

ശ്രീകപാലീശ്വരാഷ്ടകമ്

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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 (അഷ്ടകമ്) 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. യതോ വാചോ നിവർത്തന്തേ അപ്രായ മനസാ സഹി 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.

അസിതഗിരിസമം സ്യാത് കജ്ജലം സിന്ധുഃ പാത്രം
സുരതുവരശാഖാ ലേഖനീ പത്രമൂർവീ ।
ലിഖതി യദി ഗൃഹീത്വാ സാരദാ സർവകാലം
തദപി തവ ഗുണാനാമീശ പാരം ന യാതി ॥

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.

മധുസ്പീതാ വാചഃ പരമമമൃതം നിർമിതവത-
സ്തവ ബ്രഹ്മൻ കിം വാഗപി സുരഗുരോർവിസ്തയപദമ് ।
മമ ത്വേതാം വാണീം ഗുണകഥനപുണ്യേന ഭവതഃ
പുനാമീത്യർഥേ/സ്മിൻ പുരമഥന ബുദ്ധിർവായവസ്ഥിതാ ॥

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.

തദ്വാഗ്വിസർഗോ ജനതാഘവിപ്ലവോ യസ്മിൻ പത്രിശ്ലോകമബദ്യവത്യപി ।
നാമാന്യനന്തസ്യ യശോ/ങ്ക്രിതാനി യച്ഛുണ്വന്തി ഗായന്തി
ഗുണന്തി സാധവഃ ॥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 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.

യേ യഥാ മാം പ്രപ്രദ്യന്തേ താംസ്തഥൈവ ഭജാമ്യഹമ് |
മമ വർത്മാനുവർതന്തേ മനുഷ്യാഃ പാർഥ സർവശഃ || 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. ലിങ്ഗ്യാതേ/നേന ഇതി ലിങ്ഗമ് |

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

it finally merges. ലയം ഗച്ഛന്തി ഭൂതാനി സംഹാരേ നിഖിലാനി

ച | നിർഗച്ഛന്തി യതശ്ചാപി ലിങ്ഗോക്തിസ്തേന ഹേതുനാ || The Supreme

Being is without parts and form. (അരൂപ). 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.

ക്ലേശോ/ധികതരസ്തേഷാ-മയക്താസക്ത-ചേതസാമ് ||

അയക്താ ഹി ഗതിർഭൂഃഖം ദേഹവദ്ഭിരവാപ്യാതേ || 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 octogonal column and the upper part relate respectively to Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Rudra the annihilator.

ബ്രഹ്മാ വിഷ്ണുശ്ച രുദ്രശ്ച ത്രിവൺഡമിതി കഥ്യതേ ।
 ഊർധ്വം തു ശിവഭാഗസ്യാത് വിഷ്ണുഭാഗസ്തു മധ്യമഃ ।
 ബ്രഹ്മാഭാഗസ്ത്വധഃ പരോക്തഃ ശാസ്ത്രജ്ഞൈർലിങ്ഗകുർഭയോഃ ॥

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

ലിങ്ഗരൂപീ - ലീനമർഥം ഗമയതീതി ലിങ്ഗമ് । തദ്രൂപീ ലിങ്ഗരൂപീ ।
 അവിദ്യാതിരോഹിത-ജഡപ്രപഞ്ചസ്യ ഗമകത്വം പ്രകാശാത്മകസ്യ
 ചൈതന്യസ്യ,
 തദ്രൂപീ പരമേശ്വരഃ ഇത്യർഥഃ । തദുകൃതം സ്കാന്ദേ -
 സൂതഃ:-
 അഥാതഃ സംപ്രവക്ഷ്യയാമി ശിവലിങ്ഗം സമാസതഃ ।
 യസ്യ വിജ്ഞാനമാത്രേണ വിമുക്തോ മാനവോ ഭവേത് ॥

ശിവ ഏവ സ്വയം ലിങ്ഗം ഗമകമേവ ഹി ।
 ശിവേന ഗമ്യതേ സർവം ശിവോ നാന്യേന ഗമ്യതേ ॥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 distributd 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 (ॐॐ) 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.

