

AARTI: RITUALISTIC AND REAL

Written by Dr. Devinder Singh Sekhon PhD
Thursday, 24 January 2013 22:19

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੈ ਸਚੁ ਜੀਉ ਸਾਧੁ ॥
ਸਚੁ ਕਾਮੁ ਹੈ ਸਚੁ ਮਨੁ ਸਚੁ ਚਿਤੁ ॥
ਸਚੁ ਗੁਣੁ ਹੈ ਸਚੁ ਗੁਣੁ ਸਚੁ ਗੁਣੁ ॥

NOTE: Just like the above holy Shabad by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, this holy Shabad is written by Naam Dev Ji in which he strongly disapproves the Hindu practices to realize God. Hindus have many holy places and believe very strongly that if they give generously to the Brahmans at those places or if they suffer extreme physical hardships (including death) at such places, they realize God or go to heaven. Some of the most popular holy places include Banaras (now Varanasi), the rivers Gunga (Ganges), Godawari, Gomti, and Kedar Nath which is a place in the Himalayas at a height of more than 11000 ft (3700 m). Uss means a horse and Ussmedh Yugg is a special yugg in which horses are sacrificed. This yugg is considered to be very effective in pleasing the deity for whom it is performed. Naam Dev Ji advises that none of such rituals please God; the only way to please Him is to worship Him which is the real Amrit (liquid of immortality).

Meaning: If you stand on your head in Banaras and recite some mantra to cleanse your body to please some deity, or you lay down your life or even burn yourself alive at some holy place, it is all useless because it cannot match the worship of God. Similarly, if you perform an ussmedh yugg and donate gold secretly (to Brahmans), it is all useless. Come on you, a big show-off person! Quit all the false pretences and deceit, and worship God (remember Him) all the time. Pause. If you go to any of the holy places like Gunga, Godawari, Kedar Nath or Gomti at the time of the Kumbh Mela (a fair which is held once every 12 years and pilgrimage to such places is believed to be very holy) and give thousands of cows in charity, it is all useless because it cannot rival the worship of God. Likewise, if you visit millions of holy places or freeze to death in the Himalayas, it is all useless.

If you give horses, elephants, land or even your wife in charity every day, it is all useless. Again if you offer yourself as a slave or give gold equalling your own weight in charity, it is all meaningless because it is no match for God’s worship. Naam Dev Ji says, do not be offended or blame the angel of death (for not permitting you to go to heaven) oh my friend! Try to recognize the state of mind where you have no attraction left for the worldly rewards and you can be one with God. The only way to be one with God and thus have access to the real Amrit is to worship Him (without the expectation of any rewards). For me, my God is (Lord) Rama who was the son of king Dashrath (I do not recognize any god other than Waheguru).

From these holy Shabads – and there are many more like these – it is perfectly clear that Guru Granth Sahib does not approve any rituals, personal hardships or donations as a means to realize God. Atari is just one of many simple rituals which do not do any good to please God or to enhance your spiritual level. So, Guru Granth Sahib strongly disapproves Aarti as to please Waheguru.

In the following holy Shabad, Guru Nanak Sahib questions the worth of the Aarti as performed by the man when natural Aarti is being performed for Waheguru all the time. Pay a careful attention to the meaning of the following holy Shabad.

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§ **Dhanasari Ravidass Ji (694). Naam tayro aarti majun Mooraaray. Hur kay Naam bin jhootthay sugal paasaray. Pause.**

Naam tayro aasno Naam tayra oorsa Naam tayra kaysro lay chhitkaaray. Naam tayra umbhulaa Naam tayra chandano ghus jupay Naam lay toojhay kaou charhay.

Naam tayra deeva, Naam tayro baati Naam tayro taile lay mahe pasaaray.

Naam tayre ki jote lagaayee bhuyyo oojiyaro bhavan suglaaray.

Naam tayro taaga Naam phool mala bhaar atthaaray sugal jootthaaray.

Tayro keeya toojhay kiyaa urpoun Naam tayra tuhee chuver dholaaray. Dus uttha utth sutthay charay khaani ihaiy vertun hai sugal sansaaray.

Kuhaiy Ravidass Naam tayro aarti Sat Naam hai Hur bhoag toohaaray.

Word Meaning: Mooraaray = Oh Waheguru, Jhootthay = unreal, insignificant;

ray

set up;

Aasno

=

the rug to sit on;

Oorsa

= the rock on which chandan is rubbed to a powder;

Kaysro

= saffron;

Chhitkaaray

=

spray;

Umbhulla

=

water;

Ghus

=

Paasa

=

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rub;

Jupay

= recite (the Naam);

Chaarhay

=

offer;

Baati

= wick;

Pasaaray

= fill;

Bhuyyo

=

became;

Oojiyaro

= light;

Bhavan

=

levels (layers) of the universe;

Suglaaray

=

all;

Taaga

=

thread;

Bhaar Atthaaray

= 18 weights (it has been an old idea that if one leaf of each and every tree and vegetation is gathered and weighed, it weighs 18 units.

One unit = 80 kg).

Jootthaaray

= which has been used before, left over, unclean;

Urpoun

=

offer;

Chuver Dholaaray

=

fan with a whisk as a mark of respect;

Dus Uttha

=

ten and eighteen (18 Puranas);

Utth Sutthay

= 8 and 60 (68 popular holy places of the Hindus);

Chaaray Khaani

=

the four life-producing sources (real birth, eggs, vegetation, and life of bacteria etc.);

lhaiy Vertun

= this is how the whole world operates;

Bhoag

=

sweets given away after the aarti.

Meaning: People perform ritualistic aarti for You, oh my dear God, but Your Naam is the real aarti for You and Your Naam is the dip in holy waters for me, oh my Waheguru! All the other rituals without Your Naam are meaningless. Pause. Your Naam is the rug to sit on for me and Your Naam is the rock on which saffron and chandan are rubbed to convert them into powder. When such a powder is mixed with Your Naam-water, it becomes the perfect incense to spray around and to offer You. For me, Your holy Naam is the lamp and Your Naam is the wick and the oil to be used in the aarti. Your naam serves as the lamp which lights up the whole universe. People offer a flower garland to the deity, but for me Your Naam is the thread for the garland, and Your Naam is the flowers because all the vegetation including the flowers is unclean and therefore unfit to offer to You because it has already been enjoyed by wild life. Moreover, whatever I offer to You, is Your own creation. Even the whisk on You is done by the wind which is created by You, so what can I offer on my own?

So, my aarti for You is just Your Naam.

The rest of the world is completely misguided because people have forgotten Your Naam and simply follow the rituals like pilgrimage etc, as described in the Puranas.

As a result, they are born and reborn in different life forms.

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Ravidass says that for me Your Naam is my aarti for You, and Your True Naam is my offer of sweets.

There are more Shabads about the insignificance of the ritualistic aarti in Guru Granth Sahib, but the unfortunate thing is that our leaders do not understand the Divine Message of Guru Granth Sahib and perform a similar type of aarti even in some historical gurdwaras. This practice is totally against the Principles of Gurbani and should be stopped immediately. Aarti has the same insignificance as wearing a janeyoo or anointing the forehead. If Sikhs discard janeyoo and putting a tilak on the forehead why should they carry this worthless ritual?