

శ్రీకపాలీశ్వరాష్టకమ్

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INTRODUCTION--

Shri Kapalishvara is the name of Lord Shiva who is the presiding deity at the ancient temple of Shiva in Mylapore, Chennai - the capital of the State of Tamilnadu. His consort has the name Kalpakambal. Ashtakam (అష్టకమ్) means a poem consisting of eight verses. In this case the verses are in praise of Shri Kapalishvara. He is praised here with qualities referred to in the vedas, puranas and also as the Infinite Supreme Being. This shows that it is the Supreme Being that appears as Kapalishvara in the temple in Mylapore as any god in any other temple.

NOTE:-

The following symbols are used in the explanations that are given below.

- (1) - SA :- Saiva Agama. (2) - SP :- Shiva Purana. (3) - SAN - Shiva 108 Namavali.
(4) - SL - Shivanandalahari of Shri Shankaracharya. (5) - VS - Vishnu sahasranama.
(6) - BG - Bhagavad Gita. (7) - SS - Siva sahasranama (From Padmapurana)

with the commentary by late H.H. Sri Parasivendra Saraswati of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

The vedas (Taittiriya Upanishad, Anandavalli) declare that the Supreme Being is beyond reach of senses and mind. యతో వాచో నివర్తన్తే! అప్రాప్య మనసా సహ! For this, reason His qualities cannot be adequately portrayed by anyone. The Shiva Mahimmna stotram (22) puts this up in a graphic manner. The poet says that even if the blue mountain were to be a lump of ink powder, the ocean the ink-pot, the branch of the heavenly tree Parijata be pen, the earth itself the writing leaf, and by taking these Saradha the Goddess of Learning writes for eternity,

even then His virtues cannot be fully described.

అసితగిరిసమం స్యాత్ కజ్జలం సిన్ధుః పాత్రం
సురతరువరశాఖా లేఖనీ పత్రమూర్ధ్యీ ।
లిఖతి యది గృహీత్వా సారదా సర్వకాలం
తదపి తవ గుణానామీశ పారం న యాతి ॥

The question then is, why should one take up the futile job of writing a stotram in praise of the Lord knowing full well that it can never be done satisfactorily? The same author of Mahimna Stotram provides the answer right at the beginning of the work.

మధుస్వీతా వాచః పరమమమృతం నిర్మితవత-
స్తవ బ్రహ్మన్ కిం వాగపి సురగురోర్విస్మయపదమ్ ।
మమ త్వేతాం వాణీం గుణకథనపుణ్యేన భవతః
పునామీత్యర్థేఽస్మిన్ పురమథన బుద్ధిర్వ్యవస్థితా ॥

He says that the Lord has given out the wonderful vedas which are sweet as the nectar. So, even the hymns composed by Brihaspathi, the learned guru of the devas will be insignificant to the Lord. This being so, I have ventured to praise You because the act will purify my speech. Our puranas repeatedly say that chanting the Lord's names and singing His glories destroy one's sins. One need not worry about the level of his learning to start in this endeavour. Sage Narada pointed this out to Sage Vyasa and advised him to write about the glories of the Lord.

తద్వాగ్విసర్థో జనతాఘవిప్లవో యస్మిన్ ప్రతిశ్లోకమబద్ధవత్యపి ।
నామాన్యనస్తస్య యశోఽఙ్గీతాని యచ్ఛృణ్యన్తి గాయన్తి
గృణన్తి సాధవః ॥BH(1-5-11).

The composition may be replete with faults. Yet, if each vesre speaks of

the Lord's glory , such a work alone will be liked by noble souls. They will hear it, sing it and repeat it to the listeners. Because of this reason scholars and poets continue to write hymns in praise of the Lord.

THE TEMPLE:-

The temple of Shri Kapalishvara is many centuries old. The Lord here has been sung by several Tamil saints known as Nayanmars. The famous composer Papanasam Sivan lived in Mylapore near the temple and was an ardent devotee of Kapalishvara. He had composed many songs in praise of the Lord and Devi Kalpakambal. Originally, the temple was situated on the sea shore. But it was badly damaged by tidal waves that battered the structure in the second half of the 16th century. It was later moved to the present location where a magnificent temple has come up. There is a large tank before the temple which is used for the float festival.

Being a major temple devoted to Lord Shiva all the important festivals associated with Lord Shiva are observed punctiliously. The temple is very popular and attracts a large number of devotees even on normal days. It includes locals and tourists from from all over India and abroad too. The crowds are particularly heavy on weekends, Fridays, on important days such as pradoshams (on the Trayodashi days) and Sivaratri.