ശംഭുരേവ തദാ പുജ്യോ നാൻയേ വിഷ്ണുവാദയസ്സുരാഃ ।
യത്തത്രസർവേ/പി സുരാസ്തിഷ്ഠന്തി ശിവസന്ധിയാ ॥

അതസ്തസ്മയാർചനം പുജാ കഥാഗുണഗണസ്തവമ് ।
തന്മന്ത്രസ്യ ജപശ്ചൈവ കർത്വയോ മോക്ഷകാംക്ഷിഭിഃ ॥

ദാരിദ്ര്യദുഃഖതാൻധാനാം ഏതദ്ദിയാഞ്ജനം സ്മൃതമ് ।
ഋണാർണവനിമഗ്നാനാം ഉഡുപോ/യം സുതാരകഃ ॥

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.

പദ്രോഷേ പാർവതീനാഥേ മഹത്തന്വതി താൻധവമ് ।
വാഗ്ദേവീ വൽലവീൻധതേ മൃദങ്ഗം ഗരുഡധ്വജഃ ।
രമാ ഗാനകലാം ബഹുമാ താലം വേണും ദിവസ്പതിഃ ॥

സർവേ ചാൻയേ സുപർവാണഃ സേവന്തേ തം മഹേശ്വരമ് ।
പുണ്യക്ഷേത്രം സമാസാദയ മഹാലിങ്ഗം നിഷ്ഠായ ച ॥

പഞ്ചകൃത്വാ നമസ്കൂർയാത് സാഷ്ടാങ്ഗം ഭക്തിപൂർവകമ് ।
പാഠസ്മൃതാം അങ്ഗലഗ്നാനാം ഏകൈകസ്യ നമസ്കൃതൌ ॥

ദിവ്യവർഷസഹസ്രം ശിവലോകേ മഹീയതേ ।

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.

ദർശനം വന്ദനം ലിംഗപദ്രക്ഷിണഞ്ച തർപണമ് ।

പദ്രോഷേ ജ്ഞമുക്തേഃ സ്യാത് ഭവതുലമഹാനിലഃ ।

ഭൂക്തിർമൈമൂനമഭ്യംഗം ഹരിദർശനകീർതനേ ।

ധർമ്മാലാപം പദ്രോഷേ തു വർജയേദ്വൈദികോ ജനഃ ॥

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.

വിഷ്ണുവർചനം സദാ കാർയം പദ്രോഷസമയം വിനാ ।

തത്രാപി നരസിംഹം തു കീർതയേദ്ദർശയേദ്ഭൂധഃ ॥

ഏവം പദ്രോഷസമയേ പുജാം കർതുമശക്നുവൻ ।

ഗത്വാ ശിവലയം പശ്യേത് ഭക്തോ/ഭക്തോ/തവാ ശിവമ് ॥

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.

ഓം ഋതം സത്യം പരം ബ്രഹ്മ പുരുഷം നൃകേശരി വിഗ്രഹമ് ।
കൃഷ്ണപിംഗല-മൂർധ്വരേതം വിരുപാക്ഷം ശങ്കരം നീലലോഹിതം
ഉമാപതിം പശുപതിം പിനാകിനം ഹൃയമിതദ്യുതി-മീശാനഃ--- ॥

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.

ദിനമേതത് തതഃ പുണ്യം ഭവിഷ്യതി മഹത്തരമ് ।
ശിവരാത്രിതി ഖ്യാതാ തിമിരേഷാ മമ പത്യാ ॥

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.

ഭോഗാവഹം ഇദം ലിങ്ഗം ഭുക്തിമുക്തയേക സാധനമ് |
ദർശന-സ്പർശന-യ്യാനാജ്ജന്തുനാം ജന്മ മോചനമ് ||

അനലാചല-സംകാശം യദിദം ലിങ്ഗമൂത്ഥിതമ് |
അരുണാചലമിത്യേവ തദിദം വ്യാതമേഷ്യാതി ||

This have occurred in Tiruvannamali where the lingam in the temple is known as tejolingam (തേജോലിങ്ഗമ്). 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 thr 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).

