**ParamaikAnti’s svastivAcanam**

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The ninth mantrā of mṛgārāis*:*

रथीतमौ रथीनामह्व ऊतये शुभङ्गमिष्ठौ सुयमेभिरश्वैः।

ययोर्वान्देवौ देवेष्वनिशितमोजस् तौ नो मुञ्चतमागसः॥

rathītamau rathīnāmahva ūtaye

śubhaṅgamiṣṭhau suyamebhiraśvaiḥ |

yayorvāndevau deveṣvaniśitamojas tau no muñcatamāgasaḥ ||

Similar to the previous verses, this verse also is a poem that follows the meter upariṣṭātjyotirjagatī. This has the following 18 words (padās) as per the pada pāṭhā.

(1) रथीतमौ (2) रथीनाम् (3) अह्वे (4) ऊतये (5) शुभम् (6) गमिष्ठौ (7) सुयमेभिः (8) अश्वैः (9) ययोः (10) वाम् (11) देवौ (12) देवेषु (13) अनिशितम् (14) ओजः (15) तौ (16) नः (17) मुञ्चतम् (18) आगसः

(1) rathītamau (2) rathīnām (3) ahve (4) ūtaye (5) śubham (6) gamiṣṭhau (7) suyamebhiḥ (8) aśvaiḥ (9) yayoḥ (10) vām (11) devau (12) deveṣu (13) aniśitam (14) ojaḥ (15) tau (16) naḥ (17) muñcatam (18) āgasaḥ

We need to remember what I had written in the introductory text before explaining the paragraph containing mṛgāra verses. There I had mentioned that this mantrā and the next mantrā are used as pairs in the mṛgāreṣṭi. In the mṛgāreṣṭi we need to offer rice flakes for performing homa towards the aśvi (aśvinī) deities as mentioned in Veda as “aśvibhyāmāgomugbhyāṁ dhānāḥ”. I have explained in the previous issue itself, that this is part of the 22nd paragraph starting with “agnaye'muce “ in seventh kāṇḍā, fifth praśnā of taittirīya saṁhitā, that explains the practical usage of this mantra (i.e. brāhmaṇā).

In the mṛgāreṣṭi, this mantra is used as purnuvākyai while offering rice flakes to aśvinī devatas. For those who would like to understand what purnuvākyai is and what yājyai is, they may refer to the details in the introductory section. purnuvākyai is like offering to request to the Lord before offering the food (i.e. sġvākālam). yājyai is like sāumuai.

For this mantra, the meaning given by śrī Sāyaṇācāryar is as follows:

Do you know about these aśvinī devas?

rathītamau rathīnām – The devas who have the chariots are known as rathīs. These twins are the foremost capable among these rathīs, i.e. rathītamas. (In the mūla pāṭhā, it is the convention to elongate and recite rathītamau rathīnām as rathīnām rathītamau). Both these rathīs, suyamebhiḥ - easily operable and well controlled, aśvaiḥ - (through) horses, śubham – to the auspicious place, gamiṣṭhau – who go (to such places), that both of them, ahve – I invite, devau – oh! The two devas!, deveṣu – among the devas, yayoḥ vām – which is unique for you two alone, aniśitam – which is not sharpened by anyone else (i.e. inherently sharp), ojaḥ - strength, tau – that two of you, naḥ - us, āgasaḥ - from sins, muñcatam - relieve and bless.

(aśvinīdevas, who are the best people among the charioteers (other devas), are the ones who go to auspicious places through the well controlled and easily operable horses. Oh! That two devas!, who have the unique strength amongst other devas, that is inherent and not sharpened by others, I call upon both of you, to relieve us from our sins).

Who are these aśvinīdevas for us, who are fortunate to relish Veda as Vedattāzhwān with the grace of Pādukā devī?

Lot of scholars who have learnt śrī bhāṣyam, answer this with a readymade answer saying that they are nothing but the supreme soul who has these devas as his body. This is over simplification. To understand in this way, we need to do it in two steps:

1. To think about the intermediate deities (smaller deities)

2. Then to think about the inner soul who is the supreme Lord

This way of thinking about the smaller deities and then the indwelling supreme Lord will be appropriate only when there is no other means of inferring this. i.e. only if the Veda itself indicates these deities with their features in the verses, then we need to muddy ourselves and wash our feet in that way. When that is not the case, it is appropriate for the paramaikāntis like us to understand that the deity indicated is the Supreme Lord in whatever way possible. Who says this? None other than śrī Tirukkudantai Deśikan, who is the reincarnation of Svāmi Deśika. Who else other than ācāryas like śrī Tirukkudantai Deśikan who are celebrated as sarvajñaśikhāmaṇi (crown jewel of the omniscient) by our elders, can impart the meanings of our pūrvācāryās like śrī naḍādūr ammāḻ, śrī śrutaprakāśikācāryār and Svāmi Deśika. Hence, those who do not accept this cannot be a Srivaishnava.

I call this tradition only as the tradition of accepting Veda as Vedattāzhwān. Who are the twin aśvinīdeities for us who consider Veda as Vedattāzhwān by the grace of Pādukā devī.

To answer such questions only I have been writing the meaning shown by Pādukā devī indicating the Divyadesa Emperumān as the deity. One friend pierced my heart by asking, “It is acceptable that śrī Tirukkudantai Deśikan has blessed that one should recite the Vedic verses by contemplating on the Supreme Lord. However, did he tell that one should understand the Lord as the one who is appearing in the form of idol in Divya Desams? Is this not little exaggerated?”

