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The Puja - A Quintessential Part Of Hindu Worship

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The Hindu pantheon rests heavily on its many and varied rites and rituals, which differ vastly among individuals, sects, casts, communities, villages and regions. What makes Hindu rituals so special is that the religion offers many similar features too, which bind Hindus spread across the globe, amazingly linking them into a single unit, even influencing other major religions of the world.

Among the most notable of features is the clear demarcation Hinduism makes between purity and impurity. This religion presupposes that every follower would have in him or her some degree of pollution or non-refinement, which would be overcome or at least minimized with the constant practice of these rites and rituals. Avoiding impurity of mind, word and deed and purifying the self with holy water, is hence, one of the basic feature of Hindu rituals. In Hindu culture, those who manage to sidestep temptations and follow the righteous path are accorded increased respect in society.

One other notable feature of this religion is the faith people have in the power of sacrifice and sacrificial or Vedic rituals. These sacrifices include preparing a sacred space to conduct the ritual, recitation of Vedic texts and mantras and offering items to the ahuti or the sacred fire. Yet another concept is that of earning punya or good Karma through acts of charity or good deeds, which, Hindus believe, will reduce their Karma and take them to a better world after their time on earth.

Hindu Worship

Hindus visit temples to conduct their religious worship. But predominantly, Hindus consider home the best place to perform basic religious rites and rituals, on an everyday basis. The religion stipulates various kinds of rituals one can conduct at various times of the day, especially during dawn and dusk. Of course, orthodox families may even engage in rituals more often.

In most households, especially those from South India, the women of the house wake up at dawn, take a bath and then draw auspicious designs on the floor of the doorstep, either using chalk or rice flour. These designs are referred to as Kolams. In the North, they use colors to draw out these geometrical designs and term them as Rangolis. Then comes the personal worship of the Gods installed in the family shrine. This ritual involves performing a detailed puja, involving lighting the lamp, taking aarti, offering food before the images, reciting prayers and singing bhajans (devotional songs).



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SRI GAYATRI YANTRAM

Very traditional Hindus recite from the Rig Veda, the Gayatri Mantra and offer prayers to the Sun at both dawn and dusk. In rural areas, you can often find a huge group of people, mostly women, who get together for satsang (prayer and/or discourse) sessions, chanting hymns and singing in praise of their favourite gods. Hindu men also offer a little water during their daily bath, in the memory of their ancestors who, they believe, bless and protect them and their families from all negatives.

At mealtimes, there are families who set aside a small portion to be given away to the needy. Many also feed birds, especially crows, who are considered to be ancestors revisiting the household in this form. These acts are believed to serve as good Karma which would protect both the followers and their families.

The basic tenet of Hinduism is bhakti or devotion to personal gods. There is a lot of sectarianism among

various Hindu communities, even within a single region. Such sects may believe only in that one god and no one else. Nevertheless, Hindus have a wide variety of gods to choose from and many Hindus opt to focus on their own ishta devata (beloved personal God), which may not necessarily conform to their religious sect's views. Hence most Hindus turn out to be polytheists, worshipping more than one single deity.

The most important aspect of Hindu worship - the Puja

The most important aspect of Hindu worship is the Puja (alternatively spelt as "Pooja"), which consists of a variety of ritual offerings and prayers to be performed as mentioned in the puja vidhi (protocol of worship as stipulated by the religion itself). The worship may be in the form of a person or a symbol, representing the presence of the sacred divine.

The special significance of Hinduism is that it includes the worship of all the five Panchamahabhutas or the five elements of fire, water, earth, air and ether. Taken together, the Panchamahabhutas constitute the physical, "macro" world and also exist within us all, within our own "micro" worlds. Each of these Mahabhutas also corresponds to the five Indriyas (physical senses).

While some Hindus conduct these pujas at home on an everyday basis, there are others who perform more elaborate special ceremonies at temples or rented halls, with the help of the resident or family priests, who are competent to carry out the detailed procedures. The priests are treated as representations of the divine and are given offerings and gifts at the end of the ritual. Those witnessing the rituals are also offered gifts and Prasad (food, which is treated as divine grace).

Hindus perform Pujas at many occasions, such as after conception for the mother, during her fourth and seventh months of pregnancy, birth of the baby, infancy, childhood, upanayanam (sacred thread ceremony), marriage, death, funeral and finally, on the 13th day after death,

which signifies bidding a final farewell to the soul of the deceased. Many families also conduct an annual Shradha, a ritual performed to pray for the peace and happiness of the departed soul.

