|| அதிஃபக்ருமிஃபூ அகமதை இருந்து முடியியதை||

.. AdityahRidayam nAmAvaliH ..
.. AdityahRidayam nAmAvalIH ..

॥ அதிஃதர்மத் நமஸ்தே ॥

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Transliterated by : N.Balasubramanian bbalu at satyam.net.in
Proofread by : N.Balasubramanian bbalu at satyam.net.in
Translated by : N.Balasubramanian bbalu@satyam.net.in
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Commentary with Namavali: by N.Balasubramanian bbalu at satyam.net.in

INTRODUCTION

Aditya Hridayam is a popular hymn. It appears in the Yuddhakandam in Valmiki’s Ramayana. It is a prayer to Aditya. One meaning of ‘Aditya’ is the sun. But, in this hymn ‘Aditya’ is to be taken to signify the Supreme Being. ‘Hridayam’ is known to mean the heart; but it also means secret. The prayer holds in itself the secret teachings of the Upanishads about the Supreme Being. The various names of the Lord mentioned in the hymn are of great significance and so justify the name ‘hridayam’. Given below are the 138 names of the Lord நாமாவலி: culled from the hymn. They come handy for those who want to do prostrations to the Lord while uttering each name and those who want to do puja to the Lord. Those who want to do puja may invoke the Lord in a design (rangoli) or a picture or in a pot of water and perform archana after reciting each name. They are also suitable for reciting by those who, for some reason are not able to do any of the above or recite the hymn in full.

(The following abbreviations are used in the comments given below. VS - Vishnu Sahasranamam with the commentary of Shri Sankaracharya. LS - Lalitha Sahasranamam)

The Aditya Hridayam, as we all know, was taught by the sage Agastya to Shri Rama in the battle field. The battle with Ravana was fierce and long-drawn. Rama was tired and concerned at the fact that the end was not in sight. At that time the sage appeared on the scene and taught Aditya Hridayam. He advised Shri Rama to worship Surya and repeat the verses three times. He said that by doing so the Lord will be pleased with his devotion and ensure victory in the battle.
Before proceeding further, some questions may arise in the minds of the reader who has some familiarity with this hymn.

1 - Who is Aditya? Is He the same as the sun we see rising and setting daily or some one different?

2 - Why does the sage ask Shri Rama to recite the prayer three times?

3 - And lastly, we know that Shri Rama was an avatar or incarnation of the Supreme Being. This being so, why should He be asked to pray to some one?

The answer to these questions require some explanation. They are given below.

THE LORD’S MANIFESTATIONS.

The upanishads say that the Supreme Being or the Lord (will be called as He here) is without any attributes including form. But He manifests Himself in three forms for the benefit of His devotees.

1 - In the gross form அடியா தேதேரா அருணா உதப.

The eyes cannot see Him, because He is the power behind the eyes. So, the kindly Lord makes Himself visible in the form of Aditya or the sun. Shri Rudram (7th and 8th Rik) says this.

This Sun who is copper colored when he rises, then slightly rosy-red, then golden-yellow, this highly auspicious and beneficient one is verily Rudra. The Lord Rudra with the blue throat who has assumed the form of the sun glows red while rising. Him the cowherds behold and so the women carrying water;
nay all the creatures. He who is thus beheld by all; may He bless us with happiness. Since He resides in the skies He is known as விஹாயஸக: (VS 876).

The sun provides the world with warmth, light, rain etc. They give life to all in this planet and also sustain life. So, the sun has the functions of Brahma the creator, Narayana the sustainer and Sankara the destroyer rolled into one.

The following prayer recited during Sandhyavandanam says all this.

2 - In the subtle form உருவதாந்திலா

He is the inner being who blesses the sun and gives him his radiance. This is said in many places in the scriptural texts. Some such cases are cited here for reference.

He is the Golden-hued Being resident in the solar disc. Or, just as one sun appears as many in many vessels containing water, so also the same Atma appears as many in many bodies. So, He is known as Aditya.

He resides in the sun.
She resides in the solar disc. She is to be meditated upon during the evening prayers.

We meditate on Narayana who resides in the sun with the following prayer recited during our Sandhyavandanam.

Similarly we are advised to meditate upon Lord Siva along with Amba in the sun and get relieved from the cyclic births.

The Mundaka Upanishad makes a more detailed narration. (II-I-9 and 10). It is pure, and is the Light of lights which the knowers of the Self realise. Everything shines according as He does so: by His light all this shines diversely. Shri Sankarchrya explains in his commentary that the Supreme Being is naturally effulgent. All this - the universe constituted by sun etc., shines diversely. It is that very Brahman that illuminates and shines through the different manifested lights. Shri Krishna says this specifically in His Bhagavad Gita. (15-12). He says that the light that resides in the sun and illuminates the whole world, that which is seen in the moon and fire are all His only.

