

## गंगष्टकम् २

{॥ गंगष्टकम् २ ॥}

GANGASHTAKAM by Shri Shridharavenkatesa of

Tiruvisanallur respectfully called as Ayyaval.

॥ श्री अय्याबाल् इति प्रसिद्धैः श्रीधरवेङ्कटेशाभिधैः विरचितम् ॥

Introduction:- Once, the author Shridhara had to perform the shrAddha ceremony wherein his ancestors are propitiated. In this ceremony three pious brahmins who are well versed in the vedas and are of exemplary character are invited. The Manusmriti gives details about the qualifications of the brahmins to be invited on this occasion. The forefathers are invoked in them. Then these brahmins are honoured, as one would do his ancestors with food, clothes and dakShina. In Shridhara's case the ceremony fell on an Amavasya day in the month of Kartika (8th month of the solar calendar). He had made all arrangements to conduct the ceremony as ordained in the shastras, including inviting the three brahmins. The food items to be served to the brahmins (who represent his ancestors) were being cooked. As the preparations were in progress, he heard the plaintive cry of a beggar. The beggar was an outcaste. He said he had not eaten for hours, and so is famished and distressed. Shridhara, who was a very pious person, saw in this outcaste the image of

Lord Siva and was immensely moved. He immediately gave the food items prepared for the shrAddha ceremony to the beggar and ensured his hunger was appeased. The beggar ate heartily and went away after invoking Lord's blessings on Shridhara and his family members. Shridhara came to himself some time after the beggar went away and realised his "folly". One is not expected to serve the food prepared specifically for serving to the ancestors (invoked in the brahmins) to anyone else till the ceremony was over. He was very upset and asked the brahmins as to how he should expiate for his act. They said that the only way to atone is to take a bath in the sacred Ganges. But Shridhara felt that this was impossible to be done as the trip to Ganges will take many weeks. This implied that he will not be able to perform the shrAddha ceremony on that day. So it will be an act of omission and will invite serious sin. Shridhara felt that the only thing to do in such a predicament is to surrender to the Lord. So, in the following verses he explained his predicament to Lord Siva and prayed to Him to release Ganga from His matted locks as He did on an earlier occasion in response to the prayers of sage Bhagirata. The kindly Lord could not bear to see His devotee upset. So He released Ganga from His locks. The well in Shridhara's house started to overflow. Many animals like fish, tortoises came out along with the gushing waters. The villagers

were astounded at the sight and were wonderstruck at the intensity of Shridhara's piety. They realised his greatness. They requested him to control the flow of the water which was threatening to flood the village. Shridhara prayed and the flow from Ganges subsided. All, including the brahmins who had been invited specially for the ceremony were only too willing to accept that if Shridhara took bath in the waters of the well it will be equal to a bath in the Ganges. Shridhara was very happy at the decision of the brahmins. He took bath in the water drawn from the well and completed the shrAddha ceremony.

This incident is celebrated every year on the Amavasya day in the month of Krittika at the village. The faithful throng in large number at the house in Tiruvisanallur village where Shridhara lived on that day every year and take bath in the water drawn from the well. They believe that the bath gives the same benefit as a bath in the Ganges.

COMMENTS. The scriptures assure that a true devotee will not encounter misfortune or problems in life. न वासुदेवभक्तानां अशुभं विद्यते ऋचित्। says Vishnusahasranama in the phalashruti. Lord Krishna gives an assurance to this effect in Gita (9-31). कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति। The question, then, is why should devotees like

Shridhara and many others like Prahladha face problems? The answer is that the problems they face may be attributed to prArabdham or deeds they might have committed in their past births. But, though the problem appears to be of serious nature to us, it does not appear to be so to the devotees themselves. They do not lose their serenity in the face of adversity, nor is there least change in their devotion.

