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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.

Meaning: The ignorant people perform ritualistic aarti for You, oh Waheguru! But aarti is taking place for You in nature all the time. In the plate-like sky, the sun and the moon are two lamps while the stars are big pearls. The wind coming from the Mount Mulye is providing the fragrance and acting as incense. (Mount Mulye in South India is known to have Chandan trees growing on it which radiate a very pleasant fragrance). All the vegetation is playing the role of flowers and the blowing wind is serving as a whisk of respect for God. God's light in every living being is acting as a drum beat like the jingling of bells. What a wonderful Aarti is being performed for Waheguru who smashes the birth-death-birth cycle! Pause.

Even though You are formless and have no visible body, no eyes, no soft feet or no nose to enjoy the Aarti, oh Waheguru! Yet, You have millions of beautiful bodies, millions of eyes, feet and nose because you reside in every human being. I am mesmerized to observe such feats on Your part.

Your light is enlightening every heart (mind).

But an individual can realize Your light in his mind only if he follows Guru's Teachings and then realizes that only that Aarti is worthwhile which is approved by You, oh Waheguru!

Day and night my mind is greedy of the dust of Your lotus-like soft feet, and just like babeeha which always yearns for the first drop of rain before it hits the ground, I am thirsty of Your Naam Amrit.

Kindly give me the alms of Your Naam so that my heart may become Your permanent residence.

In the following holy Shabad, Ravidass Ji says that Waheguru's Naam is every aspect of Aarti for him; so the ritualistic Aarti is worthless. Please pay attention to it.

ਭਗਤ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਅਰਤੀ ਦਾ ਸਾਰ ਹੈ।
ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਦਿਲ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਥਾਂ ਲੈ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ। ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਦਿਲ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਥਾਂ ਲੈ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ।
ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਦਿਲ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਥਾਂ ਲੈ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ। ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਦਿਲ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਥਾਂ ਲੈ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ।
ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਦਿਲ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਥਾਂ ਲੈ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ। ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਦਿਲ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਥਾਂ ਲੈ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ।
ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਦਿਲ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਥਾਂ ਲੈ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ। ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਦਿਲ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਥਾਂ ਲੈ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ।

Written by Dr. Devinder Singh Sekhon PhD
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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 joothaaray.
Tayro keeya toojhay kiya 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.

Paasa

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.);

Ihaiy 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.

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?