



MOUNT
MADONNA

YOGA DIWALI INDIA 2025 CUSTOMS AND ETIQUETTE IN INDIA & AT SRI RAM ASHRAM

CUSTOMS AND ETIQUETTE IN INDIA

Cultural differences extend to all sorts of little things. While allowances will usually be made for foreigners, visitors unacquainted with Indian customs may like a little preparation. Manners are our ticket to the world and a nice way to show respect and encourage positive communication. This list of cultural norms is not exhaustive: when in doubt, watch what the Indian people around you are doing.

The left hand

It is considered unclean. Generally, avoid using your left hand for eating, shaking hands or other public activities such as paying money for purchased items, receiving temple offerings, etc.

Feet

The soles of your feet are considered unclean so it is preferable not to point them toward people, alters and deities.

Temple

For women, it is a good idea to have a scarf or shawl to wear in the temple; some cover their heads and shoulders and across the front. Remember not to point your feet at the altar. Give and receive offerings with your right hand only.

Winking

Winking is a huge no-no in India.

CHILDREN, RESIDENTS, AND STAFF OF SRI RAM ASHRAM

How to Give and Interact

Children

The best gift is your visit. Nothing replaces human contact, and as all parents know, the key to good parenting is showing up. So, thank you for showing up! Please bring something about yourself to share with the children. For example, if you are a dancer bring photos of yourself dancing, or better yet music and be ready to dance together.

The children are curious to learn about anything and everything.

Another way to interact with the children is to bring a game to play with them. There are some great card or board games that are simple and fun. We can integrate art projects, sports and other hobbies into activities for the children. Bring a children's book and read it to them. Or, just join in with what's happening. If you bring donated clothes or other items, please give them to management for distribution later when needed.

As in all families, jealousies can occur. If you plan on bringing gifts for the children, please bring one for all the children such as a group gift or donations that can be given to management. Before passing anything out to the children or staff please check with management on the best time and way to do so.

Diwali is their "Christmas" or holiday gift-giving time, and all children and staff will be receiving annual gifts. The children receive a small amount of cash in a special envelope for the annual "Shop tTil you Drop" outing. On this night we take all children to Haridwar for shopping (Yes, you will be going as well!).

The children also receive a gift bag on the day of Diwali. The items in the bag are different each year depending on what donations we have received and what the ashram has prepared for them.

If you would like to contribute, below are a few ideas on what you can bring for these gift bags:

- Punching balloons

- Candy (Reese's cups, tootsie pops, small Hershey bars, Snickers, M n M) that is easy to carry and aren't available in India)
- Stickers
- Socks
- Lip balm
- Money can be collected for a group gift.

A nice easy gift is a group outing to a movie to be done at a later time. This is a huge favorite for the kids done once or twice annually. This can be gifted if everyone contributes \$20.

Other Questions regarding children of Sri Ram Ashram...

Do the Children have a curfew?

Yes, the children have a curfew although it tends to crumble during festival season. They are expected to be in their rooms soon after dinner (approximately 8:30) unless there is an activity they are working on. When we have visitors we tend to let them hang out more after dinner with the guests.

Do we live with the children?

The children have their own wing in the building. The buildings are shaped like a "U" and surround a courtyard. The guest building, called Om Bhavan, is one arm of the "U", the children and staff live in the other sections.

Staff

The staff receives gifts of cash and clothes, which the Ashram management gives them annually. Please do not give any gifts or tips to the staff. If we want to thank the staff we can collect cash at the end of the trip and distribute it evenly when you leave. But this isn't necessary or expected.