

Idols are Pointers to Divinity

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*"God is the basis of the universe.
Truth is the essence of God.
The virtue of noble souls is truth.
Such noble souls are verily Divine."*

Embodiments of Love!

Our ancients enquired into the nature of divinity through many paths, but were not successful in recognizing the reality. Hence, they started worshipping *Prakriti* (Nature). Thereafter, the Bharatiyas took to *Murthi Aradhana* (idol-worship). Every creature that takes birth in this universe has a form (*Murthi*). Idols are inert in nature and do not possess the qualities of compassion, love, forbearance, etc. It is for this reason that some people are against idol-worship. This is ignorance. You use your forefinger to point a specific object, say, a flower or a tumbler. Similarly, idols are like pointers to Divinity. Once you recognize divinity, you don't need the pointers, say, idols. Such being the case, is it not foolish to object to idol worship? Are you not worshipping the pictures of your parents and grandparents? Do these pictures have life in them? No. Nor do they have the qualities of compassion, love, sacrifice, etc. Then what is the point in worshipping them? It is through these pictures that we are reminded of their virtues and ideals they stood for. Take for instance a hundred rupee note with dimensions of 6 inches x 4 inches. There is neither life nor virtues of love, compassion, etc., in this currency note. Yet people love it and would like to possess it. Is there anybody in the world who dislikes money? Irrespective of the country or religion, everyone loves money. There are

innumerable instances wherein people gave up their lives for the sake of money. The currency note is valuable because it bears the government's seal. Similarly, we respect the national flag for the value it stands for, though it is merely a piece of cloth, which is inert. If idol worship is considered foolish, then the same should apply to love for money and respect for flag, which are also lifeless. Man's beliefs are based on his likes and dislikes.

Isavasyam Idam Jagat (the entire world is permeated by God). Every being is an embodiment of Eswara. It is also said, *Eswara Sarva Bhutanam* (God is the Indweller of all beings). He is present in all beings in the form of Consciousness. Eswara is the master of six forms of wealth - *Dharma* (righteousness), *Aiswarya* (wealth), *Yashas* (fame), *Shakti* (power), *Jnana* (wisdom) and *Vairagya* (detachment). Eswara has another name, *San(m)kara*. 'Sam' refers to *Chidanandam* (eternal bliss) and *Atmanandam* (bliss of the Self). 'Kara' means one who bestows. Therefore, Sankara is one who confers eternal bliss. Every word has a deep inner meaning. Take for instance the name Sathya Sai. Sathya stands for Rig Veda. 'Sa', 'Aa' and 'Ya' in Sai stand for Sama Veda, Atharvana Veda and Yajur Veda, respectively. Therefore, Sathya Sai is the very personification of the four Vedas. What is the meaning of the term Linga? It is the symbol of divinity, as it has neither

beginning nor end. Divinity is immanent in the heart (*Hridaya*) of every man. *Hridaya* means that which is suffused with compassion. So, Divinity is the embodiment of compassion.

Today people are unable to understand the principle of Divinity. Though the modes of worship vary, they all are directed towards different forms of the same God. You may call Him Rama, Krishna, Easwara, etc. All are one. They refer to the same God. Each person worships a particular form according to his or her likes. Some people worship Rama because they are attracted by Rama's Name and Form. It is said, *Ramayate Iti Rama* (Rama is one who captivates the hearts of one and all).

Today is Sivarathri, meaning auspicious night. Siva symbolizes the breathing process 'Soham', that takes place in every man. This is referred to as Hamsa Gayatri. '(A) Ham' refers to 'I' and 'So' means 'That' (God). This message of 'I am God' is conveyed through this breathing process - 21,600 times a day. Such teachings have been propagated and practiced since ancient times.

