

Hosting a Bhiksha

Bhiksha is a simple meal served when an *acharya* is invited to your home. *Acharyas* offer their words of wisdom, according to the times of society, expecting absolutely nothing in return. It is considered an honor and privilege to offer them a meal. *Bhiksha* provides an ideal opportunity to have *satsang* in your home.

Planning:

The guest list is entirely your prerogative.

Arrival at your home:

1. In the Hindu tradition, it is our custom for the host family to welcome a visiting *acharya* with *aarti* – honoring the *acharya* as a source of knowledge and respecting him/her for the life commitment. Please keep a *dipam* (plate with wick lamp) ready for his *aarti* at the front door. The *sloka* that is recited is:

Na tatra suryo bhati - na chandra taarakam
Nema vidyuto bhaanti - kuto yam agni
Tameva bhaantam - anubhaati sarvam
Tasya bhaasa - sarvavidam vibhaati

There the sun does not shine, nor does the moon, nor the stars
There this lightning does not shine; what to talk of this fire?
That alone is (ever) shining, all (else) shines after IT (reflecting HIS glory)
By the light of THAT (alone) this whole world is illumined.

If you do not know the shloka, do not be concerned. The *acharya* will recite it!

2. If you wish, you may lead the *acharya* to your *puja* before offering him a seat.

Meal:

1. Food guidelines: Simple vegetarian food – less oil, less spice. Typical menu: Dal, steamed vegetables, cooked vegetable curries. Please use quinoa (a South American grain available at HEB, Central Market or Whole Foods) instead of rice. Quinoa is cooked just like rice – one cup quinoa to three cups water. You can also make chapathi, bajri roti, etc. Special dishes of your region are always appreciated.
2. Please serve the *acharya*'s food in stainless steel or ceramic ware.
3. Have a buffet planned for the rest of the guests. (Paper plates can be used!) Encourage them to help themselves and be seated quickly. The seating at the *acharya*'s table can be assigned, if you wish.
4. Things move quickly in a *bhiksha*. Once the *acharya* has eaten, you can request him to address the group, take a few questions, or have an informal conversation.

Offering of thanks:

1. Keep a basket of fruits ready (one fruit for each guest, including children). The *acharya* will give this fruit as *prasad* to your guests.
2. The host family offers a *dakshina* and seeks the *acharya*'s blessings. The amount of the offering is your choice (suggested donation is \$101.00) made in cash or a check payable to Chinmaya Mission Austin.

Procedure for Bhiksha signup:

Please sign up at www.carecalendar.org

Please Note: Calendar ID - 7050, Security Code – 2700

Bhiksha coordinator: Charu Mahajan (512)968-0527, bhiksha.schedule@gmail.com

