**SRI AMARANATHA MAHATMYAM**

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SRI AMARANATHA MAHATMYAM is a rare find of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. This work describes inter alia the various kshetras and tirthas to be worshipped en route to the celebrated Amaranath Lingam as part of the holy Yatra. Stories bringing out the significant association of these sacred spots with Shiva, Shivaganas, Devi, Ganapathi and Vishnu are recounted in a gripping manner. Stotras in praise of Shiva, Devi, Ganapathi and Vishnu, occurring in the narrative are beautiful. The book concludes by saying:

“By performing yatra in this manner of the sacred Amaranatha, one attains Mukti without (tough efforts like) control of sense organs. After enjoying happiness in this world, he attains to Sayujyam (merger with Shiva) at the end.”

 

This interesting Mahatmyam occurs in **Bhringisa Samhita**. Bhringisa is a rarely heard name of Shiva. Bhringi was a Maharishi, who was such a great devotee of Shiva that he did not wish to worship Parvathi even along with Shiva! When Shiva and Parvathi were seated together in Kailasa, the Maharishi took the form of a bhringi (bee) not wishing to go round Parvathi, and pierced his way through the gap between them. Parvathi cursed him to lose all the sap of his body; he was reduced to mere bones. When Bhringi realized the truth that Shiva and Sakti are indeed one and inseparable, he apologized. He was then granted a third leg so that he could manage to walk.

Amaranatha Mahatmyam occurs in ‘Dakshina Parsva Upatirtha Sangraha’, compilation of Tirthas on the south side of the Himalayas. At the very outset it is made clear that Yatra (pilgrimage) and not mere Darshan is very important; even now the popular name for having darshan of Amaranatha is Amaranatha ‘Yatra’. The entire account of the Yatra is covered as teaching of **Bhairava** (Shiva) to **Bhairavi** (Parvathi). Kala Bhairava, who is an aspect of Shiva, celebrated specially in Kashi, is associated with the last moments of life of a person departing from earth. If the person dies in Kashi, Bhairava punishes him for the accumulated sins he has committed in all his previous births. This happens prior to Shiva granting him Moksha by chanting the Taraka mantra of Rama’s name in his right ear. The punishment of Bhairava results in intense experience of pain over a short period of time; this is the misery the Jiva would otherwise have experienced in many future births. Amaranatha, says the Mahatmyam, grants Moksha on completion of the arduous journey after having darshan at 16 kshetras and sacred bath in 23 Tirthas en route. It is but appropriate that this revelation is made by Bhairava.

When Shiva refers to **Amaranatha Linga** for the first time, he calls it as ‘Svadhalingam’, implying that the blessings of Pitrus are attained through Darshan of the Linga. प्रणम्य विधिवद्भक्त्या स्वधालिङ्गं सनातनम् । नरो न लिप्यते पापैः कोटिजन्मसमुद्भवैः ॥ (1.22) ‘Svadha Devi’ is Agni’s consort, who gives him power to carry ‘Kavya’ (offerings made to Pitrus) to Pitrus. It is of course stressed that Darshan, touch, Puja and prostration to Amaranatha destroys all sins.

दर्शनात्स्पर्शनाच्चापि पूजनाच्चापि वन्दनात् ।

अमरेशस्य लिङ्गस्य मुच्यते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ॥ (1.23)

The Yatra procedure enunciated by Shiva envisages a total of 23 baths (Snanam), six in Vitasta river and seventeen in Ganga and other Tirthas.

षट्स्नानानि वितस्तायां प्रोक्तानि जगदम्बिके ।

सप्तदशस्थलस्थानानि स्नानान्यन्यानि सुन्दरि ॥

त्रयोविंशभिधा यात्रा स्मृता ह्यमरनाथगा ॥(1.24, 25) Vitasta is one of the seven rivers celebrated as ‘Sapta Sindhu’ in Rigveda. Vitasta is a tributary of Sindhu river. The following celebrated prayer to the seven rivers occurs in the Nadi Stuti Sukta in Ashtaka 8 of Rig Veda.

**इमं मे गङ्गे यमुने सरस्वति शुतुद्रि स्तॊमं सचता परुष्ण्या ।**

**असिक्न्‍या मरुद्वृधे वितस्तयार्जीकीये श्रृणुह्या सुषॊमया ॥**

One, who performs Yatra in the manner described and has darshan of Amaranatha, attains to Shiva Sayujya (merger with Shiva).

