

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry



DEITY WORSHIP IN THE TEMPLE

Lord Krsna's instructions on the process
of deity worship



SB 11.27.12

*śailī dāru-mayī lauhī
lepyā lekhyā ca saikatī
mano-mayī maṇi-mayī
pratimāṣṭa-vidhā smṛtā*

śailī — made of stone; *dāru-mayī* — made of wood; *lauhī* — made of metal; *lepyā* — made of clay, sandalwood and other substances laid down as a paste; *lekhyā* — painted; *ca* — and; *saikatī* — made of sand; *manaḥ-mayī* — conceived of in the mind; *maṇi-mayī* — made of jewels; *pratimā* — the Deity; *aṣṭa-vidhā* — in eight varieties; *smṛtā* — it is remembered.

The Deity form of the Lord is said to appear in eight varieties — stone, wood, metal, earth, paint, sand, the mind or jewels.

Purport

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains that certain Deity forms, such as those made of sand, are manifested for a brief time to fulfill a personal desire of the worshiper. Those, however, who desire to attain pure love of God should worship the permanent form of the Deity (made, for instance, of marble, gold or brass), and they should maintain continual worship. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness there is no scope for neglecting the worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

SB 11.27.13

calācaleti dvi-vidhā

*pratiṣṭhā jīva-mandiram
udvāsāvāhane na staḥ
sthirāyām uddhavārcane*

calā — movable; *acalā* — immovable; *iti* — thus; *dvi-vidhā* — of two varieties; *pratiṣṭhā* — the installation; *jīva-mandiram* — of the Deity, who is the shelter of all living entities; *udvāsa* — sending away; *āvāhane* — and calling forth; *na staḥ* — are not done; *sthirāyām* — for the permanently established Deity; *uddhava* — My dear Uddhava; *arcane* — in His worship.

The Deity form of the Lord, who is the shelter of all living entities, can be established in two ways: temporarily or permanently. But a permanent Deity, having been called, can never be sent away, My dear Uddhava.

Purport

The devotees of the Lord understand themselves to be the Lord's eternal servitors; recognizing the Deity to be the Lord Himself, they permanently install the Deity and engage in perpetual worship. The impersonalists, however, regard the eternal form of the Lord as a temporary manifestation of illusion. In fact, they regard the Deity form as a mere stepping-stone in their ambitious program to become God. Materialistic persons of whatever stripe consider the Lord to be their order supplier, and so they make temporary arrangements for religious ceremonies to achieve temporary material sense gratification. This temporary mode of worship is favored by those desiring to exploit the Personality of Godhead for their personal ends, whereas the loving devotees in Kṛṣṇa consciousness eternally engage in worship of the Personality of Godhead. They install permanent Deities meant to be worshiped perpetually.

SB 11.27.14

*asthirāyām vikalpaḥ syāt
sthaṇḍile tu bhaved dvayam
snapanam tv avilepyāyām
anyatra parimārjanam*

asthirāyām — in the case of the temporarily installed Deity; *vikalpaḥ* — an option (as to whether the Deity is to be called and sent away); *syāt* — there is; *sthaṇḍile* — in the case of the Deity traced upon the ground; *tu* — but; *bhaved* — do occur; *dvayam* — these two rituals; *snapanam* — the bathing; *tv* — but; *avilepyāyām* — in the case when the Deity is not made out of clay (or paint or wood); *anyatra* — in the other cases; *parimārjanam* — thorough cleansing, but without water.

The Deity that is temporarily established can optionally be called forth and sent away, but these two rituals should always be performed when the Deity is traced upon the ground. Bathing should be done with water except if the Deity is made of clay, paint or wood, in which cases a thorough cleansing without water is enjoined.

Purport

Various classes of devotees worship the Deity of the Personality of Godhead according to their various stages of faith in the Lord. An advanced devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa understands his eternal loving relationship with the Lord and, seeing the Deity as the Lord Himself, establishes an eternal relationship with the Deity based on loving servitude to Him. Understanding Lord Kṛṣṇa to be the eternal form of bliss and knowledge, a faithful devotee makes a permanent arrangement for Deity worship, installing the Lord's form made of, for example, stone, wood or marble.

The *śālagrāma-śilā* is considered to be automatically installed even without the formal ceremony, and so it is forbidden to call the Deity with *mantras* or ask the Deity to leave. On the other hand, if one prepares a Deity form by drawing on sanctified ground or by constructing a sand image, one must call the Deity with *mantras* and then ask the Deity to leave the external form, which will soon be demolished by the natural elements.

