

Physical Parts of Temple

1. What is Praakaram?
 - a. Prakaaram is the compound. Starting from ONE, there can be upto 7 Praakaras in a Temple. (Srirangam is one example for 7 Praakaaras).
2. What is Gopuram?
 - a. Gopuram is Temple Tower. Raja Gopuram is the entrance Tower.
3. What is Mahaa Dwaaram?
 - a. Mahaa Dwaaram is the main entrance of the Temple.
4. What is Garbha Gruham?
 - a. Garbha Gruham is the principal place of the deity. Hence, this is the most important place in the entire temple complex. Only authorised Archakas can get into the temple. Entry is restricted to maintain sanctity and security.
 - b. If the Temple is deemed as an embodiment of the God, Garbha Gruha constitutes the HEAD.
5. What is Antaraalayam or Antaraalikam?
 - a. Antaraalayam (Antaraalikam) is next to Garbha Gruham. This is the closest point, a devotee is allowed to.
 - b. If the Temple is deemed as an embodiment of the God, Garbha Gruha constitutes the NECK.
6. What is Vimaanam?
 - a. Vimaanam is another word for Tower (Gopuram). Usually the Main Tower atop Garbha Gruham is called Vimaanam.
7. What is Shikharam?
 - a. Shikharam is the topmost part of the Temple. It has a Kalasham (made of metal) adorning the top part of Vimaanam.
8. What are the symbols found atop the Shikharam in some temples?
 - a. Vishnu Temple has Chakra (Sudarshana), Trishula (Trident) for Shiva Temple, connoting the main deity in the Temple.
9. What is Paakashaala?
 - a. Paakashaala means the place of cooking. Cooking = Paaka.

- b. Food Preparation should be done in sterile environment. This iron clad rule applies to home also. Hence, only authorised and trained persons are allowed operate here.
- c. To enforce this system, MADl or separation is used.
- d. The Correct word to codify this Purity is **Shoucham. (Cleanliness)**

10. What is Dhawaja Stambha?

- a. Dhaja Stambha means Flag Pole. During every major festivity, hoisting the flag and lowering it signify the starting and conclusion.
- b. In case, the temple is very crowded, you can stand near Dhawaja Stambha to pray. Even during inauspicious periods, you can stand near Dhawaja Stambha and record attendance.
- c. Entry beyond is a sign to purity of body and mind.

11. How many types of idols are prescribed for the Main deity of the Temple?

- a. Bera means body/ embodiment. Five Types of Bera is prescribed for each main deity.
 - i. Dhruva Bera (Main Idol/ Statue)
 - ii. Koutuka Bera (Always second in command, usually made of metal. Always situated in the Garbha Gruha)
 - iii. Utsava Bera is the set of statues taken around the Temple for Utsava Precessions and Kalyanam etc.) These are very important set representing the Dhruva Bera, which cannot be taken out due to permanent fixation.
 - iv. Snapana Bera is Saaligrama (a stone usually found in Himalayas - Nepal) with a naturally formed hole). Since, daily Abhishekam is not possible in major Temple due to variety of logistics, daily Abhishekam is performed to this Saaligraama and Teertham collected for distribution.
 - v. Bali Bera - is the subsidiary (Upa Devataa) representing the main deity is taken around the temple for offering Bali to various stake holders of the Temple. (Sudarshana in Vishnu Temples and Chandeeswara in Siva Temples are the supervisors to ensure equitable distribution of Bali (Morsels of Rice). Later these are consumed by various creatures (Birds/ insects dependent on the land, used by the Temple).

12. What is an Archaka?

- a. Archaka is the one, who offers Puja / Archana to the main deity every session.

- b. Pradhana Archaka - is the main priest.
- c. Upa Archaka or Sahaaya Archaka are the assistants.
- d. Classification varies from temple system to other.
- e. Pujari is a slang and not appropriate to denote. (Though grammatically, that term can also be supported.)

13. Who is a Purohit?

- a. One who shows the correct path thru rituals is called a Purohit. This word is generally used, when you conduct personal rituals such as Naama Karanam, Jaata Karma, Upanayana, Vivaaha, Gruha Pravesham etc.

Concepts

14. What is Veda? What is the number of Vedas? Name them?

- a. Veda means Knowledge/ Wisdom.
- b. Vedas are the basis of Bhaarateeya Samskruti (Indian Culture).
- c. Rigveda, Yajurveda, Saama Veda and Atharva Veda are the four Vedas.
(Rik has fixed metre with a number of letters, Yajus = free flow, Sama = Singing)
- d. Veda Mantras in Samhitaa, have explanatory sentences contained in a Braahmanam.
Both Samhita and Braahmanam constitute Veda.
- e. Sage Vyasa has made these classification of Mantras, earning him the sobriquet Veda Vyasa.

