

श्री:

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Śrītattva as reflected in Śrīstuti of Vedānta Deśika**R Kshama**

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Various religions are followed, various Gods are worshipped and various means of living are followed to gain permanent happiness, which is the ultimate goal of mankind. One such religion is Hinduism, which itself is nothing but a way of living. There are six darśanas of Hindu Philosophy, one of which is Vedānta, considered as ‘āstika darśana’ – believer of the presence of Vedas. Amongst the many sects of Vedānta, Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Dvaita are well-known, the expounders of them being Śrī Śaṅkara, Śrī Rāmānuja and Śrī Madhvācārya respectively.

In order to establish the principles of Viśiṣṭādvaita, following the footsteps of Śrī Rāmānuja, was born Svāmī Vedānta Deśika, 750 years ago, as an incarnation of the Holy Bell of Lord Śrīnivāsa. He has authored more than 100 texts, out of which 28 are devotional lyrics. In all his works, Śrī Vedānta Deśika has dealt with the philosophical tenets of Viśiṣṭādvaita vividly.

According to Viśiṣṭādvaita, the Supreme Lord – the Parabrahman is none other than Lord Śrīman Nārāyaṇa who possesses all the good qualities and does not possess any fault. This is called Ubhayalingatvam. In the Puruṣasūkta the Paramapuruṣa is identified as Nārāyaṇa residing in Śrī Vaikuṇṭham and His identity is defined as being the spouse of Hrī and Śrī. ‘ह्रीश्च ते लक्ष्मीश्च पत्न्यौ’ (HE – The Paramapuruṣa – The Supreme, for whom Mother Earth and Goddess Lakṣmī are the consorts) proclaims the Puruṣasūkta.

This has been echoed in Viṣṇu Purāṇa thus:

नित्यैवैषा जगन्माता विष्णोः श्रीरनपायिनी।

यथा सर्वगतो विष्णुस्तथैवेयं द्विजोत्तम॥ (1-8-17)

‘O! Foremost among Brahmins (Maitreya!), This mother of the Universe, Śrī, who is not separated from Bhagavān even for a moment, is constant. Just as how Lord Viṣṇu is all pervasive, She too is.’

Ālavandār addresses Mahālakṣmī in the first verse of Catuśśloki and says, ‘कान्तस्ते पुरुषोत्तमः’ (Your husband is Puruṣottama), which also reiterates the identity of the Lord.

The Maṅgalaśloka of Śrī Bhāṣyam (the commentary to Brahmasūtra written by Śrī Rāmānuja) which runs as,

अखिलभुवनजन्मस्थेमभङ्गादिलीले विनतविविधभूतव्रातरक्षैकदीक्षे।

श्रुतिशिरसिविदीप्ते ब्रह्मणि श्रीनिवासे भवतु मम परस्मिन् शेमुषी भक्तिरूपा॥

'Let my intellect remain in Bhakti towards the Ultimate Lord who is the abode of Goddess Lakṣmī, who creates, sustains, and annihilates all the worlds as a sport, who is dedicated in protecting all the beings which salute Him, and who shines in the Upaniṣads!!,'

proclaims the Supreme Lord as the creator, sustainer and annihilator of all the worlds, and as the abode of Goddess Lakṣmī.

According to Viśiṣṭādvaita, the Śrītattva is nothing but the essential nature of Goddess Lakṣmī and how this is reflected in the Śrīstuti of Swāmī Vedānta Deśika is the crux of this article.

Śrīstuti comprises of 25 verses extolling Śrī (Mahālakṣmī) who is the prime consort of Lord Nārāyaṇa, who recommends us to the Lord and asks for forgiveness on our behalf (being the Puruṣakārabhūtā). In this devotional lyric, the svarūpa, rūpa, guṇa, vibhava and aiśvarya of Śrī have been explained vividly.