NOTE:-

In the passages that follow there may be statements that will appear to eulogise Lord Shiva as the Supreme Being and place other Gods on lower pedestals. These statements may cause some confusion or displeasure to some. There is no need at all for such feelings. Our puranas always resort to this kind of statements in which one form of God is praised as the Supreme Being and others are shown as an inferior to that particular deity. This is just to glorify that particular form. The intention is never to slight any deities. All puranas are particular in stating what

is said in the vedas - that it is the one Supreme Being which appears as different Gods and in essence all are one and the same. The Lord says clearly in Gita that He receives worship offered to God in any form.

యే యథా మాం ప్రపద్యంతే తాంస్తథైవ భజామ్యహమ్ ।

మమ వర్తమానువర్తంతే మనుష్యాః పార్థ సర్వశః ॥ BG(4-11).

We see in some movies that one actor plays the roles of the hero and also other characters. The hero frequently fights with others (played by same person). And finally some event reveals the fact that all of them are born to the same lady and are brothers. They hug each other in great joy and live happily ever after. Similarly, the one Supreme Being alone appears in various forms. So, essentially all forms depict the same Being.

LINGAM -

Shri Kapalishvara in the sanctum in the temple is in the form of a lingam.

The form has esoteric significance. The word "lingam" means a sign or emblem that characterises an object. లింఘ్యతేనైవ ఇతి లింఘమ్

The Agama texts, however, interpret the word to describe the Supreme Being from which the universe emerges (నిర్గచ్ఛన్తి) and into which it finally merges. అయం గచ్ఛన్తి భూతాని సంహరే నిఖిలాని చ నిర్గచ్ఛన్తి యతశ్చాపి లింఘ్యక్తిస్తేన హేతునా ॥ The Supreme

Being is without parts and form. (అరూప). However this form is not easily understood or suitable for worship by most people since they have intense attachment to their bodies. Krishna says this clearly.

క్షేణోఽధికతరస్తేషామవ్యక్తాసక్తచేతసామ్ ॥

అవ్యక్తా హి గతిర్దుఃఖం దేహవద్భిరవాప్యతే ॥ BG(12-5).

Considering this problem that will face many, our shastras provide three concepts of the Lord. That is, sakala (one with form, rupa, like Nataraja, DakShinamurty etc.,), nishkala (one without form, arupa) and sakala-nishkala (one with and without parts or specific form, rupa-arupa).The lingam belonga to the third category - a combination of form and formlessness. It is thus extremely suitable for worship. Its form is made of mantras and hence it is said that the Sivalinga is constituted of vidya or mantra deha. The three sections of the Shiva linga, namely the square base, the octogonal column and the upper part relate respectively to Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preservator and Rudra the annihilator.

బ్రహ్మ విష్ణుశ్చ రుద్రశ్చ త్రిఖణ్డమితి కథ్యతే ।
 ఊర్ధ్వం తు శివభాగస్యాత్ విష్ణుభాగస్తు మధ్యమః ।
 బ్రహ్మభాగస్త్యధః ప్రాక్తః శాస్త్రజ్ఞైర్లింగకుంభుయోః ॥

Thus the lingam represents the Supreme Being that embodies in itself the triad of gods. One of the names of Shiva is

లింగరూపీ - లీనమర్థం గమయతీతి లింగమ్, తద్రూపీ లింగరూపీ ।
 అవిద్యాతిరోహిత-జడప్రపఞ్చస్య గమకత్వం ప్రకాశాత్మకస్య చైతన్యస్య,
 తద్రూపీ పరమేశ్వరః ఇత్యర్థః, తదుక్తం న్కాన్తే -
 సూతః:-

అథాతః సంప్రవక్ష్యామి శివలింగం సమాసతః ।
 యస్య విజ్ఞానమాత్రేణ విముక్తో మానవో భవేత్ ॥

శివ ఏవ స్వయం లింగం గమకమేవ హి ।
 శివేన గమ్యతే సర్వం శివో నాన్యేన గమ్యతే ॥SS(653).

Now we will say a few words about some important days observed in

the temple. These days may be divided into two types - festivals and vratams. Their purpose is the same, that is to make strong the remembrance of the Lord and bring us close to Him. Festivals like Deepavali and Dusserrah are marked by celebrations. The vratams, such as the Ekadasi and Shivaratri are marked by fasting, devotion, austeriry and observance of vows.

