

What is Puja? Read this text and then answer the questions

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, which is carried out at least once and is a way of welcoming God into the home. Some shrines are decorated and others are quite simplistic. They can also vary in size.



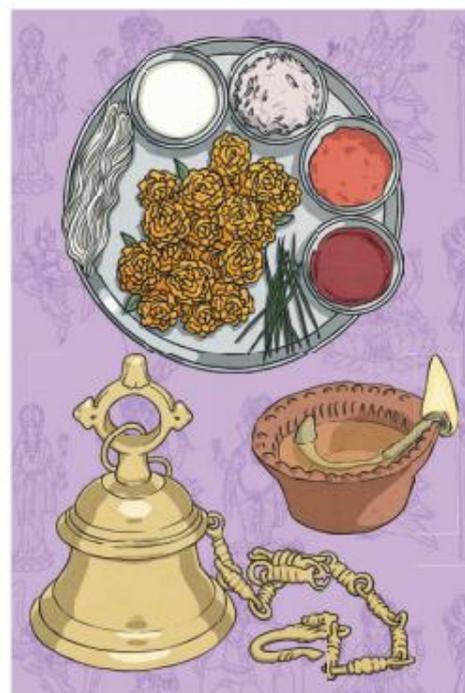
Before puja begins, everyone removes their shoes as a sign of respect. Worshippers chant prayers (mantras) and the name of their favourite gods or goddesses then offerings such as fruit, incense, water and flowers are made. Once puja has finished, the food, which is offered to the deities to be blessed,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



'Aum' is the name given to the Hindu religious symbol and 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 known as the pujari. Hindus can choose to worship at the temple, or at home, during special religious festivals.

Answer the questions below in full sentences.

1. What is a murti?

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

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3. How can shrines in Hindu homes vary?

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4. What is the significance of removing shoes before puja?

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5. Give three examples of possible offerings.

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6. Explain 'Aum'.

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7. What is the significance of the bell, diva lamp and water during puja?

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8. Give one similarity and one difference between puja in the home and at the temple.

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