

# Performing a Simple Puja and Aarati

Literally translated, aarati means 'that which takes away pain'. The puja and aarati service is highlighted by the waving of the aarati lamp to the aspect of the Divine you are honoring. The flame symbolizes the burning away of ignorance in order to perceive the Divine at all times and in all things. The puja and aarati service is an ageless tradition of the Sanatan Dharma (eternal religion) as it exists in India. It is a welcoming service to the particular Divine Being who is invoked. The aarati prayers appeal to the Divine Being for fulfillment of all desires and to dispel the darkness of ignorance veiling the transcendent Self.

Before beginning the process, one should be freshly bathed and preferably in fresh clothing.

All materials used should be new or those that are specifically kept for worship purposes.

Organize all utensils and supplies: (bell, water vessel, aarati lamp, bhatis, flowers, prasad, chandan, kum kum, whole grains of rice, incense, perfume oil.

1. Purification – *Om Gang Ganapatye Namah* (sprinkle water around 3x)
2. Invoking – *Om Maha Devi Namah Avahanam Samarpyami* (asking Mother to stay with you)
3. Offering Seat – *Om Maha Devi Namah Asanam Samarpyami*
4. Offering Water for Bath – *Om Snanam Samarpyami*
5. Offering Cloth to Dry – *Prokshnaarte Vastram Samarpyami*
6. Offering Perfume Oil – *Om Sugandham Samarpyami*
7. Offering Sacred Thread – *Om Yagyo Pavitam Samarpyami*
8. Offering Clothes – *Om Vastram Samarpyami*
9. Offering Ornaments – *Alankaran* (jewelry), *Malam* (mala), *Abushanam* (crown) *Samarpyami*
10. Offering Sandalwood Paste – *Om Chandanam Samarpyami*
11. Offering Red Vermillion Paste – *Om Kumkumam Samarpyami*
12. Offering Clean Whole Grains of Rice – *Om Akshatam Samarpyami*
13. Offering Flowers – *Om Pushpam Samarpyami*
14. Offering Incense – *Om Dhupam Samarpyami*

15. Offering Prasad – *Om Naivaidyam Samarpyami* - sprinkle water around 3 times to purify and then with right hand offer the essence of the prasad (unsalted nuts, fruits, etc.) with these mantras:

*OM PRANAYA SWAHA, OM APANAYA SWAHA*

*OM VYANAYA SWAHA, OM UDANAYA SWAHA, OM SAMANAYA SWAHA*

16. Offering Water to Rinse the Mouth – *Achamaniyam Samarpyami*

17. Offering Light – Dipam

- Light bhatris (ghee-soaked cotton wicks) in aarati lamp and sprinkle water three times around it to purify it for presentation to the image.
- Ring bell in left hand, wave aarati lamp in a clockwise motion with right hand, starting at feet of the murti/photo and sing "*Karpura gauram...*" or some other aarati.
- Stop ringing the bell; place the aarati lamp down on some form of asan (seat).
- Pick up the water vessel, wave three times to the image, pour a few drops on either side of the image, sprinkle some water around the flame, and around the room.
- Fan the flame lovingly with right hand toward the image and then take it yourself and offer it to anyone else present.
- Distribute water and prasad.
- After the puja is completed, it is important to take time to meditate on the aspect of the Divine that you have been honoring with the puja.

18. Circumambulate and Pranam – Circle the altar or murti in a clockwise direction and then Bow and say thank you and that you are sorry for any mistakes.

The best times for puja are in the early morning (around sunrise) and the early evening (around sunset).

NOTES: It is important to remember that none of the puja materials should be placed on the floor. There should always be an asan (seat) placed for them on the floor so that they will remain clean. The seat may be a plate, piece of cloth, leaf, etc...

If you do not know all these mantras, you can make each offering in your heart and repeat *Om Namah Shivaya* or some other mantra you recite regularly. Aarati may also be done by waving lit incense in lieu of aarati lamp.