

చిదంబరం శ్రీనటరాజస్తుతి

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నమస్తే రూద్ర మన్యవ ఉతోత ఇషవే నమః ।

నమస్తే అస్తు ధన్వనే కరాభ్యాం తే నమో నమః ॥ ౧॥

యాతే రుద్ర శివా తనూః శాన్తా తస్యై నమో నమః ।

నమోఽస్తు నీలగ్రీవాయ సహస్రాక్షాయ తే నమః ॥ ౨॥

సహస్రపాణయే తుభ్యం మీఢుష్ఠమాయ తే నమః ।

కవర్దినే నమస్తుభ్యం కాలరూపాయ తే నమః ॥ ౩॥

నమస్తే చాత్తశస్త్రాయ నమస్తే శూలపాణయే ।

హిరణ్యపాణయే తుభ్యం హిరణ్యపతయే నమః ॥ ౪॥

నమస్తే వృక్షరూపాయ హరికేశాయ తే నమః ।

పశూనాం పతయే తుభ్యం పథీనాం పతయే నమః ॥ ౫॥

పుష్పానాం పతయే తుభ్యం క్షేత్రాణాం పతయే నమః ।

ఆతతావిస్వరూపాయ వనానాం పతయే నమః ॥ ౬॥

రోహితాయ స్తపతయే వృక్షాణాం పతయే నమః ।

నమస్తే మన్త్రిణే సాక్షాత్ కక్షాణాం పతయే నమః ॥ ౭॥

ఓవధీనాం చ పతయే నమః సాక్షాత్పరాత్మనే ।

ఉచ్చైర్హౌషాయ దేవాయ పత్తీనాం పతయే నమః ॥ ౮॥

సత్వానాం పతయే తుభ్యం ఘనానాం పతయే నమః ।

సహమానాయ శాన్తాయ శంకరాయ నమో నమః ॥ ౯॥

ఆధీనాం పతయే తుభ్యం వ్యాధీనం పతయే నమః ।

కకుభాయ నమస్తుభ్యం నమస్తేఽస్తు నిషణ్ణిణే ॥ ౧౦॥

స్తేనానాం పతయే తుభ్యం ధనానాం పతయే నమః ।

తస్కరాణాం నమస్తుభ్యం పతయే పాపహరిణే ॥ ౧౧॥

వజ్రతే పరివజ్రతే స్తాయూనాం పతయే నమః ।

నమో నిచేరవే తుభ్యం అరణ్యానాం పతయే నమః ॥ ౧౨॥

ఉష్ణిషిణే నమస్తుభ్యం నమస్తే పరమాత్మనే ।

విస్మతాయ నమస్తుభ్యం ఆసీనాయ నమోనమః ॥ ౧౩॥

శయనాయ నమ్నుభ్యం సుషుప్తాయ నమో నమః ।

ప్రబుద్ధాయ నమస్తుభ్యం స్థిరాయ పరమాత్మనే ॥ ౧౪॥

సభారూపాయ తే నిత్యం సభాయాః పతయే నమః ।

నమః శివాయ సామ్నాయ బ్రహ్మణే సర్వసాక్షిణే ॥ ౧౫॥

॥ ఇతి సూతసంహితాయాం ముక్తికాణ్డే సభాపతిస్తుతిః సమ్పూర్ణమ్ ॥

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The following abbreviations are used in the commentary.

SS - Shiva Sahasranamam (Padmapuranam with the commentary of Shri

Paramasivendra Sarasvati)

VS - VishnuSahasranama. BG - Bhagavad Gita

The above verses are in praise of Lord Nataraja at the famous shrine in

Chidambaram. They are from Suta Samhita, Mukti Kanda. The Suta Samhita talks about the glory of Chidambaram in chapters 9 and 10. The puranas say that it is one of the most hallowed places on earth. For For vaishnavas, the word `temple' refers to Shrirangam. Others refer to Chidambaram as `temple'. It is one of the ముక్తి క్షేత్రమ్ - places where one gets liberation just by seeing it. The following verse says that.

దర్శనాదభ్రసదసి, జన్మనః కమలాలయే ।
కాశ్యాస్తు మరణాత్ ముక్తిః, స్మరణాదరుణాచలే ॥

MEANING:- One gets liberated by seeing Chidambaram, by being born in Tiruvarur where there is the tank Kamalalaya, by dying at Kashi and by merely thinking of Arunachala. Chidambaram is also one of the places renowned as Kailas on earth where the Lord is ever present and confers liberation. The following verse says that.

