

Significance of "Na KarmaNaa ..." (also referred to as Vedic Arathi in Chinmaya Mission):

This article is intended to explain the meaning of the Vedic Aarathi that we perform regularly in Chinmaya Mission. Also referred to commonly as 'Na Karmanaa', it comprises several Mantras that originate from the Vedas.

What is a Mantra ? A Mantra is different from a Shloka or Stotra – they are not attributed to any person but are revelations from the Supreme to the Sages at the seat of meditation. *MananAt traayate iti Mantraha.* 1) that which helps protect the Mind 2) that which helps transcend the mind. Hence Mantras as sacred and need to be chanted with reverence to get the maximum benefit. This specific Mantra is a part of the Yajur Veda Samhita, and is repeated in several places, most predominantly in the Chaturtha Prasna (4th part of Taitereya Upanishad), commonly known as Maha-Naaraayanopanishad. A portion of it also appears in the Kaivalya Upanishad (Vs 3,4).

It represents the path to achieve the highest goal - Moksha or merger with the Para-Brahman. It very directly and forcefully calls for the single path of Renunciation – Sanyasa Yoga (SanyAsa is *Sat-NyAsa* - or eternal renunciation) as the final step to achieve that ultimate goal.

Since SanyAsis are the practitioners of this SanyAsa Yoga that is spoken of here, this part is always associated in greeting any great SanyAsi Mahatma, typically with the Poornakumbha.

The stanza on 'Na Tatra Suryo Bhaati ...' that ends the Vedic Aarathi – is referenced in several Upanishads (Kathopanishad II-V-15, Mundaka Upanishad II-2, Svetasvatara Upanishad VI-14). A close representation also appears in Gita Ch 15:6. This shows the importance of this verse.

Short Word-By-Word Meaning:

**na karmaNaa na prajayaa dhanena tyaagenaike amRitatvamaanashuH
pareNa naakam nihitam guhaayaaM vibhraajate yadyatayo vishanti**

Na KarmaNaa: Not by Work

Na prajayaa: Not by progeny

Na Dhanena: Not by wealth

Tyaagena eke: Only by renunciation

Amru-tatvam Anashuhu: can immortality be attained

Parena Naakam: Higher than the heaven

Nihitam Guhaayaam: deep in the cave of the intellect

Vibhraajate: it shines brightly

Yat (which) yatayaha: self-controlled sages

Vishanti: Enter

Not by work, not by progeny, not by wealth, they have attained Immortality. Some have attained Immortality by renunciation. That which the hermits attain is laid beyond the heaven; yet it shines brilliantly in the (purified) heart.

**Vedaantavijnaana sunishchitaarthaah sanyaasayogaad yatayaH shuddhasattvaaH
te brahmalokeshu paraantakaale paraamRitaath parimuchyanti sarve**

Sunishchitaarthaah: Those who have come to learn

Vedanta Vignana: this direct knowledge of Vedanta

Sanyaasa Yogaad: through renunciation
Yatayah: those self-controlled sages
shudha satwaha: pure in mind

Te: They; **Brahmalokeshu:** Brahmaloaka
Paraantakaale: at the time of their final mortal existence
Paraa Amruthaath: and due to the highest immortality
Parimuchyanti sarve: get freed from all bondage

Having attained the Immortality consisting of identity with the Supreme, those self-controlled sages all those aspirants, who have direct experience of the knowledge of Vedanta, and who have attained purity of mind through the practice of the discipline of yoga and steadfastness in the knowledge of Brahman preceded by renunciation, get themselves released into the region of Brahman at the dissolution of their final body.

**Dahram vipaapam parameshma bhootam yat puNDareekaM puramadhya samstham
tatraapi dahram gaganam vishookam tasmin yadantas-tad-UPaasitavyam**

Dahram: That which is deep
vipaapam : sinless
Parameshma Bhutam: of nature of Parameshwara
Visokam: that deep, vast, and sorrowless existence is to be mediated upon continually (tat upasitavyam)

In the citadel of the body there is the small sinless and pure lotus of the heart that is the residence of the Supreme. That is to be meditated upon continually.

