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A Prayer to River kAverI

कावेरी प्रार्थना

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కావేరీ ప్రార్థనా



మరుద్భృతే మహాభాగే మహాదేవి మనోహరే ।  
సర్వాభీష్టప్రదే దేవి స్నాస్థితాం పుణ్యవర్ధిని ॥ ౧॥  
సర్వపాపక్షయకరే మమ పాపం వినాశయ ।  
కవేరకన్యే కావేరి సముద్రమహిషిప్రియే ॥ ౨॥  
దేహి మే భక్తిముక్తి త్వం సర్వతీర్థస్వరూపిణి ।  
సిన్ధవర్యే దయాసిన్ధో మాముద్ధర దయాంబుధే ॥ ౩॥  
స్త్రీయం దేహి సుతం దేహి శ్రియం దేహి తతః స్వగా ।  
ఆయుష్యం దేహి చారోగ్యం ఋణాన్ముక్తం కురుష్వ మామ్ ॥ ౪॥  
తాసాం చ సరితాం మధ్యే సహ్యాకన్యాఘనాశిని ।  
కావేరి లోకవిఖ్యాతా జనతాపనివారిణి ॥ ౫॥  
ఇతి బ్రహ్మాణ్ణ పురాణే కావరీ ప్రార్థనా ॥

These verses are in praise of river Kaveri - a sacred river flowing in the southern peninsula of India. The river is one of the five great rivers flowing in South India. The other four are Mahanadi, Godavari, Narmada and Krishna. It is also the smallest of them all, being only 765 Km long. The river is known for the scenic beauty of the regions it flows through. The entire region it passes through is considered sacred. It has its birth at Talakaveri at a height of 1320 feet in the Brahmagiri mountain in the Western Ghats in Karnataka State. There is a small temple there where people offer worship to Kaveri. After flowing through Karnataka State the river meanders through Tamil Nadu State and empties into the Bay of Bengal on the eastern side of the peninsula. It starts as a thin strand of water and as it enters the plains at Bhagamandalam a small river

Gajoti joins it. Bhagamandalam is a picturesque small village at the foothills of thickly forested mountains with the two rivers flowing through it. It has a small temple for Shiva who has the name Bhagamandaleshvara. Later on rivers Hemavati and LakShmana Teertham join Kaveri and it becomes large and deep. Here the waters of the three rivers are collected at the Krishnaraja Sagar dam. Other tributaries that join Kaveri are Shimsha, Hemavati, Arkavati, Kabini and Bhavani. Near Tiruchy, in Tamil Nadu, the river branches and joins again after a couple of kilometers further forming the island of Srirangam. Nearby we have the Grand Anicut (Dam). It is 323 mts. long and 20 mts. high and built of stones. It was built during the 2nd century AD and stands as a tribute to the expertise of the builders of those days.

The river flows through some of the richest lands of the country and blesses the people on its course. In return the people worship it. People of Tamil Nadu worship the floods with a festival called 18th day of Adi month (July-August). They offer puja, light lamps and offer sweetmeats and, fruits and flowers.

One may have a question as to whether it is rational to worship an inanimate object like a river. The answer follows. Our scriptures say that it is the one God who permeates everything. The Narayana Suktam says this clearly. It says that whatever is there that is seen or heard of in the universe is pervaded in and out by the Lord.

యచ్చ కిఞ్చిజ్జగత్సర్వం దృశ్యతే శ్రూయతేఽపి వా ।

అన్తర్బహిశ్చ తత్సర్వం వ్యాప్య నారాయణః స్థితః ॥

Lord Krishna echos this in Gita (9-4). మయా తతమిదం సర్వం

జగదవ్యక్త మూర్తినా । He says that the universe is pervaded by Him - the unseen One. So, what we see as the world is The Lord only. The very first name in the Vishnu-sahasranama is విశ్వమ్ = the universe. But we see the world as made of myriad objects and do not see the God.

Why so? Krishna gives the reason too in Gita.(7-13).