Svarūpa

By svarūpa, the true nature of Lakṣmī is meant. At the very outset, the author describes Her as 'शरण्या – One Who is fit to be sought as the sole refuge,' and in verse 6, the author says, 'उद्देश्यत्वं भजतोः युवयोः – to both of You (the Lord and the Lordess) who have attained the quality of being the goal', and in verse 8, the author says that the utterance of the mere names of Śrī will pave way for salvation. He says:

अस्येश्याना त्वमसि जगतः संश्रयन्ती मुकुन्दं लक्ष्मीः पद्मा जलधितनया विष्णुपत्नीन्दिरिति।

यन्नामानि श्रुतिपरिपणान्येवमावर्तयन्तो नावर्तन्ते दुरितपवनप्रेरिते जन्मचक्रे॥(8)

'Those names of Her's (Śrī's) like Lakṣmī, Padmā, Jaladhitanayā (daughter of the ocean), Viṣṇupatnī (the consort of Lord Viṣṇu), and Indirā, which are the base for the Veda-s, when recited repeatedly, they (the devotees who recite these names) will not be caught in the cycle of birth and death which is rotated by the wind of sins. You (Śrī) having taken refuge in the Lord is being the Goddess of this Universe.'

The author intends that by reciting these names, the devotees get an interest in salvation and undergo 'prapatti' (total surrender) which gives them salvation.

Further, in the 9th verse, the author says, 'भगवति! युवां दम्पती दैवतं नः – Oh Bhagavati! You, the couple (Lord Nārāyaṇa and Mahālakṣmī) are our Supreme Lord.'

By these, the svarūpa of Śrī has been explained by the author.

Rūpa

Rūpa, here, denotes the divine, auspicious physical form of Śrī which has been described by the author in many instances in this Śrīstuti. In the 11th verse, the author describes Her physical form as 'तप्तजाम्बूनदाभा – She who shines like molten gold, तुङ्गस्तनभरनता – She who is slightly bent by the weight of her lofty breasts and तन्वी – slender bodied.' Moreover, in the 23rd verse, the author

describes Her as ‘स्मेरवक्त्रा विभासि – *You (Śrī) shine with a smile in Your face.*’ In the first verse, She is described as ‘मधुविजयिनः वक्षःपीठीं स्वकान्त्या भूषयन्ती – *You (Śrī), by your luster adorn the chest of the Lord (the winner of the demon Madhu).*’

Thus, Her luster, complexion, and the nature of Her physical form etc. have been described by the author vividly.

Guṇa-s

Guṇa-s are the positive attributes, and in this Śrīstuti, the guṇa-s of Śrī have been described splendidly by the author. In the 2nd verse, he says, that She is ‘अनवधिगुणा – *One who possesses endless positive attributes,*’ and in the 5th verse, it is said, ‘अनवधिगुणं द्वन्द्वं अन्योन्यलक्ष्यम् – *You, the couple (Lord Nārāyaṇa and Mahālakṣmī), who possess endless positive attributes are such, that the One is attained by the Other.*’

Vibhava

The word ‘vibhava’ represents ‘greatness’. In the 1st verse itself, the author explains Her greatness vividly. He says,

मानातीतप्रथितविभवां मङ्गलं मङ्गलानां वक्षःपीठीं मधुविजयिनो भूषयन्तीं स्वकान्त्या।

प्रत्यक्षानुश्रविकमहिमप्रार्थिनीनां प्रजानां श्रेयोमूर्तिं श्रियमशरणस्त्वां शरण्यां प्रपद्ये॥(1)

‘I, who has none other as refuge, seek refuge unto You, Who possesses endless, well manifested greatness, Who gives auspiciousness to all auspicious objects, Who adorns the chest of the winner of the demon Madhu by Your luster, Whose physical form is the fruit of the devotees who wish for the wealth of this world and the nether world, Who is fit to be sought as refuge, and Whose divine name is Śrī.’

All the adjectives used in this verse speak of the greatness of Śrī.

In Viśiṣṭādvaitic parlance, the word ‘vibhava’ also means incarnation. In this Śrīstuti, the author has also spoken of the incarnations of Śrī. In the second half of the 11th verse, he says,

यस्यां गच्छन्त्युदयविलयैर्नित्यमानदसिन्धौ इच्छावेगोल्लसितलहरीविभ्रमं व्यक्तयस्ते।

‘In which physical form of Yours, which is an ocean of joy, the incarnations by their presence and absence become the sport of the waves rising due to Your own volition,’

thus beautifully metaphorising the Goddess’s physical form as the ocean, Her volition as the wind and Her incarnations as the waves.