The general principle is that a pure devotee of the Lord understands his relationship with the Deity to be eternal. The more one surrenders in loving devotion to the Deity, the more one can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Lord Kṛṣṇa is a person, but He is the Supreme Person, possessing His own unique feelings. One can easily please the Lord by devotional service offered to His Deity form. By pleasing the Lord one can gradually progress in the mission of human life and eventually go back home, back to Godhead, where the Deity personally appears before the devotee and welcomes the devotee to His personal abode, known throughout the world as the kingdom of God.

SB 11.27.15

*dravyaiḥ prasiddhair mad-yāgaḥ
pratimādiṣv amāyinaḥ
bhaktasya ca yathā-labdhair
hṛdi bhāvena caiva hi*

dravyaiḥ — with items of paraphernalia; *prasiddhaiḥ* — excellent; *mat-yāgaḥ* — My worship; *pratimā-ādiṣu* — in the different Deity forms; *amāyinaḥ* — who has no material desire; *bhaktasya* — of a devotee; *ca* — and; *yathā-labdhaiḥ* — by whatever paraphernalia he can

easily obtain; *hṛdi* — in the heart; *bhāvena* — by mental conception; *ca* — and; *eva hi* — certainly.

One should worship Me in My Deity forms by offering the most excellent paraphernalia. But a devotee completely freed from material desire may worship Me with whatever he is able to obtain, and may even worship Me within his heart with mental paraphernalia.

Purport

A devotee still troubled by material desire tends to see the world as an object of sense gratification. Such a neophyte devotee may misunderstand the Lord's supreme position and may even consider the Lord an object of his own enjoyment. Hence the neophyte must offer opulent paraphernalia to the Deity so that he may constantly remember that the Deity is the supreme enjoyer and that he, the neophyte, is simply the worshiper and is actually meant for the Deity's pleasure. In contrast, an advanced devotee, one fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, never forgets that the Supreme Lord is the actual enjoyer and controller of everything. The pure devotee offers his unalloyed love to the Personality of Godhead along with whatever paraphernalia is easily obtained. A Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee does not waver in his devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa, and even with the simplest offering he completely satisfies the Personality of Godhead.

SB 11.27.16-17

*snānālāṅkaraṇaṁ preṣṭham
arcāyām eva tūddhava
sthaṇḍile tattva-vinyāso
vahnāv ājya-plutaṁ haviḥ
sūrye cābhyarhaṇaṁ preṣṭhaṁ
salile salilādibhiḥ*

*śraddhayopāhṛtaṁ preṣṭhaṁ
bhaktena mama vāry api*

snāna — bathing; *alaṅkāraṇam* — and decorating with clothing and ornaments; *preṣṭhaṁ* — is most appreciated; *arcāyām* — for the Deity form; *eva* — certainly; *tu* — and; *uddhava* — O Uddhava; *sthaṇḍile* — for the Deity drawn upon the ground; *tattva-vinyāsaḥ* — establishing the expansions and potencies of the Lord within the various limbs of the Deity by chanting the respective *mantras*; *vahnau* — for the sacrificial fire; *ājya* — in ghee; *plutam* — drenched; *haviḥ* — the oblations of sesame, barley and so on; *sūrye* — for the sun; *ca* — and; *abhyarhaṇam* — the *yoga* meditation of twelve *āsanas* and offerings of *arghya*; *preṣṭhaṁ* — most dear; *salile* — for the water; *salila-ādibhiḥ* — by offerings of water and so on; *śraddhayā* — with faith; *upāhṛtaṁ* — presented; *preṣṭhaṁ* — most dear; *bhaktena* — by the devotee; *mama* — My; *vāri* — water; *api* — even.

In worshiping the temple Deity, my dear Uddhava, bathing and decoration are the most pleasing offerings. For the Deity traced on sacred ground, the process of tattva-vinyāsa is most dear. Oblations of sesame and barley soaked in ghee are the preferred offering to the sacrificial fire, whereas worship consisting of upasthāna and arghya is preferred for the sun. One should worship Me in the form of water by offering water itself. Actually, whatever is offered to Me with faith by My devotee — even if only a little water — is most dear to Me.

Purport

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is present everywhere, and Vedic culture prescribes various ritualistic methods for worshiping the Lord in His various manifestations. The principal item is the faith and devotion of the worshiper, without which everything else is useless, as the Lord describes in the next verse.