
GangAShTakam 2

க³ங்கா³ஷ்டகம் 2

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GANGASHTAKAM by Shri Shridharavenkatesa of
Tiruvisanallur respectfully called as Ayyaval.

|| ஸ்ரீ அய்யாவால் இதி ப்ரஸித்³தை:⁴ ஸ்ரீத⁴ரவேங்கடேஸாபி⁴தை:⁴ விரசிதம் ||

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. He 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 ommission 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 wonderstuck 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. ந வாஸுதே³வப⁴க்தாநாம் அஸுப⁴ம் வித்³யதே க்வசித் | says Vishnusahasranama in the phalashruti. Lord Krishna gives an assurance to this effect in Gita (9-31). கௌந்தேய ப்ரதிஜானீஹி ந மே ப⁴க்த: ப்ரணஸ்யதி | 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.

க⁴ரு'ஷ்டம் க⁴ரு'ஷ்டம் புநரபி புநஸ்சந்த³நம் சாரு க³ந்த⁴ம் சி²ந்நம் சி²ந்நம் புநரபி புந: ஸ்வாது³ சை-வேக்ஷுக²ண்ட³ம் | த³க³த⁴ம் த³க³த⁴ம் புநரபி புந: காஞ்சநம் காந்தவர்ணம் ந ப்ராணாதே ப்ரக்ரு'திவிக்ரு'தி: ஜாயதே ஸஜ்ஜநாநாம் ||

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:

விபத:³ ஸந்து ந: ஸஸ்வத்தத்ர தத்ர ஜக³த³கு³ரோ |

ப⁴வதோ த³ர்ஸநம் யஸ்மாத³புந⁴ர்-த³ர்ஸநம் || Shri Bhagavatam (1-8-25).

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

ஸம்போ⁴ ப⁴வந்நாம நிரந்தராநுஸந்தா⁴ந பா⁴க³யேந ப⁴வந்தமேவ |

யத³யேவ ஸர்வத்ர ததா²ந³த்யஜே⁵த³ய பஸ்யத்யஹோ கோ⁵த்ர க்ரு³தோ⁵பராத:⁴ ||
1 ||

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?

அஸ்தவேஷ மந்து: பித்ரு³யஜ்ஞ நிஷ்டே க³ங்ாபலவோ யோ விஹிதோ⁵பசித்யை |
தூ³ராத்து தந்நாமஜபேந ஸுத்³தி:⁴ ந ஸ்யாத் கத²ம் மே ஸம்ரு³திரர்த²வாத:³ || 2 ||

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?

த்வந்நாமநிஷ்டா ந ஹி தாவதோ மே ஸ்ரத்³தா⁴ யத: கர்மஸு ந ப்ரத்³க³தா⁴ |
த்ரைஸங்கவம் மே பஸுபாந்தராய: முச்யேய தஸ்மாக்கத²ம் ஆர்தப³ந்தோ⁴ || 3 ||

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?

யத³யத³ய தே ஸ்ராத்³த⁴விநஷ்டிரிஷ்டா கோ⁵ஹம் ததோ⁵ந்யச்சரிதும் ஸமர்த:² |

ஸ்ராத்³தோ⁴ வ்ரு³தா: பூர்வதி³நோபவாஸா: நாந்யத்ர பு⁴ஞ்ஜீய: இத³ம் து கி²த³யே || 4 ||

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.

ஸ்ர³த³தா³லவ: ஸ்ர³த³த³விகா⁴த³பீ⁴த்யா ஸ்வாத்மோபரோத⁴ம் விக⁴ணய்ய தீ⁴ரா: |
யத்ப்ரோசரத்ராபசிதம் மஹாந்த: தத்ரோசிதம் யத்³த³யயா விதே⁴ஹி || 5 ||

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.

க³ங்கா³த⁴ர! த்வத்³ப⁴ஜநாந்தராய பீ⁴த்யா க்³ரு'ஹே கூபக்ரு'தாவகா³ஹ: |
ஜாநே ந தீர்தா²ந்தரம் அத்³ய க³ங்கா³ம் ஆஸாத³யேயம் கத²மா³ர்தப³ந்தோ⁴! || 6 ||

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?

நாஹம் தபஸ்வீ ஸக³ரந்வவாய: ஜாநே ந ஜஹஹ்ரு: சரதி க்வவேதி |
ஸம்போ⁴! ஜடாஜூடமபா³வ்ரு'ணுஷ்வேத்யப்⁴யர்த²நே நாலமயம் வராக: || 7 ||

I am not an ascetic like Bhagiratha nor do

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

க³ங்கா³த⁴ராக்²யா க³திரத்ர நாந்யா தாமாஸ்ரயே ஸங்கட-மோசநாய |
ஹந்த! ப்ரவாஹ: கத²மத்ர கூபே விஸ்பூர்ஜதீஸ: க²லு தே ப்ரஸந்ந: || 8 ||

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.

க³ங்கே³தி க³ங்கே³தி ஹரதி க்³ரு'ண்ஹந் ஆப்லாவிதோஹம் த³யயா புராரே: |
கூபோத்திதோயம் கருணாப்ரவாஹ: கா³ங்க³ஸ்சிராயாத்ர ஜநாந் புநாது || 9 ||

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 மித்²யா வஸ்து . 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 அநித்யம் | But the items like gold that lend substance to them are known as real or ஸத்யம் | . They are permanent or நித்யம் . 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.

மயா ததமித³ம் ஸர்வம் ஜக³த³வ்யக்த-மூர்திநா | 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 விஸ்வம் 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 அநித்யம் only. These impermanent, changing objects are many names and forms of the Lord only. In other words God is the real thing or ஸத்யம் | . God gives substance to the world and is the substratum or அதி⁴ஷ்டா²நம் | 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).

