



Communication of the Central Committee

INFORMATION ON SAHAJA YOGA PUJA PROTOCOL No 18

ACCORDING TO THE ADVICE OF
HER HOLINESS SHRI MATAJI NIRMALA DEVI

INTRODUCTION

Worship from the heart is not limited to a caste of trained officials. Anyone who has progressed in his or her recognition of HH Shri Mataji can be a pujari of the Goddess. The knowledge of the puja ritual must be open and shared among sahaja yogis. Shri Mataji encouraged us to have Her puja in our homes, precisely as a way to open our heart, as we seek ways to express the veneration, gratitude and love we feel for Her. On the other hand, participating in a puja without any sense of recognition may be detrimental for our growth.

On the collective level and as stated before, Shri Mataji held many pujas in different places around the world to spread vibrations. There was no set number of pujas during the year and in some cases Shri Mataji held two of the same puja in different places. It was only in recent years, when Shri Mataji stopped speaking, that a fixed number of international pujas was introduced during the year mainly in Italy and India. The original tradition of having international pujas in different countries has been reactivated by the CC and we recently saw how it helps spread vibrations and bring yogis together from all over the world. At the same time pujas have been maintained both in Cabella and India.

This text is intentionally kept simple to list the essential elements of a Sahaja Puja, as it emerged from the teachings of Shri Mataji and decades of practices.

1. PROTOCOL TO BE OBSERVED AT PUJA

Puja is a beautiful and respectful expression of our love for Shri Mataji in all of Her aspects, expressed through worship. It is not to be treated trivially or with lack of understanding and best when performed with full heart and attention. Size of attendance at a Puja, or a slavish adherence to ritual does not define its Divine power, but the openhearted way we perform this ageless act of devotion (bhakti). While pujas can be performed individually, in family or collectively, the following refers more to collective celebrations.



The Puja is offered for our own spiritual ascent. Its protocol is a protection for the attendants as they approach the highest reality with deepest humility and profound respect.

We know that different aspects of divinity invoked by the puja correspond to our respective charkas. As we celebrate the sublime reality of the Divine, it awakens the corresponding reality within ourselves. It is important to understand the difference between a ritual and a protocol.

“Puja is an external offering, but you should understand how you get the reward of the blessings of the puja and its Prasad. A Puja or a prayer grows from your heart...but if Puja is not performed from your heart or if Kundalini is not associated with recitation of Mantras then that Puja becomes a ritual.”

– Old Letter in Marathi – Meaning of Puja.

“Puja is really a triggering thing, it triggers you. It triggers you into another realm. It is really miraculous. Once you have done the Puja then you can project out much more in your silence. Your silence itself becomes so powerful.”

– 1980-07-19: The Meaning of Puja, Brighton, UK.

“Puja is one of the things by which you can excite the forms into formless...when you do the Puja, the forms melt into formless energies...and then blows the wind...and that is how these superimpositions on the Spirit are removed.”

– 1983-06-18: Importance of Puja and Havana, Paris, France.

“So it would be better if you all keep your hearts opened and watch the Puja without thinking about it.”

– 1983-06-18: Importance of Puja and Havana, Paris, France.

2. GETTING THE BEST FROM OUR OFFERING

We should all assemble at the Puja place in time and be prepared to sit in quiet meditation as we wait for Puja to start. Dress code should be dignified and, in the presence of HHSM, yoginis were encouraged to wear saris, as it would please Her. This is not the time to spend chatting to friends, or eating or drinking. Puja is a privilege, it is not a right, and only when we perform it with genuine dedication will we fully absorb the released energy. This period, just before the Puja starts, is the moment we pray to take our attention away from the base aspects of the material universe and transfer it to the reality of our Sahasrara.

At puja place a red bindi/kumkum may be applied on the forehead of all at the entrance to keep the Agya clear.



Parents should educate the children about the proper respect for Puja, and should remind them how to behave peacefully in a collective setting. The children should not be allowed to roam free, shouting and playing during the Puja, in order to show respect to the Deities and other yogis who are in attendance.

Because we may be seated in Puja for some time, it is advisable to eat beforehand and to wear comfortable clothing. It is not auspicious to eat or drink during Puja, our attention should be totally focused on the vibrations of the Puja ceremony. When facing the puja stage, men seat on the left side, (corresponding to the right side of the Photo of Shri Mataji, women on the right (corresponding to the left side of the Photo).

During the process of puja, eyes would be kept open watching the puja process and photo of Shri Mataji till the Aarti is complete.

3. FORMAT OF PUJA

The opening of the ceremony

The formal opening of the puja takes place with Avahan ceremony which includes a song inviting the Adi Shakti Shri Mataji to be present, an invocation asking forgiveness for mistakes that may be committed and announcing the place, time and attendants at the congregation.

The Shri Ganesha puja

The first part of the puja is focused on the deity of the first chakra, SHRI GANESHA who brings auspiciousness.

“Now in this special case of our Western lives, we have to establish our innocence, very important...that is why we worship Ganesha first...”

– 1980-07-19: The Meaning of Puja, Brighton, UK.

