**ParamaikAnthi’s svastivAcanam**

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With the immense help of *Tirukkudanthai Sri Rāmānuja Bātrācāryā Svāmi,* I had the opportunity of relishing lot of facts about *Arāvamudāzhwān*. I asked him to describe the scene which I had seen when I was young. That scene is the occasion of *Arāvamudāzhwān* getting down from the chariot for gracing *tīrtavāri* on the day of *śankarānti*.

*Bātrācāryā* described that scene as, “When the chariot comes to a stop, *Arāvamudāzhwān* will get down from the chariot, enters through the sannidhi in the east entrance and come to west entrance. There is a mantapa with three stages near the west entrance. Below that is the staircase leading to the divine pond (poāmarai tirukkuḻam). In that manḍapa, for the *Arāvamudāzhwān* who will occupy the center stage, Lord *Cakrapāṇi* will wait in the right stage and Lord *Rāmā* will wait in the left stage. *Arāvamudāzhwān* will come and bless there and it will appear as though the other two approach Him as He gets on to the stage. Then *tīrtavāri* happens. After that *Arāvamudāzhwān* will bid bye to the other two and comes inside through tūnilāmuam. He blesses *sri* *śaṭhāri* to *Meivāsa uḍaiyār* who is in idol form in the west side of the inner *prākāram*. Then He comes to eastern entrance to accept and bless all the other respects such as *tiruvandi* *kāppu* and *ghaṭa deepam*.”

*Meivāsa uḍaiyār* mentioned by *Sri Rāmānuja Bātrācāryā* was an ardent devotee of *Arāvamudāzhwān*. That was the time when Arabs came with an arrogant army to rob the temples. During that time the processional deity (utsavar) of *Arāvamudāzhwān* was safeguarded in Tirukkṭṭiyūr. In the memory of the same, even today in the sannidhi of *Arāvamudāzhwān*, during the daily chanting of *nityānusandhānam*, after chanting the first padikam of *Periyāzhvār*, which is ‘*tiruppallāṇḍu*’, it is customary to chant the second padikam ‘*vaṇṇa māḍaṅgaḻ sūzh tirukkṭṭiyūr*’. When the Arabian army approached Tirukkudanthai, to safeguard the main deity (*mūlavar*) and the vedic tower, which appears as a chariot beautified with sculptures of elephants and horses, that devotee hides them with haystack. Then he diverted the entire Arab army by telling them that there was only haystack at that place. To express the gratitude towards *Meivāsa uḍaiyār*, who protected the main deity and the tower, *Arāvamudāzhwān* conveys His respects to him by having an idol for him in the *tiruvuṇṇāzhi* *prākāram*, and graces him first during the festivals like *śankarānti* before accepting the other respects. By having this custom, He conveys His love with gratitude for His devotees and steals the heart of His devotees. In the same way the Goddess Komalavalli thāyār also graces *Meivāsa uḍaiyār* after the *tīrtavāri* during the panguni brahmotsavam. Thus *Arāvamudāzhwān* makes the devotees happy.

Some people say that this devotee’s name is *Meivāsa iḍaiyār*. He was the chief of *iḍaiyār* (cowherds). That was the reason for him having enough hay to conceal the vaidIka tower of *Arāvamudāzhwān*.

When *Sri Rāmānuja Bātrācāryā* completed his description, I mentioned to him the scene described by this mantra where two devas approach the king with chariot.

He told me that this mantra seem to reflect the scene of Lord *Cakrapāṇi* and Lord *Rāmā* approaching King *Arāvamudāzhwān* during *sankramaṇa* *tīrtavāri*. However he asked how to reconcile with the names *Mitrā* and *Varuṇā* mentioned in the veda.

For that I told him, “*Mitrā* represents *Cakrapāṇi*. Mitam means danger. One who saves His devotees from danger is *mitran*. Once upon a time Sun egoistically refused to work. All the three worlds were immersed in the ocean of darkness. To save the world *Arāvamudāzhwān* sent *Cakrattāzhvān*. He appeared on the southern banks of Cauvery in Tirukkudantai and destroyed the darkness. The place where he appeared is known as ‘*cakrapaḍitturai’*. Hence *Cakrapāṇi* is *mitran*. “

He immediately replied, “This is the history of this place. The *pāñcarātra samhitā* corresponding to this place is *Sri Praśna samhitā*. In that it is stated that to protect the divyadesam and its people, a separate temple for *Cakrattāzhvān* should be established on the right side of the tower of the temple or on the banks of river or on the hillock. In accordance with that Lord *Cakrapāṇi* was established on the banks of the river in the *paḍitturai* that appears like a hillock” and to prove his point he showed the following *ślokā* in the 31st chapter of *Sri Praśna samhitā*.

