

श्रीकपालीश्वराष्टकम्

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INTRODUCTION--

Shri Kapalishvara is the name of Lord Shiva who is the presiding deity at the ancient temple of Shiva in Mylapore, Chennai – the capital of the State of Tamilnadu. His consort has the name Kalpakambal. Ashtakam (अष्टकम्) means a poem consisting of eight verses. In this case the verses are in praise of Shri Kapalishvara. He is praised here with qualities referred to in the vedas, puranas and also as the Infinite Supreme Being. This shows that it is the Supreme Being that appears as Kapalishvara in the temple in Mylapore as any god in any other temple.

NOTE:-

The following symbols are used in the explanations that are given below.

(1) – SA :- Saiva Agama. (2) – SP :- Shiva Purana. (3) – SAN – Shiva 108 Namavali.

(4) – SL – Shivanandalahari of Shri Shankaracharya. (5) – VS – Vishnu sahasranama.

(6) – BG – Bhagavad Gita. (7) – SS – Siva sahasranama (From Padmapurana) with the commentary by late H.H. Sri Parasivendra Saraswati of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

The vedas (Taittiriya Upanishad, Anandavalli) declare that the Supreme

Being is beyond reach of senses and mind. যতো বাঢ়ো নিবর্তন্তে। অপ্রাপ্য
মনসা সহ। For this, reason His qualities cannot be adequately
portrayed by anyone. The Shiva Mahimmna stotram (22) puts this up in
a graphic manner. The poet says that even if the blue mountain were
to be a lump of ink powder, the ocean the ink-pot, the branch of the
heavenly tree Parijata be pen, the earth itself the writing leaf, and
by taking these Saradha the Goddess of Learning writes for eternity,
even then His virtues cannot be fully described.

অসিতগিরিসমং স্যাৎ কজ্জলং সিন্ধুঃ পাত্ৰং
সুরতরুবরশাখা লেখনী পত্ৰমূৰী ।
লিখতি যদি গৃহীত্বা সারদা সৰ্বকালং
তদপি তব গুণানামীশ পারং ন যাতি ॥

The question then is, why should one take up the futile job of writing
a stotram in praise of the Lord knowing full well that it can never be
done satisfactorily? The same author of Mahimna Stotram provides the
answer right at the beginning of the work.

মধুস্পীতা বাচঃ পরমমমৃতং নিমিত্তবত-
স্তব ব্রহ্মন্ কিং বাগপি সুরগুরোৰ্বিস্ময়পদম্ ।
মম ত্বেতাং বাণীং গুণকথনপুণ্যেন ভবতঃ
পুনামীত্যর্থৈহস্মিন্ পুরমথন বুদ্ধিৰ্যাবস্থিতা ॥

He says that the Lord has given out the wonderful vedas which are sweet as the nectar. So, even the hymns composed by Brihaspathi, the learned guru of the devas will be insignificant to the Lord. This being so,

I have ventured to praise You because the act will purify my speech.

Our puranas repeatedly say that chanting the Lord's names and singing

His glories destroy one's sins. One need not worry about the level of

his learning to start in this endeavour. Sage Narada pointed this out

to Sage Vyasa and advised him to write about the glories of the Lord.

তদ্বাগ্বিসর্গো জনতাঘবিপ্লবো যস্মিন্ প্রতিশ্লোকমবদ্ধবত্যপি ।

নামান্যনন্তস্য যশোহঙ্কিতানি যচ্ছৃণন্তি গায়ন্তি

গৃণন্তি সাধবঃ ॥BH(1-5-11).

The composition may be replete with faults. Yet, if each vesre speaks of the Lord's glory , such a work alone will be liked by noble souls. They will hear it, sing it and repeat it to the listeners. Because of this reason scholars and poets continue to write hymns in praise of the Lord.

THE TEMPLE:-

The temple of Shri Kapalishvara is many centuries old. The Lord here has been sung by several Tamil saints known as Nayanmars. The famous composer Papanasam Sivan lived in Mylapore near the temple and was an ardent devotee of Kapalishvara. He had composed many songs in praise of the Lord and Devi Kalpakambal. Originally, the temple was situated on

the sea shore. But it was badly damaged by tidal waves that battered the structure in the second half of the 16th century. It was later moved to the present location where a magnificent temple has come up. There is a large tank before the temple which is used for the float festival.

Being a major temple devoted to Lord Shiva all the important festivals associated with Lord Shiva are observed punctiliously. The temple is very popular and attracts a large number of devotees even on normal days. It includes locals and tourists from all over India and abroad too. The crowds are particularly heavy on weekends, Fridays, on important days such as pradoshams (on the Trayodashi days) and Sivaratri.

