

8. Neerajanadi Kainkarya

Nirajana means fumigation before the idol of the deity, and it has a significant place in our tradition. It is followed in temples and other places of worship. In this procedure lamps are waved and camphor is burnt before the idol, in homage. This is also known as Harathi or Arthi. These terms represent an underlying message.

The materials used in this process are camphor, ghee wicks or oil wicks. These materials when burned generate light and in the process of getting consumed are

transformed into light-producing flames. In the same manner, all the creatures on the earth, who are the reflection of the Almighty, should help others and while ending this life get transformed into that service. This is the ultimate truth.

There is a proverb that states that we have to complete our works when there is light, which is similar with the English proverb 'make hay while the sun shines'. The underlying meaning of this proverb is that we have to try our level best to reach God when our bodies are functioning with full

vitality. In order to reach God we must associate ourselves with righteous people.

In North India, fumigation with camphor is termed Arthi, which also denotes difficulty. One should attempt to notice God in the idol form. Then only one's problems and difficulties would be sublimated like the camphor during fumigation. That is why Arthi also connotes difficulties and sufferings.

Let us investigate the term Arthi. God appears elegant and prosperous in the Harathi's light. We have wonderful and amazing

manifestation of God in that light. This attracts all our senses towards God and we develop an urge to witness God. That is why the Harathi procedure plays an important role in worship procedures.

In the past when there was no electricity in the temples, people used to see deity in the light generated by oil lit lamps. Gradually, this became a tradition. However, the sight of the god is not so scintillating despite the presence of several lamps. The complete and eternal sight of the deity can only

be witnessed through the light of Harathi and particularly in the light of camphor or ghee wick light. Harathi with ghee wicks is offered with one, two, three, four, five, six, eleven, sixteen, and twenty – seven ghee wicks. In the light of these ghee wicks, we can witness the grandeur of the deity from head to toe. This constitutes a pleasing and extraordinary feast for our eyes. In this light, we can see the different parts of the deity, different organs of the deity, weapons and ornaments of that deity. Hence, the

offering of Harathi is a significant part of worship.

Mantrapushpa

The service that follows the Harathi is called Mantrapushpa. It implies the offering of our hearts with complete devotion and surrender to the deity, while chanting the mantras. Mantrapushpa means mantras and flowers, and we have to offer our soul and heart as flowers to the deity. Moreover, there are six

righteous aspects such as Ahimsa¹, Satya², Ruta, Dana³, Daya⁴ and Dharma⁵, which are adored by the deity. After obtaining the beautiful and brilliant vision of the deity, one should pray that these six good qualities should remain permanently with one. This is the method of Mantrapushpa.

As a matter of fact, the procedure of Harathi and Mantrapushpa are not part of the original shodasopachara⁶. In order to facilitate ordinary people in their

¹ Non - Violence

² Truth

³ Giving of alms

⁴ Compassion

⁵ Righteousness

⁶ Sixteen acts of civility

worship, the narrower procedures of worship have been established. In these procedures there are activities such as Namarchana⁷, dhupa⁸, naivedya⁹, Nirajana¹⁰, and Mantrapushpa. These are known as the panchopachara¹¹.

It was seen that people were unable to obtain satisfaction with prayer, hence, in order to rectify this situation, services based on worship of the idol form, were introduced. These services were also affordable, and permit

⁷ Chanting of namam

⁸ Smokes of incense sticks

⁹ Offering of food or other eatables

¹⁰ Harathi with camphor or ghee wicks

¹¹ Five activities of worship

worshippers to perform them, in accordance with their ability and resources. These techniques are termed as the Rajopachara¹², Devopachara¹³, Sakti upachara¹⁴ and Bhakthopachara¹⁵.

During the Navaratri celebrations we worship the Goddess. Thus, regal services have to be offered to the goddess Jaganmata. The various objects utilised in this service include the Chatra¹⁶, Vyajana¹⁷, Visinikarra¹⁸,

¹² Services which are suited to the king

¹³ Services suitable to the god

¹⁴ Services to be performed according to the abilities and resources by the performer

¹⁵ Services that are performed according to the devotion by the devotees

¹⁶ A regal umbrella

¹⁷ A fan made of leafs

¹⁸ Fan

Dhvaja ¹⁹ , Janda ²⁰ , Bana ²¹ and Darpana ²² . Even after offering these things and services, it is impossible to obtain satisfaction for the devotees. Hence, they offer the Harathi at the end of the worship and witness the glory of the Goddess in the light produced by the Harathi. After that, it should be assumed that several deities have arrived at the place where the adoration is being performed; and all these deities perform worship to the goddess Jaganmata. With this thought we have to adore the

¹⁹ A flag or banner

²⁰ Flag

²¹ An arrow

²² A mirror

Goddess and witness Her in the light of the Harathi. This is an important method that has to be incorporated with the Navaratri ceremonies.

