

Idol Worship : 25 Arguments Examined

Q. 1. God is infinite and we are finite. It is difficult for the finite to have a true conception of the infinite. Idol brings the infinite within the range of the finite and enables us to have glimpse of it.

A. the absurdity of the argument is clear at the very face of it. The purpose of the worship was to realize the conception of the infinite. First of all it is not possible for us to drag the infinite down to the level of the finite. The infinite does not dance at our suggestions and cannot change itself to please us or to suit our convenience. Secondly, whatever glimpses we thus have are the glimpses, not of the infinite, but of the gross object which lies before us. If by worshipping the idol, you are satisfied that you realized god, it is your self delusion and can be easily seen by a little introspection. A man may think himself learned while he is not, or a king while he is not. Who can check him from doing so? But the fact is that an idol worshipper remains an idol worshiper all his life and does not rise an inch above. To say that the finite cannot realize the conception of the infinite is a verbal jugglery. You say that if you realize the infinite, you make him finite, as he has come within your finite ken and is no longer infinite. But the fact is that the finite is not ill suited to realize the infinite nature of the infinite, by trying to find its limits and to fail. A bird flies in the sky and thinks that it will soon reach the limits. But when it is tried and finds the end of the sky is limitless. Similarly when trying to have a conception of god, the soul finds that however high it may soar, it cannot get an end, the conception of the infinitude of the infinite dawns upon it. The worshippers aim is to know god and not to know the whole of him. A child knows its mother so far as she is its mother. To know the whole of the mother is impossible for it and unnecessary too. I know that god is my god. This satisfies me. He may be much more than that. I cannot know it. My not being able to know it means that he is infinite and I have a glimpse of his infinitude. Idols are an obstacle in our way of having this realization.

Q.2 God is invisible. We cannot see him. Therefore we make his representations, so that we might satisfy our cravings to see him.

A. when god is invisible, how can he be represented by visible objects? Visibility means grossness; grossness means limitations. The form you see is not god's but of the idol, the size you see is not god's but of the idol; the colors you see is not god's but of the idol. In fact whatever is visible to your physical eyes belongs to the idol and has no connection whatsoever with the nature of god. Wherever in scriptures, there is a mention of seeing god it is all figurative and means realization. It is very unfortunate that the world is mad after seeing him who cannot be seen with the physical eye, after hearing him who cannot be heard with physical ears. The Upanishads clearly warn this delusion when it says - he is not sound, he is not touch, he is not form, he is not divisible. (Kathopanishad)

This all means that the eye cannot see god and it is a vain quest on the part of man to try to see him. People are mad after seeing him. They observe all sorts of practices, undergo all sorts of austerities, and bear all sorts of practices in order that they might see the invisible. The Hindu puranas and other mythologies as well as other serious religious scriptures contain stories that encourage this quest. There are anecdotes of persons who performed such and such austerity for such and such period and god was in end pleased to present himself to the devotee in his bodily shape. The prophets are said to have traveled to heaven in order to have a talk with the almighty. These descriptions, if figurative, are generally taken in their literalness and devotionally disposed people feel a sort of itch to get the same result. The credulity of the devotees provides an easy market for the hypocrite who contrives various devices to ensnare the credulous. Ignorance about the true nature of god, fabricated or exaggerated stories of the past saints, temptations to ensnare common people and delusive elementary successes all continue to produce a mischievous circle from which the simple worshipper finds it difficult to free himself. The Upanishad says that god is arupa or without a form and the eyes cannot see him, ears cannot hear him. One thing that people need to be taught is that just as they cannot see their ownself and yet they feel that they are, similarly god is invisible, will remain invisible and will never assume visibility under any circumstances or for any reason.

Q.3 Admitted that idols cannot represent god, they have another utility. Some physical object is necessary for concentrating the mind, and idols can serve that purpose

A. Emphatically not! No idols, in any temple of the world, public or private, are ever used for concentrating the mind nor were they originally designed for this end. It is futile to achieve mental concentration in temples. If the reader does not agree with me he should go to any temple and make an experiment upon his own person or watch the devotees educated and uneducated both. If you wish to practice concentration of mind, you shall have to be as away from temples and idols as possible. The mind concentrating devices commonly in vogue in these days or in olden days do not consist of idols. It is not relevant here to discuss or examine the efficiency or even comparative value of these devices. They may have different degrees of utility, not as objects of worship, but as instruments of teaching elementary lessons in mind concentration; but they do not come under the category of idolatry and it is unfair to drag them to the discussion in order to prove a thing which has not the remotest connection with it. If an object is required from concentrating the mind, a small black spot on a piece of paper is sufficient, or the tip of your finger will do. But will you call it idol worship? In Sankhya Darshan, Kapila calls the fully concentrated mind one which has freed itself from all physical impressions or association. In elementary lessons, it may be useful to choose some very tiny objects. But we must remember that the selection of a tiny object means, in other words, exclusion of bigger objects, or narrowing down the range of vision to its irreducible minimum. It is wrongly suspected that mind concentration business needs a gross object. On the contrary, it needs elimination of gross factors as far as possible. The un-concentrated mind,

before its training, was habituated to wander in gross objects of a very wide range. This wandering habit was the disease of which we wanted to cure the mind. Therefore, we tried to narrow the range of its ramblings, by fastening it to a very small tether and shortening the rope. The process is to minimize grossness and not to augment it. The object is to eliminate this grossness altogether. Between the elementary lesson and the desired end, there are intermediary stages where a tiny object, having the least possible grossness, is retained or is allowed to linger. This retainment of an unavoidable element is no argument for worshipping idols. Idols with their thousand ornamental embellishments and historical or legendary associations cannot but tend to increase mental wanderings and are no help in concentration. The process is just the reverse and increases the disease instead of curing it. No teacher of mind concentration is so foolish as to advise you to go to the temple of Jagannatha at Puri or Meenakshi at Madurai or Shiva in Rameshwaram for receiving your first lessons there. And if advanced in the practice, you will yourself find such places a great nuisance and fly from them if you want to make any progress.

Q.4 God's creation reminds us of its creator. Are not idols god's creation?