It is not possible for people like us to meditate on formless thing. Hence our ancestors thought that the form of Emperumān is more capable of giving salvation to us than his attributes.

Here we should remember what Svāmi Deśika has blessed:

svarūpāt svāmino rūpam upādeyatamaṁ vidhuḥ

For the meditation, it is the holy form of Emperumān which is appropriate. For the holy form, the form that appears before us ahead of everything is the arcā (idol) holy body of the Emperumān. The meditation will be more simplified if we understand the mantra to be representing the divya desa arcā holy bodies, that were praised by āzhvārs. Experience will be enhanced.

Using this approach, I have been writing about the divya desams on the basis of experiences shown by Pādukā devī. I have been explaining based on the Amudan experiences I got.

However, I was taken aback when one friend mentioned to me that there are great scholars who out of their immense devotion towards their divya desa Emperumān do not like other divya desa Emperumāns to be equated with theirs, are not happy because I have been praising about Amudan alone.

It is possible for someone who is more scholarly than me by the grace of Pādukā devī to write commentary on these mantras that they indicate only their Divya desa Emperumān. It is my wish as well that many people should come forward to write such commentaries. Such differences are appropriate for His glory. It safeguards our status of paramaikānti as well.

Do not bemoan that I am stretching by writing all these things. There is a reason for the same.

In the last four verses, by the first two mantrās, Vedattāzhwān relished the saṅkramaṇa tīrtavāri mahtsavam in which Cakrapāṇi and kdaṇḍapāṇi get together and sārṅgapāṇi becoming sārṅgarājā by joining them on the banks of poāmarai tirukkuḻam to experience it. In the next two mantras he relished the scene of Arāvamudāzvān and Kmaḻavallit tāyār blessing together during the dvādaśa ārādhanam held at the conclusion of Panguni Kmaḻavallit tāyār Brahmotsavam. Now in the continuation of the same, in the next two mantrās he sings about the Chittirai brahmotsavam of Arāvamudan, in which Arāvamudāzvān and Cakrattāzvān appear together as twins. Thus in the six mantrās of mṛgārā, Arāvamudāzvān is praised. This explanation may be unacceptable to the dear ones out of their staunch devotion towards their divya desa Emperumān. I have given the above explanation so that they should not reject this experience as ‘sour grapes’.

During the second day of Chittirai Brahmotsavam, Arāvamudāzvān starts from the temple in the palanquin and reaches the south entrance of Cakrapāṇi sannidhi and joins Cakrapāṇi who waits in a palanquin there. Then both of them together reach the hall on the banks of Cauvery. In order to make others understand their indebtedness towards the great service rendered by the followers of Madhva sampradayam for Him, there is a tradition of Him accepting the Tiruvārādhanam offered by the pontiffs of Madhva mutt.

For everyone to recognize Arāvamudāzvān as the supreme Lord, and in order for those who fought without accepting this, Sri Vijayendra Swamigal tied mere fibers of Plantain tree between the Rajagopuram of Sri Arāvamudāzvān and Rajagopuram of Kumbeswaran and walked on it by pronouncing, “Even if I walk on the fiber, I will not fall, you see!, the deity who holds the Sārngam is the Deity” (nārilġ naḍandum vīzġn sattiyam kāṇmin aiyā! sārṅgamġndum devanġ devan āvān) similar to the pronouncement of Toṇḍaraḍippoḍi āzvār:

talaiyauppuṇḍum sāvġn sattiyam kāṇmin aiyā!

silaiyināl ilaṅgai sea devanġ devan āvān

There are different historical facts of many such services rendered by that pontiff of Madhva mutt. Hence, Amudan has blessed the followers of that pontiff with that right on that day.

Then the rectification ceremony in accordance with pāñcarātra āgamā will be performed to overcome this deviation. Then the deity twins will accept the services of the pāñcarātra priests and participate in the procession during the night across the streets.

From then till the eighth day of proceeding on the horse vehicle, they will proceed together as twins. Tirumangai āzvār, who has special attraction towards this holy place, would have relished this brahmotsavam procession in which Amudan holds Sārngam in hand and blesses along with Cakrapāṇi many times. It is my father’s relishing that the following world famous verse in Tiruneḍundāṇḍagam echoes this:

mai vaṇṇā nauṅguñjik kuzal pin tāza

makaram sġr kuzai irupāḍu ilaṅgi āda

ey vaṇṇa veñcilaiyġ tuṇaiyā iṅgġ

iruvarāi vandār en munnġ ninār

It is not an exaggeration that both of them appearing together in sġṣa vāhanam in the hall located in the East Sannidhi street on the third night belies the statement “unless there are two Supreme Lords, it is difficult to repay ācāryas who show the Lord to us”.

In the same way, the scene where they appear together in the two garuḍa vāhanam (which are known as Viṣṇu rathās) on fourth night is so pleasant to our eyes. On the fifth day they together appear on siiya tiruvaḍi, on sixth day on gajġndrā and on seventh day on mast wood. On the eighth morning, both of them go through all the streets in the “veṇṇey tāzi tirukkolam” and come to the Sri Valayappettai village on the sunny Cittirai day.

(To be cont’d..)