3 - In the causal form as the Self residing in the heart of all beings. He is known as
Shri Krishna says this clearly in the Gita. BG (10-20). He says that He is the Self residing in the heart of all beings. He is the beginning, the middle and also the end.

The worship of Surya by chanting the verses thrice implies the worship of the Supreme Being in all the three forms - in the gross form as the Sun, the worship of Supreme Being in the subtle form as the power behind the Sun and, in the causal form as the sentience resident in the heart of all beings as explained above. We may find in the list of names (namavali) that follows names that support the above explanation.

After teaching the Aditya Hridayam the sage left the place and joined the gods (devas) who have assembled in the sky above the battle field to witness the war between Shri Rama and Ravana.

Earlier Shri Rama was concerned as to how he can win the battle with Ravana as the events were not going his way. But on hearing the advice from the sage Agastya, he regained his confidence and became cheerful. He chanted the Aditya Hridayam stotram as advised by the sage and got ready to face Ravana.
Surya Bhagavan was pleased by Shri Rama chanting the Aditya Hridayam properly with devotion. He came down from His region and joined the group of gods who have assembled in the sky above the battle field to watch the events. He encouraged Shri Rama to go ahead and fight Ravana. He was sure that Rama will kill Ravana and emerge victorious in the war.

Now, we take up the question No. (3) mentioned earlier. That is, Shri Ramayana says that Shri Rama was an incarnation of Shri Narayana or the Supreme Being. We find in the Valmiki Ramayana (Yuddha Kanda - chapter 120) that after Shri Rama won the battle with Ravana, the gods including Brahma, Rudra and others approached Shri Rama, praised him and said that he is none other than the Supreme Being Narayana.

This being so, is it appropriate for Shri Rama to worship the Sun god? Does it not imply that the Sun god is superior even to Shri Rama who is not different from the Supreme Being? The answer to this question is as follows. The Sun god mentioned in this Aditya Hridayam is not the solar disc but the Supreme Being residing in the sun. This is said in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (3-7-9)

He who inhabits the sun, but is within it, whom the sun does not know, whose body is the sun, and who controls the sun from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal self. This was said earlier also.

That the Surya Bhagavan referred to here is the supreme Being only is amply made clear as He is called herein (name no. 109) as the Lord of Brahma, Isha
or Siva and Achyuta or Vishnu. How can the sun be the Lord of the three gods mentioned here? So, one has to conclude that the Aditya is only the Supreme Being. Shri Rama took on the role of a human being just to teach us the way to live, not just to destroy the demons. Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the same advice on the KurukShetra battle field. He told Arjuna that he will overcome all difficulties by fixing his mind on Him the Lord. Shri Krishna added a warning that if Arjuna failed to heed His advice, and, if from egotism he thought he can manage the affairs himself, he will then be doomed to fail.

BH(5-19-5) He wanted to show that when one is confronted with a seemingly difficult situation that appears to defy solution, he can overcome it by resorting to God. Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the same advice on the KurukShetra battle field. He told Arjuna that he will overcome all difficulties by fixing his mind on Him the Lord. Shri Krishna added a warning that if Arjuna failed to heed His advice, and, if from egotism he thought he can manage the affairs himself, he will then be doomed to fail.

BG(18-58).

This, then, is the lesson we learn from Aditya Hridayam. To repeat, we should turn to Lord when confronted with problems that threaten to overwhelm us. Now, given below are the names of Lord Surya.
அதி ஹிரண்யேரதேஸ நம: ஒ
அதி திவாகராய நம: ஒ
அதி ஹரிதவாய நம: ஒ
அதி ஸஹராசிேஷ நம: ஒ
அதி ஸவதஸவதேய நம: ஒ
அதி மரீசிமேத நம: ஒ
அதி திமிேராமத நம: ஒ
அதி ஶேபவேவ நம: ஒ
அதி மாதாடாய நம: ஒ
அதி அஶுமேத நம: ஒ
அதி ஹிரண்யக்பாய நம: ஒ
அதி வாராய நம: ஒ
அதி மாணுண்டாக நம: ஒ
அதி தபய நம: ஒ
அதி பானேவ நம: ஒ
அதி ரவேய நம: ஒ
அதி அஞேனிகேபாய நம: ஒ
அதி அதி புராய நம: ஒ
அதி ஶேகாய நம: ஒ
அதி மாணுண்டாக நம: ஒ
அதி தேமாேபதி நம: ஒ
அதி வாபுஜாநரு நம: ஒ
அதி அபாமி தநாய நம: ஒ
அதி வி யவீதீ மாய நம: ஒ
அதி ஆதபிேன நம: ஒ
அதி மணலிலேன நம: ஒ
அதி வநாமாவலீ நம: ஒ
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