A. Ultimately they are. But they tell us more about sculptor and very little about god. All art has a tendency to conceal nature. If you see a beautiful statue, you will first think of the human sculptor who has given it this beautiful shape and may very likely forget the great maker of the original stone. A picture on a paper reminds more of the paper maker, than of god who created the original material. You may go to temples to see art and not nature. They are the specimens of human workmanship which has thrown nature in the background and brought art into relief. The earth on which you are sitting, the sky which is above your head, the rivers, the hills and other objects where unadorned nature is visible in its stark nakedness do remind us that they have an intelligent maker and if you are trained to look behind things, you can get religious inspirations. But carvings on the temple doors or idols and their ornaments do just the contrary. Once I went to see The Taj with a friend. Near the gate there is a tank which had a very beautiful tiny rose flower. I asked my companion as to what was the most striking object there. He pointed to the towers and other fine carvings. His mind was so engrossed with art that there was no margin left to observe the tiny flower which was ten thousand times more artistic than The Taj. But human mind has such a partiality towards human workmanship, that he forgets god and his workmanship. If you are anxious to remember god by observing his work, why have temples or idols? Your finger will teach you all the lessons you need. Even a blade of grass or the wing of a butterfly will do. The condition is that you have an eye to see.

Q.5 God is all pervading. We do not worship idols, but god who is within them.

A. Honesty requires that we should refer to your personal experiences we shall ask you to scrutinize the doings of your mind and leave us to go further. If, however, you are beat upon pressing your dry logic, we can rebut your argument by saying that we admit that god is in the

idol, but you are not. How can you meet god at the place where he is, but you are not? The most proper place for the union of god and your self is your own heart where god and you both reside.

Q.6 Idol worship may not be quite proper. But it is expedient. It keeps up the religiosity of the masses that are unfit to understand finer things. If all idols and all temples are taken away, then masses will be grossly irreligious. Something is better than nothing.

A. This expediency is more apparent than real. In fact it is idolatry that keeps the ignorant masses always ignorant. They are by nature religious. Religiosity is inherent in their very nature. If they are taught to worship god in a correct way, they will gradually improve. But they do not, because the priests and preachers misdirect their energies. They have been given to understand that bowing before the idols and presenting offerings is all that is required of them. You have not to go far to discover this fact. The pandas and their agents will try to take hold of you as soon as you are within a hundred miles from a sacred place and will make your life miserable. Do you call all this religiosity? Is it the spiritual food you wish to give to your masses? Religiosity should make people intellectually and morally better. But it is making them worse. It is a simple sheepmaking process. It kills the germs of intelligence in them and makes them credulous. They become superstitious and cowardly. They tolerate the immortal deeds of their priests and preceptors. They lose all sense of righteous indignation. No doubt, something is better than nothing, but it should be something. Nothing is much better than a wrong thing. Nobody would eat poison because he has no food to eat and if he does so, it will not prolong his life. Will you run after a wrong thing because you cannot get a right thing?

Have you ever imagined what horrors idol worship is doing under cover of religiosity?

The first loss which idolaters are doing to themselves is that they are running after will-o-the-wisp. They do not learn the right way of seeking the god. They are busy with the worship of anything but god. They are in a fool's paradise and never think of coming out of it. For one, who has an aim of his life, it is a great loss, an irreparable loss, a loss which cannot be ignored. But it is only the negative side of the question and may not possibly be keenly felt.

Positively speaking, the harm which idolatry is doing to the country and the society is so great that all other harms in other ways dwindle into insignificance when compared with it.

Just imagine the number of animals being offered at altars of the gods and goddesses all over the world in public places, on public occasions and in private houses to ward off calamities. If you are imaginative enough and can draw in your mind the picture of all the bloodshed that is going on in the name of the religion, you will be horror struck. Such an immense loss of animal life is sufficient to condemn idolatry. It makes man callous, cruel, and selfish. It produces in man's mind a conception that god is neither man, nor super-man, but a brute and that also of a terrible nature. Propitiation of the almighty with the blood of animals! How horrible! How wicked!

Then think of the public money that is being spent for the upkeep of temples. One great

temple costs much more a great university and one small shrine no less than a small school. The money that could have been utilized for the opening of educational institutions is being spent in encouraging forces of darkness. For, what are your temples, if not the dens of darkness? They are dark physically, dark morally, dark socially and dark intellectually- leave aside the question of spirituality. When the whole world is enjoying the benefit of broad sunshine outside, inside the temples you will find dim light of dim lamps, hardly sufficient to make the image roughly visible. This is the physical side. Morally? Less said the better. It is this idolatry that is responsible for the creation of the institution of priest craft, well-known for its craftiness, greed, voluptuousness and what not. These ignorant leaders of ignorant masses. Oh! They can do anything with impurity, nay with religious sanction! The mysteries of the temples are more horrible than the mysteries of royal courts. They remain hidden in the dark recesses of these so called holy places and the public gets only a glimpse of them when some exceptional scandal finds its way to the courts of law. There too, blind belief plays its part and devotees manage to forget the whole thing. If you have a measure to weigh the moral level of a poor ignorant peasant, who leaves his village to pay homage to a holy shrine for spiritual nourishment and compare it with the mortal level of the priest who is meant to administer to his spiritual wants, the latter would be found wanting much in the balance. Innocence, sincerity, devotion on the side of the former, while craftiness, greed, dissimulation, and immorality on the side of the latter. Is it something, which you call better than nothing?

Socially, to set aside a class of people (as priests) for such nefarious trade means to dig our grave with our own hands. It is the priests that always militate against social reform. It is they who have created untouchables. At least in India, temple entry has become a problem. Poor worshippers are untouchable, while their hard earned money is not only touchable, but swallow able. What would you think of a schoolmaster who looks down upon his pupils on account of their ignorance? Or what would you think of a doctor who does not touch his patients because they are suffering from impure diseases? What was the justification of a school, if they were no ignorant pupils? It is in order to dispel ignorance that they come to schools. It is in order to get the diseases cured that the patients come to the hospitals. Similarly, the priest-craft that keeps the laity socially, morally and intellectually backward and throws constant obstacles in the path of progress has no justification to exist and the society that tolerates such things digs its own grave. You deck your idols with gold-umbrellas while your idols are dying for want of a morsel. For lifeless, unreal representatives of god you build palatial buildings, while the poor, the famished and the bereaved, those real representatives of god, are dragging on their piggish existence in miserable sties. Look at the big halls of the Rameshwaram temple. It could have accommodated a big university and changed the whole face of Southern India. The temples of the Mathura and Brindawan which reverberate with the wrangling of the pandas could have easily turned into magnificent colleges and evolved the potentialities of the people of the Brajdesha.

