श्रीकृष्णकृत्तदर्श्टोत्रम्

(हरिवंशपुराण, विष्णुपर्व अध्याय ७४, श्रोकाणि २२-३४)

रूऽो देवस्तवं रुद्दनाद्रावणाच् रोक्यमाणो द्रावणाचातिदेवः।
भक्ते भक्तानां वत्सरसौ वत्सश्राणार्क्य युद्धशाच्य प्रभवायन्तरे न। १।
ग्राम्यारण्यानाम त्वं पारस्त्वं पद्यात रघुतो देवः परल्पतः सर्वकमः।
नान्यस्तवंः परमौ देवदेव जागतपतः सुरवीरारिण्या। २।

यस्मादीशो महतामीश्वराणां भवानायः प्रीतिः प्राणदृश्।
तस्मादि त्वामीश्वरं प्राहूरीशं सन्तो विद्याः सर्वशाखार्थत्ज्ञः। ३।

भूतं यस्माजगद्यन्त्वेव तवसेवकादशक्रादशक्रेषा।
तस्मात्त्वामाहुर्भेव इतः भू मू सर्वश्राणां महतामय्युदारम्। ४।

पूज्यो देवैः पूज्यसेन नित्यदा वै शाश्वदध्वयः।
तस्मादिश्वातः भवानादेवैः सतामिष्टः सर्वभूतात्माभावी। ५।

भूमित्रयाणां देव यस्मात्त्विद्या पुर्णे भावानेक्यकर्तिः।
च्यम्बकेन प्रथमं तेन नाम तवाप्रभमव तिरङ्गेश्वानाथ। ६।

शर्वं शास्त्रवेण शासानप्रमेयमस्तथा भूमेस्व शासनः।
सर्ववानिपत्वाच्छव्रतानां सदिः शान्तनेिशानेशः। ७।

संस्कारानां नित्यदा यत्रोषी शम भृतावान् यथवैशीः समस्तान।
तस्मादेवः शाश्वदर्श्वप्रमेयः सदिः भृत्यैः कथ्यसेत्य सर्वनाथः। ८।

धर्मः प्रहारः कुळशेषं पूष्य तवेशानः सूरराज्ञासिद्विधी।
कण्ठेऽनैवत्यो तेन ते एक्यवृत्त्त्वस्तवस्तवनीत्तकमेश्य कल्यः। ९।

यथिन्मां। यत्साकाक्षः सर्वो सोम तवं स्थावरं जहम्मच। १०।
A Commentary on the Rudra-Stotra

By

V. S. Agrawala

The above Rudra Stotra by kRiShNa is inspired by a Vedic spirit and begins by invoking the etymological import of Rudra from the root rud ‘to weep’. This symbolical meaning (arthanirvachana) is first recorded in the shatapatha br. (VI. 1. 3. 10):–

When kumAra was born, he wept and, therefore, was named Rudra from रूढ़ ‘to weep.’ This occurs in the Agni-chayana contest, where Agni is the new-born babe (कुमार), the prANic principle of the manifestation of life, that in each birth becomes young or renovated (नयो नयो भवति जायमानः). This agni or prANa is the pulsating principle of Life which manifests in the plant,
animal and human kingdoms. He is named Rudra (अभिवृङ्खला रुद्रः, शतपथ व.३.१.१०). What is the esoteric symbolism of the word Rudra? The name points to a mystical meaning by the well known Vedic dictum इत्याचक्षे परोक्षण प्रोक्षणिया वै देवा: प्रत्यक्षविषयः; ‘that which weeps’ refers to a child who starts life with weeping. The child weeps because he is afflicted with hunger. Hunger implies the desire for food, or what is called the principle of अशनाया, i.e. assimilation of food from outside. अग्नि is the eater of food and सोम is food; Agni is अग्नि, and Soma is अग्नि; अग्नि-अग्नि is a veritable pair that upholds the law of life. Food (अशन) and nourishment (पोषण) go together; and it is agni that is always the eater of रघु or सोम (अभिनार रघुमश्वतः पोषेत् दिवे दिवे, Rv. I. 1. 1). Assimilation and elimination make up the first law of Life or prANa, upon which depends its second feature, viz. that of growth (बृंहण). Assimilation in symbolical language is rudana or weeping, i.e. hunger or the crying for food (अशनाया), of which the perfect demonstration is seen in the new born babe. The shatapatha br. makes a clear statement about agni being Rudra for he cries for food as the means of obtaining immortality and the Devas appease him by offering food. agni longs for food and the gods bestow upon him the highest immortality through food (अग्नि or सोम) by which his terrific form becomes appeased, i.e. रुद्रदेवत्य अग्नि becomes शान्तदेवत्यः. This is the mystical import of the शतरुद्रिय litany of Yajurveda, Ch. XVI.[1]