NOTE:-

In the passages that follow there may be statements that will appear to eulogise Lord Shiva as the Supreme Being and place other Gods on lower pedestals. These statements may cause some confusion or displeasure to some. There is no need at all for such feelings. Our puranas always resort to this kind of statements in which one form of God is praised as the Supreme Being and others are shown as an inferior to that particular deity. This is just to glorify that particular form. The intention is never to slight any deities. All puranas are particular in stating what is said in the vedas – that it is the one Supreme Being which appears as different Gods and in essence all are one and the same. The Lord says clearly in Gita that He receives worship offered to God in any form.

যে যথা মাং প্রপদ্যন্তে তাংস্তথৈব ভজাম্যহম্ ।

মম বর্তমানুবর্তন্তে মনুষ্যাঃ পার্থ সর্বশঃ ॥ BG(4-11).

We see in some movies that one actor plays the roles of the hero and also other characters. The hero frequently fights with others (played by same person). And finally some event reveals the fact that all of them are born to the same lady and are brothers. They hug each other in great joy and live happily ever after. Similarly, the one Supreme Being alone appears in various forms. So, essentially all forms depict the same Being.

LINGAM –

Shri Kapalishvara in the sanctum in the temple is in the form of a lingam.

The form has esoteric significance. The word "lingam" means a sign or emblem that characterises an object. লিঙ্গ্যতেহেনে ইতি লিঙ্গম্।

The Agama texts, however, interpret the word to describe the Supreme Being from which the universe emerges (নির্গচ্ছন্তি) and into which

it finally merges. লয়ং গচ্ছন্তি ভূতানি সংহারে নিখিলানি

চ। নির্গচ্ছন্তি যতশ্চাপি লিঙ্গোক্তিস্তেন হেতুনা ॥ The Supreme

Being is without parts and form. (অরূপ). However this form is not

easily understood or suitable for worship by most people since they have intense attachment to their bodies. Krishna says this clearly.

ক্লেশোহধিকতরস্তেষা-মব্যক্তাসক্ত-চেতসাম্ ॥

অব্যক্তা হি গতির্দুঃখং দেহবদ্ধিরবাপ্যতে ॥ BG(12-5).

Considering this problem that will face many, our shastras provide three concepts of the Lord. That is, sakala (one with form, rupa, like Nataraja, DakShinamurty etc.,), nishkala (one without form, arupa) and sakala-nishkala (one with and without parts or specific form, rupa-arupa). The lingam belongs to the third category – a combination of form and formlessness. It is thus extremely suitable for worship. Its form is made of mantras and hence it is said that the Sivalinga is constituted of vidya or mantra deha. The three sections of the Shiva linga, namely the square base, the octagonal column and the upper part relate respectively to Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preservator and Rudra the annihilator.

ব্রহ্মা বিষ্ণুশ্চ রুদ্রশ্চ ত্রিখণ্ডমিতি কথ্যতে ।

উর্ধ্বং তু শিবভাগস্যাত্ বিষ্ণুভাগস্তু মধ্যমঃ ।

ব্রহ্মাভাগস্ত্বধঃ প্রোক্তঃ শাস্ত্রজৈলিঙ্গাকুন্তয়োঃ ॥

Thus the lingam represents the Supreme Being that embodies in itself the triad of gods. One of the names of Shiva is

লিঙ্গরূপী - লীনমর্থং গময়তীতি লিঙ্গম্। তদ্রূপী লিঙ্গরূপী ।

অবিদ্যাতিরোহিত-জডপ্রপঞ্চস্য গমকত্বং প্রকাশাত্মকস্য চৈতন্যস্য,

তদ্রূপী পরমেশ্বরঃ ইত্যর্থঃ। তদুক্তং স্কান্দে -

সূতঃ:-

অথাতঃ সংপ্রবক্ষ্যামি শিবলিঙ্গং সমাসতঃ ।

যস্য বিজ্ঞানমাত্রেন বিমুক্তো মানবো ভবেত্ ॥

শিব এব স্বয়ং লিঙ্গং গমকমেব হি ।

শিবেন গম্যতে সর্বং শিবো নান্যেন গম্যতে ॥SS(653).

Now we will say a few words about some important days observed in the temple. These days may be divided into two types – festivals and vratams. Their purpose is the same, that is to make strong the remembrance of the Lord and bring us close to Him. Festivals like Deepavali and Dusserrah are marked by celebrations. The vratams, such as the Ekadasi and Shivaratri are marked by fasting, devotion, austeriry and observance of vows.