एवं कृत्वा नरो यात्रां पश्येल्लिङ्गं रसात्मकम् ।

स याति शिवसायुज्यं यत्र नास्ति कृताकृतम् ॥(1.26)

The Linga is described here as ‘Rasatmaka Linga’, Linga of water. One can recall the description in Gajaranya (Tiruvanaikkaval) Mahatmyam of how Akhilandeswari prepared a Lingam of water (Jambukeswara) with her own hands and worshipped. Sloka 1.26 describes Shivasayujya as a state where there is no ‘krita’ (acts done) and ‘akrita’(acts not done). The dos and don’ts of conduct apply to normal human behaviour. In the state where senses and mind have been conquered and Gnana has dawned, the person rises above the dualities of life. For him, there are no acts to be done and no acts to be not done. A common prayer to Shiva is as under:

**यत्कृत्यं तन्नकृतम्, अकृत्यं कृत्यवत् यदाचरितम्, उभयोः प्रायश्चित्तम् शिव तव नाम द्व्यक्षरम्, शिवाय नमः ।** “I have not done acts that should be done; I have done acts that ought not to be done, as if they should be done. Your name ‘Shiva’ of two letters is the only atonement; prostrations to Shiva.”

The account of Amaranatha Mahatmyam as available now is probably not complete. Hence descriptions of many of the kshetras en route to the Amaranatha cave are not covered in this account, though the names of all the kshetras and Tirthas are listed in chapter 1 as given below.

1. Shivaparam, Ganga
2. Padmapura, Mahanaga Tirtha, worship Haridra Ganapati
3. Balihara, Sthalatirtha
4. Hastikarna, Saraswathi Asrama Tirtha, Chakresa Tirtha, Devaka Tirtha, Harischandra Tirtha
5. Sthalavata, Mrita Tirtha
6. Surya Guhavatam, Lambodari Tirtha
7. Suryasrama, Surya Ganga
8. Kara, Sthalatirtha, worship Ganapati
9. Hayasirashasrama, Asvataranaga Tirtha
10. Baddhorasi, Ganga
11. Saralaka, Sthalatirtha
12. Khilyapanam, Narayana Tirtha, worship Vishnu
13. Mamalakam, Mamesa Tirtha, worship Ganapati and Mamaleswara Linga
14. Bhrigupati, Nilaganga
15. Sthanvasrama, Panchatarangini
16. Garbhagara, Amaravathi

**Khilyapanam**

Once Balakhilya Rishis did hard penance for a thousand years, standing on tip of the thumb of one foot. Balakhilyas are said to be 60000 in number; they are the sons of Brahma. They are always in front of the chariot of Surya and giving Argyam (offering of water) in order to ward off the attack by Asuras called Mandehas on Surya. This is an emergency provision made by Bhagavan when Dvijas on earth do not perform Sandhyavandanam and offer Argya in time! The sloka (2.6) says that the power of Balakhilyas stemmed from their ‘Santhi’, attitude of peace. **विष्णुध्यानपरासक्ताः शान्तात्मानो महौजसः ।** This is what distinguishes Rishis from Asuras, who also perform intense Tapas, but who are overcome by ‘Asanthi’, restlessness, Rajoguna. When Vishnu gave darshan to the Rishis, they prostrated in bliss and burst into poetry. A sloka says: “I take refuge in you, who is the primal Deva of Devas, who is Hiranyagarbha and is also Hiranyabahu”. Hiranyagarbha is Brahma, who created the universe from golden egg. Hiranyabahu is Shiva, who is thus praised in Sri Rudram, meaning one with golden arm. The Rishis thus saw the Trinity in Vishnu. In another verse, the Rishis say:

प्रसार्य जालं रागद्वेषादितन्त्रं दृष्टं मनः पक्षिणं प्राणमध्ये ।

दशग्राहं परिगृहातिसत्यं महापदं शरणं प्रपद्ये ॥ (2.12)

“With your Maya, you spread the web of attachment, hate etc. and, seeing that the mind, like a bird, is ensnared and caught by the ten sharks (Indriyas), we perceive the Supreme True State and take refuge in you.” Bhagavan’s Maya is said to be ‘**दुरत्यया’** difficult to cross. (Bhagavadgita says: दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया। मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ।7.14।) Vishnu looked at his feet, and Ganga emerged. In this kshetra of ‘**Khilyapanam**’, also called Narayana kshetra, Vishnu gives darshan and Ganga is the Tirtha, also called Narayana Tirtha or Balakhilya Tirtha. All sins are destroyed with bath in the Tirtha and darshan of Vishnu here; the Purana enumerates great sins in this context.