വിഷയാ വിനിവർത്തന്തേ നിരാഹാരസ്യ ദേഹിനഃ|

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

മാഘകൃഷ്ണചതുർദശ്യാം ഉപവാസോ/തിദുർലഭഃ |
തത്രാപി ദുർലഭം മന്യേ രാത്ത്രൗ ജാഗരണം നൃണാമ് ||

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.

അതീവ ദുർലഭം തത്ര ശിവലിങ്ഗസ്യ ദർശനമ് ।
സുദുർലഭതരം തത്ര പുജനം പരമേശിതുഃ ॥

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

ഭവ-കോടി-ശതോപാത്ത-പുണ്യ-രാശി-വിപാകതഃ ।
ലഭ്യതേ വാ പുനസ്തത്ര ബിൽവ-പത്രാർപണം വിഭോഃ ॥

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.

വർഷാണാമയുതം യേന സ്നാതം ഗങ്ഗാസരിജ്ജലേ ।
സക്യദ് ബിൽവാർചനേനൈവ തത്ഫലം ലഭ്യതേ നരൈഃ ॥

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.

അത്ഭോപവാസഃ കേനാപി കൃതഃ കത്ര ശതായതേ ।
രാത്രൗ ജാഗരണം പുണ്യം വർഷ-കോടി-തപോധികമ് ॥

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.

ഏകേന ബിൽവ-പത്രേണ ശിവ-ലിങ്ഗാർചനേ കൃതേ ।

ത്തരൈലോക്യേ തസ്യ പുണ്യസ്യ കോ വാ സാദൃശ്യമൃച്ഛതി ॥

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

അഹോ ബലവതീ മായാ യേന ശൈവീ മഹാതിഥിഃ |
നോപാസ്യതേ ജനൈ-ർമുഖൈഃ അതിമുർഖൈരിവ തത്രീ ॥

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.

ഉപവാസോ ജാഗരണം സന്ധിഃ പരമേശിതുഃ |
ഗോകർണം ശിവലോകസ്യ നൃണാം സോപാന-പദ്യതിഃ ॥

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 ഋഷഭാരുഢഃ. The bull or rishabha (ഋഷഭഃ) 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 :- "വൃഷ സേചനേ"

വർഷണാത് സർവകാമാനാംവൃഷഭഃ, ധർമരുപതയാ സർവകാമപദ്രത്വാത്, തമാരുഢഃ; വൃഷഭവാഹനഃ ഇത്യർഥഃ ISAN(40). The Lord also has the bull as the mark in His flag. Because of this He also has the name വൃഷാങ്ക് ISAN(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.

രഥസ്ഥം വാമനം ദൃഷ്ട്വാ പുനർജന്മ ന വിദ്യതേ | The "car"
represents the body.

ആത്മാനം രഥിനം വിദ്ധി ശരീരം രഥമേവ ച |

ബുദ്ധിം തു സാരഥിം വിദ്ധി മനഃ പഗ്രഹമേവ ച ||

says Katha Upanishad (1-3-3).

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

the chariot. The വാമനഃ 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).

അങ്ഗുഷ്ഠമാത്രഃ പുരുഷോ മധ്യ ആത്മനി തിഷ്ഠതി |

ഈശാനം ഭൃതഭയസ്യ ന തതോ വിജുഗുപ്സതേ ||

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.

നിരപേക്ഷം മൂനിം ശാന്തം നിർവൈരം സമദർശനമ് |

അനുവജ്രാമ്യഹം നിത്യം പുയയേത്യങ്ഘ്രിരേണുഭിഃ ॥

(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 ഭിക്ഷാടനഃ

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 കാമേശ-ബദ്ധ-മാംഗല്യസുത-ശോഭിത-കന്ധരാ Devi's

neck shines with the Mangalya thread tied by the Lord who, therefore

has the name അമ്ബികാനാമഃ = അമ്ബികായാ നാമഃ പതിഃ| ഇദം ചാർഥതഃ

ശൃതി-പ്രസിദ്ധം നാമ| "നമോ ഹിരണ്യ-ബാഹവേ ഹിരണ്യ-വർണായ

ഹിരണ്യ-രൂപായ ഹിരണ്യ-പതയേ/മ്ബികാ-പതയ ഉമാ-പതയേ പശു-പതയേ

നമോനമഃ|

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 .