PRADOSHAM: -

We are familiar with the story of the churning of the ocean by devas and asuras to obtain the Amrit or nectar. It is said that they used the mountain Manthara as the churning pestle and the snake Vasuki as the rope. The asuras held the snake near the head and the devas the tail portion. As they started churning the snake suffered intense agony and vomitted its venom. It was very potent and threatened to engulf the world. The devas ran to Lord Shiva and prayed to Him to save them and the world. Shiva, who is the embodiment of compassion took pity on them and consumed the venom. All the devas who gathered at that time felt immense relief and worshipped the Lord in gratitude without taking any food. This was the Ekadasi day. The Lord was pleased with their worship and distributd the Amrit to them. On the following day (that is, on the dwadasi) the devas finished their puja early in the morning and had their food. On the next day, that is on trayodasi, the Lord who was pleased with their devotion performed a dance in the evening. Devi Parvati was watching the dance along with the devas. This dance performance lasted for one yAma (యామ) or three hours. The period came to be known as pradosham. This is a vratam and devoted exclusively for the worship of Lord Shiva. If the pradosham falls on a Saturday then it becomes specially auspicious. The pradosham is auspicious as on that occasion all the gods and devas assemble to have the darshan of Lord Shiva and witness

His dance. So, by visiting the temple on that occasion one can have the benefit of having the darshan of Lord Shiva as also all gods. Some verses from Shiva Puranam that talk about the glory of pradosham are given below. Rough translations of the verses are also given.

శంభురేవ తదా పూజ్యో నాన్యే విష్ణ్వాదయస్సురాః ।

యత్రత్ర సర్వేఽపి సురాస్తిష్ఠన్తి శివసన్నిధౌ ॥

అతస్తస్యార్చనం పూజా కథాగుణగణస్తవమ్ ।

తన్మన్తస్య జపశ్చైవ కర్తవ్యో మోక్షకాంక్షిభిః ॥

దారిద్ర్యదుఃఖతాన్ధానాం ఏతద్ధివ్యాజ్ఞానం స్మృతమ్ ।

ఋణార్ణవనిమగ్నానాం ఉడుపోఽయం సుతారకః ॥

On that occasion (evening of pradosham day) Lord Shiva alone is to be worshipped, and not other devas like Vishnu. For, all of them are there in the presence of Lord Shiva. So, one who seeks liberation should do His puja, listen to stories that narrate His glories and chant His mantra.

Those who are severely afflicted by poverty and sorrow will get relief by this. This will serve as a boat that will help those who are immersed in ocean of debts.

ప్రదోషే పార్వతీనాథే మహాత్తన్వతి తాన్ధవమ్ ।

వాగ్దేవీ వల్లవీన్ధతే మృదఙ్గం గరుడధ్వజః ।

రమా గానకలాం బ్రహ్మ తాలం వేణుం దివస్పతిః ॥

సర్వే చాన్యే సుపర్యాణః సేవన్తే తం మహేశ్వరమ్ ।

పుణ్యక్షేత్రం సమాసాద్య మహాలిఙ్గం నిషేవ్య చ ॥

వజ్రకృత్యా నమస్కుర్యాత్ సాష్టాఙ్గం భక్తిపూర్వకమ్ ।

పాంసూనాం అఙ్గలగ్నానాం ఏకైకస్య నమస్కృతౌ ॥

దివ్యవర్షసహస్రంతు శివలోకే మహీయతే|

During pradosha time Lord Shiva dances along with Parvathi Devi. Sarasvati Devi plays on veena. Vishnu plays on mridangam. Laxmi Devi sings and Brahma plays on cymbals. Indra plays on flute. All gods witness the glorious sight. One should reach a holy shrine and worship Mahalingam by prostrating to Him five times. By saluting thus one gets to live in Shivaloka for as many years as the dust particles that had stuck to his body.

దర్శనం వస్తనం లిఙ్గప్రదక్షిణఞ్చ తర్పణమ్ |
ప్రదోషే ఋణముక్తేః స్యాత్ భవతూలమహానిలః |
భుక్తిర్మైథునమభ్యఙ్గం హరిదర్శనకీర్తనే |
వ్యర్థాలాపం ప్రదోషే తు వర్జయేద్వైదికో జనః ॥

Having darsan of Shivalingam, circumambulating It and performing tarpanam will pay off the five obligations one is born with. One should not indulge in eating, sex, oil bath, darsan of Hari and idle gossip during pradosham.

విష్ణుర్చనం సదా కార్యం ప్రదోషసమయం వినా |
తత్రాపి నరసింహం తు కీర్తయేద్దర్శయేద్భుధః ॥

ఏవం ప్రదోషసమయే పూజాం కర్తుమశక్నువన్ |
గత్వా శివాలయం పశ్యేత్ భక్తోఽభక్తోఽతవా శివమ్ ॥

One should worship Lord Vishnu always except on pradosham days. It is beneficial to have darsan of Lord Narasimha and worship Him on pradosham time. One who is unable to do puja etc., as said above during pradosham can get the benefit by having a darsan of the temple of Lord Shiva.

NOTE:-

It is said here that one should not have darsan of Vishnu on pradosham days but it does good to have darsan and worship Narasimaha. The reason is that Narasimha is Shiva only and not different from Him. The following quote from Nrisimhapurvatapani upanishad states this clearly.