ata priye pravakṣyāmi sudarśana samarcanam |

svayam vakta sthale divya kṣetre parama pāvane |

tat kṣetrarakṣaṇārtthāya kāmināmiṣṭa siddhaye |

dakṣiṇe vyomayānasya sadanam cakra rūpiṇaḥ |

ālayasya bahirvāpi naditīre acale api vā |

saprākāraṁ garbhāgṛhaṁ nirmāya vidivat rame |

pratiṣṭitaṁ yajet vidvān trikālaṁ cakra rūpiṇam |

Here the phrase “kṣetrarakṣaṇārtthāya” also adds strength to the inference that *Mitrā* indicates *Cakrattāzhvān*.

“This is acceptable. However, how can Lord *Rāmā* be referred by the term *Varuṇā*?”

Lord took the form of Human being when he was born as *Rāmā* to show how to live in accordance with the Vedas, which are His commandments. Because He was born as a human being, which birth is supposed to be higher than that of plants and animals, and which enables the souls to go to a higher state, he can be called as *Varuṇā*. *Varam* means the *jīvātmā* who is higher being, *unnayati* – *ūrddhvaṁ* *nayati* – taking him to a higher state.

varam - uttamaṁ jīvam unnayati ūrddhvam nayatīti varuṇaḥ – this is one of the explanations shown by Satyasanda tīrtā who is one of the commentators of Sri Vishnu sahasranāma belonging to the Madhwa tradition. If we match this along with the Azhwār’s blessing in the verse,

napāl ayoddhiyil vāzhum carācaram muavum

napālukku uyttanan

It will be clear that *Varuṇā* indicates Lord *Rāmā*,

The word *Mitrā* also indicates sun. The history of the place states that the Sun worshipped *Cakrattāzhvān* who destroyed his ego. Hence, this place is popularly known as Bhāskara kṣetram. In the sanctum sanctorum of the sannidhi of Sri *Cakrapāṇi*, the three deities Sun, *Nānmugan* (four faced Brahmā) and Shiva who is *ahirbuddhniyan* that makes the world aware of the glory of *Cakrattāzhvān* are seen worshipping Him. Thus to grace the Sun who corrected himself and worshipped Him, Lord blessed the Sun to get back his lost glory and also born in Sun’s lineage as Lord *Rāmā*. Thus both helped Sun to attain his glory. In accordance with the Vedic phrase “uttarato(a)bhibhrayāyī jayatī“ when the Sun starts his journey towards north during the holy sankramaṇa period, both approach the sārṅga rājā *Arāvamudāzhwān* for the welfare of the world.

This *Cakrattāzhvān* who is *Mitrā* and Lord *Rāmā* who is *Varuṇā*, aggressively act to eradicate the sins of the devotees.

Don’t think that the word king indicates *Arāvamudāzhwān* just because of the term rājā in sārṅga rājā. Since He makes his devotees happy with his love towards the devotees such as *Meivāsa uḍaiyār*, he is called king in accordance with “rañjayatīti rājā”.

Please do not doubt on how the *Vedattāzhwān* can jump to Tirukkudanthai in this verse after praying to tiruvarangan to relieve from the sins in the last mantra. While thinking about sins, all the places that remove the sins came to the mind. Among those, Kasi will remove the sins committed in other divine places. Tirukkudantai will remove the sins committed in Kasi. If one commits sins in Kumbakonam, then that also is removed by Kumbakonam only. I should have been reminded of such sin removing place Tirukkundanthai only, where maha magam is held.

Not only that. In the last verse lot of three things came to the mind for the verse “trayāṇi sasṛjati”. In that the threesome of the Kudanthai, pāṇi trayam consisting of *Sārṅgapāṇi*, *Cakrapāṇi* and *Kodanḍapāṇi* came to the mind. In this verse, the *Vedattāzhwān* brings the scene consisting of that pāṇi trayam during *tīrtavāri* before our eyes and prays to *Arāvamudāzhwān* to relieve us from our sins.

For this mantra the English translation as per the Vedic commentary is

“Of you O! Mitra and Varuna I reckon

Take heed of him O Ye of true strength strong ones whom ye afflict

Ye who go in might against the king in his chariot

May ye relieve us from sins”

This will become as follows in the ways shown by *Vedattāzhwān*

“Of you O! Chakrapani and Rama at Kudantai I reckon

Take heed of our sinful deeds O Ye of true strength strong ones whom ye afflict

Ye who go to receive the king Sarngaraja in chariot on the eve of sankranti

May ye relieve us from sins”