pashupati panchAsya stavaH

पशुपति पञ्चास्य स्तवः

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The above verses are in praise of Lord Shiva, renowned by the name Pashupati in the temple in Nepal. (पशुपति पञ्चस्यास्या स्तवः)

Asyam means the face, and (स्तवम्) stavam means a hymn in praise. So
the title says that this is in praise of Lord Pashupati with five faces.

NEPAL: - The kingdom of Nepal is India’s neighbour. The state is situated high in the Himalaya mountains. Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world, is situated in Nepal. It is an ancient country and has been referred to in our puranas like Skandam and Bhagavatam. The Skanda Purana in the chapter Nepala Mahatmayam says that fortunate indeed are those who live in that country, because they are blessed with all the four goals of life, to wit, dharma, artha, kama and mokSha. They are able to have darshan of the Lord Pashupati whom even devas cannot see directly. Nepal is described as a gem amongst holy places. The Skanda Puranam further says that the people there will be calm, and will have other good qualities. The place is situated in high mountains, among dense forests and has remarkable scenic beauty; and in such wonderful surrounding shines Lord Pashupatinath as the very embodiment of wisdom. (Nepala mahatmyam.7-54).

It was a Hindu kingdom, the only one in the world, till recently. Here, in Nepal, Lord Pashupati is seen as a lingam, nearly four feet high. and with five faces - four facing the four directions and the fifth facing up. The pujaries draw the Shri Chakra on the lingam daily before commencing the puja. The full moon day (paurnami) is specially celebrated when a huge quantity of rice is cooked along with vegetables. The rice is shaped as a lingam and offered to the Lord and deeparadhanam is performed. The temple attracts huge crowds on Shivaratri day when people throng to the
temple during the entire day to have darshan of the Lord.

FIVE FACES OF SHIVA: - Because of his five faces Shiva has the name शिवाय. पशुपति पद्माचकारी वन्दन नानारूपाणि यस्य स तथा । (Shivasahasranamam-Padmapuranam). These faces have the following names. ईशान, तत्त्वज्ञ, अघोर, वामदेव, and सतद्योजात. These faces face up the sky, East, South, North and West respectively. It seems that a lingam with five faces as described here is to be seen only in the Pashupati temple in Nepal and the temple attached to the Shankara math in Tiruvanaikkaval near Trichy. The hymn given in the beginning has salutations to the five faces of the Lord.

We have the salutations to Shiva’s five faces in Mahanyasam that is chanted before chanting the vedic hymn Shri Rudram. There are two Nyasams, the Mahanyasam and the Laghunyasam. Maha(मह) means big. Laghu is the opposite,(लघु) means light, not heavy. The Mahanyasam is a part of the methodology of chanting of the Rudram on special occasions such as Pradosham, Shivaratri. Typically, during a Rudra parayanam at home, one recites the Laghunyasam. Such a Shri Rudra parayanam in a public place of worship such as a temple is preceeded by the recital of the Mahanyasam. As the name difference indicates, the Laghunyasam is shorter. The Mahanyasam invokes the deity of Shri Rudra in His many forms of Indra, Agni, Yama, Varuna etc in the different limbs (anga’s) of the one who chants. Such an invoking is done to seek the blessings of the Lord, and at the same time giving one and all a feeling of immediate presence of the Lord in the vicinity of the chanting. The Mahanyasam has certain chapters of the Shri Rudram, the Purusha Suktam etc repeated in it. The Shiva samkalpam is also part of this. The prayers addressed to the five faces of Shiva are given below.

तत्त्वज्ञाय विविध्रे महादेवाय धीमहि। तत्रो रुद्रः प्रचोदयात्।
संवत्तमाः-तत्त्वमितु-कनकक्रयापद्ध-तेजोरुणां
गम्भीरधवनि-सामवेशजनकं तात्त्राधरं सुन्दरसम्।
अर्थनदयुति-तीर्थ-पिनालं जटा भार-प्राणोहस्तं
कन्दे सिद्दसुरक्षुरेन्द्र-नमितं पूरं मुखं दूल्धिनः।

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ॐ नमः भगवः सः । पूर्वाण मुखाय नमः ॥

The above verse is in salutation of Tatpurusha facing East.

अघोरेयोऽध धारेयो घोरघारतेऽधः । सर्वेयोऽर्त्ते नामस्तु रुद्रुपेयः ॥
कालाध्रुवमार्जनसृष्टिनिव्यावृत्तिसंगक्षणः कर्णोऽदासितत्भोगिमस्तकवर्मणोऽर्द्धद्रुंगकुररम् ।
सप्तो तपालाः शुकिभासके व्याकरणात्तेशते वन्दे दक्षिणानि धरस्व बदनं चार्धरनाददेवम् ॥
ॐ नमः भगवः सः । पूर्वाण मुखाय नमः ॥

The above verse is in salutation of Aghora facing South.

संयोजनां प्रत्यायम सदो जाताय वै नमः नमः ।
भवे भवे नातिभे भवस्व माम् । भवोऽद्राय नमः ॥
प्रातेयाचतुर्मन्तादुपययागोक्षीरनिम्यः
भस्मायगमनमोदहदत्त् ज्वालावलीक्षोचनम् ।
विणुवमहादुरान्तिपदं ऋच्चवेदनादेवम्
वन्देयच सकर्त्तैः कर्मकर्तितं स्थाणामेवम् पश्चिमम् ॥
ॐ नमः भगवः सः । पश्चिमाण मुखाय नमः ॥

The above verse is in salutation of Sadyojata facing West.