(Aथाय: शतरुद्रियः जुहोति। अग्निः सर्वोऽभियोऽघृः सन्तुष्ट:। स एषोऽघृः रुद्रो देवता। तस्मिन्देवा एतद्वृत्तं रूपमुत्तममधुः। स एषोऽघृः दीयमानोऽधिकशुद्ध अग्निमिन्चधमान:। तस्मादेवा अविभूत्युष्टः बोधवः न हिंस्यादिति। तेषुभवन्त: अन्नस्यामि सम्भारम तेनैनं शान्तमेति। तस्मा एतद्वृत्तं सम्भवत: शान्तदेवत्यं तेनैनमशमनः। शतपथ व.३.१.१-२)
Here शत्रुङ्गीय is equated with शान्तदेवत्य or शान्तरुङ्गीय; रुद्र is the ‘animal fire,’ expressing itself as hunger, which is the flare or flame in each individual or creature, referred to as मन्यु in the first mantra

नमस्ते रुद्र मन्यवे Yajurveda XVI. 1. It is a नमः stotra to Rudra comprising a sting of नमः offerings, where नमः means food’ अच्छे नमः; शतपथ ६.३.१.१७)

which is the highest kind of ‘reverence’ offered to the Deity.

Agni grows amongst creatures for the consumption of every kind of food (जायते एव एतद् यथीवते स एव सर्वस्मागच्छाय जायते शातपथ ९.१.१.२). agni as Life has a hundred heads with a hundred mouths all longing for appeasement through food-offering (शतशीर्षरुद्रशमनीयम, शातपथ ९.१.१.७).

This was the Vedic background of Rudra and his Rudana, which is correctly interpreted by Griffith as ‘the hundred forms and powers of Rudra representing life and nature’, where ‘Agni has on completion become Rudra’.

The PurANas fondly borrowed and repeated this Vedic conception of Rudra, one of the clearest statement being in the li Nga purANa:

अथैकादश ते रुद्रा रुद्दर्तौर्ध्यकमस्तथा || २३||
रोदनातः खलु रुद्दत्वं तेषु वै सम्ज्ञायत || २४||
ये रुद्दास्ते खलु प्राणा ये प्राणास्ते तदात्मका: || २५||
प्राणा: प्राणवतः झेया: सर्वभृच्छवस्थिता: || २५||
(लिङ्गपुराण १.२२)

Not only Rudra is derived from rud, but rudra is identified with prANa, a truly Vedic metaphysical doctrine, e.g.
Wherever there is a body constituted of the five gross elements (bhUtas), there inheres within it the Life Principle called prANa, or in its several functioning aspects as prANas. The One Rudra becomes many Rudras (रुद्र रुद्रांशसंभवाः, शिक्षपुराण 1. 82. 41). The harivaMsha repeats the epithet of rudana as rorUyamANa, ‘crying day by day, or frequentatively’, and also as rAvaNa, i.e. the divine principle of prANa or rudra that makes a ten-headed Asura cry, referring to the prANas within the body (दशेमे पुरुषे प्रणा: आत्मेकादः) whose riotous aspect is rAvaNa.

The etymology of Rudra is also connected with drAvaNa, which is a new idea:

ते रुद्रन्तो द्रवन्त्वेण भगवन्ते पितामहम्।
रोदनादू द्रावणाचैव ततो रुद्रा इति स्मृता: ॥

(हरिवंश ३.१४.३९)

What is implied in this idea of drAvaNa, ‘taking flight’? This too is a Vedic conception, viz. agni being frightened of the gods fled in the form of a मृग (i. e. animal) and concealed himself. The meaning is quite obvious, viz. that agni as prANa (Life or Energy) can never be seen in concrete or manifest form unless it incarnates in an animal body. The animal form is material (made of the Five bhUtas) and agni comes within the orbit of our experience only on the plane of matter. agni is visualised not as prANa, but prANa within the mRigas. It is the same thing as प्राणात्म्यA and भूतात्म्यA joined together, Life and Matter integrated in manifestation. This is the principle of drAvaNa or the flight of Agni as mRiga; each such mRiga or creature is pierced by Rudra’s dart who is the Great Hunter.
(मुगलुक्तक), for which the mRigashIrsha star in the sky is pointed out as a symbol on the basis of निदान विदा.