15. How are Vedas relevant to a Temple?

- a. The rituals propounded in Vedas, are central to every custom of India.
- b. Thus, Veda Mantras and practices thereof are basis to Temples.
- c. Chanting of Veda Mantras, brings the cosmic energy of divinity to the place of chanting.
- d. Hence, Veda Parayanam is prescribed for every occasion of life and every place, although the set of Mantras vary.

16. What is the difference between a Veda Pundit and Archaka?

- a. Archana is worship. In Archana (worship), very few Mantras identified by the Sages are used.
- b. Veda contains a vast set of Mantras for all the occasions and rituals.

- c. Veda Pundit, memorises the entire set of Mantras and recites them. With years of practice, his chanting becomes perfect. Whereas Archaka requires a miniscule set of Mantras, with lesser number of years in training.
- d. For Archaka, practical work is foremost; whereas Veda Pundit has the theoretic ingredients in his repertoire.

17. What is Puraana?

- a. Puraanaas are compiled by Sage Vyasa. These are developed on the themes propounded by Vedas.
- b. The theories and concepts are buttressed by detailed explanation thru narrations of stories.
- c. Puraanas constitute the core of Agama Sastra, along with the ancillary texts.

18. What is Vedanga?

- a. Vedangas means Limb of Veda.
- b. Vedanga is required to understand and utilise Veda Mantra, without which the Vedic texts are nothing but a locked treasure house. (If Vedas are a mound of solid gold, Vedangas are the procedures/ tools to make the solid bar into fashionable jewellery.)
- c. Six Vedangas = Shiksha, Vyakaranam, Chhandas, Niruktam, Jyoutisham and Kalpa are the six Sastras, called Vedangas.
 - i. Shiksha (Teaches the methodology to pronounce)
 - ii. Vyakaranam (Grammar = teacher to make and dissect a word to give correct meaning)
 - iii. Chhandas (Metre = teaches the construction of sentence into proper metre)
 - iv. Niruktam (Etymology helps us to correlate a word with its meaning).
 - v. Jyoutisham (Explains the celestial timing for successful beginnings and conclusions. This is compiled after millennia of research and observation by our fore father seers.
 - vi. Kalpa (Procedure of conducting his Life, Rituals. This Kalpa has four parts. Kalpa connects all the dots described in the Veda, to bring the total picture to the mind, in order to lead a good life.
 - 1. Dharma Sutra - Code of Conduct
 - 2. Gruhya Sutra - Ceremonies related to a family/ person.

3. Srouta Sutra - Rituals (Ranging from few hours to few years) prescribed by the Veda in entirety.
4. Sulba Sutra - Construction Science to make Yaaga Shala and various tools

19. What is Agama?

- a. Agama is the code of Temple Construction and Temple administration. Agama originally meant Veda only. However, now a days, it is used in the above mentioned context, as they are dependent on the core principle laid out in the Veda.
- b. Puraanas are the principle source of Agamaas.

20. What are the main Agamaas followed?

- a. Shaiva Sect - Kaarana Agama
- b. Shaakteya Sect - Kaamika Agama
- c. Vaishava Sect - Vaikhanasa (Tirumala) and Paancharaatra (Bhadraachalam)

21. What is system of Time Calculation (Kaala Maanam) followed in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka?

- a. Chaandra Maanam is followed here.
- b. Chaandra Maanam is calculated on the basis of Poornima and Amaavaasya (Full Moon and New Moon day and other days in between)

22. What is Soura Maanam? Where is it followed?

- a. Soura Maanam is calculation based on Surya Gati.
- b. It is followed in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bengal, Asom etc.

23. What is the exact system followed here?

- a. We have Luni Solar system, where as both the systems are reconciled to an extent and followed.
- b. Hence, our new year is called with the same name.

24. What is this year?

- a. Vijaya Naama Samvatsara.

25. What is Ayanam?

- a. From our planet - the direction of Sun appears to be changing twice a year.
- b. From South to North in January is Uttara Ayanam = Moving towards North.
- c. From North to South in July is Dakshina Ayanam = Moving towards South.

26. What is this Maasam?

- a. This is Kartika Maasam?

