

कावेरी प्रार्थना

{॥ कावेरी प्रार्थना ॥}

मरुद्धते महाभागे महादेवि मनोहरे ।

सर्वातीष्ठप्रदे देवि स्नास्थितां पुण्यवर्धिनि ॥ १ ॥

सर्वपापक्षयकरे मम पापं विनाशय ।

कवेरकन्ये कावेरि समुद्रमहिषिप्रिये ॥ २ ॥

देहि मे भक्तिमुक्तिं त्वं सर्वतीर्थस्वरूपिणि ।

सिन्धुवर्ये दयासिन्धो मामुद्धर दयां बुधे ॥ ३ ॥

स्त्रियं देहि सुतं देहि श्रियं देहि ततः स्वगा ।

आयुष्यं देहि चारोग्यं शृणानुक्तं कुरुषु माम् ॥ ४ ॥

तासां च सरितां मध्ये सह्यकन्याघनाशिनि ।

कावेरि लोकविख्याता जनतापनिवारिणि ॥ ५ ॥

इति ब्रह्माण्ड पुराणे कावेरी प्रार्थना ॥

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These verses are in praise of river Kaveri – a sacred river flowing in

the southern peninsula of India. The river is one of the five great rivers flowing in South India. The other four are Mahanadi, Godavari, Narmada and Krishna. It is also the smallest of them all, being only 765 Km long. The river is known for the scenic beauty of the regions it flows through. The entire region it passes through is considered sacred. It has its birth at Talakaveri at a height of 1320 feet in the Brahmagiri mountain in the Western Ghats in Karnataka State. There is a small temple there where people offer worship to Kaveri. After flowing through Karnataka State the river meanders through Tamil Nadu State and empties into the Bay of Bengal on the eastern side of the peninsula. It starts as a thin strand of water and as it enters the plains at Bhagamandalam a small river Gajoti joins it. Bhagamandalam is a picturesque small village at the foothills of thickly forested mountains with the two rivers flowing through it. It has a small temple for Shiva who has the name Bhagamandaleshvara. Later on rivers Hemavati and Lakshmana Teertham join Kaveri and it becomes large and deep. Here the waters of the three rivers are collected at the Krishnaraja Sagar dam. Other tributaries that join Kaveri are Shimsha, Hemavati, Arkavati, Kabini and Bhavani. Near Tiruchy, in Tamil Nadu, the river branches and joins again after a couple of kilometers further forming the island of Srirangam. Nearby we have the Grand Anicut (Dam). It is 323 mts. long and 20 mts. high and built of stones. It was built during the 2nd century AD and stands as a tribute to the expertise of the builders

of those days.

The river flows through some of the richest lands of the country and blesses the people on its course. In return the people worship it. People of Tamil Nadu worship the floods with a festival called 18th day of Aadi month (July–August). They offer puja, light lamps and offer sweetmeats and, fruits and flowers.

One may have a question as to whether it is rational to worship an inanimate object like a river. The answer follows. Our scriptures say that it is the one God who permeates everything. The Narayana Suktam says this clearly. It says that whatever is there that is seen or heard of in the universe is pervaded in and out by the Lord.

যচ্চ কিঞ্চিজ্জগৎসর্বং দৃশ্যতে শ্রু্যতেহপি বা ।

অন্তর্বহিষ্চ তৎসর্বং ব্যাপ্য নারায়ণঃ স্থিতঃ ॥

Lord Krishna echoes this in Gita (9-4).মযা ততমিদং সর্বং

জগদব্যক্ত মূর্তিনা । He says that the universe is pervaded by Him –

the unseen One. So, what we see as the world is The Lord only. The very first name in the Vishnu-sahasranama is বিশ্বম্ = the universe. But we see the world as made of myriad objects and do not see the God.

Why so? Krishna gives the reason too in Gita.(7-13).