**Mamaleswaram**

Amaranatha Mahatmyam recounts some unusual and interesting events. Shiva once was resting on the peak of Khelanaka hill. He asked Ganapati to stand guard at the entry at the bottom of the hill and asked him not to allow anyone inside. Devas arrived. Shiva said to them in a loud voice not to come. Ganapati appeared with an axe and shouted to Devas not to proceed. The interesting thing is that the moment they heard the voice of Ganapati, Devas became immersed in the ocean of Sachchidananda. That village became ‘Mamalakam’, after the words ‘Ma’ (no) and ‘Alam’ (enough) spoken by Ganapati. (This place is known as Mamal nowadays). Shiva asked Ganapati to take his residence there and remove the obstacles of devotees. Two special days are recommended for getting the blessing of Ganapati here: Vaisakha Sukla Chturdashi and Vinayaka Chaturthi. One should also have bath in Mamesa Tirtha and darshan of ‘**Mamaleswara Linga**’ nearby.

**Lambodari River**

Ganapati was once standing guard at the entrance of Kailasa; he had been told not to let anyone in. Indra came along with Devas and was duly stopped. Indra became furious and raised his hand holding Vajrayudha in order to strike Ganapati. With a mere sound of ‘Hum’, Ganapati paralysed Indra’s arm. (Readers will be reminded of how Devi annihilated Dhumralochana by merely uttering ‘Hum’, as recounted in Durga Saptasati). A penitent Indra prostrated and praised Ganapati in a beautiful Stotra as one without beginning, middle and end, cause of all causes, form of ‘Tat’, form of ‘Chit’, Brahman, Shiva, and one who cannot be comprehended by Vedas. In a verse, Indra says very beautifully that Ganapati destroys hordes of obstacles by just waving his hand (trunk) again and again.

Ganapati was pleased; he blessed and released Indra’s arm. Indra prostrated to **‘Mantravinayaka’** as the Purana describes. **प्रणिपत्य महेशस्य सूनुं मन्त्रविनायकम् । 4.23.** Ganapati is of the form of Omkara, the fundamental and the most significant mantra. Skanda Purana describes how Ganapati emerged from the Omkara image at the centre of images of seven crores of Mahamantras in Chitra Mandapa in Kailasa, when Shiva and Parvathi looked at that Omkara image. The Stotra of Ganapati rendered by Indra is named as ‘Krodhasamharaka’ Stotra, Stotra that removes anger, in the Purana. **क्रोधसंहारकं नाम स्तोत्रम् गणपतेस्तदा । 4.24.** Recital of this Stotra will remove obstacles.

Ganapati then became very hungry and ate a lot of fruits and drank water from the Ganga, drying up the river in the process! He became ‘Lambodara’, large-bellied. When Shiva saw Ganga had dried up, he struck at Ganapati’s belly with his Damaru (small drum). Ganapati threw out the Ganga waters from his mouth. That river came to be known as ‘**Lambodari**’. Bath and Danam (ceremonial gift) in the river destroy all sins and bestow Shiva Sayujyam. The Purana mentions specifically Danam of cow, land, gold and clothes.

गो-भू-हिरण्य-वासांसि लंबोदरनदीतटे ।

यो ददाति द्विजश्रेष्ठो ह्यनन्तफलमाप्नुयात् ॥4.30&

It may be noted that the four items mentioned are part of ‘Dasa Danam’ recommended in Sastras: cow, land, sesame oil, gold, ghee, clothes, foodgrains, jaggery, silver and salt. गो-भू-तिल-हिरण्याज्य-वस्त्र-धान्य-गुडानि च । रौप्यं लवणमित्याहुः दशदानानि पण्डिताः ॥

**Bhrigutirtha and Nilaganga**

Maharishi Bhrigu once did penance, described as impossible even for Devas, for a thousand divine years in Parisilavana. Vishnu gave darshan; Bhrigu prostrated and chanted stotra. Vishnu raised him, embraced him and shed tears of joy. His sweat flowed as **Bhrigutirtha**. Bath in Bhrigutirtha destroys sins like even killing of brahmana (one of the five heinous sins). Danam of copper vessel or leaving it in the flow of the Tirtha is meritorious. Sraaddham in this sacred tirtha satisfies Pitrus for a hundred Kalpas (one kalpa is a day of Brahma, which equals 1000 chaturyugas). As per another Purana, when Kashmir was inundated, Rishi Kasyapa drained the flood waters through many rivers and channels. Bhrigu came at that time and had darshan of Amaranatha.

