

Śrī Rudram Anuvāka 02

नमो रुद्राय॑त॒तावि॑ने॒ क्षेत्रा॑णां प॒तये॑ नमः ॥७॥

namō rudrāyātātāvīne kṣetrāṇāṃ patāye namaḥ ||7||

namaḥ – salutation; rudrāya – to the one who liquidates the sorrow of saṃsāra; ātatāvīne – who protects with a bow that is ready for use; kṣetrāṇāṃ – of all bodies; patāye – to the Lord; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to the one who liquidates the sorrow of saṃsāra, who protects with a bow that is ready for use and who is the Lord of all bodies.

Rudraya namaḥ – Salutations to Lord Rudra. Earlier in this text, the word rudra was explained as rodāyati, one who is the cause for tears. But here He is said to be one who removes it either relatively or totally. Rudra is the giver of karma phala for prayers and reaching out karma, giving relatively a break from sorrow. The removal of sorrow is total by being the svarūpa of oneself which is why the upaniṣad says ātmavit śokam tarati¹—the knower of the self crosses sorrow', meaning, He is pūrṇa ānanda, all happiness.

Ātatāvīne² namaḥ—Salutation to Him, who is ready to protect with his bow. There is a poetic work of Bhāgavata in Telugu written by Pothanna. Describing the Lord's response to Gajendra's call for help, he says, "Lord seated in vaikunṭha with Lakṣmī left the place without weapons, upper cloth, conch, disc and so on. He did not say a word to Lakṣmī but rushed towards his devotee to help him". It poetically presents the Lord's readiness to help. He is thus ātatāvī, ready to help his devotees. One has to only seek help and it will be given. The Lord has to come to one's rescue in time and he is ever present as grace to be tapped.

Ātatāvīne³ is another reading as even in Śukla Yajurveda. Even though an ātatāvī is defined⁴ as one to be given capital punishment, here the word refers to Rudra meaning 'the one who goes with a bow which is ready set with arrow for striking... 'Unto Him my salutation.

He is the kṣetrāṇāṃ patiḥ, the Lord of the kṣetrās, bodies and everything else one can objectify. This body is kṣetra, the field where you reap the harvest of karma phala. In fact, it is dharma kṣetra, puṇya kṣetra, a combination of peculiar puṇya and pāpa making this human body qualified for gaining mokṣa. One who knows this body and its nature as such as kṣetrajña.

Kṣetra is also a place of pilgrimage outside of oneself. One has to reach a place of pilgrimage. Here, the distance is between knowledge and ignorance. In kṣetrāṇāṃ patiḥ, the word kṣetra also includes a mosquito's body. The Lord is in an ant as well as in a devatā.

¹ Chāndogyaopaniṣad 7|1|3

² The derivation of the word 'atatāvī': ātata-jyena dhanuṣā avati rakṣati iti ātatāvī, one who protects with a bow set with an arrow.

³ Rudrāyātātāvīne (śukla yajurveda). The derivation of the word ātatāvī: ātatena vistreṇa dhanuṣā saha eti gacchati iti ātatāvī udyatāyudhaḥ—one who goes with a bow ready (to send an arrow)

⁴ Agnido garadascaiva śāstrapāṇirdhanāpahaḥ kṣetradārāpaharatā ca śadete hyātātāvīnaḥ. One who sets fire to the house, who poisons food, who attacks with weapons, robs another, usurps another's land and who abducts another's wife—these six are indeed (known) as ātatāvīns.

