The Hindu form of home worship, known as puja, is unique in all the world. Quite fittingly, it arises from the magnanimous spirit of hospitality that Hindu people are famous for. All guests are received and treated as God in the Hindu home, and God is no exception. During this daily morning rite, family members gather in their well-appointed shrine room to honor God as their royal guest. They receive Him warmly, offer a seat, serve water to quench His thirst, bathe and dress Him in beautiful clothes, burn the finest incense for His enjoyment, honor Him with light and flowers and feed Him a sumptuous meal. It is an intimate, personal interaction with God. Throughout the puja, the officiant chants sweetly to the Deity in Sanskrit, describing these kindly acts and beseeching His blessings. Finally, he thanks the Deity for His presence, bids Him farewell and humbly apologizes for any errors he may have committed. It is a ritual performed daily in millions of homes. In a sense, each Hindu has a private temple right in the home, and invites God to abide there, close to the family. Mystically, it keeps open the channels to the superconscious, divine areas of the inner worlds, bringing peace, health, prosperity and happiness to family members. Intellectually, it keeps religious beliefs strong. Emotionally, it cultivates a burgeoning love of God, known as bhakti. Puja literally means “worship, adoration.” Home puja is a personal version of the public puja performed in temples by priests. The forms of puja vary widely between Hinduism’s four main denominations and its hundreds of lineages, but all puja finds its basis in sixteen offerings, ṣodasha upacha ra.

These also vary somewhat, depending on the scriptural source that is followed, but one popular list is the following: 1) Åvâhanam, invoking; 2) Åsanam, offering a seat; 3) Pâdyam, offering water for cleansing feet; 4) Arghyam, offering water for cleansing the palms; 5) Åchamaniyam, sipping water; 6) Snânam, ceremonial bath; 7) Vasstram, offering vestments; 8) Yajnopavîtam, offering sacred thread; 9) Chandanam, offering sandalwood paste; 10) Pushpam, offering flowers; 11) Dhûpam, burning incense; 12) Dipam, waving lighted camphor; 13) Naivedyam, offering food; 14) Añjali, praying with folded hands; 15) Pradakshinâ, circumambulation; 16) Udvasanam, farewell. Lord Ganesha is the God honored and worshiped by all Hindus, so here we present a puja for this universally beloved, boon-giving Lord of Beginnings and Ruler of Obstacles, which can be performed by anyone, young and old, Hindu or non-Hindu, Vaishnava or Shaka, Saiva or Smarta. It is Lord Ganesha who bridges all distinctions and unifies all peoples, and it is through His worship that we ultimately come to know all the other Gods.
A young Hindu family share in morning worship, as father performs the traditional rite of worship called puja, honoring and invoking the blessings of the Elephant-Headed Lord of Dharma, the Deity worshiped by Hindus of all lineages.
In performing the puja, preparation is of utmost importance—gathering flowers, cleaning the altar and puja tray, making ready the oil lamps and preparing the fruit and/or cooked food offering. It is common to chant a Ganesha mantra or softly sing devotional songs while performing these tasks. This quiets the mind and brings one’s awareness close to Him. Indeed, all this preparation is an integral part of worship.

As you see in the photos, there are a number of traditional implements needed for the puja, such as a metal tray, holy water cups and spoons, ghee lamp, camphor lamp, as well as puja supplies, like holy ash and sandalwood paste. These are now available at Indian grocery stores, and online at www.minimela.com. For more information on setting up an altar, see Chapter 22, “Hindu Home Sanctuary.”

Before beginning the puja, check the altar to make sure all necessary articles are there, so that you don’t have to interrupt the flow of puja to get a missing item. Arrange all the items the same way for each puja so you can reach automatically when needed, with those most frequently used closest at hand.