PRADOSHAM: –

We are familiar with the story of the churning of the ocean by devas and asuras to obtain the Amrit or nectar. It is said that they used the mountain Manthara as the churning pestle and the snake Vasuki as the rope. The asuras held the snake near the head and the devas the tail portion. As they started churning the snake suffered intense agony and vomitted its venom. It was very potent and threatened to engulf the world. The devas ran to Lord Shiva and prayed to Him to save them and the world. Shiva,

who is the embodiment of compassion took pity on them and consumed the venom. All the devas who gathered at that time felt immense relief and worshipped the Lord in gratitude without taking any food. This was the Ekadasi day. The Lord was pleased with their worship and distributed the Amrit to them. On the following day (that is, on the dwadasi) the devas finished their puja early in the morning and had their food. On the next day, that is on trayodasi, the Lord who was pleased with their devotion performed a dance in the evening. Devi Parvati was watching the dance along with the devas. This dance performance lasted for one yama (যাম) or three hours. The period came to be known as pradosham. This is a vratam and devoted exclusively for the worship of Lord Shiva.

If the pradosham falls on a Saturday then it becomes specially auspicious. The pradosham is auspicious as on that occasion all the gods and devas assemble to have the darshan of Lord Shiva and witness His dance. So, by visiting the temple on that occasion one can have the benefit of having the darshan of Lord Shiva as also all gods. Some verses from Shiva Puranam that talk about the glory of pradosham are given below. Rough translations of the verses are also given.

শংভুরেব তদা পূজ্যো নান্যে বিম্বাদয়স্সুরাঃ ।

যতত্র সৰ্বেহপি সুরাস্তিষ্ঠন্তি শিবসন্নিধৌ ॥

অতস্তস্যাৰ্চনং পূজা কথাগুণগণস্তবম্ ।

तन्मन्त्रस्य जपश्चैव कर्तव्यो मोक्षकाङ्क्षिभिः ॥

दारिद्र्यादुःखतान्त्रानां एतद्दिव्याङ्गुनं स्मृतम् ।

ऋणार्णवनिमग्नानां उडुपोहयं सूतारकः ॥

On that occasion (evening of pradosham day) Lord Shiva alone is to be worshipped, and not other devas like Vishnu. For, all of them are there in the presence of Lord Shiva. So, one who seeks liberation should do His puja, listen to stories that narrate His glories and chant His mantra.

Those who are severely afflicted by poverty and sorrow will get relief by this. This will serve as a boat that will help those who are immersed in ocean of debts.

प्रदोषे पार्वतीनाथे महत्तुष्टिं ताण्डवम् ।

वान्देवी बल्लवीन्धते मृदङ्गं गरुडध्वजः ।

रमा गानकलां ब्रह्मा तालं वेणुं दिवस्पतिः ॥

सर्वे चान्ये सुपर्वाङ्गं सेवन्ते तं महेश्वरम् ।

पुण्यक्षेत्रं समासाद्य महालिङ्गं निषेव्य च ॥

पञ्चकृत्वा नमस्कृत्यात् साष्टाङ्गं भक्तिपूर्वकम् ।

पांसूनां अङ्गलग्नानां एकैकस्य नमस्कृतौ ॥

दिव्यवर्षसहस्रंतु शिवलोके महीयते।

During pradosha time Lord Shiva dances along with Parvathi Devi. Sarasvati Devi plays on veena. Vishnu plays on mridangam. Laxmi Devi sings and Brahma plays on cymbals. Indra plays on flute. All gods witness the glorious sight. One should reach a holy shrine and worship Mahalingam by prostrating to Him five times. By saluting thus one gets to live in Shivaloka for as many years as the dust particles that had stuck to his body.

दर्शनं वन्दनं लिङ्गप्रदक्षिणञ्च तर्पणम् ।

प्रदोषे ऋणमुक्तेः स्यात् भवतूलमहानिलः ।

भुक्तिर्मैथुनमभ्यङ्गं हरिदर्शनकीर्तने ।

वार्थालापं प्रदोषे तु वर्जयेद्दैदिको जनः ॥

Having darsan of Shivalingam, circumambulating It and performing tarpanam will pay off the five obligations one is born with. One should not indulge in eating, sex, oil bath, darsan of Hari and idle gossip during pradosham.

विस्मर्त्तनं सदा कार्यं प्रदोषसमयं विना ।

तत्रापि नरसिंहं तु कीर्तयेद्दर्शयेद्भुधः ॥

एवं प्रदोषसमये पूजां कर्तुमशक्नुवन् ।

गत्वा शिवालयं पश्येत् भक्तोऽभक्तोऽतवा शिवम् ॥

One should worship Lord Vishnu always except on pradosham days.

It is beneficial to have darsan of Lord Narasimha and worship Him on pradosham time. One who is unable to do puja etc., as said above during pradosham can get the benefit by having a darsan of the temple of Lord Shiva.

NOTE:-

It is said here that one should not have darsan of Vishnu on pradosham days but it does good to have darsan and worship Narasimaha. The reason is that Narasimha is Shiva only and not different from Him. The following quote from Nrisimhapurvatapani upanishad states this clearly.