త్రిభిర్గుణమయైర్భావైరేభిః సర్వమిదం జగత్ ।

మోహితం నాభిజానాతి మామేభ్యః పరమవ్యయమ్ ॥

The world is deluded by His power of maya and so, does not see Him who is beyond them. An example will provide the answer. We see an ornament - say - a chain made of gold. We see the chain and talk about the chain only and not the gold which really is the substance. The 'chain' is not a substance at all. There is no chain apart from gold. When we wear the chain or handle it or lock it up in the cupboard we, in fact we are doing all these with gold only in the garb of a chain. The 'chain' is only a name for a particular form of gold. In fact there is no such 'thing' as chain! The 'chain' has its birth from gold, has its existence in gold and goes back into gold when it is melted. Gold is the substratum or (అధిష్ఠానమ్). So also is God the substratum of everything. He is known as the అధిష్ఠానమ్ -

అధితిష్ఠన్తి భూతాని ఉపాదానకారణత్వేన బ్రహ్మేతి అధిష్ఠానమ్ ।

“మత్స్యాని సర్వభూతని” (గీతా ౯।౪) ఇతి భగవద్వచనాత్ ।

(Vishnuhasranamam - 324) A verse in Shri Bhagavatam (VIII-3-3) makes this abundantly clear. This was said by Gajendra the elephant in praise of the Lord who rescued him from the grip of the crocodile. He said 'I take refuge in the self-existent Being in whom the universe rests, from whom it has sprung, by whom it it has been brought into being, who Himself constitutes it, and who is at the same time distinct from both the cause and effect.'

యస్మిన్నిదం యతశ్చేదం యేనేదం య ఇదం స్వయమ్ ।

యోఽస్మాత్ పరస్మాచ్ఛ పరస్తం ప్రపద్యే స్వయమ్భవమ్ ॥

Taking the example of the chain, we find that it has its birth from the gold, its existence in gold and finally goes back into gold when melted. So is the case with everything in the universe. The lay person sees movie and misses the screen on which it is projected though he is looking at it all the time! To extend the logic further he sees the world and misses the Lord behind. The 'world' we see is constituted of very many objects, animate and inanimate. But though they appear to be different and bear different names they are all the forms and names of the one Supreme Being only. So the Lord has the name విశ్వమ్ as said above. That is the reason we have the custom of worshipping all objects. Because the worship of any

object or being is equivalent to the worship of the Lord. All animals including the cow, the monkey and even the snake are objects of worship. Even the 'inanimate' objects such as the books, trees, mountains and rivers are holy. There can be no such thing as a bad or evil thing.

The seers of ancient times had this grand vision. They could see through the superficial layer and perceive God in everything. Krishna says that a realised person will see only God in anything: for example a learned righteous brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog which is considered unclean, and also a mean outcast who eats the flesh of the dog. Gita(5-18).

విద్యా-వినయ-సంపన్నే బ్రాహ్మణే గవి హస్తినీ ।  
శుని చైవ శ్వపాకే చ పణ్డితాః సమదర్శినః ॥

The word సమం in this context means the Supreme Being and not 'equal.' This is made clear by Krishna in the very next verse (5-19). నిర్దోషం హి సమం బ్రహ్మ । The famous vedic hymn Shri Rudram salutes the Supreme Being by addressing Him by names of various objects, both good and 'not good' according to common man's perception. There are salutations to trees, mountains, birds, dogs etc. There are even salutations to thieves, and cheats who are nothing but forms of God only, because there cannot be anything but God. He is the rivers also. Rudram salutes Him as నమో నాద్యాయ. This name నాద్యః is in the Sivasahasranamam (No.684. Padmapuranam). The commentator say నదీగత జలరూపో నాద్యః। నమో నాద్యాయ చేతి శ్రుతిః ॥ For this reason we consider the rivers as sacred. They are not to be polluted. Do not urinate or spit in the waters advises the vedas. నాపు మూత్రపురీషం కుర్యాత్ । న నిష్ఠివేత్ । Our pilgrimages include visiting famous temples and also taking bath in sacred rivers like Ganaga, Kaveri, Yamuna etc.. We have hymns in praise of these rivers. Here we have a short hymn in praise of the sacred river Kaveri.

The river is mentioned in the vedas and puranas. The Aghamarshana Suktam(అఘమర్షణసూక్తమ్) which forms part of Mahanarayanavalli in the Taittiriyanopanishad is a prayer addressed to Lord Varuna - the

god of waters. This is normally chanted before taking bath. అగం = sin. మర్చణమ్ = cleaning or wiping off. So, this is a prayer to Varuna to make us free from sins. In this sukta we come across the following prayer addressed to some famous rivers.