Q.7 Idols and temples have encouraged art.

A. This is perhaps the strongest and the most appealing argument, but at the same times the most irrelevant. Idolatry and art are two different and distinct things, different in origin, different in aims and different in nature. It is very unfortunate that they should be yoked together. Those who denounce idolatry never mean to condemn, ignore or underrate art. The value of art, as a humanizing force is beyond all disputes, above all questions. Art has an intrinsic value and must stand on its own legs. It is derogatory for art to depend or to be made to depend upon such an ungodly institution as idolatry. Who will not admire the exceptional grandness of art for which the temples of the Southern India are famous for? The monumental workmanship exhibited therein is marvelous. But who will not deplore the use of the capabilities of the artist for no better cause. Surely there could be conceived causes, much more ennobling than indecent pictures on the temples of Jagannatha and other places, or the stone representations of the fantastic stories of the Puranas. The help that art is lending to idolatry is misplaced. The evil that idolatry is doing much outweighs the good that accompanying art is able that it should be tied to the wheels of the wretched cart of idolatry and dragged behind. Why confuse two things a beautiful ornament may be worn by a pious lady as well as by a woman of doubtful chastity: what has the workmanship of the smith to do with the nature of the wearer? Idolatry may be good or may be bad. Art too, may be good or may be bad. Why should there be an inseparable association between them? If idolatry has a merit, its merit will not be marred by the absence of art. And if it has demerits, it is not always idolaters that are custodians of art. The Mughals were not idolaters, but they developed some of the finest arts, both paintings and sculpture. There is much in the Rajput paintings without any background of idolatry. It is a matter of satisfaction that now in India, as also elsewhere, art is developing on new lines.

Q. 8 Are we not all idol worshipers in one way or other? Does not the fond young lover worship the god he thinks he sees in his fair mistress? Does not the fond mother worship the tiny babe in her arms? Do not the patriot worship an abstract idea, the miser his hoard, the agriculturist his richly laden fields? Are they not all idol- worshipers? The craving for idol- worship is in our very blood?

A. in answer to above questions i should say an emphatic “no”. The excessive attachment to a person or an object is neither worship nor idol worship. I do not worship the mango I eat, not the house I live in, nor the horse do I ride. Why confuse two things which are so very distinct? I fear that my friend’s poetic imagination goes too far and leaves the matter - of- fact world far behind.

Q .9 “At the very outset, I may tell you that there is no polytheism in India. In every temple, if one stands by and listens, one will find the worshiper’s applying all the attributes of god, including omnipresence to the images.”....”the tree is known by its fruits. When I have seen amongst them that are called idolaters, men the like of whom in morality and spirituality and love, I have never seen anywhere, I stop and ask myself, ‘ can sin beget holiness?’...”my brethren, we can no more think about anything without a mental image than we can live

without breathing. By the law of association the material image calls up the mental idea and vice versa. This is why the Hindu uses an external symbol when he worships. He will tell you it helps to keep his mind fixed on the being to whom he prays. He know as well as you do, that the image is not god, is not omnipresent....the Hindus have associated the ideas of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence and such other ideas with different images and forms....he (the Hindu) does not abuse anyone idol or calls its worship sin. He recognizes in it a necessary stage if life.” the child is the father of man’. Would it be right for an old man to say that childhood is a sin or youth a sin?

Idolatry in India does not mean anything horrible. It is not the mother of harlots. On the other hand, it is the attempt of the undeveloped minds to grasp high spiritual truths”... (Swami Vivekanand’s paper on Hinduism. pp.25-30)

A. While we pay our homage to the revered swami for his patriotism as well as for his unprecedented advocacy of Hindu civilization in the west, we can not help expressing surprise at these too bold assertions of his. We may be held guilty of irreverence if we say that the assertions quoted above are full of inaccuracies. But truth is truth. To say that” there is no polytheism” in India is to betray utter unawareness of facts. The Puranas are full of plurality of gods and goddesses, their birth, their marriages, their quarrels and what not. And all orthodox pundits and their followers have a belief in them. If one honestly questions millions of Hindu idolaters in any village or temple or religious fair, barring a few sophisticated persons, they will all corroborate my statement. The platform idolater is quite different from actual idolater.

If “the tree is known by its fruit”, then one can boldly say that idolatry is a tree which has never yielded a fruit. the horrible and most scandalous system of Devadasis and Murlis, the nauseating scenes at the temple of Kali in Calcutta and one thousand and one other evils which Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda and so many other Hindu Saints, by no means less patriotic than Swami Vivekananda, have so honestly pointed out would not have darkened the Hindu civilization if the Non-Aryan and No-Vedic element of idolatry had not crept into Hinduism. Truth is the best of patriotisms and we do not serve our country if we minimize, tolerate, or applaud our weakness and try to whitewash evils.

We have elsewhere fully shown that idol worship is quite different from the mental image of the observed objects or mental conception of abstract things. It is pity that such an eminent man as Swami Vivekananda should have confused the two. His advocacy of symbolization is misleading, to say the least of it. Go to any temple and look at any idol-worshipper there and you will have to admit that the poor worshipper has nothing to do with “keeping his mind fixed on the being to whom he prays.” Swami Vivekananda imagines an ideal worshipper and imposes his qualifications on an ideal worshipper and imposes his qualification on the actual idolater, who, poor fellow, does not know the niceties the Swami speaks of.