ॐ ऋतं सत्यं परं ब्रह्म पुरुषं नृकेसरि विग्रहम् ।

कृष्णपिंगल-मूर्ध्वरेतं विरूपाम्बुं शंकरं नीललोहितं

उमापतिं पशुपतिं पिनाकिनं ह्यमितद्व्यति-मीशानः--- ॥

SHIVARATRI.

The pradosham day occurring in the Magha month (11th in the Hindu calendar) is very special and is celebrated as Shivaratri. This is the day when Lord Shiva revealed His glorious form to the gods to show that He alone is the Supreme Being. He appeared to them in the form of infinite effulgence. He told them that they all can derive benefit by worshipping Him. Accordingly the gods offered special puja to Him. Lord Shiva was pleased with their worship. He added that the day will be known as Shivaratri and will be a very auspicious one.

দিনমেতত্ ততঃ পুণ্যং ভবিষ্যতি মহত্তরম্ ।

শিবরাত্রিরিতি খ্যাতা তিথিরেষা মম প্রিয়া ॥

Later the infinite form transformed itself into a lingam. The Lord said that whoever fasts on that day or worships Him will get all that is good in this life and will escape rebirth. He also said that the lingam will get installed in all the temples and the place where the lingam appeared first will be known as Arunachalam. Aruna means red – the colour of the flame. Achalam means mountain. Shiva in this place is known as Arunachaleshvara.

ভোগাবহং ইদং লিঙ্গং ভুক্তিমুক্ত্যেক সাধনম্ ।

দর্শন-স্পর্শন-ধ্যানাজ্জন্তুনাং জন্ম মোচনম্ ॥

অনলাচল-সংকাশং যদিদং লিঙ্গমুখিতম্ ।

অরুণাচলমিত্যেব তদিদং খ্যাতমেষ্যতি ॥

This have occurred in Tiruvannamali where the lingam in the temple is known as tejolingham (তেজোলিঙ্গম্।). The event is celebrated as an annual festival in that town. A big lamp is lighted at the top of the hill behind the temple to mark the event. Thousands of people gather to witness the light.

Shivaratri day is celebrated with great deal of fervour in Shiva temples

all over the country. This is a vratam and so is marked by pujas, fasting and offering prayers throughout the night. After having bath one should wear vibhuti, necklace of rudraksha beads, worship the Lord with bilva leaves, chant the sacred panchakshara mantra and visit Shiva temple and participate in the pujas that are done throughout the night. Fasting is prescribed as an aid to curb the wandering tendency of the mind so that it can concentrate on the job on hand – in this case the puja of the Lord. This is known to us for long. Shri Krishna mentions this in Bhagavad Gita (2-59).

বিষয়া বিনিবর্তন্তে নিরাহারস্য দেহিনঃ।

Some verses from the Shiva puranas that extol the important day are given here with rough translation.

মাঘকৃষ্ণচতুর্দশ্যাং উপবাসোহতিদুর্লভঃ ।

তত্রাপি দুর্লভং মন্যে রাত্রৌ জাগরণং নৃণাম্ ॥

Fasting on the chaturdashi day in the fortnight following the full moon day in the Magha month (ie) on Shivaratri day is not something that is easily got by everyone. Still more difficult to get is the possibility of keeping awake during the night on that day.

অতীব দুর্লভং তত্র শিবলিঙ্গস্য দর্শনম্ ।

সুদুর্লভতরং তত্র পূজনং পরমেশিতুঃ ॥

It is very difficult to have darshan of the Shiva lingam. Still more difficult is a to get a chance to worship the Lord.

ভব-কোটি-শতোপাত-পুণ্য-রাশি-বিপাকতঃ ।

লভ্যতে বা পুনস্তত্র বিম্ব-পত্রার্পণং বিভোঃ ॥

Even in performing that worship to that omnipresent Lord the good fortune to offer bilva leaves to Him is got only by the fructification of good deeds done in innumerable births.

বর্ষাণামযুতং যেন স্নাতং গঙ্গাসরিজ্জলে ।

সকৃদ্ বিম্বার্চনেনৈব তৎফলং লভ্যতে নরৈঃ ॥

What merit one earns by taking bath in the river Ganga for ten thousand years is got by worshipping Lord with the bilva leaves on Shivaratri day.

অত্রোপবাসঃ কেনাপি কৃতঃ ক্রতুশতায়তে ।

রাত্রৌ জাগরণং পুণ্যং বর্ষ-কোটি-তপোধিকম্ ॥

Fasting on the night of Shivaratri is equivalent to performing hundreded vedic sacrifices. Keeping awake on that night is superior to austerities performed in ten million years.

একেন বিম্ব-পত্রেণ শিব-লিঙ্গার্চনে কৃতে ।

ত্রৈলোক্যে তস্য পুণ্যস্য কো বা সাদৃশ্যম্চ্ছতি ॥

Nothing in all the worlds equals the merit one earns by offering one
bilva leaf to the Lord on that holy day.