घृष्टं घृष्टं पुनरपि पुनश्चन्दनं चारु गन्धं  
छिन्नं छिन्नं पुनरपि पुनः स्वादु चै-वेम्बुखण्डम् ।  
दक्षं दक्षं पुनरपि पुनः काङ्कनं कान्तवर्णं  
न प्राणान्ते प्रकृतिविकृतिः जायते सज्जनानाम् ॥

This says that a piece of sandal wood, when repeatedly rubbed against a stone emits only a pleasant flavour. Even when the sugarcane is cut into many pieces it will continue to taste sweet only. A chunk of gold when heated in the fire again and again will give out its natural shine only. So also, the qualities of the great people will not undergo the least change even at the end of their lives. To repeat, a devotee of the Lord will certainly encounter problems. They are designed by the Lord to bring out the devotee's unshakeable faith in the Lord so that others may understand his greatness. The devotee himself never complains that he is undergoing immense suffering. But he thinks of the Lord as usual for help. He gets it

and is happy that his problem is solved. In fact, Kunti–the mother of Pandavas, cleverly converted the problems into advantage. She found from experience that she thought of the Lord whenever she faced a problem. Krishna promptly appeared on the scene and helped her. So, she prayed to Krishna that she should face problems every now and then so that she can have His darshan often. She said:

বিপদঃ সন্তু নঃ শশ্বত্তত্র তত্র জগদ্দুরো।

ভবতো দর্শনং যস্মাদপুনর্ভব-দর্শনম্॥ Shri Bhagavatam (1-8-25).

The verses of Gangashtakam are given below. The translations of the verses given here are not exact.

শংভো ভবনাম নিরন্তরানুসন্ধান ভাগ্যেন ভবন্তমেব ।

যদ্যেব সর্বত্র তথাহন্ত্যজেহ্য পশ্যত্যহো কোহত্র কুতোহপরাধঃ ॥ ১ ॥

O Lord Shambhu! I am used to repeating Your name all the time. As a result I am blessed to see You only every where. So, today I saw You only in this outcaste also. Is there anything wrong in this?

অস্তেষ মন্তুঃ পিতৃযজ্ঞ নিষ্টে গণাপ্লবো যো বিহিতোহপচিত্যে ।

দূরাত্তু তন্মামজপেন শুদ্ধিঃ ন স্যাৎ কথং মে স্মৃতিরর্থবাদঃ ॥ ২ ॥

Let me agree that a bath

in the Ganges is the proper atonement for my transgression of the rules pertaining to the shrAddha ceremony. But the Smriti texts say that even if one just repeats the name "Ganga" few times he becomes pure. Can not I take recourse to this expediency in this situation?

ত্বন্মামনিষ্টা ন হি তাবতো মে শ্রদ্ধা যতঃ কৰ্মসু ন প্রদক্ষা ।

ত্রৈশঙ্কবং মে পসুপান্তরাযঃ মুচ্যেয তস্মাৎকথং আৰ্তবন্ধো ॥ ৩॥

O Lord, I accept that I have not got that intense faith in Your name that I can give up performance of duties like shrAddha. Thus I am in an awkward situation, like king Trishanku. How do I get relieved from this situation?

যদ্যদ্য তে শ্রাদ্ধবিনষ্টিরিষ্টা কোহহং ততোহন্যচ্চরিতুং সমর্থঃ ।

শ্রাদ্ধে বৃতাঃ পূৰ্বদিনোপবাসাঃ নান্যত্র ভুঞ্জীযুঃ ইদং তু খিদ্বে ॥ ৪ ॥

If it is Your wish that the shrAddha should be missed let it be lost. I cannot go against Your will. But, what about the brahmins who have been specially invited for the occasion? They have been fasting since yesterday and will not take food at any other place.

শ্রদ্ধালবঃ শ্রাদ্ধবিঘাতভীত্যা স্বাত্মোপরোধং বিঘণয়্য ধীরাঃ ।

যৎপ্রাচুরত্রাপচিতিং মহান্তঃ তত্রোচিতিং যদযথা বিধেহি ॥ ৫ ॥

These brahmins

are noble souls. They have prescribed the expiation, not with any selfish motive but only to make sure that the shrAddha should not become deficient in any manner. They have not taken into account the inconvenience that they will face in the process.

গঙ্গাধর! ত্বদ্ভজনাশ্রয়ায ভীত্যা গৃহে কূপকৃতাবগাহঃ ।

জানে ন তীর্থান্তরং অদ্য গঙ্গাং আসাদমেযং কথমার্তবন্ধো! ॥ ৬ ॥

On account of the

fear that the chanting of Your name should not be interrupted even for a moment, I have been taking bath only in the well in the house itself. I do not know any other holy river or waters.

This being the case, how will I go in search of Ganga?

নাহং তপস্বী সগরম্ববায়ঃ জানে ন জহক্ষুঃ চরতি ক্বেতি ।

শংভো! জটাজূটমপাবৃণুশ্বেত্যভ্যর্থনে নালমযং বরাকঃ ॥ ৭ ॥

I am not an ascetic like Bhagiratha nor do

I know the whereabouts of the sage Jahnu. I am not qualified even to pray to You to release Ganga from Your locks.