Hold the attitude that, as pujari, you are a servant of the Gods, a channel for the spiritual energies. Only thoughts of God are on your mind as you perform puja, thus enhancing the outpouring of divine blessings. Tradition provides a caution: you should never perform puja during or within 31 days of experiencing severe anger or other deep emotional upset, but it is all right to attend. Also, puja is not performed or attended by women during their menses, or by anyone who has a wound that is bleeding. Puja is a yoga, or link, between this and inner worlds. Therefore, you must be at your best in mood and emotion to assist in making this connection. Before performing puja, you should be freshly dressed, clean and undistracted by daily concerns. Having bathed beforehand, enter the shrine room and prostrate.

The form of prostration differs for men and women. Men perform “eight-limbed obeisance,” ashtanga pranama, a fully prone pose in which hands, chest, forehead, knees and feet touch the ground. Women perform “five-limbed obeisance,” panchanga pranama, a kneeling pose in which hands, head and knees touch the ground (with ankles crossed, right over the left).

When everything is ready, take your seat in a cross-legged posture in front of and to the left of the altar, facing the Deity but turned slightly to the right. Close your eyes, sit quietly for a moment and tune your nerve system to God Ganesha and the sacred puja you are about to perform. If others are attending, be careful not to sit directly in front of the Deity, thereby blocking their view of the altar. Generally one remains seated throughout the ritual, though in some shrines it may be more comfortable to stand during the arati or throughout the puja. When small children are in the home, the shrine room is locked so they do not disturb the contents. If a lockable room is not available, the altar is raised so as to be out of reach, and the puja is performed.
standing up. Those attending will usually sit during most of the ceremony, then stand during the final arati. However, this again may be left to individual discretion in consideration of the height of the shrine.

During the ritual, you will be making many offerings. Most offerings are made with the right hand, never just the left, though there are occasions when both hands are used.

The offering of food is an important part of puja. Traditionally a simple dish of cooked rice is prepared especially for the Deity, with cooking utensils reserved for this purpose alone. If cooked food is not offered, then freshly cut fruit may be substituted. Keep the offering covered until the point in the puja when the pranas (life energies) of the food are offered to the Deity. Keeping the food covered helps to preserve purity and contain the pranas, which the Gods and devas can see, absorb, enjoy and reflect back to cleanse the auras of devotees. After the puja, the food offerings—along with holy ash (vibhuti), sacred water (tirtha), sandalwood paste (chandana), red powder (kumkuma) and flowers (pushpa)—are passed out and enjoyed as prasada.

A recording of sacred chanting from the Vedas may be played softly before the puja begins. At the high point, as the arati is presented, loud drums and nagasvaras resound. As the sacraments are passed out by the pujari, the divine musical ragas are heard softly played on the vina, or Vedic chanting or devotional songs may be played.

After the sacraments are passed out, encourage everyone to sit quietly for a while to enjoy the sanndhya, the ever-present feeling of the Divine, that the God, Gods, inner-plane gurus and devas suffuse in the shrine room. Such internalized worship naturally follows a puja. Those who perform daily japa will find this an ideal time for that sadhana.

Internalizing worship in this way gives you and all members of the family strength to face the outside world, its daily challenges and, yes, school tests. Internalizing worship is the core of the Sanatana Dharma. It is the root, stem and blossom of the highest chakra, the 1,000-petalled lotus. It is the force that gives the strength to resist temptation, to turn others from their bad ways and to face up to and live through birth karmas, prarabdha karmas, that are brought with you in this life. It gives the courage to resist making new, especially unwanted, karmas to be faced at a later date. It gives the willpower needed in this Kali Yuga to survive. It gives the love which provokes the understanding to overlook and forgive, then forget. Finally, internalized worship gives the peace of mind, the shanti, in which all saints, sages, mahatmas and great seers dwell, in their jnana, their wisdom, of how things work in their universe of which we are a vital part.

