

The real and unreal

Shobit Arya

THE SCENE was picturesque, the ambience serene, the atmosphere resonant with the enchanting *arati* being rendered by Swami Chidananda Saraswatiji and his young disciples, the *munikumars*.

It was the now globally known Ganga Arati at Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh. I was on a holiday with my family in Rishibhumi. It seemed even the holy Ganga swayed to the melody of sweet human voices.

I was happy that my two children were connecting with our rich Indian culture.



**INNER
VOICE**

When my five-year old daughter who usually is not very fond of *aratis* and pujas turned to me in my lap and said, "Pa, it feels so nice here," I felt elated. There was a sense of satisfaction that I was succeeding in facilitating her relationship with her roots.

My two-and-a-half-year-old son who is not so averse to rituals was already swaying to the *arati*.

Just across from us stood a big statue of Lord Shiva. Pointing at it, I told my son, "Look, that's God." He looked at it for a minute and then with a confused look on his face, said, "But Pa, how can this be God? This is not real. God is real. He is within me because I am real."

For a second, I didn't know what to say. Was it just a little child's common sense making a lot of sense or was it that the power of divinity was so strong there that it was expressing itself through everything — and for me it chose my little son as the medium?

Whatever it was, it reminded me of the fact that rituals are merely tools to connect to the self and we should not be so lost in their enactment that they become ends in themselves. For God is within you and me and all that is around us: the 'real' as well as the 'unreal', the obvious as well as the subtle, the mundane as well as the sublime. We are only here to let the Divine be unfolded. Let there be light!

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