

Ayyappa Vratham Guidelines

1. Preparing for Maaladharan

- Before beginning the Ayyappa Swamy Vratham, inform your parents and spouse (if married). It is not advisable to take up the Vratham without their consent.
- On the day before Maaladharan, devotees should shave, trim their nails, get a haircut, and ensure personal cleanliness.
- A Tulasi mala is traditionally recommended for Ayyappa Swamy Vratham. Clean the mala with turmeric water and place it in the pooja room beforehand.
- On the day of Maaladharan, take a head bath and wear a black, blue, or saffron dhoti with a towel or shawl. Mathas (women devotees) may wear sarees or churidars in the same colors.
- Apply Vibhuti, Gandham, and Kumkum on the forehead.
- Offer Kanikkai (small offering) to Lord Ganesha, the Paradevata/Kuladevata, and Lord Ayyappa for a nirvighna (obstacle-free) Vratham.
- Perform pooja to Lord Ganesha, Paradevata/Kuladevata, and Lord Ayyappa Swamy. Chant the 108 Ayyappa Swamy Saranam Gosham.
- Seek the blessings of your parents if they live with you.
- Bring the mala safely to the temple for the Maaladharan ceremony.

2. Duration

- The Vratham typically lasts 41 days (Mandala Kaalam).
- It begins with the wearing of the Tulasi mala, received from the Guru Swami.

3. Daily Practices

- Perform Ayyappa pooja twice daily—in the morning and evening.
- Take a bath and wear clean black, blue, or saffron attire before each pooja.
- During Nitya Pooja (daily worship):
 - Recite Ganesha, Subramanya, and Ayyappa Ashtothram (if known).
 - Chant 108 Ayyappa Saranam Gosham both morning and evening.
 - Recite Namaskara Shlokams twice daily.
 - Offer Doopam, Deepam, and Nivedyam during both poojas.

4. Lifestyle Discipline

- Observe complete celibacy (brahmacharya) during the Vratham.
- During the entire time of Vradham please avoid hair cutting, nail cutting or shaving
- Avoid alcohol, smoking, non-vegetarian food, garlic, onion, and other stimulants.
- Consume simple sattvic vegetarian meals, once or twice a day, after offering prayers.
- Practice self-control, humility, and patience.
- Sleep on the floor without a mattress or other comforts.
- Walk barefoot as much as possible.

5. Behavioral Conduct

- Speak truthfully, gently, and respectfully.
- Avoid anger, jealousy, and gossip.
- Follow Ahimsa—non-violence in thoughts, words, and deeds.
- Engage in service, charity, and acts of compassion.

6. Social Rules

- Maintain purity of both body and mind.
- Avoid attending events such as puberty ceremonies, births, deaths, or festive celebrations during the Vratham.
- Treat everyone you meet as Swami (a manifestation of Lord Ayyappa).
- Address fellow devotees respectfully as “Swami.”

7. Concluding Ritual

- After completing the 41-day Vratham, devotees prepare the Irumudi Kettu (sacred offering bag).
- Begin the Sabarimala pilgrimage with the blessings of the Guru Swami.
- The Vratham concludes after having Darshan of Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala and offering the Neythenga (ghee-filled coconut) to Swamy.
- The returned Abhishekam ghee marks the successful completion of the Vratham.

8. Travel Guidelines

- Keep rituals simple while traveling:
 - Chant 108 Ayyappa Saranam Gosham twice daily after bathing.
 - Recite Namaskara Shlokams at least once a day.
 - Offer Nivedyam (dry fruits, if possible).
 - Eat only vegetarian food and strictly avoid eggs.