



Home Deity Worship Course

Six divisions of purity



ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry

Exploring the six divisions of purity

Purity and cleanliness are essential in deity worship. *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* explains there are six divisions of purity that must be established:

1. Purity of place (sthāna-śuddhi)

A pure place for worship is essential; if the place is impure, then the worship (*pūjā*) will not be as effective. Care must therefore be taken before the *pūjā* begins to ensure that the place is clean. The place of worship may then be decorated with auspicious items and purified with mantra. As the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* enjoins, *sammārjana-lepanādinā vedika-maṇḍala- nirmāṇādinā*: “Clean the place of worship properly, purify it with cow dung, and decorate it with nice arrangements.”

2. Purity of articles (dravya-śuddhi)

All the articles used in offerings must be physically pure in accordance with scriptural standards. When physical purity is established, the articles are then spiritualized with mantra and *mudrā*. The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* directs us to clean the articles and sprinkle them with sanctified water (*śodhana-prokṣaṇādinā*).

3. Purity of body (ātma-śuddhi)

Because the Lord cannot be approached in a contaminated state, you must first purify your physical body by waking at the proper time, bathing, wearing the ornaments of a Vaiṣṇava (*tilaka*, *kañṭhī-mālā*, and *upavīta*), and putting on fresh cloth. You then establish a finer state of purity through the mental process of *bhūta-śuddhi*. Finally, you spiritualize your body by means of *nyāsa* and mantra.



4. Purity of mind (*citta-śuddhi*)

For the worshiper, the mind is the most important element. If the mind is impure, then all other purificatory processes become insignificant. The other processes of purification are actually assistants to purification of the mind. The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* describes *citta-śuddhi* as *cintāntara-parityāgādinā*, or giving up of thoughts other than those concerning Kṛṣṇa. This purification finds its perfection in meditation (*dhyāna*) on the form of the Lord and in worshiping the Lord in the mind (*mānasa-pūjā*).

5. Purity of mantra (*mantra-śuddhi*)

The mantras that the guru gives to the disciple for using in deity worship are most important in *pāñcarātrika-pūjā*, for sound is the best means of associating with the Lord. The worshiper, desiring to utilize the full potency of the mantras in their service to the Lord, must receive them from a bona fide spiritual master. As stated in the Padma Purāṇa;

sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ

If one is not connected with a bona fide disciplic succession, whatever mantras he chants will not bring the desired result.

If mantras are covered by impurity due to offensive chanting or worship, then their effect will be lessened. By avoiding offenses and pronouncing the mantras properly, the worshiper maintains the purity of the mantras.

6. Purity of the deity (*mūrti-śuddhi*)

The worshiper must cleanse the deity with scented water, a fine cloth, and mantra before bathing can begin.



Mūrti-śuddhi means to cleanse the deity, not to purify. The deity is directly Kṛṣṇa and is therefore pure, as confirmed by Śrīla Prabhupāda in the following quote:

As for bathing the deities in milk from time to time, that is not required. The smarta or caste brahmanas, they think if someone inattentively touches deity it becomes impure, so they bathe. But that is not needed by us, only when they are installed.

Maintaining these six divisions of purity will greatly assist devotees in worshiping the Lord.