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High school Essay- Hindu Mandir and Deity Worship

Many aspects of Hinduism are compared with western religions. Among these is idol worshipping and deity worship. Many look down upon idol worshipping, but the truth is there is scientific and philosophical reasoning behind this aspect of our religion.

To understand the reasoning for deity worship and idol worshipping, one must first understand the basic tenants of Sanatan Dharma. One of the most basic beliefs is that there is only one truth, but many paths to get to it. Sanatan Dharma focuses on personally experiencing the truth from within. The focus is on the individual and the fact that everyone is unique and has different ways of attaining truth. This idea is inculcated in the Rig Veda as well in the following shloka:

Ekam sat, Vipraha bahudha vadanti

The meaning of this is that truth is one, but the wise people call it by various names. God is defined in the scriptures as two different aspects. There is the transcendent, which is the impersonal form and the immanent, which is the personal form. The transcendent aspect is called *Nirguna Brahman*, which means Brahman without attributes. The mind is unable to reach the Nirguna Brahman as this aspect of God cannot be expressed by speech or visuals. This is the aspect which is absolute existence, knowledge and bliss, translated to *sat-chit-ananda*.

Understanding the basic tenants of Sanatan Dharma helps to appreciate the basic philosophy of idol worshipping. Recent studies show that having something visual helps increase the focus and the attention on one concept. Especially with a concept as ethereal as God, it would be hard to realize truth if we didn't have a visual representation of what we are trying to achieve. Having Murtis and mandirs not only helps in concentration and focus on the concept of God and attaining eternal truth, but it also achieves this goal by making the journey personal. Having various forms of God and having different gods and goddesses, and temples lets Hindus personalize their spiritualism. This follows the idea of *Ekam sat, vipraha bahudha vadanti*. The eternal truth is one and there is also only one form of god, but we see Him in many different forms and pray to Him in many different forms. Our rishis and sages wanted to make the spiritual journey easier and more attainable for the common man. *Nirguna Brahman* takes no form so it is hard to focus on to attain spiritual enlightenment, but through Murtis

and mandirs we realize God through the personal form as they create a stepping stone for higher spiritual enlightenment.

Murtis and mandirs also help in sustaining a religion. A Mandir is a God's home or a visual representation of it at least. There are many steps in welcoming a God to his home and making him comfortable. An example can be given of Ganesh pooja. We first welcome him in, give him water, wash his feet, and then give him something to eat. Such traditions and rituals are passed on from generation to generation and help keep a religion alive. Many Hindus, even if they have been away from bharat from many years and don't speak a native language, still practice such Hindu rituals. Rituals helps unite Hindus worldwide and helps create a unity within the diversity.

As seen idol worshipping, mandirs, and rituals have many philosophical benefits as well as scientific benefits for Hinduism and sustaining and implementing the tenants of Hindu dharma.

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