However great the worship and whatever its length of duration, it has to perforce come to an end. In the last stage of life, the soul of creatures should combine with the Divine Soul. If our consciousness reaches a particular state it becomes one with the Ultimate. This is called jeevanmukti or moksha²³. To that end, we have to

²³ Liberation from earthy connections

offer a lamp or light, as a representation of our consciousness, to the Goddess Sri Mata and declare that this light of ours belongs to Her. This is termed as the Nanda Deepa, where Nanda denotes natural happiness. The truth is light, which is the light of the Nanda Deepa, and indicates eternal happiness. This eternal happiness is the Satchidananda, which is the ultimate goal of life.

The eighth Keertana provides such understanding to us.

Nīrājana Seva

Nīrājana Dīpārciṣi Vīkṣēmahi Dēvīm.

Sānōvatu Lōkatraya Dīkṣājaga
Dambā..

1)

Dēvā Api Yakṣā Ṛṣi Varyāstvayi
Bhaktyā

Ārārtika Sēvāmiha Vāñchantiḥ Diṣṭyā.
Ēkaikaśa Udyadravi Tējassama Dīpaiḥ
Saṅkāśaya Mānāḥ Pravi Līnā Stava
Bhāse)..

2)

Aṃbhōjasu Kanyāyuta Kēkī Bhasu
Dīpaiḥ

Mūṣāgaru Ḍeśānaḍu Daśvādika Kāśaiḥ.

**Kumbhānvita Nandābhidha Nīrājana
Kāntau**

**Śrīmātr̥su Mūr̥tiṃ Mama Bhāgyādava
Lōkē..**

3)

Adrīśasu Putritrija Gadrāja Su Patni

**Chatraṃ Vyaja Nara Tē Dhvaja
Bāṇāvava Lōkya.**

**Ādarśama Pīkṣasvaca Samrājñi Su
Vēni**

**Saṅkāśaya Gēhāni Ca Sampattibhi
Rīśē..**

4)

**Śuddhaṃ Ghr̥ta Varticchavi Dīpraṃ Tava
Vaktraṃ**

**Sandhyāruṇa Varṇaṃ Śiva Bhāgyaṃ
Prasa Vitri.**

**Pūrṇaṃ Tava Saṃvinmaya Bhāsā Mama
Śīrṣaṃ**

Līyai Paradīptā Vatha Saccidānandē..

Nīrājana Dīpārciṣi Vīkṣēmahi Dēvīm.

**Sānōvatu Lōkatraya Dīkṣājaga
Dambā..**

Meaning

Pallavi:

The goddess Jaganmata protects the three worlds. Let us witness her in the light of the Neerajana Deepas.

Charanam 1:

O! Jaganmata! All the deities, yakshas and maharshis are desirous

of praying to You with camphor flames. They are fortunate to serve you with red coloured light, which is equivalent to the light of the rising sun. They are fortunate to witness your brilliance and to immerse themselves in you.

Charanam2:

I am fortunate to witness You in different forms like the lotus, virgin, peacock and elephant and in the light generated through these forms. I am also fortunate to witness the divine brilliance of the Goddess Sri Mata in the eternal light emitted by Her various forms

like mushika, garuda, nandi, aswa and kalasa, and the Nanda deepa, which emits millions of rays of light.

Charanam 3:

O! Eswari! You are the daughter of the king of the mountains, and the Wife of the Ruler of the three worlds. So please accept the Rajopacharas I am offering to You and show me the beauty of Your face in the mirror. O! Maharajni! O! Parameswari! Please enrich us and render our homes prosperous.

Charanam 4:

Your face is glowing in the light of ghee wick lamps. It is glowing like the orange light of the twilight. Sri Mata! You have a beautiful face and it is the great fortune of Lord Sadasiva. Your brilliance has filled my mind with eternal consciousness. I will engross myself into your Satchidananda divinity, which is the ultimate goal of any spiritual practitioner. There is nothing beyond that Satchidananda and this sloka declares that immersion in the Satchidananda is the highest state that a devotee can attain.
