

श्री रुद्रम् Śrī Rudram

त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे, सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् ॥
उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात् ॥
tryāmbakam yajāmahe sugandhim puṣṭivardhanam
uroārukam iva bandhanānmṛtyormukṣīya māmṛtāt.

tryambakam the one who has three eyes;
yajāmahe - we worship; *sugandhim* - who has fragrance;
puṣṭi-varadhanam who nourishes health;
uroārukam water-melon; *iva* like;
bandhanāt from the bondage; *mṛtyoḥ* from death;
mukṣīya I should get released;
mā not; *amṛtāt* from immortality

We worship the three-eyed Lord, the fragrant one who nourishes our health. Just like the water-melon (that gets released from the creeper), release me from death, but not from immortality.

This *mantra* occurs in certain other places of the *śruti Śuklayajur-veda*, *Ṛg-veda* and *Atharva-deva*. So this is a popular *mantra* like *Gāyatrī*. All *mantras* cannot be used for *homa*; but this *mantra* can be used for *mṛtyuñjaya homa*. It is used for protection from death, or death like experience, or illness. Where *prārabdha* has a death like situation but with a possibility of further longevity, then by *puruṣārtha*, self-effort, the full course of life is achieved. It is also a *mantra* for a prayer to get *mokṣa*, since the words ‘*mukṣīya mā amṛtāt* I should not get released from immortality’ are there. We are invoking the grace of *Īśvara* for the purpose of crossing death and gaining immortality.

For the unborn there is no death. “*Jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyuḥ dhruvam janma mṛtasya ca* ¹⁴² for the born, death is certain and for the dead, birth is certain.” Death is only from the standpoint of the physical body. There is no death for the *jīva* or for *ātmā*. The *jīva* is subject to the process of continuous becoming in the form of birth and death and the release is only by the knowledge that, ‘I am unborn.’ Here the Lord Rudra is prayed to for that kid of *amṛtatva* which releases one from *saiṁsāra*.

*Tryambakam*¹⁴³ One who has three eyes. *Ambaka* means eye. Eye is called *ambaka* because it is always glistening. The Lord is visualised as one with three eyes *sūrya, candra, agni* because of which you are able to see. The one who is in the from of eyes of the eyes. And also one who is aware of past, present and future. Or *ambaka* is also father, therefore, *tryambaka* is one who is father of the three: Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra who refers to only one aspect, *saṁhāra*. Or *tryambaka* is three *ambas*: *mahālakṣmī, mahākālī, mahāsarasvatī*. *Yajāmahe* we praise, salute him.

Sugandhim The one who has *sugandha*, fragrance. The word *sugandhi* is a *bahuvrīhi* compound, meaning, the one in whom there is always fragrance; the one who has no attributes of a mortal, who is unlike an active sweating mortal. The Lord has to do three jobs all at the same time; creation, sustenance and resolution. Even though he does all this, he is *niṣkarma*, actionless. He is *nitya nirvikārah*, ever free from any change, any action.

Puṣṭivardhanam The one who nourishes health. *Puṣṭi* means the health, nourishment for the entire *jagat*. *Puṣṭi* is that which is the sustaining factor in a given thing. The Lord is the sustainer he sustains everything including my body. Also he is the one who nourishes the *buddhi* and all that can be nourished. Again he is the one who provides situations which help one get emotionally nourished. We praise and salute him.

Urvārukam bandhanāt iva- mṛtyoḥ (mān) mukṣīya Release me like the oval shaped water-melon that gets released from the creeper when it is ripe. The fruit of a creeper is on the ground. Without any external interference, the fruit becomes free from the creeper. This is *urvāruka* melon.

‘O Lord, may you nourish me in such a way that I will be mature and free from *saṁsāra* without any obstacles. *Mā mukṣīya āmṛtāt*, do not take away from the pursuit of freedom from death, *mokṣa*.

¹⁴² *Bhagavad Gītā* 2.27

¹⁴³ *trīṇi ambakāni yasya* - one who has three eyes.