shrI sarasvatI stotram 2
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श्रीसरस्वतीस्तोत्रम् २

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श्रीसरस्वतीस्तोत्रम् २

या कुन्देन्द्र-तुषार-हार धवला या शुभ्र-वस्थावृता
या वीणा वर-दुर्घ-मणिद-करा या श्रेष-पवासना ।
या ब्रह्माच्युत-शाङ्कर-प्रभृतिभि: देववससदा पूजिता
सा मा पातु सरस्वती भगवती निर्षेष-जावापहा ॥ १ ॥

श्रीमचन्दन-चर्चितोजजवलपुष्पः शुक्काम्बरा मद्दीका-
मालाभालितकुंकूलाः प्रविष्टसम्मुखावलीश्रोभना ।
सर्व्यानिनिनानपुस्तककारि रुद्राक्षमालाक्षिता
वाग्देवी वदनामुखे वसस्तु मे त्रैलोक्यामाता शुभा ॥ २ ॥

जय जय देवि दयालहरि जननि सरस्वति पालय माम् ।
अमलेन कमलासनसहिते अद्वृत्वरि पालय माम् ॥ ३ ॥

मातमिस्तगुणाचारे मनोद्रशीरे पालय माम् ।
क्रिरीकुण्डलसुशोभिते क्रियवागी पालय माम् ॥ ४ ॥

भगवति भारति गीवाणि पद्मवेणि पालय माम् ।
सर्व्योक्तिपूज्जितचरणे रलाभरणे पालय माम् ॥ ५ ॥

कमलमुचि कमलपदे कमलदलयतविलोचने ।
कमलस्मारि कमलकरे कमलसनस्वपि वरदे ॥ ६ ॥

विमलमते विधुमकुटि विधुधारणार्चितचरणयुगे ।
वैद्वन्तानसराजहसि विकारापि सरस्वति ॥ ७ ॥

बुद्धिवारि भारति मे पूरय देवि कृपालघरि ।
मुके वर्ण वधि नितरा मुद्रमनिवं दिहि मम जननि ॥ ८ ॥

सुरमुनिगे विधिषाये सुमिरत्वदने शुभसदने ।
स्वयमवीणापुस्तकधारिणि परब्रह्मपूर्णिणि वाणि ॥ ९ ॥
Commentary N.Balasubramanian bbalu@sify.com

COMMENTS:- In the following comments these abbreviations are used.
SS -Sivasahasranamam (Padmapuranam with the commentary of
Sri Paramasivendra Sarasvati.
LS - Lalithasahasranamam with the commentary of Sri Bhaskaracharya.
BG - Bhagavadgita

All living beings instinctively seek comfort and happiness. They all dislike discomfort and pain. But in life we find that the happiness that we seek eludes us. Even if we find a modicum of happiness, it lasts for a short period only and is followed by a spell of unhappiness. So our scriptures term this kind of happiness as not true happiness but unhappiness only because either it makes one hanker for more of the kind and leaves one restless and not enjoy the happiness on hand or is followed by unhappiness. Krishna wants us to ponder over this fact. He calls this life as a the repository of unhappiness and ephemeral. द्व:वात्यमशाख्यतम्।
BG (8-15). The ideal condition will then be to have happiness that is never ending. One would like to have happiness at all times and at all places. Such a condition appears like chimera or a distant
dream. But our scriptures say that this need not be so; because our very nature is such happiness and wisdom. But then we cannot accept this statement looking at the condition we find ourselves in now. The reason is said to be that our true nature is veiled by spiritual ignorance. This is stated by Krishna अज्ञानेनावृतं ज्ञानं तेन मुक्तिः जन्तवः। BG (5-15). This spiritual ignorance is known variously as avidya, ajnanam, maya and prakriti. The power of maya deludes us and makes us believe that we are the mixture of the body and mind and are subject to many ills such as sickness, pain, sorrow etc., that pertain to them. Krishna mentions these and says जन्म-मृत्यु-जरा-व्याधि-दुःख-दोषानुदशनम्। (BG-13-8) that one should discern the defects such as birth, death, old age, disease and sorrow that are the hallmark of life. But, truly speaking these ills pertain to the body and mind and not to us - the true self. The remedy then is to get the right knowledge. Just like darkness is dispelled by light, ignorance is dispelled by right knowledge. Once the ignorance about Self is removed true knowledge shines. Then we will be able to realise that we are separate from the body/mind complex and the ills that beset the body and mind cannot affect us. Krishna points this out in BG (5-16) as follows.

श्यानेन तु तद्वजाने चेषां नांशितमालमः।
तेषामात्मान्यज्ञानं प्रकाशयति तत्त्वतः॥

The question then, is how to get the right knowledge? Firstly one should do the duties prescribed by the scriptures. This first step is necessary as this will cleanse the mind of impurities. चित्तस्य शुद्ध्ये कर्म says Shri Shankaracharya in his Vivekachudamani (11). Then one should worship the Lord whom the vedas describe as the repository of all knowledge.