ఓం ఋతం సత్యం పరం బ్రహ్మ పురుషం సృకేసరి విగ్రహమ్ ।
కృష్ణపింగల-మూర్ధ్వరేతం విరూపాక్షం శంకరం నీలలోహితం
ఉమాపతిం పశుపతిం పినాకినం హ్యమితద్యుతి-మీశానః--- ॥

SHIVARATRI.

The pradosham day occuring in the Magha month (11th in the Hindu calendar) is very special and is celebrated as Shivaratri. This is the day when Lord Shiva revealed His glorious form to the gods to show that He alone is the Supreme Being. He appeared to them in the form of infinite effulgence. He told them that they all can derive benefit by worshipping Him. Accordingly the gods offered special puja to Him. Lord Shiva was pleased with their worship. He added that the day will be known as Shivaratri and will be a very auspicious one.

దినమేతత్ తతః పుణ్యం భవిష్యతి మహత్తరమ్ ।
శివరాత్రిరితి ఖ్యాతా తిథిరేషా మమ ప్రియా ॥

Later the infinite form transformed Itself Into a lingam. The Lord said that whoever fasts on that day or worships Him will get all that is good in this life and will escape rebirth. He also said that the lingam will get installed in all the temples and the place where the lingam appeared first will be known as Arunachalam. Aruna means red - the colour of the flame. Achalam means mountain. Shiva in this place is known as Arunachaleshvara.

భోగావహం ఇదం లింగం భుక్తిముక్త్యైక సాధనమ్ ।
దర్శన-పుర్షన-ధ్యానాజ్ఞస్తానాం జన్మ మోచనమ్ ॥

అనలాచల-సంకాశం యదిదం లింగముత్థితమ్ ।
అరుణాచలమిత్యేవ తదిదం ఖ్యాతమేష్యతి ॥

This have occurred in Tiruvannamali where the lingam in the temple is known as tejolingam (తేజోలింగమ్). The event is celebrated as an annual festival in that town. A big lamp is lighted at the top of the hill behind the temple to mark the event. Thousands of people gather to witness the light.

Shivaratri day is celebrated with great deal of fervour in Shiva temples all over the country. This is a vratam and so is marked by pujas, fasting and offering prayers throughout the night. After having bath one should wear vibhuti, necklace of rudraksha beads, worship the Lord with bilva leaves, chant the sacred panchakshara mantra and visit Shiva temple and participate in the pujas that are done throughout the night. Fasting is prescribed as an aid to curb the wandering tendency of the mind so that it can concentrate on the job on hand - in this case the puja of the Lord. This is known to us for long. Shri Krishna mentions this in Bhagavad Gita (2-59).

విషయా వినివర్తన్తే నిరాహారస్య దేహినః।

Some verses from the Shiva puranas that extol the important day are given here with rough translation.

మాఘకృష్ణచతుర్దశ్యాం ఉపవాసోఽతిదుర్లభః ।
తత్రాపి దుర్లభం మన్యే రాత్రౌ జాగరణం నృణామ్ ॥

Fasting on the chaturdashi day in the fortnight following the full moon

day in the Magha month (ie) on Shivaratri day is not something that is easily got by everyone. Still more difficult to get is the possibility of keeping awake during the night on that day.

అతీవ దుర్లభం తత్ర శివలిङ्గస్య దర్శనమ్ ।
సుదుర్లభతరం తత్ర పూజనం పరమేశితుః ॥

It is very difficult to have darshan of the Shiva lingam. Still more difficult is a to get a chance to worship the Lord.

భవకోటి-శతోపాత్త-పుణ్య-రాశి-విపాకతః ।
లభ్యతే వా పునస్తత్ర బిల్వ-పత్రార్పణం విభోః ॥

Even in performing that worship to that omnipresent Lord the good fortune to offer bilva leaves to Him is got only by the fructification of good deeds done in innumerable births.

వర్షాణామయుతం యేన స్నాతం గణ్ఘాసరిజ్జలై ।
సకృద్ బిల్వార్చనేనైవ తత్ఫలం లభ్యతే నరైః ॥

What merit one earns by taking bath in the river Ganga for ten thousand years is got by worshipping Lord with the bilva leaves on Shivaratri day.

అత్రోపవాసః కేనాపి కృతః క్రతుశతాయతే ।
రాత్రౌ జాగరణం పుణ్యం వర్షకోటి-తపోధికమ్ ॥

Fasting on the night of Shivaratri is equivalent to performing hundred vedic sacrifices. Keeping awake on that night is superior to austerities performed in ten million years.

ఏకేన బిల్వ-పత్రేణ శివ-లిङ్గార్చనే కృతే ।
త్రైలోక్యే తస్య పుణ్యస్య కో వా సాదృశ్యమృచ్ఛతి ॥

Nothing in all the worlds equals the merit one earns by offering one
bilva leaf to the Lord on that holy day.