யதே³வேஹு தத³முத்ர யத³முத்ர தத³ந்விஹ |

ம்ரு³த்யோ: ஸ ம்ரு³த்யமாப்நோதி ய இஹ நாநேவ பஸ்யதி ||

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).

ப⁴க்த்யா மாம் அபி⁴ஜாநாதி யாவாந்யஸ்சாஸ்மி தத்த்வத: |

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

வித்³யாவிநய-ஸம்பந்நே ப்³ராஹ்மணே க³வி ஹஸ்திநி |

ஸூநி சைவ ஸ்வபாகே ச பண்டி³தா: ஸமத்³ர்ஸிந: || 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).

ம்ரு³கோ³ஷ்டர்-க²ர-மர்காகு²-ஸூ³ஸுரு³ப்க²க³மகூ³கா: |

ஆத்மந: புத்ரவத் பஸ்யேத் தைரேஷாமந்தரம் கியத் ||

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 விஸ்வம் , ஸத்ய: , and அதி⁴ஷ்டா²நம் in the Vishnusahasranamam. One of Lalita's names in Lalitasahasranamam (No. 734) மித்²யாஜக³த³தி⁴ஷ்டா²நா | (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

யச்ச கிஞ்சிஜ்ஜக³தஸர்வம் த்³ரு³ஸ்யதே ஸ்ருயதே⁵பி வா |
அந்தர்ப³ஹிஸ்ச ததஸர்வம் வ்யாப்ய நாராயண-ஸ்தி²த: |

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).

யோ மாம் பஸ்யதி ஸர்வத்ர ஸர்வம் ச மயி பஸ்யதி |
தஸ்யாஹம் ந ப்ரணஸ்யாமி ஸ ச மே ந ப்ரணஸ்யதி ||

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.

GangAShTakam 2

க³ங்கா³ஷ்டகம் 2

|| க³ங்கா³ஷ்டகம் 2



ஸம்போ⁴ ப⁴வந்நாம நிரந்தராநுஸந்தா⁴ந பா⁴க்³யேந ப⁴வந்தமேவ |
யத்³யேவ ஸர்வத்ர ததா²ந்த்யஜே³ய பஸ்யத்யஹோ கோ³த்ர க்ரு³தோ³பராத:⁴ || 1 ||

அஸ்த்வேஷ மந்து: பித்ரு³யஜ்ஞ நிஷ்டே க³ஙாப்லவோ யோ விஹிதோ³பசித்யை |
தூ³ராத்து தந்நாமஜபேந ஸுத்³தி:⁴ ந ஸ்யாத் கத²ம் மே ஸ்ம்ரு³திர்த்²வாத:³ || 2 ||
த்வந்நாமநிஷ்டா ந ஹி தாவதோ மே ஸ்ரத்³தா⁴ யத: கர்மஸு ந ப்ரத்³க்³தா⁴ |
த்ரைஸங்கவம் மே பஸுபாந்தராய: முச்யேய தஸ்மாக்கத²ம் ஆர்தப³ந்தோ⁴ || 3 ||
யத்³யத்³ய தே ஸ்ராத்³த⁴விநஷ்டிநிஷ்டா கோ³ஹம் ததோ³ந்யச்சரிதும் ஸமர்த:² |
ஸ்ராத்³தே⁴ வ்ரு³தா: பூர்வதி³நோபவாஸா: நாந்யத்ர பு⁴ஞ்ஜீய: இத³ம் து கி²த்³யே || 4 ||
ஸ்ரத்³தா⁴லவ: ஸ்ராத்³த⁴விகா⁴தபீ⁴த்யா ஸ்வாத்மோபரோத⁴ம் விக⁴ணய்ய தீ⁴ரா: |
யத்ப்ரோசுரத்ராபசிதும் மஹாந்த: தத்ரோசிதம் யத்³த³யயா விதே⁴ஹி || 5 ||

க³ங்கா³த⁴ர! த்வத்³ப⁴ஜநாந்தராய பீ⁴த்யா க்ரு³ஹே கூபக்ரு³தாவகா³ஹ: |
ஜாநே ந தீர்தா²ந்தரம் அத்³ய க்ரு³ங்கா³ம் ஆஸாத³யேயம் கத²மார்தப³ந்தோ⁴! || 6 ||

நாஹம் தபஸ்வீ ஸக³ர்நவவாய: ஜாநே ந ஜஹஹ்நு: சரதி க்வவேதி |
ஸம்போ⁴! ஜடாஜூடமபாவ்ரு³ணுஷ்வேத்யப்⁴யர்த்²நே நாலமயம் வராக: || 7 ||

க³ங்கா³த⁴ராக்²யா க்³திரத்ர நாந்யா தாமாஸ்ரயே ஸங்கட-மோசநாய |
ஹந்த! ப்ரவாஹ: கத²மத்ர கூபே விஸ்பூர்ஜதீஸ: க²லு தே ப்ரஸந்ந: || 8 ||

க³ங்கே³தி க்³ங்கே³தி ஹரதி க்³ரு³ண்ஹந் ஆப்லாவிதோஹம் த³யயா புராரே: |
கூபோத்திதோயம் கருணாப்ரவாஹ: கா³ங்க்³ஸ்சிராயாத்ர ஜநாந் புநாது || 9 ||

இதி ஸ்ரீஅய்யாவால் ஏவம் ஸ்ரீத⁴ரவேங்கடேஸாபி⁴தை:⁴ விரசிதம் க³ங்கா³ஷ்டகம்
ஸம்பூர்ணம் |

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GangAShTakam 2

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