Many people are hesitant to do puja, specific, traditional rites of worship, because they feel they don’t have enough training or don’t understand the mystical principles behind it well enough. Most Hindus depend on the priests to perform the pujas and sacraments for them, or to train them to perform home puja and give them permission to do so through initiation, called diksha. However, simple pujas, such as this one, may be performed by anyone wishing to invoke grace from God, Mahadevas and devas. Mothers, daughters, aunts, fathers, sons, uncles, all may perform puja within their own home, and do, as the Hindu home is considered to be nothing less than an extension of the nearby temple.

The Ganesha puja presented on the following pages consists of a series of Sanskrit chants to be intoned while performing the indicated actions and visualizations. Each chant is given in three forms, first in Sanskrit’s traditional Devanagari script, second in transliterated for those who speak English, and third in a
freely-rendered English translation. Each translation is followed by detailed instructions to guide the pujari’s actions.

The chants of the simple Ganesha puja given here are in Sanskrit, Hinduism’s ancient scriptural language. Time spent mastering the pronunciation is time well spent. Ideally, training is received personally from a priest, pundit or other person proficient in Sanskrit, so that you can chant the verses properly. Such a teacher will generally begin by teaching the alphabet and will offer training in reading in the Devanagari script, as well as the transliteration to help English-speaking students. Learning Sanskrit is not mandatory, and for those who do not have a teacher, we have a voice recording of this entire puja for learning the mantras properly. It is available at www.himalayanacademy.com/looklisten/chanting-songs/ganesha-puja. A key to Sanskrit transliteration system used in this puja is found in any of the Master Course trilogy books.

Devotion During Sacred Rituals

While correct chanting is important, the essential part of any puja is devotion. Without love of God and the Gods, outer performance is of little value. But with true devotion, even the simplest puja can be a profoundly sacred experience. Devotion is facilitated by the belief that you really are communing with the Divine through puja, that the Gods and devas do actually hear your prayers, enjoy your intonations and respond by sending blessings that purify your aura and protect your home. Though you can’t see them with your physical eyes, they are there nonetheless. As you perform or attend puja, visualize the Deity sitting before you, accepting your offerings, pleased to be in your company, delighted with your love and hospitality. Think of the God as a part of your family, a grand being who is concerned with your welfare. Through strong visualization and sincere devotion, your sensitivity to the darshan will grow and your relationship with the Deity will become strong and close.

Cultivating devotion is called bhakti yoga. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami stressed its importance in this way, “Bhakti yoga is love on all levels of consciousness—physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. The greatest inhibiting factor in practicing bhakti yoga is the doubting, cynical, intellectual mind. Doubt and skepticism harden the heart and narrow the mind. The bloom of bhakti softens the heart and relaxes the intellect. Through bhakti yoga, the yoga of devotion, the combative mind becomes erased, absorbed into the consciousness of the One Self, the Being permeating all beings. With the help of devotion, you can soar within. You can not only pull away detachedly from unwholesome areas of the mind, but it is possible to keep yourself in an inward state of expanded consciousness.”

Use and Care of the Shrine Room

Keep the shrine spotlessly clean, and decorate it for festivals and special holy days. Visit your shrine before you leave the home, seeking blessings and protection as you leave its shelter, and go there again for purification upon returning. Worship in heartfelt devotion, so the Gods’ grace flows freely toward you and loved ones. Make the shrine a refuge for all family members, a haven where they can find peace and solace, where they can connect with the Gods, offer their praise and pray for practical needs. Train your children to worship in the shrine before each important event in life, such as a major exam at school or when faced with a personal challenge or problem.
**Water Sipping**

*By the Pujari*

| Aum! Hail to the God whose face is always shining! |
| Aum! Hail to the God who has only one tusk! |
| Aum! Hail to the God with huge elephant ears! |

Holding the spoon with your left hand, take a spoonful of water from the cup and place it in the right palm to rinse the hand, letting the excess fall onto the floor or a tray. Put another spoonful of water into the right hand, intone “Aum sumukkhāya svāhā” and sip the water. Repeat for the second and third lines, then rinse the right hand again.

