Why Temples

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Questioner: Why were temples built? What was the purpose behind them?

Sadhguru: The very nature of human perception is such that, whenever a person is involved with right now, that will be the only truth for him in his experience. Right now, most people are involved with the five sense organs, so that seems to be the only truth and nothing else. Sense organs can only perceive that which is physical, and because your perception is limited to the five sense organs, everything that you know as life is only physicality: your body, mind, emotion, and life energies are physical.

You see the physical existence as a fabric, like a piece of cloth – let us say you are living on the fabric of the physical. You are walking on this cloth, and what you are walking on is all that is real. But when you look up, there seems to be a vast emptiness above, and even then, you only recognize the physical. You look at the stars or the sun or a moon – this is all physical. You do not perceive what is not physical.

What you call a temple is like a hole in the fabric. It is a space where the physical becomes thin and something beyond becomes visible to you. This science of making the physical less manifest is the science of consecration, so if you are willing, that dimension beyond the physical becomes apparent or visible to you.

To take the analogy further, it is like the temple is a hole in the fabric of the physical, where you could fall through easily and go beyond. Today, temples may be built like modern shopping complexes with concrete and steel – probably for the same purpose because everything has become commerce. When I talk about temples, I am talking about the way ancient temples were created.

In this country, in ancient times, temples were built only for Shiva and no one else. It was only later that other temples started coming up because people started focussing on immediate wellbeing. Using this science, they started creating various other forms. They created different types of energies and deities for their benefit in terms of health, wealth and wellbeing. These temples came up only in the last 100 or 1200 years, but before that, there were no other temples in the country except for Shiva.

The word ‘Shiva’ literally means ‘that which is not’. So the temple was built for ‘that which is not.’ That which is physical manifestation; ‘that which is not’ is that which is beyond the physical. A temple is a hole through which you enter into a space which is not. There are thousands of Shiva temples in the country, and most of them do not have any form as such. They just have a representative form, which is generally a linga.

The word ‘linga’ means ‘the form.’ We are calling it ‘the form’ because when the unmanifest began to manifest itself, or when creation began to happen, the first form that it took was that of an ellipsoid. A perfect ellipsoid is what we call a linga. Today modern cosmologists have identified this in many different ways. One thing is, the core of every galaxy always starts as an ellipsoid, or a linga, and then becomes many things. And we know from our experience that if you go into deep states of meditation, before a point of absolute dissolution comes, once again the energy takes the form of an ellipsoid or a linga.

The incredible thing is that there are lingas all around the world. In Africa, there are terracotta lingas used for occult purposes. In Greece there is a temple with a linga below the ground, known as the ‘Navel of the Earth’. This is a Manipuraka chakra linga consecrated by Indian yogis. As most temples were funded by kings, they were mostly Manipuraka in nature. But a few kings who looked beyond those things wanted Anahata lingas, which are for love, devotion, and ultimate dissolution. Anahata is a very noble kind of state, which is accessible to most people.

Right now, most of the lingas represent one or two chakras at most. Generally it is only one because the linga is made powerful and intense with one chakra for a particular purpose, and is consecrated by mantras. However, the Dhyana linga located at the Isha Yoga Center, is empowered with all the seven chakras, and consecrated by prana pratishtha. When you say Dhyana linga, it is the highest manifestation of the Divine. It is like a living person, with all the seven chakras manifesting themselves at their peak. There is a whole body of a person in a very subtle way, on the level of the etheric or spiritual body. The Dhyana linga is like having the energy body of the most evolved being sitting there, or you could say, the energy body of the highest being, referred to as Shiva.

The Dhyana linga is like a Guru, maybe not a physical Guru who speaks to you, but still a Guru. A Guru is not there to speak to you or guide you on the physical level. Your relationship in the world is physical, mental or emotional, but the relationship with your Guru is such that he touches you in those dimensions where others cannot. Dhyana linga definitely touches you in these dimensions, so it is definitely a Guru.

By just gazing at the Dhyana linga for a few minutes and then sitting with eyes closed, the energy form of the Dhyana linga imprints itself on your system. It functions from within. Once you allow this to happen, it is always with you, guiding you, making things happen to you on a deeper dimension. The Dhyana linga is a miracle, because it is a possibility to know life in its utmost depth and totality. The sphere and the energy of the Dhyana linga will create this possibility for every human being who comes in contact with it – either actually in its vicinity, or just in his consciousness.

You have known the pleasure and the convenience of modern science. I want you to know the power, the liberation of another kind of science, the inner science, the yogic science through which you can become the master of your own destiny. That is why the Dhyana linga. A science like this gives you absolute mastery over life itself. The whole process of the Dhyana linga is just to manifest this science in such a way that it cannot ever be taken away. It is accessible at any time to everyone who is willing.