సేతుర్వాతపురీ చిదమృరసభా గోకర్ణ-పమ్పాపురీ
శ్వేతారణ్య-వటాటవీ శ్రుతిపురీ శోణాద్రి వృద్ధాచలాః ।
కాఞ్చీ శ్రీగిరి కాలహస్తినగరీ కేదార-వారాణసీ
కైలాసా ఇతి శంకరస్య నిలయా ఖ్యాతాశ్చ ముక్తిప్రదాః ॥

Maharshi Jaimini, in his Vedapadastava శ్రీవేదపాదస్తవః says that one who utters the name Chidambaram sets out on his way to liberation.

చిదమృరమితి బ్రూయాత్ సకృజ్ఞననవర్ణితః ।
ముక్తిఘట్టామణిపథం మోక్షమేవ సమశ్చుతే ॥

The holy place is said to be the heart (హృదయ స్థానమ్) of the Virat Purusha representing the universe. The deities at other temples

are said to merge with Nataraja after the last puja for the day is over and the temples are closed for the day.

THE TEMPLE:- The origin of the temple is lost in antiquity. Historical references to it take one back to 6th century CE. It was built in 10th century. Krishnadeva Raja, the king of Vijayanagar has also contributed to the building of the temple. It is a magnificent edifice and occupies a vast area of about 18 acres. Amongst the temples in India it occupies a pre-eminent place because of its antiquity, richness in terms of worship, the festival traditions and the architectural and sculptural profusion. Its association with music and dance is unique in nurturing the cultural heritage of our country. It has four towers of about 50 meters tall. They carry elaborate carvings including the 108 classical dance postures.

The sanctum is known as Kanaka Sabhaకనక సభా or the golden hall.

So, He is known asకనకసభాపతి Kanaka Sabhapati or simply as

సభాపతి Sabhapati, Sabesan and Sabhanayakan. The Lord

also has the golden hue. He, therefore has the name (SS-273)

హిరణ్యః- హిరణ్యసదృశ-సర్వాణ్ణో హిరణ్యః ।

ఆప్రణఖాత్పర్వ ఏవ సువర్ణ ఇతి శ్రుతిః॥

He dances in the golden hall. The sabha or hall represents the heart.

One is advised to meditate on Him as available in the heart.

Taittiriya Upanishad (1-6)says this.

స ఏషోఽస్తర్భదయ ఆకాశః తస్మిన్నయం పురుషో మనోమయః అమృతో హిరణ్యయః।

So, one who can see the Lord in the sabha or within the

heart gets liberated. This is what is meant by saying quoted

aboveదర్శనాదభ్రసదసి that one gets freed by seeing

Chidambaram. దభ్ర = small or little. The small space in the

heart is referred to here. The Mundaka upanishad (3-1-3) makes this abundantly clear.

యదా పశ్యః పశ్యతే రుక్మవర్ణం కర్తారమీశం పురుషం బ్రహ్మయోనిమ్ ।
తదా విద్వాన్పుణ్యపాపే విధూయ నిరజ్ఞానః పరమం సామ్యముపైతి ॥

MEANING:- When one sees the Purusha (Self within) - the One having the colour of shining gold, the creator, the Lord and who is the source then he becomes illuminated, completely shakes of all bondage (karmas that bind and cause rebirth), becomes pure and becomes one with Him. The same subject is also discussed in chapter 8 of Chandogyopanishad wherein the subject is called దహర విద్యా। దహర means small and the heart itself. It says:-

అథ యదిదమస్మిన్ బ్రహ్మపురే దహరం పుణ్డరీకం వేశ్మ
దహరోఽస్మిన్నస్తరాకశ-స్తస్మిన్ యదస్తస్తదన్వేష్టవ్యం,
తద్వావ విజిజ్ఞాసితవ్యమితి ॥ ౧.౧॥

MEANING:- In this body there is a small house; in it there is space; one should seek and find what is in it. The space is known as దహరాకాశమ్ small sky to differentiate it from the big sky we see around us. Shri Krishna clearly talks about this more than once.

జ్యోతిషామపి తజ్జ్యోతి-స్తమసః పరముచ్యతే । జ్ఞానం జ్ఞేయం
జ్ఞానగమ్యం హృది సర్వస్య విష్టితమ్ ॥ (BG 13-17)

again:-

సర్వస్య చాహం హృది సన్నివిష్టః మత్తః
స్మృతిర్జ్ఞానమపోహనం చ । వేదైశ్చ సర్వైరహమేవ వేద్యః
వేదాస్తకృద్వేదవిదేవ చాహమ్ ॥(BG 15-15)

The gist of the above verses may be said as this. The Lord is seated in the heart of all and is behind all their actions. He is of the form of pure wisdom. He is to be known and can be known only by wisdom.