ईशानस्वर्गविज्ञानं ईश्वरस्वर्गभूतानां
ब्रह्मरिपितिरिध्यं दयतिरीं शिवो मेदस्तु सदाशिवोऽ॥

The Mundaka Upanishad (1.1.9).says
that He is the omniscient Being. He created Brahma the creator of all beings and taught Him (Brahma) the vedas to enable Him to carry on with the work of creation. The Svetasvataropanishad (6-18) says this as follows.

The Lord is moved by the sincere devotion of the seeker and grants him the wisdom that helps in destroying the darkness of ignorance. He says this in BG(10-10,11).

The vedas describe the Lord as having matted hair, three eyes and crystal clear body. When He appeared as DakShinamurty to teach the highest wisdom to the sages He had all these and also a rosary and a book in His hands. The DakShinamurtyupanishat describes His form as follows.

Such a Supreme Being appears in various forms to enable people to worship Him and to satisfy their diverse tastes. One such form that is popular among all is that of Sarasvati Devi. She is also described as having matted hair, three eyes and crystal clear body. She is also having rosary and a book in Her hands. She is worshipped by other gods like Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. This is said in the first verse given above. In fact our scriptures
say that it is the Supreme Being that appears as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva etc. cf.,Narayana Suktam (Taittiriyaranyakam, 4.10.13) स ब्रह्मा स शिवः स हरि: सेन्त्रः सोऽक्षरः परमः स्वराट। 

Lord Krishna says that He (the Supreme Being) alone appears as all deities. Any worship offered to any form and name goes to Him alone and He alone grants the wishes of the worshippers through that form. But such worshippers of these various forms do not realise the truth.

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धायापरितुमित्वमिच्छति । 
तस्य तस्याचार्यं श्रद्धां तामेव विद्यमयहम् ॥ BG(7-21).

Whichever form a devotee wishes to worship with faith, I make the faith more firm.

स तया श्रद्धा युक्तः तस्याराधनमीहते । 
लभते च ततः कामान् मयैव विहितानिहितान् ॥ BG(7-22).

Possessed of that faith, he engages in the worship of that form and he obtains his desires that are indeed granted by Me alone. Thus, the Supreme being alone that is worshipped as Sharada Devi represents Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva is said in one of Her names in the 108 names (नामावलः) as : ब्रह्म-विष्णु-शिवालिमका। This same name can also be seen in the 108 namavali of Laksmi. The list of 108 names also have the names शारदा, रमा, शिवा-(शिवाभेदा शिवा), चण्डिका, चामुण्डी, वाराही। She can be worshipped by all, though each one may have different desires, and She will fulfill all those desires. Lalitha Devi has also the name Sarasvathi (LS 703)। सरस्त्वाती - सरस्त्वाती ज्ञानाभिमानी। She has the form of DakShinamurti also. (LS724)। दक्षिणामूर्तिरपिणी - शिवस्य दक्षिणाभिमुखी मूर्तिरंगा-नारायणादरुपयकल्यै प्रसिद्धा। All these show that whom we call as Sarasvati is the very Supreme Being only. This is said as परब्रह्मरूपिणी in verse No.9 in the poem given in the beginning.
The Mukhapanchasati says that She is also KamakShi.

(Mukhapanchashati - Aryashatakam -92). The verse says that KamakShi alone shines as Sarasvati wearing clean robes who is seated in a lotus flower, has a book and rosary in her beautiful hands, has charming eyes and holds the veena in Her hands.

She is also known as Sharadha Devi. She is seen at Shringeri temple with chinmudra (in which the thumb and index finger are joined together and the three other fingers stand apart), rosary, a book and a pot containing nectar. The Kamalajadayitashtakam (कमलजदियताष्टकम्।) composed by the late acharya Shri Nrisimha Bharati Swamigal of Shringeri describes Her form as follows.

The mudra represents Paramatma or the Supreme Being described as the size of the thumb (for the purpose of meditation) in the Katha Upanishad (II-1-12) in the following mantra.

अनुष्ठानतपुरुषो मध्ये आत्मनि तिन्तित।
ईशानो भूतभवस्य न ततो विजिज्ञुपस्ते।पत्तेऽतु।

The mudra represents the merging of the jivatma and Paramatam that is implied by the mahavakyam. The three fingers represent the three bodies (gross, subtle, causal). The jivatma, represented by the index finger, has to get free of the bodies to realise its identity with the Paramatma, represented by the thumb. Sharadha Devi has this mudra as also DakShinamurti. Then, She (as also DakShinamurthi) has the rosary in another hand. The string of beads is made of crystal.
or rudrakSha beads. The rudrasha beads are from the tree that are
said to have sprung from the tear drops that fell from the eyes of
Shri Rudra. The RudrakShabodhepanishad says this as follows.

