જમ્બુનાથાષ્ટકં

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By Shri Sridharavenkatesa

This hymn is about Jambunatha as Shiva is known at Jambukeswaram (known as Tiruvanaikkaval in Tamil), a place of pilgrimage in Tamilnadu. It is on the northern bank of the river Cauvery and 5 K.M. north of Trichy. The temple is one of the largest (having a spread of nearly 18 acres) and historic temples in the country. It dates back to the 13th century and has been visited by the great saivaite saints who had sung hymns on the presiding deity – Lord Shiva in the temple. It seems that the temple was once a forest of jambu trees and there was a Shiva linga under one of the trees. So Shiva came to be known as Jambunatha or Jambukeswara. This is a Shiva temple associated with one of the five great elements (viz.) water and so called pancha bhoota sthalam (પંચ ભૂત સ્થલમ્). The Shiva lingam in the sanctum is always surrounded by water and so is known as appu lingam (ap for water). The other places where Shiva is worshipped in the form of the great elements are Chidambaram (space), Kalahasthi (air), Tiruvannamalai (fire) and Tiruvarur (earth). The temple is known for the historical inscriptions and magnificient architecture. It suffered damages during the moghul invasion in the 14th century and worship in the temple was disrupted. The temple was restored during the Vijayanagar rule and the worship also revived. The goddess Parvathi in the temple has the name Akilandeswari. She is said to have meditated on lord Shiva

here. Her shrine is very famous and attracts large number of visitors. Adi Shankaracharya is said to have visited the temple and worshipped the Lord and goddess here. Legend. As said earlier the Shiva lingam was under a jambu tree. Two devotees of Shiva were born as a spider and an elephant in the forest due to a curse. Both were regularly worshipping the lord in their own way. The spider would weave a web over the lingam to protect it from the falling leaves. The elephant brought flowers and water in its trunk for bathing the lingam before offering the flowers. But it would clear off the web the spider has built first. This act angered the spider very much. Soon a fierce fight broke out between the two resulting in the death of both. Pleased with their devotion Lord Shiva appeared before them and blessed them. Shince Shiva was worshipped by an elephant (Anai in Tamil) here the place is called AanaikkA.

॥ જમ્બુનાતાષ્ટકમ્ ॥

॥ શ્રી શ્રીધરવેઙ્કટેશાર્યેણ વિરચિતમ્ ॥

કશ્ચન જગતાં હેતુ: કપર્દકન્દલિતકુમુદજીવાતુ: ॥

જયતિ જ્ઞાનમહીન્દ્રુર્જન્મમૃતિકલાંતિહરદયાબિન્દુ: ॥ ૧॥

શ્રિતભૃતિભદ્ધપતાક: કલિતોત્પલવનનવમદ્દોદ્રેક: ॥

અખિલાણ્ડમાતુરેક: સુખયત્વસ્માંસ્તપ:પરીપાક: ॥ ૨॥

કશ્ચન કારુણ્યઝર: કમલાકુચકલશકષણનિશિતશર: ॥

શ્રીમાન્ દમિતત્રિપુર: શ્રિતજંભૂપરિસરશ્ચકાસ્તુ પુર: ॥ ૩॥

શમિતસ્મરદવવિસરશશકાઘાશાસ્યસેવનાવસર: ॥

કરિવનઘનભાગ્યભરો ગિરતુ મલં મમ મનસ્સરશ્શફર: ॥ ૪॥

ગૃહિણીકૃતવૈકુણ્ઠં ગેહિતજંભૂમહીરુડુપકણ્ઠમ્ ॥
દિવ્યં કિમપ્યકુણ્ઠં તેજ: સ્તાદસ્મદ્વનસોત્કણ્ઠમ્ ॥ ૫॥

કૃતશમનદર્પહરણં કૃતકેતરફણિતિચારિરથચરણમ્ ॥
શકાદિશ્રિતચરણં શરણં જંભૂદ્રુમાંતિકાભરણમ્ ॥ ૬॥

કરુણારસવારિધયે કરવાણિ નમ: પ્રણમ્રસુરવિધયે ॥
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કશ્ચન શશિચૂઢાલં કણ્ઠેકાલં દયૌઘમુત્કૂલમ્ ॥
શ્રિતજંભૂતરુમૂલં શિક્ષિતકાલં ભજે જગન્મૂલમ્ ॥ ૮॥

