

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry



DEITY WORSHIP IN THE TEMPLE

Cleanliness and Punctuality



ISKCON®

DEITY WORSHIP
MINISTRY

Cleanliness and Punctuality

Priest not touched by outsiders – keep themselves completely pure

The servants are always coming and going without interval. If I touch them, I shall be ruined.

Herein it is very clearly indicated that priests performing Deity worship should be careful to keep themselves completely pure and not be touched by outsiders. Sanātana Gosvāmī and Haridāsa Ṭhākura, thinking themselves *mlecchas* and *yavanas* because of their past association with Muslims, did not enter the temple or even travel on the path in front of the temple gate. It is customary for the priests of temples in India not even to touch outsiders or enter the Deity room after having been touched. This is a very important item in temple worship.

Antya 4.127

Washed after Ārati

The arati articles may be returned to the same places, especially the conch shell, but the deeps, lamps, should be set down from their places because they must be washed.

Letter to: Yamuna -- 16 January, 1970

* Deity worship means

Deity worship means to be very, very clean. You should try to bathe twice daily. The Deities should never be approached without having bathed first and changed to clean cloths after passing stool, etc. Keep teeth brushed after each meal, fingernails clean and trim. Be sure that your hands are clean before touching anything on the altar or the Deities. And cleanse the Deity room, altar and floor daily thoroughly. Shine the various Aratrik paraphernalia after Aratrik. This is described in the booklet for pujaris written by Silavati Dasi. The idea is summit cleanliness--that will satisfy Kṛṣṇa.

Letter to: Rukmini -- 20 March, 1970

* Cleanliness – advance very quickly

Try to learn this art of Arcana very nicely. You can consult in this connection Himavati, Yamuna and also Silavati. I wish that all our girl devotees be expert in the matter of Arcana and cooking. The temple and altar should always be very clean and decorated with flowers and incense. We shall touch the Deity altar and Deity in very clean condition, after taking bath and washing mouth nicely. Practice washing hands after eating and wash with soap and water after toilet. Cleanliness is next to Godliness, so this point should be very carefully observed, then you will advance very quickly to the perfectional stage of Krishna Consciousness.

Letter to: Kancanbala -- 20 April, 1970

* Cleanliness will reduce as Kali yuga advances

Śaucam, cleanliness, that will also diminish. Cleanliness is required. *Bahyābhyantara-śuciḥ*. If one is to advance, he has to clean himself. According to Vedic civilization, one has to take bath thrice daily. Actually, in India they take. In our country I was also taking twice bath till I was attacked last year. So I thought that in this country, twice taking bath is not possible, so I am taking once now. But India, there are many gentlemen, high class gentlemen, they take bath thrice. Morning, and before lunch, and in the evening. Especially the *brāhmaṇas*. So cleanliness is next to godliness. To take bath, to evacuate daily, to wash the teeth, wash clothings, this cleanliness process. But as the days of this Kali-yuga will make progress, this system of hygienic cleanliness, cleanliness both inside and outside Outside by taking bath, inside by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious—two kinds of cleanliness. Simply if we take bath with soap outside, and inside all rubbish things, that is not cleanliness. Cleanliness means *bahyābhyantaraḥ*. Bahya means outside, without. *Abhyantara* means inside. Unless we are clean, unless we are pure, how we can make advance to approach the Supreme? The Supreme is described as the purest. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna said, *param brahma param dhāma pavitraṁ paramaṁ bhavān*: [Bg. 10.12] “My dear Kṛṣṇa, You are the Supreme Lord, Brahman.” And *pavitraṁ paramaṁ*: “You are supreme pure.” There is no impurity. Impurity means material contamination, and purity means spiritual life. So this cleanliness inside and outside, that will also decrease.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.2.1 -- San Francisco, March 18, 1968

Cleanly, everything should be done

Regarding offering spinach, just it should be very clean--everything should be done very cleanly.