**yo vedaadau svarah prokto vedaante cha pratishThitaH
tasya prakRiti leenasya yah parah sa maheshvaraH**

He who transcends the syllable Om which is uttered at the commencement of the recital of the Vedas (Vedadau svarah prokto) and is well established in the Upanishads (vedaante cha pratishhThitaH), that which is dissolved in the primal cause during contemplation (tasya prakriti leenasya), is the Maheswarah/Supreme Brahman (yah parah sa maheshvaraH)

na tatra (not there) **suryo bhati** (sun shines)
na candra (moon does not) (na) **tarakam** (nor the stars)
nema vidyuto (nor the lightning) **bhanti** (shines) **kuta ayam agnih** (how can fire shine)
tam (that) **eva** (alone) **bhantam** (shines) **anubhati** (thereafter shines) **sarvam** (everything)
tasya bhasa (in that light) **sarvam idam vibhati** (everything shines)

The sun does not shine there, nor does the moon, nor the stars or the lightning, much less this fire (deepam). When He shines, everything shines after Him; by His light alone everything is illumined.

Detailed Vedantic Explanation:

TyAga alone can lead to Moksha (Mohasya Kshaya - removal of Moha or delusion, leading Liberation). All other paths or means (some listed are Karma, Praja, Yagna etc) are only the means to purification of the anta-karana (Mano-Buddhi-Ahamkara-Chitta). They are the stepping-stones to the final step of realization.

TyAga here represents a deep meaning here. It means the rejection of everything that is 'Asat' – i.e. everything associated with the Body-Mind-Intellect and the World outside – through the process of Neti-Neti (Not Self – Not Self). This can be done through any of the listed paths but the final state on Mind will result in this state of tyAga – renunciation of everything other than the Unconditioned Love for the Self.

Such Mahatmas are referred to as **Yatayaha**. They have completed the effort (Yatna) and have entered (**vishanti**) the deepest of the Caves of the Intellect (**Nihitam Guhaayam**) to experience a bliss that is even higher than Heavenly bliss. This is Supreme Bliss that is our essential Nature. Why is this deep? It represents the subtlest of the subtle. Vedas refer to this as **Guhyaad Guyhatam** (deepest of deep) – **Sukshmat Suksmataram** (subtlest of subtle) – **Mahato-MahAntam** (Biggest of the Big). Words cannot define it – hence these superlatives are used as the best that words can do.

Most important qualification of such Mahatmas is the clear understanding of what Vedanta proclaims (**Vedanta-VignAna SunishchitArtha**). They are **Brahma-NishtA** – they are established in the Knowledge (Veda) of Brahman – that the Vedanta proclaims. Vedanta represents the end of the Vedas – the Upanishadic texts – that in one voice proclaim the truth of our own Divine Nature.

Swami Tapovan Maharaj would say: *'Renunciation is beggary if not supported by Knowledge? What is the difference between Renunciation and Beggary? Both have nothing. The beggar does not have anything though he wants everything. The renunciates want nothing in-spite of having everything.'*

They have sacrificed everything for the exclusive reason of pursuing that 'Sat' – negating everything that is Mithya [**Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya Jeevo-Brahmaiva Na-Apara** ... Only that Brahman is Real – everything is Mithya – the World or Jiva is not different from Brahman – Brahman alone pervades everything]

Sanyasa Yoga – is also defined in Gita Ch VI as '**Dukha Sanyoga-Viyoga**' - disassociation/identification with the union with sorrow. In other words, it is continuous Bliss due to Non-Identification with the perceived Mithya – through the recognition of the 'Sat' alone in everything. This is the path of the Mahatmas – through tyAga or renunciation.

