

Contamination occurs when an article contacts any of the impure items listed previously. Serious contamination takes place when an article contacts the first six impurities from the body, or when it contacts any other heavily contaminating substance, such as alcohol. Before touching an unoffered item during worship, the pujari should purify his hands by performing samnya-arghya with water from the pañca-ptra.

The left hand, which is considered impure, should not touch the Deity directly while He is being bathed. (If the Deity is made of metal, during the polishing, the pujari may hold or touch the Deity with a cloth held in his left hand.)

Articles become free from contamination in different ways, depending on their nature. In the case of serious contamination, things made of iron and similar metals are purified by fire (by bringing the object to a red-hot state); jewels, stones, and conch shells by being buried for seven nights in the ground; objects of horn, ivory, and turtle shell by planing the surface; and cloth by removing the contaminated portion. When things made of wood or earthenware are seriously contaminated, however, they should be discarded.

When articles are mildly contaminated through contact with impure items such as food remnants, they may be purified in the following ways: gold, silver, conch shells, jewels, stones, and spoons are purified by water; yajña utensils, such as the sruk and sruva (wooden ladles), by rinsing with warm water; other yajña utensils by scrubbing with kusa grass and water; an sana, bed, and vehicle by water; and grains, deerskin, cloth,* thread, linen, fruits, flowers, grass, and leaves by washing them in water if extensively contaminated, or simply by sprinkling if the contamination is slight.

Cloth washed by a dhobi (professional launderer) is not considered suci; pujaris or Deity cooks should not wear it. Dry-cleaning is also not suci, since alcohol, which is most impure, is used in the process.

We continue with purification methods for mildly contaminated objects: Blankets are purified by soap berries (rta-phala), silk by saline earth, linen by mustard seeds; cotton cloth is purified by washing with soap and water, then drying in the sun and wind. Iron and bell metal are purified by ash; tin, copper, and lead are purified by tamarind and water. Wood and floors are purified by planing or scraping. Liquids are purified by straining; containers of gourd or coconut are purified by scrubbing with the hair from a cow's tail. Earthenware, if glazed, is purified by water; different types of items altogether are purified by sprinkling with water. Raw rice is purified by discarding the bad part; boiled rice is purified by discarding the impure part, chanting Gayatri, and sprinkling the rice with water. The ground is purified by sweeping and smearing it with cow dung and water, by sprinkling with cow urine and dung, by burning, by the treading of cow hooves, by time, and by digging. Boats, paths, grass, and brick constructions are purified by wind and sun. Water for one's own bath or for Deity worship is purified by flowing water, which should be clear, sweet-tasting, and sweet-smelling. In order of preference, water should be taken from the following sources: the Ganga or Yamuna, other tirthas, a river that flows directly to the ocean (that is, not a tributary), a tributary river, a natural spring, a lake, a pond, a large man-made reservoir, a small man-made reservoir, a well, and a pot.

Source: (Pancharatra Pradipa)