

## Book of Enlightening Laughters

Collection of Stories & Anecdotes From the Talks of Swami Dayananda Saraswati.  
(Sri Swami Dayanandaji's lectures)

### 005 SAGE'S TEMPLE Vs KING'S TEMPLE

In this historic incident, meditation is revealed as the highest form of worship. Every ancient temple in India has a story behind it. One such temple in South India has a particularly interesting story relevant to the significance of mental worship as opposed to physical and oral worship.

Meditation is a form of mental worship, whereas physical worship refers to rituals and oral worship involves prayer, chanting, and other forms of praise. Although we do not know if this story is true, it does serve to highlight the efficacy of meditation as a form of worship and devotion.

We are told that the story is a historical one, involving the king of a small domain who kept his people occupied by building temples when they were not engaged in agricultural matters. Building temples was a way for them to earn their food and was a kind of service also. Therefore, this king had a few temples under construction all the time. Having completed one huge temple, the king arranged for its consecration. Until the consecration takes place, a temple is only a place. Even though it looks like a temple, it is not a temple until it is consecrated. Thus, consecration is a very significant and elaborate ceremony in which the idol is installed and the deity is invoked in it. This invocation involves performing various religious ceremonies or rituals, and the completion of these rituals makes the structure a temple. Once the consecration is done, the idol is worshipped as the Lord and is, therefore, an altar of worship. No one worships an idol as such; one only worships the Lord for which the idol is but a symbol. Invoking the deity in the idol is what makes the idol a symbol of worship.

The date and time of consecration is also very important. For instance, a temple should be consecrated only when the sun is in the northern hemisphere. Certain days of the month, according to the movement of the moon, are auspicious and others are to be avoided. Thus, based on such astrological data, the most auspicious date and time were set for the consecration of the temple.

Because attending and participating in the consecration of a temple is considered to be a great blessing, thousands of people were expected and all the necessary preparations were made.

The night before this great event was to take place the king did not sleep; he merely dozed. He was in that particular state that is neither dream nor sleep but in between, the state in which one may have premonitions.

In this particular state, the king saw a Swami sitting under a tree. This Swami had also built a temple that was to be consecrated on the same day that was fixed for the consecration of the king's temple. And the king was being commanded, as though by the Lord, to set another day for his temple's consecration.

Because the king saw this entire dream-like situation vividly, he could not dismiss it as a meaningless dream. Therefore, he talked to his minister to find out whether there could be any truth to it. He told the minister that he had seen a hill-like place, and a swami sitting under a tree beside a pond. Having been given a detailed description by the king, the minister went out and, only a few miles away, found the very place and the Swami described by the king, sitting under a tree with eyes closed in meditation. The minister returned and reported all this to the king.

The king then went to the Swami and prostrating, he addressed him. But the Swami's eyes remained closed. Then the king said, "Swami, I have to talk to you about something. Please listen." The Swami opened his eyes. The king introduced himself and told the Swami his story. "I have built a temple and I am going to have the consecration today. It is a good day, an auspicious day. But, last night, I had a vision in which I was told that I should have the consecration on another day because it seems you also have built a temple. Is it true?"

"Who told you this?" the Swami asked.

"I felt it was the Lord, Lord Śiva, telling me. But it may be just a dream," the king replied.

"It is true that I have built a temple" the Swami said, "but it is not complete and the consecration indeed is today."

"Where is the temple you have built?" the rājā then asked.

“It is all here,” the Swami replied, touching his head.

“When did you start building this temple?” was the king's next question.

“Twenty years ago,” the Swami said. “Twenty years ago I planned the temple and then brought all the stones here and dressed them one by one. I built the entire temple and even sculpted all these idols. It was a big job that has taken me twenty years. And, still, I have not finished. Because the date for the consecration has already been fixed for today, I am extremely busy now. Therefore please come some other time.” The Swami then closed his eyes and resumed doing what he had been doing -- putting the finishing touches on his temple!

The King arranged another date for the consecration of his own temple and, after it was over he again approached the Swami and asked, “Did the consecration of your temple go off well?”

“Oh, it went off very well indeed; it was wonderful,” the Swami replied.

The king then asked the Swami for the plans of his temple and the Swami gave them to him. The king then built another temple but this time according to the plans the Swami had given him. He also had it consecrated by the Swami. This, then, is the story of the temple that still stands near Tiruvallur, outside Chennai.

The temple that was originally a mental act of worship was the preferred temple since the Lord as much as told the king to forget his own temple. Perhaps the Swami told the king to come some other time, when he was not busy building his temple, to make the king understand that what is done mentally is not less real than a physical or oral act of devotion.

Whether the story is true or not, there is a special beauty about it. An act of devotion is purely an attitude. Therefore, all you require is this attitude and commitment and you will see how real it is. Mental worship can, in fact, be most efficacious. To make it efficacious, you have to avoid distractions and, for this, there are certain methods to be followed. To just sit and meditate does not work. But if you live a life of prayer, involving physical and oral forms of worship, you will find that meditation or mental worship is the most efficacious of all.

Compared to praising and repeating the Lord's name aloud or in a whisper, mental worship or meditation (in this order) is better.