

Belief of Hinduism: *Sakaar-Upaasna* (Idol worship)

1. Introduction

Idol worship or *sakaar-upaasna* is one of the most important features of our Hindu brethren. Aryasamaj – one of the offshoot of Hinduism - is against idol worship. They don't do idol worship because – they say – idol worship is against the teachings of Vedas. Those who do idol worship agree that God is free from any shape, yet they give justification for idol-worship.

The argument is – “See, Almighty God is *nirakar* (without any shape), but we cannot concentrate on someone who is shape less; so we need *sakaar* (a shape) medium in order to reach that *nirakar*(the shapeless). We will reach *nirakar* God using a *sakaar* medium”.

2. No person has reached to the almighty God using a shape or image.

* I am yet to meet any person in my life who starts with idol worship and gradually stops idol worship because he has successfully acquired the devotion of God [and no more requires idol for concentrating on that shapeless God].

* Hindu Scholars agree that idol worship evolved over a period of time. Before that, *Sanatan dharma* was followed without *sakaar-upaasna* wherein people would worship God, connect with him without need of idol or image.

* 1 billion Muslim in the world can concentrate on that God without using idol /shape /picture then why cannot our Hindu brethren?

* Visit any mosque round the globe and you will find people worshipping almighty God through *Namaz* [prayer] without any idol/picture/image. I firmly believe that even our Hindu brethren can concentrate without image.

3. Idol worship distorted the pure *Sanatan dharm*

The religion of God – in Indian tradition – is referred as *Sanatan Dharma*. The pure *Sanatan dharm* - that was based on oneness of God - got lost in mythologies. Expressing dismay over the distorted concept of God in Hinduism, the great Vedic Scholar and founder of *Gayatri parivar* – **Pandit Shri Ram Sharma Acharya** writes –

“The One God was divided into several god and goddesses. Theses god and goddesses not only possessed different shapes but also these gods were given different nature; and they were attributed such nature as if they were angry over the one who didn't worship them and

worshipped the others. These gods started giving miseries to those who did not worship them..... With the polytheism, several stories and legends were attached. Several stories were fabricated so that people could understand benefit of worshipping these gods and wrath incurred by these gods [if they were not worshipped]. Numerous gods were attached to festivals. It was made compulsory to visit places of these gods. Some of these old gods sustained and several new originated. Several of the old gods were forgotten into oblivion and several new came into existence and became famous.”

Source: Pandit Shri Ram Sharma Acharya, *Akhand Jyoti*, June 1985

4. Idol worship contradicts Vedic mantr

Worship is for whom? For God!

Who will define about God? God himself!

Does God tell about himself and his attributes in his revealed scripture? YES – this is the most important part of the revelation.

Vedas are considered to be *ish-wani* [God’s word] and *apaurishya* [not humane but divine] by Hindus. As per my best understanding Vedas never propagate *sakaar-upaasana* or idol worship.

* *Na tasya pratima asti yasya namah mahaddashah :*

“Of him (The God) there is no image. Remembering him is itself great act” Yajurved 32:3

* **“God cannot be grasped in any direction”** Yajurved 32:2

* *Sah akayam*: **“He is bodiless”** Yajurved 40:8

* *Andhatm pravishanti ya asambhuti upaste...* – **“Those who worship *asambhuti* - they enter into darkness of *tamas* (part of hell). Those who worship *sambhuti* – they enter more into darkness of *tamas* (part of hell)”**- Yajurved 40:9

The Sanskrit word *asambhuti* - refers to Nature in its germinal state. Ex- Fire, air, water.

The Sanskrit word *sambhuti* - refers to man made things e.g. idol.

The Sanskrit word “*tamas*” refers to one of the hells which are described in *Shrimad Bhagwad puran* 3:30:25-28.

So Yajurved 40:9 tells that those who will do shirk (Associate partner with Almighty GOD) will enter hell. This is similar to what Quran says in 4:48; 4:116; 5:72

* **“That GOD alone is ONE without any partner.”** - Atharv ved – 13:4:12

* **“GOD is the master of all creatures. He is the master of heavens and the Earth. Except him whom do you worship?”**- Rigved 10:121:1

*** “GOD is the Ruler of living and non living worlds. He is the Lord of mankind and animal kingdom - Except him whom do you worship?” Rigved 10:121:3**

*** “. Except the GOD whom do we worship and give offerings?”- Rigved 10:121:5**

There are several other references from Vedas which make ample clear that Almighty God is one, alone, unique, without any likeness. He cannot be compared with anything.

How correct is giving image and shape to God?

Let's leave scripture for some time and think logically.

5. God: One who created the universe?

Think about our world. Large desert, dense forest, widespread land, gigantic mountain and vast ocean: how big our earth is?

Our galaxy has more than 1000000000000 stars!!! Each star is thousands of times greater than earth!! What is the status of earth in our galaxy? Earth is negligibly small in our galaxy.

How many galaxies are in the universe? More than 100000000000!!!!

So how many stars are there in the universe? Seems Infinite?

How big our universe is? It is beyond our imagination. And this seemingly-infinite universe is continuously expanding!!! More you ponder over creation of God, more you are amazed.

Who is the creator of this universe? I, you or any great human being?

No, No. not at all.

It's the almighty God who is the creator-the supreme power and the planner of this universe.

Is that almighty God someone like me and you? No!

Is he someone who needs food to survive? No!

Does he sleep and get tired? No.

Has he any parent or child or spouse? No.

He is free from any gender, any human need, and any human quality.

Then how come we give him image or equate him with anything?

He cannot have any likeness, no vision can grasp him.

He is beyond our comprehension.

6. Different gods for different people?

How many Gods are there? One.

Is there separate God for Hindus, separate God for Muslims and separate God for Christians? No. Is there separate God for people of India, Bhutan, America and Japan? No.