অহো বলবতী মায়া যেন শৈবী মহাতিথিঃ ।

নোপাস্যতে জনৈ-মূঢ়ৈঃ অতিমূখৈরিব ত্রযী ॥

OH! great is the power of maya. Ignorant people do not observe Shivaratri
which is so glorious. This is just like the ignorant people not caring
to study the vedas.

উপবাসো জাগরণং সন্নিধিঃ পরমেশিতুঃ ।

গোকৰ্ণং শিবলোকস্য নৃণাং সোপান-পদ্ধতিঃ ॥

Fasting on Shivaratri day, keeping awake during that night, visiting
the temple of the Lord, the holy place of Gokarna constitute the steps
for one to reach the abode of Lord Shiva .

THE SUMMER FESTIVAL:-

The summer festival (March-April) lasts for ten days. It attracts
huge crowds from in and around the city of Chennai. We can have
the darshan of the Lord riding on the bull Nandi on the fifth day.

One of the Lord's name is ঋষভরুঢ়ঃ. The bull or rishabha

(ঋষভঃ) represents dharma which showers all desired results

like dharma. artha kama and also gives purity of mind that helps

in pursuing mokSha. The commentator says :- "বৃষ সেনে"

বর্ষণাত্ সৰ্বকামানাংবৃষভঃ, ধৰ্মৰূপতয়া সৰ্বকামপ্রদত্বাত্,

তমাকৃঢ়ঃ; বৃষভবাহনঃ ইত্যর্থঃ।SAN(40). The Lord also has

the bull as the mark in His flag. Because of this He also has the name

বৃষাঙ্কঃ।SAN(39).. This shows the great importance the Lord

attaches to dharma.

On the seventh day we have the car festival when He goes round the streets

in a car. It is very popular and attracts huge crowds. It is said that

one who can have the darsan of the Lord in the car will escape rebirth.

রথস্থং বামনং দৃষ্ট্বা পুনর্জন্ম ন বিদ্যতে । The "car"

represents the body.

আত্মানং রথিনং বিদ্বিধ শরীরং রথমেব চ ।

বুদ্ধিং তু সারথিং বিদ্বিধ মনঃ প্রগ্রহমেব চ ॥

says Katha Upanishad (1-3-3).

The Self within the body is the charioteer, the one who rides in

the chariot. The বামনঃ or dwarf mentioned herein refers to the

Self, Supreme Being, the size of the thumb, who resides in the body,

in the small chamber of the heart of everyone. The Katha Upanishad says

this. (KU-2-1-12).

অঙ্গুষ্ঠমাত্রঃ পুরুষো মধ্য আত্মনি তিষ্ঠতি ।

ঈশানং ভূতভব্যস্য ন ততো বিজুগুপ্সতে ॥

Even though the Self is all pervading, It is conceived as a dwarf residing in the heart to facilitate meditation on It.

Another important festival is the day when the 63 saivaite saints, known as Nayanmars are taken in a procession and the Lord follows His devotees. A popular Tamil poet Avvaiyar has said in one of her poems that a devotee of the Lord is greater than the Lord Himself as he has the Lord enshrined in his heart! This will remind us of what Sri Krishna told about His devotees to His friend Uddhava in the Uddhava Gita.

নিরপেক্ষং মুনিং শান্তং নিবৈরং সমদর্শনম্ ।

অনুব্রজাম্যহং নিত্যং পূযযেত্যঙ্গিরেণুভিঃ ॥

(Srimad Bhagavatam-11-14-16).

He said that He invariably follows His devotees.

This festival is celebrated on the eighth day.

On the ninth day one can have the darshan of the Lord as ভিক্ষাটনঃ

a mendicant going around the streets with a begging bowl. The question now arises as to why the Lord is reduced to state of nothingness? Puranas

tell that Lord Shiva took on the role of a beggar with a dishevelled

appearance to teach a lesson to some sages who were staunch adherents of

the path of karma and ignored the higher path of jnana. They were proud

of their of achievements in this path that got them some supernatural

powers also. The beggar was extremely handsome. On seeing Him many of the men and women in the ashram precinct lost their balance and started following Him. When the sages saw this they were furious. They cursed him and let loose some demons created by their spiritual power. But their attempts to harm the beggar utterly failed and they felt humiliated. They surrendered to the Lord.