By referring to Rudra as पशुपाति, the Vedic invocation of पशूनां पतये नमः and the rich doctrine of pashu and pAsha and pashupati as elaborated by the pAshupata shaivas is hinted at in purANic terminology, as explained in my article on pAshupata yoga (purANa, I, pp. 242-243). From brahmA, the Creator, down to the plants and trees, all are pashus:

Animals from the Rigveda onwards have been classified as tame (grAmya) and wild (AraNya, Rv. X, 90-8), the former being fit for yaj na and the latter being ayaj niya or amedhya; the former being symbols of Devas and the latter of Asuras (i.e. of dedicated power and riotous unharnessed power respectively).

Vs. 24 repeats the significant epithets, ईश, ईशा, referring to shiva as the paramount Lord IshAn, because of which He was known as महेश्वर in his transcendent form.

Vs. 25 distinguishes between भूत and अक्षर, based on the क्षर पुरुष and अक्षर पुरुष doctrine of the Rigveda (I, 164-42, ततः क्षरपुरुषम्). bhUta or Matter is called kShara, as defined in the gItA (क्षरः सवाणिभूतानि, 15.16). प्राण or अव्यक्त is called अक्षर (cf. गीता १२.३, ये लक्षरमनिर्देश्यमय्यं पर्युपसते), also called कृपस्थ (कृपस्थोक्षर उच्चते, गीता १५.१६). The
purANas make very frequent references to AKSHARA—

न कशीयसे न कशसि कत्यकोटिशतेयि ।
तस्मात्मकशरत्वाच अक्षरश्च प्रक्रिति। ॥

(मत्स्य। २४८.१९)

The muNDaka up. contains an exposition of अक्षर विद्या, also
called परावर ब्रह्मविद्या (I. 1-2) and according to it the
source of this Universe is akshara, also identified with Satya,
amRita, prANa. A significant term for it is सेतु—

यः सेतुरीज्ञानामक्षरं बह्य यत्परम ।
भव तितिष्ठत । पारं नामिचकेतं। ॥ (क। १.३.२)

The अक्षर or प्राण is the Bridge connecting the lower
क्षर पुरुष with the highest अव्यय पुरुष called
पुरुषोत्तम. Kshara is Matter, akshara is Energy and avyaya
is Consciousness. akshara is therefore the connecting link
between the two. If we conceive of these three as a circle,
अव्यय is its centre, अक्षर the diameter, and kShara its
circumference. It is the activity of the akshara that measures
out the circle:

पद्म पदानि रूपो अन्तरोदित चतुष्पदीनविमित्वं वतेऽत ।
अक्षरेण प्रतिमिम एतामूतस्य नाभाविधि सं पुनापि ॥

(Rv. X, 13-3)

According to Griffith this stanza is most obscure; his translation is–

‘Five paces have I risen from Earth:
I follow her who hath four feet with devout observance.
This by the Sacred Syllable have I measured:
I purify in the central place of Order.’

Earth here is the symbol of each material creation (bhUpiNDa);
in its pulsating centre is the creative force of prANa
measuring out the Five aksharas through five steps, viz. brahmA
(sthiti), indra (gati), viShNu (Agati) and agni-soma. This is the akSharavidyaA, the pulsating rhythm which measures out the threefold manifestation (mana-prANa-vAk) of each life-centre against the background of Rita. Rita is Soma and akshara is agni, the latter by virtue of its rhythm of expansion and contraction (sama nchana-prasAraNa, prANApAna, shvAsa-prashvAsa) is drawing in matter from outside and creating the material body. This was the ancient kSharAkSharavidyaA–

यदक्षणं पद्बिध्य स्मेति चुडो चुका अभियत संवहन्ति ।
(ऐतरेय आ. २.३.२०)

The five constituents of akShara are enumerated in the following mantra:

त्वमिदं इन्द्रो वृःस्मि सतामसि तव विष्णुरुगायो नमस्यः ।
तवं ब्रह्म रथिविदु ब्रह्मणस्येत तवं विधते सचसे
पुरुषः ॥ (ऋ. २.१.३)

‘O Agni, thou art Indra, thou art viShNu of the mighty stride adorable:

Thou Brahmanspati (Soma), thou brahmA; thou as agni bringing in Rayi (rayi, the opposite principle of AgneyaprANa): thou Sustainer (vivartaH) with thy power dwell in our Pura (so that we may become Purusha).’