27. How does the name of the month derive?

- a. Name derives from the Nakshatram of Poornima in the particular month.
- b. If Poornima occurs on Krittika Nakshatram - it is called Kartika Maasam.
- c. If Poornima happens on Mrugashira - it is Maargashira.
- d. Ashwini - Ashwayuja, Jyeshtha - Jyeshtha Maasa so on.

28. What is this Paksham (Fort Night)?

- a. Shukla Paksham.
- b. Shuka Paksham is bright fortnight. Waxing Vruddhi Paksha).
- c. Krishna Paksham is darker. (Waning - Kshaya Paksha)

29. What is Panchangam?

- a. Panch Angam = Five limbs.
- b. Five attributes associated with each day are called Panchaangas.
- c. Since, an almanac provides all the details of a day - it is called Panchaangam, though it gives many other exhaustive details.
- d. Tithi, Vaara, Nakshatra, Yoga and Karana are the five attributes.
- e. Only Tithi and Nakshatra are visibly verified by naked eye. Rest all are derived from calculations.

30. What is today's Tithi? What is that?

- a. Dashami.
- b. Tithi is a day according to Lunar (Chaandra Maana) system.
- c. 15 Tithis, starting from Pratipat/ Paadyami, Dwiteeya, Truteeya ... Poornima/ Amaavaasya are observed.

31. What is today's Nakshatram? What is that?

- a. Poorvabhaadra Nakshatra.
- b. Nakshatras are 27 in numbers. The angle each start, in which Moon appears from our planet is the Nakshatra for the day. The angle changes based on the movement of Chandra/ Moon.

Activities

32. What is Abhishekam?

- a. Abhishekam is ablution/ bathing. Pouring Water, Pancha Amruta on the deities' Dhruva Bera (Main Idol). Occasionally all the deities/ icons are offered this Seva.
- b. It is the main cleansing activity for the day/ week/ month in each temple.
- c. During Abhishekam preset Mantras are chanted.
- d. Timing is usually the early hours of a temple.
- e. Shiva Temples have Abhishekam as very important activity, as Shiva is said to be fond of this Seva

33. What is Alankaaram?

- a. Decoration is Alankaaram.
- b. Daily decoration is done with flowers, clothes.
- c. It is customary to offer new clothes and jewels to all the deities on important days.
- d. In Non Shiva - Temples, this is a very important daily activity. Some temple often have different alankarams for each session.

34. What is Utsavam?

- a. Utsavam is celebration of divinity.
- b. It is conducted in regular intervals.

35. What are the main Utsavam?

- a. Kalyana Utsavam (Divine Marriage), Teppa Utsavam/ Plava Utsavam (Raft), Dola Utsavam (Swing), Ratha (Chariot), Mandapam, Palyankika (Pallaki/ Palanquin) are some of the Utsavas.
- b. These are conducted annually, monthly etc.

Significance (Vaisishtyam)

36. What is Maasa Sivaratri?

- a. This occurs on previous day to Amavaasya.
- b. Abhishekam and Upavaasam are important on this day.
- c. Shiva Puja is prescribed for this day.

37. What is the specialty of Sravana Nakshatra?

- a. Shravana Nakshatram pertains to Vishnu.
- b. It is one of the five monthly occasions to perform Vishnu Puja.

38. What are the Pancha Parvas in Vishnu Temple?

- a. Shukla Paksha Dwadashi
- b. Krishna Paksha Dwadashi
- c. Poornima
- d. Amavaasya
- e. Shravana Nakshatram

39. What is Navaratri?

- a. Nava Ratri is nine nights.
- b. It is celebrated in Vasanta Ritu and Sharannavaratri.
- c. In Vasanta (Spring) Rama is worshipped.
- d. In Sharad Ritu, Devi is worshipped
- e. Other systems have Ganapati Navaratri etc.

40. What is Shivaratri?

- a. In the month of Maagha Maasa, Maasa Shivaratri is celebrated.
- b. Night long awakened Puja is prescribed along with Fasting.
- c. Proper Archana and Darshanam is said to result in Moksham (salvation.) Hence, this is called Shiva Ratri. (Janmaaniki oka Shiva Raatri is the proverb.

41. What is Vaikuntha Ekadashi/ Mukkoti Ekadashi?

- a. In Soura Maanam system, Shukla Ekadashi of Dhanur Maasam is celebrated as Vaikuntha Ekadashi.
- b. Vision thru Northern door is the specialty. (Uttara Dwara Darshana)
- c. North Direction connotes Upward Mobility. On this day, 3 crores of deities throng to Vaikuntha (Place of Vishnu) to have his glimpse.
- d. Proper Archana and Darshanam is said to result in Moksham (salvation.)