Shiva and Parvathi were once engaged in a light hearted banter; Parvathi became teary eyed. On seeing that, Shiva’s face assumed a blue black colour. Parvathi was shocked; she showed him a clear mirror. The import is that a clear mirror-like heart will only enable us to have darshan of Shiva. Impurities like Kama (desire), krodha (anger) etc. rob us of the vision of Shiva in the heart. A surprised Shiva wiped his face with his tresses and washed with Ganga waters. Ganga became blue black. This is **Nilaganga**, bath in which destroys all sins. Bath with the soil from Nilaganaga leads one to Brahmaloka. Listening to this story is by itself remover of sins, specially for women. It will clear the impurities of mind, speech and action.

**Sthanvasrama Pesha**

After the departure of Dakshayani, Shiva was in severe penance in Samadhi for a thousand divine years in the Himalayas. Gowri, who had incarnated as the daughter of Parvataraja, came to serve him. As Shiva was like Sthanu, unmoving pillar, the place was known as **Sthanvasrama.** Bath in the Tirtha here bestows Shiva Sayujya and Sraaddha satisfies Pitrus for a hundred Kalpas. Danam of silk and gold is recommended. The Purana specifically states that **Sandhyavandanam performed in Sthanvasrama is a crore of times more meritorious than in one’s home.** Sastras say that Sandhyavandanam performed on river bank is twice as meritorious as in home; in Gosala, ten times; in Agnisala, a hundred times; Siddha kshetra, Tirtha, Devata Sannidhi, a crore of times.

Devas once came to Sthanvasrama for darshan of Shiva. Rakshasas also came at that time and started fighting with Devas in order to move ahead on the hill for darshan. The enraged Devas pulverized and threw away the Rakshasas; as they pulverized them like flour, ‘Pishta’, the place came to be known as ‘**Pesha**’. Darshan of Pesha hill bestows the fruit of bath in many sacred tirthas. Mere climb of the Pesha hill yields lofty fruit. Climb should start after prostration to the hill. The Mahatmyam interestingly says that one should keep chanting **‘Sri Sri Sri Sitikanthesa’** while climbing the hill.

तत: प्रोक्तं पुराविद्भिः पेषाख्यो गिरिरुत्तमः । आरोढुमिच्छति यस्तु गिरिं देवि समन्ततः ॥

श्री श्री श्री शितिकण्ठेश इदं मन्त्रमनुस्मरेत् । स ब्रह्मभवनं याति यत्र गत्वा न शोचते ॥ 6.25, 26. The name of Shiva chosen in this context is a rare one. Sitikantha is a name which occurs in Sri Rudram, **’नमो भवाय च रुद्राय च नमः शर्वाय च पशुपतये च नमो नीलग्रीवाय च शितिकण्ठाय च’.** The name interestingly means white-necked or black-necked one. How is it possible for one to have neck of both colours? Two explanations are offered. One, Shiva’s blue coloured neck is smeared with Vibhuti and is seen as white, and hence the description of both colours is apt. Second, Shiva consuming Halahala poison, which resulted in blue coloured neck is an event, before occurence of which his neck was always white; thus the two colours apply to different time-frames. But I feel the true lesson is that he is ‘Suddha sphatika sankasa’, like pure crystal; in which case he is colourless. He shows us how to rise above differences of colour, quality etc. and be in the blissful state of Advaita, one without a second.

**Susrama Nagaraja Mahagonasa Mahima**

Devas once performed Puja in the Sannidhi of Chamareswara in the Himalayas and were engaged in austerities. A Rakshasa attacked them in the form of wind; he was very powerful and pushed all of them to the ground. Devas prayed to Shiva for succour. They praised him in their Stotra as mother, father, relative, and refuge for those with no refuge. Shiva gave them darshan and said, “As I have nourished these Rakshasas, it will not be proper for me to kill them. Hence you approach Vishnu in the Ocean of Milk. Devas went to the Milk Ocean and praised Vishnu in a beautiful Stotra: “You are the creator and protector of this universe; you are of the form of Chit, consciousness.” Vishnu assuaged their concern and appeared in the Himalayas. He instructed Sesha, **Nagaraja**, to consume the Wind (the Rakshasa), as Sesha, being a serpent, is consumer of wind.