అహో బలవతీ మాయా యేన శైవీ మహాతిథిః ।

నోపాస్యతే జనై-ర్ముఢైః అతిమూర్ఖైరివ త్రయీ ॥

OH! great is the power of maya. Ignorant people do not observe Shivaratri
which is so glorious. This is just like the ignorant people not caring
to study the vedas.

ఉపవాసో జాగరణం సన్నిధిః పరమేశితుః ।

గోకర్ణం శివలోకస్య నృణాం సోపాన-పద్ధతిః ॥

Fasting on Shivaratri day, keeping awake during that night, visiting
the temple of the Lord, the holy place of Gokarna constitute the steps
for one to reach the abode of Lord Shiva .

THE SUMMER FESTIVAL:-

The summer festival (March-April) lasts for ten days. It attracts
huge crowds from in and around the city of Chennai. We can have
the darshan of the Lord riding on the bull Nandi on the fifth day.

One of the Lord's name is ఋషభారూఢః. The bull or rishabha
(ఋషభః) represents dharma which showers all desired results

like dharma. artha kama and also gives purity of mind that helps
in pursuing moksha. The commentator says :- "వృష సేచనే"

వర్షణాత్ సర్వకామానాంవృషభః, ధర్మరూపతయా సర్వకామప్రదత్వాత్,

తమారూఢః; వృషభవాహనః ఇత్యర్థః।SAN(40). The Lord also has

the bull as the mark in His flag. Because of this He also has the name

వృషాఙ్కుః।SAN(39).. This shows the great importance the Lord

attaches to dharma.

On the seventh day we have the car festival when He goes round the streets in a car. It is very popular and attracts huge crowds. It is said that one who can have the darsan of the Lord in the car will escape rebirth.

రథస్థం వామనం దృష్ట్వా పునర్జన్మ న విద్యతే । The "car" represents the body.

ఆత్మానం రథినం విద్ధి శరీరం రథమేవ చ ।
బుద్ధిం తు సారథిం విద్ధి మనః ప్రగ్రహమేవ చ ॥

says Katha Upanishad (1-3-3).

The Self within the body is the charioteer, the one who rides in the chariot. The వామనః or dwarf mentioned herein refers to the Self, Supreme Being, the size of the thumb, who resides in the body, in the small chamber of the heart of everyone. The Katha Upanishad says this. (KU-2-1-12).

అఙ్గుష్ఠమాత్రః పురుషో మధ్య ఆత్మని తిష్ఠతి ।
ఈశానం భూతభవ్యస్య న తతో విజగుష్పతే ॥

Even though the Self is all pervading, It is conceived as a dwarf residing in the heart to facilitate meditation on It.

Another important festival is the day when the 63 saivaite saints, known as Nayanmars are taken in a procession and the Lord follows His devotees. A popular Tamil poet Avvaiyar has said in one of her poems that a devotee of the Lord is greater than the Lord Himself as he has the Lord enshrined in his heart! This will remind us of what Sri Krishna told about His devotees to His friend Uddhava in the Uddhava Gita.

నిరపేక్షం మునిం శాస్త్రం నిర్వైరం సమదర్శనమ్ ।
అనువ్రజామ్యహం నిత్యం పూయయేత్యఙ్ఞిరేణుభిః ॥

(Srimad Bhagavatam-11-14-16).

He said that He invariably follows His devotees.

This festival is celebrated on the eighth day.

On the ninth day one can have the darshan of the Lord as **భిక్షాటనః** a mendicant going around the streets with a begging bowl. The question now arises as to why the Lord is reduced to state of nothingness? Puranas tell that Lord Shiva took on the role of a beggar with a dishevelled appearance to teach a lesson to some sages who were staunch adherents of the path of karma and ignored the higher path of jnana. They were proud of their achievements in this path that got them some supernatural powers also. The beggar was extremely handsome. On seeing Him many of the men and women in the ashram precinct lost their balance and started following Him. When the sages saw this they were furious. They cursed him and let loose some demons created by their spiritual power. But their attempts to harm the beggar utterly failed and they felt humiliated. They surrendered to the Lord.

The ten days festival concludes with the wedding of the divine couple (Lord Kapali and Devi Kalpakambal). The function is celebrated with great deal of enthusiasm by the people as they consider it as a marriage happening in their own house. Everyone brings presents to the "bride" and "groom" in the form of silk sarees and silk dhoties etc. Many offer pieces of jewellery. They also bring sweet and savoury items prepared specially for the occasion. Thus the marriage turns out to be a memorable occasion. After the function gets over the devotees are given prasada offered to the divine couple. The wedding signifies the union of the Jivatma and Pramatma who were never separate, but felt separated due to the veil of avidya or nescience. The Lalithasahasranamam describes Devi Lalitha as **కామేశ-బద్ధ-మాణ్డల్య-సూత్ర-శోభిత-కన్ధరా**। Devi's

