**ParamaikAnthi’s svastivAcanam**

(Sri U.Ve. Villur NadAdUr KaruNakarAcAryar Swamy, Chennai)

We observed that since this *iṣṭi* helps in driving away the *mṛgams* i.e. sins like *ārā* i.e. goad, this glorious *iṣṭi* is known by the name *mṛgārā.* The word *ārā* that represents goad is a feminine gender word.

Lots of facts are given about *jīvātmā* in the fifth chapter of śvetāśvatarpaniṣad in eight Mantras from the seventh Mantra to the fourteenth Mantra. Of that in the eighth Mantra the Upanishad shows a fact that the dimension of *jīvātmā* has been mentioned in varied ways in *śāstrās*.

anguṣṭamātro ravitulyarūpaḥ sankalpāhankārasamanvito yaḥ |

buddherguṇenātmaguṇena caiva ārāgramātro hyavaro'pi dṛṣṭaḥ ||

*jīvātmā* is of the size of the thumb is seen in *śāstrās*.

*jīvātmā* is of the size of the tip of the goad is seen in yet another *śāstrā*. This fact, i.e., having the size of tip of the goad has been depicted by the phrase *ārāgramātran* in the Upanishad.

Then, what is the exact size of *jīvātmā*? Upanishad conveys this in the ninth Mantra.

vālāgraśatabhāgasya śatadhā kalpitasya ca |

bhāg jīvas sa vijñeyas sa cānantyāya kalpatġ ||

vālam denotes a grain by name *vāl nel*. The size of *jīvātmā* is one hundredth of one hundredth[[1]](#footnote-2) of its tip.

Other bigger sizes have been mentioned in *śāstrās*! How is that?

For that there is some background. When *jīvātmā* resides in human body, its house is the heart in that body. This heart will be of the size of the thumb of that body. *śāstrās* consider the size of the place while denoting the size of *jīvātmā* as that of the thumb.

In accordance with its sins and good deeds, the *jīvātmā* has the characteristic of entering into various types of bodies. To explain this only, it is opined that the dimension is that of tip of the goad that is capable of penetrating the skin. In the *pariṣkāram*(embellishment) blessed as an ornament for the commentary on śvetāśvatarpaniṣad, Srimadabhinava Desika Uttamur Swami has explained the phrase *ārā* as *śarmasūci* – needle used for stitching the skin. In his Tamizh book *upaniṣadsāram* he has explained the same as *seruppāṇi* – cobbler’s awl.

Likewise, the word *ārā* has been used in all these places as feminine gender. However, *Sāyaṇācaryar*, who blessed the commentary on Vedas has mentioned the needle in the goad in neuter gender also as *āram*. Where?

In sixth *kānḍam*, second *praśnam*, second *anuvākam*, for *deekśita* who performs the *yajñam* another small *deekśai* (religious code of conduct) is ordained amidst the bigger *deekśai*. When describing about that *deekśai,* Veda glorifies it as *ārāgra*. i.e. the *deekśai* as sharp as the tip of the goad is the description Veda gives while talking about this *avāntara* *deekśai*. While explaining this *Sāyaṇācaryar* says – “The metallic goad used to hasten/ chase the bull (that drives the cart) is called *āram*. Since, in the same way the tip (*agram*) of the goad slowly pierces the skin, increases the size of the hole and enters, this intermediate (*avāntara*) *deekśai* begins in a small scale and then expands to a bigger scale, this is named as *ārāgrā* by Vedas, based on *āra* + *agrā*.

balīvarda pratardanam loham - āram tatvat alpam agram - mukham yasyāssā ārāgrā’ is his *śrīsūkti.*

I am able to visualize few readers murmuring “All these are fine. After writing at the end of previous issue that we will enjoy the meaning of *mṛgāreṣṭi* Mantras going forward, why is he still filling pages on the name *mṛgāreṣṭi*”.