वामदेवाय नमः ज्ञेष्याय नमः श्रेष्याय नमः रुद्राय नमः
कालाय नमः कल्याविकरणाय नमो बल्याविकरणाय नमो बलाय नमो
बलप्रामःनाय नमस्तुप्युत्तमाय नमो मनोत्तमाय नमः ॥
गौरेः कुंकुमपंक्ति सुतिलक्य व्यापाण्डुमण्डलाय
भूतविशेषोऽदराविशेषायसससूक्तकर्णोऽद्यतमम् ।
सिमन्त विश्वदेवयार्थम् प्रदिशितं नीलावलकालकृ ते
वन्दे यातुष्य-वेदाध्ययनक्य वक्रे हस्तयोक्तम् ॥
ॐ नमः भगवः सः । उत्तराण मुखाय नमः ॥
The above verse is in salutation of Vamadeva facing North.

The above verse is in salutation of Ishana facing up - the sky.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FIVE FACES: - What is the significance of Shiva being said to have five faces? This is explained in detail by Shri Nilakanta DikShita in his commentary called Shivatattva rahasyam to Shiva 108 Namavali. The name पशुपति: is the 52nd name in the namavali. A chapter from the elaborate commentary is given below.

A full discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this writeup. One may have to approach a scholar for further details on this subject.

‘Pashupati’ means the protector of the kine. Every thing in creation from Brahma the creator down to immovables are known as pashus. Shiva is known as Pashupati since He is their Lord. The name occurs in vedas (eg) in Shri

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Rudram that says. 

It also occurs in the Shiva 108 namavali (no.92) and Shiva 1000 namavali. In the Shiva sahasranamam(Padmapuranam) (No.44) we find the following.

Nepal is therefore known as Pashupatipuri after the Lord.

The river Vangmati flows close to the temple of Pashupati. The waters from the river are used for the daily ablutions in the temple. It is said that after Lord Narasimha appeared, killed the demon king and blessed Prahlada. Then He disappeared from the scene. Prahlada was greatly disappointed at this. He wanted to see the Lord again and did severe penance. Lord Shiva was impressed by this and laughed in happiness. Water flowed from His mouth at that time and turned into a river. The river that flowed from His mouth came to be known as Vangmati. (From Nepala Mahatmyam).

Lord Shiva blessed Prahlada that his devotion to Hari will remain firm.

Nepal also has the river Gandaki. Shaligrama stones are found in the river bed. They are symbolic of Lord Vishnu. Shrimad Bhagavatam makes a reference to the river in Book 5 - chapter 7 when it narrates the story of King Bharata. This country came to be known as Bharata Varsha after this king only. The king, after ruling over the country for a long time
renounced everything and repaired to the forests to the hermitage of Sage Pulaha situated on the banks of river Gandaki. It is said that Lord Hari reveals His form to His devotees there in the ashram even today. The holy river Chakranadi (Gandaki) hallows on both sides the places of this ashrama through contact with circular (wheel like) pebbles on both sides. This place is known as the ShaligramakShetra.

HISTORICAL NOTES:-

The documents in the National Archives of Nepal reveal that Shri Shankaracharya visited Nepal during his travels around the country. He had discussions with the then king of Nepal who was a Buddhist and weaned him away from Buddhism to Hinduism. He made changes to the way pujas were being done in Pashupatinath temple and arranged to have regular pujas done by priests got from South India. Four priests, properly trained in the temple procedures and reciting the vedas perform the pujas to the four faces on the four sides. These facts are also to be seen in the text Punyashloka manjari that deals with the history of the Kanchi Shankara math. It also says that Shri Vipulananda Sadashiva - the 53rd acharya in the lineage of acharyas of the math visited Nepal. He was warmly received by the king and honoured by him. The following verse in the text says that.

This fact is also mentioned as...
in the Vyasachaliya Shankaravijayam..

Shri Vyasachala was the disciple of Shri Vipulananda Sadashiva and succeeded him as the 54th head of the math. He is the author of Vyasachaliya Shankaravijayam. The details show that the Shri Vipulananda Sadashiva visited Nepal when it was in the grip of severe famine. He blesed the state and brought relief from the severe famine.

Now, before concluding, let us ponder as to what we should seek from Lord Pashupati. Shri Shankaracharya, in his Shivanandalahari (verse No.68) shows us the way. Let us join him in this moving appeal to Lord Pashupati.

अिमतमुदमृतं मुहीम ्।
िवमल-भवद-गोमावसीम ्।
सदय पशुपते स-पुण्य-पांक
मम परिपात्य भक्ति-चेनुमेकाम् ॥ ६८॥

Pashu(पशु) means cattle in general. Here the acharya takes it to mean a cow. The ‘cow’ in this instance is devotion or bhakti. Lord Pashupati is the owner of the cow. The acharya requests the Lord to take care of the bhakti ‘cow’ and nourish it or, in other words, make his devotion to Him firm and unwavering. The cow shed will generally be unclean. But the bhakti cow will not stay in unclean places. It stays in a very clean place (viz.) the Lord’s feet. विमल = clean, pure. भवद-गोमावसीम = staying in the cow-pen of your feet. गोम = cowpen. This implies that the place where bhakti resides is a very exalted one. The ordinary cow can give only milk, in limited quantities and that too at specific times only. This bhakti cow is capable of giving us many good things - and that too all the time and in abundance and most importantly the nectar called ‘bliss’. So, अिमतमुदमृतं मुहीम ्। अिमत = unlimited. मुदम = joy, happiness. अमृतं = nectar. दुहन्तीम = yielding. मुছ: = often, frequently. The cow will be tied to a peg
fixed to the ground. Bhakti is the result of good deeds or punyam done in many births. So, the bhakti cow is tied to the peg that is the frution of good deeds or punyam done in numerous births. The Lord is requested to take care of such a cow. Lord Pashupati is addressed as सदय पशुपते = O! the compassionate Pashupati! This indicates that the Lord has a kind heart and will certainly listen to our pleading.

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