42. Why should tradition prescribe that you should not touch Deva Swam?

- a. Deva Swam is Temple property. It is accumulated from the donations/ Daanam by devotees.
- b. If it is illegally amassed for personal usage, the usurper will have to bear the sins of the donors or his family members in perpetuity.
- c. Hence, elders restrict the usage of Deva Swam for persons/ family usage, even if donated by own family.

43. Why is Temple sacred than home?

- a. Temple is the seat of piety (Pavitrataa). In home, you can be callous, lazy and prone to sins.
- b. Whereas, a Temple provides an occasion for the body and mind to conduct properly.
- c. Hence, visitors and staff should strive to maintain the decorum and sanctity of Temple.

44. Name some Major Kshetras of the State?

- a. Tirupati, Shrisailam, Daakshaaram are the Kshetras described in Puraanas.
- b. Bhadrachalam, Annavaram, Vijayawada Kanaka Durga are historic Kshetras.
- c. Historic Kshetras are of recent past, but do not find reference in ancient Puraanas.

45. What are the incompatible periods for a person to enter the temple?

- a. 11 days after the birth or death of person, due to polluted environment in the home are Aashoucha period.
- b. Monthly periods (At least 3 nights) for ladies are polluted period.
- c. Wherever Bleeding has happened, it is polluted.

46. Why Naada Swaram should be played during Opening of the Temple?

- a. Naada Swaram denotes Mangalam, auspicious along with sounds of bells.
- b. It is appropriate to offer the best of our services to the God. Hence, every opening of the Temple connotes the beginning of Mangalam.
- c. One, who causes Mangalam is the Mangali. Hence, the artists are to be respected.

47. Why should one avoid taking even a single object from Siva Temple? (Including a drop of oil?)

- a. All the Puja articles are bequeathed to Chandeeshwara, who is a ferocious sub- deity in Shiva Gana.
- b. Without the permission of the deity, if an object is stolen or consumed, it will cause curse on the family.
- c. Hence, even the refuse (Nirmaalyam) or used napkins containing strands of oil should be avoided.

48. Why should you wash your feet after doing Pradakshina to Nava Graha Temple?

- a. Pradakshina to Nava Graha is to ward off the negative effect of the constellation of Planets (Graha Chaara).

- b. After getting rid of some
- c. thing impure or negative, it is customary to wash feet.

49. Why should you wash your feet before entering a temple?

- a. Washing the feet, which step on impurities on the road is to ensure clean surroundings and body purity.
- b. Feet and Hands are important limbs in contact with many objects.
- c. Hence, before starting anything important, including food consumption the washing is compulsory.

50. What is Pradakshinam?

- a. Pradakshinam is circumambulation around the main Temple. Each step of the Pradakshina relieves you from one sin of this life or past life. It is very healthy practice too. Hence the path should be wide, clean and chanting the name of the God is advised, rather than chatting during Pradakshina.

51. Why should you keep the temple calm and quite without hassles or quarrels?

- a. Devotees visit Temple to attain blessings and peace. This is a mental activity.
- b. Best of the results are possible in calm environs. Hence, it is a fundamental duty for one and all to enable the mind attain its objective.
- c. Prayers, Meditation conducted in serene, clean and calm surrounding tranquil the mind and the resultant peace keeps you fresh for the day or week.

52. Why is the need to sit in a temple before leaving, at least for a minute?

- a. Visiting the temple is to instil calmness, composure in life. **Sitting quietly for at least minute symbolises the purpose.** Hence, it is advised to sit in Temple after Darshanam to meditate on the Roopam (Vision) captured with our eyes. (It is similar to review the photos taken on the camera, in order to preserve them.)

Summary of Temple/ Worship:

Deho Devaalayah Prokto Jeevo Devas Sanaatanah

Tyajedajnaana Nirmaalyam Soham Bhaavena Pujayet

దేహో దేవాలయః ప్రోక్తో జీవో దేవ స్సనాతనః త్యజే దజ్ఞాన నిర్మల్యం సోహం భావేన పూజయేత్ ।

The Temple is the body. The deity is in the inner soul. Shedding the Ajnaana (Imprudence) is removing the Nirmaalyam (Impurity). Your worship should be based on the concept of SOHAM. I am the (part of) All pervading Paramaatman.