“By worshipping Me as Shri Ganesha your innocence will be established and you will see the vibrations rise, your vibrations will be increased and you will feel very stable within yourself.”

– 1986-05-24: Meaning and Importance of Puja, Madrid, Spain.

This ceremony includes WASHING THE LOTUS FEET on a picture of the Lotus Feet of Shri Mataji OR vibrated Silver Paduka (sandals/chappals)



“When you wash My Feet what do you do? Actually My Feet have been working very hard, and then you put a little water to soothe them...and a kind of sweet melodious Love flows out of these Feet then.”

– 1980-07-19: The Meaning of Puja, Brighton, UK.

The puja of the specific deity being invoked as an aspect of the Adi Shakti

In the practice of Sahaja yoga, pujas have been offered to deities that rule the charkas of our inner being. A constant feature is the Devi puja, with offering of a saree, performed by seven married ladies. The focused attention on a deity will be reflected in some specific aspects of the ritual, in the offerings made and in the choice of mantras and bhajans.

Making the offerings

“Collect the Puja material and offer it sincerely. There should be no formality or binding in the offerings. It is correct to wash hands, but is your heart washed?”

– Old Letter in Marathi – Meaning of Puja.

Mantras and bhajans

“You should say the Mantras in Puja but with great faith (Shraddha). There is no alternative to Shraddha. You should perform the Puja when Shraddha grows deep, so that the heart itself gets all Puja performed. At that time waves of bliss start flowing...”

– Old Letter in Marathi – Meaning of Puja.

Shri Mataji would encourage the use of mantras as it would draw the attention (chitta) in the act of worship. At the same time songs of worship (bhajans) are always part of the puja ceremony as a medium to carry our heart to the object of its devotion.

The Aarti

The puja ends with the Aarti, camphor fire and bhajan of Aarti ceremony to express our recognition of Shri Mataji and to seek Her blessings and protection beyond the ceremony of the puja.



4. THE PROCESS

Unfolding of the puja

At the start of Puja, attendants all stand and sing the invitation and welcome song (swagat) to pray the divine to kindly be present and accept the puja.

Often, the puja is introduced by watching a video lecture of Shri Mataji of a puja of the same aspect of Deity. A bhajan of seeking permission to offer puja may be sung.

Thereafter, a selection of children representing our innocence will gather on the podium to start the Shri Ganesha puja.

Following this a selection of Yogis from the regions or other groups will offer five elements on our behalf. (milk, ghee, yoghurt, honey, sugar, and some safran will be added) These elements, once offered, make up the basis for the drink (Panchamrut), which is offered to all Yogi-nis/yogis at the end of the Puja.

During the next portion of the Puja 7 married ladies will perform a Devi Puja on behalf of the attendance called Shringar (decoration) and Ooti. This includes the decoration of the holy picture of Shri Mataji's feet and this is done with kumkum, perfume and flowers etc. Then offering (Ooti) of fruits, dry fruits etc. and a selection of Prasad is presented.

One should realize the Deities and, more specifically Shri Mataji do not need the offerings we make in a puja. Out of their infinite compassion for us, they accept these offerings for our own benefit. In order to effectively absorb such benefits, however, it is recommended to offer puja with surrendered heart and silent attention.

Completing the puja

The final part of the main Puja ceremony will involve the whole collective standing to sing the Aarti as well as singing the Maha Mantras and performing a collective Namaskar.

After the Namaskar has been completed attendants are invited to sit in silent meditation for 5 to 10 minutes min. to absorb the vibrations of chaitanya released by the auspicious performing of the ceremony. Thus all attendants would be requested to sit down again, remain in a state of meditation and maintain the same atmosphere of devotion and silence for some time. This can be the powerful part of the Puja, when we can obtain maximum benefit from receiving the blessings flowing from Shri Mataji, as an expression of its acceptance of the puja.



The Prasad (offering of food)

After this period, a selection of girls and ladies will be asked to serve Prasad to the assembled Yogis. The Prasad can be distributed by boys or men also if required.

Prasad is an offering from the Divine to the assembled Yogis as an expression of the Lakshmi principle. It is not to be treated like a 'snack' and grabbed from the hand and gobbled down, nor should we try and pick and choose from the Prasad platter. It is offered delicately with the right hand, and it is accepted with respect and silence and appreciation with the right hand only. Once received, it is consumed without delay. While giving and taking Prasad, both must ensure that it or its particles shall not fall on the floor as mark of respect to Prasad. It is not proper to get up and walk around the room looking for more Prasad to fill the stomach.

If we accept it graciously and with shraddha, we will benefit in our Nabhi Chakra, experiencing satisfaction and fulfillment.

Cleaning and tidying

We should remember that we have invited the Deities to attend our location for Puja, which means that it is auspicious for everyone to help with the tidying up and cleaning afterwards. It may be inconsiderate to rush off after the Puja has ended, without trying to take care of the premises and surrounding Puja area. At all times we should try to conduct ourselves in the same attitude of peaceful, loving cooperation.

After the puja, the offering (Ooti) and flowers to Shri Mataji are then offered to a river, a lake or the sea (visarjan), for the water element to spread the vibrations.