



Welcome to Amba's Home Study Courses

Course title: Shree Rudram -Praveshika

Duration: Approximately 11-12 weeks if done in succession without breaks.

Lesson Plan: 11 lessons on the Rudram.

3 apprehension quizzes. Entire text of verses sent with the last lesson.

ALL LESSONS SENT ELECTRONICALLY AS ATTACHMENTS

Charges: None

Study Tips

Most important is to set the goal of completing this course

Set a **convenient** time for study and be **regular** in the study.

Questions and Responses are conducted via can be asked of us via email.

When responses are asked (apprehension quiz) then the succeeding lesson will be sent to you only after we get your response.

We recommend for **general reference** " Essentials of Hinduism" by Swami Bhaskarananda.

This may be purchased at any Ramakrishna Mission in India, or Vedanta Society outside of India. You can also order it through the Internet at www.vedanta.com

If you wish to use this course as a text for a **study group** please check with us for more details.

We invoke the grace of the Divine in this precious endeavour.

We would appreciate if you recommend our site to those who may benefit.

Please check our website for monthly updates

Thank you for letting Amba House provide this Narayana Seva

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SHRI RUDRAM Introduction

The Vedic ritual of homa that has its origins more than 500 years before the birth of Christ, continues to highlight the religious traditions of Bharat even to this day. Among the many homa-s the Rudra homa is resorted to in times of fear and concern. The powerful chant accompanying this ritual today is a collection of about 82 mesmerizing suktas taken primarily from the Yajurveda. Of these 66 to 69 suktas are addressed directly to the divinity of Rudra. These elaborate suktas are the outpourings of Parameshti Kutsa rishi. The remaining ones are addressed in the original Vedas, to various deities such as Mrtyunjaya, Agni, Prajapati and Atma. In usage however all these have been gathered under the terms Shri Rudram, Shatarudriyam, Rudradhyaya and Rudra Prasna. Reciters also classify parts of the Shri Rudram as namakas and chamakas based on the recurrences of the words nama and cha-mey.

Yajurvedic suktas are often repetitions or expansions of seed-suktas found in the older veda, the Rgveda. The very first sukta addressed to the divine Rudra in the Rgveda is by the seer Kanva.

**“Kadrudraaya prachetasey meelhurstamaaya tavyasey.
Vocheyma shantam hridey.”**

For the sake of peace, we vocalize praise, from our hearts, to the highly praiseworthy Rudra, who is the Purer.

Later Rgvedic suktas on Rudra are by Angiras, Kutsa and Ghritsamada..

Who is the Devata called Rudra?

We owe our present cultivar concept of Shiva, cultured over the many years crossed with regional traditions, to the main stock- the Rgvedic divinity Rudra. The Satya shrutah rishis of the Vedic times were able to internalize external phenomena. Being Kraanta darshees they gave back the truths that they had culled, back to the world in the form sublime outpourings. These outpourings became indicators or suktas of the Divine.

The root Ru is to sound, to vibrate. Ruda is to pour, to cry. Rudra is to shed, to flow, to inflict. The senses and faculties of the rishis were razor sharp and their life style was consistent with the cosmic order or Rttham. They were alive to the Mountains, Wind, Rain, Verdant greenery and bodies of water. They were conscious of the value of a full and healthy life. They were deeply aware of the many sources both external and internal that endangered man's daily life. In nature therefore they saw the Cosmic Inflictor- Rudra. The very same Rudra was the one in charge of their afflictions. Plagued by fears, sickness and death they turned to this Cosmic Inflictor. The mighty Panchakshara mantra “namah shivaaya” appears first here. They recognized the omnipotence and the omnipresence of the immanent Divine Warrior. Only He with his multifarious weapons and moods could facilitate a full and healthy life and protect them from danger. These Rudra suktas therefore became the most powerful appeal by the Afflicted directed towards the Cosmic Source of Inflictions.

The home study course on the Shrirudram has 11 lessons. These are sent to you in stages via first class mail. The course includes the original Sanskrit verses, transliteration in English, gist of the word meaning and general commentary.

There are 3 apprehension quizzes.

INTRODUCTION TO VEDIC THOUGHT

Vedic concept of the divine is very unique The modern Bharatiya's concept of the Divine has its roots here. However we have modified and complicated it over the many centuries to match the modifications of our mind and our changing ways of living.A few pointers are given below that can help.

1.The Rgvedic concept of the Divine was spontaneous. This matched their language of communication which was also spontaneous. These concepts are not the result of deliberate planning as seen in the later works. This planning is seen however in the other three Vedas that are later in their construction.

The Riiks or stanzas of praise are conceptualizations of what the rishis spontaneously felt. The experience of Man, Nature and the Divine has to be reasoned by us. For them it was a matter of instinctive and instantaneous experience. When we talk of Shiva/Rudra today we refer to one of the thrimurthis, the husband of Parvati, the father of Kartikeya, the destroyer of Tripura and so on. For the Rgvedic rishis, Rudra was a divine phenomenon at work outside in nature in the form of thunder, rain, pestilence, terror, and inside of them in the form of pain, fear and, sorrow. There was no room for dichotomous thinking. It is simply for that reason that modern man finds it hard to understand the Riiks as we are approaching it with the magnifying glasses of a mind that no longer is harmonious with its environment, in the form of nature. So many Western scholars and Indians inspired by the West have sadly dubbed these Riiks as just beautiful hymns or poetry.