**Ganeśa**

*Invocation*

Salute Lord Ganeśa by holding hands in añjali mudrā, the prayerful pose. Then, while reciting the verse, tap your temples lightly with your knuckles three times, as in the photo. Alternatively, you may cross your arms before your face, the left hand tapping the right temple and vice versa. Return your hands to añjali mudrā while reciting the last words of the chant.

**Dedication of Pūjā, Statement of Purpose**

Aum! O Lord dressed in splendid white, pervading the universe, shining radiantly like rays of the full moon, having four mighty arms and a charming, happy face, we meditate on you that all obstacles may be quelled.

**Five periods of the day (insert one in chant).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uṣṭ:</th>
<th>Kāla</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>प्रातः:</td>
<td>काल</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>मध्याह्नकाल</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>साययनकाल</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>उर्द्धयामकाल</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aum adya pūrvokta evaṅgaṇuṇaśakala viśeṣeṇa viśiṣṭāyaṁ aṣṭāṁ śūbhāṁś | Mahāgaṇeśa praṇam śuddhitau Mahāgaṇeśvara prītyartham Mahāgaṇeśvara prasāda siddhyartham Adya āpam upasprīṣya |
At this particularly auspicious moment, time and place, on this auspicious day, so that we may realize the fullness of your grace, to the best of our ability this (insert time of day) Gāṇeśa pūjā we shall now perform. Aum. By touching pure water we become pure. While reciting this statement of purpose, take a pinch of rice and hold it at chest height in your closed right palm, with open left hand underneath. Insert the time of day and the place where indicated. As you chant the last word, karisheya, gently toss the rice toward the base of the image. Then, with the left hand, place a spoonful of water into your right palm and ritually wash both hands with the water by wiping the palms together a few times as you recite “Aum apa upa spriṣya.” Once the sankalpam has been chanted, the pūjā must not be interrupted or abandoned until the concluding mantras are recited.

We now meditate on you, O Lord, and invite you to sit upon the jewel-studded, lion throne we have prepared for you. We now humbly bathe each of your white lotus feet and gently wash each of your precious hands, Lord Gāṇeśa. With your right hand offer a spoonful of pure water by holding it up before the Deity momentarily and then placing it in the tīrtha cup. This is how all water offering is done throughout the pūjā. As you chant the first line, visualize yourself bathing the feet of Gāṇeśa. Offer a second spoonful of pure water as you intone the next line and visualize yourself washing His hands.

Offer a spoonful of pure water to Gāṇeśa. Visualize His accepting it in His Hand and sipping it.

We now humbly bathe each of your white lotus feet and gently wash each of your precious hands, Lord Gāṇeśa.
We now bathe you, beloved Lord Gaṅgā, the pure one, with the water that was brought from the Ganges in the golden pot. We have bathed you in sacred Gaṅgā water.

While ringing the bell and reciting this verse, dip a flower into the tīrtha water and gently sprinkle the Deity. Do this three times or more. Hold the flower in your right hand in the mṛgī mudrā, the stem between your third and fourth fingers. If the altar design allows, you may pour water over the mūrti, rather than sprinkling it during this chant.

We give you this auspicious unbroken rice, our magnificent Lord, that you may enjoy resplendent clothing. We give you auspicious unbroken rice, Lord Śiva, that you may be handsomely adorned with a white, cotton sacred thread. Aum. O Lord, the destroyer of the demon Andhakāsura, you who resides in the Himalayas, please accept the good smelling chandana with kuṅkuma and choice offerings.

Dress the Deity. Offer a pinch of unbroken rice while chanting each of the first two lines. Repeat the third and fourth lines over and over as you decorate the Deity with flowers. The last line is recited once while applying vibhūti (holy ash), chandana (sandalpaste) and kuṅkuma. (red powder).
We now offer this auspicious unbroken rice. And for the fulfillment of our devotion, we offer fresh, blooming flowers for your enjoyment, our peerless Lord.

