

Śrī Rudram

नमोऽसिमद्भ्यो नखंचरद्भ्यः प्रकृन्तानां पतये नमः ॥ ७ ॥

namo'ṣimādbhyo naktāñcaradbhyaḥ prakṛntānām pataye namaḥ || 7 ||

namaḥ – salutation; asimadbhyaḥ – of those who carry a sword on them; naktāñcaradbhyaḥ – of those who are nocturnal; prakṛntānām – of those who rob others by killing; pataye – to the Lord; namaḥ – salutation.
Salutation to the Lord of those who carry a sword on them, who wander in the night and who kill for robbing.

Naktañcaradbhyaḥ – People who move during the night with swords and knives to rob people. They stop the bus and rob the people. Some others kill to rob. They are prakṛntās.¹ The Lord is in the form of these people and when they become devotees, he protects them.

नम उष्णीषिणे गिरिचराय कुलुञ्चानां पतये नमः ॥ ८ ॥

nama uṣṇīṣiṇe giricarāya kuluñcānām pataye namaḥ || 8 ||

namaḥ – salutation; uṣṇīṣiṇe – to the one who wears a turban; giricarāya – who wanders in the hills; kuluñcānām – of those who appropriate other's property; pataye – to the Lord; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to the one who wears a turban, who wanders in the hills and who is the Lord of those who appropriate other's property.

Uṣṇīṣiṇe namaḥ – Salutation to the one who wears a turban. He is kuluñca,² one who appropriates other's property, which is in the form of a house or field. He goes and sits in the property and then claims rights of possession/ownership. Such encroachers of properties remain in villages and towns who bully people to accomplish

¹ hatvā eva apaharantaścoraḥ prakṛntāḥ – prakṛntāḥ are those thieves who steal after killing.

² kuṁ bhūmim gṛha kṣetrādi rūpaṁ luncanti iti kuluncāḥ dvididhāḥ - grāmeṣu sthitvā uṣṇīṣinaḥ duṣpravartikaṭāya durbalānām kṣetrādyapahāraḥ kecit kecittu giri-vanāyāśrayeṇa baliṣṭāḥ kṣetrādin apaharanti – those who grab land in the form of house, field and so on, are called kuluncāḥ. They are of two types: some of them remaining in the villages and wearing turbans, grab the land etc., belonging to the weaker strata of society, while others resort to hills and forests being strong, forcibly occupy others' lands (and rob their belongings).

their desired ends. They will say, 'Go to the court and only your grandson will get the judgment'. Others live in the forest well protected. They have their own army. They are strong and use force to occupy and claim the right of possession. They harvest someone else's paddy and go away with it. They go on extending their domain and the villagers keep losing the lands. Here, the Lord is presented as ātatāyi, one who performs any one of the five great crimes, namely, arson, poisoning, stealing wealth, attacking a weaponless person, usurping land and grabbing another's wife.

The division of everything as good and bad constitute the jiva. Being judgemental is a great impediment in knowing Īśvara. It is difficult to see people as they are. From actions one makes judgements about others and then deals with them based on those judgements. One cannot make a judgement without branding a person by a single word. In every judgement there is the need for a single word. 'He committed theft,' is a fact. 'He is a thief' is a judgement. 'Thief' is a single word. He is not the thief at all times, in all situations. He does many other actions, like any other human being. How can one label him as thief?

There was a person presented as a fool by others. I desired to see a fool in him, to know what he looks like. But when the time came to eat, he placed the food in his mouth, not in his right or left ear. When he walked, he lifted his leg. He seemed to know a log of things. I failed to see a total fool in him. That he is a fool is a judgement. Fool is a single word. As long as one has these one-word judgements, Vedanta is a far cry. That judgement goes away once we repeat these mantras, knowing their meaning.

Naming a person a kuluncā, thief, is a form of judgement. But it is taken away by saying he is one more form of Īśvara. I cannot say, 'Do not call him kuluncā.' But kif I say, "kuluncā is Īśvara," it changes my attitude to be saintly. Rudra text is unique because of the kind of presentation of Īśvara therein. It takes a clear vision of Vedanta to understand Īśvara as a robber and also his or her protector.