neck shines with the Mangalya thread tied by the Lord who, therefore

has the name అమ్మికానాథః = అమ్మికాయా నాథః పతిః। ఇదం చార్థతః

శ్రుతి-వ్రసిద్ధం నామ। "నమో హిరణ్య-బాహవే హిరణ్య-వర్ణాయ

హిరణ్య-రూపాయ హిరణ్య-పతయేఽమ్మికా-పతయ ఉమా-పతయే పశు-పతయే

నమోనమః।

We also have the float festival (in January-February) when the Lord goes

round the tank in a float. This symbolises the fact that the Lord Siva,

like a boatman, goes in a boat or raft, scours the ocean of samsara and

looks for people who are struggling in the ocean and seeking His help

to come out of it. So Siva has these names .

సంసారార్ణవ-మగ్నానాం సముద్ధరణ హేతుః -

సంసారః జననమరణాదిసమూహః స ఏవార్ణవః, సముద్రః అపారత్వాత్,

తత్ర మగ్నానాం సర్వదా దుఃఖనుభవిత్పాణాం,

దుఃఖనాశకరప్లవాదిరహితానాం, సముద్ధరణే,

తేషాం దుఃఖనాశనే హేతుః కారణం వేదాంతమహావాక్యజన్య-

వృత్త్యారూఢః సన్ సంసరపాశవిచ్ఛేదకరత్వాత్ ॥

"జ్ఞాత్వా దేవం సర్వపాశాపహానిరితి" శ్రుతిః ॥SS(408) and

విషయార్ణవమగ్నానాం సముద్ధరణసేతుః -

విషయశబ్దేన విషయానుభవరూపసంసార ఉచ్యతే॥ స ఏవార్ణవః

సముద్రః విషయార్ణవః, తస్మిన్ సంసారసముద్రే మహతి,

అవిద్యాకామకర్మప్రభవదుఃఖోదకే తీవ్రరోగజరామృత్యుమహాగ్రాహే

అనాదావనంతేఽపారే నిరాలమ్పే విషయేన్ద్రియజనితసుఖలవలక్షణవిభ్రమే,

పఞ్చేన్ద్రియోత్థత్పాణా రుత- విక్షోభోత్థితానర్థశతమహోర్మిణి,

మహాపాతకాద్యనేకనిరయగతే, (దుర్వారవారిచరగర్భే) హాహేత్యాది-

కూజితాక్రోశనోద్భూతమహార్ణవే మగ్నానాం సముద్ధరణే సమ్యగుద్ధరణే

సేతురివ సేతుః ।

"త్రిరున్నతం స్థాప్య సమం శరీరం

హృదీస్త్రియాణి మనసా సన్నివేశ్య ।

బ్రహ్మాడుపేన ప్రతరేవ విద్వాన్

స్తోతాంసి సర్వాణి భయావహాని॥" ఇతి శ్రుతిః ॥SS(477).

This will bring to our mind the verse from the popular Karavalamba stotrAm wherein Shri Shankaracharya beseeches Lord Laxmi Narasimha to extend His hand and pull him out of the fearsome ocean of samsara.

సంసార-సాగర-నిమజ్జన-ముహ్యమానం

దీనం విలోకయ విభో కరుణానిధే మామ్ ।

ప్రహ్లాద-భేద-పరిహార-పరావతార-

లక్ష్మీన్యసింహ మమ దేహి కరావలమ్బమ్॥(౧౦) ॥

Every individual is struggling in the ocean of samsara, but does not know how to reach the shore. Also he does not have the ability to know the means. In such a precarious situation the kindly acharya tells us that reaching out to the Lord is the only way. One struggling in the sea for a long time swallows the bitter water, feels weak and faint. In the same way one caught in the ocean of samsara takes in the poison of pleasures and pains through the senses and is befuddled. The acharya herein gently reminds the Lord that saving someone caught in the sea is not something new to Him. On an earlier occasion He had rescued Prahlada who was bound to a big slab of stone and thrown into the sea by saying ప్రహ్లాద-భేద-పరిహార-పరావతారమ్। The kindly Lord is one who is capable of helping us to get out of samsara and administer the required treatment. He is renowned in the vedas as the foremost and divine physician. Shri Rudram says this.అధ్యవోచదధి వక్తా ప్రథమో దైవ్యో భిషక్। Krishna says that He will lift up those who have exclusive devotion to Him from the ocean of samsara. Gita (12-7).

తేషామహం సముద్ధర్తా మృత్యుసంసారసాగరాత్ ।

భవామి న చిరాత్పార్థ మయ్యావేశితచేతసామ్ ॥

There is a separate temple inside the main temple for Devi who bears the name Kalpakambal. It is said that She took the form of a peacock and worshipped the Lord here to demonstrate the power of devotion. Peacock is called "mayil" in Tamil. Thus the place has come to be known as Mailai or as Mayilapuri and as Mylapore.