अथ हैं कालाश्च रुद्र भूमण्ड: प्रप्रज्जव कथं
रुद्राक्षोपण्यिति।। तेन होवच भगवानु कालाश्च रुद्र: ।
दिव्यवपसहस्याणि चक्षुरुन्मीलितं मया ।
भूमवाशिन्त पुराण्यं तु पतिता जलभिन्नव: ।
तत्रास्वविन्दो जाता महारुद्राक्ष बृक्षका:।
भक्तानां धारणात पार्ष दिवाराणिकृत हरेत ।
सुरे पीते सदाकाल्न रुद्राक्ष्यार्येव: ॥

The AkShamalikopanishat (अक्षामलिकोपिनषत ्) gives the procedure
for purifying the rosary or the string of beads. In this procedure
one invokes each letter of the alphabet in each bead and does puja.
Thus the first letter is अ and the last letter is श्र. Tha
name AkSha (अक्ष) represents all the letters of the alphabet. The
letters are arranged either in the ascending order or descending
order. So, we have the string having either 54 beads standing for
the 54 letters or 108 beads representing both the orders.

Sarasvathi Devi uses the rosary for japa just to inspire us to do
japa and gain purity of the mind. A pure mind is a prerequisite for
acquiring and assimilating spiritual wisdom. The qualities that
characterise a pure mind that qualifies for receiving spiritual
teachings from a guru are given in detail in chapters 13 and 16 of
Gita. Krishna calls these qualities as divine qualities or दैवी
संपत्ति. She has विद्या a book, indicating the scriptural
knowledge. This is said as सर्वज्ञाननिदानपुस्तकधरा in
verse No.2 in the poem given in the beginning. She is ready to
give the vedic wisdom to one who worships her with devotion. This was indicated above in the verses BG(10-10,11). The famous Tamil poetess Avvaiyar gives a delightful meaning to Sarasvathi holding a book made of handful of palm leaves in Her hand. Avvaiyar says it is to show that what even She has learnt is only a handful and what is not learnt is vast as the universe. So one should never become puffed up with one’s learning. Then, pot of amrita or nectar symbolising mokSha or liberation. So, if we do japa and get a pure mind, learn the scriptues from a qualified guru and understand the teachings and also worship Her She will bless us with spiritual wisdom which will lead us to liberation.

In the last line of the verse विद्यां शुद्धां च बुद्धः
कमलज-द्विते सत्तरं देहि महाम्॥ the spiritual seeker prays to Her to bless him with a pure mind and knowledge. He prays for विद्या or knowledge. The Mundaka upanishat divides knowledge into two categories - the inferior one and the superior one.

The former one represents the secular knowledge that includes the sciences, literature, grammar etc. This is termed as अपरा विद्या or the inferior knowledge. This is named “inferior” because any amount of this knowledge may help one to gain name, fame and perhaps lot of wealth but will not lead to liberation or mokSha.

Sankaracharya, in his commentary says that the lower knowledge is ignorance only that has to be eradicated, inasmuch as nothing in reality is known by knowing the objects of ignorance.

Liberation can be had by acquiring the spiritual knowledge of…
only. There is no other means to gain liberation. Our scriptures very firmly assret this fact. तमेवं विद्यान्मृत इह भवति नान्यः पनश्च विचंतेऽयनाय। (Purushasuktam, No. 17) We worship Sarasvati for granting us both types of knowledge.

She is described as Vak Devi or as the Goddess presiding over the power of speech. The popular hymn Shyamaladandakam says that if one meditates on Her holding a rosary of crystal beads, a book that represents essence of wisdom, a hook or goad and a noose then he will become a great poet. From his mouth will flow words in the form of prose and poetry.

The Rig veda worships Her as Vak Devi.

ॐ रणो देवी सरस्वती वाजेभिराजिणीवती। 'पीनामविच्यवतु || ॐ || (Rig veda. 6.5.12). Lord Shiva is also known as such. One of His names to be seen in the list of His 108 names and also in the 1008 names is गिरिरा: - गिरि भक्तानां बाचि सकलविचारप्रचन निग्रहानुमय ह सामर्थ्य प्रदानेन वसति इति गिरिरा:।

She is also known as Medha Devi (मेधादेवी). Medha implies intellectual brilliance and also retentive power. The Medha Suktam (मेधासूक्तम) in the Taittiriya Aranyakam (4.10.41-44) praises Her and says that one who receives Her grace becomes a sage, wealthy and obtains various other riches. He gets the spiritual enlightenment by which he crosses the ocean of samsara.

त्वा जूषु ऋषिर्णवति देवी त्वा ब्रह्माण्डगतश्रीरीत्व त्वा।
त्वाजुष्ठिथिं विनितते वसु सा नो जुष्वस्त्र द्रविणेन मेघे।

Thus the worship of Sarasvati Devi is necessary to have a happy life in this world and also to get relief from the frightful cycle of birth and death. Let us wind up this short piece with a prayer to Her.
O auspicious One! You are the source of all auspiciousness. You are the accomplisher of all cherished desires. You are the giver of refuge. You possess the eye of wisdom and beautiful form. O You Power divine! salutations to You.