5. SYMBOLISM OF RITUALS

Rituals constitute the essential detail of all cultural life, and especially in social and religious fields\textsuperscript{116}. It is not possible often times to distinguish between social and religious areas. Temple, for instance, is a complex institution involving both religious and social aspects almost in equal measure. And naturally the rituals that dominate the temple are socio religious in their import\textsuperscript{117}.

Here is an attempt to consider temple-rituals in this context. Prescriptions found in the Agama texts provide the framework for the festivals and rituals as they are conducted now, but social idioms of the religion in which the temple is situated also play an enormous role. The significance of this dual nature of the temple-rituals is sought to be highlighted in the following few pages.

More important than the actual ritual is the symbolism there of. It is this symbolism that operates as the thread of continuity between generations and as the web in which the entire community is enclosed\textsuperscript{118}.

Man’s approach to God takes many forms. One of the most widespread forms is worship. And worship naturally visualizes the incomprehensible divinity in terms of some concrete shapes and
attributes, so that the worshipper may easily dwell on it mentally or engage himself in certain services. The Agama mentions that divinity conceived of us worshipful may be approached in one of four ways: 1. recitation of the names of divinity in standard formula: 2. oblations offered in fire: 3. meditation of the transcendental and empirical aspects of divinity: and 4. actual worship of divinity as an honoured guest.

The first of these approaches takes God as a pattern of holy sounds, the second as represented in fire, the third as independent of concrete representation, and the fourth as visualized in an icon. Of the four approaches the easiest for the common man to follow is the fourth; hence the popularity of temples. The other three approaches, however, are incorporated in the actual worship, so that worship in a temple is an integrated mosaic of different details.

The texts classify worship in a temple into Vedic, Tantrik and mixed types. It is unlikely the temples or icons were envisaged in the Vedic culture. The only concrete object of worship for the Vedic folk was fire, regarded as the visible representation of divinity, and a medium for all the God's in the celestial realms. Oblations offered into the fire while articulating appropriate hymns constituted Vedic worship. The Tantrik ideology, however, projected divinity in terms of
human or semi-human form and in terms of diagrams of merit and of formula of great import\textsuperscript{123}. Temples and iconic worship were a special feature of Tantrik approach. But in actual practice, the two approaches intertwined, so that in the temple, icons and fire together received worship; archa and homa were alike, rituals that were necessarily involved.

Symbolism is an ingredient of both archa and homa alike. The individual constitution and the cosmic organization are essentially identical\textsuperscript{124}. The spirit inhabiting the body is in reality the God animating the entire universe. And human mind, functioning with limitations, can comprehend God only in terms of the spirit. Comprehending the really incomprehensible is possible only when forms are given to it. While one is fully aware that human or animal forms, meaningful or meaningless sounds, and involved diagrams are mere human approximations and as such thoroughly inadequate representations of divinity, he finds them useful in getting into communion with the highest. Whether, it is agni or an archa, what it is, is not as important as how it is approached. In rituals, concepts are more significant than percepts, procedures more significant than concepts, and symbolism more relevant than procedures\textsuperscript{125}.
The worship ritual has therefore two distinct aspects: Symbolic or representational and actual or presentational. The former is technically known as internal worship or mental worship, whereas the latter is called as external ritual or the services\textsuperscript{126}. In the former, God is recognized as the worshipper’s own innermost spirit, while in the latter the personified God is treated like an honoured guest. All the sixteen internal rituals like invitation, seating, offering water for the feet, offering water to sip and rins the mouth, providing a bath, presentation of dry and fresh garments, serving food, etc., are what were usually given in India for a guest. A guest, in the ancient reckoning, was indeed God in human form\textsuperscript{127}.

Further, on the assumption that the human King derives his power and glory from God is treated like the King of Kings. Many of the royal honours are, therefore, offered to the icon representing God, especially during festivals. These are in fact known as ‘Royal services or honours’. And on festive occasions, the temple is made to look gorgeous and take on the appearance of a Royal Court\textsuperscript{128}.

There is, however, an awareness among the devotees that this ‘exitement’ incidental to external ritual is only for entertainment and enjoyment, and that it is but secondary to the main worship which is only symbolic. It is described as an ‘overflow’ of religious devotion,
meant to impress the lay folk that God must be the Supreme concern\textsuperscript{129}.

More important than ‘external’ worship is the ‘internal’, consisting of several sequences like purification of elements placement of divine attributes, assumption of appropriate and effective gestures, regulation of breath in order to facilitate the contemplation on the abstract character of divinity, Sohambhavana assumption of identifying the worshipped with the worshipper, the sacred formula which helps realizing the deity in one’s own heart, and mystical diagrams representing aspects of divinity.

‘Internal ritual’ is mostly conducted with in the sanctrum, and private, screened from public graze: and by the priests specially initiated into it. The deity stationed in the sanctorum, is but an alibi; the priest recognizes the deity as abiding in his own heart. When he contemplates on the deity he attempts to identify the parts of his own constitution, physical as well as mental with the assumed aspects of the divine constitution of the deity. The dhyana thus is an important sequence in ‘internal worship’. It is not prayer, nor is it laudatory in character: there are no desires expressed, and on gain contemplated. It is essentially an attunement of the inherently divine nature of the worshipper with the essentially divine nature of the deity visualized.
The selection and communication of an appropriate and effective mantra for the worship of the deity is an indispensable prerequisite. The priest relies on this for the evocation of the power of the deity. He utilizes also standard and mystical designs called yantras or mantras as fit abodes for the deity during worship. In fact, ‘internal worship’ regards the body itself as a yantra for the deity to reside. During ‘prana-pratishtha’. Sequence, the priest extracts the power or luster of the deity out of his body through his breath and invests it upon the physical icon making an abstract yantra on it, and presenting certain mudras. The formula recited during this ritual invokes the divinity within his own heart to come out and reside with ease in the icon infront until the worship ritual is completed.