It is the finger that points to a flower. Likewise, idols point to the divinity. So, idol worship cannot be considered foolish. Never disregard idols because they are inert. Even in inert objects, there is *Chaitanya* (consciousness). *Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan* (Brahman is subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest). This *Chaitanya* is present in the smallest to the biggest. From your point of view, an object may appear to be inert, but from the Vedic point of view, everything is *Chaitanya*. It is foolish to overlook the existence of *Chaitanya*. One may question if *Chaitanya* is all-pervasive, why is it not visible to the naked eye? You are all well aware of the fact that there is butter in

every drop of milk. Can you deny its existence merely because it is not visible to the naked eye? The process of obtaining butter involves curdling the milk and then churning it. Man is unable to perceive this *Chaitanya* principle because of two defects:

1. He overlooks his innumerable mistakes; and
2. He magnifies the minutest mistake of others.

One can attain divinity only when he stops hiding his mistakes and highlighting the faults of others. It is a great sin to search for others' faults. Instead, look for your own. Consider your smallest defect as a great blunder and try to rectify the same. Ignore the faults in others however big they may be. Do not criticize others, instead criticize and question yourself - Is this the way I should behave, having been born as a human being ?. True spiritual practice lies in finding out one's own mistakes and correcting them. It involves giving up of evil tendencies and developing noble traits. That is 'Sa' '*Dhana*' (spiritual practice). 'Sa' symbolizes divinity which is the embodiment of all forms of wealth (*Dhana*). Today the people who seek the faults of others are on the rise. This is the cause for restlessness in society. All those who aspire to be peaceful should eradicate all their defects. Only then can you realize *Sivatwa* (Divinity).

Man is falling a prey to anger. Who is affected by this anger? It is not others but he himself. It is said, "Anger is one's own enemy, peace is the protective shield, compassion is the true relation, happiness is verily the heaven and misery is the hell." (Telugu Poem) Therefore, make efforts to control your anger. Do not consider yourself to be superior to others.

Where is God? He is present in every human being and in every living creature. That is why it is said, *Eswara Sarva Bhutanam* (God is the Indweller of all beings). *Daivam Manusha Rupena* (God takes the form of man). When you consider all as divine, you will never indulge in criticism. God judges a person by his feelings not by his actions. God is *Bhavapriya*, not *Bahyapriya*. So, make efforts to turn your vision inward. *Pashyati Iti Pashuhu* (One who goes purely by external vision is an animal). A true human being is one who looks inward. The moment an animal spots a green patch of land, it immediately rushes to that spot without weighing the pros and cons. It is the duty of man to use his power of discrimination and act accordingly. Man should be conscious of his duties always. Otherwise, he has to pay a heavy price. Whenever there is a delay in the arrival of a bus or a flight, the passengers start criticising all those responsible for the delay. This is because of the fact that duties were not carried out diligently. Likewise, man becomes an object of criticism if he does not discharge his duties properly.

Man cannot be called a human being unless he practices human values - *Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Santhi*, *Prema* and *Ahimsa*. These are like the five life-breaths of man. The absence of these life-breaths amounts to living death. Each one is responsible for his own downfall. Man kills himself by not practicing these human values.

Embodiments of Love!

Love is your greatest asset. Develop love and always speak the Truth. Truth sounds bitter whereas people are easily pleased by falsehood. People do not relish milk, which is brought to their doorstep, whereas they are prepared to traverse miles together to consume a bottle of liquor. Falsehood has become order of the day. Falsehood may please others but not

your conscience. Strive to satisfy your conscience before satisfying others. Under all circumstances follow the path of Truth. In case the utterance of Truth is likely to lead to some danger, remain silent. A hermit was deeply engrossed in the contemplation of God. He had vowed to speak "Truth always". Lord Eswara wanted to subject him to a test. He assumed the form of a hunter and started chasing a deer, which, out of fear, hid in a bush close to the hermitage. This was noticed by the hermit. On being questioned by the hunter about the whereabouts of the deer, the hermit was in a dilemma. He could not feign ignorance and say that he had not seen the deer as that would amount to uttering a lie. At the same time he could not reveal the whereabouts of the deer, lest the hunter should kill it. In that case he would be a party to the crime. He prayed to Lord Eswara fervently to show him a way out. A brilliant idea flashed in his mind by God's Grace. God is always with you, in you, around you, above you guiding and guarding you. Why fear when He is near? The hermit replied, "O hunter, that which sees cannot speak; that which speaks cannot see." By such a tactful answer, the hermit not only upheld his adherence to Truth but also protected the life of the deer. Then Lord Eswara manifested in His true form and declared, "Such *Yukti* (tact) which safeguards your interests as well as those of others is true Yoga." Therefore it is said, Truth is the life of the tongue. Righteousness is the life of hands. Non-violence is the life of the heart. Sivarathri is celebrated to teach man the significance of these values.

