

॥ कावेरी प्रार्थना ॥

.. A Prayer to River kAveRI ..

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मरुद्धृते महाभागे महादेवि मनोहरे ।
 सर्वाभीष्टप्रदे देवि स्नास्थितां पुण्यवर्धिनि ॥ १ ॥
 सर्वपापक्षयकरे मम पापं विनाशय ।
 कवेरकन्ये कावेरि समुद्रमहिषिप्रिये ॥ २ ॥
 देहि मे भक्तिमुक्ति त्वं सर्वतीर्थस्वरूपिणि ।
 सिन्धुवर्ये दयासिन्धो मामुद्धर दयांबुधे ॥ ३ ॥
 स्त्रियं देहि सुतं देहि श्रियं देहि ततः स्वगा ।
 आयुष्यं देहि चारोग्यं ऋणान्मुक्तं कुरुष्व माम् ॥ ४ ॥
 तासां च सरितां मध्ये सह्यकन्याघनाशिनः ।
 कावेरि लोकविख्याता जनतापनिवारिणि ॥ ५ ॥
 इति ब्रह्माण्ड पुराणे कावेरी प्रार्थना ॥

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 Aadi 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.

यच्च किञ्चिज्जगत्सर्वं दृश्यते श्रूयतेऽपि वा ।

अन्तर्बहिश्च तत्सर्वं व्याप्य नारायणः स्थितः ॥

Lord Krishna echos this in Gita (9-4). मया ततमिदं सर्वं

जगदव्यक्त मूर्तिना । 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 विश्वम् = 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).

त्रिभिर्गुणमयैर्भावैरेभिः सर्वमिदं जगत् ।

मोहितं नाभिजानाति मामेभ्यः परमव्ययम् ॥

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

अधितिष्ठन्ति भूतानि उपादानकारणत्वेन ब्रह्मेति अधिष्ठानम् ।

“मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि” (गीता ९।४) इति भगवद्ब्रह्मचरम् ।

(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.'

यस्मिन्निदं यतश्चेदं येनेदं य इदं स्वयम् ।

योऽस्मात् परस्माच्च परस्तं प्रपद्ये स्वयम्भुवम् ॥

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 विश्वम् 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).

विद्या-विनय-संपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥

The word समं in this context means the Supreme Being and not 'equal.' This is made clear by Krishna in the very next verse (5-19). निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म । 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 नमो नाद्याय. This name नाद्यः is in the Sivasahasranamam (No.684. Padmapuranam). The commentator says नदीगत जलरूपो नाद्यः । नमो नाद्याय चेति श्रुतिः ॥

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. नाप्सु मूत्रपुरीषं कुर्यात् । न निष्ठीवेत् । Our pilgrimages include visiting famous temples and also taking bath in sacred rivers like Ganga, 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 (अघमर्षणसूक्तम्) which forms part of Mahanarayanavalli in the Taittiriyaopanishad is a prayer addressed to Lord Varuna - the god of waters. This is normally chanted before taking bath. अगं = sin. मर्षणम् = 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.

इमं मे गङ्गे यमुने सरस्वति शुतुद्रि स्तोमगं सचता परुष्णिग्या ।
असिक्रिया मरुद्धृते वितस्तया ऽऽजीकीये शृणुह्या सुषोमया ॥

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 (मरुद्धृते) 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. कामकोटिपुरी
काञ्चीं कावेरीं च सरिद्वराम् । (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).

क्वचित् क्वचिन्महाराज द्रविडेषु च भूरिशः ।
ताम्रपर्णी नदी यत्र कृतमाला पयस्विनी ।
कावेरी च महापुण्या प्रतीची च महानदी ॥

(भविष्यन्ति नारायणपरायणाः ।)

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.

ततस्तामापगां दिव्यां प्रसन्नसलिलां शिवाम् ।
तत्र द्रक्ष्यथ कावेरीं विहृतां अप्सरोगणैः ॥

(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

अहं दक्षिणगङ्गेति विश्रुता वेदमूर्धनि ।
इमां मधुरपानीयां दक्षिणापथजाह्वीम् ॥

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.

कावेरि त्रिजन्मानः कावेरि सलिलाद्भुता ।
कावेरि वाताद्यै स्पृष्टा यान्ति हरेःपदम् ॥

The Brahmavaivarta Puranam defines the word Kaveri as follows.

ककारः कलुषं हन्ति, वेकारो वाञ्छितप्रदः ।
रीकारो मोक्षदो नृणां कावेरीत्यवधारय ॥

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 Kanakasariit(कनकसरित). Kanakam (कनकम्) means gold and sarit(सरित) 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 sopenam (verse no.2).

वेलातीत श्रुतिपरिमलं वेधसांमौलि सेव्यं

प्रादुर्भूतं कनकसरितस्सैकते हंसजुष्टे ।

लक्ष्मीभूम्योः करसरसिजैर्लालितं रङ्गभर्तुः

पादांभोज प्रतिपलतु मे भावनादीर्घिकायाम् ॥

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. न बदुध्नाति रतिं हंसः

कदाचित्कर्दमेऽम्भसि । The water of Kaveri is clean and have gold

content in the sands. So, the birds prefer to stay in such lovely place.

The wordहंसः 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 (कमण्डलु) waterpot of the sage. With another body and the name (लोपामुद्रा) 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(शरदु) 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. Kaveri 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.

महारहस्यं किञ्चात्र शृणुष्वत्यद्भुतं शुभे ।
 ब्रवीमि दिव्यदृष्ट्याद्य सर्वशास्त्रेषु निश्चितम् ॥
 महापातकिनां पापं मोचयन्त्यः क्षणेन हि ।
 गङ्गादिका महानद्यस्तीर्थानि च महान्ति च ॥
 मलीकृताश्च तत्पापैः अशक्तास्तद्विमोचने ।
 शोचयन्त्यः परं देवं यान्ति लोकपितामहम् ॥
 तासां विशुद्धये ब्रह्मा सभायां मुनिभिः सह ।
 सम्यग्विचार्य शास्त्रेषु वेदेषु च पुनः पुनः ॥
 हरिणा च ततः प्रोक्तं प्रायश्चित्तं विधास्यता ।
 स्नास्यन्तु सह्यघात्र्यग्रे कावेर्यां तौलिसङ्गमे ॥

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(तुला) 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. षट्षष्टिकोटि तीर्थानि द्विसप्त-भुवनेषु च ।

तानि चायान्ति कावेर्यां स्वाघौघ-विनिवृत्तये ॥

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.

अहं तु वैखानस वालखिल्यैरन्यैः मुनीन्द्रैस्सनकादिभिश्च ।

सर्वत्र ते पुण्यतटे वसामि ॥

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.

विभूत्यै दाक्षिणत्यानां क्षेमाय विजयाय च ।

मया चैवाभ्यनुज्ञाता गच्छ देवि यथासुखम् ॥

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.

अच्छ-स्वच्छ-लसद्-दुकूलवसनां पद्मासनाध्यायिनीं

हस्त-न्यस्त-वराभयाब्ज-कलशां राकेन्दु-कोटि-प्रभाम् ।

भास्वद्-भूषण-गन्ध-माल्य-रुचिरां चारु-प्रसन्नाननां

श्रीगङ्गादि-समस्त-तीर्थ-निलयां ध्यायामि कावेरिकाम् ॥

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.

॥ ॐ तत्सत् ॥

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