It is again wrong to say that the Hindu abuse any one’s idol. The feuds between the Hindu idolater and the Jain idolater (Do not go to a Jain temple, even if you are at the point of being crushed by an elephant.) and the Shavite and the Shakta are too common to be

forgotten. (Those who worship Shiva are hypocrites and enemies of true scriptures. those who desire salvation should renounce the fierce-looking Shiva and devoutly worship the blissful aspects of Vishnu- Bhagvata; the very sight of Vishnu leads to the hostility if Shiva .the hostility of Shiva undoubtedly leads to horrible hell.....therefore nobody should ever recite the name of Vishnu -Padam Purana ; that man is a hypocrite who looks upon god Vishnu with an eye of equality with Brahma, Rudhra and other Gods. why talk much. suffice to say that even Brahmans who are not Vaishnavites, should be neither touched nor seen not talked to.- Padam Purana)

Once a gentle man came to me and complained that the Jains were taking out a procession of their naked idols through the streets of a town. I pointed out to him that the idol of Shiva is also naked. The gentleman felt nonplussed and went away.

Paramhansa Ramakrishna's example is often quoted as the most spiritual person and still an idolater. His life is so mystic and so mystified by other especially by Swami Vivekananda who was his disciple, that we forbear discussing personalities. The preacher of idolatry is a different being. He invents arguments where no arguments are admissible. He tries to make out a case out of no case. His professional polemics actuate him to have recourse to hair - splitting. He is not a seeker-after-truth, but a seeker- after-difficulty. He has to keep a hold upon his followers and he manages to do so at all cost. His arguments are very often self-contradictory and at times frivolous. Let us examine few of them.

Q. 10 "Just as certain visible forms of letters represent visible sounds by supposition, or dot on the black-board represents the formless and magnitude less geometrical point, in the same way, we can suppose visible representations of the invisible and formless god."

A. The analogy is false and is based upon the mistaken notion that anything can be supposed as the representative of anything. First of all, the question of representation arises only in case of absentees. Objects present before us need no representation. God, being omnipresent, there is no need to have a substitute for him. Secondly the representer and the representee should have something common between them in order to represent the particular feature which belongs to both. The geometrical magnitude less point and the gross point on the paper both have the common feature of forming lines and surfaces. Similarly letters and sounds are the elements of which words and phrases are composed. The written and the spoken languages run parallel and tally with each other from point to point. Hence the representation. In case of idolatry no common feature is conceivable, nor the idolater conceives it in his practical life. The analogy has no reference to actualities and shots over the mark. Not to speak of the representation of formless things by means of gross things, even every gross thing cannot be supposed to represent every other gross thing. You can suppose a mountain to be represented by an elephant, when you mean to show its height but you cannot suppose it to be a well or a glass of water though both have forms. The real point generally missed in this argument is the absence of special feature to be represented. This is

an argument too commonly forwarded from the platform and the most misleading because of the intricate nature of the analogy.

Q.11 The argument which is frequently alleged in support of idolatry is that “those who believe god to be omnipresent, as declared by the doctrines of the vedant, are required by the tenets of such belief, to look upon all existing creatures as god, and to show divine respect to birds, beasts, men, women, vegetables and all other existences, and as practical comfort to such doctrines is almost impossible, the worship of figured gods should be admitted.”

A. This misrepresentation, I am sorry to observe, entirely serves the purpose intended, by frightening Hindus in general from attending to the pure worship of the supreme regulator of the universe.

Q.12 Another argument is that” no man can have as said by the sashtra, a desire of knowledge respecting the supreme being, unless his mind be purified; and as idol worship purifies men’s minds, it should be therefore attended to”

A. I admit the truth of the first part of this statement- but I must affirm with the Vedas that purity of the mind is consequence of divine worship, and not of any superstitious practices.

Q.13 let the authors of the Vedas, Puranas and tantras it is said assert what they may in favor of devotion to Supreme Being, but idol worship has been practiced for so many centuries that custom renders it proper to continue that worship.

A. It is however evident to everyone possessed of common sense, that custom or fashion is quite different from divine faith; the latter proceeding from spiritual authorities and correct reasoning’s, and the former being merely the pursuit of vulgar caprices.

Q.14 Idol worship is the legacy of our forefathers. We ought not to feel ashamed of it before the foreigners whose own practices are some of them as indecent or as credulous

A. First of all, it is wrong to say that our forefathers were all idolaters. Idolatry was quite unknown in the times of the Vedas, and even in the Brahmanas and later books you do not find it in this gross form. But it is mistaken patriotism to cling to our weaknesses simply because they are ours. We must remember that so many of our religious leaders and reformers raised their voice against idolatry. Their legacy is not idolatry and the worship of one god. They opposed idolatry not because foreigners laughed at us, but because it is bad. It had ruined other nations and is ruining the Hindus. Nothing is as ruinous as superstition. The following extract may be read with interests: - the Egyptian religion perished because it was latterly dominated by a persistent theriolatry and a mass of myths about gods, rather strange in a people otherwise so advanced in civilization. The same is the case with Assyrian, Babylonian and Teutonic religions. In Greece speculation became secular at a very early time and philosophy pursued a career independently of religion, with the effect that ten popular

faiths was reared on Homeric tales, not always ethically palatable or philosophically sound. The best minds were obliged to evolve personal faiths: and while most of them probably conformed outwardly to the religion of the state, they were inwardly alienated from it and did not think it worth their while to waste their philosophic labors on futile popular legends. The Romans, not much noted for either for their religions or for their philosophic originality, gathered gods from all corners of their far flung empire without much references to their compatibility and among them also the best minds sought personal solace in ethical speculations unrelated to popular religion- Buddhism could spread so rapidly in Japan because the myths of the kojiki could not supply enough spiritual food to the thinking minds of the island race. Today, for the same reason, in India the religion of the Puranas has grown shame-faced and is failing to hold the undivided attention, interest and devotion of the ethicist and the philosopher.

Q.15 Idolatry gives a sense of security. When we come across a temple, we feel that there is some divine power, which protects us.