The meaning of the word, "Puja"

There are many explanations as to how the word "Puja" came into being. One version says that the word "Puja" is derived from the Sanskrit roots, 'P', which stands for 'Paapa' or sin, and 'J', which stands for 'Janma' or birth. Some believe that the word Puja is derived from the Dravidian word, "pu-chemy" or offering flowers. Some other version links this word to "pusu", which means, to smear with vermilion or sandalwood paste.

Puja serves as a substitute to homa (sacrificial fire ritual), bali (animal sacrificial ritual) and other Vedic rituals which women and the Shudra community (the lowest community in the then-relevant caste system) could not perform. With the advent of Buddhist and Jain cultures that preached ahimsa (non-violence), animal sacrifices were discontinued and religious iconography, symbolisms, idol worship and puja took their place instead. Puja was acknowledged as a religious medium for all Hindus, irrespective of caste and gender, and, therefore, became the universal option of prayer for everyone.

In the present, Puja includes all forms of ritual or ceremonial worship, its vast spectrum including daily domestic offerings of flowers, fruit, leaves, food and water to the deities, to performing detailed and complicated rituals at temples, even to offering sacrifices of chicken and goats in certain Kali, Durga and other such temples.



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**VAISHNAVA DEVOTEES CHANTING
HYMNS OF LORD KRISHNA**

Generally, Hindus see the puja as a simple way for ordinary mortals to relate to the divine, so it can even be performed even on something that symbolizes the divine, like a cow or a tree. Puja takes several forms, such as darshan (simply gazing at the deity's image), arpan (offering flowers, fruit, incense and so on to the deity), smaran (contemplating on the ishta devata at all times), shravan (listening to stories of or hymns in praise of the deity) and bhajan (singing in praise of the deity). The prayer thus performed could either be silent or be accompanied by prayers. Pujas can also be performed either individually or in groups. The entire aim of performing the puja is to create a protective layer of spiritual forces around us, warding off all evils and negative forces, thereby creating a conducive environment to lead a happy and peaceful life.

Materials used in pujas

Each puja involves the use of a variety of materials, as specified in that particular puja vidhi. The simplest of pujas requires offering of pushpam (flowers), phalam (fruit), toyam (water), karpuram (camphor) and naivedyam (food). The more elaborate puja rituals, would, of

course, need more materials.

According to Shri Aurobindo, Vedic rituals such as the Yagna and Homa are "attempts to fulfill the purpose of creation and elevate the status of man to that of a godhead or a cosmic man". But the simple puja is a symbolic offering of our lives and activities to that higher cosmic power, who we term as God.

Each and every item used in the Puja has a reason and a symbolic significance behind it. We now delve into the significance of each of these Puja-related objects.

The Vighraha (Idol)



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**VIGRAHA OF
LORD KRISHNA**

The Vighraha is the idol or image of the chosen deity. The term "Vighraha" comes from the Sanskrit root, "Vi+Graha", which means, something that is shorn of the negative effects of the planets or the "grahas", as they are called. Hinduism believes a lot in planets and the effects they cast on human beings. The divine is considered to be the controller of these planets and hence, is said to be beyond these effects. Surrendering to such a divine force, Hindus believe, will also liberate them from their grahadoshha (ill-effects of planets). Offering various items to the Vighraha during the Puja is symbolic of the devotee's surrender to the deity.

The puja Vighraha could be made of any material, such as mud, clay, brass, copper, silver or even be gold-plated. There are no bars whatsoever on that aspect.

The Kalasha or the Purnakumbha

The term "Purnakumbha" in Sanskrit means, "full pot" - "Purna" (full)+"Kumbha" (pot). The Kalasha or the Purnakumbha is an earthen or metal (usually copper or silver) pot or pitcher, which is filled with water. Mango leaves are then placed on this pot, with a coconut atop it. This purnakumbha is then placed before the deity prior to commencing the puja.

The pot here signifies Mother Earth; the water is considered the life-giver; the leaves signify the life breath and the coconut, the divine consciousness. The coconut is referred to in Sanskrit as the "Sriphala" (God's fruit).



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COPPER KALASH

Water is known to be a cleanser, and hence, Hindus use it to purify both themselves by performing Prokshanam (sprinkling of holy water) on the head and also on the food, before they consume it. Hindus usually sprinkle water around their food three times, before they start eating. This could in a way be associated to the Western culture of giving thanks before consuming meals.

The Kalasha is used during almost all pujas and is also considered by some as Goddess Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth.

