

Puja

Many Hindus worship one or more of the deities (gods and goddesses), but it doesn't matter which as they are all seen as different forms of the one supreme god, Brahman. Hindu worship is known as puja and involves praying to images of deities (murtis) and making offerings to them.



Most Hindu homes have a holy shrine where puja takes place. Puja is a daily routine and is a way of welcoming God into their home. Some shrines are decorated and others are quite simple. They can also be different sizes.



Before puja begins, everyone takes off their shoes as a sign of respect. Worshippers chant prayers (mantras) and the name of their favourite gods or goddesses, then offerings such as fruit, incense, water and flowers are made. Once puja has finished, the food which is offered to the deities to be blessed is then shared out and eaten.



'Aum' is the name given to the Hindu religious symbol. This is also chanted by worshippers.

Each shrine contains a puja tray which holds important items:

- Bell – The worshippers ring the bell to let God know that they are ready for puja;
- Incense and holder – The incense burns and gives off a pleasant smell;
- Diva lamp – The lamp is lit to remind everyone that God is with them;
- Water containers and spoon – To show respect, water is offered to the gods on a spoon;
- Kum kum powder – Hindu worshippers use it to mark their foreheads as a sign of respect to the gods. They also mark the foreheads of the gods on their shrine.



Puja can also take place at a Hindu temple known as a mandir. Family puja in the home is similar to puja in the temple. Each temple is usually dedicated to a specific god, but contains shrines for several different gods to which offerings can be made. Worshippers sit near to the main shrine whilst the priest chants. Puja is led by the temple priest. Hindus can choose to worship at the temple, or at home, during special religious festivals.

Questions about Puja

Answer the questions below in full sentences.

1. Where does puja take place in the home?

2. How often is puja carried out in the home?

3. How can shrines in Hindu homes be different?

4. Why do worshippers take off their shoes before puja?

5. Give two examples of possible offerings.

6. Why is a diva lamp lit during puja?

7. Where else can Hindus worship?

Questions about Puja

Answers

1. Where does puja take place in the home?

Most Hindu homes have a holy shrine where puja takes place.

2. How often is puja carried out in the home?

Puja is a daily routine which is carried out at least once.

3. How can shrines in Hindu homes be different?

Some shrines are decorated and others are quite simple, they can also be different sizes.

4. Why do worshippers take off their shoes before puja?

Everyone takes off their shoes as a sign of respect.

5. Give two examples of possible offerings.

Accept two of the following: fruit, incense, water, flowers.

6. Why is a diva lamp lit during puja?

The lamp is lit to remind everyone that God is with them.

7. Where else can Hindus worship?

Hindus can also worship at the temple (mandir).