śivāya, kṣīra snānaṁ samarpayāmi

b. Dadhi Snānaṁ (Curd)

ॐ नमः शिवाय, दधि स्नानम् समर्पयामि	oṁ namaḥ śivāya, dadhi snānam samarpayāmi

c. Ghṛta Snānaṁ (Ghee)

ॐ नमः शिवाय, घृत स्नानम् समर्पयामि	oṁ namaḥ śivāya, ghṛta snānaṁ samarpayāmi

d. Madhu Snānaṁ (Honey)

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

ॐ नमः शिवाय, मधु स्नानम् समर्पयामि	oṁ namaḥ śivāya, madhu snānaṁ samarpayāmi

e. Sharkarā Snānaṁ (Sugar)

ॐ नमः शिवाय, शर्करा स्नानम् समर्पयामि	oṁ namaḥ śivāya, śarkarā snānaṁ samarpayāmi

Finally, do another jala abhisheskam with purified water from the Kalash, chanting:

ॐ नमः शिवाय, शुद्ध जल स्नानम् समर्पयामि	oṁ namaḥ śivāya, śuddha jala snānaṁ samarpayāmi

After this, offer water to devata again for achamanam

ॐ नमः शिवाय, स्नान अनंतरम् शुद्ध आचमनीयं समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, snāna anantaraṁ śuddha ācamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi
With an Uddharini (spoon), take a small amount of water and place it in a separate plate or near the devata as a symbolic gesture.	

8.8. Vastraṁ and ābharaṇaṁ

Vastraṁ: Offer clothing to the devata, symbolizing dignity and respect. If you have a new cloth, gently place it on the vigraha/kalasha/trishula. If not, symbolically touch the devata with a clean cloth.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, वस्त्रं समर्पयामि	oṁ namaḥ śivāya, vastraṁ samarpayāmi
Offer sacred cloth to the devata	

Ābharaṇaṁ: Offer ornaments or jewelry to the devata, signifying honor and beauty. If actual ornaments are not available, symbolically offer by touching the devata and visualizing them adorned.

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

ॐ नमः शिवाय, आभरणं समर्पयामि	oṁ namaḥ śivāya, ābharaṇaṁ samarpayāmi
Offer ornaments and/or jewelry to the devata	

8.9. Yajñopavītaṁ

Offer a sacred thread to the devata, symbolizing purity and spiritual discipline. If you have a new thread, gently place it on the vigraha/kalasha/trishula/vel/.etc. If not, symbolically offer by touching the existing thread and visualizing the devata adorned.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, यज्ञोपवीतं समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, yajñopavītaṁ samarpayāmi
Offer the sacred thread to the devata.	

8.10. Gandhaṃ/Kuṃkuṃ

Apply **sandal paste (gandham)**/ **kumkum** to the devata. If applying directly is not possible, place a small amount on a plate in front of the devata.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, दिव्य श्री गन्धं समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, divya śrī gandhaṃ samarpayāmi
Offer gandham to the devata	

8.11. Puṣpaṃ

Offer flowers to the deity as a gesture of devotion and beauty. Place fresh flowers at the feet of the vigraha/kalasha/trishula/vel or in front of the devata with reverence.

You may chant the aṣṭottara nāmāvalī of the devata with each offering.

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

For example:

- First flower: ॐ महेश्वराय नमः (oṃ maheśvarāya namaḥ)
- Second flower: ॐ शम्भवे नमः (oṃ śambhave namaḥ)
- Third flower: ॐ रुद्राय नमः (oṃ rudrāya namaḥ)

  …and so on until you finish the aṣṭottara

ॐ नमः शिवाय, पुष्पाणि समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, puṣpāṇi samarpayāmi
Offer flowers to the devata.	

8.12. Dhūpaṃ

Offer incense to the devata, symbolizing purity and devotion. This creates a sacred and fragrant atmosphere.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, धूपं समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, dhūpaṁ samarpayāmi
Offer incense to the devata.	

8.13. Dīpaṃ

Show the lamp (dīpaṃ) to the devata.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, दीपं दर्शयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, dīpaṃ darśayāmi
Show lamp to the devata.	

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

8.14. Naivedyaṁ (Offering Food)

Offer food to the devata as an act of gratitude and surrender.
Purification steps:

- Sprinkle a drop of water on naivedyam:

  Mantra: अमृतमस्तु (amṛtamastu)

- Sprinkle water around naivedyam clockwise:

  Mantra: अमृतोपस्तरणमसि (amṛtopastaraṇamasi)

- If daytime (before sunset):

  Mantra: सत्यं त्वर्थेन परिशिञ्चामि (satyaṃ tvarthena pariśiñcāmi)

- If night time (after sunset):

  Mantra: ऋतं त्व सत्येन परिशिञ्चामि (ṛtaṃ tva satyena pariśiñcāmi)

Pancha Prāṇa Offerings

Place food with petals before the devata and show mudras or gesture your hand respectfully to the devata to accept the bhog/naivedyam.