The following verse, also from the mouth of Krishna says that He is not just sitting in the hearts, but enlivens every cell in the body.

ఈశ్వరః సర్వభూతానాం హృద్దేశేఽర్జున తిష్ఠతి ।

బ్రామయన్ సర్వభూతాని యన్త్రారూఢాణి మాయయా ॥ (BG 18-61).

Modern science confirms the fact that cells in the body have intelligence. Even when one is asleep or in coma or under sedation, activities go on within the body of which one is not aware. The blood circulation goes on. Cells receive nutrition from the blood stream and exchange waste material and accept oxygen and so on. Similar activities take place within every living being including plants. This shows that the Lord in the form of consciousness pervades the entire universe. This activity of the Lord who is seated in the heart is called His dance.

To sum up, Chitచిత్ means intelligence and also Brahman - the Supreme Being. Ambaram -అమ్బరమ్ means the space or ether. The scriptures often compare Brahman to space, because they share many common attributes. For example space envelops everything - the entire universe - in fact and is imperceptible to senses. So, the place Chidambaram may be taken to be the external representation of the Chidambaram within every one.

For these reasons said above Chidambaram occupies a prime position in our culture comparable to Kashi and Rameshvaram. Our tradition says that one should make it a mission to visit Chidambaram and see the temple in one's lifetime - else the purpose of life is not

fulfilled. The Tamil shaivaite saints, known as Nayanmars have gone ecstatic on seeing the Lord, sung at Chidambaram and poured out their joy in many songs in praise of the Lord . Normally a devotee prays to the Lord to spare him from the agony of rebirth. But one nayanmar wished that to drink in the divine beauty of the Lord at Chidambaram he should be born again and again. Another nayanmar says in one of his songs that any day that one does not talk of the Lord is wasted as he can be deemed to be not born on that day.

One unique feature of the temple at Chidambaram is that as one stands facing the sanctum of Nataraja, he can also have the darshan of Lord Ranganatha (రఙ్గనాథః) lying on His splendid serpent bedశేష సయనమ్ and in the lotus that comes out of His navel is seated Lord Brahma the creator. Thus the fortunate visitor to the temple can have the darsan of all the three gods - Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva - at one go. Lord Nataraja is also the very personification of bliss. According to Saiva Agamic texts the ananda aspect of the Lord is represented by the form of Nataraja. The realisation of Nataraja's dance within the recess in the devotee's heart unites him with Shiva as said above. Ranganatha (who is Vishnu) is also bliss personified. He has the name

ఆనందః- ఆనందస్వరూపమస్యేతి ఆనందః, ద్విత్యైవానందస్య అన్యాని భూతాని మాత్రాముపజీవన్తి ద్విత్యై ఇతి శ్రుతేః (VS -526). He is also of golden hue says the sahasranama (737, 738) సువర్ణవర్ణః, హేమాఙ్గః। He also shines in the devotees' hearts. The great Acharya Vedanta Deshika says this in his wonderful poem Shri Bhagavaddhyana sopanam (శ్రీ భగవద్ధ్యాన సోపానమ్). In fact this is the very first verse in the poem. Please note how wonderfully sweet is this verse.

అస్తర్జ్ఞాతిః కిమపియమినామజ్ఞానం యోగదృష్టేః చిన్తారత్నం
 సులభమిహ నః సిద్ధిమోక్షానురూపమ్ । దీనానాథ వ్యసనశమనం
 దైవతం దైవతానాం దివ్యం చక్షుః శ్రుతిపరిషదాం దృశ్యతే
 రఙ్గమధ్యే ॥

Thus, He and Nataraja are one and the same but have different forms.

The great scholar devotee Shri Appayya Dikshitar spent his last days in Chidambaram. He was a staunch advaitin and so saw no difference between the two - Nataraja and Ranganatha. He has composed a unique poem హరిహర అభేద స్తుతిః wherein he says he sees no difference between the two. The Chidambaram temple has a separate shrine within the main temple dedicated to Devi who bears the name Shivakamasundari. She represents the Maya shakti of Shiva.

When Lord Nataraja is dancing at Chidambaram four persons - Patanjali, Vyagrada, Nandhi and Bhiringi are the blessed ones who witness the divine phenomenon. The first two are maharishis and the other two are devarishis. Devarshis are deified divine sages, such as Atri, Bhrgu, Angiras etc. Thus Nandhi and Bhiringi are always with the Lord. Just like the sun setting at a village in the evening also sets in all other places in the evening, so also Shiva dances at Chidambaram in the evenings implies that He dances in the evenings at other places too. The dance of Lord Shiva is described in the following verse from Shiva thandava stotram. The third line of the verse mentions who are all witnessing the dance.