A pinch of rice is offered with the first line. A handful of flowers is offered with the second.

The finest incense, of magical qualities, of full and varied fragrances, Lord Gałęsa, we set aflame and offer to you in this, our home. Incense of the finest resins and perfumes, incomparable in sweetness and aroma, to be inhaled and enjoyed by you and all the Gods and devas, we offer to you in this, our home. Eagerly we offer to you, our resplendent Lord, fine resin incense, of heavenly odor, bewitching to the mind, rising out of a ghee-fed flame. We offer it to you in this, our home. This fine incense we have duly offered for your pleasure. And we again offer you cool, sweet water for sipping and auspicious unbroken rice.

During this chant, make three circles before the Deity with lighted incense held in your right hand while ringing the bell with your left hand. Complete the third circle and trace an Aum as you chant the fifth line, dhūpamāgrāpayāmi. At that point raise the incense higher and ring the bell louder. Put the incense down, and recite the next two lines. With the first, water is offered, with the second, a pinch of rice.
While reciting the first part of the mantra, uncover the food offering. Then, while chanting the last line and ringing the bell, circle a spoonful of water over the food and offer it to the Deity. While ringing the bell softly, gently waft the aroma and vital essences of the food or fruit toward the Deity. Do this by sweeping the right hand over the food with a flower held between your fingers, stem upward. The palm is facing downward as it moves over the food, then rotates upward as the sweep approaches the Deity, bringing the aroma and prāṇa toward His nose and mouth. As you complete the third line, gently toss the flower toward the feet of the Deity at the end of the sweep with all the love in your heart.

Within fire is spiritual knowledge, our refuge. Because of it, no harm can befall us. In our home, cows are honored and respected, which enlivens nations in all directions. Let us not forget right knowledge, culture and religious rites, O matchless Lord! Nor may any soul in this world so forget! Spreading before and around us, purity and peace abound, as this holy flame illumines all with clarity. This divine flame we have shown you, Lord Gaṇeṣa, and dutifully, in proper order. That all may receive your grace, we again offer you cool, sweet water for sipping and auspicious unbroken rice.

Offer the oil light to Lord Gaṇeṣa and ring the bell as you chant this hymn. As with the incense, circle three times then draw the Aum with the flame. Then raise the flame and ring the bell louder, then stop ringing. Offer water, then a flower or a pinch of rice.
Aum! Salutations to all the Gods and devas present! Because we are offering you our very best, Lord Gañeṣa, in all sincerity and love, please consider the essence of this food as among the finest meals you have ever received. To the best of our ability in the worship of you, we offer this food and humbly beg that you will receive it.

Ringing the bell loudly as you recite the above chant, pick up a flower or a pinch of rice and hold it at chest height in the fingertips of the right hand. As the last word is spoken, gently release the rice or flower at the feet of the Deity. Then put down the bell and raise your hands above your head in devout prayer that Gañeṣa will accept the meal. While your hands are raised, close your eyes and visualize Gañeṣa accepting and partaking of the meal. After a moment, lower your hands and intone Aum quietly.

In this section of the pūjā, chant the “garland of Gañeṣa’s 108 names.” As you intone each name, offer with your right hand a flower, some flower petals or a pinch of rice. The names are attributes of the Deity, each delineating an aspect of His wondrous nature. Each name is preceded by the mantra Aum and followed by nama, meaning “obeisance, adoration or homage to.” Thus the first line is chanted Aum Vināyakāya Namā (pronounced, “na-ma-ha”).