A. The sense of security and trust in god can best be achieved by the contemplation of god's work that surrounds us all times and at all places. The sense of security from idolatry is deceptive and leads to superstition. Idolaters have much more easily fallen prey to foreign attacks than non-idolaters. When Mahmud of Ghazni broke the idol of Somnath the priests and their Kshatriya devotees wasted a long time in the superstitious expectation that Somnath would rise and rout the foe in a twinkling of the eye. The Kshatriyas of those days were not so weak as not to be able to guard the country from the inroads of the Muslims invaders. What makes them weak was the false hope that stone gods were sufficient to save them. And the weakness of the Hindus was the strength of Muslims. The latter knew that those who depend upon tinsel gods for their safety could be easily subdued. Even now the Hindus lose ground because of this false sense of security. What could you expect of a nation which has to take care of its deities as of chattel? A Hindu carries his god in his neck, or in his pocket or in a box and has much ado in protecting it. The constant anxiety of protecting his deities and his temples takes away all courage from him. He is the protector of his god and not the vice versa. The cases of the theft of idols and their ornaments are not rare. When the idol is broken or dishonored, people naturally lose faith and crafty priests fabricate false stories. For example, the idol at Benaras was thrown into a well by some one, either by a Muslim invader or by a priest who wanted to save it. Later on it was announced that the god, not liking to see the face of the unbelievers, hid himself in a well. Such false stories are too common and are creating mischief among the masses. So long as the Hindus will remain idolaters they cannot be a strong nation. Whatever strength they may gain from other sources, it will all remain temporary and will fail them at the time of difficulty. Idolatry is a cancer in the body-politic of the Hindus. Different idols have different sets of devotees which constantly fight among themselves and can never be united. The Hindu has much less to fear from outsiders than from his own man, because there are disuniting elements in the society whose force it is

foolish to ignore. Let us admit that the Hindus are very very religious. But we must also admit the religiosity in their case mostly means vanity, superstitions, misguided charity, sectional jealousies and gross animosities. The little good that is left is only negligible.

Q.16 Idolatry can never leave humanity. Even Muslims and Christians are idolaters

A. It is true that most Christians worship the images of Christ, Mary and Angels. It is also true that the Muslims hold the black stone at Mecca (sang-i-aswad) sacred and kiss it. But these are the remnants of old idolatry which Mohammad the prophet of Islam, could not shake for some reasons. There is no doubt that he was anxious to spread the worship of one god. But being unacquainted with higher teachings of the Upanishads and the Vedas, he could only make a halting reform. The sijda (bowing down) of the Muslims shows that though the idol has been taken away, the fashion of bowing down before the idol is still the same. It is the remnant of the old Arab customs. As to the tomb worship which is notoriously common among the Muslims, it must be admitted that it is the weakness of the Muslims as of others and has done them the greatest loss. Muslims and Christians could have shaken idolatry altogether, had they not been obsessed with the false idea that Mohammad and Christ had a share in the divinity. This is their basic weakness and does not allow them to rise higher. The teachings of these great men are thrown in the background and their personality comes into relief. A Muslim does not know what life is and what death is. He has a superstitious belief that the soul of the dead has not entirely left the body. Therefore, it is that he clings to the grave of his relations and saints as much as the Hindu to his gods.

Moreover, we should remember that what is evil is evil whether it is in Hinduism or Islam or elsewhere. An evil cannot be good, simply because it is found among others. The seriousness of the disease does not become negligible because so many are its victims; it is rather an epidemic and needs special attention.

Q.17 Idolatry serves as a stepping stone in the attainment of god.

A. The analogy is again wrong. the stepping stone brings you nearer and nearer the top, but an idolater remains idolater throughout his life, unless some force shakes him up and points to him the error he is involved in. it is pious deeds and right sort of teaching alone that can serve as stepping stone for the realization of the god. Image worship is a stumbling-block and not a stepping stone.

Q.18 Idols do have some divinity in them; otherwise so many miracles ascribed to them will be impossible.

A. Impossible they are and false too. There is no truth whatever in the so-called miracles. it is cheating pure and simple. Swami Dayananda in his famous book Satyarth Prakash has clearly shown the hollowness of miracle - mongering so very prevalent in the Hindu temples. For e.g. miracle of Lat-Bhairava in Benaras, when Aurengzeb attacked the temple and swarms of bees rising from these set his army to flight, image of Kali Kanta smoking a tobacco pipe, flight of

image of Dakorji in Dwarka with a devotee, volcanic eruption in Jawala-mukhi Kangra etc. An institution which emboldens crafty priests to cheat the public in this way needs the condemnation of all thinking persons.

Q. 19. Idols representing the incarnations of god can be worshipped.

A. many people believes that god incarnates and comes into flesh and in order to remember that particular incarnation it is necessary to have an image of him. Krishna and Rama were god-incarnate and so were many others. Even Christ is held as god-incarnate. Theory of god's incarnate has greatly misled those who claim to be monotheists. All monotheism begins with one principle that there is one and only one god, who governs this universe. He is almighty, all pervading, all knowing, and all governing. And what does polytheism says? That there may be one highest god, but there are many lesser gods or great god's agents who work in their own spheres like the satraps of a mighty emperor. This doctrine of god of governing the universe through satraps is very popular, because it appeals to people's imagination. they everyday see that the king needs so many viceroy's and governor's to help him in the administration of the country and it is natural for them to extend the analogy to god. But they forget that in god's case, there is no occasion for the application of the analogy. No earthly kings are almighty or all pervading or all knowing. The king even does not know what is being done behind the wall. No doubt every king wishes to govern, but his power, knowledge and means are strictly limited and for every small thing, he has to depend, not only upon big viceroys but upon ordinary menials. The king needs agent not because he is the king, but because his powers are limited. God is our king so far as he governs but he is much more than a king. His powers are perfect and unlimited. I shall keep no watchmen if it were in my power to see my things with my own eyes. To think that god needs agents to govern the universe is to condemn his as weak king. It is god's power that works through different channels. Different forces of nature are not so many beings, but merely different ways of the expression of the powers of the same being. It is pity that anthropomorphism has lead people to drag god down to the level of the earthly kings and imbued him with all limitations that the human mind can think of. To incarnate or come into flesh is the necessity of the soul and not of god, as a being that is compelled, by any circumstances earthly or unearthly, to act as a man or even to ape as such, is no god and cannot command our worship or even reverence. God is unchangeable. No change can overtake him. Even a spontaneous desire to change himself is unimaginable in god. God is a being and he cannot be becoming. There is such a close kinship between the theory of god's incarnation and idol worship that most images are either of the deities or deified objects, and as long as defying which is another word for god making process will continue, idolatry cannot leave man. All incarnations are to punish an evil doer or to help a devotee. Bhagwat Gita says-"to protect the good, to destroy the wicked and to establish righteousness, I take my birth, in different ages." protection of good, destruction of wicked and establishment of righteousness is the purpose of creation. Which god does without incarnating? Why should god incarnate in order to kill Ravana or Kansa when he could

