

श्री रुद्रम् Śrī Rudram

नमो अग्रेवधाय च दूरेवधाय च

namo agrevadhāya ca dūrevadhāya ca

The Lord protects the devotees from dangers, near and far. When Arjuna entered the battlefield Lord Krishna became his protector by being Arjuna's charioteer. All the arrows had to pass through Krishna. There is another interesting episode in the Mahabharata.

The context was Arjuna's battle with Drona. As we know, Drona was the archery guru of Arjuna and therefore Arjuna was inhibited by his respect for his teacher while fighting against Drona. But Arjuna found that he had an ally fighting for him right in front of him standing in the opposite camp, neutralizing all the fighters.

He says, "In the battlefield, as I attack the opposite army with my countless arrows, I see in front a person moving, shining and effulgent like fire, raising his hand with his spear and to whichever direction he moves in those places the enemies, O Lord, stand powerless. I only follow him and hit these people who are already rendered powerless. While they are already destroyed by this person, people think that I had killed them".

Later in the Mahabharata, in the section of mokṣa dharma in the Śānti parva, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, "The one who moves around in front of you when you are engaged in the battlefield fighting, understand him to be, O Arjuna, as Rudra. He continues to say that the enemies were already made powerless by Rudra, Arjuna's life of dharma besides his respect for his guru protects him even in the battlefield.¹

A śatru, enemy, can be within or outside. According to śāstra, the real enemy is only inside. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "jahi śatruṁ mahābāho kāmarūpaṁ durāsadam"—O mighty armed! Destroy this powerful enemy who is in the form of want". There cannot be an enemy outside without one being there inside. What is outside is only an object of enmity whereas the enemy within is difficult to eliminate. Anger, for instance, robs the will of a person. One who is under the spell of anger has no choice really speaking and requires help.

¹ यस्तु ते ह्यग्रतो याति युद्धे संप्रत्युपस्थिते । तं विद्धि रुद्रं कौन्तेय
निहतान् तेन वै पूर्वं हतवान् असि वै रिपून् ॥ महाभारत शान्तिपर्व

Śatru is one who works against you. While kāma, desire is not śatru, greed is. But kāma also is an enemy if it is against dharma. One cannot even accomplish artha and kāma when the śāstras are there inside. Mokṣa is too far away for such a person.

One certainly requires help to win over inner enemies and that help can only be from the Lord. The Lord becomes the protector for the one who surrenders to Him. There is no better victory than destroying the inner śatrus; the jayahetu, the cause of victory over enemies is also the Lord.

Dūre-vadha is one who protects from a distance. Arjuna did not want to fight the war. In the course of teaching him, Kṛṣṇa showed his viśvarūpa, the cosmic form. Arjuna saw everyone in the jaws of death. The Lord said to him, 'Even before you start the war, these warriors had already been destroyed by me. You are only a nimitta, medium.' What makes the difference between success and failure is the grace of Bhagāvan alone.

Hantre ca hanīyase ca — Hanṭṛ is one who resolves everything unto himself, the saṁhāra kartā. Even if saṁsāra goes away in the pralaya, dissolution, it will come back when the creation begins. I you need to totally destroy saṁsāra, mere pralaya is not adequate. You have to invoke the real hanṭṛ, who is the adhiṣṭhāna, the basis of pralaya. You invoke Him as hanīyas to destroy the saṁsāra. Since He is anartha- hanṭṛ, I invoke Him as upāsya for removing the anatha; the Lord become artha-hetu. Salutation to the one who resolves everything unto himself and who destroys saṁsāra totally.

Namaḥ vṛkṣebhyaḥ harikeśebhyaḥ ² —The Lord in the form of trees is a source of life for human being. They provide oxygen and food—a source of protection and source of shade. Salutations unto the one who is manifest in the form of trees with green leaves.

Namastārāya - Tāra means Om, which is a means for mokṣa. Om, which is a means for mokṣa. Om is at the beginning of the Vedas as well as its end. Om is the name for Brahman, the cause and effect of everything. Therefore all that is here is Om. What was, what is and what will be is Om. What transcends all the three periods of time is also Om. The śruti says ayam ātma (oṅkārahidheyah) brahma, this self (which is the meaning of the word Om) is Brahman. Salutations to the Lord who is the self-revealing, self-evident ātmā that is Brahman, that is Om.