The ten days festival concludes with the wedding of the divine couple (Lord Kapali and Devi Kalpakambal). The function is celebrated with great deal of enthusiasm by the people as they consider it as a marriage happening in their own house. Everyone brings presents to the "bride" and "groom" in the form of silk sarees and silk dhoties etc. Many offer pieces of jewellery. They also bring sweet and savoury items prepared specially for the occasion. Thus the marriage turns out to be a memorable occasion. After the function gets over the devotees are given prasad offered to the divine couple. The wedding signifies the union of the Jivatma and Pramatma who were never separate, but felt separated due to the veil of avidya or nescience. The Lalithasahasranamam describes Devi Lalitha as कामेश-बद्ध-माङ्गल्यसूत्र-शोभित-कन्धरा। Devi's neck shines with the Mangalya thread tied by the Lord who, therefore has the name अम्बिकानाथः = अम्बिकाया नाथः पतिः। इदं चार्थतः श्रुति-प्रसिद्धं नाम। "नमो हिरण्य-बाहवे हिरण्य-वर्णाय हिरण्य-रूपाय हिरण्य-पतये। अम्बिका-पतये उमा-पतये पशु-पतये

নমোনমঃ।

We also have the float festival (in January–February) when the Lord goes round the tank in a float. This symbolises the fact that the Lord Siva, like a boatman, goes in a boat or raft, scours the ocean of samsara and looks for people who are struggling in the ocean and seeking His help to come out of it. So Siva has these names .

সংসারার্ণব-মগ্নানাং সমুদ্বরণ হেতুঃ -

সংসারঃ জননমরণাদিসমূহঃ স এবার্ণবঃ, সমুদ্রঃ অপারত্বাত্,

তত্র মগ্নানাং সর্বদা দুঃখনুভবিতৃণাং,

দুঃখনাশকরপ্লাবদীরহিতানাং, সমুদ্বরণে,

তেষাং দুঃখনাশনে হেতুঃ কারণং বেদান্তমহাবাক্যজন্য-

বৃত্ত্যাকুটঃ সন্ সংসরপাশবিচ্ছেদকরত্বাত্ ॥

"জ্ঞাত্বা দেবং সর্বপাশাপহানিরিতি।" শ্রুতিঃ ॥SS(408) and

বিষয়ার্ণবমগ্নানাং সমুদ্বরণসেতুঃ -

বিষয়শব্দেন বিষয়ানুভবরূপসংসার উচ্যতে॥ স এবার্ণবঃ

সমুদ্রঃ বিষয়ার্ণবঃ, তস্মিন্ সংসারসমুদ্রে মহতি,

অবিদ্যাকামকর্মপ্রভবদুঃখোদকে তীব্ররোগজরামৃত্যুমহাগ্রাহে

অনাদাবনস্তেহপারে নিরালম্বে বিষয়েন্দ্রিয়জনিতসুখলবলক্ষণবিভ্রমে,

পঞ্চেন্দ্রিয়োখতৃণ্মারুত- বিক্ষোভোথিতানর্থশতমহোর্মিণি,

মহাপাতকাদ্যনেকনিরয়গতে, (দুৰ্বাৰবাৰিচৰগৰ্ভে) হাহেত্যাদি-
কৃজিতাক্রোশনোদ্ধৃতমহাৰ্ণবে মগ্নানং সমুদধরণে সম্যগুদধরণে
সেতুরিব সেতুঃ ।

"ত্রিরূপতং স্থাপ্য সমং শরীরং

হৃদীন্দ্রিয়াণি মনসা সন্নিবেশ্য ।

ব্রহ্মোড়ুপেন প্রতরেব বিদ্বান্

স্রোতাংসি সর্বাণি ভয়াবহানি ॥" ইতি শ্রুতিঃ ॥SS(477).

This will bring to our mind the verse from the popular Karavalamba
stotrAm wherein Shri Shankaracharya beseeches Lord Laxmi Narasimha to
extend His hand and pull him out of the fearsome ocean of samsara.

সংসার-সাগর-নিমজ্জন-মুহ্যমানং

দীনং বিলোকয় বিভো করুণানিধে মাম্ ।

প্রহ্লাদ-খেদ-পরিহার-পরাবতার-

লক্ষ্মীনৃসিংহ মম দেহি করাবলম্বম্ ॥(১০) ॥

Every individual is struggling in the ocean of samsasra, but does not
know how to reach the shore. Also he does not have the ability to know
the means. In such a precarious situation the kindly acharya tells us
that reaching out to the Lord is the only way. One struggling in the
sea for a long time swallows the bitter water, feels weak and faint. In
the same way one caught in the ocean of samsara takes in the poison of
pleasures and pains through the senses and is befuddled. The acharya
herein gently reminds the Lord that saving someone caught in the sea

is not something new to Him. On an earlier occasion He had rescued Prahlada who was bound to a big slab of stone and thrown into the sea by saying প্রহ্লাদ-খেদ-পরিহার-পরাবতার। The kindly Lord is one who is capable of helping us to get out of samsara and administer the required treatment. He is renowned in the vedas as the foremost and devine physician. Shri Rudram says this. অধ্যবোচদধি বক্তা প্রথমো দৈবো ভিষক্। Krishna says that He will lift up those who have exclusive devotion to Him from the ocean of samsara. Gita (12-7).
তেষামহং সমুদ্বর্তা মৃত্যুসংসারসাগরাত্ ।
ভবামি ন চিরাৎপার্থ ময়্যাবেশিতচেতসাম্ ॥

There is a separate temple inside the main temple for Devi who bears the name Kalpakambal. It is said that She took the form of a peacock and worshipped the Lord here to demonstrate the power of devotion. Peacock is called "mayil" in Tamil. Thus the place has come to be known as Mailai or as Mayilapuri and as Mylapore.

