



OUR TEMPLES



Part-3

The entire temple is considered to be the expansion of the Supreme Lord Himself. Whereas it is only the deity that receives all the worship, hence the deity is considered to be the vital aspect of the temple. The deity is undoubtedly an embodiment of the Supreme Lord. His pastimes in His deity form with great devotees like *A:lwa:rs* and *A:cha:ryas* bears evidence to this fact and quells all the contradictions and doubts of the Supreme Lord being the deity. The significance of the deity form of the Lord explained in the previous issues, needs to be kept in mind. The class of the temple is determined by the nature of the deity it houses. Hence let us know about different kinds of temples.

The deities are divided into four categories according to the nature of their origin. They are: -
1) *Svayam Vyaktha*: - The self manifested deities are called as *Svayam Vyakthas*. It is said that the Supreme Lord manifests Himself in His deity form in some places out of His own liking for those particular places and for the sake of bestowing His mercy on all the beings that are devoted to Him. The Lord has chosen this form to keep Himself approachable to all the devotees in

such places not expecting for their call or protocol. Hence such places are considered to be most auspicious and sacred.

There are very a few places in which the Lord manifested Himself. The tradition recognizes only the following eight places as the *Svayam Vyaktha Kshe:thras* 1) **Sri**: Rangam, 2) **Sri Mu:shanam**, 3) Thiruve:ngadam (Tirumala Tirupati), 4) Sa:lagra:mam (the present Mukthina:th in Nepal), 5) Naimisa:ranam, 6) Va:nama:malai, in Tamil nadu, 7) Badarika:sramam or Badrinath in Uttaranchal and 8) **Sri Pushkaram**.

All the pious activities like charity, worship, bathing in sacred waters in such places, offering food and water to ones departed forefathers etc., are said to be very efficacious in these places.

2) *De:va Prathisthitha* - In the past the demi gods viz., Indra, Vayu etc, have constructed temples for the Supreme Lord in various places in order to thank Him for the favours received or as an act of propitiation or out of love and devotion towards Him or to escape the sins committed or in order to seek emancipation. The deities that were installed and invoked by the demi-gods are called as *De:va Prathisthithas*. There are few *De:va Prathisthitha*

Kshe:thras like Thiru Mani Ku:dam, Thirukandiyu:r etc. these places are said to be very sacred and sanctifying.

3) *Rushi Prathisthitha*: - Many great sages have erected many temples for the Supreme Lord and have installed various deities of the Lord in them. The deities that are installed and invoked by the great sages viz. Agasthya, Ma:rkande:ya, Bhrgu etc and are called as *Rushi Prathisthitha Kshe:thrams*. There are various *Rushi Prathisthitha Kshe:thrams* few of them are Thiruvananthapuram (Travancore), Thiruk Kannapuram, Ve:da:dri, Mangalagiri etc. These places are said to be all sanctifying and all the pious deeds committed in these places are said to be very efficacious.

4) *Manushya Prathisthitha*: - The deities that are installed and invoked by great human beings are called as *Manushya Prathisthithas*.

Apart from the above mentioned classification, the temples are classified as *Divya de:sams*, *Abhima:na Sthalam*s and Common temples in the tradition. The *A:lwa:rs* have done *Mangala:sa:sanam*s to the Supreme Lord in deity form at 108 different places in their Tamil songs called *Pa:surams*. The deity forms of the Lord which have received the *Mangala:sa:sanam*s of the *A:lwa:rs* are known as *Divya Desams*.

These places are

considered to be very auspicious and all sanctifying. The *Sri Vaishnavas* adore all the *Divya desams* with great regard and try to visit as many *Divya desams* as possible within their lifetime. All the pious deeds performed at these *Divya desams* are supposed to be very efficacious and sanctifying. It is said to be very auspicious even if someone dies in the *Divya desams*. Most of the *Sri Vaishnavas* aspire to live in these places.

The sacred places that are associated with the pastimes of the *Pu:rva:cha:ryas* and have not received the *Mangala:sa:sanam*s of the *A:lwa:rs* are called as *Abhima:na de:sams*. Melkote which was renovated by *Sri Bhagavad Ramanuja* is a very good example of such sacred places. These places are also considered to be very sacred. The temples that are glorified by the *A:lwa:rs* and associated with the *Acha:ryas* are considered as extraordinary temples. Though the Lord is the same in all the temples, the temples that are associated with the most cherished devotees of the Lord like *A:cha:ryas* and *A:lwa:rs* are said to be more sanctifying for The Lord always accepts Himself to be under their guidance.

Temples are the places where we can see God with our naked eyes.

to be continued...