Siva also stands for humility. A person with humility is one of *Sivam* (auspiciousness). On the other hand, a person with ego is verily a *Savam* (corpse).

By constant prayer, man can overcome any difficult situation. You should develop noble thoughts and help the needy. Do not harm anyone. The harm that you inflict on others will boomerang on you. Criticism and accusation are worldly traits and negative in nature. Develop positive tendencies. What is the use of all your education if you cannot give up your evil tendencies?

"In spite of his education and intelligence, a foolish man will not know his true Self and a mean-minded person will not give up his wicked qualities. Modern education leads only to argumentation, not to total wisdom. What is the use of acquiring worldly education if it cannot lead you to immortality? Acquire the knowledge that will make you immortal."

Paropakara Punyaya, Papaya Parapeedanam (one attains merit by serving others and commits sin by hurting them). Help ever, Hurt Never. This is the essence of the eighteen Puranas. Never mind if you have to suffer, but do not put others to suffering. God will take care of you.

Your behavior should be befitting human birth. *Neeti* (morality) and *Nijayati* (integrity) are the life principles of *Manava Jathi* (human race). Develop morality and lead an honest life. Only then can you attain Easwaratwa.

The main teaching of the "Culture of Bharat" is to realize unity in diversity. But today man fragments unity into diversity because of his narrow-mindedness

Embodiments of Divine Atma!

Never give scope to the feelings of I and mine. First know yourself. Question yourself, "Who am I?" Once you know who you truly are, you will realize the oneness of all. Once you realize that you are the embodiment of *Atma*, you will know that all others are also embodiment

of the *Atma*. However, in your daily life, it is difficult to recognize this equality based on profession.

What is *Adhyatmikam* (spirituality)? Weeding out animal qualities and rising to the level of Divine constitutes true spirituality. *Adhyatmikam* refers to *Adhi* (eternal) and *Atma*. Therefore, true *Adhyatmikam* is that which relates to the eternal *Atma*. Recognizing the fact that I and you are one is true *Adhyatmikam*

When Dharmaraja offered Krishna the *Agratambulam* (prime offering), the wicked Sisupala felt that Krishna did not deserve it. He abused Krishna endlessly and said:

"Do You think that You deserve this honor because You stole the Saris of Gopikas when they were having a bath or do You think that You deserve this because You played pranks with the Gopikas. Stop this self-aggrandizement and shut up!"

Krishna smilingly replied, "Yes, you are right, you speak truly".

Dharmaraja felt deeply hurt and fell at Krishna's Feet and said, "O Lord! How is it that you continue to smile in the face of such harsh criticism? You may be smiling, but I am shedding tears of sorrow." Then Krishna replied, "Dharmaraja, praise or blame relate to the body, not to the *Atma*. Why should one feel depressed when criticized and elated when praised? In fact, we criticize our own body because it gives scope to various diseases and makes us suffer. Hence understand that whoever criticizes your body is in fact doing you a favor." Dharmaraja was immensely satisfied with Krishna's reply and said "Because there is a shortage of such teachers people are afflicted by ignorance".

What about Duryodhana? He was no ignoramus. But in spite of knowing all (about right and wrong), he fell into the path of ignorance. He also asked Dharmaraja to keep his mouth shut.