Rangolis and Kolams

Rangoli, though not compulsory for Pujas, has nevertheless made a significant contribution to India's culture. The art of Rangoli or Kolam, which involves drawing on flat surfaces, usually at thresholds of houses, can range from very simple to very elaborate and colored designs. While they look like mere geometrical figures, they actually represent divinity in many ways. Since the Rangoli was a work of art, it was considered that only a woman with a spiritual bent of mind could create a perfect one. This raised her stature in society, even if she was actually illiterate otherwise.

Some rangolis were then used to invite good into the house and ward off the evil. The most notable thing about rangolis is their highly fragile structure. Made of many kinds of powders, it needed tremendous control on the part of the artist to create a perfect design. This meant that she would have to be completely immersed in the activity, without letting any internal thought or external event distract her. That would itself give her temporary liberation from the material world.



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STICK-ON RANGOLIS

At a more spiritual level, it shows how temporary even a beautiful, painstaking, creation is, in this material world. Due to its extremely fragile state, even a gust of wind or a few drops of rain can completely destroy a rangoli. However, modern times have seen an alternative to using powders for Rangoli, to overcome this fragile state. Sticker Rangolis are now available, with readymade Rangoli

patterns on plastic sticker sheets. These Rangolis are ready to use and simply need to be stuck to the area needed to get the exact look of an original Rangoli.

Patram (Leaves)

There are certain leaves that are considered the symbols of divinity, such as mango leaves, betel leaves, banyan leaves and leaves from the 'Bilva' or 'Bael' trees. Areca-nuts and betel nuts are also considered holy.

Pushpam (Flowers)

The flowers we offer to the deity during Puja symbolize the good in us. It is a way of offering the 'sat' (good) that has blossomed within us as a result of performing these rituals. Flowers also are an embodiment of water, especially the lotus, which rises from water.

The Kamala (Lotus)

Hindus consider the lotus, also the national flower, as the most sacred among flowers. The lotus also embodies the true soul or spirit of the devotee, which represents the pure Self, the Being, which, in spite of rising out from dirty, turbid water, is yet clean and free of it all. Hence, this flower signifies enlightenment and mukti (liberation) from the material world.

According to Hindu mythological, the lotus symbolizes creation, since Brahma, the Creator of the Universe, comes forth from the lotus that bloomed from Lord Vishnu's navel. The Padmasana (lotus posture) is used during meditation and yoga as well.



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**BRAHMA SITTING
ON LOTUS**

Flowers and Garlands



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ARTIFICIAL FLOWER GARLAND

Flowers constitute a very important part of any Hindu Puja. It is one of the most important offerings made to the deity. Flowers are used both while performing the Puja at home as well as temples and all other sacred places. There is hardly ever some Puja conducted which does not use flowers. During the course of the Puja, the deity is decorated with various types of flowers and garlands made of different flowers and leaves. Flowers are also placed at the feet of the deity and often times; the deity is also showered with these flowers. The Puja thali (plate) thus always includes a lot of colored, fragrant flowers to be used for that particular Puja.

Puja vidhis many times specify the flowers to be used while performing that particular Puja and the method in which they are to be used during the Puja. Some flowers are actually associated with a particular deity,

so they are used in a Puja which is aimed at pleasing Him/Her. For example, the red Hibiscus flower is used for Lord Ganesha's Puja. He is garlanded with a string of hibiscus, along with the Ariham, better known as Durva, grass. Lord Krishna is often garlanded with a Vanamala (mixture of sweet-smelling flowers) and the Tulsi Mala (garland of tulsi or leaves of the Holy Sage plant).

The act of garlanding the deity with flowers, placing flowers at His feet and showering Him with flowers signifies the seeker's complete faith, devotion and surrender to that deity. In offering the flowers, the seeker is actually offering his own self to the deity.

Why certain flowers are never used during Puja

Sometimes, some flowers are completely avoided for a particular deity, as it might have been cursed for that particular god and so on. Flowers with very strong odors are generally never used for the Puja. Also, flowers without fragrance are also avoided. Wild flowers and those which haven't blossomed fully are not used either. Similarly, flowers mutilated by birds or insects are not used. Flowers picked from gardens, on the other hand, are considered the best for a Puja. In some cases, flowers picked from a forest may also be used.

Just as in the case of human beings, the flowers used for a Puja too are categorized into Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. This is based on the flower's origin, shape, fragrance and color. Flowers that fall into the Sattva and Rajas category are commonly used for everyday worship. Tamas flowers, on the other hand, are completely avoided during major functions and Pujas, though they might be used at some festivals.

