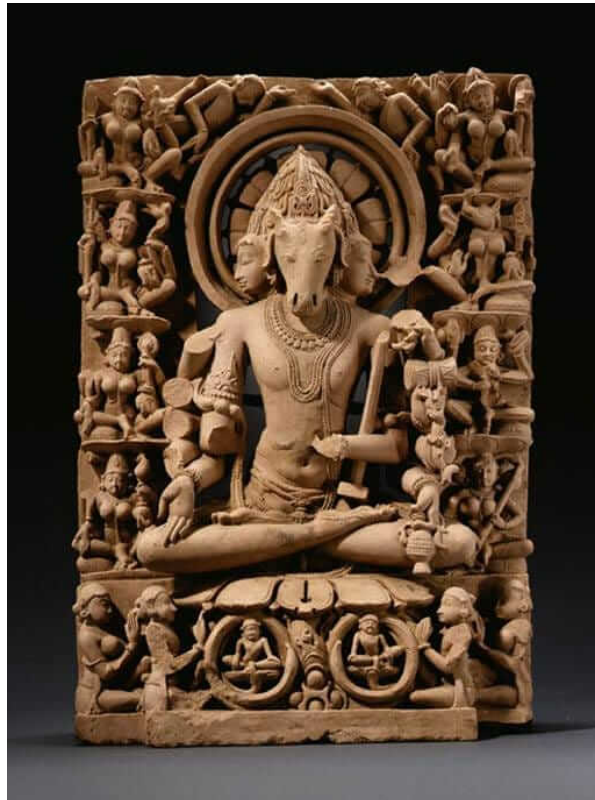


Are Hindus Idolators?. “We are being called idolators Acharya...



Posted on August 14, 2024 by Raghu Ananthanarayanan

“We are being called idolators Acharya, please help me understand why we pray to idols?”

You should understand that you do not pray to idols. We use the temple and the deity in the temple as ways to evoke the sacred within us. The Temples are built in places of power and with a strict adherence to architectural principles and sacred geometry. The *mūrti* within them is sculpted to evoke a sense of beauty and order in us and with many symbols that remind us to live a *dhārmika* life. You become open to feeling the sacredness, the order and the beauty of the world when you go to the temple with devotion and absorb its energy.

Nirguṇa Brahman is pure Consciousness and has no form or attributes. You cannot realise what this means unless you are capable of deep levels of *samādhi*. You need practice to lead

you from your present state to the possibility of experiencing the Divine. The entire universe emerges from *Nirguṇa Brahman*; therefore, every grain of sand and every blade of grass is replete with divinity and sacredness.

Be an āstika

In the Hindu tradition, we have had people called *nāstika* who have questioned the existence of Brahman. They say that the Brahman cannot be shown, so it does not exist. They even say that space cannot be accepted as one of the quintessential elements of matter because it cannot be seen or experienced by the senses like earthiness, fluidity, fieriness and airiness. Your question about idols sounds like the *āstika* — *cārvāka* idea. How do you know that a stone that you call *jada vastu*-non-living is different from a cow that you call *ajada vastu*-living?

“the cow has *prāṇa*.”

Can you see *prāṇa*? You cannot, but you know that there is an energy in the living object that is different from the non-living or the dead object. We call this *prāṇa*.

When I bring 100 stones, keep them in a heap, and count them, you and I will agree that there are 100 stones. The number 100 does not exist; you cannot hold, taste, see, or touch it, but both of us know the meaning of 100. We even have a way of speaking about it and doing arithmetic (*gaṇita*) with it. Without the idea of the number, can you build anything? So, be an *āstika* and have *śraddhā* — steadfast faith in what the Rishi’s have seen in samadhi.

The mūrti points to Brahman

The *mūrti* is only a pointer, like the number 100, that helps us go further in our *sādhana*— a journey towards realising the *Nirguṇa Brahman*. By making the *avyakta* and *amūrta* Brahman more tangible and *vyakta* through the *mūrti*- the *Saguṇa Brahman* (Brahman with name and form), the Hindus have built a bridge for us to walk on and realise the Divine within.

When you have to do a *pūjā*-worship at home, you pick up a bit of sandal powder or even some mud and make a *kṣaṇika* Ganapathy (temporary form of Ganesha). You invoke *prāṇa* into it by doing *prāṇa pratiṣṭhā*. You offer it flowers and other offerings. When you finish, you thank Lord Ganesha and say, “please return to where you came from”. The sculptural forms in the temple are exactly like that. A living Yogi is asked to do the *prāṇa pratiṣṭhā* in a temple. The temple priest keeps the energy alive through his Vedic rituals, and you go there to be blessed by the energy. Only fools think that name and form are *pūrṇam* —

whole. We have never given great importance to name and form.