What is silence? One should never speak ill of others. *Mounath Kalaham Nasthi* (strife does not arise out of silence). Salute those who offend you. Don't return offence with offence. If you act in the same manner as your opponent, how can you become greater? While saying that the other is acting wrongly, will you be right if you act in the same manner? Never act in this manner. Let those who commit offence continue their offensive behavior. You should never react. Wish for the welfare of everyone. Our daily prayer is *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all people of the world be happy!) When all are happy, you are included. We pray for the welfare, wealth and health of all. Never wish for the misfortune of any other person. There is no room for hatred in this world. All are friends. If you persist in this manner, wishing well for everyone, praying for their prosperity, you become an ideal for the whole world. You are born in this world for this ideal only. There is a purpose behind the creation of every individual. That is why God created you. And for this you have been gifted with the capacity to love. Act according to your conscience. Consecrate to God every action of yours.

"O Lord! That heart which You have gifted me, all its actions are being offered back by me. What else is there for me to worship Your feet with? Please accept this with my humble salutations."

"The one valuable gift that You have bestowed on me is love. It is my duty to share this love with all my fellow beings. That is the sign of my understanding Your gift." One who is filled with anger, hatred and envy will be shunned by all those who

are near to him including his wife and children. Hence, you should avoid these evil tendencies. Once you understand the principle of love, all these evil tendencies leave you by themselves. Humanness is Divinity in essence. When a child is born, he is naturally pure, but as he grows, he starts accumulating these evil tendencies more and more. The evil tendencies are of your own making. They will ultimately destroy your humanness itself. Don't ruin your human nature. How sacred, how noble, how humble and how valuable is humanness! Such a noble humanness is wilfully ruined by you. Never harm others for the sake of your selfish and greedy desires. Be happy at the happiness of others. Then only will you realize humanness. Being born a man, don't turn mean. Cruelty is the nature of animals. By hurting others, you lose your humanness and become a beast. When you threaten others, you become a wild beast. If you are scared by somebody, you become an animal of prey. You are neither a hunting beast nor an animal of prey. You are a human being. Never hurt anybody; cultivate an attitude of happiness in yourself. Then you will be doubly happy. The Lord is constantly saying, *Thathastu, Thathastu!* (So be it !). As you wish, so will it happen. If your intentions are evil, evil will result. If you are always filled with good intention, they are equally blessed by God. The consequences of all your actions will result in reactions. May be not immediately, but definitely sooner or later. Therefore, we should live without hurting others or being harmed by others, and thus lead a blissful life. Put your learning to good use. Give respect and take respect. This is true humanness. Love and be loved in return. Your education is meant to cultivate such virtues.

Students study some limited subject or the other. Of what value is such specialization? All such academic under-

takings are essentially negative. There is a saying in Telugu that a washerman is better than a scholar. When the washerman collects clothes from your house, you make a detailed record of the number and type of clothes, if nowhere else, atleast by a few marks on the wall. But the washerman does not need any such devices and carries all the information in his head, and will return your clothes to you duly washed and pressed. What study has he made? This is not the only type of studies one should undertake. You should study positive things. Your education should benefit the society at large. Only when you help others do you become pure.

Our ancients worshiped Nature. It is Nature that gives us food, raiment and shelter. Not merely that, it also gives us precious metals like gold and silver. So, what is wrong in worshiping Nature? All the modes of worship that our ancients practiced were highly sacred. *Bhumatha* (Mother Earth), *Gomatha* (cow), *Vedamatha* (the Vedas) and the *Dehamatha* (physical

mother) are to be revered. As people have stopped worshiping God, we find chaos all over the world. People are plunged in sorrow as they have lost faith in the Self. What is the use of life without self-confidence? Worship of God alone can safeguard the nation. The country will be blessed with plenty and prosperity and people will lead a happy life once they start thinking of God. We repeat the *Santhi Mantra* thrice in our daily prayers. What does this mean? We should attain peace at three levels, i.e., physical, mental and spiritual. There is no peace in the external world; we find only pieces. Peace is in fact, within you. Make efforts to manifest your inner peace.

Embodiments of Love!

Spend the whole night in chanting the holy Name and spread this spiritual energy to the world at large. Who is Eswara? He is all-pervasive. Just as the wind blows freely everywhere, so also do we find the principle of Eswara pervasive. Share your love with all and propagate the Divine Name to the entire world.

