



Home Deity Worship Course

Week 3 FAQ



ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry

Week 3 FAQ

Topics:

Ritual and culture, Offenses, Waking the deities

Ritual and culture

It is understandable that someone who grew up in India could easily adopt the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava culture, but it doesn't make sense that someone from a completely different background would be even interested in this culture, what to speak of adopting it. It seems so foreign. How can this be?

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* preface that the *Bhāgavatam* is a cultural presentation for the respiritualization of the entire human society.

The whole focus of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava culture is service to Kṛṣṇa, and reawakening our actual identity as His eternal servant,

We can reawaken this consciousness from any situation, in any culture, but the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava culture is supportive of this and generally will make it easier to come to our original consciousness.

Waking the deities

What is the order of waking the deities if I not only have Gaura Nitāi and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, but also Nṛsiṃhadeva and Laḍḍu Gopāl deities at home?

Always wake your spiritual master first, then Gaura-Nitāi, and conclude with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa last. The other *viṣṇu-tattva* deities may be woken in any order in between Gaura-Nitāi and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

When putting the deities to bed, do it in the reverse order.

The terms “ascending order” and “descending order” are often used by devotees when discussing different procedures of deity worship. What do they mean?



This refers to the order of offering a service or item of worship.

For example, on an altar where there are Gaura-Nitāi, Jagannātha-Baladeva-Subhadrā and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa deities—at the beginning of offering food to the deities, generally the first person offered a seat is your guru. This is because they will be assisting and directly serving the Lord.

Then after the guru is seated we would offer a seat to Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda, followed by Jagannātha-Baladeva-Subhadrā and concluding with the main deities, which in this example would be Radha-Kṛṣṇa.

This is what is known as ascending order.

After the meal we would ask the deities to return to the altar in the descending order, which is essentially the opposite of what we have just described.

As we are worshiping Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as the main deities, or the deities who are considered the most important on the altar, the intention is that They wait the least amount of time while preparing to offer bhoga to Them.

The opposite is also true after the meal. The main deities are the first to return to the altar and be offered foot-wash and mouth-wash after the meal.