Should we go to temples

Sadhguru, Isha Foundation

No other culture has looked at life with as much depth and profoundness as Indian culture has. Here, God is not the ultimate focus of life. Liberation or mukti is the ultimate goal. Liberation is about becoming free — not just from the devil but from god and heaven too! For this, we created many tools in the form of deities, mantras, rituals, practices and processes — both inward and outward. Nowhere else on the planet have people looked at these things as profoundly as we have. Gods and goddesses were created by us. This is the only culture that has given you the freedom to create your own god. This is the highest level of freedom.

Temples were not places of worship or prayer. They were energy centres that you are supposed to make use of. Temples were built according to what is referred to as Agama Shastra — the five fundamental principles through which you can generate a certain dimension of energy. This is the science of consecration. If you convert mud into food, that is called agriculture. If you make food into flesh and bone, that is called digestion. If you make this flesh and bone into mud once again, that is called cremation. Similarly, if you can make a stone or even an empty space into a divine process, if you can make it reverberate with the highest level of intensity, that is consecration. A consecrated space is of immense value because it is an incubation for a human being to flower into greater possibilities.

In southern India, traditionally, when you went to a temple, no one told you to pray or appeal to God about your business, family or whatever else. When you go to a temple, you are supposed to sit there for some time. Nowadays, a whole lot of people just touch their bottom to the floor and go. That’s not the idea. The idea is it is a public battery-charging place.

The nature of the world is such that there is a conflict in every transaction — what is my profit is your loss, what is your profit is my loss. If this is not lubricated with grace, every transaction — whether it is within the family or outside, in the marketplace — will become fricitions. So, the first thing you did in the morning was to imbibe a certain energy before you went out into the world. At the same time, the instructions also said that if you are on the spiritual path, you need not go to the temple because now you have a self-charging system. You don’t have to go to the public battery charger.

It is like there was a time when there used to be a public tap. Everyone would go and stand there. But once you got your own tap at home, you did not go to the public tap anymore. So, the most important thing is to turn inward because once you turn inward, you will not need any outside help. It is all right to create a supportive atmosphere and an incubating climate so that everyone can get it. But for an individual person, whatever the outside situation, once you turn inward, it does not need any outside support. If you have turned inward, you don’t have to go and stand in a queue. But if you have not turned inward, someone created a place that you can experience.

These places are generally known as teerthas. Teertha means a consecrated or energised space, water body or whatever else. Those who create these are known as teerthankars. Powerful teerthas have been created in this land, which one can definitely make use of. But the best thing is to turn inward because ultimately, that which is the source of life — whether you call that the Creator or whatever other name — is within you. When the source of creation is within you, you should not be consulting anyone else. If you want to know life, you must turn inward. But till then, you can make use of the external supports that have been created.

(Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and bestselling author. He was conferred the Padma Vibhushan in 2017 for exceptional and distinguished service)