സംസാരാർണവ-മഗ്നാനാം സമുദ്യരണ ഹേതുഃ -

സംസാരഃ ജനനമരണാദിസമൂഹഃ സ ഏവാർണവഃ, സമുദ്രഃ അപാരത്വാത്,

തത്ര മഗ്നാനാം സർവദാ ദുഃഖനുഭവിത്യുണാം,

ദുഃഖനാശകരപ്ലവാദിരഹിതാനാം, സമുദ്യരണേ,

തേഷാം ദുഃഖനാശനേ ഹേതുഃ കാരണം വേദാന്തമഹാവാക്യജന്യ-

വൃത്തയാരുഘഃ സൻ സംസരപാശവിച്ഛേദകരത്വാത് ||

"ജ്ഞാത്വാ ദേവം സർവപാശാപഹാനിരിതി" ശൃതിഃ ||SS(408) and

വിഷയാർണവമഗ്നാനാം സമുദ്യരണസേതുഃ -

വിഷയശബ്ദേന വിഷയാനുഭവരൂപസംസാര ഉച്യതേ || സ ഏവാർണവഃ

സമുദ്രഃ വിഷയാർണവഃ, തസ്മിൻ സംസാരസമുദ്യരേ മഹതി,

അവിദ്യാകാമകർമ്മപ്രവദുഃഖോദകേ തീവരോഗജരാമൃത്യുമഹാഗ്രാഹേ

അനാദാവനന്തേ/പാരേ നിരാലമ്ബേ

വിഷയേൻദ്രിയജനിതസുഖലവലക്ഷണവിഭ്രമേ,

പഞ്ചേന്ദ്രിയോത്ഥത്യൺമാരുത- വിഷ്ണോഭോത്ഥിതാനർഥശതമഹോർമിണി,
മഹാപാതകാഭയനേകനിരയഗതേ, (ദുർവാരവാരിചരഗർഭേ) ഹാഹേത്യാദി-
കുജിതാക്രോശനോഭൂതമഹാർണവേ മഗ്നാനം സമുദ്യരണേ
സമ്യഗുദ്യരണേ

സേതുരിവ സേതുഃ |

"തപ്രിരൂന്തതം സ്ഥാപ്യ സമം ശരീരം

ഹൃദീന്ദ്രിയാണി മനസാ സന്ദിഖേശ്വരഃ |

ബ്രഹ്മോദ്ധുപേന പത്രരേവ വിദ്വാൻ

സ്രോതാംസി സർവാണി ഭയാവഹാനി||" ഇതി ശ്ലോകഃ ||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.

സംസാര-സാഗര-നിമജ്ജന-മുഹ്യമാനം

ദീനം വിലോകയ വിഭോ കരുണാനിയേ മാമ് |

പ്രഹ്ലാദ-വേദ-പരിഹാര-പരാവതാര-

ലക്ഷ്മീന്ദ്രസിംഹ മമ ദേഹി കരാവലമ്ബമ് ||(൧൦) ||

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 പ്രഹ്ലാദ-വേദ-പരിഹാര-പരാവതാര| 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.അധ്യയവോചദധി വക്ത്രാ പന്ത്രമോ ദൈവയോ ഭിഷക് | Krishna says that He will lift up those who have exclusive devotion to Him from the ocean of samsara. Gita (12-7).
തേഷാമഹം സമുദ്ധർതാ മൃത്യുസംസാരസാഗരാത് |
ഭവാമി ന ചിരാത്പാർഥ മയ്യാവേശിഅതചേതസാമ് ||

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 കൽപം kalpam. At the time of Kalpam, Shiva withdrws the creation within Himself and releases it at the beginning of the next Kalpa. Krishna says this in Gita-(9-7).

