

શ્રીસુબ્રહ્મણ્ય ષોડશનામાનિ

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જ્ઞાનશક્તિધરઃ સ્કન્ધઃ દેવસેનાપતિસ્તથા ॥

સુબ્રહ્મણ્યો ગજારઠઃ શરકાનનસમ્ભવઃ ॥ ૧ ॥

કાર્તિકેયઃ કુમારશ્ચ પદ્મુખસ્તારકાન્તકઃ ॥

સેનાનીર્બ્રહ્મશાસ્ત્રા ચ વલ્લીકલ્યાણસુન્દરઃ ॥ ૨ ॥

બાલશ્ચ કૌઞ્યભેતા ચ શિખિવાહન એવ ચ ॥

એતાનિ સ્વામિનામાનિ ષોડશ પ્રત્યહઃ નરઃ ॥

યઃ પઠેત્ સર્વપાપેભ્યઃ સ મુચ્યતે મહામુને ॥ ૩ ॥

COMMENTS:

In the following comments some abbreviations are used. They are –

(1) VS – Vishnu sahasranama. (2) SS – Siva sahasranama (Padma Purana).

(3) BG – Bhagavad Gita (4) BH – Shrimad Bhagavatam

(5) LS – Lalita sahasranamam.

Our religion lays great emphasis on the purificatory power of the Lord's name.

Our vedas talk about this. The following verse from the Yajur Veda will serve as an instance.

પ્રતત્તે અઘ શિપિવિષ્ટ નામાર્યઃ શંસામિ વયુનાનિ વિદ્વાન્ ॥

તં ત્વા ગૃણામિ તવ સમતવીયાન્ ક્ષયન્તમસ્ય રજસઃ પરાકે ॥

This prayer addressed to Lord Vishnu says "I specially extol Your name".

Swami Bodhendra, who was a great advocate of chanting of the Lord's name points out that शंसामि indicates repeating the name several times.

The vedas themselves contain many hymns that extol the Lord. Shri Rudram, Shrisuktam etc., give the names of the Lord. The puranas also contain many compilation of names (nAmAvali) which are very suitable for recitation. Among these the Vishnu sahasranamam, Shiva sahasranamam and Lalita sahasranAmam are popular. Their recitation with devotion is guaranteed to confer immense benefits to the person. The Vishnu sahasranamam has the following verse towards the end. This says that the one who listens to it or recites it daily will not encounter misfortunes in this life or the life hereafter.

य ऽहं शृण्व्याञ्जित्यं यश्चापि परिकीर्तयेत् ॥
नाशुभं प्राप्नुयात् किञ्चित् सोऽमुत्रेह च मानवः ॥

Similarly the Kaivalyopanishad says that one who recites Shri Rudram is absolved from great sins.

यः शतरुद्रीयमधीते सोऽग्निपूतो भवति ॥ सुरापानात्पूतो भवति ॥
ब्रह्महत्यात्पूतो भवति ॥ कृत्याकृत्यात्पूतो भवति ॥

Sage Naradha told sage Vyasa (BH 1-5-22) that wise men declare that the abiding purpose of man's austere penance, sacred knowledge, sacrificial performances, recitation of the Vedas with correct intonation, enlightenment and offering of gifts is to recount the virtues of the Lord.

ऽहं हि पुंसस्तपसः श्रुतस्य वा स्विष्टस्य सूक्तस्य च बुद्धिद्वतयोः ॥
अविच्युतोऽर्थः कविभिर्निर्दिष्टो यद्भुतमश्लोक-गुणानुवर्णनम् ॥

In view of such statements many have the habit of reciting these hymns daily after completing their worship. But in these days, when time has become a scarce commodity, many have given up performing daily puja and even sandhyavandanam. For the benefit of such people, our kindly sages have provided shorter version of the hymns. In addition to sahasranamas that contain 1000 names, they have given us trishatis that contain 300 names, ashtottarashatams that list 108 names and even lists containing 16 and 12 names. If someone was to claim that he has not the time even to say these abridged versions, our puranas suggest repeating any of Lord's names that one prefers. Towards the end of the Vishnu sahasranama stotram, there is a verse in which Parvati asks Lord Shiva if there is an easy method to recite the lengthy sahasranamam. In reply Lord Shiva says that repeating the name Rama is equivalent to reciting the entire sahasranamam!

