

Jaiṡa Dharma

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Chapter Eleven

Nitya-dharma and Deity Worship

“The pure method of worshiping the Supreme Lord’s transcendental Deity form is certainly not possible for the general populace.”

Only those qualified persons who having overcome the influence of matter are transcendently situated and can thus conceptualise spiritual form should perform Deity worship.

I earnestly entreat you to give this subject deep thought.”

Mullah Sāhib, “I have seriously considered your points and I can say that the six primary absolute attributes possessed by He who is called Bhagavān are likewise mentioned in our Koran-sharīf in describing Allah.”

Therefore, let us not overly dissect and analyse the etymology of the name, Allah.

Allah is Bhagavān, the possessor of unlimited opulence.”

Gorācānda Bābājī, “Very good! Then you accept that the Supreme Being possesses divine beauty.

Thus, you affirm that beyond this material creation a spiritual world exists where the Supreme Lord resides as the embodiment of beauty.

This very form of sublime transcendental exquisiteness is the Deity that we worship.”

Mullah Sāhib, “Our holy Koran-sharīf also states that the Supreme Being possesses an absolute spiritual body—hence there is no cause for rebuttal.

However, when one tries to make an image of that absolute transcendental form of Allah, or Bhagavān, the image becomes a material replica—this we call byūt.

Worshiping byūt is not the same as worshiping the Supreme Lord. Now kindly explain your viewpoint on this subject.”

Gorācānda Bābājī, “The Vaiṣṇava scriptures espouse the worship of the pure and transcendental Deity form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

The elevated devotees are not permitted to worship material objects. The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 10.84.13, states:

yasyātma-buddhiḥ kuṇape tri-dhātuke
sva-dhīḥ kalatrādiṣu bhauma ijya-dhīḥ
yat-tīrtha-buddhiḥ salile na karhicij
janeṣv abhijñeṣu sa eva go-kharaḥ

“One who identifies his self as the inert body composed of mucus, bile and air, who assumes his wife and family are permanently his own, who thinks that an earthen image or the land of his birth are worshipable, or who sees a place of pilgrimage as merely the water there, but who never identifies himself with, feels kinship with, worships, visits, or hears from those sādhus residing at the place of pilgrimage who are wise in spiritual truth—such a person is no better than a cow or an ass.” (SB 10.84.13)

“Furthermore, in the Bhagavad-gītā, 9.25, we find:

...bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā...

“Those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth amongst such beings.”

These statements clearly indicate that the worship of material objects and ghosts and spirits is strongly censured.

Yet, one fact must be noted: Human beings acquire varying degrees of eligibility in spiritual activities according to their level of knowledge and saṁskāra, purification.

Therefore, the devotee who has realized śuddha-cinmaya-bhāva, pure transcendence, is alone worthy of worshiping the cinmaya, transcendental, Deity form of the Supreme Godhead.

Accordingly, lower eligibility is indicated by the lower degrees of knowledge and purity.

“A neophyte kaniṣṭha-adhikārī, who is at the bottom of the scale of eligibility, is unable to perceive śuddha-cinmaya-bhāva.”

→ Highest degree of knowledge & purification.

↓ BUT, there are lower degrees of knowledge & purification also.

→ at the most sentimental faith.
↓
SB's Prakṛita bhakti.

If he meditates upon the Lord within his mind, the image of the Lord he
construes within his consciousness being a fabricated form is clearly endowed
with mundane qualities.

Perceived

Construed
fabricated.

To assume Divinity in a sculpted earthly Deity form is ultimately identical to
the neophyte's meditation upon an image of the Supreme Lord created within
his mind from his contaminated material consciousness.

This is not the pure form of Deity worship; nevertheless, for the neophyte
such Deity worship is beneficial.

Indeed, the absence and prohibition of such Deity worship for the general
ignorant mass of people is inauspicious.

For when spiritually neophyte people somehow become inspired to approach the Supreme Lord, if they do not find a Deity form of Him, they may feel disappointed and disconsolate.

“The religions which have no provision for Deity worship face the danger that those children born into the religion and those just beginning spiritual life—both of whom may have little or no understanding, or deep faith in Godhead—may become overtly materialistic and even develop aversion towards the Supreme Lord as a result of the absence of a Deity form upon which to fix their minds.

Therefore, Deity worship is the foundation of religion for general humanity.

The mahājanas, highly elevated, unalloyed devotees of the Lord, perceive the beautiful spiritual form of the Supreme Lord by dint of their pure consciousness and perfect realization.

→ *Suddha - Cinmaya - bhāva*
pure spiritual consciousness.

These mahājanas constantly meditate upon and worship this sublime and transcendental form of the Lord, whom they see within their hearts saturated with prema-bhakti.

After long and deep meditation upon the transcendental form of the Lord, eventually the consciousness of the pure devotee extends to see the Lord's presence within all objects of even the material world.

Out of mercy, these pure devotees delineate the transcendental divine form of the Lord both verbally and physically in the Deity form.

Thus, on the basis of the instruction of the realized pure devotees who are forever guided from within by the Lord Himself, the Deity form—an exact replica of the spiritual form of the Lord—is portrayed externally in the material world as non-different from the transcendental Supreme Lord.

*Uttama adhikārī's vision → Cinmaya vision.
↓
nature sp. consciousness*

"The self-realized uttama-adhikārī always perceives the Deity form as cinmaya, a transcendental and direct manifestation of the Lord.

śākhakṛt → manomaya

The madhyama-adhikārī perceives the Deity form as manomaya, conscious of his prayers, worship, and devotion;

however, his perception of the wholly transcendental nature of the Deity form is constricted by the immaturity of his spiritual consciousness.

→ medhya → sentimental faith.
↓
medhya adhikari → maha maya vision
immature (or) restricted
SP consciousness

The prākṛta-bhakta sees the Deity form initially as jadamaya, material, but as his consciousness and intelligence are gradually cleansed by the awakening of prema he begins to worship the Deity form with increasingly spiritual perception and understanding.



Thus, we see that worship of the Deity is essential and beneficial to all categories of devotees.

Certainly, however, worshiping an imaginary and concocted idol of Bhagavan as the Supreme Lord is forbidden in vaiṣṇava-dharma.

“The Deity image of the actual eternal form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is all-auspicious.”

Therefore, the Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas have recommended and established Deity worship for all the three levels of devotees: uttama, madhyama, and kaniṣṭha.

There is no fault in this process and by this arrangement human beings benefit at every step, ushering in sublime sanctity.

This is substantiated in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 11.14.26:

yathā yathātmā parimṛjyate 'sau
mat-puṇya-gāthā-śravaṇābhidhānaiḥ
tathā tathā paśyati vastu sūkṣmaṁ
caḁsur yathaiivāñjana-samprayuktam

“Medicated salve, collyrium, when applied to the eye, helps one see even the finest of objects. Similarly, when the heart of the jīva is cleansed of impurities by hearing and discussing transcendental topics about Me, he perceives the most esoteric knowledge about My original spiritual form and the purport of My pastimes.” (SB 11.14.26)

“Jīvātmā is covered by material energy in the form of the material mind and senses.

Therefore, he is unable to understand properly his actual spiritual nature and thus serve the Paramātmā feature of the Supreme Lord.

Nevertheless, through sādhana-bhakti, the elevating devotional process of hearing and chanting, the jīva gains spiritual strength, which concomitantly weakens the grip of material energy upon him.

With the decrease of material influence, the original nature of the jīva comes into brighter focus and direct perception of Ísvāra and activity in relationship to Ísvāra become more distinct and natural.