ఇమం మే గజ్జే యమునే సరస్వతి శుతుద్రి స్తోమగం సచతా పరుష్ణియా ।  
అసిక్వియా మరుద్ధృధే వితస్తయా ౨౨జీకీయే శృణుహ్యో సుషోమయా ॥

The rivers mentioned in this mantra are, Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvati, Shutudri (Sutlej), Parushni (Rabi), Asikni (Seenab), Vitasta (Jilam), Sushoma (Sohan). The last four rivers mentioned here were flowing in the Sind Province. In this mantra the word(మరుద్ధృతే) Maruddhrute is a reference to Kaveri. In fact the hymn given in the beginning of this article starts addressing Kaveri by this name only. The Bhagavata Purana mentions the river more than once. It says that during his pilgrimage Lord Balarama visited Kanchi and the sacred river Kaveri. కామకోటిపురీం కాఞ్చీం కావేరీం చ సరిద్వరామ్ । (10-79-14). Again later on in Book 11 the sage Karabhajana, in his conversation with King Nimi talks of the merits of Kaliyuga and says that it is in this age that great devotees of the Lord will appear everywhere, especially in the Dravda country where the rivers Tamaraparni, Kritamala, Payasvini, the extremely sacred Kaveri and the great river Mahanadi which flows towards the west they will be found in large numbers. (11-5-39).

క్వచిత్ క్వచిన్మహారాజ ద్రవిడేశు చ భూరిశః ।  
తాన్రుపర్ణీ నదీ యత్ర కృతమాలా పయస్వినీ ।  
కావేరీ చ మహాపుణ్యా ప్రతీచీ చ మహానదీ ॥

(భవిష్యత్వి నారాయణపరాయణాః ।)

Valmiki talks about it in his Ramayana. Sugriva sends various groups of soldiers to search for Sita. He sends a group headed by Angada to search in the southern direction. He gives details of places he will have to search. At that time he describes the southern mountain range and the holy river Kaveri as follows. He says that Angada will see the blessed heavenly river Kaveri carrying pellucid waters and celestial nymphs sporting in the

river.

తతస్తామాపగాం దివ్యాం ప్రసన్నసలిలాం శివామ్ ।

తత్ర ద్రక్ష్యథ కావేరీం విహృతాం అప్పరోగజైః ॥

(Kishkindha Kanda -41-14).

Kaveri is also known as DakShin Ganga - Ganga of the South and the river's water is reputed to be limpid and sweet

అహం దక్షిణగజ్జేతి విశ్రుతా వేదమూర్ధని ।

ఇమాం మధురపాసీయాం దక్షిణాపథజాహ్నువీమ్ ॥

The Agnaeya Purana says that those who are contacted by the breeze blowing from Kaveri get release from rebirth and reach the lotus feet of the Lord.

కావేరీ త్రిజన్మానః కావేరీ సలిలాప్లుతా ।

కావేరీ వాతాద్యై స్పృష్టా యాన్తి హరేఃపదమ్ ॥

The Brahmavaivarta Puranam defines the word Kaveri as follows.

కకారః కలుషం హన్తి వేకారో వాఞ్చితప్రదః ।

రీకారో మోక్షదో నృణాం కావేరీత్యవధారయ ॥

The letter ka stands for the destruction of sins, ve for the bestowal of desires and ri for the granting of mokSha or liberation from the cyclic births. Kaveri is also known as Kanakasarit(కనకసరిత్). Kanakam (కనకమ్) means gold and sarit(సరిత్) means river. The sand in the bed of Kaveri is said to be rich in gold content. Kaveri is called Ponni (pon = gold) in Tamil. The great acharya Shri Vedanta Desika mentions the glory of the river in his famous work Sri Bhagavaddhyana sopanam (verse no.2).

వేలాతీత శ్రుతిపరిమలం వేధసాంమాలి సేవ్యం

ప్రాదుర్భూతం కనకసరితస్సైకతే హంసజుష్టే ।

లక్ష్మీభూమ్యోః కరసరసిజైర్దాలితం రజభర్తుః

పాదాంభోజ ప్రతిపలతు మే భావనాదీర్ఘికాయామ్ ॥

The acharya says that the lotus feet of the Lord Ranganatha appeared on the golden sands of Kaveri which are home to hamsas or swans. It is said that swans do not like to stay in turbid waters.