Why we have made hundreds of different gods in Hinduism?

Why have made separate God for north India and separate God for south India?

How come different God for Andhra Pradesh, different God for Tamilnadu and different God for Kerala?

How come a separate God for rain, separate God for wealth, separate God for prosperity?

Once people started giving different images / personalities to God, these images gradually became different gods.

7. Who makes idol?

People believe that Almighty God is THE CREATOR who had done many things necessary for our existence. How logical and just it is that people create idol from their own hands and then worship it? Idol is created by man; then how come idol became superior to man? Can an idol eat sweet that is offered to it? No!

Can an idol remove a fly that sits over it? No!

Leave alone giving life and death, it cannot see/hear/listen/harm/benefit you at all. Don't you think that only worthy to be worshipped is the almighty God who can benefit / see/listen to you?

Has God created us or we created God?

8. Justification in favour of idol worship

Some people say that through the idol we are worshipping Almighty God. They give example of visiting card. Just like a visiting card represents your detail, similarly an idol represents God but it's actually not God.

Is this logic appealing? When you take visiting card and then you want to speak to or seek any help from the person concerned, then do you communicate to the person OR you speak to visiting card?

But natural, people will laugh if you hold the visiting card of Mr. xyz in hand and say – “O! xyz. Please tell me about yourself? Please tell me answer for my question.”

Will you do this? No.

What you will do is that you will communicate to the person Mr. xyz. Similarly when you want to worship God then you will worship him and not any image or shape or idol or human being.

Some say that there is great benefit in idol worship because there are various types of waves that come from idols. When you go to idol then you get these waves which are very useful.

What you will say about this argument on the parameter of logic and common sense?

Even if we suppose that waves come out of idol, how does it justify that one should worship idol as god? Waves come not from idol but from all objects – so should we worship everything? Wave comes from brick then should we worship it?

9. Kaba is NOT worshipped

Here on thing is important to mention. Some people – knowingly or unknowingly spread the misconception that Muslims worship kaba.

Kaba is a cubical structure at Mecca. It represents the direction for *namaz* (prayer) for Muslims all over the world. Islam lays great emphasis on unity and discipline. For worship also great emphasis is on unity and

harmony. Devotees stand shoulder to shoulder in rows while offering *namaz* at mosque. All people will face the same direction. This direction is defined by kaba. In order to foster unity, brother-hood, discipline and harmony every muslim faces the direction of Kaba for offering prayer. Never in the history of Islam –kaba was worshipped by any muslim.

10. Idol worship is against human psychology

Usually, our Hindu brethren will say that in order to concentrate on formless God, we concentrate on idol or image. It is as per the human psychology that more you concentrate on something; more it will be embedded into your mind. The more you look at image or idol and concentrate over it, more it will be embedded into your mind as God.

When someone talks about Lord *Ganesh*, then he will have the image and mythological story of *Ganesh* in his mind. When someone talks about Lord *Vishnu* then he will have the image and mythological story of *Vishnu* in his mind. Similarly, you will have different attributes, different stories and different personalities in your mind when you talk about different gods popular in Indian tradition.

When a Muslim talks about *Allah*, *Al-rahman*, *Al-raheem*, *Al-kareem*, *Rab* etc then he is talking about the same one God who is free from any image, shape, color or humanly attributes.

11. What is the substitute for idol worship?

The problem expressed by our Hindu brethren in concentrating formless God is actually a genuine problem. It's really difficult to concentrate on formless God. God has not left us unguided on this topic. We have guidance from the God regarding how to concentrate and worship him.

The messenger of God - Prophet Muhammad - taught that when you stand for prayer [*Namaz*] then you should concentrate by assuming that you are seeing God. But it will be difficult for you initially. So you should at least concentrate that God is seeing you.

When a person starts offering *namaz* with the belief that God is seeing him, no other thought should come to his mind then he will be able to fully concentrate on *namaz*. He will understand that *namaz* is a way of communication with God. The way we offer *namaz* with full obedience – we should be obedient even after *namaz*.

Messenger of God or Prophet Not only teaches to worship God but also teaches how to do so. *Namaz* is one of the ways to worship God. It was taught by every Prophet. One of the parts of *namaz* is still prevalent in Hinduism today. It is called *sashtang*.

12. Sashatang

Wrong way of doing sashtang is the one which is prevalent today. The devotee lies down by his stomach; his whole body touches the ground.

In order to understand the correct way of performing *sashtang* we need to understand its meaning. Word “*sashtang*” is made up of 3 words:

Sah (with) + asht (8) + ang (parts of body).

So, sashtang is the mode of worship in which 8 parts of the body participate. When a person lies down on ground then his whole body (and not 8 parts) – touches ground; so it’s not the correct form.



Correct way of doing Sashtang in which 8 parts of the body touch ground. 2 hands, 2 legs, 2 knees, 1 forehead and 1 nose = 8 parts



**Sa (with)+Asht(8)+Ang(parts of body)
= Sashtang**



The correct Sashtang is prostration or sajda in which 8 parts of body touches the ground: 2 hands, 2 knees, 2 leg-fingers, 1 forehead and 1 nose.

To know – how *namaz* is best form of worship in Hinduism and Islam, refer to our books:

1. “*Namaz – ek sarwdharm upaasna*” [*Hindi language*]
2. “*The Salah – that muslims do not offer*” [*English language*]

13. Conclusion

1. Idol worship or sakar upasna is one of the most important features of Hinduism today.
2. People doing sakar upansa give the excuse that one cannot concentrate on God without idol; hence it is required for concentration.
3. Idol worship contradicts the teachings of Vedas.
4. It contradicts common sense and logic.
5. Namaz is the substitute of sakar upasna.