ত্রিভিগুণমযৈভাবৈরেভিঃ সর্বমিদং জগত্ ।

মোহিতং নাভিজানাতি মামেভ্যঃ পরমব্যয়ম্ ॥

The world is deluded by His power of maya and so, does not see Him who is beyond them. An example will provide the answer. We see an ornament – say – a chain made of gold. We see the chain and talk about the chain only and not the gold which really is the substance. The 'chain' is not a substance at all. There is no chain apart from gold. When we wear the chain or handle it or lock it up in the cupboard we, in fact we are doing all these with gold only in the garb of a chain. The 'chain' is only a name for a particular form of gold. In fact there is no such 'thing' as chain! The 'chain' has its birth from gold, has its existence in gold and goes back into gold when it is melted. Gold is the substratum or(अधिष्ठानम्). So also is God the substratum of everything. He is known as theअधिष्ठानम् – अधितिष्ठन्ति भूतानि উপাদানकारणত্বেন ব্রহ্মেতি অধিষ্ঠানम् ।

।দ্‌মৎস্থানি সৰ্বভূতনিৰ্দ্ (গীতা ৯।৪) ইতি ভগবদ্বচনাত্ ।

(Vishnusahasranamam – 324) A verse in Shri Bhagavatam (VIII-3-3) makes this abundantly clear. This was said by Gajendra the elephant in praise of the Lord who rescued him from the grip of the crocodile. He said 'I take refuge in the self-existent Being in whom the universe rests, from whom it has sprung, by whom it it has been brought into being, who Himself constitutes it, and who is at the same time distinct from both the cause and effect.'

যস্মিন্দিদং যতশ্চেদং যেনেদং য ইদং স্বয়ম্ ।

যোহস্মাত্ পরস্মাচ্চ পরস্তং প্রপদ্যে স্বয়ম্ভুবম্ ॥

Taking the example of the chain, we find that it has its birth from the gold, its existence in gold and finally goes back into gold when melted. So is the case with everything in the universe. The lay person sees movie and misses the screen on which it is projected though he is looking at it all the time! To extend the logic further he sees the world and misses the Lord behind. The 'world' we see is constituted of very many objects, animate and inanimate. But though they appear to be different and bear different names they are all the forms and names of the one Supreme Being only. So the Lord has the name विश्वम् as said above. That is the reason we have the custom of worshipping all objects. Because the worship of any object or being is equivalent to the worship of the Lord. All animals including the cow, the monkey and even the snake are objects of worship. Even the 'inanimate' objects such as the books, trees, mountains and rivers are holy. There can be no such thing as a bad or evil thing.

The seers of ancient times had this grand vision. They could see through the superficial layer and perceive God in everything. Krishna says that a realised person will see only God in anything: for example a learned righteous brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog which is considered unclean, and also a mean outcast who eats the flesh of the dog. Gita(5-18).

विद्या-विनय-संपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।

शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥

The wordसमं in this context means the Supreme Being and not 'equal.'

This is made clear by Krishna in the very next verse (5-19).निर्दोषं

हि समं ब्रह्म । The famous vedic hymn Shri Rudram salutes the Supreme Being by addressing Him by names of various objects, both good and 'not good' according to common man's perception. There are salutations to trees, mountains, birds, dogs etc. There are even salutations to thieves, and cheats who are nothing but forms of God only, because there cannot be anything but God. He is the rivers also. Rudram salutes Him asनमो नद्याय. This nameनद्यः is in the Sivasahasranamam (No.684. Padmapuranam). The commentator sayनदीगतं जलरूपो नद्यः। नमो नद्याय चेति श्रुतिः ॥

For this reason we consider the rivers as sacred. They are not to be polluted. Do not urinate or spit in the waters advises the vedas.नाम्नू मूत्रपुरीषं कुर्यात्। न निश्चीरेत् । Our pilgrimages include visiting famous temples and also taking bath in sacred rivers like Ganaga, Kaveri, Yamuna etc.. We have hymns in praise of these rivers. Here we have a

short hymn in praise of the sacred river Kaveri.

The river is mentioned in the vedas and puranas. The Aghamarshana Suktam(अघमर्षणसूक्तम्) which forms part of Mahanarayanavalli in the Taittiriyaopanishad is a prayer addressed to Lord Varuna – the god of waters. This is normally chanted before taking bath.अगं =

sin.मर्षणम् = cleaning or wiping off. So, this is a prayer to Varuna

to make us free from sins. In this sukta we come across the following prayer addressed to some famous rivers.

