

GROUP 5

TEMPLES IN THE WEST

Temple worship. Is it relevant in today's society? Some say that you can pray to God anywhere - after all, he is in every part of the universe. He is the omnipresent Paramasiva so yes - you can worship him anywhere. However we have to ask ourselves this as souls, are we able to worship him anywhere? Nearly all of us find it impossible to make our minds devoid of all thoughts and truly meditate for even half a minute. At least in a temple - if we tried hard enough - we have a chance of meditating for that amount of time. That is why Auvai Patti said in her Konrai Venthan, 'ஆயைத் தொழுவது சாலவும் நன்று'...ie Temple Worship is indeed the best form of worship. Likewise, the significance of this important act has been emphasised by many, including Thiruvalluvar, Thirunavukarasar and Thirugnanasambanthar. And here I am today to put forward my views on this issue as those from the past have claimed that temple worship is extremely relevant.

Temples are recognised as being the house of God and temple worship enables us to visit this divine place. The spiritual atmosphere present here cannot be found elsewhere. One's mind can focus in the perfect tranquillity and we can be at one with the Almighty Lord in a temple. By attending Alaya Thiruvillas and truly being at one with God, our souls can reach a true sense of cleanliness. This is something which is definitely needed in today's society.

In this life we have our parents who we can regard as God, hence 'அன்னையும் பிதாவும் முன்னெறி தெய்வம்'. However, this only applies to our present lives. It is God himself whom we may consider as the mother and the father of our immortal souls. God is always present within us, in our mind, in our soul and in our eternal lives. We are all God's children and he loves us regardless of who we are and so is it actually possible not to worship such a God?

In Sri Lanka, people are able to live as Hindu communities. However, since our motherland was constantly being stained with blood due to the deadly war which took place, Tamil Hindus migrated to many foreign countries such as, England, Switzerland and Italy - we were no longer together as a community. But the one thing that untied us all was our religion. Temples allowed people of our faith to meet together on a regular basis. In today's society, there is a high chance of our culture and tradition being forgotten but the building of temples helps these survive. Once temples are built they are used as stages for Bharatha Natyam and Karnatic Music which are both forms of worship to God. These all help keep our culture alive. Therefore for these reasons too, temple worship is obviously necessary.

Although, the Hindus wealth, dignity, health and lots more were destroyed we grew stronger everyday by believing in our wonderful religion. In order for that to happen we required place of worship and temples to fulfil this task completely. As days go by, us Tamils have developed and united more of our religion and culture all over the world. By building temples and establishing an everlasting worship in them we can ensure that our unity and religion can develop much more in years to come. Some of the temples which were in our homeland were destroyed due to the foreign rulers such as the Portugese, which is heartbreaking. However we can now build temples anywhere in the world because within our community we have the ability, wealth and most importantly co-operation.. Also, although most of the younger generation have been born and brought up in a different society and culture, they still have the same beliefs and opinions of the older generations and to prevent these from changing in accordance to where we live we must have temples where the younger generation can also pray and grow in our tradition and culture.

If we pray from home, it is very likely that the actual act of praying will get pushed around to suit the busy schedule which we all live and work in. And eventually, our religion and times of prayer may actually be forgotten due to the hectic lives we all lead. But when we pray at a temple we have to be at the temple for the exact time of the poojas and so our life is then set out around the times when we pray. This is essential if our religion is to thrive in the 21st century.

Therefore, in today's world, the 21st Century, temple worship is most definitely a relevant act!. Our ancestors said 'கோயில் இல்லை ஊரில் குடியிருக்க வேண்டாம்' and so even if there is no temple in the area in which you live try your hardest to find a temple nearby and worship there instead of at home where there are so many distractions. Temples enable us to pray to the Almighty Lord, to thank him for loving us, caring for us and providing us with this precious form of human life, which indeed is very special as Auvai Patti said 'அறிது அறிது மாண்டிராதல் அறிது'. Furthermore, it enhances our spiritual being, brings together our Hindu community and provides us with a peaceful atmosphere where we can be at one with our God.