वातं पिब फणोद्भूत सहस्रवदनैस्तथा ।

प्राणांस्तर्पय नागेश यतस्त्वं पवनाशनः ॥ 7.26 । Sesha ‘drank’ the Wind and resided in the hill. The hill came to be known as ‘**Seshnag**’ (Anantnag) and ‘Susrama’(the names by which it is known even today). ‘**Mahagonasa**’ refers to serpent; Gonasa is a kind of serpent. There is a lake called Seshnag lake even today; that is the tirtha of this kshetra; bath in that tirtha removes weariness (hence ‘**Susrama**’) and brings great merit. The place is also called ‘Svasrama’ as Devas were able to get back to their normal place of residence, Devaloka, from here.

**Vayuvarjanam**

After Asuras were pulverized and thrown away on the Pesha hill by Devas, one Asura called Prishata took the form of Wind and troubled Devas. Devas took refuge in Shiva. Shiva asked Devas to install ‘**Mathikas**’ (small rooms), and remove air completely from the rooms, ‘**Vayuvarjanam**’ and stay there itself. Devas did accordingly and saved themselves. The Asura Prishata assumed the form of very powerful wind and came for attack. Indra killed him with his Vajrayudha. Darshan of this kshetra called Vayuvarjana is highly meritorious. Danam of ‘Mathika’ is specially recommended here.

The rest of the Rakshasas hid themselves in a lake and started troubling Devas and Munis. When Parvathi brought this to the notice of Shiva, Shiva uttered ‘Hum’; the Rakshasas were drowned in the lake. Parvathi cursed the lake to dry up. Shivaganas killed the Rakshasas, who emerged.

**Panchatarangini**

Once Shiva performed Tandava and his tresses separated into five parts, through which Ganga flowed in the form of five rivers. The Tirtha came to be known as ‘**Panchatarangini**’ (now known as Panchatarani). Bath here destroys sins and confers merit. Sraadham and Danam are highly recommended. Danam, specifically of cow, gold, silk clothes, sandalwood, Kumkum, fragrance, camphor and Kasturi to a good brahmana confers Shivaloka.

गोहिरण्यं सुवासश्च क्षौमं चन्दनमेव च । कुङ्कुमागरुकर्पूर मृगनाभिमपीश्वरी ॥

यो ददाति द्विजेन्द्राय स शैवं लोकमाप्नुयात् ॥ 8.48, 49 &

**Damaruka Garbhagara Nissaranam**

Shiva performs the dance of Tandava at both Sandhyas, dawn and dusk, every day. One evening as he was playing with Subrahmanya, Shiva was anxious that he might miss the Sandhya time. As recommended by Parvathi, Shiva appointed Damaruka, one of the Shivaganas, to sound his Damaru (small drum) at the correct time in order to remind him. Damaruka was doing his duty. One day he fell asleep and failed to strike the Damaru at the right time. Shiva cursed him to turn into stone. **Damaruka** is now giving darshan in the form of stone on the peak of the mountain of gems. Darshan of the image releases the devotee of sins.

Once Devas came to Kailasa for darshan of Shiva. Nandi stopped them. Devas started fighting among themselves. Nandi went to Shiva, laid down his Danda (staff of authority), prostrated and expressed his great fear of Devas. Shiva asked him to pick up his staff and build a Garbhagara (Garbhagriha, cave-like enclosure of stone) so that Devas and Asuras, who enter the Garbhagara, would not be able to come out. Shivaganas built Garbhagara accordingly. The Purana says that the Yatri should enter and come out of Garbhagara (this is **Garbhagara Nissaranam**) before proceeding on his path ahead to Amaranatha. He will be blessed with Shiva Salokya (living in the realm of Shiva). The import appears to be that the pilgrim should develop fear of entering into mother’s womb again, and grow consequent detachment and unquenchable desire to merge with Shiva. One should bathe in and drink from Amaradhara (Amaravathi) river emerging from the Garbhagara, apply bhasma and, without lavish clothes on, ascend the hill, chanting **पन्थानं देहि मे परमेश्वर** “Parameswara, show me the way” and eschewing vices like anger etc.