అనన్తనవ-రత్న-విలసత్కటక-కిశ్కిణి-ల్లజ్జలయులజ్జలరవం
 ముకున్ద-విధి-హస్త-గత-మద్దల-లయధ్వని-ధిమిద్ధిమిత-సర్తనమ్ ।
 శకున్తరథ-బర్హిరథ-నన్దిముఖ-దన్తిముఖ-భృశ్శి-రిటి-సజ్గ-నికటం
 సనన్ద-సనక-ప్రముఖ-వన్దిత-పదం పర-చిదమ్పర-నటం హృది భజ ॥

శకుంతరథ = one who has the bird as His vehicle -

శకుంతః = bird. రథః = chariot or vehicle. So,

the word శకుంతరథ refers to Vishnu who has Garuda as

his vehicle. Next, బర్హిరథ = One who has peacock as

His vehicle. బర్హిన్ = peacock. So, the word బర్హిరథ

refers to Kartikeya. దన్తిముఖ = one having the face of an

elephant. దన్తిన్ = elephant. ముఖమ్ = face. Refers to

Ganapati. భృంగీ-రితి-సఙ్గ-నికటం = The group consisting

of those mentioned here, namely, Vishnu, Kartikeys, Nandi, Ganesha

and the sages Bhringi and Riti. సఙ్గమ్ = group. నికటమ్

= nearby. Of course we have to include His consort Parvati Devi who

is always with Shiva. The last line asks us to meditate on the feet

of Nataraja which is worshipped by great sages such as Sanaka and

Sananda. Shiva as Nataraja and DakShinamurthy are facing the south

which is the direction presided over by Yama the god of death. By this

they show that those devotees who approach Him will not be bothered by

Yama. Both are having the demon Apasmara who represents ignorance or

avidya under their foot. Thus there is no difference between the two.

The Tamil saint Thirumular in his famous work Thirumandiram says that

the dance of Lord Nataraja symbolises His five acts. The five acts of

Lord Shiva are said in the following verse from Sarvadarsanasangraha

(సర్వదర్శనసఙ్గహః). They are creation, preservation,

destruction, obscuration and blessing.

పఞ్చవిధం తత్యత్యం సృష్టి-స్థితి-సంహార-తిరోభావః ।

తద్వదనుగ్రహకరణం ప్రోక్తం సతతోదితస్యాస్య ॥ఇతి॥

The small drum He holds in His hand signifies SRISHTI or creation;

the lower right hand that offers protection signifies STHITI or

preservation; the upper right hand that holds the flame stands for destruction; the foot that keeps down the asura Apasmara indicates TIROBHAVA or obscuration and finally the perennial dance indicates ANUGRAHA or blessing; all these to bless the devotees. The Lalitha Sahasranama mentions all these five actions.

సృష్టికర్త్రీ బ్రహ్మరూపా గోప్త్రీ గోవిందరూపిణీ ॥ ౧౧౪॥

సంహారిణీ రుద్రరూపా తిరోధానకరీశ్వరీ ।

సదాశివాఽనుగ్రహో పఞ్చకృత్యపరాయణా ॥ ౧౧౫॥

LEGEND:- Sage Saunaka once met Nandhikeshvara and expressed his desire to see the dance of the Lord. Nandhikeshvara said that himself, Uma Devi, Lord Ganesha and Lord Guha witness His dance in Kailasa every day in the evenings as said above. The time is known as ప్రదోష time.

ప్రదోషో రజనీముఖమ్ says Amara the Sanskrit dictionary. It is the time of onset of night. It is auspicious and is to be devoted exclusively for prayer and meditation. Nandhikeshvara replied saying that it is not easily available to others. If he went to Chidambaram, took bath in the Shivaganga tank, chanted the holy panchakshara mantra and also worshipped Lord Sabhapathy for one year then he can witness His dance in the following year. He should start the program from the holy month of Dhanus (9th month in the solar calendar). Sage Saunaka did exactly as advised by Nandhikeshvara and could witness the dance of Shiva in the following year in the Dhanus month on the day presided by Ardhra star. The day is celebrated in Chidambaram as Ardra Darshanam. Thousands of devotees gather at Chidambaram to witness the celebrations. The sages who had assembled in the holy place Naimisharanya heard the above story from

Suta who knows and narrates the puranas. They expressed a desire to witness the dance. Suta prayed to his guru Sage Vyasa who appeared there immediately. Shri Vyasa advised them to go to Chidambaram and repeat the same program as prescribed by Nandhikeshvara to Saunaka. The sages successfully completed the program and as a result could enjoy the divine dance. They praised the Lord Nataraja with the above hymn which contains the essence and wordings of the famous vedic hymn Shri Rudra. The Kaivalyopanishad says that one who recites the hymn Shri Rudra is absolved of all sins.

