

Mahashivaratri Puja Guidelines

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INTRODUCTION

The night of Mahashivaratri is divided into 4 sections each of 3 hours duration. Each 3-hour section is called a Prahara. On each of the praharas, the Shiva Lingam is bathed with auspicious articles such as milk, dahie, ghee, sugar, coconut water, cane juice, vibhuti ash and honey. Puja to the lingam is then performed. A devotee usually spends the entire night in prayer, worship and meditation to Lord Shiva. The day leading up to the festival is spent in fasting as a way of preparing for the ceremonies.

In a home procedure maintaining the vigil throughout the night and performing the puja at each prahara is ideal. If not practical, the midnight prahara is considered to be most auspicious. At a minimum the procedure can be done once at the most convenient prahara.

PUJA ARTICLES: Your Checklist of Items Needed:

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| 1. Flowers | 13. Deeya |
| 2. Lota of water | 14. Prasad |
| 3. Thaali | 15. Supari |
| 4. Panchamrit mix of – Milk, dahie, ghee, sugar, honey, tulsi leaf . | 20. Coins/Gifts |
| 5. Cotton | 21. Havan Kund |
| 6. Perfume | 22. Lingam |
| 7. Chandan | 23. Camphor |
| 8. Doob grass, mango leaves and bel leaves | 24. Mango Wood for havan |
| 9. Haldi | 25. Ghee for havan |
| 10. Sindoor | 26. Matches |
| 11. Rice | 27. Abhishekam liquids such as milk, dahie, honey, ghee, etc. |
| 12. Agarbati or Incense | 28. Murti of Lord Ganesh |

SET UP

All preparations will be made in a way that you and your family will face East or North during the offerings. Prepare a bedi, a simple flat surface nicely decorated will do. Place the murtis of Lord Ganesh and Shiva Lingam on top of the bedi. The Lingam can be placed on a tray or dish deep and wide enough to catch the liquids used for bathing it. Your Havan Kund will be next to the bedi. Have a container with ghee and a

spoon to offer the ghee during the Havan. Have also a lota of water with mango leaf and basket of flowers. Lastly, have all the other ingredients from your checklist next to you.

PROCEDURE - PREPARATORY STEP

Now you are ready to start: Follow the steps below:

Om Sri Ganeshaaya Namah, Sri Saraswatyai Namah, Sri Gurave Namah

a. Sprinkle water east, west, north, and south and repeat:

Om Apavitrah Pavitro Vaa

Sarvaasthaang Gato-pi Vaa

Yah Smaret Pundari-Kaaksham

Sa waa hyaa Bhyaantarah Suchih

Meaning: One who remembers Lord Vishnu becomes pure both externally and internally.

b. Meditate on Lord Ganesh: take flowers in your hand and repeat:

Om Gajaa Nanam Bhuta Ganaadi Say Vitam

Kapitha Jambu Phaala Saara Bhakshitam

Uma Sutam Shoka Vinaasha Kaaranam

Namaami Vighneshwara Paada Pankajam

Meaning: I bow to the feet of Lord Ganesh, with the face of the elephant, who is served by the Ganas, who partakes of the fruits of the Kapitta and Jambu, the son of Uma Devi, who removes all obstacles.

Offer flowers to the murti of Lord Ganesh.

PROCEDURE - ABHISHEKAM (BATHING OF LINGAM)

Bathe the lingam by pouring the auspicious articles directly on the lingam one by one starting with water and ending with another portion of water. Usually milk, dahi, ghee and honey are used but other articles can be included - coconut water, cane juice, sugar, ashes are popular.

Mantras to be chanted while the abhishekam is done include (can choose one that is known by everyone):

(a) Panchaskshari - Om Namah Shivayaa recited continuously.

(b) Panch Brahma mantras.

(c) Saharsra Lingarchanam mantras.

(d) Lingastakam

Then the Lingam is removed from the tray and washed completely and dried and placed in a clean thali or tray for the next step.

PROCEDURE - PUJA FOR THE LINGAM

Now the Shodasha Upchaar Puja (16 steps) to Lord Shiva on the Lingam

1. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA AAWAAHANAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer a few rice grains on the Lingam to welcome the Lord.

2. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA AASANAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offering of flower to symbolize a divine seat.

3. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA PAADHYAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer water to wash the feet of the murti.

4. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA PANCHAAMRIT SNAANAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Bathing with a mix of milk, dahi, ghee, sugar and honey. (3 small spoonfuls).

5. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA JAL SNAANAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Bathing with water. (3small spoonfuls),

6. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA VASTRAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer clothing or cotton symbolic of clothing.

7. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA CHANDANAM GANDHAM CHA SAMARPAYAAMI

Beautification of the Deity with tilak and perfume.

8. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA PUSPHAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer flowers as a symbol of beauty

9. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA DURVAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer doob graas symbolic of health and long life

10. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA HARIDRAM SINDOORAM CHA SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer haldi and sindoo to symbolize health

11. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA BEL PATRAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer bel leaves for health and long life.

12. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA DHOOPAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Wave Incense around the murti to glorify Him

13. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA DEEPAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Perform Aarti as further glorification

14. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA NAIVEDYAM AACHAMANIYAM CHA

SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer Prasad and water, as food and drink

15. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA TAAMBULAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer paan and supari for health and mouth cleansing after meal

16. OM SRI SHIVAAYA NAMAHA DAKSHINAM SAMARPAYAAMI

Offer coins and gifts to appreciate His blessing

PROCEDURE - JAPAM (CHANTING THE LORD'S NAME)

Using a mala with 108 beads recite a few rounds of your favorite Shiva Mantra - for example Panchakshari, Rudra Gayatri, Mrityunjaya, etc.

If only doing 1 prahara can complete with havan and final arti here. If doing more than one, the procedures of Abhishekam, Puja and Japam can be repeated at the various times and havan and final arti done after the last prahara is complete.

PROCEDURE - HAVAN

A simple havan can be done with ghee offerings into the sacred fire. Or a mix of some of the prasad with samagri, cloves, til, gogul and ghee made if practical to burn completely.

The names of the dieties form the mantras themselves with the use of SWAAHAA accompanying the offering (or SWADHAA for ancestors).

Light fire

OFFER WATER AROUND FIRE 3 TIMES

Om Sarva Tirtha Samaayuktam Sugandhim Nirmalam Jalam

Aachmaniyam Mayaa Datam Grihaana Parameshwara

OFFER GHEE or PRASAD TO ALL THE DEITIES USING THEIR NAMES AS THE MANTRA

Om Agnaye Swaahaa

Om Soamaaya Swaahaa

Om Prajaapatye Swaahaa

Om Indraaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Ganeshaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Gowri Divyai Swaahaa

Om Sri Suryaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Chandraayaa Swaahaa

Om Sri Bhowmaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Budhaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Brihaspataye Swaahaa

Om Sri Shukraayaa Swaahaa

Om Sri Sanaischaraaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Rahave Swaahaa

Om Sri Ketawe Swaahaa

Om Sri Shivaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Krishnaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Hanumate Swaahaa

Om Sri Raamaaya Swaahaa

Om Sri Durgaa Divyai Swaahaa

Om Sri Lakshmi Divyai Swaahaa

Om Sri Saraswati Divyai Swaahaa

Om Sri Graam Devata Bhyo Swaahaa

Om Sri Staan Devataa Bhyo Swaahaa

Om Sri Kula Devataa Bhyo Swaahaa

Om Bhu Swaahaa

Om Bhuwah Swaahaa

Om Swah Swaahaa

Om Tat Savitur Varenyam Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi Dhiyo YoNah Prachodayaat

Swaahaa (3 times)

Om Sarva Devataa Bhyo Swaahaa

Om Sarva Devi Bhyaam Swaahaa

Om Sarva Pitri Bhyo Swadhaa

While standing:

Om Purnamadah Purnamidam

Purnaata Purnamudachyate

Purnsaya Purnamaadaaya

Purnam Eva Vashisyatay

Om Sarvam Vai Purna Gwam Swaahaa (3 times)

OFFER WATER AROUND FIRE

Om Sarva Tirtha Samaayuktam Sugandhim Nirmalam Jalam

Aachmaniyam Mayaa Datam Grihaana Parameshwara

PROCEDURE - FINAL STEPS

1. Aarti – Perform Aarti around the bedi, Havan, Puja Room,

throughout the entire house, and to your Mother, Father, Grandparents, etc. Can sing or play arti bhajans as this is being done.

2. Closing Mantra:

Twameva Maata Cha Pitaa Twameva

Twameva Bandhu Cha Sakhaa Twameva

Twameva Vidya Dravinam Twameva

Twameva Sarvam Mama Deva Deva

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shantih.

May we enjoy the blessing of Lord Shiva on this auspicious day.