Kapali is one of Shiva's names. (No.24-Shiva 108 namavali). Kapala means a skull. Siva wears a garland of skulls. Each skull in His garland is said to be that of one Brahma, the creator god after Brahma's demise at the time of resolution or pralaya. Brahma is only the name of the post, like that of the President or the Prime Minister. When the post is vacated by the occupant another suitable person takes up the post and the work of

creation continues. This period is known as कल्पं kalpam. At the time of Kalpam, Shiva withdraws the creation within Himself and releases it at the beginning of the next Kalpa. Krishna says this in Gita-(9-7).

सर्वभूतानि कौन्तेय प्रकृतिं यास्यि मामिदम् ।

कल्मषये पुनस्तानि कल्पादौ विसृजाम्यहम् ॥

Brahma has a very long life according to our calendar. We may get an idea about Brahma's longevity from the following figures. 360 human years = 1 year of devas. 12,000 years of the devas = The duration of 4 yugas. 2000 such periods = One day of Brahma. Brahma has a life of 100 years made of such days and is equal to 432 million years of mortals. Thus, it is very very long as per our reckoning. Still, Brahma has a finite life only, however long it may be. It has an end. So, every one, including Brahma, is absorbed by Lord's Prakriti and released again. Shiva wearing a garland made of skulls of Brahmas indicates that Shiva is beyond time, is eternal and lasts even after other lesser gods like Brahma who are in the grip of time meet their end. Shri Nilakanta DikShita explains this in his Shivatattvarahasyam as follows. SAN(24).

कपालीति - कपालं ब्रह्मकपालं अस्योस्तीति कपाली। एतेन

अनेक-ब्रह्मात्यय-दर्शित्व-लक्षणं सनातनत्वमुक्तं भवति ।

Now we are faced with a peculiar problem. What can we ask of

Kapaleeshvara, who Himself goes around with a begging bowl (kapalam or

skull) in His hand? Shri Shankaracharya too faced this problem and had come out with an ingenious solution. He had seen that wandering beggars usuallu keep with them dogs, monkeys and such small animals. They make the animals do some simple tricks, entertain the people and collect alms. He says that he has a monkey called his mind that is very frisky, mischevous and uncontrollable. He beseeches the Lord to tie it with the cord of devotion and take it with Him. Please look at this entreaty that is addressed to Kapali.

সদা মোহাটব্যং চরতি যুবতীনাং কুচ-গিরৌ
নটত্যাশাশাখাবটতি ্হটিতি স্বেৰমভিতঃ ।
কপালিন্! ভিক্ষো! মে হৃদয়-কপিমত্যন্ত-চপলং
দৃঢ়ং বধ্বা শিব ভবদধীনং কুরু বিভো! ॥ SL (20).

Thus, the hymn that follows is about the Infinite Supreme Being who appears as Kapali for the benefit of devotees and who is none other than Lord Shiva. Devi Kalpakamba is His Maya shakti also known as Prakriti. The Supreme Being associated with maya is known as Ishwara or Maheshwara. This is said in the Svethasvaropanishad as: মায়াং তু প্রকৃতিং বিদ্যাশ্রয়িনং তু
মহেশ্বরম্ । Maya has names as Parvati, Shiva, Uma etc. Shiva means auspiciouness. SS(18). শিবো মঙ্গলরূপঃ।
নিৰ্মাণি-নিখিল-দুঃখানুষঙ্গ-পরমানন্দ-রূপ ইত্যর্থঃ ।

So is also Devi Kalpakamba who has the name Mangala (meaning auspicious).

The

following popular verse from Saptasloki Durga says this clearly.

सर्वमङ्गलमाङ्गल्ये शिवे सर्वार्थसाधिके ।
शरण्ये त्र्यम्बिके गौरी नारायणि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

Thus, by saluting them whose very names spell auspiciousness, one is bound to get all that is good in life here and hereafter. The following popular verse says this.

यः शिवो नमरुपाभ्यां या देवी सर्वमङ्गला ।
तयोः संस्मरणत् पुंसां सर्वतो जय मङ्गलम् ॥

The Kaivalyopanishad (7) says:-

उमासहायं परमेश्वरं प्रभुं
त्रिलोचनं नीलकण्ठं प्रशान्तम् ।
ध्यात्वा मुनिर्गच्छति भूतयोनिं
समस्तसंस्मिन् तमसः परस्तात् ॥

that one, by meditating on the highest Lord who is allied to Uma, supremely powerful. three eyed, has a blue neck and tranquil reaches Him who is the source of all, the witness of all and is beyond darkness (ignorance or avidya).

