

Creating a sacred space

Not only can you add touches of spirit to your home atmosphere by including artwork, candles, rituals, incense, devotional music, and natural elements, but you can also set up an altar or mini-temple that can represent the sacred space of your devotional heart. This sacred space can be a shelf or table of any size, perhaps covered with some decorative cloth.

Place on your altar objects that carry spiritual meaning for you. These items may be statues, paintings, icons, photos, candles, holy water, sacred oils, bells, crystals, gems, flowers, and whatever other personal or symbolic objects help to open your heart and focus your mind on spirit.



Consider

One great way to begin each day is to stand or sit before your altar and to fold your hands, bow your head, or otherwise honor the forms and representations of divinity you've chosen to include. Some like to wave a flame clockwise around each image – a common tradition in Indian temples. Offer the day to grace, ask for a specific blessing, or just give thanks for all the blessings you already have.

You may also want to set up a meditation space right in front of your altar so that you can sit in front of these representations of spirit while turning your attention inward toward the spirit that also exists inside of your own divine form.

A potential downside to worshipping divine forms

The ashram I used to live in was filled with representations of the divine in form. Its beautiful gardens included statues from many different spiritual and religious traditions, and inside the buildings and temples, you'd find reminders of the divine around every corner, with photos, statues, candles, and other representations of gods, gurus, saints and sages.

After leaving the ashram and moving to Los Angeles, I continued this practice of worshipping the divine in form by covering the walls and shelves of my apartment with photos and statues of divine forms. I also placed a photo of my guru in my car, in an elegant metal frame that I superglued to the dashboard. For several years, this photo was a natural part of my daily drive.

One day, I took my car to a car wash and was surprised to have it returned with my guru's photo frame broken off the dashboard. As I drove away, my mind was racing, thinking about how I would have to get a new frame as soon as possible.

At that point, I remembered to center myself and looked at my thoughts with a more objective view. I saw that I was feeling less protected in that moment than I had felt just a few minutes earlier when my guru's photo was still glued to the dashboard. At that moment, I decided that if I was basing my trust in the divine on whether or not a photo was on the dashboard of my car, then I shouldn't have one there at all.

Therefore, if you do choose to practice worshipping forms, be sure not to get into the same trap that I was in. Don't allow worship to become just one more way to get attached and snared by the expectations and fears of this world. Use a divine image to bring out the best, the greatest, and the most sublime in yourself. Feel devotion for the greatness of God through whatever form you worship; and understand that the divinity you see in any form is always your own divinity shining forth and reflecting back through the many mirrors of this world.