Flowers that fall under the Sattva category include Nandyavartham, Arka, Drona, Jasmine, Coral tree flowers, white lotuses and so on. The red lotus, white thorn apple flowers, trumpet flowers etc fall under the Rajas category, while the China Rose, cotton plant flowers, Ketaki, Kusa grass etc fall under the Tamas flower category.

Phalam (Fruit)

Offering the phalam or fruits symbolizes surrendering the fruit of our action at the feet of the Lord. This signifies detachment, surrender and self-sacrifice.

Gandham (Incense)

Gandham or fragrance-emitting materials, such as incense, can collectively be grouped to symbolize our vasanas (samskaras or subconscious inclinations developed) and desires we accumulate throughout our lives. These we offer to God, in order to obtain liberation from the birth-death cycle.

Incense sticks are created by extracting the perfume of fragrant wood and flowers. Burning these creates a congenial atmosphere for meditation and spiritual contemplation.



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INCENSE STICK HOLDER

Dhoopam (Smoke)



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INCENSE CONES OR DHOOP AND DHOOP HOLDERS

Dhoop aims at worship of the divine via the sense of smell. Dhoopam or the smoke arising from camphor or incense sticks or powder (samrani) symbolizes our clouded consciousness that creates a huge hurdle on the path of self-realization. It also signifies the shackles we are bound with in this material world. Offering dhoopam signifies surrendering our fickle, illusory minds to Godhead. On the elemental side, dhoopam stands for air, which again signifies the life-breath or the prana within us.

The term "dhoop" is said to originate from the dhoop tree, which is found in eastern parts of India, and whose chips emit a wonderful fragrance. But in actuality, dhoop is black-colored putty, which is made from a mixture of wood chips, herbs and ghee. This could also make for a mini havan of sorts. But since dhoop works through the power of fragrance, it is not the mainstay of Vedic rituals.

Both the aspects of gandham and dhoopam create an illusion of physical purification. The seeker derives a psychological benefit out of the same, which helps him to delve deeper into his meditation.

Powders used during Pujas

Apart from all the above materials, there are different kinds of powders used in a Puja too. These include Kumkum (vermilion), Haldi (turmeric), Chandan (sandalwood) and Vibhuti (holy ash). Each of these powders is used for a specific purpose, as listed below.

Kumkum, Chandan and Haldi Powders

Kumkum stands for both our emotions as well as our inner wisdom. The turmeric and sandalwood symbolizes our inner purity, as also our false ego and inner pride. Sandalwood additionally gives the seeker peace of mind, cools his system and helps him concentrate during his meditation sessions.



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KUMKUM POWDER



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HALDI POWDER

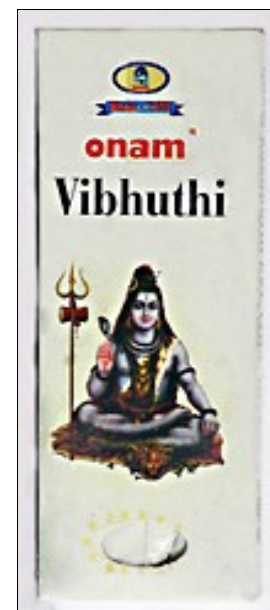
Vibhuti (Sacred Ash)

Vibhuti or the sacred ash is usually associated with Lord Shiva. It is termed as "Vibhuti", as it endows the seeker with all prosperity. It is also known by various other names, such as "Bhasma" as it burns away all sins from the seeker; "Bhasitam" or "brightened", since it enhances one's spiritual aura; "Ksharam" or "destruction", since it destroys danger; and "Raksha" or the "protector", since it acts as a protective armor against negative and evil forces. Vibhuti is also significant, as it is a reminder of the evanescence of the human body, which will eventually be reduced to a potful of ash after death.

Vibhuti is of great spiritual relevance as well, in Hindu culture. When Shiva razed down Kama (the God of Love) and reduced him to ashes, nothing remained - all desire was burnt to ashes, but pure love reigned supreme. So eliminating desires gives rise to that Prema (pure love) welling up from the soul. Since ash is the final thing, it cannot change, fade, dry or disappear. It cannot get dirty, lose color or rot over a period of time. So applying vibhuti on the forehead is symbolic of reaching the state of nothingness and thereby, attain liberation.

The unchangeable nature of ash is also that of the true nature of the soul or the Atman. The vibhuti can be rubbed all over the body or applied on the forehead area between the brows. Shaivaites (followers of Shiva) also wear stripes of the holy ash across their foreheads and arms.