Further, in the 10th verse the author describes Mahālakṣmī as the ‘प्रियसहचरी – *loving companion of the Lord,*’ and says, ‘प्रादुर्भावैरपि समतनुः प्राध्वमन्वीयसे त्वम् – *You (Śrī) follow the Lord conformably in suitable forms during His incarnations*’ which is in conformity with the Viṣṇu Purāṇa verse,

देवत्वे देवदेहेयं मनुष्यत्वे च मानुषी। विष्णोर्देहानुरूपां वै करोत्येषात्मनस्तनुम्॥(1-9-145)

‘When Lord Viṣṇu is in the form of God She is in the form a Goddess and when He is in human form She too is in human form. Thus She takes a form corresponding to that of Lord Viṣṇu.’

Thus, She accompanies the Lord in all His incarnations and Her incarnations are in conformity with that of the Lord’s.

Aiśvarya

Aiśvarya is Śrī and Śrī is its bestower too. In the 14th verse, the author says,

आलोक्य त्वाममृतसहजे विष्णुवक्षःस्थलस्थां शापाक्रान्ताः शरणमगमन् सावरोधाः सुरेन्द्राः ।

लब्ध्वा भूयस्त्रिभिवनमिदं लक्षितं त्वत्कटाक्षैः सर्वाकारस्थिरसमुदयां संपदं निर्विशन्ति॥(14)

‘Oh You who were born with the ambrosia! The great deva-s along with their wives, repenting after the curse (of Durvāsa) sought refuge unto You who is seated in the chest of the Lord. On receiving Your side-long glances they got back the three worlds with their riches and also enjoy the everlasting wealth.’

In this verse, the author speaks of how the Deva-s got back their wealth (aiśvarya) by the side-long glances of Śrī.

In the second half of the following verse, he says:

यस्यां यस्यां दिश् विहरते देवि दृष्टिस्त्वदीयाः तस्यां तस्यामहमहमिकां तन्वते संपदोघाः॥(15)

‘In whichever direction Your glances move, in all those directions the floods of wealth compete among themselves (to reach there).’

In this verse, the author explains that different types of wealth compete among themselves and reach the person who is blessed with Her side-long glances.

In the next verse, the author continues to say,

योगारम्भत्वरितमनसो युष्मदैकान्त्ययुक्तं धर्मं प्राप्तुं प्रथममिह ये धारयन्ते धनायाम्।

तेषां भूमेर्धनपतिगृहादम्बरादम्बुधेर्वा धारा निर्यान्त्यधिकमधिकं वाञ्छितानां वसूनाम्॥(16)

‘In this universe, those who speedily want to start yoga, in order to perform righteous deeds with an attitude of seeking refuge unto both of You (Lord Nārāyaṇa and Mahālakṣmī), at first when they are interested in wealth, for them, the wealth pours profoundly from either the earth, or from the kingdom of Kubera, or from the skies, or from the oceans.’

In this verse, the author clearly says that those who seek refuge unto Śrī, are enriched with riches from all sides.

Further, in the next verse, the author says,

श्रेयस्कामाः कमलनिलये चित्रमाम्नायवाचां चूडापीडं तव पदयुगं चेतसा धारयन्तः।

छत्रच्छायासुभगशिरसश्चामरस्मेरपार्श्वाः श्लाघाशब्दश्रवणमुदिताः स्रग्विणस्सञ्चरन्ति॥(17)

'You Who reside in the lotus! Those who desire to achieve great riches, by bearing in their hearts Your feet which are the adornment for the words of the Veda-s, (because of that) enjoy all sorts of wealth, by their heads covered by umbrellas (kings are seated under the umbrellas) and fanned on both sides, by being garlanded, and by happily roaming about listening to eulogizing words. (In short, they enjoy the richness of an emperor).'

Here, the author says that those who bear the feet of Mahālakṣmī on their hearts, become a receptacle of all sorts of riches.

Also, in the 24th verse, the author uses the terms 'दिव्या सम्पत् – divine wealth' and 'सकलभुवनप्रार्थनाकामधेनुः – (She is) the Kāmadhenu cow who gives all that are desired in all the worlds', to explain the aiśvarya of Śrī.

In this Śrīstuti, all the six vyutpattis of the term Śrī have been deftly suggested by the author. He ends the work by stating that those who recite this stuti with devotion will be devoid of all sins and attain the riches. Thus, the author glorifies Śrī.