

How To: BLESS A CAR

by TONY QUIROGA

What you'll need:

GETTING TO DRIVE A CADILLAC CTS-V wagon for 40,000 miles is a blessing in itself, but with 556 horsepower on tap, we figured it couldn't hurt to have our newest long-termer blessed by a Hindu priest. So we took it in for a *pooja*, which is a Hindu ceremony popular with car buyers in India. *Poojas* are often performed on everyday machines, tools, or objects. The ritual may seem odd to some Westerners, but the Hindu faith says that everything is connected to God, even material goods such as cars. Hindus bless a vehicle to ask deities to purify and safeguard the machine, to express appreciation, and to request that the car operate in a fruitful manner. Here's how it's done:

STEP ONE: After praying and making an offering of uncooked rice inside the temple, head priest Shiv Kumar Bhat walks out to the car and chants ancient Vedic mantras in Sanskrit while sprinkling holy water over the hood and windshield. This is to purify the car. He asks Goddess Durga, who represents energy, to bless the car.

STEP TWO: While chanting more Vedic mantras, the priest draws a six-pointed star on the hood using turmeric powder. The star

symbolizes protection from evil and obstacles. (We did notice that we encountered fewer red lights after Bhat's blessing of the CTS-V. Your results may vary.)

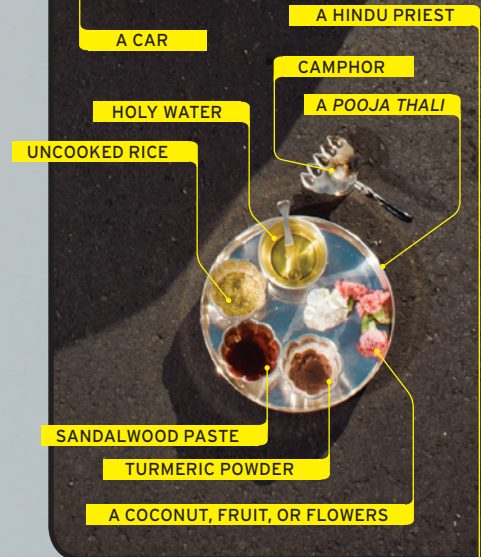
STEP THREE: Bhat dabs blessed sandalwood paste and turmeric powder around the grille to mark the occasion and to decorate the car. He places a flower on the hood as an adornment.



STEP FOUR: After opening the driver's door, the priest chants and sanctifies the interior by marking the steering wheel with a dot of the sandalwood paste.

STEP FIVE (OPTIONAL): If he had performed the ceremony during the summer, Bhat tells us that he would have broken a coconut as an offering of appreciation to Goddess Durga.

STEP SIX: The ceremony ends with the priest igniting camphor and praying. To the Hindu faithful, the light represents knowledge and the divine. The whole affair takes just five minutes and a suggested contribution of \$25 to the temple. Definitely worth it.



► HEAD PRIEST BHAT OF THE HINDU TEMPLE OF CANTON, IN MICHIGAN, PERFORMING A *POOJA* ON OUR NEW CADILLAC.