This is said in the following verse also.

কল্পকাম্বা-কপালীশৌ ভক্তরক্ষণ-তৎপরৌ ।

তযোঃ অনুগ্রহো যত্র বর্ততে তত্র মঙ্গলম্ ॥

॥ শ্রী কপালীশ্বরাস্টকম্ ॥

কপালি-নামধেয়কং কলাপি-পূর্যধীশ্বরং

কলাধরার্থ-শেখরং করীন্দ্র-চর্ম-ভূষিতম্ ।

কৃপা-রসার্দ্র-লোচনং কুলাচল-প্রপূজিতংব্

কুবের-মিত্রমূর্জিতং গণেশ-পূজিতং ভজে ॥ ১ ॥

ভজে ভূজঙ্গ-ভূষণং ভবাস্থি-ভীতি-ভঙ্গনং

ভবোদ্ভবং ভয়াপহং সুখপ্রদং সুরেশ্বরম্ ।

রবীন্দ্র-বহ্নি-লোচনং রমা-ধবার্চিতং বরং

হ্যমা-ধবং সুমাধবী-সুভূষিতং মহাগুরুম্ ॥ ২ ॥

গুরুং গিরীন্দ্র-ধরিনং গুহ-প্রিয়ং গুহাশয়ং

গিরি-প্রিয়ং নগ-প্রিয়া-সমব্রিতং বর-প্রদম্ ।

সুর-প্রিয়ং রবি-প্রভং সুরেন্দ্র-পূজিতং প্রভুং

নরেন্দ্র-পীঠ-দায়কং নমাম্যহং মহেশ্বরম্ ॥ ৩ ॥

মহেশ্বরং সুরেশ্বরং ধনেশ্বর-প্রিয়েশ্বরং

বনেশ্বরং বিশুদ্ধ-চিত্ত বাসিনং পরাংপরম্ ।

प्रमत्तवेष्ट-धारिणं प्रकृष्ट-चिन्सरूपिणं

विरुद्ध-कर्म-कारिणं सुशिक्षकं स्मराम्यहम् ॥ ४ ॥

स्मराम्यहं स्मरान्तकं मुरारि-सेविताञ्छिकं

परारि-नाशन-क्षमं पुरारि रूपिणं शुभम् ।

स्पृष्ट-सहस्र-भानु-तुल्य तेजसं महौजसं

सु-चण्डिकेश पूजितं मृडं समाश्रये सदा ॥ ५ ॥

सदा प्रहृष्ट-रूपिणं सतां प्रहर्ष-वर्षिणं

भिदा विनाश-कारण प्रमाणगोचरं परम् ।

मुदा प्रवृत्त-नर्तनं जगत्पवित्र-कीर्तनं

निदानमेकमद्भुतं नितान्तमाश्रयेह्यहम् ॥ ६ ॥

अहं-ममादि दूषणं महेन्द्र-रत्न-भूषणं

महा-वृषेन्द्र-बाहनं ह्यहीन्द्र-भूषणवितम् ।

वृषाकपि-स्वरूपिणं मृषा-पदार्थ-धारिणं

मृकण्डसूनु संस्तुतं ह्यतीतिदं नमामि तम् ॥ ७ ॥

नमामि तं महामतिं नतेष्टदान-चक्षुणं

नताति-भङ्गनोद्यतं नगेन्द्र-वासिनं विभुम् ।

अगेन्द्रजा समवितं मृगेन्द्र विक्रमावितं

खगेन्द्र-बाहन-प्रियं सुखस्वरूपमव्ययम् ॥ ८ ॥

সুকল্পকাম্বিকা-পতি-প্রিয়ংবদং মনোহরং
সুগুডকাঞ্চিরামকৃষ্ণ যোগিশিষ্য সংস্কৃতম্ ।
মহাপ্রদোষ পুণ্যকাল কীর্তনাংশুভপ্রদং
ভজামহে সদামুদা কপালি মঙ্গলাষ্টকম্ ॥ ৯ ॥

কপালি তুষ্টিদায়কং মহাপদি প্রপালকং
ত্বতীষ্ট-সিদ্ধি-দায়কং বিশিষ্ট-মঙ্গলাষ্টকম্ ।
পঠেৎসুভক্তিতঃ কপালি সন্নিধৌ ক্রমাত্
অবাপ্য সর্বমায়ুরাদি মোদতে সুমঙ্গলম্ ॥ ১০ ॥

ইতি গুডলূর্ শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণানন্দ যতীন্দ্র শিষ্য
শ্রী রামচন্দ্রেণ বিরচিতং
॥ শ্রী কপালীশ্বরাষ্টকং সম্পূর্ণম্ ॥

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