bring them into being without such process? Is it more difficult to kill than to create? In order to meet this objection, many frivolous anecdotes have been fabricated which only appeal to the most credulous and one can need not refer to them. One such anecdote is of Ravana that god gave him boon for overcoming death. God must indeed be too childish if he falls a victim to such dodges and has no farsightedness enough to detect their trickery. If we consider that after incarnation god return back to his original form what is the value of his incarnation for those in whose life he does not appear in incarnated form? In such situations if the idols are means to remind god then what about the god that pervades through us and even now in our heart ready to hear our inner voice or respond to our prayers. We need images help in case of those who are no longer with us. But god is always with us.

Q.20 Idols representing the Prophets and Saints can be worshipped.

A. Their case is a little different from that of incarnations. They were men and therefore their representations can easily represent as their commemorations. But mere representations, whether statues, idols, images, pictures or the like do not form idolatry. There is a clear difference between idols and idol-worship. Idols do not constitute of idol worship unless there is lurking behind them an idea of mysterious divinity and adoration. An emperor picture on the coin or on a postage stamp is not idolatry, because nobody adores it. Making belief that the god comes to help on listening the prayer is the beginning of idolatry .the line is originally very thin and at it is difficult to detect where commemoration ends and idolatry begins. Very soon commemoration falls into background and the grossest form of idolatry takes its place. Gautam Buddha was no idol worshipper, nor did he preach idol worship. If he said come and seek refuge Buddha he meant thereby living and real Buddha and not his representation. But when Buddha dies, the process of commemoration began in the form of keeping his ashes, or tooth or any part of the body or object that might have any association with his person. Human weakness gravitated and temples arose, idols were set up and all the good and bad paraphernalia that accompanies idolatry came into existence. it appears that for long periods of time the whole Buddhist world , high and low has devoted the best of their lives and energy to making idols of the great Buddha and worshipping him. Similar is the story about Narayan Guru and Mahatma Gandhi. It is antireligious and let loose those forces which instead if stimulating spirituality kill it outright and turn innocent populace not into saints, but into sheep. Legends and miracles are woven and interwoven round real, half real and unreal personalities till there is such a huge and dark forest of superstition that the coming reformer finds it extremely difficult to take remedial measures.

Q.21 Idols can be worshipped after Pran Prathishta or consecration ceremony.

A. A sculptor makes a lifeless stature and a priest quickens breath into it. By doing Pran Prathishta or consecration ceremony the lifeless image has become a living being fit to accept offerings, hear prayers and be responsive. Thereafter begins feeding the idols, lulling them to sleep and fanning them during summer or covering them with quilts in winter considering the

as alive. Priests know that as long as people would think the idols as inanimate objects, their faith in their divine nature would remain weak and shakable. So they makes out that after pran prathishta rites the idol no longer remains an idol, it became a god or goddess. But how hypocritical it is can be easily seen that there are no signs of breath, no motion, no responsiveness. The change is not in idols but in the belief of the worshipper. He has begun to believe in what does not actually exist. He has deceived himself. The priests know actual facts, but they conceal them from the public and represent them wrongly from selfish motives. Thus the priests and the temples become so many forces of darkness instead of light, ignorance instead of knowledge, superstition instead of spirituality. Swami Dayananda in 11th chapter of satyarth prakash remarks that if the god comes by the invitation with Vedic verses, then why does the image not become animate, and why does he not go when bidden farewell to? Where does he come from? And where does he go to? Hear, you simpletons, the all pervading god neither comes nor goes. If you can call god with the power of your Vedic verses, then with the same formula why can you not call the departed soul of your son to the dead body and why can you not kill your enemy by sending away his soul from his body?

Q.22 Enumerate famous sayings of various texts and great men on idolatry.

Here we give a few quotations from scriptures and other writings:-

(1) Of him there is no image, whose glory is indeed great (Yajur Veda 32/3)

(2) He is not to be grasped either from above or across or in the middle. Of him there is no image, whose glory is indeed great (Svetasvatara Upanishad 4/16)

(3)God is without figure, epithet, definition or description. He is without defect, not liable to annihilation, change, pain or birth; we can only say that he, who is the eternal being, is god. The vulgar look for their gods in water; men of more extended knowledge in celestial bodies; the ignorant in wood, brocks and stones but learned -men in the universal soul (Vishnu Purana 2/14/29)

(4) He who views as the soul this body formed of phlegm, wind and bile, or regards only wife, children and relations as himself i.e. he who neglects to contemplate the nature of the soul, he who attributes a divine nature to earthen images, and believes in the holiness of water, yet pays such respect to those who are endowed with a knowledge of god, is an ass amongst cows. (Bhagwat Purana 10/84/13)

(5)The fool looks upon clayey, stony, metallic or wooden images as god and they never attain bliss- Mahabharata

(6) Thou dost not see god in the house, though tho art hanging a stone in the neck-Guru Nanak

(7) The fool worships a stone; who can save him who is determined to be drowned-Guru Nanak

(8) one man bows his head before a stone, another hangs it in his neck, one bows towards the east and another towards the west, why does he worship these and why does he go to the stone; the whole world is mad; it can not know the secret of god- Guru Nanak

(9) Whoever looks upon a stone as god, wastes his service- Kabira

(10) The image was made by putting the foot on the stone, had the image been real, it should have devoured the maker- Kabira

(11) If stone worship can lead to the attainment of god, I am ready to worship a mountain. A millstone is better than this idol as it enables the world to grind corn- Kabira