Mantras:

ॐ प्राणाय स्वाहा (oṁ prāṇāya svāhā)

ॐ अपानाय स्वाहा (oṁ apānāya svāhā)

ॐ व्यानाय स्वाहा (oṁ vyānāya svāhā)

ॐ उदानाय स्वाहा (oṁ udānāya svāhā)

ॐ समानाय स्वाहा (oṁ samānāya svāhā)

After this chant:

ॐ नमः शिवाय, नैवेद्यं समर्पयामि (oṁ namah śivāya, naivedyaṁ samarpayāmi)

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

After the offering of the naivedyam, do the following:

a. Offer water:

   मध्यमध्ये पानीयं समर्पयामि (madhya madhye pānīyaṁ samarpayāmi)

   Place water before the devata or else offer a small amount of water to the devata on a plate.

b. Sprinkle water:

   अमृतापि धनमसि, उत्तरापोषणं समर्पयामि (amṛtāpi dhanamasi, uttarāpoṣaṇaṁ samarpayāmi)

c. Offer water to wash hands:

   हस्तौ प्रक्षालयामि (hastau prakṣālayāmi)

d. Offer water to wash the feet:

   पादौ प्रक्षालयामि (pādau prakṣālayāmi)

e. Offer water to cleanse the mouth:

   मुखे शुद्ध आचमनीयम् समर्पयामि (mukhe śuddha ācamaneeyam samarpayāmi)

Tambulam (Offering betel leaves & nuts)

Offer betel leaves and nuts to the devata. Place them on a plate in front of the deity.

ॐ नमः शिवाय, ताम्बूलं समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, tāmbūlaṁ samarpayāmi

8.15. Nīrājanam

Perform Ārati by waving light before the devata. Light the lamp or camphor and wave it in front of the devata in a clockwise circular motion.

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

ॐ नमः शिवाय, नीराजनं समर्पयामि	oṁ namah śivāya, nīrājanaṁ samarpayāmi

Optional: Offer Bhasmam

ॐ नमः शिवाय, भस्म-विलेपनं समर्पयामि	oṃ namaḥ śivāya, bhasma-vilepanaṃ samarpayāmi

8.16. Pradakṣiṇa & Namaskāram

Perform circumambulation (usually three times clockwise) around the devata, or do it in the same place, and then offer shashtanga (for men) / panchanga (for women) namaskaram, or simply fold your hands and offer namaskaram.

यानि कानि च पापानि जन्मान्तरकृतानि च। तानी तानी विनश्यन्ति प्रदक्षिणे पदे पदे॥	yāni kāni ca pāpāni janmāntarakṛtāni ca tāni tāni vinaśyanti pradakṣiṇe pade pade

9. Perform Samarpan

Offer the fruits of your practice to the devata in the following manner.
Take a little water in your right palm and mentally say that you are dedicating the whole fruits of sadhana to the devata through guru and recite the appropriate samarpana mantra given below:

- For any form of devi (female deity):

गुह्यति गुह्य गोप्त्रि त्वम् गृहाणस्मत्कृतं जपम् सिद्धिर्भवतु मे देवि त्वत्प्रसादन्मयि स्थिरा ॥	guhyati guhya goptri tvam gṛhāṇasmatkṛtaṃ japam siddhir bhavatu me devi tvatprasādān mayi sthirā

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation

- For any form of devata (male deity):

गुह्याति-गुह्य-गोप्ता-त्वं गृहाणास्मितकृतं जपम्। सिद्धिर्भवतु मे देवो त्वत्प्रसादान्मयि स्थिर॥	Guhyāti-guhya-goptā-tvaṁ gṛhāṇāsmitakṛtaṁ japam | Siddhir bhavatu me devo tvat-prasādān mayi sthiraḥ ||

- If unsure, simply say mentally: 'I surrender the fruits of this sadhana to devata through guru.'

10. Kshama Prarthana

यस्य स्मृत्या च नामोक्त्या तपःपूजाक्रियादिषु । न्यूनं सम्पूर्णतां याति सद्यो वन्दे तमच्युतम् ॥ मन्त्रहीनं क्रियाहीनं भक्तिहीनं जनार्दन । यत्कृतं तु मया देव परिपूर्णं तदस्तु मे ॥ अनेन देवपूजाविधिप्रकारेण तत्सर्वं श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ।	yasya smṛtyā ca nāmoktyā tapaḥ-pūjā-kriyādiṣu | nyūnaṁ sampūrṇatāṁ yāti sadyo vande tam acyutam || mantra-hīnaṁ kriyā-hīnaṁ bhakti-hīnaṁ janārdana | yat-kṛtaṁ tu mayā deva paripūrṇaṁ tad astu me || anena deva-pūjā-vidhi-prakāreṇa tat sarvaṁ śrī-kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu |

Conclude with humility:

"O [devata's Name], please forgive any errors in mantra, procedure, or devotion due to my ignorance. Please accept my sincere effort."

[Publication Date: 19 October, 2026]

Kamakhya Bhairava Upasaka Foundation