Aratrika

Aratrika or nirajana consists of waving various auspicious articles before the Lord to glorify his presence. This is the only part of the worship which is done publicly on a daily basis.

There is an injunction that one should perform worship of the Lord. However, if one cannot, it is advised that one may derive the benefits of worship by observing the worship. Thus, though most of the worship is done privately (also by scriptural injunction), the spectator, though he may not be able to perform full worship of the deity himself, may derive the benefits of puja by observing the performance of aratrika. This public aratrika is also sometimes called maha nirajana to distinguish it from the nirajana performed as part of the private puja.

Deity Schedule:

You are waking up your new deities too early. Best time is between 4:30 and 5:00 A.M. with mangal aratrika at 5:00 A.M. Although Krsna is the Master of Sleep, still we must allow Him sufficient rest for herding cows all day and playing with His cowherd friends.

letter from Srila Prabhupada,
Rupanuga, Feb.22, 1972

Both mangala aratrika and sandhya aratrika can be changed according with sunrise and sunset. We are not concerned with the time, but with the sun's movements. Sandhya aratrika may be performed one half to one hour after sunset.

letter from Srila Prabhupada,
April 16, 1970

The first aratrika ceremony is performed as you have seen in Vrndavana, at Radha Damodra Temple, early in the morning, before sunrise, at least one and a half hours before sunrise. The second aratrika is performed at about 8:00 in the morning, after dressing and decorating the deity with flowers. The third aratrika is performed after offering the luncheon to the deity, and then the fourth aratrika is performed in the evening. The fifth aratrika is performed when the Lord goes to bed.

letter from Srila Prabhupada,
Montreal, Aug.23, 1968
Dhup aratika may be performed in the morning (mangala aratrika)... but it is better to hold full aratika. We should not try to diminish our standard of deity worship once it has reached a certain program, and it is especially nice to wake up Radha and Krsna with full aratika with everyone dancing....
letter from Srila Prabhupada,
Upendra, Feb. 19, 1973

Thus mangala aratika is preferably a full aratika. Bhoga aratika at noon and sandhya aratika at twilight are also full. Srngara or morning darsana aratika and sayana aratika before the Lord takes rest may be shorter. The Lord may also be woken in the late after noon and offered a short aratika. In some temples however, this aratika is omitted for, after waking the deities in the late afternoon elaborate worship is performed privately and the deities are revealed to the public at the sandhya aratika.

**Upacaras of Aratika:**

The articles which may be offered are as follows.

**Lamp:**

The essential and most typical item of nirajana is lamps, by which the Lord's full form is revealed to the eyes of the worshipper and persons present.

The lamp should have an uneven number of wicks: five, seven nine etc. the wicks should made of fresh white cotton. If ghee is not available, good smelling oil may be used. camphor may also be offered as nirajana.

**Manner of Offering Lamps:**

Though many scriptures do not specify the manner of offering the lamps to the Lord's body, the Brahma Vaivarta Purana says that one should offer four times to the feet, two times to the navel, one time to the head and seven times to all the limbs of the Lord's body, in clockwise direction. Visnu Yamala substitutes three times to the head in place of one time.

adau catus padatalaikadese
dvau nabhi dese ca mukha mandale trin
sarvesu gatresu ca sapta baran
aratrikam tan munayo vadanti

One should offer aratika four times to the feet, two times to the navel, three times
to the head and seven times to all the limbs.

Hari Bhakti Vilasa simply mentions that one should wave the lamps in the area of the head.

After offering the lamps to the Lord one should offer to the Lord's associates, and then wave in the direction of the spectators. At this time the spectators should mentally take the lamps upon their heads as an act of submission. Passing the lamps around to the spectators so that they can touch the flames and then touch their heads fulfils the same purpose. One who offers the lamps and one who sees the effulgent form of the Lord lit by the lamps so offered attains the effulgent realm of Vaikuntha.

Though nirajana of incense and lamps is part of the worship using sixteen, ten and five items, at that time it is not specifically intended for the benefit of the public. The manner of offering is also slightly different. During the private puja incense is offered from the feet up to the navel according to Hari Bhakti Vilasa, or up to the nose according to other sources, and lamps are offered from the lotus feet up to the eyes.

**Conch water:**

Hari Bhakti Vilasa, after mentioning the nirajana of lamps, describes nirajana using water in a conch shell. Hari Bhakti Vilasa states that one should offer conch water three times above the head. Visnu Yamala says one should offer the water eight times to all the limbs of the Lord's body. One who receives this water one his head will be free from all difficulties and sickness.

Full aratrika in the Radha Govinda Mandir at Jaipur and Radha Ramana temple in Vrndavana consists of offering only these two items. In South India at many temples, aratrika consists of offering camphor lamps or ghee lamps with various numbers of wicks in succession.

**Panca Nirajana:**

Aratrika using more items, current for some time in Bengal, is derived from some tantrika scriptures (Kulottara Tantra) which direct one to perform panca nirajana (offering five items): lamps, arghya water, clean cloth, leaves and pranamas.