पार्वत्युवाच -

केनोपायेन लघुना विष्णोर्नामसहस्रकम् ॥
पठ्यते पण्डितैर्नित्यं श्रोतुमिच्छाम्यहं ब्रह्म ॥

ईश्वरोवाच -

श्रीराम राम रामेति रमे रामे मनोरमे ॥
सहस्रनाम तत्तुल्यं रामनाम वरानने ॥

The stotram that is given herein contains sixteen names of Lord Subrahmanya who is a very popular deity worshipped in the country. The last verse says that one who recites these names daily will be absolved from all sins. So, the Lord has the name पापनाशनः - कीर्तितः पूजितो

ध्यातः स्मृतः पापराशिं नाशयति ॥ VS(992). Reciting a short poem that contains few names looks very easy and because of this reason one may entertain some doubt if repeating few names can free one from sins. Shrimad Bhagavatam gives the example of one taking a medicine. A tablet may weigh only few milligrams, but it can work even in the body of a burly person and can give great relief. Also a medicine will do its work even one takes it by mistake! (Eg.) a laxative tablet even when swallowed by mistake will make the person run to the toilet within a short time. Similarly, the Lord's names will purify a person in whatever manner it is uttered. The Padma Purana says this as follows.

आश्चर्यं वा लये शोके क्षुते वा मम नाम यः ॥
व्याजेन वा स्मरेद्यस्तु स याति परमां गतिम् ॥

That is why in the introduction to Vishnu shasranama stotram Shri Bhishma says that worshipping the Lord by reciting hymns (stotras) is the best and easiest form of worship by which one can get over the problem of samsara or cyclic births.

अेष मे सर्वधर्माणां धर्मोऽधिकतमो मतः ॥
यद्भक्त्या पुण्डरीकाक्षं स्तवैरर्थञ्जरः सद्यः ॥

We should note an important point here. The stotras may be named after different forms of gods such as Vishnu or Shiva or Lalita Devi etc.

But when we go through the names we find that there are some that clearly say that the god that is praised is the Supreme Being. So, there is no question of one being superior or inferior to the others.

They all are in praise of one and the same Being.

Where is the Supreme Being and how to worship it – one may wonder.

It is everywhere and every thing according to the scriptures.

सर्वः - सर्व स्वरूपः ॥ क्षिति-सलिल-द्रुतवह-पवन-गगन-हिमकर-
दिनमणि-यजमानात्मभिर्भूतिभिः सर्व व्याप्य व्यवस्थितः ॥

।६० सर्वो वै रुद्राद्देव इति श्रुतिः ॥ SS(802)

We find the name in the Vishnu sahasranama (25) also. For the convenience of those who want to worship the Lord, He has assumed various forms such as Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Devi etc. We may worship Him in anything as He is every thing. So, we have the habit of worshipping Ashwattha tree, rivers like Ganga, books like the Gita or Ramayana and so on. But for the sake of convenience we have the practice of worshipping Him in idols, shaligrama and lingam. It is known that the mind is wavering by nature and so is difficult to concentrate for a long time during the worship. This kind of worship is easy and most suitable for those who require an external object to help them to focus their mind during the worship. After proper installation with mantras the idol is no more an inanimate idol, but the living presence of the Lord. As the worship of the Lord in such a consecrated idol has to be done with great deal of devotion the external object helps in paying attention to the Lord in the object. So, one may say that it is most suited during the early stages of worship for one whose mind is not steady. But as one continues with the worship he progresses steadily on the spiritual path. Devotion swells in the heart

and the Lord slowly creeps into his mind. The mind is gradually purged of undesirable traits such as likes, dislikes, anger, lust that pollute and distract the mind. In such a mind that is pure and steady the Self within reveals Itself. Such a devotee who has made great progress on the spiritual path may worship the Lord within himself – in the space (called 'cave' or ગુહ). The Katha upanishad (1-2-20)says this as follows.

અણોરણીયાન્મહતો મહીયાન્ આત્માસ્ય જન્તોર્નિહિતં ગુહાયામ્ ॥
તમકતુઃ પશ્યતિ વીતશોકો ધાતુપ્રસાદ્ધન્મહિમાનમાત્મનઃ ॥

For this reason, Lord Subrahmanya is also known as Guha (ગુહઃ). SS(865).

