

Ways of Wisdom

How Do We Overcome Life's Obstacles?

Sloka 86: The past can confuse the present and hide our divinity, just like a small leaf can obscure the sun when held before our eyes. With Vedic spiritual practices, we remove obstacles to reveal the ever-present inner light .

What Are the Hindu's Daily Yoga Practices?

Sloka 87: Devout Hindus perform daily vigil, usually before dawn. This sacred period of *puja*, *japa*, chanting, singing, *hatha yoga*, meditation and scriptural study is the foundation of personal life.

How Are Ayurveda and Jyotisha Used?

Sloka 88: *Ayurveda* is the Hindu science of life, a complete, holistic medical and health system. *Jyotisha*, or Vedic astrology, is the knowledge of right timing and future possibilities. Both are vital tools for happy, productive living.





How Do Hindus Regard Art and Culture?

Sloka 89: Hindus of every sect cherish art and culture as sacred. Music, art, drama and the dance are expressions of spiritual experience established in scripture by God-inspired sages as a natural outgrowth of temple worship.



What Is the Hindu Outlook on Giving?

Sloka 90: Generous, selfless giving is one of the central virtues of *dharma*. Hospitality, charity and support of God's work on Earth arises from the belief that the real purpose of life is spiritual, not material.

Sacraments



What Are Hinduism's Rites of Passage?

Sloka 91: Hindus celebrate life's major changes by holy sacraments, or rites of passage, called *samskaras*. These ceremonies deeply impress the mind, inspire sharing among family and community and bring blessings from the Gods.



What Are the Sacraments of Childhood?

Sloka 92 The essential religious sacraments of childhood are name-giving, called *namakarana*; head-shaving, or *chudakarana*; feeding of first solid food, or *annaprasana*; ear-piercing, or *karnavedha*; and the beginning of formal study, called *vidyarambha*.



What Are the Sacraments of Adulthood?

Sloka 93: The most important sacrament of adulthood is the marriage ceremony, or *vivaha samskara*, which follows a formal engagement. A boy's or girl's coming of age is also blessed through special ceremony in the home.

What are the Sacraments For Child Birth?

Sloka 94: The essential child-bearing *sam-skaras* are the rite of conception, *garbhadhana*; the third-month blessing, *punsavana*; the hair-parting ceremony, *simantonnaya*; and the rite welcoming the new-born child, *jatakarma*.

Are There Rites for the Wisdom Years?

Sloka 95: Special ceremonies may mark the entrance into the elder advisor stage at age 48, renewal of marriage vows at age 60, and the stage of renunciation at 72. Funeral rites, *antyeshti samskara*, honor the transition called death.

Festivals



What Are the Festival Days of Saivism?

Sloka 96: Festivals are special times for worship of God and Gods, for family and community sharing and for spiritual practices. Saivites observe many festivals, both in the temple and the home. They also honor special holy days each week and month.



What Are the Primary Festivals to Siva?

Sloka 97: On Mahasivaratri, Siva's great night, we worship Parasiva. On Krittika Dipam we celebrate the infinite light of Parasakti. During Ardra Darshanam, we invoke the blessing of Parameshvara—Lord Siva Nataraja in His blissful Cosmic dance.



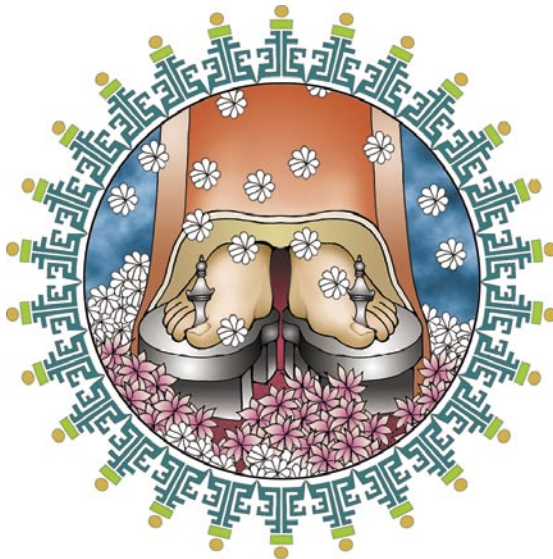
What Are the Major Ganesha Festivals?

Sloka 98: Ganesha Chaturthi is a joyous celebration of Ganesha's birthday. Vinayaka Vratam is twenty-one days of fasting and daily temple worship. Pancha Ganapati is a five-day family festival of harmony and gift-giving.



