

കാവേരീ പരാമനാ

{॥ കാവേരീ പരാമനാ ॥}

മരുദ്യുതേ മഹാഭാഗേ മഹാദേവി മനോഹരേ ।

സർവാഭീഷ്ടപ്രദേ ദേവി സ്നാസ്ഥിതാം പുണ്യവർധിനി ॥ ൧ ॥

സർവപാപക്ഷയകരേ മമ പാപം വിനാശയ ।

കവേരകന്യേ കാവേരി സമുദ്രമഹിഷിപ്രിയേ ॥ ൨ ॥

ദേഹി മേ ഭക്തിമുക്തി ത്വം സർവതീർഥസ്വരൂപിണി ।

സിന്ധുവർയേ ദയാസിന്ധോ മാമുദ്യര ദയാംബുധേ ॥ ൩ ॥

സ്തത്രിയം ദേഹി സുതം ദേഹി ശത്രിയം ദേഹി തതഃ സ്വഗാ ।

ആയുഷ്യം ദേഹി ചാരോഗ്യം ഋണാൻമുക്തം കുരുഷ്വ മാമ് ॥ ൪ ॥

താസാം ച സരിതാം മധ്യേ സഹ്യകന്യാഘനാശിനി ।

കാവേരി ലോകവിഖ്യാതാ ജനതാപനിവാരിണി ॥ ൫ ॥

ഇതി ബ്രഹ്മാൺഡ പുരാണേ കാവരീ പരാമനാ ॥

{അർഗ്ഗ്വേ

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.

യച്ച കിഞ്ചിജ്ജഗത്സർവം ദൃശ്യതേ ശ്രവ്യതേ/പി വാ ।

അൻതർബഹിഷ്വ തത്സർവം യാപ്ത നാരായണഃ സ്ഥിതഃ ॥

Lord Krishna echos this in Gita (9-4). മയാ തതമിദം സർവം

ജഗദ്യക്ത മുർതിനാ । 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 വിശ്വത് = 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).

തപ്രിഭിർഗുണമയൈർഭാവൈരേഭിഃ സർവമിദം ജഗത് ।

മോഹിതം നാഭിജാനാതി മാമേഭ്യഃ പരമായയത് ॥

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 (അധിഷ്ഠാനം). So also

is God the substratum of everything. He is known as the അധിഷ്ഠാനം –

അധിതിഷ്ഠൻതി ഭൂതാനി ഉപാദാനകാരണത്വേന ബ്രഹ്മേതി അധിഷ്ഠാനം ।

ഭക്തസ്ഥാനി സർവഭൂതനിർഭക്ത (ഗീതാ ൯.൪) ഇതി ഭഗവദ്വചനാത് ।

(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.'

യസ്മിൻനിദം യതശ്ചേദം യേനേദം യ ഇദം സ്വയമ് ।
യോ/സ്മാത് പരസ്മാച്ച പരസ്തം പ്രപ്രദ്യേ സ്വയമ്ഭൂവമ് ॥

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 nameവിശ്വമ് 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).

വിദ്യാ-വിനയ-സംപന്നേ ബ്രഹ്മണേ ഗവി ഹസ്തിനി ।
ശൂനി ചൈവ ശ്വപാകേ ച പണ്ഡിതാഃ സമദർശിനഃ ॥

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

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

ഹിസമം ബ്രഹ്മ | 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 asനമോ നാഭായ. This

nameനാഭയഃ is in the Sivasahasranamam (No.684. Padmapuranam). The

commentator sayനദീഗത ജലരുപോ നാഭയഃ | നമോ നാഭായ ചേതി ശ്ലുതിഃ ||

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.നാപ്സു

മുതപ്രുരീഷം കുർയാത് | ന നിഷ്ഠീവേത് | 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(അഘമർഷണസൂക്തം) 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.അഗം =

sin.മർഷണമ് = 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.

ഇമം മേ ഗങ്ഗേ യമുനേ സരസ്വതി ശുതുമുദ്രി സ്തോമഗ്ം സചതാ പരുഷ്ണിയാ |

അസിക്നിയാ മരുദ്യധുധേ വിതസ്തയാ //ജികീയേ ശൂണ്യഹ്യാ സുഷോമയാ ||

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(മരുദ്യുതേ) 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.കാമകോടിപുരീം കാഞ്ചീം കാവേരീം ച സരിദ്വരാമ് | (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).

കവചിത് കവചിൻമഹാരാജ ദ്രവിഡേഷു ച ഭൂരിശഃ |
താമ്രപർണീ നദീ യതഃ കൃതമാലാ പയസ്വിനീ |
കാവേരീ ച മഹാപുണ്യോ പത്രിചീ ച മഹാനദീ ||

(ഭവിഷ്യതൻതി നാരായണപരായണാഃ |)

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.