സർവഭൂതാനി കൌന്തേയ പക്രൂതിം യാന്തി മാമികാമ് |
കൽപക്ഷയേ പുനസ്താനി കൽപാദൌ വിസൃജാമ്യഹമ് ||

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).

കപാലീതി - കപാലം ബ്രഹ്മകപാലം അസ്യാസ്തീതി കപാലീ। ഏതേന
അനേക-ബ്രഹ്മായ-ദർശിത്വ-ലക്ഷണം സനാതനത്വമുക്തം ഭവതി ।

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.

സദാ മോഹാഽയാം ചരതി യുവതീനാം കൃപ-ഗിരൌ
നടയാശാശാഖാവസതി ഹൃദി സിവൈരമഭിതഃ ।
കപാലിൻ! ഭിക്ഷോ! മേ ഹൃദയ-കപിമത്യന്ത-ചപലം
ദൃശ്യം ബധ്വാ ശിവ ഭവദധീനം കുരു വിഭോ! ॥ 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 Svethasvaropanisad as: മായാം തു പക്രൂതിം വിദ്യാൻമായിനം തു മഹേശ്വരമ് | Maya has names as Parvati, Shiva, Uma etc. Shiva means auspiciousness. SS(18). ശിവോ മങ്ഗലരുപഃ | നിർമാഷം-നിഖില-ദുഃഖാനുഷങ്ഗ-പരമാനന്ദ-രൂപ ഇത്യർഥഃ | So is also Devi Kalpakamba who has the name Mangala (meaning auspicious). The following popular verse from Saptasloki Durga says this clearly. സർവമങ്ഗലമാങ്ഗൽയേ ശിവേ സർവാർഥസാധികേ | ശരണ്യേ ത്യദ്ബിഭേ ഗൌരി നാരായണി നമോ/സ്തു തേ ||

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.

യഃ ശിവോ നമരുപാഭ്യാം യാ ദേവീ സർവമങ്ഗലാ | തയോഃ സംസ്മരണാത് പുംസാം സർവതോ ജയ മങ്ഗലമ് ||

The Kaivalyopanisad (7) says:-

ഉമാസഹായം പരമേശ്വരം പഭ്രൂം
 ത്രിലോചനം നീലകണ്ഠം പശ്രാന്തമ് |
 ധ്യാത്വാ മുനിർഗച്ഛതി ഭൂതയോനിം
 സമസ്തസാക്ഷിം തമസഃ പരസ്താത് ||

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.

കൽപകാമ്ബാ-കപാലീശൌ ഭക്തരക്ഷണ-തത്പരൌ |

തയോഃ അനുഗൃഹോ യതഃ വർത്തതേ തതഃ മങ്ഗലമ് ॥

॥ ശ്രീ കപാലീശ്വരാഷ്ടകമ് ॥

കപാലി-നാമധേയകം കലാപി-പുർയധീശ്വരം
കലാധരാർധ-ശേഖരം കരീൻദ്ര-ചർമ-ഭൂഷിതമ് ।
കൃപാ-രസാർദ്ര-ലോചനം കുലാചല-പ്രപുജിതം
കൃബേര-മിതമൂർജിതം ഗണേശ-പുജിതം ഭജേ ॥ ൧ ॥

ഭജേ ഭൂജങ്ഗ-ഭൂഷണം ഭവാബ്ധി-ഭീതി-ഭഞ്ജനം
ഭവോദ്ഭവം ഭയാപഹം സുഖപദ്രം സുരേശ്വരമ് ।
രവീൻദ്ര-വഹ്നി-ലോചനം രമാ-ധവാർചിതം വരം
ഹൃയുമാ-ധവം സുമാധവീ-സുഭൂഷിതം മഹാഗുരുമ് ॥ ൨ ॥