ইমং মে গঙ্গে যমুনে সরস্বতি শুতুদ্রি স্তোমগং সচতা পরুশ্বিয়া ।

অসিকিনয়া মরুদধ্বে বিতস্তয়া ২২জীকীয়ে শৃণুহ্যা সুষোময়া ॥

The rivers mentioned in this mantra are, Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvati, Shutudri (Sutlej), Parushni (Rabi), Asikni (Seenab), Vitasta (Jilam), Sushoma (Sohan). The last four rivers mentioned here were flowing in the Sind Province. In this mantra the word(মরুদধ্বে) Maruddhrute is a reference to Kaveri. In fact the hymn given in the beginning of this article starts addressing Kaveri by this name only. The Bhagavata Purana mentions the river more than once. It says that during his pilgrimage Lord Balarama visited Kanchi and the sacred river Kaveri.কামকোটিপুরীং কাঙ্ক্ষীং কাবেরীং চ সরিষ্বরাম্ । (10-79-14). Again later on in Book

11 the sage Karabhajana, in his conversation with King Nimi talks of the merits of Kaliyuga and says that it is in this age that great devotees of the Lord will appear everywhere, especially in the Dravda country where the rivers Tamaraparni, Kritamala, Payasvini, the extremely sacred Kaveri and the great river Mahanadi which flows towards the west they will be found in large numbers. (11-5-39).

ঋচিৎ ঋচিন্মহারাজ দ্রবিডেষু চ ভূরিশঃ ।

তাম্রপর্ণী নদী যত্র কৃতমালা পয়স্বিনী ।

কাবেরী চ মহাপুণ্যা প্রতীচী চ মহানদী ॥

(ভবিষ্যন্তি নারায়ণপরাযণাঃ ।)

Valmiki talks about it in his Ramayana. Sugriva sends various groups of soldiers to search for Sita. He sends a group headed by Angada to search in the southern direction. He gives details of places he will have to search. At that time he describes the southern mountain range and the holy river Kaveri as follows. He says that Angada will see the blessed heavenly river Kaveri carrying pellucid waters and celestial nymphs sporting in the river.

ততস্তামাপগাং দিব্যাং প্রসন্নসলিলাং শিবাম্ ।

তত্র দ্রক্ষ্যথ কাবেরীং বিহতাং অন্মরোগণৈঃ ॥

(Kishkindha Kanda –41-14).

Kaveri is also known as DakShin Ganga – Ganga of the South and the river's water is reputed to be limpid and sweet

অহং দক্ষিণগঙ্গেতি বিশ্রুতা বেদমূর্ধনি ।

ইমাং মধুরপানীয়াং দক্ষিণাপথজাহবীম্ ॥

The Agnaeya Purana says that those who are contacted by the breeze blowing from Kaveri get release from rebirth and reach the lotus feet of the Lord.

কাবেরি ত্রিজন্মানঃ কাবেরি সলিলাপ্লুতা ।

কাবেরি বাতাদ্যৈ স্পৃষ্ঠা যান্তি হরেঃপদম্ ॥

The Brahmavaivarta Puranam defines the word Kaveri as follows.

ককারঃ কলুষং হন্তি, বেকারো বাঞ্ছিতপ্রদঃ ।

রীকারো মোক্ষদো নৃণাং কাবেরীত্যবধারণ ॥

The letter ka stands for the destruction of sins, ve for the bestowal of desires and ri for the granting of mokSha or liberation from the cyclic births. Kaveri is also known as Kanakasari(কনকসরিত্). Kanakam (কনকম্) means gold and sarit(সরিত্) means river. The sand in the bed of Kaveri is said to be rich in gold content. Kaveri is called Ponni (pon = gold) in Tamil. The great acharya Shri Vedanta Desika mentions the glory of the river in his famous work Sri Bhagavaddhyana sopanam (verse no.2).

বেলাতীত শ্রুতিপরিমলং বেধসাংমৌলি সেব্যং

প্রাদুর্ভূতং কনকসরিতসৈকতে হংসজুষ্টে ।

লক্ষ্মীভূম্যোঃ করসরসিজৈলালিতং রঙ্গভর্তুঃ

পাদাংভোজ প্রতিপলতু মে ভাবনাদীর্ঘিকায়াম্ ॥

The acharya says that the lotus feet of the Lord Ranganatha appeared on the golden sands of Kaveri which are home to hamsas or swans. It is said that

swans do not like to stay in turbid waters.ন বদ্ধনাতি রতিং হংসঃ

কদাচিংকর্দমেহন্তসি । The water of Kaveri is clean and have gold

content in the sands. So, the birds prefer to stay in such lovely place.