नम इषुमद्भ्यो धन्वाविभ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ ९ ॥
nāmaḥ iṣumadbhyo dhanvāvibhyaśca vo namaḥ || 9 |

namaḥ – salutation; iṣumadbhyo – to those who have arrows;
dhanvāvibhyaḥ – to those who hold bows; ca – and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of those who have arrows and who hold bows.

The previous topic, that is, the Lord is sahamāna is concluded, and vaḥ 'to you' who is sarvātmā is brought in here. One can see a change in the style and topic from here on. It is easy for us to look at the sun, stars, earth, fire, herbs and even animals, as the Lord.

Now, the mantra mentions simple people such asunters in a forest who are not educated and for whom study of any Veda is out of question. All that they know is arrows and animals. They are inadequately clad and perhaps use a sign language. One cannot say, this person is Īśvara's glory! Suppose one meets a scholar, then one says he is Īśvara's glory and Īśvaratva exists in him. One can see the Lord only in chosen people such as scholars, saints and sages. In cruel people one cannot see the Lord. In Tamilnadu, there are certain nomadic people who go around, each with a bag made of jackal skin. When you see them, you do not want to have anything to do with them. We begin with them—the fierce people of the forest—to see Lord in them.

Iṣumadbhyo dhanvāvibhyasca namaḥ – Salutation to you, O Lord, in the form of those who have arrows and bows. People who have arrows, iṣumantaḥ, people who have bows, dhanvāvinaḥ, are non-separate from the Lord. The Lord himself is wearing the arrows and holding the bow to protect them. The same Rudra is in the form of all types of people, devatās, aśurās and so on. They exist; they are the Lord and to them, my salutation.

Are you afraid of them? The devotee says, 'No, because they are you.' Vo namaḥ— yuṣmabhyam namaḥ, salutation to you. I salute them because they are you. They may be anybody doing anything, but they are you and I accept them as you, whether they have a mace, a disc or an arrow.

नम आतन्वानेभ्यः प्रतिदधानेभ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ १० ॥

nama ātanvānebhyaḥ pratiḍadhānebhyaśca vo namaḥ ॥ 10 ॥

namaḥ – salutation; ātanvānebhyaḥ – to those who are trying to string in the bow; pratiḍadhānebhyaḥ – to those who are setting the arrows on the tied bow, ca – and; vaḥ to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you, in the form of those who are trying to string in the bow and those who are setting the arrows on the tied bow.

Here the arrows of the Lord are depicted in different stages of use. Ātanvānebhyaḥ—to the ones who are tying the string to the bow. One devatā is going to strike in the form of lightning. Another devatā is going to strike in the form of an earthquake. Yet another with something else. All of them are included here. The Lord ties the string and is getting ready. Then what does he do? He sets the arrows on the bow where the string is already tied. It is the saṅkalpa of the Lord that any deity gets ready to strike. O Lord! You are now a frightening person; my salutation to you.

नम॑ आय॑च्छ॒द्भ्यो॑ विसृ॑ज्ज॒द्भ्यश्च॑ वो नमः॑ ॥ ११ ॥
 namā āyacchadbh̄yo visr̄jadbh̄yaśca vo namaḥ ॥ 11 ॥

namaḥ – salutation; āyacchadbh̄yḥ – to those who are drawing the string of the bow; visr̄jadbh̄yaḥ – to those who are releasing the arrow; ca – and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of those who are drawing the string of the bow and who are releasing the arrow.

Now they are drawing the string upto the ear for releasing the arrows. Now they are releasing the arrows. This is more frightening than before. O Lord! You alone are in the form of those people who are going to release the arrows and those who have already released; salutation to you.

नमो॑ऽस्य॒द्भ्यो॑ वि॒ध्यद्भ्यश्च॑ वो नमः॑ ॥ १२ ॥
 namo'syadbh̄yo vidh̄yadb̄yaśca vo namaḥ ॥ 12 ॥

Namaḥ – salutation; asyadbh̄yaḥ – to those who are sending the arrow that reaches the target; vidhyadb̄yaḥ – to those who are piercing the target; ca – and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of those who are sending the arrow that reaches the target and who are piercing the target.

The arrow that is released and its travel to the target is frightening. It then pierces the target. The release covers the travel of the arrow up to reaching the target. The arrow piercing the target is indifated by vedhana, striking. Those who do these two acts are Rudra and unto him my salutation. O Lord, you are in all these forms and therefore they are no longer frightening to me.