തതസ്താമാപഗാം ദിപയാം പസ്രന്സസലിലാം ശിവാം |

തത്ര ദക്ഷിണേ കാവേരീം വിഹൃതാം അപ്സരോഗണൈഃ ॥

(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

അഹം ദക്ഷിണഗന്ധേതി വിശുതാ വേദമുദധനി ।
ഇമാം മധുരപാനീയാം ദക്ഷിണാപഥജാഹ്നവീമ് ॥

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.

കാവേരി ത്വിജന്മാനഃ കാവേരി സലിലാപ്തതാ ।
കാവേരി വാതാദ്യൈ സ്സപൃഷ്ടാ യാന്തി ഹരേഃപദമ് ॥

The Brahmapurana defines the word Kaveri as follows.

കകാരഃ കലുഷം ഹന്തി, വേകാരോ വാഞ്ചരിതപദഃ ।
രീകാരോ മോക്ഷദോ നൃണാം കാവേരീത്യവധാരയ ॥

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(കനകസരിത്). Kanakam (കനകമ്) means gold and sarit(സരിത്) 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).

വേലാതീത ശുതിപരിമലം വേധസാംമൗലി സ്വേധം
പ്രാദുർഭൂതം കനകസരിതസ്സൈകതേ ഹംസജുഷ്ടേ ।
ലക്ഷ്മീഭൂമയോഃ കരസരസിജൈർലാലിതം രങ്ഗഭർതുഃ

പാദാംഭോജ പത്രിപലതു മേ ഭാവനാദീർഘികായാമ് ||

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. ന ബദ്യ്നാതി രതിം ഹംസഃ കദാചിത്കർദമേ/മ്ഭസി | The water of Kaveri is clean and have gold content in the sands. So, the birds prefer to stay in such lovely place.

The word ഹംസഃ 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(കമൺഡലു) waterpot of the sage. With another body and the name(ലോപാമുദ്ര) 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(ശരദ) 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.

മഹാറഹസ്യം കിഞ്ചാതശൃണുഷ്വാത്യഭൂതം ശുഭേ ।
ബ്രഹ്മീമിദ്രിയഭൃഷ്ടയാദയസർവശാസ്തരേഷു നിശ്ചിതമ് ॥

മഹാപാതകിനാം പാപം മോചയൻതഃ ക്ഷണേന ഹി ।

ഗങ്ഗാദികാ മഹാനദ്യസ്തീർത്ഥാനി ച മഹാൻതി ച ॥

മലീകൃതാശ്ച തത്പാപൈഃ അശക്താസ്തദ്വിമോചനേ ।
ശോചയന്തയഃ പരം ദേവം യാൻതി ലോകപിതാമഹദ് ॥

താസാം വിശുദ്ധയേ ബ്രഹ്മാ സഭായാം മുനിഭിഃ സഹ ।
സമ്യഗ്വിചാരിയ ശാസ്തരേഷു വേദേഷു ച പുനഃ പുനഃ ॥

ഹരിണാ ച തതഃ പരോക്തം പ്രായശ്ചിത്തം വിധാസ്യതാ ।
സ്നാനായൻതു സഹ്യധാത്വഗ്ദേ കാവേരിയാം തൌലിസങ്ഗമേ ॥

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(തുലാ) 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.
ഷട്ഷഷ്ടികോടി തീർത്ഥാനി ദ്വിസപ്ത-ഭൂവനേഷു ച ।
താനി ചായാൻതി കാവേരിയാം സ്വാഘൗഘ-വിനിവൃത്തയേ ॥

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.
അഹം തു വൈഖാനസ വാലഖിൽയൈരന്യൈഃ മൂനീൻദരൈസ്സനകാദിഭിശ്ച ।
സർവതഃ പുണ്യതഃ വസാമി ॥

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.

വിഭൂത്യൈ ദാക്ഷിണത്യാനാം ക്ഷേമായ വിജയായ ച ।
മയാ ചൈവാഭയനുജ്ഞാതാ ഗച്ഛ ദേവി യഥാസുഖമ് ॥

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.

അച്ഛ-സ്വച്ഛ-ലസദ്-ദൃകുലവസനാം പദ്മാസനായ്യായിനീം
ഹസ്ത-ന്യസ്ത-വരാഭയാബ്ജ-കലശാം രാകേന്ദ്ര-കോടി-പഭ്രാമ് ।
ഭാസ്വദ്-ഭൃഷണ-ഗന്ധ-മാര്യ-രൂചിരാം ചാരു-പ്രസന്നാനനാം
ശ്രീഗൗഹി-സമസ്ത-തീർഥ-നിലയാം ധ്യായാമി കാവേരികാമ് ॥

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.

}

॥ ഓം തത്സത് ॥

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