



Home Deity Worship Course

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.14.39



ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry

SB 7.14.39

*dṛṣṭvā teṣāṁ mitho nṛṇām
avajñānātmātām nṛpa
tretādiṣu harer arcā
kriyāyai kavibhiḥ kṛtā*

dṛṣṭvā — after practically seeing; *teṣāṁ* — among the *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas; *mithaḥ* — mutually; *nṛṇām* — of human society; *avajñānātmātām* — the mutually disrespectful behavior; *nṛpa* — O King; *tretā-diṣu* — beginning from Tretā-yuga; *hareḥ* — of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *arcā* — the Deity worship (in the temple); *kriyāyai* — for the purpose of introducing the method of worship; *kavibhiḥ* — by learned persons; *kṛtā* — has been done.

My dear King, when great sages and saintly persons saw mutually disrespectful dealings at the beginning of Tretā-yuga, Deity worship in the temple was introduced with all paraphernalia.

Purport

As it is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (12.3.52):

*kṛte yad dhyāyato viṣṇum
tretāyām yajato makhaiḥ
dvāpare paricaryāyām
kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt*

“Whatever result one obtained in Satya-yuga by meditating on Viṣṇu, in Tretā-yuga by performing sacrifices and in Dvāpara-yuga by serving the Lord’s lotus feet one can also obtain in Kali-yuga simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.” In Satya-yuga, every person was spiritually advanced, and there was no envy between great personalities. Gradually, however, because of material contamination with the advance of the ages, disrespectful dealings appeared even among *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas. Actually, an advanced Vaiṣṇava is to be respected more than Viṣṇu. As stated in the *Padma Purāṇa*, *ārāadhanānām sarveṣāṁ viṣṇor ārāadhanam param*: of all kinds of worship, worship of Lord Viṣṇu is the best. *Tasmāt parataram devi tadīyānām samarcanam*: and recommended more than worship of Viṣṇu is worship of the Vaiṣṇava.



Formerly, all activities were performed in connection with Viṣṇu, but after Satya-yuga there were symptoms of disrespectful dealings among Vaiṣṇavas. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has said that a Vaiṣṇava is he who has helped others become Vaiṣṇavas. An example of one who has converted many others into Vaiṣṇavas is Nārada Muni. A powerful Vaiṣṇava who has converted others into Vaiṣṇavas is to be worshiped, but because of material contamination, sometimes such an exalted Vaiṣṇava is disrespected by other, minor Vaiṣṇavas. When great saintly persons saw this contamination, they introduced worship of the Deity in the temple. This began in Tretā-yuga and was especially prominent in Dvāpara-yuga (*dvāpare paricaryāyām*). But in Kali-yuga, worship of the Deity is being neglected. Therefore chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is more powerful than Deity worship. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu set a practical example in that He did not establish any temples or Deities, but He profusely introduced the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Therefore Kṛṣṇa consciousness preachers should give more stress to the *saṅkīrtana* movement, especially by distributing transcendental literature more and more. This helps the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Whenever there is a possibility to worship the Deity, we may establish many centers, but generally we should give more stress to the distribution of transcendental literature, for this will be more effective in converting people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

It is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.47):

*arcāyām eva haraye
pūjām yaḥ śraddhayehate
na tad-bhakteṣu cānyeṣu
sa bhaktaḥ prākṛtaḥ smṛtaḥ*

“A person who is very faithfully engaged in the worship of the Deity in the temple but does not know how to behave toward devotees or people in general is called a *prākṛta-bhakta*, or *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*.” A *prākṛta* devotee, or neophyte devotee, is still on the material platform. He certainly engages in worshipping the Deity, but he cannot appreciate the activities of a pure devotee. It has actually been seen that even an authorized devotee who is engaged in the service of the Lord by preaching the mission of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is sometimes criticized by neophyte devotees. Such neophytes are described by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura: *sarva-prāṇi-sammānanāsamarthānām avajñā spardhādimatām tu bhagavat-pratimaiva pātram ity āha*. For those who cannot properly appreciate the activities of authorized devotees, Deity worship is the only way for spiritual advancement. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya 7.11)



it is clearly said, *kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana*: without being authorized by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot preach the holy name of the Lord throughout the entire world. Nevertheless, a devotee who does so is criticized by neophyte devotees, *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs*, who are on the lower stages of devotional service. For them, Deity worship is strongly recommended.