

A Prayer to River kAverI

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காவேரீ ப்ரார்த²நா

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A Prayer to River kAverI

காவேரீ ப்ரார்த்நா



மருத்³த்⁴ரு³தே மஹாபா⁴கே³ மஹாதே³வி மநோஹரே |
ஸர்வாபீ⁴ஷ்டப்ரதே³ தே³வி ஸ்நாஸ்தி²தாம் புண்யவர்தி⁴நி || 1 ||

ஸர்வபாபக்ஷயகரே மம பாபம் விநாஸய |
கவேரகந்யே காவேரி ஸமுத்³ரமஹிஷிப்ரியே || 2 ||

தே³ஹி மே ப⁴க்திமுக்தி த்வம் ஸர்வதீ²ர்²த்²ஸ்வரூபிணி |
விந்து⁴வர்யே த³யாஸிந்தோ⁴ மாமுத்³த⁴ர த³யாம்பு³தே⁴ || 3 ||

ஸ்திரியம் தே³ஹி ஸுதம் தே³ஹி ஸ்ரியம் தே³ஹி தத: ஸ்வகா³ |
ஆயுஷ்யம் தே³ஹி சாரோக்³யம் ரு³ணந்முக்³தம் குருஷ்வ மாம் || 4 ||

தாஸாம் ச ஸரிதாம் மத்⁴யே ஸஹ்யகந்யாக⁴நாஸிநி |
காவேரி லோகவிக்²யாதா ஜநதாபநிவாரிணி || 5 ||

இதி ப்³ரஹ்மாண்ட³ புராணே காவரீ ப்ரார்த்நா ||

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 tributeries 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.

யச்ச கிஞ்சிஜ்ஜக³த்ஸர்வம் த்³ரு³ஸ்யதே ஸ்ருயதே஽பி வா |

அந்தர்ப³ஹிஸ்ச தத்ஸர்வம் வ்யாப்ய நாராயண: ஸ்தி²த: ||

Lord Krishna echos this in Gita (9-4).மயா ததமித³ம் ஸர்வம் ஜக³த³வ்யக்த மூர்திநா | 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 isவிஸ்வம் = 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).

த்ரிபி³ரூ³ணமயைர்பா⁴வைரேபி:⁴ ஸர்வமித³ம் ஜக³த் |

மோஹிதம் நாபி⁴ஜாநாதி மாமேப்⁴ய: பரமவ்யயம் ||

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 (அதி⁴ஷ்டா²நம்). So also is God the substratum of everything. He is known as the அதி⁴ஷ்டா²நம் -

அதி⁴திஷ்ட²நதி பூ⁴தாநி உபாதா³நகாரணத்வேந ப்³ரஹ்மேதி அதி⁴ஷ்டா²நம் |
 “மத்ஸ்தா²நி ஸர்வபூ⁴தநி” (சு³தா 9|4) இதி ப⁴க³வத்³வசநாத் |

(Vishnusahasranamam - 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.'

யஸ்மிந்நித³ம் யதஸ்ஸேத³ம் யேநேத³ம் ய இத³ம் ஸ்வயம் |

யோ⁵ஸ்மாத் பரஸ்மாச்ச பரஸ்தம் ப்ரபத்³யே ஸ்வயம்பு⁴வம் ||

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 விஸ்வம் 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 seuperficial 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).

வித்யா-விநய-ஸம்பந்நே ப்³ராஹ்மணே க³வி ஹஸ்திநி |

ஸூநி சைவ ஸ்வபாகே ச பண்டி³தா: ஸமத³ர்ஸிந: ||

The wordஸமம் in this context means the Supreme Being and not 'equal.'

This is made clear by Krishna in the very next verse (5-19).நிர்³தோ³ஷம் ஹி ஸமம் ப்³ரஹ்ம | 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 asநமோ நா³த்யாய. This nameநா³த்ய: is in the Sivasahasranamam (No.684. Padmapuranam). The commentator sayந³தீ³க³த ஜலரூபோ நா³த்ய: | நமோ நா³த்யாய சேதி ஸ்ருதி: ||

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.நாப்ஸு மூத்ரபு³ஷம் குர்யாத் | ந நிஷ்ட²வேத் | 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(அக⁴மர்ஷணஸூக்தம்) 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.அக³ம் =

sin.மர்ஷணம் = 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.

இமம் மே க³ங்கே³ யமுநே ஸரஸ்வதி ஸுதுத்³ரி ஸ்தோமக்³ம் ஸசதா பருஷ்ணியா

।

அஸிக்நியா மருத்³த்⁴ரு⁴தே⁴ விதஸ்தயா ஸ்ஹீக்ஷீயே ஸ்ரு³ணுஹ்யா ஸுஷோமயா ॥

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(மருத்³த்⁴ரு⁴தே) 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.காமகோடிபுரீம் காஞ்சீம் காவேரீம் ச ஸுரித்³வராம் । (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).

க்வசித் க்வசிந்மஹாராஜ த்³ரவிடே³ஷு ச பூ⁴ரிஸ: ।

தாம்ரபர்ணீ நதீ³ யத்ர க்ரு³தமாலா பயஸ்விநீ ।

காவேரீ ச மஹாபுண்யா ப்ரதீ³ ச மஹாநதீ³ ॥

(ப⁴விஷ்யந்தி நாராயணபராயண: ।)

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.

