

Why do we ring the bell in a temple?

Bells are usually seen hanging at the entry of the temples and rung to inform the deity of the devotee's arrival. The bells are used during Aarti and prayers at both sunrise and sunset. Bells can come in all shapes and sizes, and between them, a definite beat and rhythm is employed for greater effectiveness. Ringing the bell produces an auspicious sound 'Aum' which is the universal name of the Lord. This auspicious sound allows the devotee to gain a vision of the Lord who is all-auspicious.

WHY?

It is believed that the ringing of the bells arouse the divinity within the deities. If bells are not used, there is a risk the deity may remain in deep meditation and the prayers and offerings may not be accepted. The sound of the bell is said to also provide protection from any harmful effects of problems in the near future. The Skanda Purana states that the ringing of the temple bell absolves devotees from sins they have committed.

The Aarti is usually accompanied by the bell, sounds of the conch and other musical instruments. Alongside their

musical purposes, these instruments also drown out inauspicious and irrelevant noises which can lead to distraction. As we start our daily rituals, one usually chants the following along with ringing the bell:

'I ring this bell indicating the invocation of divinity, So that virtuous and noble forces enter (my home and heart); And the demonic and evil forces From within and without, depart.'

Humankind was created in the presence of musical sound; this same sound is generated by the ringing of the bell and when one chants Aum. All these methods lead to the same endpoint and allow clarity of vision.

On the other end of the spectrum, a bell is also said to symbolise death due to the striking finality it carries with it. When taking dead bodies for cremation one is to ring the bell. It is also believed that when this world ends there will be a similar sound of ringing bells.

Mentioned in
Skanda Purana

Use
Prayer, rituals, temples and cremation

Sound
Aum

Effect
Clarity of vision and mind