গঙ্গাধরাখ্যা গতিরত্র নান্যা তামাশ্রয়ে সঙ্কট-মোচনায ।

হস্ত! প্রবাহঃ কথমত্র কূপে বিস্পূর্জতীশঃ খলু তে প্রসন্নঃ ॥ ৮ ॥

So, Your name Gangadhara is my refuge. I see  
no other way out. Oh! What a wonder! Even as i say this, I see  
the well overflowing! surely, the Lord has shown mercy.

গঙ্গেতি গঙ্গেতি হরতি গৃহ্ন্ আপ্লাবিতোহং দযযা পুরারেঃ ।  
কূপোত্তিতোযং করুণাপ্রবাহঃ গাঙ্গশ্চিরাযাত্র জনান্ পুনাতু ॥ ৯ ॥

As I repeat the name "Ganga", the very mercy  
of the Lord has taken the form of a flood and submerged me. May  
this flow of the waters of Ganga purify the people in the days to  
come.

CONCLUSION. One may ask as to how it was possible for  
Shridhara to have a vision of Siva in a beggar. The answer is that  
he was convinced that every thing in this world is the Lord only  
and there is no second thing. Krishna says this in the Bhagavad  
Gita. He explains that He manifests Himself as the world using the  
power of maya. Though He is every thing in the world, people are  
deluded by the powerful maya. Their vision is veiled. They see the  
objects and overlook the God behind them. As an example, we see that  
several ornaments are made of a piece gold. They are given various  
names like bangle, chain etc. If we think a bit we will find that  
the word "bangle" is not a substance but only a name given to a  
particular shape of gold. Gold can exist as gold but bangle cannot



exist without the gold. Similarly, a person can go to sleep and have a dream. The dream is not substantial and is dependant on the dreamer; but not the other way round. Such things as the ornament that have no separate existence but have shape and name are called unreal objects or मिथ्या वस्तु . They do not have a permanent existence. A bangle may be melted and made into another ornament any number of times. They are therefore impermanent or अनित्यम्। But the items like gold that lend substance to them are known as real or सत्यम्। . They are permanent or नित्यम् . They do not change when the ornament is changed. We may say that gold pervades the bangle as, really speaking, there is no such thing as bangle. Krishna says He pervades the entire universe. मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्त-मूर्तिना। Gita(9-4). The right knowledge will, then, be to understand first that the ornament is gold. Overlooking the very existence of gold will be a major error and will have serious consequences. Extending this idea, we should be able to see that every thing in this universe विश्वम् is impermanent and changing. People and animals come and go. So do the seas and mountains. We learn that even the sun and the stars are not permanent but have limited life only. Thus, the universe is अनित्यम् only. These impermanent, changing objects are many names and forms of the Lord only. In other words God is the real

thing or সত্যম্। . God gives substance to the world and is the substratum or অধিষ্ঠানম্। Krishna explains this to Arjuna and says the right vision is to see Him every where. But we are taken by the world and do not see the God hiding behind it. To start with, we do not see the Lord within us, but identify ourselves with the bodies. This results in numerous problems. We have to take care of the body, ensure it is fed and clothed properly. We require so many things to protect it and keep it happy and secure. To get all these things we have to work hard. The need for comfort and security makes us desire many things. We get a family and friends around ourselves. We import their joys and sorrows on to ourselves. This leads to likes and dislikes. We like things and people who add to our joy and comforts and dislike those who do not. This corrupts our minds. As we go on working hard for ourselves and our family and friends, we do many things that are right and many times compromise with values and do wrong things. The results are puNyam and pApam. We have to enjoy the fruits of the puNyam and pApam in our account and to do this we have to take one or many births. Repeated births and deaths is sorrow only. The only way out of this problem is to have the right vision that shows that God is in every thing and every where. Yama tells this to Nachiketha in Kathopanishad. (2-1-10).

যদেবেহ তদমুত্র যদমুত্র তদস্বিহ।

मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥

He says that one who sees plurality is condemned to be born and die again and again. Krishna says that by intense devotion one gets an understanding of the Lord's true nature and gets such a right vision. Gita (18-55).

ভক্ত্যা মাং অভিজানাতি যাবান্যচ্চাস্মি তত্ত্বতঃ।

Thus a true devotee is able to see the Lord in every being.