ഗുരും ഗിരീൻദ്ര-ധൻവിനം ഗുഹ-പ്രിയം ഗുഹാശയം
ഗിരി-പ്രിയം നഗ-പ്രിയാ-സമൻവിതം വര-പദ്രമ് ।
സുര-പ്രിയം രവി-പദ്രം സുരേൻദ്ര-പുജിതം പദ്രം
നരേൻദ്ര-പീഠ-ദായകം നമാമ്യഹം മഹേശ്വരമ് ॥ ൩ ॥

മഹേശ്വരം സുരേശ്വരം ധനേശ്വര-പ്രിയേശ്വരം
വനേശ്വരം വിശുദ്യ-ചിത്ത വാസിനം പരാത്പരമ് ।
പമ്രത്തവേഷ-ധാരിണം പക്രൂഷ്ട-ചിത്സ്വരൂപിണം
വിരുദ്യ-കർമ-കാരിണം സുശിക്ഷകം സ്മരാമ്യഹമ് ॥ ൪ ॥

സ്മരാമ്യഹം സ്മരാൻതകം മുരാരി-സേവിതാങ്ഘ്രികം
പരാരി-നാശന-ക്ഷമം പുരാരി രൂപിണം ശുഭമ് ।
സ്വപുരരത്-സഹസ്ര-ഭാനു-തുൽയ തേജസം മഹൗജസം
സു-ചൺഡികേശ പുജിതം മൃഡം സമാശ്രയേ സദാ ॥ ൫ ॥

സദാ പഹൃഷ്ട-രൂപിണം സതാം പഹർഷ-വർഷിണം
ഭിദാ വിനാശ-കാരണ പമാണഗോചരം പരമ് ।
മുദാ പവ്രുത-നർത്തനം ജഗത്പവിത-കീർത്തനം
നിദാനമേകമദ്ഭൂതം നിതാൻതമാശ്രയേഹ്യാഹമ് ॥ ൬॥

അഹം-മമാദി ദുഷണം മഹേൻദ്ര-രത്ന-ഭൂഷണം
മഹാ-വൃഷേൻദ്ര-വാഹനം ഹ്യാഹീൻദ്ര-ഭൂഷണാൻവിതമ് ।
വൃഷാകപി-സ്വരൂപിണം മൃഷാ-പദാർഥ-ധാരിണം
മൃകൺഡുസുനു സംസ്തുതം ഹ്യാഭീതിദം നമാമി തമ് ॥ ൭॥

നമാമി തം മഹാമതിം നതേഷ്ടദാന-ചക്ഷണം
നതാർതി-ഭഞ്ജനോദ്യതം നഗേൻദ്ര-വാസിനം വിഭൂമ് ।
അഗേൻദ്രജാ സമൻവിതം മൃഗേൻദ്ര വികമാൻവിതം
ഖഗേൻദ്ര-വാഹന-പ്രിയം സുഖസ്വരൂപമായയമ് ॥ ൮॥

സുകൽപകാമ്ബികാ-പതി-പ്രിയംത്വിദം മനോഹരം
സുഗുഡകാഞ്ചിരാമകൃഷ്ണ യോഗിശിഷ്യ സംസ്തുതമ് ।
മഹാപദ്രോഷ പുണ്യകാല കീർത്തനാത്ശുഭപദ്രം
ഭജാമഹേ സദാമുദാ കപാലി മങ്ഗളാഷ്ടകമ് ॥ ൯॥

കപാലി തുഷ്ടിദായകം മഹാപദി പപ്രാലകം
ത്വഭീഷ്ട-സിദ്ധി-ദായകം വിശിഷ്ട-മങ്ഗലാഷ്ടകമ് ।
പഠേത്സുഭക്തിതഃ കപാലി സൻനിയൗ കഥ്രാത്
അവാപ്ത സർവമായുരാദി മോദതേ സുമങ്ഗലമ് ॥ ൧൦॥

ഇതി ഗുഡലൂർ ശ്രീരാമകൃഷ്ണാനന്ദ യതീൻദ്രശിഷ്യ
ശ്രീ രാമചന്ദ്രരേണ വിരചിതം
॥ ശ്രീ കപാലീശ്വരാഷ്ടകം സമ്പൂർണമ് ॥

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