2.Vedic Sanskrit and its manner of expression and usage of words is different from the Itihasic and Pouranik Sanskrit Often a single word has different meanings that hold good together and separate,but the word always carries with it, its essence which remains the same no matter what is being said. Agni can be the Divinity that is First, it can be the sacrificial fire, it can even be the first Eagerness within, yet throughout the essence of the word Agni the igniting factor remains the same. Go means cow, rays and light. Asva means horse, power and speed. Vaaja means food, nourishment and source.Ritam means water. It can also mean manifested Truth. It also stands for cosmic order and order in living style. Saagara means ocean, and the raw material for the building of creation. These are just a few of the many examples.

Shiva in the Vedic times meant the Divine Pure.It could also mean Peace and at other times auspiciousness. Giri is for word and for mountain. Meedushtama means the one who pours. The pourer of rain as well as pourer of impact in life.

3. Gender and Number made no difference when words to suggest the Divine was used. The condition of peace is the same as the Giver of Peace- Shivathamam & Shiva. It could be the single Rudra or the many Rudraa.

4. The Riiks being rishi-conceptualisations their creators were not mere poets. Their understanding went beyond normal understanding. They are kraanta darsees. Most important of all they are satya shrutah. They could hear the revealed truth. These truths are already there in the Vyoma (space or akasa) before and will continue to be after them. It is as if they went into the inner space or daharaakaasa and caught what is in outer space or mahaakaasa and expressed these truths in outpourings sublime and divine through the medium of speech. What resulted was these Riiks, that have an automatic parallel value. One that is an outer value baahya and one that is guhya or inner. That is why they became mantras. This double value is instantaneous. It can therefore be used to attain what we desire and ward off what we do not want. Its measurement in the outer life can be seen by ordinary man. Its measurement in inner life is known only to the rishi and falls within the dominion of the " Cannot Be Expressed". It is not always possible to find one exact English word for every Sanskrit word It is better to get at what these words literature. Suktas are pointers or indicators to the truth. A group of riks(verses) go to make a sukta with a theme in mind. Suktas are grouped into adhyayas and mandalas.

THE PROBLEM OF TRANSLATIONS

The concept of the divine as reflected in the Védas is very pristine. All religious thinking can find some roots of their growth right here. The truths contained in them is however readily available only to minds that are integrated and can fathom Vedic Sanskrit. The average man can access these truths only through translations. To trace the roots of current religious practices and thoughts to its root vedic source is time consuming and strenuous. Modern practitioners of Sanatana Dharma have therefore moved away from this root source. There are many other reasons that have contributed to this distancing. Here are some:-

1. Access to the scriptures in the past had been in the hands of an exclusive few. The general public had to rely on what was given to them by the former. This condition continues to exist today. All of our most valuable scriptures are in Sanskrit, a language not encouraged for study in India. The average Indian is not literate in this language.
2. The land of Bharat went through a long period in its religious history where a variety of philosophical adventures thrived often at the cost of the disappearance of others. This resulted in practices that seem like a puzzle that has some parts that dont seem to quite fit well. eg Vegetarianism in mainstream Hinduism.
3. When Eurocentric education came to India along with the British and eventually independent states became an union then the popularity of English took over. Many non Indians intrigued by the bold thinking found in the many darshanas (visionary philosophies), frantically began to translate them into English. Many of these translators did not spend enough time or energy to study the cultural nuances of the land which is an integral part of any language. In their translations there is a serious handicap in that they have used totally confining English words to translate expansive Sanskrit words. These translators also relied heavily on local pundita-s. These pundita-s faithfully followed the texts as revealed by their teachers in their own language. Often the pundits' connection to Sanskrit was a mere committing- to- memory.
4. When educated Indians at large decided to learn more about their religious heritage they resorted to these readily available translations in English. In doing so they fell into the trap of thinking and using the meaning of these texts in a very confined way. Many well known Indians though well meaning in their intentions have translated our texts in this confined way.
5. English translations written by Indians often contain strange sentence constructions that make it rather difficult to comprehend. This is due to the fact that the writer is thinking in his native language at that time and not in English.
6. Very often translations are based on other translations without looking at the source material.

It is a challenge to us therefore to go back to the meaning of these prayers and texts having rid ourselves of all the narrow meanings that we have become accustomed to. This means that we should spend more time thinking about the ramifications of the meaning of words. The study of such texts coupled with familiarity with Sanskrit and finally testing the validity of these truths in our daily lives will ensure the revelation of the divine in and around us, as the Vedas proclaim. Then the essential truths contained within becomes accessible to all, across all borders, time space and culturewise.

SHUBHAM