The reason why I am pursuing this research is because the vedic part – ārāgrām avāntara deekśām upġyāt continued to nag me thus pushing me to see the meaning of the phrase *ārāgrā*. If the meaning of *ārā* as occurred to me by the grace of Paduka Devi had been shown by ancestors in vedic literature, then it will commensurate the pride of having the meaning graced by Paduka Devi. However, from the beginning of Thai till eighth of Maasi most of the days had to be spent in *sancāram* of the places like Tiruvarangam, Naachiar koil and Tirukkudanthai. Hence, I was unable to refer to Veda bhashya books and I was restless. Since Brahmasri Sundararama Vajapeyi, who has great respect for achara anushtanams of Sri Vaishnavas resides in Thirukkudanthai, I approached him thinking that he would be able to provide me with the Veda Bhashya book. However, he was also on a long tour like me. Hence, there was no fruit. But, in an unexpected manner, I was able to meet him in a seminar held at Thanjai Shastra University. I asked him for the Veda bhashyam of this part. Soon he read out the explanation of this part as given in the commentaries of Bhatta Bhaskara and Sri *Sāyaṇācaryar* over mobile to me. From that it was confirmed that the word *ārā* denotes goad in Vedic literature also. The usage of this word as *āram* by Sri Sāyaṇār answered another puzzle. You are asking what is that, isn’t it?

The compound word *mṛgāreṣṭi* can be split in two ways: *mṛga*+ *ārā* + *iṣṭi* and *mṛga*+ *āra* + *iṣṭi*. Since the great poet Maagha has used this word *ārā* as feminine gender, this can be considered as *mṛga*+ *ārā* + *iṣṭi*. However, vaideekas call these Mantras in a neuter gender from *mṛgāram* without elongating it as *mṛgārā*. In the list of *udakaśānti* Mantras as blessed by *bodhāyana*, this part is denoted as *mṛgāram* only. How to interpret this? I was plagued by the question of which grammatical rule to apply to reconcile the word *āram*. The neuter gender term *āram* used by Sri *Sāyaṇācaryar* answered this as well.

Therefore, it is clear that this *iṣṭi* is known as both *mṛgārā* as well as *mṛgāram*.

At this juncture, I need to talk a bit on this intermediate (*avāntara*) *deekśai* as mentioned by Veda as ārāgrām avāntara deekśām upġyāt. Once during a Maasi Pushya while gracing a discourse on Sri Periyandavan Vaibhavam at Azhwarpet Ashramam in presence of Srimushnam SrimadAndavan, Srimath Ubha.Ve. Mahavidwan mahamahopadyayadhinacaca Varada Thathacharya Swamy (son of Sri Somayaji Narayanacharya Swamy) mentioned a fact. While connecting that information with the information provided by Veda on *avāntara* *deekśai*, we can admire the presence of Vedas in the background of even small anushtanams performed by great people like Periyandavan. Hence I will write about that before enjoying the *mṛgāra* Mantras.

*avāntara* *deekśai* is the intermediate *deekśai-* – i.e. a small vratam, in the midst of the greater *deekśai* performed by the person who performs the yajñam. How should this intermediate *deekśai* be performed? While starting the greater *deekśai*, the person who performs the *yajñam* (vġḻvi), should tighten the rope made of grass, i.e. mġkhalai around his hip. That is the *svarūpam* of *avāntara* *deekśai*. Taking only the hot milk as the food and using only hot water are the stipulations for this *avāntara* *deekśai*. When does it start? In the evening of the day on which the ritual for buying soma plant for soma yaga is completed. That time the person who performs the *yajñam* should drink only the milk obtained from only one of teats of the cow. That is the dinner for him on that day. Next time he takes the milk got from two teats. Third time the milk got from three teats is the food. Fourth time the milk got from all the four teats is the food. Since this way of increasing the intake of the food is similar to the increasing amount of goad getting into the skin by slowly piercing, Veda has christened this *avāntara* *deekśai* as *ārāgra*.

Conversely, there is another method in which the intake of food is reduced in steps by consuming the milk from all the four teats the first time, from three teats second time, from two teats third time, from one teat fourth time. The *avāntara* *deekśai* performed in this way is christened as parvarīyasī by the Veda.