న బద్ధాన్తి రతిం హంసః  
కదాచిత్కర్తమేఽమృసి । The water of Kaveri is clean and have gold content in the sands. So, the birds prefer to stay in such lovely place.

The word హంసః also mean sanyasins of the highest order - paramahansa sanyasis. This means that the great sanyasis gather on the shores of Kaveri because of its sacredness.

### STORY OF THE RIVER KAVERI

There was a king by name Kavera. He was righteous and ruled his kingdom according to the injunctions of the scriptures. He sought liberation or mokSha and with this in mind he did severe penance. Brahma the creator was pleased with his penance and appeared before the king and wanted to know his wish. The king requested Brahma to grant him mokSha. Brahma said that this is not something which He can grant but can be attained only by one getting spiritual wisdom or jnanam. He requested Maya Devi to appear before them. Brahma asked Maya to be born as the king's daughter and impart him the required knowledge. In addition Brahma told her to become a river by name Kaveri and save all beings and also she, by another aspect to become the wife of sage Agastya and spread spiritual wisdom. Accordingly Maya appeared before the king Kavera as an infant. The king was very happy at this. He took the child with him and brought it up with loving care. After some years, the king renounced the kingdom, repaired to the forests, performed severe penance and attained liberation. Kaveri wanted to serve the world in the form of a river and to achieve this she prayed to Lord Narayana and did penance. Pleased with her devotion, the Lord appeared before her and learned of her desire. He told her that He will reside in a gooseberry tree in the Sahyadri hills. Brahma will worship Him in the tree and wash His feet with the water from the river Vraja in his conch. She should merge herself with those waters and flow in the southern regions and sanctify that area. She will get the names Sahya amalaka Tirtha, Shanka Tirtha and DakShina Ganga. In this period sage Agasthya was performing penance. Brahma appeared before him and advised him to get married and lead the life of a householder. At first he sage was not agreeable to this idea. Brahma explained to him the greatness of a householders' life and suggested that he marry His daughter Kaveri. This



will be of advantage to him and also to everyone. Agasthya was convinced of Brahma's words and agreed to marry Kaveri. He went to the Himalayas and met Kaveri who was performing penance there. He told her of Brahma's advice to him. Kaveri agreed to marry the sage. She divided herself into two forms. With the name Kaveri she entered the (కమణ్ణలు) waterpot of the sage. With another body and the name (లోపాముద్రా) Lopamudra she bowed to the sage. The gods assembled at that place. Brahma got Lopamudra married to Agasthya as per the vedic rules. The sage with his wife saluted to the gods assembled there. Sarasvathi Devi, her mother, advised her in detail the duties of a householder's wife. After the marriage Agasthya with his wife started his journey to the south, crossed the Vindhya mountains and reached the Sahya mountains. He kept his water pot in a place and told his disciples that he is going to the nearby Swarnamukhi river to perform his ablutions and till his return to look after it. At that time Brahma saw Lord Vishnu shining in a gooseberry tree nearby. He was overjoyed. He circumambulated the tree and washed the feet of the Lord with the water that had the essence of all the holy waters from the conch (that represented the Gaytri mantra) he had. The holy water grew into a stream and flowed down the mountain. Kaveri who was staying in sage Agasthya's water pot saw this and was filled with joy. At that time a heavenly voice addressed Kaveri and said that the time for fulfilment of her wish is very near. "The time for you to reach the ocean has come. The holy autumn (శరద్) season has come. In this season even a small gift given to a deserving person will yield immense benefit. As the result of your severe penance this also happens to be birth of the month of Thula (7th month of the solar calendar). You should proceed and mingle with the holy waters that is flowing from the worship offered by Brahma. You will be conferring great benefit to the people of the country". By divine will a strong wind accompanied by heavy rain started blowing at that time. The disciples of the sage forgot all about the sage's advice to take care of his water

pot and ran for cover. The strong wind upset the pot. Kavri flowed from the pot, mixed with the waters in the stream and started to flow in the southern direction. Sage Agasthya returned after finishing his ablutions and saw what had happened. He was very happy to see Kaveri flowing down the mountain as a river. He summoned Kaveri and blessed her. She told the sage what all happened in his absence and how she got mixed with the holy waters from bathing the feet of Lord Vishnu who appeared in the tree. Sage Agasthya was pleased by the answer of Kaveri. He lauded her and said that the Southern Peninsula will derive great benefit from her. Then he also passed on to her some secret information he knew by his great spiritual power.