యః శతరుద్రీయమధీతే సోఽగ్నిపూతో భవతి, సురాపానాత్పూతో భవతి,
బ్రహ్మహత్యాత్పూతో భవతి, తస్మాదవిముక్తమాశ్రితో భవతి।

This hymn being a condensation of Shri Rudra is bound to grant similar benefits on the reader.

SAGE PATANJALI:-

Any talk about Chidambaram will be incomplete without a mention of Sage Patanjali. He was an incarnation of the serpent king Sesha who serves Lord Vishnu. He heard about the glory of the dance of Shiva and became very eager to witness the grand spectacle. At the same time he was reluctant to leave the service of Lord Vishnu. The Lord could divine what was going on in Sesha's mind and granted him permission to leave His services for some time. He advised Sesha to go to earth to Chidambaram and pray to Lord Shiva. Accordingly Sesha came down to earth to Chidambaram which was covered by dense forest at that time. There he met another sage by name Vyagrapada who was worshipping Shiva. Shiva was pleased by their intense devotion. HE appeared before them and granted them their desire to witness His sacred dance. They are blessed to witness the dance every day in the evening from that time. This happened in the first yuga known

as Krita Yuga. Patanjali was the first incarnation of Sesha. In the following Tretha Yuga he was born as Lakshmana and served the Lord born as Rama. In the next yuga known as Dwapara Yuga he took birth as Rama (Balarama) the elder brother of Shri Krishna.

STUNNING FEATURES OF ARCHITECTURAL EXCELLENCY:

The place where temple located is the center point of world's magnetic equator. Three of the five Panchaboothasthala temples, those at Kalahasti, Kanchipuram and Chidambaram all stand on a straight line exactly at 79 degree 41 minutes East longitude - truly an engineering, astrological and geographical wonder. Of the other two temples, Tiruvanaikkaval is located at around 3 degrees to the south and exactly 1 degree to the west of the northern tip of this divine axis, while Tiruvannamalai is around midway (1.5 degree to the south and 0.5 degree to the west).

The 9 gateways signify the 9 orifices in the human body.

The Chitsabai or Ponnambalam, the sanctum sanctorum represents the heart which is reached by a flight of 5 stairs called the Panchakshara steps - pancha meaning 5, akshara - indestructible syllables - SI VA YA NA MA, from a raised anterior dias - the Kanakasabai. The access to the Sabhai is through the sides of the stage (and not from the front as in most temples). The Chit sabha roof is supported by four pillars symbolic of the four Vedas .

The Ponnambalam or the Sanctum sanctorum is held by 28 pillars - representing the 28 agamas or set methodologies for the worship of Shiva. The roof is held by a set of 64 beams representing the 64 forms of art and is held by several cross-beams representing the innumerable blood vessels. The roof has been laid by 21,600 golden tiles with the word SIVAYANAMA inscribed on them representing 21600 breaths

one takes in a day. The golden tiles are fixed using 72,000 golden nails which represents the no. of nadis exists in human body. The roof is topped by a set of 9 sacred pots or kalasas, representing the 9 forms of energy. The ardhmandapa (sanctum) has six pillars denoting the six shastras (holy texts). The hall next to the ardha mantapa has eighteen pillars symbolizing the eighteen Puranas. Shri Nataraj Mandir at Satara is a replica of this temple.

Now, let us end this commentary with a prayer to the Cosmic Dancer. This is a verse that gives a picture of the dancing Nataraja. It explains the significance of the pose of Nataraja in His dance.

లోకానాహూయ సర్వాన్ డమరుకనినదైః ఘోరసంసారమగ్నాన్
దత్వాభీతిం దయాలుః ప్రణతభయహరం కుఞ్చితం వామపాదమ్ ।
ఉద్భ్రత్యేదం విముక్తేరయనమితి కరాత్ దర్శయన్ ప్రత్యయార్థం
విభ్రద్వహ్నిం స పాయాత్ కలయతి నటనం చిత్తభాయాం శివో యః ॥

Meaning: The Lord calls the people struggling in the violent sea of samsara by the sound of the small drum in the right upper hand. By His right lower hand He says "do not be afraid" and offers protection from fear. He indicates by His left hand His left foot that is slightly bent as the path to freedom from the frightful samsara sea. He induces the confidence of the people by holding the fire in His left upper hand.

Let such a Lord who is dancing in the chit sabha protect us.

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