The invisible or unmanifested centre of Life is essentially the akshara, the Divine Principle which creates and controls the manifested bhUtas:

अवकोकश्च इत्युक्तस्तत्तमाः परमां गतिम् ।
(गीता ८.२९)

It is rightly said that all creation takes place by virtue of akshara or the pulsation of prANic rhythm:

तथाशक्रान्तिन्युक्ते विश्वम् (मुण्डक १.१.७)
तथाशक्राद्य विविद्या सोम्य भावः प्रजायन्ते तत्र चैवापि यन्ति
(मुण्डक २.१.१)

It is the mighty reality of akshara or activating Energy that
upholds all the material world:

यथा सूच्या पताशानि सन्तृप्तानि स्युरवमेवतनाक्षरेणोऽऽकोऽऽक: सन्तृप्तानि:
(जैमिनिय उप. ब्रा. १.१०.३)

The अक्षर is both the unifying Thread (सूत्रात्म = the Thread Spirit) and the dynamic controlling spirit called antaryAmI atmA. It permeates each and everything in its hundred, thousand and million manifestations and thus is the basic Immortal Principle (अक्षिति) underlying all space:

तत्तदमू इमानतिविभ्य दशाप्तः क्षरति शताः
सहस्ययुत्यथा प्रयुत्यथा
(नियुत्यथा) वर्णर्थ न्यवर्त्था निर्भर्था पद्मम अक्षितिविभ्योमान्तः ।

Like the mighty irresistible flood it overflows and overtakes each and everything, the lower and the higher ones, as itself being the Supreme Indestructible Reality – this Akshara is the One Divinity:

यथौघो विभयदमानः परः परोवरीयान भवति, एवमेवतदुः
असर्वे परः परोवरोऽयो भवति ।
(जै. उप. ब्रा। १.१०९।)

In vs. 25 the great Vedic doctrine of अक्षर is invoked by calling Rudra as the Lord of Akshara (अक्षरेश) and the Unmanifest Akshara from whom the Universe emanates in each cosmic aeon.

In vss. 26-27 Rudra is addressed as देवतिदेव, Supreme One God over all the gods and demons, referred to as महादेव in the Rigveda (IV. 58.3) and महादेव in the purANas. The doctrine of trika or triple manifestation is the bedrock of Vedic and purANic metaphysics and in fact of all ancient Indian philosophical thought. The same is frequently mentioned in the Vedas and is the permeating spirit of purANic
cosmogony. Verse 28 refers to it under the two symbols of Three Earths (bhUmitraya) and Three Mothers (tryambaka). For the generation of Mind, Life and Matter which constitute the unified Fire of prANa, Three Mothers are essential, as the tisro mAtrIH of the Rigveda:

तिस्यो मातृकृष्णीपितृन् विष्रेधेक उद्धर्षस्तर्थो नेमवंगम्पायणि ।
(ऋ. १.१६४.१०)

तिस्यो द्वायो निहिता अन्तरस्त्रिमिनितिस्यो भूमीरूपरा: पद्यियाना:
(ऋ. ७.८७.५)

मित्रतार्काः || त्री रजासिः || त्रीणि रोचना ।
तिस्यो दिव: पृथिवीस्तिःश: || त्रिभ्रंगति: ।
(ऋ. ४.५३.५)

तिस्यो पृथिवीशुपरिवा दिवो नाके रक्षेये चुरिरंकर्मिहितम् ।
(ऋ. १.३४.८)

तिस्यो महीरपरास्तस्थुरत्या गुहा द्वेनिहिते दशस्यका ।
(ऋ. ३.५६.२)

पद्धार्थ्यावपृथिवी ।
(अथवं. ८.९.१६)