Letter to: Balavanta -- 4 October, 1976

Cooking for Kṛṣṇa requires standards of cleanliness

It was rather hot that afternoon, and I was perspiring. I asked, "Swamiji, may I please have a glass of water?" He peeked his head around the door, and said, "Go wash your hands." I immediately did so, and when I returned Swamiji had a glass of water for me. He explained to me that while preparing this food for offering to the Supreme Lord, one should not think of eating or drinking anything. So after drinking the glass of water, I went in and washed my hands and sat down. About two in the afternoon, I said, "Swamiji, may I have a cigarette?" and he peeked his head around the corner and said, "Go wash your hands." So I did, and when I came back he explained to me the four rules of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I continued to make the *kacaurīs*, and around three-thirty, four o'clock, it was extremely warm in the room, and as Swamiji was bringing in one of his preparations I was wiping my arm and hand across my forehead. He looked down at me and said, "Please go and wash your hands." Again I did so, and upon returning he had a moistened paper towel for me. He explained that cooking for Kṛṣṇa required certain standards of cleanliness and purity that were different than the ones I was accustomed to.

Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta 19: Planting the Seed

Devotee is naturally clean inside and outside

Naturally a devotee takes a bath at least twice in a day and rises early in the morning for devotional service. Thus he is naturally clean both inwardly and outwardly.

Bg 12.16

Everything must be kept very clean

I am very encouraged to hear that people are coming. So please manage temple affairs nicely. Nanda Kumar is expert pujari and his wife is already going there. The Deity worship must be done very very carefully. I have

already seen how Nanda Kumar is doing and it is all right. Everything must be kept very clean.

Letter to: Madhudvisa -- 14 August, 1971

Insects

Some precautionary measure should be taken to keep bugs from the altar and the Deity. You cannot allow them to disturb the Deity. Best is that you try to catch them and throw them out rather than kill them, but if killing them is the only alternative, then what can be done?

Letter to Ekayani, August 31st, 1971

One of the twenty-six qualities needed to become a pure devotee ... twenty-six in number, are listed as follows: (1) kind to everyone, (2) does not quarrel with anyone, (3) fixed in the Absolute Truth, (4) equal to everyone, (5) faultless, (6) charitable, (7) mild, (8) clean, (9) simple, (10) benevolent, (11) peaceful, (12) completely attached to Kṛṣṇa, (13) has no material hankering, (14) meek, (15) steady, (16) self-controlled, (17) does not eat more than required, (18) sane, (19) respectful, (20) humble, (21) grave, (22) compassionate, (23) friendly, (24) poetic, (25) expert, (26) silent. The Lord is satisfied by development of the transcendental qualities of the living entity and not by artificial performance of sacrifices and mystic yoga. In other words, unless one is fully qualified to become a pure devotee of the Lord, one cannot expect to be liberated from material entanglement.

SB 4.20.16

* Proper Deity worship means to be clean and punctual

Proper Deity worship means to be clean, punctually and nice offerings of foodstuffs.

Letter to: Bhima, Kṛṣṇa dasa, Sanat Kumara, Nityananda, Samba, Joseph -- 16 May, 1974

* Rapid advancement

A *brāhmaṇa*'s name is *śuci*, or one who is clean. In the toilet room wash with water and wash your hands with soap. Then wash feet, face and mouth. Your cloth must be washed daily, especially any cloth used to sleep in. In the

kitchen also, things should be kept spotless and cooking should only be done by *brāhmaṇas*; others may assist. That is the same procedure followed with Deity worship. So these are some of the points to note in Brahminical life. Keep yourself clean outside by bathing, etc. and clean inside by chanting Hare Krishna Mantra. Go on in this way and your rapid advancement in Krishna Consciousness will be certain.

Letter to: Laksmi Narayana -- 8 July, 1971

Ritualistic ceremony, one must first become clean

The demigods and demons then observed a fast. After bathing, they offered clarified butter and oblations into the fire and gave charity to the cows and to the brāhmaṇas and members of the other orders of society, namely the kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras, who were all rewarded as they deserved. Thereafter, the demigods and demons performed ritualistic ceremonies under the directions of the brāhmaṇas. Then they dressed themselves with new garments according to their own choice, decorated their bodies with ornaments, and sat facing east on seats made of *kuśa* grass.

The Vedas enjoin that for every ritualistic ceremony one must first become clean by bathing either in the water of the Ganges or Yamunā or in the sea. Then one may perform the ritualistic ceremony and offer clarified butter into the fire. In this verse the words *paridhāya āhatāni* are especially significant. A *sannyāsī* or a person about to perform a ritualistic ceremony should not dress himself in clothing sewn with a needle.

