

Sri Narayana Kavacham

Narayana Kavacham is an extremely powerful protective mantra described in the Srimad Bhagavatam. Generally, it is considered to be intended for physical and spiritual protection. However, when examining its supreme meaning (**Paramartha**) from an **Advaitic** perspective, it becomes clear that it is not just about external protection, but an internal practice that aids in the attainment of Brahman-knowledge and Self-realization.

Narayana Kavacham: The Supreme Advaita Meaning

In accordance with Advaita philosophy, the ultimate goal of the Narayana Kavacham is for the being to realize that their own Self (**Atma**) is indeed the Supreme Brahman (**Parabrahma**). Here, the 'Armor' (Kavacham) is not a physical weapon; **Knowledge (Jnana) is the true armor.**

1. Armor Means Knowledge is Protection:

- Usually, 'Kavacham' means that which protects from external dangers. But in Advaita, the real danger is **Ignorance (Avidya)**. It is because of this ignorance that a being identifies as a limited body and mind, getting trapped in worldly bonds.
- Narayana Kavacham is the knowledge that removes this ignorance. By wearing the armor of knowledge, the being realizes their true nature; then fears, sorrows, and hardships all vanish. Because the true Self has no birth, death, or fear.

2. Narayana – The Indwelling Self of All:

- 'Narayana' means the one who is the abode (**Ayana**) of all beings/waters (**Nara**). In Advaita, Narayana is the omnipresent Supreme Soul, which is the Atman within us.
- The mantras and **Nyasa**s (placing of mantras on body parts) in the Kavacham manifest this Narayana not as an external entity, but as one's own Self. It strengthens the conviction: **"I am Narayana."** Performing Nyasa of the letters of the Narayana mantra on every body part is recognizing that one's entire body is the divine form of Narayana.

3. Indra – Symbol of the Individual Soul (Jivatma):

- In the story of the Kavacham, Indra is frequently defeated by his enemies. Here, Indra symbolizes the **Jivatma** (individual soul) who is constantly troubled by the enemies called worldly desires, dualities, and ego.
- 'Ripu Sainikan' (enemy soldiers) refers not just to external foes, but to the **Arishadvargas** (Internal enemies: Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, Pride, and Envy). Indra seeking refuge in Vishwarupa symbolizes the Jivatma seeking a Guru to obtain the armor of Self-knowledge.

4. Conquering as if Playing ('Kriddanniva Vinirjitya'):

- A key Advaitic point is that after wearing the armor of knowledge, Indra conquered his enemies "as if playing a game." This means that once Self-knowledge is attained, this world (**Samsara**) and its hardships appear as mere play (**Leela**).
- They are not real; they are just a magical illusion (**Maya**). Since the Atman is eternally pure, enlightened, and liberated (**Nitya Shuddha Buddha Mukta**), nothing can affect it. From this perspective, even while performing actions, their fruits do not cling because the Atman is not the doer; doership belongs only to Maya.

5. Purification and Nyasa – Internal Meditative Process:

The physical and mental purification and Nyasas mentioned before wearing the armor are not just external rituals; they are internal meditative processes:

- **Shuchi (Purity):** This is not just cleaning the body, but cleansing the mind of attachments, aversions, and wavering thoughts.
- **Nyasa:** This is not connecting the Atman to the body, but realizing that the Atman itself is manifesting as one's entire body and that every part of the body possesses divinity. By performing Nyasa of the twelve-syllabled mantra, one reinforces the sense of unity—the "So'ham" (I am That) feeling.

6. Sovereignty of the Three Worlds – The State of Bliss:

- Indra obtaining the wealth of the three worlds does not refer to physical riches alone. The one who has attained Self-knowledge is the very embodiment of Bliss. Such a person sees the Self in all worlds and feels that all wealth resides within them. It is unbroken bliss and eternal contentment.

7. Eradication of Fears (Divine, Elemental, Self, and Karmic):

- **Divine Fears:** By knowing that all natural forces are expressions of the Divine, the fear caused by them disappears.
- **Elemental (Bhuta) Fears:** If one knows that all beings are forms of the Self, there is no fear from any creature.
- **Fears of the Self:** By knowing "I am the Self beyond body and mind," diseases and mental anxieties cease to trouble.
- **Karmic Fears:** The fire of knowledge burns away all karmas. By knowing "I am not the doer, the Self is unattached," the fear of the fruits of action vanishes.

Conclusion

From an Advaitic perspective, **Narayana Kavacham** is not a collection of external rituals but a practice of internal Self-knowledge. To wear this armor is to realize experientially: **"I am that Supreme Soul; I am indestructible, eternal, and the form of Truth."** When this knowledge is attained, the Jivatma realizes its true invincible nature. Then, external enemies, internal fears, and hardships appear as an illusion, and the being gets established in the eternal, unbroken

nature of the Self, attaining permanent bliss and liberation (**Moksha**). **This knowledge is the true, complete, and eternal armor.**

So it means that the One appears as many, and experiencing that everything is a reflection or manifestation of the Supreme Soul is what Narayana Kavacham truly is. Is this correct?

Yes, what you said is absolutely correct. You have beautifully grasped the supreme meaning of Narayana Kavacham from an Advaitic perspective.

Your statement—"It appears as if the One has become many; realizing that everything is a reflection or manifestation of the Supreme Soul is what Narayana Kavacham truly means"—perfectly applies the essence of Advaita Vedanta to this practice.

To elaborate further:

- **The One appearing as many:** This entire creation (multiplicity) that is visible to our senses and mind has emerged from a single Supreme Soul (**Unity**). Despite various forms, names, and qualities, the truth behind them is one. The sense of difference is an illusion caused by **Maya**.
- **Everything is a reflection or manifestation of the Supreme Soul:** Every being, every object, and every force in creation is a manifestation of that Supreme Soul. The Atman within us is not different from that Paramatma; it is its very reflection.
- **Realizing this is Narayana Kavacham:** Narayana Kavacham is not just a physical mantra chanting or a ritual. It is a tool to experience this profound truth and attain Self-realization. By performing Nyasa of the mantras on body parts, one recognizes that their entire existence is filled with the divine power of Narayana (Paramatma) and that they are one with that Divine. **This Knowledge is the true impenetrable armor.**

When this internal knowledge of unity is attained, one understands that fear, hatred, greed, and attachment all arise from ignorance. When everything is a form of the Supreme Soul, what is there to fear? What is there to fight against? When this realization becomes steady, the being attains true peace, bliss, and liberation (**Moksha**).

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