ગુહઃ સ્કન્દઃ, તદ્રૂપત્વાત્ ॥ યદ્વા ગુહા બુદ્ધિઃ,
સાસ્યાભિવ્યક્તિસ્થાનત્વેનાસ્તીતિ મત્વર્થીયાઅત્યયાન્તઃ શબ્દઃ ॥
।દ્વ યો વેદ નિહિતં ગુહાયાર્દ્વ મિતિ શ્રુતિઃ ॥ ।દ્વ યો વૈ રુદ્રઃ સ
ભગવાન્યશ્ચ સ્કન્દાર્દ્વ ઇતિ શ્રુતિઃ ॥

Devi Lalita also has the name Guhya (ગુહ્યા - ગુહં પ્રવિષ્ઠા ગુહ્યા ॥)

LS(624)

Sage Vishvamitra narrates the story of the birth of Subrahmanya to Shri Rama and Laxmana as he is taking them through the forests. In the end, he gives the benefits that will accrue to one who listens to the story and says that if one is devoted to Lord Subrahmanya he will have longevity and an abode in the divine world of Skanda along with his sons and grandsons. (Balakanda-37-32).

ભક્તશ્ચ યઃ કાર્તિકેયે કાકુત્સ્થ ભુવિ માનવઃ ॥

આયુષ્માન્ પુત્રપૌત્રૈશ્ચ સ્કન્દસાલોક્યતાં વ્રજેત્ ॥

The late Paramacharya of Kanchi math pointed out that the name swami (સ્વામી) occurring in the third verse is unique to Lord Subrahmanya and identifies Him with the Supreme Being. He quotes the verse from Amarakosha in support. દેવસેનાપતિઃ શૂરઃ સ્વામી ગજમુખાનુજઃ ॥ The word swami (સ્વામી) means the owner. What does the Lord own? He owns the entire universe and so is the Supreme Being. The name Subrahmanya may be split as su (સુ) and brahmanya (બ્રહ્મણ્ય). Brahmanya means protector of dharma. The name appears in the Vishnu and Siva sahasranamas. The commentators Shankaracharya define the word as follows. બ્રહ્મણ્યઃ –

।દ્વ તપો વેદશ્ચ વિપ્રાશ્ચ જ્ઞાનં ચ બ્રહ્મસંજિતમ્ ॥૨૬૧

તેભ્યો હિતત્વાત્ બ્રહ્મણ્યઃ ॥ VS (661). Tapas or austerities, the vedas,

those who study and abide by the vedic injunctions and have got the knowledge of the Self, and the spiritual wisdom are known as brahma

(not the creator Brahma). The Lord supports them. The name is defined similarly in SS(562).

બ્રહ્મરૂપાણં જ્ઞાનિનાં હિતકારી બ્રહ્મણ્યઃ ॥

।દ્વ તસ્યૈવ આત્મા વિવૃણોતિ તનૂમ્ ॥૨૬૧ ઇતિ શ્રુતિઃ ॥

જ્ઞાનીત્વાત્મૈવ મે મતમિતિ ભગવદ્વચનાચ્ચ ॥ (Gita-7-18)

We find from the Skanda Purana that Lord Subrahmanya incarnated to quell the asuras and bring the dharma back on its feet. This is in accordance with what the Lord said in the Bhagavad Gita in the following verses that are quite popular. (4-7 and 8).

યદ્ય યદ્ય હિ ધર્મસ્ય ગ્લાનિર્ભવતિ ભારત ॥

અભ્યુત્થાનમધર્મસ્ય તદાત્માનં સૃજામ્યહમ્ ॥ ૭ ॥

પરિત્રાણાય સાધૂનાં વિનાશાય ચ દુષ્ટતામ્ ॥
ધર્મ-સંસ્થાપનાર્થાય સંભવામિ યુગે યુગે ॥ ૮ ॥

But we should notice one difference with Lord Subrahmanya's fighting the asuras like Shura and Taraka. According to the puranas, He no doubt fought with them, but did not kill them (unlike in other avatars). He subdued them and made them His servants in the form of the peacock etc. This shows His extraordinary kindness. Shri Sankaracharya points this out in his Subrahmanya Bhujanga stotram. He says that there are gods who shower their grace on the sages and their devotees. But I do not know of a god who showers His grace even on one belonging to the lowest category.

મુનીનામુતાહો નૃણાં ભક્તિભાજમભીષ્મદ્વઃ સન્તિ સર્વત્ર દેવતાઃ ॥
નૃણામન્યજાનામપિ સ્વાર્થદાને ગુહાદેવમન્યં ન જાને ન જાને ॥

Let us pray to Lord Subrahmanya and seek His grace.

॥ ૐ તત્સત્ ॥

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