(12) You drink the water after washing the stone; you worship the stone as a living thing. You are engrossed in ignorance and you will become a stone in the end- Dadu

(13) What meaning is there in calling one that is all pervading, or offering seat to one that is the support of all? What sense is there in offering water for washing feet, hands or mouth to him who is pure? What sense is there in offering scents or flower to one that needs no smelling? What sense is there in offering dress or ornaments to him who has no body? What is the need of offering food to one that is ever satiated or betel leaf to one that is everywhere? How can you bid farewell to one that is within all and without all! Why offer incense to one that is formless, or lamp to one that sees all? To him who is ever satisfied with his own nature there is no need of libations. a betel leaf is useless for one that is full of all bliss. No lamps are necessary for one that is the illuminator of the sun etc. it is impossible to perambulate one that is infinite, or to weigh one that has nobody. it is impossible to send sway him who is within all and without all- quoted from the works of Sri Shankaracharya vol. 18 vani vilas press, Shri Rangam p-107-108

(14) The inanimate can never give any fruit whatsoever. Therefore nobody should ever worship an inanimate object, nor should anybody expect good fruit from a false or improper worship. - Madhvacharya in his commentary of Chhandogaya Upanishad 7/14

(15) Many learned Brahmins are perfectly aware of the absurdity of idolatry, and are well informed of the nature of the purer mode of divine worship. but as in the rites, ceremonies and festivals of idolatry they find the source of their comforts and fortune, they not only never fail to protect idol worship from all attacks, but even advance and encourage it in the utmost of their power, by keeping the knowledge of their scriptures concealed from the rest of the people. their followers too, confiding in these leaders, feel gratification in the idea of the divine nature residing in a being resembling themselves in birth, shape and propensities; and are naturally themselves in birth, shape and propensities to the senses, though

destructive of moral principles and the fruitful parent of prejudice and superstition. - Raja Ram Mohan works p-68

Q. 23 what are demerits of idol worship according to Swami Dayananda?

A. 1. Millions of rupee are spent in constructing temples for idol worship. This leads to poverty and indolence.

2. Free and promiscuous mixing together of the sexes in the temples leads to adultery, internecine quarrels and the spread of disease (contagious).

3. The idol worshippers regard this mode of worship as the sole means of the practice of righteousness, the acquisition of wealth, the fulfillment of legitimate desires and the attainment of salvation. They, therefore, give up all active work and waste away their precious lives.

4. Since people worship idols with different names, forms and characteristics, they have not unity of faith and their mutually antagonistic beliefs and practices create bad blood in the country and lead it to its ruin.

5. They depend upon the idols for the defeat of their enemies and the triumph of their arms, and, therefore, do not exert themselves. The result is that they are defeated, and government of the country, independence and wealth with its attendant pleasures, fall to the lot of their enemies. They are themselves robbed of their independence and reduced to the condition of a subject race; suffer in a hundred different ways like the pony of an innkeeper and the donkey of the potter.

6. If some one were to say to another person that he would put a stone in his name or place, he will feel angry and will most likely abuse him or hit him back. In like manner the ignorant people who take a stone to be the symbol of the Deity and worship idols in place of God will surely have the Divine wrath visited upon them.

Laboring under mistaken notions, they peregrinate from temple to temple and from one country to another, endure untold misery, lay waste at the root of their worldly and spiritual welfare, suffer at the hands of thieves and are duped by thugs.

7. Money is given away to wicked priests who spend it on debauchery and the gratification of the bestial appetites on flesh and wine and in fomenting quarrels and in promoting litigation. Thereby the donor forfeits its happiness and is pained beyond measure.

8. These people lay themselves open to the charge of ingratitude by not showing due respect to their parents and other persons worthy of esteem and worshipping idols instead.

9. When these idols are stolen by thieves or are dashed into pieces (by some iconoclast), they set up loud lamentation.

10. The priestesses and priests are corrupted on account of illicit intercourse with other men and women and thus forfeit their connubial felicity.

11. The servants do not properly obey their masters and they turn against each other and are thereby ruined.

12. The soul by constant contemplation of dead and inert matter loses the power of sound

judgment, because the material properties of the object contemplated (such as a stone) are transmitted to the soul through the manas.

God has created fragrant substances like the flowers to purify air and water and to prevent disease. If the priests were not to pluck the flowers, the purificatory process would go on for an indefinitely long period, air and water would be purified and the flowers would continue shedding fragrance till the time of their natural decay. They cut off their useful career in the prime of their life. The flowers get mixed with mud, are decomposed and emit stench instead of sweet odor. Has God created flowers and other odoriferous substances for making an offering of them to the idols? Sandal wood, unhooked grain and the like offerings get mixed with water and mud, and are then thrown into a drain or a cistern where they rot and give off such offensive odors as issue from human excrement. Thousands of tiny creatures are constantly produced and die and cause it to stink still more.

Q. 24 idol worship made Hindus brave to fight the invaders in past.

A. Read the passages below and think for moments.

The Muslims' plundering and looting of Hindu temples

When Mahmud of Ghazni attacked this temple, it was razed to the ground, its priests and other devotees were humbled and reduced to a most wretched condition, and an army of hundreds of thousands of soldiers was put to flight by a force of 10,000 men. A pretty miracle indeed!

The popish priests offered presents to the god, worshipped and praised him and addressed prayers to him, thus "O god of gods! Do thou destroy this barbarian and take us under thy protection." They would tell their dupes - ruling princes: - "Do not be at all anxious. Rest assured, Mahaadeva is sure to send Bhairava or Virabhadra for your assistance who will destroy or blind all these barbarians." Or they would tell them, "Our god is sure to manifest himself presently. Hanumaan (monkey-God). Bhairava (the Indian Bacchus) and Durga have appeared to us in a dream and promise to do everything for us."