বিদ্যাবিনয়-সংপন্নে ব্রাহ্মণে গবি হস্তিনি ।

শুনি চৈব শ্বপাকে চ পণ্ডিতাঃ সমদর্শিনঃ ॥ Gita (5-18).

He says that a person endowed with wisdom sees the same brahman in a brahmin endowed with wisdom and humility, in a cow, an elephant as also in a dog, and in an outcaste who eats a dog. Sage Narada said the same in his advice to Yudishtira. Bhagavatha (7-14-9).

মৃগোষ্ট্র-খর-মর্কাখু-সরীসৃপ্খগমক্ষিকাঃ ।

আত্মনঃ পুত্রবৎ পশ্যেত্ তৈরেষামন্তরং কিযত্ ॥

One should look upon a deer, camels, donkeys, monkeys, rats, reptiles, birds and flies as though they were his own children. What is it that makes them separate from these (own children)?

The vedic seers had this grand vision. The great vedic hymn Shri Rudram has

three hundred salutations to the Lord, not by His names, but as being available in various beings, both animate and inanimate. He is saluted as being the one available in the streams, shoals, clouds, lightnings, trees, grass, animals like horses, vultures and even in cheats and thieves! Because the hymn contains such a lofty idea its recitation is very inspiring. But, everyone may not be expected to study the scriptures like the upanishads, Gita and Shri Rudram. Understanding this limitation of the people in general our rishis had incorporated these valuable ideas in the popular hymns. We see these names encountered above विश्वम् , सत्यः , and अधिष्ठानम् in the Vishnusahasranamam. One of Lalita's names in Lalitasahasranamam (No. 734) मिथ्याजगदधिष्ठाना। (i.e.) She is the substratum of this unreal universe, says this fact explicitly. As we keep on reading or reciting these prayers, the great vedantic truths contained in them will gradually enter our mind and change our concept of God. That is why we have the practice of pArAyaNam or reciting such stotras daily. By repeated reading we will understand that God is not a Being residing in remote places like Vaikuntha or Kailasa, but He is very intimately available in any thing we see or hear about – including our bodies. This is said in the Narayana Suktam यच्च किञ्चिज्जगत्सर्वं दृश्यते श्रूयतेऽपि वा ।  
अन्तर्बहिःश्च तत्सर्वं व्याप्य नारायण-स्थितः।

Understanding and accepting the facts stated above will cause a great change in our personality and attitude. We will know that we are surrounded by God resident in all things and beings. So, we are never alone or away from Him. This idea will give us great sense of security, as we can get His help at any time or place.

Krishna says this in Gita(6-30).

যো মাং পশ্যতি সর্বত্র সর্বং চ মযি পশ্যতি ।

তস্যাহং ন প্রণশ্যামি স চ মে ন প্রণশ্যতি ॥

Since He is in all things and beings we will show great respect and love for them. We will enjoy immense peace of mind and confidence. This is how the great men like the sages and saints could be calm and enjoyed happiness. Thus Shridhara's experience teaches us an important lesson to be followed in life.

Written, encoded, and proofread by N.Balasubramanian bbalu at sify.com

Please send corrections to [sanskrit@cheerful.com](mailto:sanskrit@cheerful.com)

Last updated ত্তoday

<http://sanskritdocuments.org>

% File name : gangAShTakam2.itx  
% Category : aShTaka  
% Location : doc\\_devii  
% Author : Shridharavenkatesa of Tiruvisanallur or Ayyaval with respect  
% Language : Sanskrit  
% Subject : philosophy/hinduism/religion  
% Transliterated by : N.Balasubramanian bbalu at satyam.net.in  
% Proofread by : N.Balasubramanian bbalu at satyam.net.in  
% Latest update : November 22, 2006  
% Send corrections to : Sanskrit@cheerful.com  
% Site access : http://sanskritdocuments.org  
%  
% This text is prepared by volunteers and is to be used for personal study  
% and research. The file is not to be copied or reposted for promotion of  
% any website or individuals or for commercial purpose without permission.  
% Please help to maintain respect for volunteer spirit.  
%

We acknowledge well-meaning volunteers for [Sanskritdocuments.org](http://Sanskritdocuments.org) and other sites to have built the collection of Sanskrit texts.

Please check their sites later for improved versions of the texts.

This file should strictly be kept for personal use.

PDF file is generated [ October 13, 2015 ] at [Stotram](http://Stotram) Website