Such Mahatmas attain complete liberation (**Parimuchyanti sarve**) – which is defined as Moksha or Enlightenment. So when does this happen ... It happens at the final end (**Paraanta-Kaale**). This has multiple meanings; 1) End of the physical life ... when the Mahatma leaves the body This literal meaning refers to Realization at the end of the physical death of the body (**Videha Mukthi**). 2) When the end of the dissolution of ego – This is referred to as **Jeevan Mukthi** – and is what Shankara's Advaita Vedanta accepts as the explanation. The Mahatma attains instant liberation from all bondage in this life itself. What continues to exist is simply the physical body as an instrument of the Lord (Ishwara) – for the benefit of the World (Loka-Kalyan).

This Pure Consciousness that is the core and substratum of all existence is **dahram** (deep), **vipaapam** (without sin ie no agitations, disturbances), **vishokam** (without sorrow), **parameshma bhutam** (of nature of Parameshwara) and is to be mediated upon continually (**tat upasitavyam**). It is also referred to as **pundarikaaksham** (lotus-eyed). The lotus is a symbol of purity, auspiciousness and perfection. In Gita V:10 [*brahmanyaadaaya karmaani ... padmapatra ivaambasa*] Bhagavan refers to the Mahapurusha or

Muni (realized Master) as a lotus leaf, acting without attachments and untainted by the World around (similar to the lotus leaf that lives in muddy water and yet is untainted by the dirt around it. In the Chandogya Upanishad and later in the Narayana Suktam, there is reference to *padmakosha prateekasham hridayam* .. the Lord is supposedly resident in our body in the form of a lotus, close to the heart. This is the same reference in this Mantra.

He who transcends the syllable Om that is uttered at the commencement of the recital of the Vedas (**Vedadau svarah prokto**) and is well established in the Upanishads (**vedAnte cha pratishhThitaH**);

The Gita (8:13) repeats what the Upanishads echo ... *Om Iti-Eka-Aksharam Brahma* – The syllable Om represents the Imperishable Brahman. That Brahma-Nishta has transcended even this representation (Om) and has merged with the Supreme. He is also a Shrotriya, well versed in scriptures. He has merged into that primal cause during contemplation (*tasya prakriti leenasya*), is the Maheswarah/Supreme Brahman (*yah parah sa maheshvaraH*)

Now we come to the verse '**Na Tatra Suryo Bhaati Na chandra Taarakam...**'. While this comes from a different part of the Vedas, it has been included in the Vedic Aarathi. This verse is so important that it features in three of the 11 major Upanishads (Kathopanishad II-V-15, Mundaka Upanishad II-2, Svetasvatara Upanishad VI-14). It is chanted at the end of all important ceremonies, during the Arathi. Even though we chant this during the display of the Deepam, it should make us think of that LIGHT in us – which is the substratum of all knowledge and existence – in the light of which everything exists and is illumined. How can this small lamp illumine that Light of Lights? This is the thought that should pass through our mind as a meditative indicator.

A close representation also appears in Gita Ch 15:6. [*na tad bhasayate suryo na sasanko na pavakah yad gatva na nivartante tad dhama paramam mama*].

Here Shri Krishna says ... 'that supreme abode of Mine (*tat dhaama paramam mama*) is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by fire or electricity. Those who reach it never return to this material world.' This indeed is the abode of the MahaPurusha – the Nitya Sanyaasi – who has realized this Great Truth and whom we reverentially welcome with these great Mantras. That Guru is verily Ishwara in Human Form – whom we worship as '**Guru Brahma Guru Vishno ...Guru Saksat Param-Brahma Tasmai Shree Gurave namah**' - that Guru is verily Brahman himself. He is no longer bound by the power of Maya - not conditioned by Moha or delusion. Whatever actions they perform are for Loka-Kalyana - and only good can come from those actions.

This article draws its inspiration from Sri Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's translation of Kaivalya Upanishad and Katha Upanishad along with Swami Ishwarananda's talks on the Kaivalya. Any errors are solely mine.

*samastha jana kalyaane niratam karunaa-mayam
namaami chinmayam devam satgurum brahma-vidvaram*