It is only when the deity is thus duly externalized, and made to be evoked, established present close at hand positioned right in front of the worshipper, confined to the icon, and well concealed, that the ‘external’ worship consisting of the services and honours, becomes relevant and meaningful. Having come out of the worshipping, the deity is now fit to be worshipped as an object outside him; it is treated as an honoured guest, as the most excellent ‘Royal’ personage who has arrived just then. But unless the worshipper retains the fundamental identity with the worshipped, despite the objectification of the latter, worship is again irrelevant. Hence the textual
prescription: “God is not to be worshipped by one who has not priorly become God himself.” But unless the worshipper retains the fundamental identity with the worshipped despite objectification of the latter, worship is again irrelevant.

When the formal worship is completed, the deity is ‘dismissed’ or sent away. The ritual signifying this involves a ‘taking back’ of the divine presence into the worshipper’s own heart. The worshipper recites the mantra which means ‘come, o God who is residing in the icon, come into my heart-lotus’ Ehy chi pratima-sthita purushottama mama hrtkamale ”. Reside in my heart, O Lord, of the world, along with your glory.

The ‘placement’ of divine presence in the human constitution is a necessary ritual sequence before the ‘services can be offered. It takes three forms: 1) mytrkanyasa, the placement of fifty seed sounds in the several psychic centres and on different parts of the body; 2) devata-nyasa, the placement of different aspect of the deity on different limbs; and 3) tattva-nyasa, the endowment of the twenty-four basic factors to the abstract deity, so that it is individualized. The first form is purely Tantrik in character; and accomplishes the analysis in the abstract of the entire expressive aspect of the universe.
The second form is also Tantrik, although the Vedic influence in it is obvious, and it has a sectarian character\textsuperscript{134}. The aspects of the God dealt with here are so many powers, enumerated and named according to the seat to which one belongs. The Vaishnavas adopt what is known as the kesavadinyasa while the saivas follow srikanthadi-hyasa, and the sakthas kala-nyasa. The third form is largely Vedic although Tantrik elements are discernible in it. The first two forms of nyasa transform the divine character of the worshipper into an abstract form of the deity, which is purely conceptual and therefore, unfit for external worship. The last form, however, provides a constitution for this abstract form, so that worship rituals could be carried out for it.

While this is the general symbolic significance of the worship ritual, there is a different ideology behind the worship conducted in temples where the image in the sanctorum is regarded as self-manifest or installed by celestial beings. The image in such cases is a permanent repository of divine power, and the priest worships it without having to gone through the ‘prana-pratistha ritual. For administering the ‘services’ however, a smaller replica of the main image is used. And this image needs to be infused with life at the time of ‘services’. But the priest draws the power from the main image itself and not from his own heart.
6. STRUCTURE OF THE HINDU TEMPLES

The temple is constructed on the model of the body of human being in a lying posture or in a sitting posture. Man is not merely the physical or the subtle body but also the soul which gives him life. In main include both the destructible and indestructible parts of a living being. The living human being has six different states which are denoted by the various parts of the temple.

3. Flag staff - Dwaja lingam – Tatavanma – Manomayakosa.
5. Archaka – Anmalingam – Mantranma – Ananda maya kosa.
6. Vimanam – Akandalingam – Paranma – Prathyakatma (Paraveli)

The presiding deity (Sivalingam) in the sanctorum. Sanctorum (Grabhagraham) is the centre of life for temple, “Ullam Perumkoil, Oon udambu Alayam” is Thirumular Thirumandram. The heart is the abode of God. The temple is the human body of flash and blood. Without the deity installed in accordance with the rules and regulations in the Agama, the temple will be like –
human body without the soul. Thirumular’s reference is Murti is a sitting posture where murti is gopura vassal entrance.

The following parts of the human body denote the various part of the temple.

1. a. Head - Garbhagraham
   b. Vimanam - Brahmarandam on the tope of the head (like a lotus butts)
2. Neck - Arthamandapam
3. Shoulders - Dwarapalakas
4. Body - (Chest – abdomen ) Maha mandapam
5. Heart - Nataraja
6. Spinal chord - Flag staff
7. Gopuram - Feet.

The seven adharasthanams of the human body are denoted by different parts of the temple as follows.

1. Mooladharam - Base of the spinal chord (flag staff to peetam)
2. Swadisthanam or Rectum - a. Balipeetam
   b. Spleen – Devi
3. Manipurakam - Nevel – Nandi
4. Anahatam - Chest (heart) – Nataraja
5. Vishuddi - Neck – Nandi
6. Aajai - fore head (middle of the space between eyebrows)
7. Sahastaram - Top of the head – Vimanam

The temple tank will generally be in front of the temple or in one of its side. The Nandavanam (flower gardens) will be on the north and the Gosala (cow-shed) on the south of the temple. Around the Garbhagraham the following Kosthavigrahams are installed. Nirtha Ganapathi and Dakshnamoorthi on the South, Lingothbavar or Vishnu on the back side, Brahma and Durga on the North, Chandeswara shrine will be a near the Niche of Durga. On the prakara around the garbagarham on the backside there will be a Vinayaka shrine on the South West. Muruga in the middle of the backside and lakshmi on the North west. Navagrahahas are installed in the north east corner of the outer prakaram$^{134a}$.

6.1. GROUND PLAN

The analogy of man’s constitution with the temple architecture is a favourite theme of the canonical texts like Sri-Prasna, Vishnutantra, Silpa-ratna, Vatulagama, and Aparajitha –