The wordহংসঃ also mean sanyasins of the highest order – paramahamsa sanyasis. This means that the great sanyasis gather on the shores of Kaveri because of its sacredness.

STORY OF THE RIVER KAVERI

There was a king by name Kavera. He was righteous and ruled his kingdom according to the injunctions of the scriptures. He sought liberation or mokSha and with this in mind he did severe penance. Brahma the creator was pleased with his penance and appeared before the king and wanted to know his wish. The king requested Brahma to grant him mokSha. Brahma said that this is not something which He can grant but can be attained only by one getting spiritual wisdom or jnanam. He requested Maya Devi to appear before them. Brahma asked Maya to be born as the king's daughter and impart him the required knowledge. In addition Brahma told her to become a river by name Kaveri and save all beings and also she, by another aspect to become the wife of sage Agastya and spread spiritual wisdom. Accordingly Maya appeared before the king Kavera as an infant. The king was very happy at this. He took the child with him and brought it up with loving care. After some years, the king renounced the kingdom, repaired to the forests, performed severe penance and attained liberation. Kaveri

wanted to serve the world in the form of a river and to achieve this she prayed to Lord Narayana and did penance. Pleased with her devotion, the Lord appeared before her and learned of her desire. He told her that He will reside in a gooseberry tree in the Sahyadri hills. Brahma will worship Him in the tree and wash His feet with the water from the river Vraja in his conch. She should merge herself with those waters and flow in the southern regions and sanctify that area. She will get the names Sahya amalaka Tirtha, Shanka Tirtha and DakShina Ganga. In this period sage Agasthya was performing penance. Brahma appeared before him and advised him to get married and lead the life of a householder. At first he sage was not agreeable to this idea. Brahma explained to him the greatness of a householders' life and suggested that he marry His daughter Kaveri. This will be of advantage to him and also to everyone. Agasthya was convinced of Brahma's words and agreed to marry Kaveri. He went to the Himalayas and met Kaveri who was performing penance there. He told her of Brahma's advice to him. Kaveri agreed to marry the sage. She divided herself into two forms. With the name Kaveri she entered the(কমণ্ডলু) waterpot of the sage. With another body and the name(লোপামুদ্রা) Lopamudra she bowed to the sage. The gods assembled at that place. Brahma got Lopamudra married to Agasthya as per the vedic rules. The sage with his wife saluted to the gods assembled there. Sarasvathi Devi, her mother, advised her in detail the duties of a householder's wife.

After the marriage Agasthya with his wife started his journey to the south, crossed the Vindhya mountains and reached the Sahya mountains. He kept his water pot in a place and told his disciples that he is going to the nearby Swarnamukhi river to perform his ablutions and till his return to look after it. At that time Brahma saw Lord Vishnu shining in a gooseberry tree nearby. He was overjoyed. He circumambulated the tree and washed the feet of the Lord with the water that had the essence of all the holy waters from the conch (that represented the Gaytri mantra) he had. The holy water grew into a stream and flowed down the mountain. Kaveri who was staying in sage Agasthya's water pot saw this and was filled with joy. At that time a heavenly voice addressed Kaveri and said that the time for fulfilment of her wish is very near. "The time for you to reach the ocean has come. The holy autumn(शरद) season has come. In this season even a small gift given to a deserving person will yield immense benefit. As the result of your severe penance this also happens to be birth of the month of Thula (7th month of the solar calendar). You should proceed and mingle with the holy waters that is flowing from the worship offered by Brahma. You will be conferring great benefit to the people of the country". By divine will a strong wind accompanied by heavy rain started blowing at that time. The disciples of the sage forgot all about the sage's advice to take care of his water pot and ran for cover. The strong wind upset the pot. Kaveri flowed from

the pot, mixed with the waters in the stream and started to flow in the southern direction. Sage Agasthya returned after finishing his ablutions and saw what had happened. He was very happy to see Kaveri flowing down the mountain as a river. He summoned Kaveri and blessed her. She told the sage what all happened in his absence and how she got mixed with the holy waters from bathing the feet of Lord Vishnu who appeared in the tree. Sage Agasthya was pleased by the answer of Kaveri. He lauded her and said that the Southern Peninsula will derive great benefit from her. Then he also passed on to her some secret information he knew by his great spiritual power.

