

# Hindu Mandir and Deity Worship – The Manifestation of Divinity

Tejas N. Dave

## A Scientific and Spiritual View at Deity Worship and Temples

Hindus are often chided based on the concepts of deity worship and *mandirs*. Many claim that the practices are primitive, unintelligent and unrefined. This essay, however, strives to illuminate upon the evolutionary and spiritual basis of the practices.

The first point of discussion is the concept of deity worship. As I previously mentioned, many people snicker at the practice and cast it off as primitive. However, when viewed through a scientific lens, the practice exemplifies the evolutionary identity of human beings. According to the Dual Representational Theory that originated from the research of Dr. Judy DeLoache of the University of Virginia, being able to impute characteristics beyond the purely physical characteristics of an object is what sets the human brain apart from all other animals. What this means is that we, as humans, can take an object and feel that the object has qualities that are not intrinsic to that object. It is based on this quality that we are able to utilize tools such as languages, on which our current society relies so heavily upon. Thus venerating what many call simply stone objects as God is actually exercising the abilities that make us human; without it, we may as well slide down the evolutionary scale to chimpanzees.

Based on the preceding discussion, one may understand and come to appreciate the beauty of deity worship, however another question arises. Why do these stone statues need to be housed in architecturally appealing houses, or *mandirs*? Research has shown that stimulating multiple senses at the same time lead to greater retention and understanding. A *mandir*, in essence, is the same concept. At the *mandir*, beyond just the *murtis*, one smells the aroma of the *agarbatis* (incense sticks), and the sounds of the *ghantas* (bells). With multiple senses being stimulated at the same time, the meanings and feelings of holiness last longer within the self. Another argument states asks that if God is omnipresent, why must there be temples? In response to this let us take the analogy of air. Air exists everywhere on Earth, but we still need a fan to feel that air, to create enough of a concentration of air so that it has a noticeable effect on the body. Similarly, the concentration of divinity in the temple is required in order to produce a noticeable effect on the soul.

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This brings us to the final part of our discussion which is the *manifestation* of divinity. Note the emphasis on “manifestation”. Consider once again that in a nutshell the practice of deity worship is worshipping a piece of stone. In this process you have mentally manifested divinity in an otherwise inert, inanimate and uninteresting piece of stone. Now consider this: if you can envision God in a piece of stone, why can’t you envision God in your neighbor? This is the central purpose and underlying meaning of the deity worship system, and that is to recognize that God resides in every object, every person and every organism. And this is how divinity is literally manifested. One has taken a previously ordinary object or person and made it divine.

Thus it is quite evident that deity worship is simply an extension of our human nature and that the *mandir* system is designed in order to compound the feeling of divinity. Finally this system allows one to manifest and see divinity within other things, plants, animals and people.

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E-Mail [Tejas N. Dave tejasndave@ramkrupa.com](mailto:tejasndave@ramkrupa.com) to omcenter

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