Vaishnavites (followers of Vishnu) place a Namam on their forehead as Tirumann or the "sacred earth (dust)". The Namam consists of three vertical lines, either shaped in a "U" or



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VIBHUTI

"Y", joining at the base. The two outer white lines symbolize the worship of Brahma and Vishnu, while the central red line stands for the worship of Goddess Sri Mahalakshmi. The Namam or the Tirumann goes to show that all wearing the same would eventually be transformed into higher spiritual beings.

Prasad or Naivedya

Prasad or Naivedya is the food that Hindus offer to God during the course of the Puja. This signifies the "avidya" or the ignorance that the devotee offers to the chief deity of the Puja. The food embodies the ignorant consciousness, which is placed before the deity, so that He may transform it into spiritual enlightenment. Consuming this Prasad removes the avidya from the follower and fills him/her with the light of true knowledge, which purifies and creates a new, better individual out of the devotee.

Many major Pujas involve sharing of the Prasad with other devotees who have gathered to witness the Puja. The act of sharing the Prasad signifies sharing the knowledge the devotee has attained, among his fellow beings, thereby purifying him further.

Naivedya is usually offered in metal vessels, such as brass and silver. Sometimes vessels made of alloys are also used for the same.

Ringling Bells during the Puja



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Bells are often rung during Puja, irrespective of whether it is performed at home, temple or sacred place. Though this has not been laid down as a compulsory Puja rule in any ancient spiritual text, it is now become part and parcel of any Puja. The symbolic element of ringing a bell during a Puja is that the chime of the bell, especially that of the deep, sonorous bell, is very similar to the sound of the Primal Sound, the "Aum". This sound is believed to do away with all unnecessary negatives from the atmosphere, taking away everything that is time-space oriented, and finally letting the devotee touch the plane of the absolute, the one that simply "IS". Of course, this is a mere symbolism, but it still creates a holy effect when a sweet-sounding bell is rung during the Puja!

The sound of tinkling bells diverts the mind from its thoughts and makes it focus on the bells instead, thereby preventing worldly thoughts for that moment. It could also be considered a sort of "doorbell", using which the devotee can "announce" his presence to god and stand at His doorstep.

The louder-sounding bells and cymbals rung during major festivals might have been a more social than a spiritual phenomenon. This was probably a way for the villagers to realize that it was time for worship. Maybe this was also done to show the particular person's power in society then.

Bells are generally made of brass and some metal alloys and they come in various shapes and sizes. Tibetan bells are very ornate and have a deep resonance. The bigger the bell, the more Naada or resonance it will generate.

Deepam (Light)

Offering deepam (or light) is an integral part of all pujas, major or minor. This signifies the light residing within us, the true Self that we offer to the divine in a spirit of pure devotion and surrender. Element-wise, deepam refers to the fire residing inside the Atman.

Simply put, light is believed to be the source of wisdom, as it dispels darkness. The Self has also been described, in spirituality, as effulgent light. Symbolically, the oil used represents the vasanas, the wick represents the ego and the fire, the flame of knowledge that burns out the ego.

The lighting of the lamp is a very auspicious occasion at any puja, festival or occasion for this very reason. It is believed that god inhabits that house where the woman of the house lights the lamp every morning and evening. The Diwali, the Festival of Lights is celebrated by first lighting little diyas (earthen lamps) and then bursting colourful crackers. These diyas are made only of natural materials, like clay.



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ORNATE GANESHA OIL LAMP

Aarati

A part of the Deepam category, the term, "Aarti", is said to have come from the Rigveda, probably among the earliest Hindu scripture. The Sanskrit term, "Aarati" comes from the roots, "aa", which means, 'towards' and "rati", which means, 'the highest love for God'. This term has many meanings assigned to it. Some aver that this goes to mean the time just before darkness sets in after sunset. Others believe that the word, "Aradhana", which is synonymous with Aarti goes to mean "the greatest love for God", which gives true and lasting happiness and joy.

The element of fire or light is related to sight or vision. According to Hinduism, fire cleans and purifies all. The aarati is performed to achieve just that. A small piece of camphor, clay or metal lamp with oil or ghee-soaked cotton wicks is placed on a metal plate, along with incense and flowers. After the camphor or lamp is lighted, the plate is rotated clockwise in front of the vigraha. This signifies invoking the divine. Bells are rung along with the aarati and prayers or hymns are chanted side-by-side. When the aarati is performed, it is believed that even the plate and light get blessed by the divine. That is why the plate is shown around to all, so that all present can put their hands over the flame and touch it to their eyes.