Kapali is one of Shiva's names. (No.24-Shiva 108 namavali). Kapala means a skull. Siva wears a garland of skulls. Each skull in His garland is said to be that of one Brahma, the creator god after Brahma's demise at the time of resolution or pralaya. Brahma is only the name of the post, like that of the President or the Prime Minister. When the post is vacated by the occupant another suitable person takes up the post and the work of creation continues. This period is known as కల్పం kalpam. At the time of Kalpam, Shiva withdraws the creation within Himself and releases it at the beginning of the next Kalpa. Krishna says this in Gita-(9-7).

సర్వభూతాని కౌన్తేయ ప్రకృతిం యాన్తి మామికామ్ ।

కల్పక్షయే పునస్తాని కల్పాదౌ విస్ఫజామ్యహమ్ ॥

Brahma has a very long life according to our calendar. We may get an idea about Brahma's longevity from the following figures. 360 human years = 1 year of devas. 12,000 years of the devas = The duration of 4 yugas. 2000 such periods = One day of Brahma. Brahma has a life of 100 years made of such days and is equal to 432 million years of mortals. Thus, it is very very long as per our reckoning. Still, Brahma has a finite life only, however long it may be. It has an end. So, every one, including Brahma, is absorbed by Lord's Prakriti and released again.

Shiva wearing a garland made of skulls of Brahmas indicates that Shiva is beyond time, is eternal and lasts even after other lesser gods like Brahma who are in the grip of time meet their end. Shri Nilakanta Dikshita explains this in his Shivatattvarahasyam as follows. SAN(24).

కపాలీతి - కపాలం బ్రహ్మకపాలం అన్యాస్తీతి కపాలీ ఏతేన
అనేక-బ్రహ్మత్యయ-దర్శిత్య-లక్షణం సనాతనత్వముక్తం భవతి ।

Now we are faced with a peculiar problem. What can we ask of Kapaleeshvara, who Himself goes around with a begging bowl (kapalam or skull) in His hand? Shri Shankaracharya too faced this problem and had come out with an ingenious solution. He had seen that wandering beggars usuallu keep with them dogs, monkeys and such small animals. They make the animals do some simple tricks, entertain the people and collect alms. He says that he has a monkey called his mind that is very frisky, mischevous and uncontrollable. He beseeches the Lord to tie it with the cord of devotion and take it with Him. Please look at this entreaty that is addressed to Kapali.

సదా మోహటవ్యాం చరతి యువతీనాం కుచ-గిరౌ
నటత్యాశాశాఖావటతి ంఱితి స్వైరమభితః ।
కపాలిన్! భిక్షో! మే హృదయ-కపిమత్యస్త-చపలం
దృఢం బధ్యా శివ భవదధీనం కురు విభో! ॥ SL (20).

Thus, the hymn that follows is about the Infinite Supreme Being who appears as Kapali for the benefit of devotees and who is none other than Lord Shiva. Devi Kalpakamba is His Maya shakti also known as Prakriti. The Supreme Being associated with maya is known as Ishwara or Maheshwara. This is said in the Svethasvaropanishad as: మాయాం తు ప్రకృతిం విద్యాన్మాయినం తు మహేశ్వరమ్ । Maya has names as Parvati, ShivA, Uma etc. Shiva means auspiciouness. SS(18). శివో మఙ్గలరూపః।

నిర్మాప్త-నిఖిల-దుఃఖానుషంక-పరమానంద-రూప ఇత్యర్థః ।

So is also Devi Kalpakamba who has the name Mangala (meaning auspicious). The following popular verse from Saptasloki Durga says this clearly.

సర్వమంజలమాంజల్యే శివే సర్వార్థసాధికే ।

శరణ్యే త్ర్యమ్బికే గౌరి నారాయణి నమోఽస్తు తే ॥

Thus, by saluting them whose very names spell auspiciousness, one is bound to get all that is good in life here and hereafter. The following popular verse says this.

యః శివో నమరూపాభ్యాం యా దేవీ సర్వమంజలా ।

తయోః సంస్మరణాత్ పుంసాం సర్వతో జయ మంజలమ్ ॥

The Kaivalyopanishad (7) says:-

ఉమాసహాయం పరమేశ్వరం ప్రభుం

త్రిలోచనం నీలకణ్ఠం ప్రశాంతమ్ ।

ధ్యాత్వా మునిర్గచ్ఛతి భూతయోనిం

సమస్తసాక్షిం తమసః పరస్తాత్ ॥

that one, by meditating on the highest Lord who is allied to Uma, supremely powerful, three eyed, has a blue neck and tranquil reaches Him who is the source of all, the witness of all and is beyond darkness (ignorance or avidya).