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panca nirajanam kuryat prathamam dipa malaya
 dvitiyam sodakabhena tritiyam dhauta vasasa
 cyutasvattha vilva patrais caturtham parikirtitam
 sastanga pranipatena pancamena yatha vidhi
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Panca nirajana consists of offering lamps, arghya water, clean cloth, leaves of the
mango, pippal or vilva tree, and full dandavats.

Flowers are often substituted for leaves (especially in vaisnava worship), arghya water refers to the conch water, and incense and raja seva (service offerable to royalty) in the form of camara and fan are added. The fan is not offered during the cold season or on chilly days or mornings.

It is also customary to blow the conch shell after the aratrika, though, as an auspicious sound, it may be blown at any time during the worship of the Lord (eg. while the Lord is being bathed.) When the conch has been touched by the lips, saliva remains on the conch. This impure substance cannot be taken into the deity room. It must be washed off with water, outside the deity room.

**Full Aratrika:**

The standard order of offering these items is as follows: incense, lamps, conch water, cloth, flowers, fan, camara, blowing conch.

**Short Aratrika:**

According to scripture a minimum aratrika will consist in waving lamps, though offering other items such as incense, flowers and camara etc are not excluded.

**Manner of Offering Items:**

All items are offered with the right hand, while a bell, which has been worshipped according the rules, is rung by the left hand. The left foot should be slightly forward according to some.

One may chant the upacara mantra (eg. "esa dipa + mula mantra") while sprinkling water over it, and then chant the deity mula mantra and gayatri while waving it before the lord. After offering an article one should wash ones hands before offering another article.

As the exact manner of waving these other items is unspecified some worshippers also offer the items without consideration of number, whereas others offer all items (except camara and fan, which are simply waved in a functional manner) in the manner of the lamps (ie four times to the feet, two times to the navel one time to the head and seven times around the whole body). Others perform only the last half of this (ie. seven times around the whole body), for all articles. And others simply offer everything three times around the body.

(Srila Prabhupada has stated different numbers and different order on different
Each offering is made by moving it in seven big circles starting at the lotus feet of the Lord and going clockwise, round.
letter from Srila Prabhupada,
Aniruddha, Nov.14, 1960

Order of Worship:

The worship of the Lord with upacaras (preceded by guru puja) which is performed in the morning is ideally performed two more times during the day: after the mid day bath and sandhya prayers, and after the evening bath and sandhya prayers. If that is not possible then one may perform ten or five upacara puja, which may be performed quite quickly. After the naivedya offering, public aratrika is performed to the Lord. Thus worship of the guru and the Lord with upacaras is followed by aratrika to the Lord.

If that is not possible one should offer puspanjalis or gandha puspa to guru, Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Krsna before the aratrika to represent ones worship. Only after taking the permission of guru can one proceed with the worship of Krsna.

Since the aratrika is considered an extension of the sixteen-tens five upacara puja of the deity previous to which one has done guru puja, during the aratrika one worships the main deity of Lord on the altar first with each article. The article may then be offered to the Lord's consort, to Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and to the acarya parampara from senior to junior. This is the system followed by all temples in India, including Radha Govinda Mandir in Jaipur.

(The articles of the aratrika are not traditionally offered as worship to guru parampara first because if they are used for guru worship those offered articles (guru prasadam) cannot be offered to the Lord. The Lord should be offered fresh articles. The articles may be shown to guru and one may request him to guide one in offering them to the Lord. Prasadam articles from the Lord's worship however may be offered in worship to the acarya parampara.)

Aratrika Prasadam:

After one offers these items to the Lord, one may offer them to the spectators as prasadam. Incense, according to Hari Bhakti Vilasa, may be distributed to the spectators, who should rub the smoke on their bodies, but usually the incense, after offering is placed in the deity room so that the Lord may enjoy the fragrance
longer. The lights are waved at the spectators so that they may mentally take the lamps on their heads, or the lamps are passed to the spectators, who first touch the lamp and then touch their heads. The arghya water is sprinkled on the head of the spectators. Cloth is usually not distributed, though for special guests sometimes cloth is offered to the deity and then offered to the guest as a special honor. Flowers may be offered to the hands of the persons present so that they may smell them. The wind caused by fanning, which has touched the Lord's body, is difficult to distribute.

(There is a practice in ISKCON (and only in ISKCON it seems) of offering all items to the spectators after offering to the Lord. The origins of this seem to lie in the fact that the ghee lamps are waved at the spectators. In order to systemize things all items are now offered in this manner. But the meaning of this is unclear. Is the offering meant as worship of the spectators, or offering of the prasadam to them?

As an offering to them, it becomes superfluous if one in fact gives the items to the spectators by passing out the ghee lamps, sprinkling the water and giving the flowers. And, with the intention of offering, even if one does not distribute the items (e.g., flowers, incense), one can not place those items back in the Lord's room, since they have already been offered for the enjoyment of the spectators.

Worship of vaisnavas is in accordance with scripture, but at this time the spectators have come to partake of the benefits of actual worship by seeing the worship, and have not come to be worshipped. In this case also items so offered should not again be placed on the altar, since they have become the prasadam of the spectators. If the items are offered as worship of the spectators, then they should not later receive them for enjoyment, since the items have already been enjoyed by them.)