Those poor simple Rajas were easily taken in by these popes. They believed in all that they said and, therefore, did not resist the invader. Many popes, who were astrologers, said that that was not an auspicious time for them to fight, because one said it was the 8th moon while the other said that the Yoginee star would face them (when they go to fight) and so on, they were altogether misled by the popes (and therefore they did nothing to defend themselves). When they were surrounded on all sides by the barbarians, they tried to escape from their miserable plight. Hundreds of popish priests and their dupes fell into the hands of the enemies. Their priests with folded hands implored the Mohammedans to spare their temple and the idol, and offered to pay Rs. 30,000,000 as ransom but the Mohammedans answered that they were not idol-worshippers but idol-breakers and off they went and began demolish the temple.

When the roof fell, and the magnetic rocks were shifted, down fell the idol which, when

broken, was found to contain Rs. 180,000,000 worth of diamonds. They were told to point out where the treasury was. Through fear of punishment, they revealed everything. There upon the Mohammedans, having looted the treasury and thrashed the priests, made slaves of them as well as of their dupes.

They made them grind corn, cut grass and carry urine and feces but gave them nothing but parched grain to eat. Oh! Why did these people ruin themselves by the worship of stones? Why did they not worship the Almighty God whereby they could have put the barbarians, to rout and gained victory over them? Had they worshipped heroes and brave men in place of all those idols, what a protection they would have afforded?

The priests worshipped those stones so devoutly and yet not one of them shifted from its place, fell upon the head of one of the invaders and broke it. Had they served a single brave man as they did the idols, he would have done his best to protect those who had served him and to destroy their enemies.

Kasim attack on deval town of sindh.

In 8th century Mohammad bin kasim attacked deval town of sindh.

The Hindu king Dahir fought bravely.

He was a follower of Devi and in his fort there was a Devi temple.

He was having a belief that until the flag over the temple will fly success will be with him.

Raja dahir fought very bravely and was about to win the war against invaders. Kasim came to know about this superstition of king. Kasim bribed the temple preist to keep the flag down next morning. Next day as the king went in the battle field preist removed the flag of the temple.

The king and his soldiers thought that the Devi was not happy from him. So he and his army lost their heart and finally the winning battle. Mohammad bin kasim killed the king and captured the fort. He killed the presit too saying if he can betray his own king why cannot he betray an outsider in future . Kasim army broke the idol and destroyed the temple, raped thousands of girls, made lakhs of Hindus slaves to sale in the slave market of Kabul. Kasim took two very beautiful daughters of king to gift to Persia.

CAN ANY THING BE WORSE THAN THE RESULTS OF IDOL WORSHIPING?

THIS INVASION WAS FIRST ENTRY OF MUSLIMS IN OUR COUNTRY.

AFTER THAT THE SAME STORY REPEATED AGAIN AND AGAIN FOR NEXT 1000 YEARS.

NEITHER KING HAD BELEIVED IN IDOL OR FLAG OF DEVI AND HAD KEPT HIS CONFIDENCE IN HIS ARMY STRENGTH.HE WOULD HAVE NEVER LOST THE WAR AND HINDUS WOULD NOT HAVE FACED SLAVERY OF INVADERS.

(Reference- bharat me murtipooja- pt rajender)

Q. 25 What is the true way of worship?

A. God's realization is not an easy task. It is the highest aim in life and of life, and demands price. Vedic scriptures have recommended yoga for this purpose. Yoga is defined as mental training which if fully attained leads to the automatic realization of god. Mind has a few innate weaknesses which do not allow its possessor to look into his inner self and realize the great self which resides still deeper within the self. This weakness can be divided into three classes (1) mala or dirt (2) viksepa or agitateness (3) avarana or curtain. These can be easily understood by an example of a mirror. A mirror ceases to function properly under three circumstances; either when it is dirty, or when it is in constant motion or when something else comes between it and the looker. We cannot realize god when our mind is impure, or constantly in motion or there stands something else between god and ourselves. The impure thoughts make the mind fidgety. Just as strong winds agitate the surface of the sea similarly the course of worldly events through which we pass constantly effects over mind and disturb the equilibrium. The curtain of ignorance does not allow soul to think of god engrossed in worldly affairs we ignore the Supreme Being. Dirt can be removed by reading or hearing about god and good conduct. Reading Vedic texts changes our outlook and clarifies our ideas about god. Evil deeds not only touch and percolate to the inner most bottoms of our self. Patanjali, the father of Yoga has advocated to the beginners of yoga the observance of Yama and Niyama. The Yamas are five- (1) Ahimsa or Nonviolence (2) Satya or Truthfulness (3) Asteya or Unthievishness (4) Bramcharya or Control of carnal desires (5) Aparigraha or Non-attachment. The Niyama are also five (1) Saucha or Cleanliness (2) Santosha or Contentment (3) Tapas or Austerity (4) Swadhyaya or Study of sacred books (5) Ishwarapranidhana or Resignation to god's will. These ten rules of conduct are the first requisites of worship, it's a, b, c, d. yama have a social tinge while niyamas personal and prepare man for fighting the temptations which arise in the observance of the former. If the practiser has started the observance of the yamas and niyamas in right earnest, he will begin to feel a sort of lull in mental storms which used to torment him hitherto fore. Remaining six are Asana or Bodily posture, Pranayam or Breathes exercise, Pratyahara or Sense-control, Dharna or Concentration, Dhyana or Contemplation and Samadhi or Composure. Patanjali defines asanas as STHIRA-SUKHAMASANAM i.e. an agreeable firm posture. Most essential is its firmness, or absence of even the slightest motion, that might cause disturbance. The practiser should try to compose his thought from before. He should sit still and try to control his breath. Pranayam is a breath exercise. Mind and breath are so related to each other that the control of one leads to the control of the other. It is based on the fact that when the motionlessness of the mind leads to the motionlessness of breath, the reverse will also be true. That is, if you could stop your breath, you will hold up your mind also. All this requires a continual practice. Between pranayam and Samadhi there are many stages; many critical points arise in the way and the journey is by no means smooth. But after a long practice the state of Samadhi or complete composure is reached, and the practiser begins to realize automatically the presence of god.

What is the form of realization is, no body can tell in words. It is neither a subject of lecture nor of verbal description. It is realization.

(This tract is dedicated to pt. Ganga Prasad Upadhayaya ji whose book worship [English] or pooja [Hindi] inspired me to write this tract)

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