In this section of the pūjā, chant the “garland of Gañeṣa’s 108 names.” As you intone each name, offer with your right hand a flower, some flower petals or a pinch of rice. The names are attributes of the Deity, each delineating an aspect of His wondrous nature. Each name is preceded by the mantra Aum and followed by nama, meaning “obeisance, adoration or homage to.” Thus the first line is chanted Aum Vināyakāya Namā (pronounced, “na-ma-ha”).
United with power
proliferation
who has a large belly
with fan-like ears
destroy evil with lion-like courage
foremost knower of God
the master of destiny
lord of planets
who is love
whose eyes are the moon, sun and fire
who holds a noose and a goad
who holds a nose and a goad
who is fierce-looking
who transends qualities
who is without blemish
self-fulfilled, perfect
whose lotus feet sages worship
who is fond of pomegranates
the boon giver
the eternal, unchanging one
the skillful one
fond of the twice-born
who is fearless
who weilds the mace
who weilds a discus
who holds a sugarcane bow
the bestower of wealth
the unborn one
who hold a proud blue lotus flower
the Lord of wealth
who delights in praise
supports Himalaya, His family's mountain
has matted hair
the destroyer of sins in the Kaliyuga
who wears a moon upon his head
the beloved, loving one
absorbed in meditation
who is our refuge
the grantor of devotees' desires
the peaceful one
bestower of unsullied liberation
embodiment of existence-knowledge-bliss
the great wisdom
full of compassion
who has self-control
who is free from aversion to knowledge
who brings terror to demons
with beautiful throat
Lord of the Wise
worshiped by Rama
who is the destiny of all
whose sacred thread is a king cobra
of stout neck
who is self-created
who loves the sound of Sâma Veda
The one who understands the beauty of the blooming powers of the Supreme Being is blessed with beautiful, blooming life, progeny and cattle. The moon is certainly the bloom of those powers. One who realizes the qualities of the moon, which are nothing but the blooming divine powers, is blessed with a blooming, beautiful life of perfection, progeny and cattle. One who realizes this principle and realizes the source from whom all these powers have come himself becomes the abode of those divine powers. Aum, salutations, Lord Mahâga∫eßvara, we respectfully offer you this flower mantra.

While chanting this mantra, hold a handful of flowers before you in añjali mudrâ, hands cupped loosely around the flowers at chest height. Recite the verses with adoration. As you intone the last word, samarpayâmi, lower your hands (as shown in the photo) and toss the flowers into the air above the murti, sending a shower of blossoms upon the God with feelings of gratitude and loving devotion.

### Mantra Pushpam

**Worship With Flowers**

Aum yo-pâm pushpaṁ vedâ,
pushpâvân prajâvân pasûman bhâvati, 
chandramâvâ apâm pushpam, pushpâvân prajâvân pasûman bhâvati, 
yâvân vedâ, yo-pâmâyatanâm vedâ, 
âyatânâvân bhâvati.

Aum Śrī Mahâgaṇëśvara namâ 
mantra pushpânjâliṁ samarpayâmi

The one who understands the beauty of the blooming powers of the Supreme Being is blessed with beautiful, blooming life, progeny and cattle. One who realizes this principle and realizes the source from whom all these powers have come himself becomes the abode of those divine powers. Aum, salutations, Lord Mahâgaṇëśa, we respectfully offer you this flower mantra.

While chanting this mantra, hold a handful of flowers before you in añjali mudrâ, hands cupped loosely around the flowers at chest height. Recite the verses with adoration. As you intone the last word, samarpayâmi, lower your hands (as shown in the photo) and toss the flowers into the air above the murti, sending a shower of blossoms upon the God with feelings of gratitude and loving devotion.
To the son of Śiva, the master and protector of noble, righteous people, the wisest among the wise, preeminent among the renowned, the greatest ruler, protector of the knowledge of all knowledgeable people, we offer this light. To all Gods and devas present, we offer this auspicious flame. We offer holy water for sipping and auspicious unbroken rice grains to grant us blessings.

