

Śrī Rudram Anuvāka 02

नमस्सुतायाहन्त्याय वनानां पतये नमः ॥ ८ ॥
namāssūtāyāhantyaāya vānānām pataye namaḥ || 8 ||

namaḥ - salutation; sūtāya - to the charioteer; ahantyaāya - who cannot be destroyed; vānānām - of the forests; pataye - to the Lord; namaḥ - salutation

Salutation to the charioteer (of the chariot of universe), who cannot be destroyed by anyone and who is the Lord of all forests.



Sūtā means a charioteer. Lord is the charioteer. He is jagat-yantra-sārathī, charioteer of the chariot which is this universe. Even though the universe is ever moving, changing, there is predictability, an order. The sun, moon, and stars, all move with predictability. It is the astrophysical order and presupposes a sārathī. One who is running it is māyāvī, who moves everything by his power. You hand over your journey to him and relax as the indwellers of the deha, like even Arjuna did in Mahābhārata war. Therefore, sūtāya namaḥ, salutation to the charioteer.

Ahantyaāya namaḥ - Salutation to the one who is indestructible. In a fight, arrows first come to the charioteer. But none of them can touch the Lord, like even the arrows that could not do anything to Kṛṣṇā in the Mahābhārata war. Kṛṣṇā being the protector as a charioteer, no arrow could reach Arjuna, his horses much less his bow or the string. Since the charioteer was ahantya¹, Arjuna escaped from destruction at the hands of Karṇā. Here the Lord is the charioteer of the entire universe and can be the altar of anyone's surrender.

If a kingdom is destroyed, the king is also as good as destroyed. The surviving king is only a namesake. Here, Lord is vikāravān, changing and avikāravān, changeless also, vikṛa being mithyā; and avikāra being satya..

Vanānām pataye namaḥ - He is pati, Lord of vana, all the glorious and worshipful. The Lord is vanam², pūjanīyam, worshipful. Anything that attracts worship from the people is vanam. He is vanānām patiḥ. There are many things that are worshipful. Wherever someone offers worship, the offering goes to the Lord, since he is vanānām patiḥ. Further, anything worshipful is because of the Lord, for he is the repository of all glories.

Or, *Vanānām aranyāyānām patiḥ* - He is the Lord of the forests. Later, it will be said vṛkṣānām patiḥ, Lord of the individual trees. Here, Lord is said to be one who manifests in the form of the forests. If you destroy the forests, there will be no life left. Forest is a blessing. The Lord blesses through the forests, mountains, clouds, and so on, and everything becomes sacred. This is the conversion of partial and mundane learning, to the learning of the whole, sacred, and profane.

¹ hantum aśakyāḥ, - One who is not available for destruction.

¹ Kenopanishad (4.6) says - taddha tadvanam nāma upāsita tadvanam ityupāsitavyam- Indeed that Brahman has to be meditated upon as tad-vanam, as Brahman is well known as the one adored by all.