**Amaranatha**

The Purana states that at the start of creation, there was only ‘Sat’; From ‘Sat’, ‘Niyati’ emerged. From ‘Niyati’ all creation manifested. This account indicates that initially undifferentiated Brahman alone existed; when Brahman thought, as Taitttiriya Upanishad says, **सोऽकामयत बहु स्याम् प्रजायेयेति** – “Brahman desired to become many, to be born as many”, he brought Prakriti, his own eternal aspect, to the fore. Prakriti, in the presence of Brahman, created everything – Devas, Asuras, Pitrus, Rishis, humans, animals etc. Fourteen types of ‘Bhutasargam’ – masses of created beings- emerged. But Mrityu devoured everyone including Devas. Devas took refuge in Shiva. They chanted Stotra in praise of Shiva:

चिच्चन्द्रनाशिताशेष स्वान्तमोहाय शंभवे ।

विमर्शिने विधिज्ञाय मुक्तरूपाय ते नमः ॥ 10.15Ÿ

“Prostrations to Shiva. With the rise of the Chandra of Chit (Consciousness), the innate delusion ends by your grace. Sambhu (form of auspiciousness), you are this visible expanse, you are the knower of rules, you are of the form of the Liberated one (and Mukti Liberation).” Shiva said: किमर्थमागता यूयं व्याकुलाः सुरसत्तमाः ।

कथयध्वं यतः सर्वं मदीयं मयि वर्तते ॥ 10.21

“O the best among Devas, tell me the reason for your coming to me; why are you miserable; tell me because all this is mine and resides in me.” (As the entire creation is permeated by the Shiva Principle, there is nothing beyond him). Devas expressed their fear of Mrityu, who was devouring everyone. Shiva asked Devas to remain patient and said he would help them out. Shiva extracted the essence of Chandrakala from his head and let it flow in the form of a river. The drops of nectar that fell on Shiva’s body turned into bhasma and took the form of Iswara on dropping from his body. Owing to love of Devas, Shiva also turned into water (ice).

**ये बिन्दवश्च्युता देवि शरीरेऽमृतबिन्दवः । ते भस्मरूपतां प्राप्य च्युताश्चेशानतां गताः ॥**

**प्रेम्णा तेषां महादेवि शिवोऽपि द्रवतामगात् ॥**

Devas prostrated to Shiva again and again. Shiva said:

**यस्माद्भवद्भिर्दृष्टं मे प्रेमलिङ्गं दरीगृहे । तस्मान्न मृत्युर्युष्मान्वै बाधते मदनुग्रहात् ॥**

**इहैव ह्यमरा भूत्वा गच्छध्वं शिवयुज्यताम् ॥**

“As you have had darshan of my form of Linga, the symbol of my love, in the cavern, Death will not bother you any more by my grace. Becoming immortal here itself, you attain Shiva Sayujya (merger with Shiva). (10.31,32)

**इतः प्रभृति मे लिङ्गममरेशाख्यमुत्तमम् ।**

**पुण्यं परमकं देवास्त्रिलोकख्यातिमेष्यति ॥** (10.33) From now onwards, this sacred supreme Lingam of mine, known as **Amaresa**, will be famous in all the three worlds.” Shiva merged with the Linga in the cave. Devas went round the Water Linga, performed Puja and returned to Devaloka. “As Shiva took the crescent moon of Krishna Paksha and destroyed Death for the good of Devas, he became known as **Amareswara** (10.36). As Devas were rendered deathless by Iswara, he came to be known as Amareswara by knowers of the past (10.37).

भवरोगं च गृह्णाति भक्तानां चेश्वरः स्वयम् । यद्दर्शनात् ततः प्रोक्तं ह्यमरेशाख्यमुत्तमम् ॥

यदसुरनाशश्चैव जरामरणनाशनम् । मोक्षैश्वर्यप्रदं यस्मात् प्रोक्तं अमरसंज्ञकम् ॥

As Iswara destroys here the disease of samsara of devotees by his mere darshan, he is known by the lofty name of Amaresa. As Iswara grants Moksha (Liberation) by destroying

Asuras (Asuric tendencies), and old age and death, he is known by the name of Amareswara. (10.38, 40)