ததஸ்தாமாபகா³ம் தி³வ்யாம் ப்ரஸந்நஸலிலாம் ஸிவாம் |
தத்ர த்³ரக்ஷயத்² காவேரீம் விஹ்ரு²தாம் அப்ஸரோக³ண: ||

(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

அஹம் த³க்ஷிணக³ங்கே³தி விஸ்ருதா வேத³மூர்த⁴நி |
இமாம் மது⁴ரபாந்யாம் த³க்ஷிணாபத்²ஜாஹ்நவீம் ||

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.

காவேரி த்ரிஜந்மாந: காவேரி ஸலிலாப்லுதா |
காவேரி வாதாத்³யை ஸப்ரு²ஷ்டா² யாந்தி ஹரே:பத்³ம் ||

The Brahmavaivarta Puranam defines the word Kaveri as follows.

ககார: கலுஷம் ஹந்தி, வேகாரோ வாஞ்சி²தப்ரத:³ |
ரீகாரோ மோக்ஷதோ³ ந்ரு²ணம் காவேரீத்யவதா⁴ரய ||

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(கநகஸரித்). Kanakam (கநகம்) means gold and sarit(ஸரித்) 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 sapanam (verse no.2).

வேலாதீத ஸ்ருதிபரிமலம் வேத⁴ஸாம்மௌலி ஸேவ்யம்
ப்ராதூ³ர்பூ⁴தம் கநகஸரிதஸஸைகதே ஹம்ஸஜுஷ்டே |
லக்ஷமீபூ⁴மயோ: கரஸரஸிஜைர்லாலிதம் ரங்க³புர்து:
பாதா³ம்போ⁴ஜ ப்ரதிபலது மே பா⁴வநாதீ³ரீகாயாம் ||

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.ந ப³த்³த்⁴நாதி ரதிம் ஹம்ஸ:
கதா³சித்கர்த³மேஸம்ப⁴ஸி | The water of Kaveri is clean and have gold content in the sands. So, the birds prefer to stay in such lovely place.

The wordஹம்ஸ: 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(கமண்ட³லு) waterpot of the sage. With another body and the name(லோபாமுத்³ரா) 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(ஸரத்³) 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.

மஹாரஹஸ்யம் கிஞ்சாத்ர ஸ்ரு²ணுஷ்வாத்யத்³பு²தம் ஸுபே⁴ |
 ப்³ரவீமி தி³வ்யத்³ரு²ஷ்டயாத்³ய ஸர்வஸாஸ்த்ரேஷு நிஸ்சிதம் ||

மஹாபாதகிநாம் பாபம் மோசயந்த்ய: கூஷணேந ஹி |
 க³ங்கா³தி³கா மஹாநத்³யஸ்தீர்தா²நி ச மஹாந்தி ச ||

மலீக்ரு²தாஸ்ச தத்பாபை: அஸக்தாஸ்தத்³விமோசநே |
 ஸோசயந்த்ய: பரம் தே³வம் யாந்தி லோகபிதாமஹம் ||

தாஸாம் விஸுத்³த⁴யே ப்³ரஹ்மா ஸபா⁴யாம் முநிபி:⁴ ஸஹ |
 ஸம்யக்³விசார்ய ஸாஸ்த்ரேஷு வேதே³ஷு ச புந: புந: ||

ஹரிண ச தத: ப்ரோக்தம் ப்ராயஸ்சித்தம் விதா⁴ஸ்யதா |
 ஸ்நாஸ்யந்து ஸஹ்யதா⁴த்³யக்³ரே காவேர்யாம் தெளலிஸங்க³மே ||

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(சூலா) 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.

ஷட்ஷஷ்டிகோடி தீர்தா²நி த்³விஸப்த-பு⁴வநேஷு ச |

தாநி சாயாந்தி காவேர்யாம் ஸ்வாகௌ⁴க⁴-விநிவ்ரு³த்தயே ||

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.

அஹம் து வைகா²நஸ வாலகி²ல்யைரந்யை: முநீந்த³ரைஸ்ஸநகாதி³பி⁴ஸ்ச |
ஸர்வத்ர தே புண்யதடே வஸாமி ||

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.

விபூ⁴த்தயை தா³க்ஷிணத்யாநாம் க்ஷேமாய விஜயாய ச |

மயா சைவாப⁴யநுஜ்ஞாதா க³ச்ச² தே³வி யதா²ஸுக²ம் ||

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.

அச்ச²-ஸ்வச்ச²-லஸத்³-து³க்ஷலவஸநாம் பத்³மாஸநாத்⁴யாயிநீம்

ஹஸ்த-ந்யஸ்த-வராப⁴யாப³ஜ-கலஸாம் ராகேந்து³-கோடி-ப்ரபா⁴ம் |


பா⁴ஸ்வத்³-பூ⁴ஷண-க³ந்த⁴-மால்ய-ருசிராம் சாரு-ப்ரஸநநாநநாம்

ஸ்ரீக³ங்கா³தி³-ஸமஸ்த-தீர்த²-நிலயாம் த்⁴யாயாமி காவேரிகாம் ||


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.

|| ஓ தத்ஸத் ||

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A Prayer to River kAverI

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