SB 8.9.14-15

Rules should be followed as far as possible

Regarding how to act when there is a choice of either attending Aratrik ceremony without bathing first or bathing and thus missing attendance at the Aratrik ceremony, the answer is that the rules should be followed as far as possible. If it becomes necessary, simply wash your feet, and when possible also wash the face, head, hands, and rinse mouth with water.

Letter to: Jayapataka -- 30 April, 1970

Show by example

Prabhupāda: *Āpani ācari prabhu jīve śikhāilā*. If you show example how to keep the temple neat and clean, then these foreigners also will learn from you.

Morning Walk -- March 9, 1974, Mayapura

* Special purpose of Deity worship

The special purpose of Deity worship is to keep oneself always pure and clean. Gr̥hastha devotees should be actual examples of cleanliness.

SB 7.5.24

* The first business

One thing is that you should keep everything very clean. That is the first business. Every room should be as clean as a mirror. The prasadam room should be immediately cleaned after taking prasadam, otherwise you are inviting rats. Be careful.

Letter to: Mukunda: -- 20 October, 1973

* The solid basis for our work

One thing is that all the students on the party must strictly follow the rules and regulations. Cleanliness is most essential, rising early, taking bath, etc. It is not that because we are travelling that we can neglect our routine work and become irregular in our habits. No, we must make every effort to remain regulated and clean, this is the solid basis for our work. When our routine work, like chanting, reading books, nice arati, deity worship, etc., is very nice, then our preaching will have effect. That is the secret.

Letter to: Kirtanananda -- 12 December, 1971

Wash hands, wash hands

Robert: One time I wanted to know how to make capātī cakes, so Swami says, "A hundred dollars, please, for the recipe. A hundred dollars please." So I went and got some money, but I couldn't get a hundred dollars. But he showed me anyway. He taught me to cook and would always repeat, "Wash hands, wash hands," and "You should only eat with your right hand."

Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta 16: Free to Preach

* Without cleanliness and punctuality there will be offense

One thing though, the deity worship must be completely pure in terms of cleanliness and punctuality, otherwise there will be some offense.

Letter to: Sri Govinda -- 31 January, 1973

Thereafter, in order to resume the activities of sacrifice, the brāhmaṇas first arranged to purify the sacrificial arena of the contamination caused by the touch of Vīrabhadra and the other ghostly followers of Lord Śiva. Then they arranged to offer into the fire the oblations known as puroḍāśa.

Lord Śiva's followers and devotees, headed by Vīrabhadra, are known as *vīras*, and they are ghostly demons. Not only did they pollute the entire sacrificial arena by their very presence, but they disturbed the whole situation by passing stool and urine. Therefore, the infection they had created was to be first purified by the method of offering *puroḍāśa* oblations. A *viṣṇu-yajña*, or an offering to Lord Viṣṇu, cannot be performed uncleanly. To offer anything in an unclean state is called a *sevāparādhā*. The worship of the Viṣṇu Deity in the temple is also *viṣṇu-yajña*. In all Viṣṇu temples, therefore, the priest who takes care of the *arcanā-vidhi* must be very clean. Everything should be always kept neat and clean, and the foodstuffs should be prepared in a neat and clean manner. All these regulative principles are described in *The Nectar of Devotion*. There are thirty-two kinds of offenses in discharging *arcanā* service. It is required, therefore, that one be extremely careful not to be unclean. Generally, whenever any ritualistic ceremony is begun, the holy name of Lord Viṣṇu is first chanted in order to purify the situation. Whether one is in a pure or impure condition, internally or externally, if one chants or even remembers the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Viṣṇu, one immediately becomes purified. The *yajña* arena was desecrated by the presence of Lord Śiva's followers, headed by Vīrabhadra, and therefore the entire arena had to be sanctified. Although Lord Śiva was present and he is all-auspicious, it was still necessary to sanctify the place because his followers had broken into the arena and committed so many obnoxious acts. That sanctification was possible only by chanting the holy name of Viṣṇu, Trikapāla, which can sanctify the three worlds. In other words, it is admitted herein that the

followers of Lord Śiva are generally unclean. They are not even very hygienic; they do not take baths regularly, they wear long hair, and they smoke *gāñjā*. Persons of such irregular habits are counted amongst the ghosts. Since they were present in the sacrificial arena, the atmosphere became polluted, and it had to be sanctified by *trikapāla* oblations, which indicated the invocation of Viṣṇu's favor.

SB 4.7.17