This is said in the following verse also.

కల్పకామ్బా-కపాలీశౌ భక్తరక్షణ-తత్పరౌ ।

తయోః అనుగ్రహో యత్ర వర్తతే తత్ర మంజలమ్ ॥

॥ శ్రీ కపాలీశ్వరాష్టకమ్ ॥

కపాలి-నామధేయకం కలాపి-పుర్యధీశ్వరం
కలాధరార్థ-శేఖరం కరీన్ద్ర-చర్మ-భూషితమ్ ।
కృపా-రసార్థ-లోచనం కులాచల-ప్రపూజితం
కుబేర-మిత్రమూర్ఛితం గణేశ-పూజితం భజే ॥ ౧॥

భజే భుజ్జ-భూషణం భవాభి-భీతి-భణ్ణానం
భవోద్భవం భయాపహం సుఖప్రదం సురేశ్వరమ్ ।
రవీన్ద్ర-వహ్ని-లోచనం రమా-ధవార్చితం వరం
హ్యూమా-ధవం సుమాధవీ-సుభూషితం మహాగురుమ్ ॥ ౨॥

గురుం గిరీన్ద్ర-ధన్వినం గుహ-ప్రియం గుహశయం
గిరి-ప్రియం నగ-ప్రియా-సమన్వితం వర-ప్రదమ్ ।
సుర-ప్రియం రవి-ప్రభం సురేన్ద్ర-పూజితం ప్రభుం
నరేన్ద్ర-పీఠ-దాయకం నమామ్యహం మహేశ్వరమ్ ॥ ౩॥

మహేశ్వరం సురేశ్వరం ధనేశ్వర-ప్రియేశ్వరం
వనేశ్వరం విశుద్ధ-చిత్త వాసినం పరాత్పరమ్ ।
ప్రమత్తవేష-ధారిణం ప్రకృష్ట-చిత్స్వరూపిణం
విరుద్ధ-కర్మ-కారిణం సుశిక్షకం స్మరామ్యహమ్ ॥ ౪॥

స్మరామ్యహం స్మరాన్తకం మురారి-సేవితాఙ్ఘికం
పరారి-నాశన-క్షమం పురారి రూపిణం శుభమ్ ।
స్ఫుఅరత్-సహస్ర-భాను-తుల్య తేజసం మహాజసం
సు-చణ్డికేశ పూజితం మృడం సమాశ్రయే సదా ॥ ౫॥

సదా ప్రహృష్ట-రూపిణం సతాం ప్రహర్ష-వర్షిణం
భిదా వినాశ-కారణ ప్రమాణగోచరం పరమ్ ।
ముదా ప్రవృత్త-నర్తనం జగత్పవిత్ర-కీర్తనం

నిదానమేకమద్భుతం నితాన్తమాశ్రయేహ్యహమ్ ॥ ౬॥

అహం-మమాది దూషణం మహేస్త్ర-రత్న-భూషణం
మహా-వృషేస్త్ర-వాహనం హ్యహీస్త్ర-భూషణాన్వితమ్ ।
వృషాకపి-స్వరూపిణం మృషా-పదార్థ-ధారిణం
మృకణ్ణుసూను సంస్తుతం హ్యభీతిదం నమామి తమ్ ॥ ౭॥

నమామి తం మహామతిం నతేష్టదాన-చక్షణం
నతార్తి-భజ్జానోద్యతం నగేస్త్ర-వాసినం విభుమ్ ।
అగేస్త్రజా సమన్వితం మృగేస్త్ర విక్రమాన్వితం
ఖగేస్త్ర-వాహన-ప్రియం సుఖస్వరూపమవ్యయమ్ ॥ ౮॥

సుకల్పకామ్బికా-పతి-ప్రియంత్విదం మనోహరం
సుగూడకాఞ్చిరామకృష్ణ యోగిశిష్య సంస్తుతమ్ ।
మహాప్రదోష పుణ్యకాల కీర్తనాత్సుభప్రదం
భజామహే సదాముదా కపాలి మఙ్గళాష్టకమ్ ॥ ౯॥

కపాలి తుష్టిదాయకం మహాపది ప్రపాలకం
త్వభీష్ట-సిద్ధి-దాయకం విశిష్ట-మఙ్గలాష్టకమ్ ।
పఠేత్సుభక్తితః కపాలి సన్నిధౌ క్రమాత్
అవాప్య సర్వమాయురాది మోదతే సుమఙ్గలమ్ ॥ ౧౦॥

ఇతి గూడలూర్ శ్రీరామకృష్ణానంద యతీస్త్ర శిష్య
శ్రీ రామచన్ద్రేణ విరచితం
॥ శ్రీ కపాలీశ్వరాష్టకం సమ్పూర్ణమ్ ॥

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