When the *avāntara* *deekśai* is performed in the method of *ārāgra* one will attain prosperity in this world. Veda tells this in the sixth *kānḍam* second *praśnam* third *anuvākam* in the part avāntara dīkśāmupeyādyaḥ kāmayetāsmin me loke'rddhukam syāditi |*.*

When the *avāntara* *deekśai* is performed in the method of parvarīyasī one will attain prosperity in the upper world. This is mentioned in the sixth *kānḍam* second *praśnam* third *anuvākam* in the part parovarīyasīmavāntara dīkśāmupeyādyaḥ kāmayetāmuṣmin me loke'rddhukam syaditi |*.*

For the people who are unable to fulfil the vratam just by drinking milk alone Veda permits to have little food.

This vratam can take one to heaven and hence the person who performs this should cautiously perform it. However, one cannot perform it when they have the inability and weakness. Those people can go one step down and perform the vratam (anuvratam) as mentioned in another part of the Veda. That is one can consume little curd. That too only once, not often.

Here there is a doubt whether the fruit is same for the person who performs vratam and the one who steps down and performs anuvratam.

Veda itself gives beautiful answer for this.

A group of people go to Ganges from their native place to take bath throughout Makara month starting Makara sankaranti.

One person in that group becomes sick during the travel. Who can stop him from taking bath along with the group in Ganges and attaining the fruit of the same if he joins the group for the reminder of the days after staying at one place and undergoing the treatment?

In the same way the person who is performing anuvratam due to inability will get the fruit. Please enjoy the beauty of how Veda describes this.

In the sixth *kānḍam* second *praśnam* fourth *anuvākam* Veda paints a picture as follows:

yovai svārtthetām yatām śrānto hīyata uta sa niṣṭyāya saha vasati |

However, the anuvratam should be performed only once to get rid of the weakness/ inability and then rest of the stipulations should be adhered to. See the beauty of Veda telling this as well:

tasmāt sakṛt unnīya nāparamunnayeta |

To perform this anuvratam Veda prescribes the use of curd:

daddhnonnayeta |

All these are found in sixth *kānḍam* second *praśnam* fourth *anuvākam*.

When Periyandavan was old during one ekadasi disciples there being scared of his weakness compelled him to take something that doesn’t affect the fasting. Periyandavan ordered to bring the curd. Curd was brought. He ordered that the same to be stirred/ beaten in front of him. The curd droplets spilled on all the sides. “I am strengthened by these droplets themselves. Enough. Please take it from here” said Andavan and continued the fast.

Periyandavan’s anushtanam thus explains the anuvratam shown by Veda, isn’t it?

Our elders underwent ekadasi fasting in this way. On that day only we in the name of performing anuvrata consume ‘kurunai pongal’, ‘kurunai puLiyodarai’ and halwa and deceive ourselves.

Why is this situation? Because we are surrounded by sins (animals) we live like animals. Instead of the ekadasi fasting to be undertaken for cleansing the sins committed during the fifteen days (paksha) we are comfortably following the anuvratam and to attain freedom from these sins the only way out is to perform prayers like *mṛgāra* japam. Hence, there is a tradition to chant *mṛgāram* as part of daily prayers (nityanusandhaanam).

In these *mṛgāra* Mantras, there are ten main deities and the prayer is performed on the basis of two Mantras per deity. After that there are two Mantras for *sviṣṭakṛt* – Agni. Thus there are twenty two Mantras as already shown.

It is clear to us, that Emperuman is worshipped by eleven different names. Out of that through ten names, His exhibits in ten Divya desams and through the eleventh one the sacred history of Him purifying Ahalya who was not true to her husband, with the help of Paduka devi is enjoyed by Vedathazhwan.

The way of worshipping Him by ten names in *mṛgāram*, reminds us His ten vibhava avataras. Hereafter, let us relish these in detail.

1. One – ten thousandth [↑](#footnote-ref-2)