इदं रसमयं लिङ्गं महाप्रेमसमुद्भवम् । सामरस्यप्रदं देवि तव स्नेहात् प्रकाशितम् ॥

This Linga made of water (Rasa-ice) is born out of great love. The Linga grants harmony and peace. Devi, this account has been unveiled out of love for you (10.41). By undertaking the pilgrimage, taking bath in the waters of Amaravathi and applying bhasma on all limbs, man attains Moksha (Liberation). Devi, having darshan in the cave and dancing with joy, man is extremely purified and is known as Amara (deathless) (10.43). By bathing, having darshan, listening about and touching the waters of Amaravathi with devotion, one attains the glory of Devas (Amaras); hence the river is called Amaravathi. One, who sets foot out of his house with the intent of having darshan of Amaranatha, attains the fruit of Asvamedha yagna at every step. (10.63)”

**Pigeons**

Shiva added in this context that by seeing groups of pigeons and other birds at Amaranatha shrine as Shivaganas and chanting ‘Jaya Jaya Rudra’, one becomes Rudra himself. Shiva then explained the origin of the pigeons. Once during Shiva’s Sandhya Tandavam, Shivaganas made competing and disturbing sounds of ‘Kuru kuru’. Shiva became angry and cursed them to become pigeons and keep sounding ‘Kuru kuru’. He also blessed them to remove the obstacles of devotees coming for darshan of Amaranatha. Darshan of pigeons removes huge sins.

Shiva calls Amaranatha Lingam by various sacred names – Rasalingam (Linga of Water), Premalingam (Linga of Love), Svadhalingam (Linga pleasing to Pitrus), Siddhalingam (Linga adored by Siddhas, or Linga bestowing Siddhis), Buddhilingam (Linga of Intellect), Suddhilingam (Linga of Purity) and Vriddhilingam (Linga of Growth).

Shiva says that all sins get destroyed on darshan of Amaranatha Linga. The devotee attains to Shiva Sayujyam by performing Abhisheka of the Linga with gingelly oil, Puja of the Linga with soft white clothes, kasturi, kumkum, sandalpaste, camphor, gold coins, silver coins, pearls etc. Darshan destroys the evils of Kaliyuga and the bondages (Pasa) of living beings (Pasu); it grants male and female offspring, enhances brilliance and steadiness of devotion. Refuge in Amaralinga bestows everything worthy without going through the tough course of meditation, charity, yoga etc. Darshan here bestows merit ten times that in Kashi, a hundred times Prayaga, a thousand times Naimisha, a thousand divine years in Arbuda kshetra. **Brahma and Vishnu prostrate to one, who prostrates to Amaranatha by falling like a staff (dandavat) on the ground.** Shiva then refers to the ephemeral nature of human life on earth.

शरीरं यौवनं द्रव्यं दारान्पुत्रान्गृहं तथा । चञ्चलं सर्वतो ज्ञात्वा ह्यमरेशं समाश्रयेत् ॥

यावन्न ग्रसते मृत्युर्यावान्नेन्द्रियविप्लवः । यावद्देहे व जराव्याधिः शीर्यते जगदम्बिके ॥

तावदेवामरेशाख्यं लिङ्गं रसमयं प्रिये ॥ (10.82-84) “Knowing that this body, youth, wealth, wife, children and house are all transient, one should take refuge in Amareswara. Jagadambike, before death hits one, the sense organs deteriorate, and old age and illness consume the body, one should worship, o beloved, the ice Linga called Amaresa.”

**Pithadanam**

Shiva recommends Danam of Pitha (seat) at the sacred kshetra. He says: “O beautiful Devi, giving **danam (charity) of Pitha (seat) of Amareswara** results in Mukti; this is truth, this is truth. (11.41). Taking five Palas (unit of weight) of flour of yava (barley), spreading it in a nice square form, spreading kumkum, camphor and sandal paste, and kasturi on top, placing gold plates in the four corners, and gold coin in the centre, or alternatively placing five silver or gold coins at the four corners and centre, and offering worship with sandal paste and flowers, it should be given in Danam (charity) to a brahmana (11.43-46). After performing Kalasa Pooja and Pitha Pooja with mantras of Aadhaara Sakti etc. and offering nice white cloths, yagnopavita, dakshina etc. with devotion to the brahmana, one should chant the following mantra in front of him (11.47)

यात्रासाफल्यहेतोश्च ह्यमरेशस्य चाज्ञया ॥ पीठं मयार्चितं दिव्यं सुवासोभिलङ्कृतम् ।

मृत्युञ्जय महादेव भिया संसारसागरात् ॥ अर्पितं त्वत्स्वरूपाय ब्राह्मणाय महात्मने ।