The aarati is usually performed in different ways in several parts of India. Even the traditional concluding aarati song is different across the regions of India. But the ultimate aim of the aarati is the same - to attain that highest love for god. The aarati performed in South India is known as the Deepa Aradhanai.

The aarati can also be performed in front of a person to ward off all evil spirits and bad omens, to greet people of very high status and to welcome a new member in the family, such as a daughter-in-law or a newborn infant, who are entering the house for the first time. The aarati is also performed on newly acquired property or land and also during the Bhoomin

Pujan (foundation-laying ceremony).

The plate on which the aarati is performed is usually made of bronze, copper or silver. Placed on the plate are flowers, kumkum, haldi, vibhuti and stand to place the incense sticks.



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COPPER PLATE FOR AARTI

AARTI LAMP

Japamalas (Prayer Beads)



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108 BEAD JAPAMALA

The Japamala or the rosary is one other accessory of the Puja. Though not everyone uses these, there is a certain significance of the Japamala in Hinduism. Japamalas usually contain 108 beads. It is believed that a man breathes 21,600 times each day. Finishing 200 rounds of recitation with the Japamala everyday comes to a total of 21,600 counts, which means, the seeker does one Japa (prayer) for each breath taken. This signifies that he had been thinking of god all day. Some japamalas also contain divisions of 108, so the prayer rounds are calculated accordingly, again to give a total of 21,600.

There is yet another significance of the number 108. According to Hindu astrology, there are in each horoscope, 9 planets, which are always in motion. Then there are 27 Nakshatras (stars), which are again divided into 12 Rashis (houses). There are 2 ½ Nakshatras in each Rashi. The 12 Rashis multiplied by the number of planets, that is, 9, gives us a total of 108 (12x9=108). Using the 108-beaded japamala, the seeker attempts to purify his horoscope and

mitigate planetary ill-effects with the help of divine grace.

The central bead of the japamala is called the 'Meru'. This is a reference point which tells you when the seeker finishes an entire round. Spiritually speaking, the Meru also denotes an

obstacle that has been crossed while on the path toward spirituality. This also signifies the removal of some more ignorance. The japamala is referred to as the Tasbi in Islam and the rosary in Christianity.

Hindus chant the Raksha Stotra before sitting in Japa. This is done in order to ask for protection and to drive away the evil spirits that act as obstacles in the way of concentration and meditation.

Door Torans

Torans are decorative hangings placed at the doorstep of households. Most Hindu households hang torans on their thresholds. Torans come in many varieties. While you can have the ordinary flower torans, there are also cloth, plastic and bead torans, some of which are elaborately strung together. Some cloth torans also have quaint designs and patchwork done on them, which make them brilliant pieces of art and a joy to behold!



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DOOR TORAN

Torans are believed to be auspicious, as they help in warding off evil spirits. It is believed that negative forces cannot make their way past the doorstep when the presence of the Toran guards the house. Hanging the toran on festive days is also meant to greet the gods visiting the household on that day.

Concluding the Puja

At the end of the Puja, there is again an aarati with the devotee again waving the aarati plate in front of the Lord, singing the traditional concluding bhajans and finally consuming the Prasad and distributing it to those present.

It should be noted that the Puja is not merely a ritual to be conducted merely as an aid to achieving something material in life. Minor lapses in the rituals do not matter at all - after all, these are mere symbolisms. Performing rituals without having the bhakti (devotion) within has no meaning either. What really matters here is true devotion and the seeker attaining true peace, happiness and joy, through the course of his spiritual journey.

As Lord Krishna states in the Bhagavad Gita,

*"Patram Pushpam Phalam Toyam
Yo Mey Bhaktya Prayacchati
Tad Aham Bhakty-upahritam
Asnaami Prayatmanah"*

The translation of the above is:

"I accept a leaf, flower, fruit or water
Or whatever is offered with devotion"

This article was written by **Saipriya Viswanathan**. Saipriya is a teacher/performer of Bharata Natyam, Carnatic vocal music and Carnatic Veena. She is a recipient of several awards for both dance and music, including the Sur Mani and Singar Mani titles. She is a recipient Govt. of India Merit Scholarship for dance and is a diploma holder in Carnatic vocal music.

Our efforts have been directed at making this article informative and refreshing for you. We will truly appreciate all forms of feedback. Please send your feedback to newsletter@dollsofindia.

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