মহারহস্যং কিঞ্চাত্র শৃণুস্বাত্যদ্ভুতং শুভে ।
ব্রবীমি দিব্যদৃষ্ট্যদ্য সর্বশাস্ত্রেষু নিশ্চিতম্ ॥

মহাপাতকিনাং পাপং মোচয়ন্ত্যঃ ক্ষণেন হি ।
গঙ্গাদিকা মহানদ্যস্তীর্থানি চ মহান্তি চ ॥

মলীকৃতাস্চ তৎপাপৈঃ অশক্তাস্তদ্বিমোচনে ।
শোচয়ন্ত্যঃ পরং দেবং যান্তি লোকপিতামহম্ ॥

তাসাং বিশুদ্ধয়ে ব্রহ্মা সভায়াং মুনিভিঃ সহ ।
সম্যগ্বিচার্য শাস্ত্রেষু বেদেষু চ পুনঃ পুনঃ ॥

হরিণা চ ততঃ প্রোক্তং প্রায়শ্চিত্তং বিধাস্যতা ।

স্বাস্যন্তু সহ্যধাত্র্যগ্রে কাবের্যাং তৌলিসঙ্গমে ॥

The rivers like Ganga that are renowned to cleanse people who take bath in them of their sins were polluted by the sins washed into them. They were sad at this and approached Brahma, the Creator, to find a way to get themselves rid of this huge load of sins dumped into them. Brahma discussed this issue with the sages assembled in his court at that time and looked into the scriptures also for an answer. They came across the expiation mentioned by Shri Hari – that is they should take bath in Kaveri in the seventh month(তুলা) of solar calendar. The 66 crores of waters from all the 14 worlds come to Kaveri at that period to wash off their sins. They should also go to Kaveri and take bath at that time.

ষট্‌ষষ্টিকোটি তীর্থানি দ্বিসপ্ত-ভুবনেষু চ ।

তানি চাযান্তি কাবের্যাং স্বাঘৌঘ-বিনিবৃত্তয়ে ॥

Such a holy river naturally attracts holy men to its banks. He said that he as also many other sages will have residence on her banks.

অহং তু বৈখানস বালখিলৈরনৈঃ মুনীন্দ্রেঙ্গনকাদিভিঃ ।

সর্বত্র তে পুণ্যতটে বসামি ॥

Sage Agastya told this to Kaveri and blessed her saying that she will

confer all prosperity for those living in the southern part of the country.

বিভূতৈ দাক্ষিণত্যানাং ক্ষেমায বিজয়ায চ ।

মযা চৈবাত্যনুজ্ঞাতা গচ্ছ দেবি যথাসুখম্ ॥

We are indeed blessed to have such sacred rivers in our country. Let us pray to Kaveri and be cleansed of our sins. The following verse gives a description of Kaveri devi and is suitable for meditation on Her.

অচ্ছ-স্বচ্ছ-লসদ্-দুকূলবসনাং পদ্মাসনাধ্যায়িনীং

হস্ত-ন্যস্ত-বরাভযাজ্ঞ-কলশাং রাকেন্দু-কোটি-প্রভাম্ ।

ভাস্বদ্-ভূষণ-গন্ধ-মাল্য-রুচিরাং চারু-প্রসন্নাননাং

শ্রীগঙ্গাদি-সমস্ত-তীর্থ-নিলয়াং ধ্যায়ামি কাবেরিকাম্ ॥

The verse, roughly translated, says that I meditate on Kaveri who wears spotlessly clean silk garments, and is seated in the Padmasana pose. She has one palm of the hand pointing down indicating that She will grant desires of those who seek her and another palm of the hand pointing up indicating She will protect and grant freedom from fear. She wears shining jewels and fine smelling garlands and has a pleasing smiling face. She is the repository of all holy wates like Ganga.

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