² हारति-वारणाह पालब्रम्हारहपाह केभ्रब्रह्म येश्वप्र ते हारकिंभाह तेवहयाह वभ्रकश्वेवहयाहंतहखसे थहचिह हावे गरेन हारिनि तहे डखरम खड लोवेस रे चाललेद हारकिंभाह । नतख चतहे लखरद नि तहे डखरम खडफ तहखसे तरेस ॥

Namaḥ tārātārāya – Tārā means Om, which is a means for mokṣa. Om is at the beginning of the Veda as well as at the end. Om is the name for Brahman, the cause and effect of everything. Therefore all that is here is Om. What was, what is and what will be is Om. What transcends all the three periods of time is also Om. The śruti says, ayam ātmā (onkārābhidheyāḥ) brahma, this self (which is the meaning of the word Om) is Brahman. Salutation to the Lord who is the self-revealing, self-evident ātmā that is Brahman, that is Om.

In addition to being abhidhāna, name for Brahman, Om is also a pratīka, sound symbol for Brahman. (Pratimā is a form symbol). There are temples with altars for all religions, wherein the altar for Hinduism is just Om. But Om is not a form symbol, pratimā. Om is meant for oral and mental repetition. One does not repeat a form symbol; one worships it. Om encompasses everything and the Vedic tradition has no hostility towards anyone. We need not do any patchwork of Bhagavān by bringing together all symbols either. Śāstra gives the vision of the total which includes the entire jagat. Therefore, the śruti says, namaḥ tārātārāya ca—salutation to the one who is in the form of the means of crossing the saṃsāra.

Namaśśambhave¹ ca mayobhave ca - The Lord is the source of happiness, sukha. Therefore it is said here, śambhave ca. Sukha can be gained here and in the hereafter. Both are karma-phala. Sukha is born here due to situations that are conducive and sukha hereafter is born of situations in heaven. Svarga-sukha is greater and more consistent. The Lord is the sukha-hetu. Śam refers to sukha here and mayas is sukha hereafter. Any sukha is due to the Lord alone, he being the karma-phala-dātā, Salutation to the one who gives happiness on earth and other worlds such as heaven and so on.

Namaḥ śaṅkarāya² ca mayaskarāya ca – In the previous line the Lord was praised as karma phala dātā, the giver of fruits of action here and in the hereafter. In this line he is praised as the very hetu, source, of happiness here and hereafter; he is Śaṅkarā and mayaskara respectively. Whenever

¹ śam sukham bhavati asmāt iti śambhuḥ tasmai—the one from whom happiness is gained is called śambhuḥ, unto him.

² śam karoti iti śaṅkaraḥ tasmai—the one who is the source of happiness, unto him.

one is happy, one is not alienated from the Lord. His svarūpa is oneself as ānanda. Salutation to the Lord who is the sukha-hetu.

Namaḥ śivāya ca śivatārāya ca - One who bestows happiness all the way is Śivā. He is also mokṣa sukha hetu, the cause of happiness that is freedom.

Śruti gives you the means for happiness here and in the hereafter and is therefore given an exalted status.

The Śata Rudrīya in the Śruti gains more importance as it has everything to give. The pañcākṣarī mantra, the five-syllabled mantra, namaḥ śivāya is as good as chanting the whole Veda. Furthermore, in the pañcākṣarī, the word Śivā, consisting of two syllables, is the greatest. Śivā means maṅgala, happy end, the grand finale.

Śivā also means śuddha, pure, that which removes all pāpa. He is the hetu for sarva-karma- nivṛtti, freedom from all karmas. He removes all the puṇya and pāpa-karmas by giving knowledge. He also gives the blessing which is the cause for knowledge. Śivā also means śānta, the one in whom the whole world resolves.

Śivā, happiness, is also caused by other devatās. We find statements like pāvaka asmabhyam śivo bhava, O fire, be auspicious to us. But Śivā here is śivatara, atīśayena śivaṁ karoti, one who gives more and lasting happiness. Any happiness you get from anywhere is Lord Śivā alone. Salutation to Lord Śivā who gives absolute happiness.

To be continued.....

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