इदं गृहाण विप्रेश स्वरूपिनवशासनात् ॥ पीठं ह्यमरनाथस्य महापापापनुत्तये ।

By order of Amareswara, and for the success of the pilgrimage, this Pitha (seat) is being offered to you, the high-souled brahmana. This Pitha has been worshipped by me and decorated with fine unguents. You are Mrityunjaya, Mahadeva, and I offer this Pitha to you for fear of the ocean of samsara. O best among brahmanas, please accept this Pitha of Amaranatha for removal of the great sins of mine (11.48-50). Whatever sin has been committed by me - killing of foetus, brahmana, Guru, or mother, stealing of gold etc., drinking of liquor, killing of cow, speaking untruth, anger, greed etc., coveting others’ wives, disgracing others, abandoning husband and attaching to another, any sin, subtle, small, large – all the sins may be destroyed by my Danam of this Pitha (11.51-55)”. Shiva continued: “Parameswari, this Danam was given by Lakshmi and Parvathi; they attained Sayujyam (merger with Shiva) there itself (11.59)”.

**Yashti (Staff)**

Shiva continued: “After having darshan, the pilgrim should descend and perform Sraaddha at the highly meritorious confluence of Amaravathi river and the Panchatarangini; the Pitrus feel elated and dance with joy. Maheswari, the wise pilgrim should then worship Ganapathi in the Mahagrama (great village) called Mamala with various offerings, flowers etc. and then proceed to Navadala and **deposit Yashti (staff) in the waters of Ganga**, chanting the following mantras.

यष्टे ह्याधारभूतासि साक्षिभूतासि वै यतः । सत्कर्मणश्च तीर्थस्य यात्रां मम निवेदय ॥

यष्टे सृष्टिस्वरूपासि स्थितिप्रलयकारिणि । यष्टे विष्णुप्रियासि त्वं शिवशक्तिस्वरूपिणि ॥

तस्मान्मे पापसंघांश्च हित्वा याहि स्वकं पदम् । गङ्गे प्रियासि देवस्य शिरसि धूर्जटेः प्रिया ॥

प्रिया पुरतो देवदेवस्य यात्रां मम निवेदय । इति मन्त्रेण देवेशि यष्टिं गङ्गाम्भसि क्षिपेत् ॥

“Yashti (staff), you are the support and witness. Please convey my good karmas and pilgrimage of tirtha to Iswara. Yashti, you are of the form of creation, sustenance and destruction. You are loved by Vishnu and you are of the form of Shiva and Sakthi. Hence please destroy my accumulation of sins and return to your original state. Ganga, you are the love of Shiva, and his head is your abode. Ganga, please convey my tirtha yatra to Shiva.” With these mantras, the yashti (staff) should be left in Ganga waters (11.62-65). The pilgrim should then take bath in Patalaganga and finally return home.

Shiva then recommends the timing for the Yatra and darshan of Amaranatha; **the pilgrim should perform Yatra in Sukla Paksha of Shravan and have darshan of Amaranatha on Purnima day.**

At the close of each chapter Shiva has recounted many fruits which are attained, and listed many sins which are destroyed on mere listening of the account of that chapter. Now, on concluding the Mahatmyam, Shiva has ecstatically bestowed Shiva Sayujyam itself on devoted listening of the Mahatmyam. “Iswari, by listening to or reading this sacred account of the greatness of Amaranatha, one gets freed from crores of sins like killing of brahmana (11.88).”

इदं प्रजननं सौम्यं श्रोतॄणां पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।

पठित्वा पाठयित्वा वा मुच्यते सर्वकिल्बिषात् ॥

This enchanting account grants the prayer for offspring and nourishes the listener; by reading or listening to this account one gets released from all sins. (11.90)

There are other stories in other local legends relating to Amaranatha. The cave is reputed to be the spot where Shiva unveiled the secret of creation to Parvathi. Shiva is said to have left Nandi behind in Pahalgam, Chandra in Chandanvadi, the serpents on the banks of Seshnag lake, Ganapati on the Mahagonasa hill, and the five elements (Pancha Mahabhutas) in Panchatarangini. He then entered the Amaranatha cave with Parvathi, performing Tandava dance. A pigeon’s egg happened to be present at the time of Shiva’s sermon to Parvathi. Two pigeons were born, and they were immortal.

The celebrated work titled ‘Rajatarangini’ of Kashmir describes how kings had darshan of Amaranatha in the cave and made many offerings. The Linga is said to grow in Sukla Paksha, attain fullness on Purnima day and then diminish in Krishna Paksha.