Earth and Heaven (द्वाया पृथिवी) are the combined units of generation, Universal Parents (योः पिता पृथिवी माता), who together form a single Pair spoken of as one prajApati. There are the Three Worlds (जगाच्य), also called पुरुष (जगाच्य रूढ़ पुरुषं हि, तिलकपुराण पुराण, १७२.१५२; L ७१.२४), the Triple Cities of Gold, Silver and Copper, symbolising the three states of consciousness, viz the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state (jAgrata-svapna suShupti). Each of them has its source in a Parental Pair. shiva as the Lord of tripura is the supreme controller of those three states of consciousness. He is therefore the son of Three Mothers in his manifest form. Ambaka (अम्बक) also means an
‘eye’, for each birth is an eye that opens on one of the three worlds (संबोधित चक्षु). The Three Eyes of Rudra are the Sun, Moon and Fire of the purANas, which the Vedas refer to as the Eye of mitra, varuNa and agni (चक्षुभिमित्रस्य वरुणस्य). The Eye of agni is the जाग्रत, the Eye of mitra is svapna, and the Eye of varuNa is the सुपुष्टि state, which sends its unobstructed vision into those deepest regions called the Dark Descent (कृष्ण निवानं, Rv. I. 164.47), or the dark interior of varuNa-loka, of which the Seer is the Rishi dIrghatamas.

The purANic authors very well understood this complex symbolism and their explicit statements are models of brevity and clarity:

प्रभुः ॥ १८
वाचकः ॥ १९
तथा च।
(विल्हपुराण २.५४)

Three Lokas, Three guNas, three Vedas, three devas, three varNas, three mAtrAs of praNava, and Three Fires—all these are the visible manifestations of the Great Mother Goddess umA and of the triyambaka Lord Rudra.

sharva as one of the forms of अष्टमूर्ति रूद्र occurs in the list of the eight names of kumAra in the shatapatha Br. (6.3.1.18), and is regularly mentioned in the purANas as a form of shiva-rudra. Here the name is derived from shatrUNAM shAsanAt, ‘the chaser of hostile forces’. It is said to symbolise the element of Earth पार्थिव
tदपुरुज्ज्वलं शर्वत्तत्वं बुभुःः (liSNgapurANa,
II: 13. 19). Similarly new derivations of IshAn and sha Nkara
are offered (vss. 29-30).

The well known exploit of shiva in drinking the poison and becoming nIlakaNTha is explained with some difference, viz. that He charred his throat on account of resisting the might of Indra’s thunderbolt. Of the five chakras in the human body, the विशुद्धिचक in the throat is the centre of AkAsha, which is the first and foremost of the pa nch-bhUtAs. The Five Elements represent the Asuric aspect of darkness and death, which so long as they are dispersed in the AkAsha or expanse of space do not harm the owner thereof. If their poison descends to the other lower centres they become fatal. The Asura represents death, darkness, falsehood and sin (मृत्यः तमः अनृतः पापम) and over all of them shiva has trimphed.

li Gga and Yoni correspond to Purusha and prakRiti, the Male and the Female Principles in the universe:

श्रीलिङ्गमित्रं देवी प्रकृतिममदेहजा ।
पुरुषं पुरुषेऽविवा ममदेहसमुचवः ॥

(लिङ्गपुराण १.३३.३४)

In fact they are two forms of one and the same energy and belong to a single Reality without distinction:

उमाशकरयोभदो नास्त्वेव परमार्थतः ।
द्विधास्यं रूपमास्थाय स्थित एव न संशयः ॥

(लिङ्गपुराण १.८७.७५.१४)

यथा शिवस्तुष्यदेवी यथा देवी तथा शिवः ।
नानयोर्तत्स विद्याचन्द्रचन्द्रक्षयोरिय ॥

(शिवपुराण वायवीयसंहिता, उत्तरार्थ ४.९)

Verse 33 refers to यज्ञ and योग as the two manifestations of the Divinity, both receiving the sanction of the Vedas as the means for crossing the ocean of the world. There is no greater
mysterious power than that of Rudra. It becomes the Past, Present and Future, and then vanishes into nothingness. The line of ancient gods like brahma, and sages like Kapila, and the many Rishis born from them, of all these the root cause and source is the great Lord Rudra (vs. 34).

Encoded and proofread by Jonathan Wiener wiener78 at sbcglobal.net

Shrikrishnakritarudrastotram

df was typeset on August 30, 2023

Please send corrections to sanskrit@cheerful.com