మహారహస్యం కింఞాన్త్ర శ్శృణుష్యాత్స్వద్భుతం శుభే ।  
 బ్రహ్మి దివ్యదృష్ట్యాద్య సర్వశాస్త్రేషు నిశ్చితమ్ ॥  
 మహాపాతకినాం పాపం మోచయన్త్యః క్షణేన హి ।  
 గంగాదికా మహానద్యస్తీర్థాని చ మహాన్తి చ ॥  
 మలీకృతాశ్చ తత్పాపైః అశక్తాస్తద్విమోచనే ।  
 శోచయన్త్యః పరం దేవం యాన్తి లోకపితామహమ్ ॥  
 తాసాం విశుద్ధయే బ్రహ్మ సభాయాం మునిభిః సహ ।  
 సమ్యగ్విచార్య శాస్త్రేషు వేదేషు చ పునః పునః ॥  
 హరిణా చ తతః ప్రోక్తం ప్రాయశ్చిత్తం విధాన్యతా ।  
 స్నాన్యన్తు సహ్యాధాత్స్యగ్రే కావేర్యాం తౌలిసంజమే ॥

The rivers like Ganga that are renowned to cleanse people who take bath in them of their sins were polluted by the sins washed into them. They were sad at this and approached Brahma, the Creator, to find a way to get themselves rid of this huge load of sins dumped into them. Brahma discussed this issue with the sages assembled in his court at that time and looked into the scriptures also for an answer. They came across the expiation mentioned by Shri Hari - that is they should take bath in Kaveri in the seventh month(తులా) of solar calendar. The 66 crores of waters from all the 14 worlds come to Kaveri at that period to wash

off their sins. They should also go to Kaveri and take bath at that time.

షట్పట్టికోటి తీర్థాని ద్విసప్త-భువనేషు చ ।

తాని చాయాన్తి కావేర్యాం స్వాఘోఘ-వినివృత్తయే ॥

Such a holy river naturally attracts holy men to its banks. He said that he as also many other sages will have residence on her banks.

అహం తు వైఖానస వాలఖిల్యైరస్యైః మునీన్ద్రైస్సనకాదిభిశ్చ ।

సర్వత్ర తే పుణ్యతటే వసామి ॥

Sage Agastya told this to Kaveri and blessed her saying that she will confer all prosperity for those living in the southern part of the country.

విభూత్యై దాక్షిణత్యానాం క్షేమాయ విజయాయ చ ।

మయా చైవాభ్యనుజ్ఞాతా గచ్ఛ దేవి యథాసుఖమ్ ॥

We are indeed blessed to have such sacred rivers in our country. Let us pray to Kaveri and be cleansed of our sins. The following verse gives a description of Kaveri devi and is suitable for meditation on Her.

అచ్ఛ-స్వచ్ఛ-లసద్-దుకూలవసనాం పద్మాసనాధ్యాయినీం


హస్త-న్యస్త-వరాభయాబ్జ-కలశాం రాకేన్ద్ర-కోటి-ప్రభామ్ ।


భాస్వద్-భూషణ-గన్ధ-మాల్య-రుచిరాం చారు-ప్రసన్నాననాం

శ్రీగంగాది-సమస్త-తీర్థ-నిలయాం ధ్యాయామి కావేరికామ్ ॥

The verse, roughly translated, says that I meditate on Kaveri who wears spotlessly clean silk garments, and is seated in the Padmasana pose. She has one palm of the hand pointing down indicating that She will grant desires of those who seek her and another palm of the hand pointing up indicating She will protect and grant freedom from fear. She wears shining jewels and fine smelling garlands and has a pleasing smiling face. She is the repository of all holy wates like Ganga.

॥ ఓం తత్సత్ ॥

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