

AARTI: RITUALISTIC AND REAL

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

NOTE: Before we take up the meaning of this holy Shabad written by Guru Nanak Sahib and which carries a highly significant message, we need to know some of the practices that people used to follow to please their deities (or God) at the time of Guru Nanak Sahib. Many people believed that god can be pleased by reading Vedas or by simply singing devotional songs and playing music without actual devotion to God. Some people thought God could be pleased by following the practices based on the knowledge of yoga in which they concentrated on something for a long period of time. Some others believed that God can be pleased by depriving themselves of happiness and always wearing a sad look on their faces. A few also believed that God can be pleased by grooming and beautifying yourself well and presenting yourself to God. A large number believed that if you undertake pilgrimage while naked, you could please God. Some believed that giving to charities with generosity will make God happy; while some others thought that suffering bodily hardships in an isolated place could buy them the pleasure of God.

A few also believed that if you lay down your life like a brave man in a battle, God would be pleased, while some others believed that humility would earn them the pleasure of God.

But, this is NOT how God is pleased says (Guru) Nanak. According to Him, God is pleased only if you worship Him with full dedication and acquire noble qualities and high moral values including service to mankind and helping the needy.

Meaning: God is not pleased by simply reading of the Vedas and singing devotional songs with music with no real affection for Him. He is also not pleased with concentrating on some deity or by the knowledge of the path that the yogis follow. He is also not pleased if you deprive yourself of worldly pleasures and wear a sad look all the time. Nor He is pleased with your physical beauty or with your love for wealth.

He is not pleased if you undertake pilgrimage naked or if you donate to (undeserving) charities. He is not pleased if you renounce the world and settle in some secluded place in the wild. Waheguru is not pleased if you lay down your life in a battle field fighting as a brave man (if the battle is fought simply to feed your ego). Nor he is pleased with your meaningless humility no matter how humble you become.

(Guru) Nanak says that God is pleased only if you have a pure heart (no discrimination against anybody and earn your livelihood by honest means) and worship Him with devotion (without any expectation of any special favour).

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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.

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.

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ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੈਰੋ ਅਰਤੀ ਮਾਜਨੁ ਮੂਰਾਰੈ ॥ ਹੁਰ
ਕਾਯ ਨਾਮੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਜਹੂਠਥੈ ਸੁਗਲੁ ਪਾਸਾਰੈ ॥ ਪਾਏ ॥
ਨਾਮੁ ਤੈਰੋ ਅਸਨੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੈਰਾ ਓਰਸੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੈਰਾ ਕਾਯਸਰੋ ਲੈ ਚਹਿਤਕਾਰੈ ॥
ਨਾਮੁ ਤੈਰਾ ਅੰਬਹੁਲੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੈਰਾ ਚੰਦਨੋ ਗੁਸੁ ਜੁਪੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਲੈ ਟੂਯੈ
ਕਾਊ ਚਾਰਹੈ ॥

§ 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 chaarhay.

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 kiya urpoun Naam tayra tuhee chuver dholaaray. Dus
uttha utth sutthay chaaray 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.);

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?