

Let us Discard the Baggage of Brahminical Rituals

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YATRA IS SYNONYMOUS WITH processions, which are meant to demonstrate socio-political clout. Mr LK Advani's 'Rath Yatra' thus became famous as it resulted in garnering votes for the BJP by whipping the sentiment of those who wished to build a Ram temple.

In 2008 Sikhs in India, while celebrating 400 years of Gurta Gaddi of Guru Granth Saheb, organized Jagriti yatras throughout the country. Millions were spent on organizing these yatras and Billions were collected from devotees. One can clearly see those who had been watching that there was no JAGRITI (awareness) amongst Sikhs which could be seen after those yatras.

Awareness can come only through true interpretation of Guru Granth Saheb, not through rituals like covering Sri Guru Granth saheb with costly, colorful and beautiful RUMALAS (scarf for covering the Holy Book) or keeping Guru Granth in bedecked palanquins with flowers, taking around the markets and streets. Leaving aside a few, many Gurdwaras follow Brahminical rituals, as mythical stories are told about Gurus who used to condemn miracles. On the other hand so far as Guru Granth is concerned it is looked after by moving fly whisk over the Granth with great dedication and devotion as show off. Guru Granth is called GIAN DA SAGAR (ocean of wisdom). Even a common man knows that wisdom comes only after one reads Guru Granth and understands its preaching to become a better person.

The downward trend in Sikhism has affected the religion to such an extent that those days are gone when Sikhs used to start any good work with ARDAS (Prayer) before Guru Granth Saheb. Guidance was sought after reading VAAK (Hymns) from Guru Granth and remembering them for times to come. Sikhs seem to have forgotten that practice, instead they would now approach a Pundit/Brahmin (Hindu priest) who would look into his PATRI (epistle) and ask for certain donations and provide guidance to perform certain rituals at certain times. The psychological impression goes as if through some magic or miracle certain benefits can be obtained by those who follow those practices. All such practices have been condemned by Sikh Gurus. Hymns of Guru Granth Saheb outrightly reject such practices:

krm ka:d bhu krih Acar .

ibnu nav{ iWRgu iWRgu Ah;kar . [SGGS: 162]

They may perform all sorts of religious rituals and good actions, but without the Name, the egotistical ones are cursed and doomed.

krm ka:d Ah;karu n kaj{ kusl s[tl Gir jaih p;idt . [SGGS: 891]

Religious rituals and egotism are of no use at all. You shall go home with happiness, O Pandit.

Further the Hymns of Guru Nanak in Sri Guru Granth Saheb about Pundits:

p;idt vacih p]TIAa na bUJih vlcaru . [SGGS: 56]

The Pundits, the religious scholars, read their books, but they do not understand the real meaning.

Further Hymns of Guru Amardas:

piz piz p;idt m]nI Tk[wUj{ Baie pit K]el . [SGGS: 70]

Reading and studying, the Pundits and the silent sages have grown weary, but attached to the love of duality, they have lost their honor.

Yet another habit under the influence of superstition can be seen in general amongst Sikhs. That is on advice of Pundits they wear different types of rings with embedded stones to ward off calamity, distress, sufferings and disasters. The general public can get influenced as they are not aware of teachings of Guru Granth. But the irony is when one looks at Raagis and Granthis wearing such rings. Those who are supposed to propagate Gurbani, when they go after Brahminical rituals, it points towards downward trends in the Sikh religion. Can stones change the bad times to good for times to come? Unfortunately the propaganda of myths is done in Gurdwaras instead of reading and reciting Guru Granth Saheb and explaining the true meanings of a particular Hymn.

The common people can not be blamed if they remain ignorant in such an atmosphere. No wonder that they learn to follow rituals faster than understanding Gurbani. What is really required is to give examples and logic from Gurbani against superstitions and rituals to remove the doubts.

Another trend which has gained ground very fast is series of AKHAND PAATHS (Non stop recitation of Guru Granth Saheb) In certain Gurdwaras series of 101 PAATHS is started. Any one sitting in other countries of the world can book in advance paying certain fee for recitation of Guru Granth in his name. This is pure Brahminical approach and nothing else. How can recitation of AKHAND PAATH thousands of miles away have influence over a person? Such people think as if it will do some magic to remove their distress and improve their business. Those who read/recite Gurbani become like those pundits who are trapped in bondage, as Guru Amardas has dictated in the following Hymns:

p;idtu pz{ b;Wn m]h baWa nh bUJ{ ibiKAa ipAair . [SGGS: 33]

The Pandits, the religious scholars, read the scriptures, but they are trapped in the bondage of emotional attachment. In love with evil, they do not understand. (SGGS page 33)

The common man, as a Sikh, goes to Gurdwara with devotion and dedication. What he learns there brings home and further dissipates to his family members. It is a Holy chain which starts from teachings of Gurbani and trickles down to all the Sikh families who believe in the Sikh religious values. The chain breaks when the teachings of Guru Granth which is eleventh Guru of Sikhs are not explained/propagated to devotees. Obviously they remain ignorant and get attracted to Brahminical rituals which are followed by the majority in India all around but were certainly condemned by all the Sikh Gurus as they spread superstitions and are exploited by Pundits.

The danger is lurking around Sikhism as it did to other religions, like Buddhism which originated from India, but was eaten up by Brahminical onslaught. Buddhism is popular in China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Japan and many other eastern countries. Sikhism is facing similar threat nowadays. The need of the hour is to follow Gurbani in its true sense.