During this chant, hold the lit oil lamp or camphor burner in your right hand and the bell in your left. While ringing the bell and slowly reciting the ārati mantra, make three circles clockwise before Gaṇeśa with the flame. Stop at the top of the third circle, lower the lamp slightly and trace the symbol of Aum in Sanskrit or in your native language. Then lift the flame slightly above the Aum that you placed in the ākāśic ether and ring the bell louder for all three worlds to hear. Keep ringing loudly while chanting the above two-line salutation to the devas (“āvāhitābhyaḥ ... sandarśayāmi”). Put down the bell and the lamp and then, with the flame still burning, offer a spoonful of water with “āchamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi,” then a pinch of rice with “maṅgalāshatāṁ samarpayāmi.”

O Indra, Lord of material and spiritual prosperity, please protect the space between the heavens and earth as well as the mind between the body and the soul with the help of fifteen noble powers and virtues (five prānas, five jñānendriyas and five karmendriyas). Your protection and blessings sustain me.

As you recite this mantra, make three circles above the burning flame with a flower held in the right hand, stem upward (photo next page). With the last words, toss the flower gently toward the Deity and place your hands in anjali mudrā while facing the altar. Now offer the flame at chest level to all present, allowing each to draw both hands through it and lightly touch the eyes three times (photo next page, upper right). The Gods and devas can see us through the flame and
send blessings. If especially honored persons are present, such as one’s guru, parents or teacher, take the flame first to them. Then proceed clockwise to the others. In some cases, the pūjārī may stand near the altar while devotees come forward to receive the flame. If no one is attending the pūjā, you may personally draw blessings from the flame, but not otherwise. Finally, present the flame once more to the Deity, then extinguish it with a wave of the right hand or by snuffing it out with a flower.

Before reciting the above verse, place a pinch of rice in your left palm, then transfer it to the right palm. Add to the rice three spoonfuls of water and close the hand (left photo). Hold the rice before you as you face the Deity, the left hand under the right hand, and recite the mantra. As you intone the last words, let the rice and water fall into the tīrtha cup (right photo). The sacraments may then be given out in the following order: holy ash, blessed water, sandalpaste, red powder, food and flowers. If no one is attending the pūjā, you may partake of the sacraments yourself, but not otherwise. If many devotees are attending, a second person may help pass out the sacraments, except for the holy ash, which is always given by the person who performed the pūjā.

To the best of our ability we have performed this (state time of day) pūjā and worshiped you, dear Lord, the brightest of all the Gods. May it please you. May it be enjoyed by you. Surrounded by your presence, we place ourselves in your care, loving Gaṇeśa.
Aum ávâhanaṁ na jânâmi na jânâmi visarjanam, pûjâñchaiva na jânâmi kshamyatâm parameśvara. mantrahînaµ kriyâhînam bhaktihînaµ sureßvara, yat pûjitam mayâdeva paripûr∫am tadastute, anyathâ ßara∫aµ nâsti tvameva ßara∫am mama, tasmât kâru∫yabhâvena raksha raksha ga∫eßvara. Aum tat sat Aum.

O Lord, we do not know the proper means of inviting you or, when taking our leave, how to wish you farewell. A full knowledge of priestly rites has not been imparted to us, so you must overlook and forgive any mistakes or omissions. We know little of mantras or pious conduct, and we are strangers to true bhakti. Nonetheless, please forgive us and regard our attempts as exact and complete—because you are our only refuge. With your compassionate nature, Lord Ganesha, we beseech you, please protect those who pray. That which is Truth is Aum.

This concluding apology is recited with hands in añjali mudra. It is a formal and devout end to the worship service. As the final words, “Aum tat sat Aum,” are spoken, it is customary to clap your hands together three times. All may now prostrate.

It is traditional and most uplifting to meditate for a few minutes after the pujâ, rather than rushing off to daily duties. There is great personal benefit in such internalized worship, eyes closed, mind still, following, deep within yourself, the prânas that the pujâ has created. Externalized worship is the bhakti path; internalized worship is the yoga path. Both together make the complete circle that sustains devotees in their spiritual life, making them strong and kindly in moving the forces of the world in their daily life. This dual-pronged effort towards self-transformation and right living is the very foundation for the final goal of all seekers: moksha, freedom from rebirth.