

DANAM CONFERENCE 2006

SESSION PW 3

Theme: Prayer and Worship in Dharma Traditions and Western Religions

Sub-Theme: Prayer and Worship in Hindu Traditions – Session 3

Adarsh Deepak, DANAM, and Rita D. Sherma, Binghamton University, Conveners

Jeffery Long, Elizabethtown College, Presiding

ABSTRACTS

Arindam Chakrabarti, University of Hawaii at Manoa

Reasoning-Yoga and the Epistemology of Worship: The 12 Forms of Kālī in Kashmir Shaivism (Tantrāloka IV)

Among the four alternative upAya (method)-s that make up the path to rediscovery of our essential identity with Shiva (= cosmic subjective consciousness), Abhinavagupta discusses the path of power (s'āktopāya) in great detail in the IVth book of his *magnum opus* Tantrāloka. In this path, not breath-control or postures but *sat-tarka* (good reasoning) is announced to be the most supreme limb of Yoga. The worship of the Goddess turns into epistemological analysis when Abinavagupta explains the path of successive (*krama*) meditation, by combining the 3 roles of the knower, the knowledge and the object of knowledge over the 4 states of creation, stability, dissolution, and the un-utterable, thereby generating the 12 *kālī*-s, such as rakta *kālī*, mahabhairavacandograa *kālī*, etc. The paper will draw attention to this style of "saadhaa" or spiritual practice where phenomenological analysis and reasoning about the steps and factors of any knowledge-situation itself is considered the heart of prayer/meditation/sacrifice/worship.

Graham M. Schweig, Christopher Newport University

Prayer and Worship in the Caitanya Vaishnava Tradition

In this presentation, I will review the various forms of worship and prayer performed by practitioners of this tradition, and will especially focus on the sacred image and the divine names of Krishna as "namAvatAra," the sound embodiment of divinity. An analysis of the "mahAmantra" for this tradition will be explored.

Guy Beck, University of North Carolina-Wilmington

Prayer and Worship through Music and Liturgy in North Indian Vaishnava Traditions

Prayer (cognate with Sanskrit, *prarthana*, "prayer or petition") and worship (from English worthship, "deserving of praise or veneration), are important categories in the study of religion, and are well-known practices of private or domestic piety among Hindus. Equally important, though not well researched, are the ways in which Hindu prayer and worship are integrated into public liturgies involving music and communal singing. With few serious studies available, this area may be expanded by focusing on North Indian Vaishnava traditions of Krishna worship. In Braj, Bhakti Sangit (devotional music) is a central part of four living communities that maintain a temple regimen of daily and seasonal hymns in Braj Bhasha (Hindi dialect). Presenting examples from the Vallabha and Radhavallabha sects, this paper will demonstrate how Vaishnavism has serviced the need for public prayer and worship by employing forms of devotional singing, known as kirtan or samaj-gayan, into liturgical structures. As such, variables including raga (melody), tala (rhythm), mood,

time of day, season, and song text all contribute to what liturgical scholars have called a “sacred auditory environment.”

Aditya Adarkar, Montclair State University

The Narrative and the Suppliant: Katha in the Mahabharata

This paper investigates how the stories that the Pandavas hear in the forest are enacted like the katha that worshippers hear during worship, e.g., during the Satyanarayan Puja. The paper will draw upon both epic scholarship and research on the uses of narrative to explore the epic's implicit philosophy of worship in its status as a religious text.

Acharya Prem Chand Shridhar, Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America

Sandhyā and Havan in Arya Samaj Tradition

This paper presents the first two of five Yajna-s that Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883), the founder of Arya Samaj, stressed were needed in daily life of each and every householder, namely: Brahma Yajna (*Sandhyā*) and Dev Yajna (Havan or Agnihotra). Just as the body needs food, the mind and soul require peace and bliss. Daily prayer provides peace to the mind and prepares the soul for the long journey towards bliss and moksha (liberation), by building a bridge between the soul and the Supreme Being. Vedic Sandhya is an act of communication with the Supreme Being, and an expression of thankfulness to the Almighty for His blessings and the supreme art of His creation. Sandhya is personal prayer turning consciousness towards the Supreme Being. During Havan, with every oblation, we chant “*Idam Na Mam*” meaning “This is not mine” and “*Svāha*” denoting whatever is said or done is true in thoughts, words and deeds.