What are the Main Karttikeya Festivals?

Sloka 99: Vaikasi Visakham celebrates the anniversary of Lord Karttikeya's creation. Skanda Shashthi is a six-day festival honoring His conquest of light over darkness. Tai Pusam is a time of spiritual practices, and of public penance, called *kavadi*.



What Are Other Important Festivals?

Sloka 100: Besides the temple festivals, there are many home, community and national celebrations, most importantly Dipavali, Hindu New Year, Tai Pongal, *guru puja* days, *kumbha melas*, Guru Jayanti and Guru Purnima.

Siva Temples



What Is the Nature of the Siva Temple?

Sloka 101: The Siva temple is the home of God Siva and the Gods, the place in which the three worlds can most easily communicate. It is especially holy, having a ray of spiritual energy connecting it to the heaven worlds.



How Are Temples Founded and Built?

Sloka 102: Siva temples are founded by God Himself, often beginning with a vision or dream of a devout Saivite, then built by temple craftsmen, usually following the rules found in the *Agama* texts. In such a holy place, holiness itself can reside.



When Should We Attend the Temple?

Sloka 103: We attend the temple to be close to God Siva, Karttikeya or Ganesha at least once each week. We also go on auspicious days of the month, on yearly festival days and on the holiest day of the year, Mahasivaratri.



How Does One Attend a Siva Temple?

Sloka 104: Approaching with deep reverence, we begin our worship with Ganesha, walk all the way around the temple and go to the main shrine for *puja*. After receiving the holy ash and other blessed items, we sit quietly for awhile before leaving.



What Occurs Within the Siva Temple?

Sloka 105: Activities within a Siva temple vary from the daily cycle of *pujas* to the elaborate celebrations on annual festival days. Even in large crowds, our worship is personal and individual, rather than group oriented.

Temple Rites



What Is the Inner Importance of Puja?

Sloka 106: The traditional ceremony of worship, called *puja*, is a sacred act of the highest importance for the Hindu. It is how we call on God Siva and the Gods and express our heartfelt love, devotion and surrender.



What Is the Special Rite Called Archana?

Sloka 107: *Archana* is a shortened form of temple *puja* in which the name, birth star and spiritual lineage of a devotee are chanted to the God by the priest to ask for special, individual, family or group blessings and assistance.



What Is the Nature of Image Worship?

Sloka 108: Through the ceremony of *puja*, we worship and draw close to God Siva and the Gods, who by their infinite powers spiritually hover over and dwell within the image, or *murti*. We revere the holy image in the temple or shrine as their temporary body.



Who Are the Priests of Siva Temples?

Sloka 109: Holy priests, called Adisaivas, are the hereditary *pujaris* who care for the temple and conduct its varied rites and rituals as humble servants of God Siva. They are trained in the complex arts of worship, generally from a young age.

What Does the Pujari Do During Puja?

Sloka 110: During the *puja*, through chants, hand gestures and mystical ritual, the priest calls upon the Deity. All observances are precisely detailed in the *Agama* texts. Every act, every spoken syllable is rich in secret meaning.



Love of God



Is Temple Worship Only for Beginners?

Sloka 111: Temple worship is for all men and women at every level of spiritual development. Our understanding and experience of it deepens as we grow and mature through the four stages of service, devotion, meditation and enlightened wisdom.



How Do Devotees Prepare for Worship?

Sloka 112: We visit a Siva temple after bathing, dressing in clean clothes and preparing an offering. This offering can be as simple as a few flowers or fruits. We bring the mind to the holy feet of the Deity even while preparations begin.



How Do Our Prayers Reach the Gods?

Sloka 113: Through temple worship, the three worlds become open to one another, and the beings within them are able to communicate. Through the mystical practice of *puja*, the three worlds work together, and prayers are received.



Do Saivites Worship Only in Temples?

Sloka 114: One can worship God anywhere and be in contact with the inner worlds—in the temple, in the home shrine and in the *yogi's* meditation. But it is in the holy Siva temple that the three worlds most perfectly communicate.



What Is the Home Shrine's Significance?

Sloka 115: Every Saivite has a shrine, which ideally is the most beautiful room in the house. An extension of the temple, it is a special room for Deities and *devas*, and for us it is a holy, quiet place for daily worship and meditation.