॥ જંભુનાથાષ્ટકં સંપૂર્ણમ્ ॥

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{LIFE OF SRIDHARA VENKATESA}

શ્રીકણ્ઠમિવ ભાસ્વન્તં શિવનામપરાયણમ્॥
શ્રીધરં વેઙ્કટેશાર્ય શ્રેયસે ગુરુમાશ્રયે ॥

Sridhara Venkatesa lived about 300 years ago in

Tiruvisanallur, a village in Tanjavur district in Tamilnadu. He was called

Tiruvisanallur Ayyaval (deeply respected person) out of great respect people held for him. Even today he is known by that name only. He was the son of Lingayaryar who was a minister to the Maharaja of Mysore. Even as a young boy Ayyaval was deeply religious and in particular had great devotion to Shiva but he made no distinction between Shiva and Vishnu. He studied Vedas, shastras and puranas and had a great desire to travel and spread the message of the puranas and in particular the glory of Lord's name among the people. After his father's death the Maharaja wanted him to take his father's job but he politely declined and left Mysore state with his wife and mother. He came to Tiruchirapalli in Tamilnadu and stayed for some time giving talks. He was supposed to have brought back to life a woman who had died by praying to the Lord. This attracted people who wanted him to solve their problems. Ayyaval did not like this and left the place. He proceeded to Tanjavur. It seems that King Shahaji (1684-1710.AD) who was ruling at that time in Tanjavur wanted him to stay in Tanjavur but Ayyaval wanted to lead a quiet life. King Shahaji was inviting scholarly brahmins to stay in his kingdom. He renamed the village Tiruvisanallur as Shahajirajapuram. One street was allotted for their stay. Ayyaval also stayed in a house there. Ayyaval was a proponent of the view that in this dark age Kali chanting the lord's name will ward off its evil effects. He was the senior contemporary of Bodhendra Swami who was the 59th pontiff of the Shankara Math at Kanchipuram and who was an ardent advocate of the glory of the lord's name. Ayyaval wrote a book ભગવન્નામભૂષણમ્ (Bagavannamabhushanam) on the subject which is sadly not available now. Bodhendra Swami had also written a book

નામામૃતરસાયનમ્ (Namamritarasayanam)on the subject wherein he had made references to the work of Ayyaval. Once Ayyaval had to perform a sraddha ceremony in his house. Therein food is prepared and offered to the departed forefathers who are invoked in three brahmins invited for the occasion. When every thing was getting ready Ayyaval saw an outcaste with his family in a famished condition begging for food. His heart melted with compassion at their condition. Without any hesitation he offered them the food that was being prepared for the ceremony.He then had the house washed and prepared to conduct the ceremony again. But the brahmins in the village considered this act reprehensible and refused to conduct the ceremony again. Ayyaval pleaded with them quoting texts from the scriptures to support his action but the Brahmins were not convinced. He asked them what he should do to remedy the situation. They said that the only atonement was having a bath in the Ganges. But there was no time to go to Varanasi and return. So he prayed to Lord Shiva (in Gangashtakam) to release the waters of Ganga from His matted hair as he did on an earlier occasion for Bhagiratha. Water started flowing out of the well in his house and flooded the streets of the village. The villagers got scared and prayed to Ayyaval to forgive them and stop the flood that was threatening the village. He accordingly prayed again to stop the flooding and requested her to appear in the well every year on that day. Even now people flock to that place every year on that day and take bath in the waters of the well in the belief that Ganga is present in the well on that day. Ayyaval had composed a number of works some of which are not yet been printed and

some not available. Some of his works are listed below. (1) Bhagavannama Bhushanam. (2) Akhyashashti. (3) Daya satakam. (4) Matrubhtasatakam. (5) Stuti paddati. (6) Shivabhakthikalpalatha. (7) Shivabhaktha lakShanam. (8) Taravali stotram. (9) Artihara stotram. (10) Kuliresvarashtakam. (11) Jambhunathashtakam. (12) Doshapariharashtakam. (13) Krishnadwadasa manjari. (14) Achyuthashtakam. (15) Dola navarathnamala. (16) Padamanimanjari – a sanskrit dictionary. (17) Shahajiraja charitam.

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