

## Prevent Animal Sacrifice this puja



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All Hindus become epitomes of excitement to the run up to the festival of the auspicious Durga puja. Pandals coming up everywhere, idols being given finishing touches, revellers thronging the markets, discount offers, designer wear on sale and so on. Everyone is under the grip of puja fever and the associated excitement.

But for once if we shift our focus away from ourselves and our frivolous acts and ponder over the plights of those innocent animals that would be sacrificed during the puja offerings, I am sure the smiles in our faces would be wiped off. At least the smiles would vanish from those faces who have a little compassion for the four legged.

Imagine the little pigeons, a symbol of peace when released from captivity, innocent goats who frolic around in a carefree manner and the majestic buffalo -- such a beautiful animal, imagine the pain, the shock they go through when they are sacrificed in the name of appeasing the goddess. These are all innocent souls who never suspect anything until they are taken to be brutally sacrificed.

I am a devotee too but my devotion takes a nose dive when I see these animals being pulled forcefully with vermilion on their forehead screaming and protesting almost being strangled while being taken away for sacrifice. My visits to the Kamakhya temple dwindled due to such experiences. I squirm when I see the horror stricken faces of goats on the shoulders of crazed devotees who run around the sanctum sanctorium after claiming to have been visited by the goddess during Deodhani. My trips to the Ugratara temple stopped the day I saw blood smattered all over the temple complex and a huge crowd waiting and oogling to experience the moment of sacrifice of hundreds of animals on the occasion of Navami.

Before we dive headlong into the controversial debate let us for a moment pause and consider the era in which we are living in. This is the year 2012 an era of space tourism when we have come a long long way from the days of a pagan religion. The days of the sati pratha are behind us. This is an era of live-in relations, of an increased divorce ratio. We have moved away from the steam engines to monorails, from horse drawn carriages to sleek sedans, from foot messengers to the ubiquitous mobile phones and so on. If we are so open to embracing modern thought and developments then why on earth are we holding on to an obsolete custom of animal sacrifice.

Yes, it can be acceptable to a certain degree if the persons practicing this heinous ritual is an illiterate person living away from civilization hence unaware of the modern strides mankind has taken. Individuals who have been arrested in the bygone era when our ancestors used to practice these rituals. But if you are educated, you use motorised vehicles instead of bullock carts for transportation or Android phones instead of Tom Toms for exchanging messages then you are a criminal if you practice killing of animals.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni indulges in this ritual, Mulayam Singh Yadav has committed the act, the former king of Nepal had done it. What more do these people want to achieve and how would the killing of animals give them what they desire?

We should remember that in ancient times it was also common to offer the life of a human being to a god. The Aztecs sacrificed thousands of victims (often slaves and servants were killed or buried alive along with dead kings in order to provide service in the afterlife) A similar tradition also existed in China. The Celts and German people are among the European peoples who practiced human sacrifice in the past.

The human race is the shrewdest of all races on earth. The ancient people steeped in pagan culture and primitive superstition believed that human sacrifice would placate the enraged god and expiate their sins, this practice was particularly common among the agricultural people who sought to guarantee the fertility of the soil or avert calamities in the form of flood or famine and therefore followed the ritual of human sacrifice. But gradually when the covers of primitivism were dispelled man thought it best to put an end to this savage ritual which was putting their own lives at peril. But they found an easier way out by replacing the human by innocent voiceless animals that cannot protest these barbaric acts and neither realise their end till the final blow

On one hand we cry ourselves hoarse when a rhino is killed by poachers, we go into sit in strikes or protests when these species are attacked or harmed but we are surprisingly mum when it comes to animal sacrifice during religious festivals. Is this not pure hypocrisy? Or is it because the rhino is our star animal by virtue of which Assam is in the map of world tourism?

The problem lies in our interpretation of the scriptures. I am sure the goddess, a mother would ever want the sacrifice of her own creations.

The word sacrifice is to give up a possession dear to us in such a case how can an animal be representative of something dear. As the animal to be sacrificed is bought minutes before being sacrificed for a few hundreds of rupees. The devotee seeking divine blessing is in no way attached to the sacrificial animal therefore it cannot be termed as sacrifice rather it is plain slaughter or killing of an animal.

The strides of modernism has touched our entire lives than why is it that we are still steeped in religious superstition.

Prayer should not lead to negativity of thoughts and actions when we create a hue and cry over killing of humans what right do we have to initiate the killing of an animal. Isn't it time we graduated to the practice of a bloodless sacrifice in the form of flowers and fruits or exercise sacrifice in the true sense of the term by relinquishing an object of desire and not a living creature pulsating with life to fulfil a mere superstition.



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