

OFFERING

Offering, as we have seen, is coming down from the very early and primitive period, when human intelligence was in its nascent stage. It was meant to provide relief to the terror-stricken human mind by an effort to please, appease, and propitiate the offended 'spirits.' It began with simple offering of select eatables and drinks and kept on changing as the human intellect and experience progressed and developed. Offerings, it should be noted, only changed their form, but the idea and basic concept have remained intact and continued to persist even to this day when human intelligence, science, and technology have so much advanced. If some people call it veiled bribery they are not far off the mark. In a way, what else is it ? From mere eatables, the shape of offerings changed to money, coins, grains, sugar, butter and fruits like coconuts, almond, raisins, and so on. Then it took the shape of flowers, garlands, and live animals like goats, sheep, oxen, buffaloes, and in addition to all the aforesaid, it took the shape of even human blood and sacrifice. Quite recently, a case of human sacrifice from Village Nohar in Ganga Nagar, District of Rajasthan, has been reported in the dailies dated 18th of August, 1971. To propitiate Goddess Kali, two innocent children of six and four years were enticed away and done to death. They were reported to be son, Naresh, and daughter, Sunita, of Kanahiya Lal Pariwal, a wholesaler of grain. It is rather significant to note that human sacrifices are generally offered more to goddesses than gods; as if lady gods cherish flesh more than a male god.

In fact, the offerings appear to have changed their forms

and shape according to the conception of the one to be propitiated. In Sikhism too, the system of offering is observed. We generally observe people offering in a congregation of the Sikhs, flowers, money, grain, jaggary, cotton and all sorts of things like that. Sometimes, when there is a rush, people are seen throwing coins from a distance at the place where Guru Granth Sahib is opened, unmindful whether a coin hits the *Granthi* in the eye and they get the “Bull’s-eye” or tear off a page of the Holy Book. Sometimes, flower petals wet and dripping are also thrown as offering which soil the cloth covers. The question of what to offer has been very lucidly posed and answered in *Rag Gujri* as follows :

The calf has defiled milk in the teats

ਦੂਧ ਤ ਬਛਰੇ ਥਨਹੁ ਬਿਟਾਰਿਓ ॥

The black-bee has defiled the flower and the fish the water.

ਫੂਲੁ ਭਵਰਿ ਜਲੁ ਮੀਨਿ ਬਿਗਾਰਿਓ ॥੧॥

O mother, what shall I now present as the offering to my Lord.

ਮਾਈ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਪੂਜਾ ਕਹਾ ਲੈ ਚਰਾਵਉ ॥

For, I cannot find a lovely flower that is not defiled.

ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਫੂਲੁ ਅਨੂਪੁ ਨ ਪਾਵਉ ॥੧॥ਰਹਾਉ॥

The Chandan tree is girdled by snakes;

ਮੈਲਾਰਗਰ ਬੇਰੇ ਹੈ ਭੁਇਅੰਗਾ ॥

Nectar and poison abide in one and the same place.

ਬਿਖੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਬਸਹਿ ਇਕ ਸੰਗਾ ॥

Then with incense, lighted lamps, eatables and fragrant flowers,

ਧੂਪ ਦੀਪ ਨਈਬੇਦਹਿ ਬਾਸਾ ॥

How is Thy servant to worship Thee ?

ਕੈਸੇ ਪੂਜ ਕਰਹਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਦਾਸਾ ॥

Then the answer is provided :

I would dedicate and make an offering of my body and mind,

ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਅਰਪਉ ਪੂਜ ਚਰਾਵਉ ॥

And thus, by the grace of the Guru attain the immaculate God.

ਗੁਰਪਰਸਾਦਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਪਾਵਉ ॥

I have no other way to offer and worship Thee.

ਪੂਜਾ ਅਰਚਾ ਆਹਿ ਨ ਤੋਰੀ ॥

Says Ravidas, I do not know what will be my fate.

ਕਹਿ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਕਵਨ ਗਤਿ ਮੇਰੀ ॥

The shape of offering had of necessity to change according to the Sikh concept of a Formless, Unborn, God and Guru. In *Rag Ramkali, Anand*, the third Satguru says :

By offering body, mind, wealth and everything to the Guru and by carrying out His instructions one gets salvaged.

ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਧਨੁ ਸਭੁ ਸਉਪਿ ਗੁਰ ਕਉ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

When a Sikh pays obeisance to the *Ishat* Guru, he first gets into the “Knight’s Pose”, what is called *Bir-Assan*. Then he bows his head and touches the ground. This is done not only in repentance or to seek indulgence but is meant primarily to offer the head to the Guru. Head includes all the intellect, argument, reasoning and thinking powers. One gets into *Bir-Assan* by grounding the right knee unto the floor and keeping the left one pointing upward. A Sikh when initiated gets practical training and full rehearsal of getting into this pose (ਬੀਰ ਆਸਨ).