

DANAM CONFERENCE 2006

SESSION PW 5

Theme: Prayer and Worship in Dharma Traditions and Western Religions

Sub-Theme: Prayer and Worship in Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Sikh Traditions

Rita D. Sherma, Binghamton University, *Convener*

Kusumita Pedersen, St. Francis College, *Presiding*

ABSTRACTS

Yehudit Kornberg Greenberg, Rollins College

Divine Love and Eros in Jewish Prayer

This paper will examine concepts of prayer and images and of divine love and eros in several texts from the Jewish prayer book including The Song of Glory and The Shema. The notion of longing for God will be explicated and highlighted in works of thinkers such as Bayha Ibn Pakudah, Maimonides, and Hasidic masters.

Tazim R. Kassam, Syracuse University

Prayer and Rituals of Ismaili Muslims

Abstract unavailable at the time of printing.

Alan Godlas, University of Georgia

Prayer and Worship in Sufi Tradition

This paper discusses different forms of prayer and worship that can be found in the practice of a variety of Sufi orders worldwide. Beginning with the canonical and supererogatory prayers, Qur'an recitation, and litanies (awrad), this survey will highlight different forms of dhikr meditation, including silent and vocal forms, group and individual, as well as those with and without movements or dance. Included as well will be discussion of the history, doctrinal underpinnings, process of psycho-spiritual transformation, and ecstatic and other states that are related to the various forms of prayer and worship under discussion.

Selva J. Raj, Albion College

Public Devotions, Domestic Rituals: Prayer and Worship in Popular Christianity in India

My paper will explore the patterns and strategies of worship employed by the religious folk in popular Christianity in India to express their felt religious sentiments, human needs, mundane concerns, and soteriological goals in both public and domestic arenas as well as to carve out for themselves a distinct religious identity *often in defiance of institutional prescriptions* as Indian Christians living in a religiously pluralistic society.

Francis X. Clooney, SJ, Harvard University

Prayer and Worship in the Srivaisnava Tradition: the Three Mantras according to Vedanta Desika

While it would be unwise to equate "prayer" with "mantra" or "mantra recitation," there are strong resemblances that justify discussing the Rahasya Traya of the Srivaisnavas—the Tiru

Mantra, Carama Sloka, and Dvaya Mantra—as a significant complete example of "Hindu prayer." As understood in the Srivaisnava tradition, and (here) in particular by Vedanta Desika, the three mantras are understood to exemplify basic attitudes of prayer: the recognition of total dependence on God as a necessary but also chosen state (Tirumantra); the word of God to the devotee, inviting faith and surrender, for the sake of liberation and the ending of sorrow (Carama Sloka); the act and utterance of taking refuge with Narayana with Sri as the decisive human response (Dvaya Mantra). The three together succinctly express the theology, psychology, and spirituality of Srivaisnavism in words which are deeply rooted in Sanskrit and Tamil Tradition and which, when uttered, form a complete dialogue with God, as prayer.

Nikky Singh, Colby College

Prayer and Worship in Sikh Tradition

Sikhs begin each day with the recitation of Japuji, the first hymn of the Guru Granth. Sikhs pay utmost reverence to this sacred book, for it is always placed on a pedestal, adorned in silks and brocades; devotees have their feet bare, heads covered, and sit on the floor when in its presence. The Japuji is the foremost liturgical prayer, and Sikh worship, whether public or private, begins with its melodious sounds. My paper will focus on the Japuji, and study its complex role in Sikh worship. I will especially try to explore its four vital modalities: 1) a celebration of the Divine; 2) an intellectual inspiration; 3) a psychological practice; and 4) an aesthetic paradigm.