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॥ मूर्ति न्याय धर्मावधार ॥

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Our religion lays great emphasis on the purificatory power of the Lord’s name. Our vedas talk about this. The following verse from the Yajur Veda will serve as an instance.

This prayer addressed to Lord Vishnu says specially extol Your name Swami Bodhendra, who was a great advocate of chanting of the Lord’s name points out that indicates repeating the name several times. The vedas themselves contain many hymns that extol the Lord. Shri Rudram, Shrisuktam etc., give the names of the Lord. The puranas also contain many compilation of names (nAmAvali) which are very suitable for recitation. Among these the Vishnu sahasranamam, Shiva sahasranamam and Lalita sahasranAmam are popular. Their recitation with devotion is guaranteed to confer immense benefits to the person. The Vishnu sahasranamam has the following verse towards the end. This says that the one who listens to it or recites it daily will not encounter misfortunes in this life or the life hereafter.

Similarly the Kaivalyopanishad says that one who recites Shri Rudram is absolved from great sins.

Sage Naradha told sage Vyasa (BH 1-5-22) that wise men declare that the abiding purpose of man’s austere penance, sacred knowledge, sacrificial performances,
recitation of the Vedas with correct intonation, enlightenment and offering of gifts is to recount the virtues of the Lord.

In view of such statements many have the habit of reciting these hymns daily after completing their worship. But in these days, when time has become a scarce commodity, many have given up performing daily puja and even sandhyavandanam. For the benefit of such people, our kindly sages have provided shorter version of the hymns. In addition to sahasranamas that contain 1000 names, they have given us trishatis that contain 300 names, ashtottarashatams that list 108 names and even lists containing 16 and 12 names. If someone was to claim that he has not the time even to say these abridged versions, our puranas suggest repeating any of Lord’s names that one prefers. Towards the end of the Vishnu sahasranama stotram, there is a verse in which Parvati asks Lord Shiva if there is an easy method to recite the lengthy sahasranamam. In reply Lord Shiva says that repeating the name Rama is equivalent to reciting the entire sahasranamam!

The stotram that is given herein contains sixteen names of Lord Subrahmanya who is a very popular deity worshipped in the country. The last verse says that one who recites these names daily will be absolved from all sins. So, the Lord has the name - Rama, Sahastranama, and Padma as the three names that distinguish him. VS(992). Reciting a short poem that contains few names looks very easy and because of this reason one may entertain some doubt if repeating few names can free one from sins. Shrimad Bhagavatam gives the example of one taking a medicine. A tablet may weigh only few milligrams, but it can work even in the body of a burly person and can give great relief. Also a medicine will do its work even one takes it by mistake! (Eg.) a laxative tablet even when swallowed by mistake will make the person run to the toilet within a short time. Similarly, the Lord’s names will purify a person in whatever manner it is uttered. The Padma Purana says this as follows.
That is why in the introduction to Vishnu shasranama stotram Shri Bhishma says that worshipping the Lord by reciting hymns (stotras) is the best and easiest form of worship by which one can get over the problem of samsara or cyclic births.

We should note an important point here. The stotras may be named after different forms of gods such as Vishnu or Shiva or Lalita Devi etc. But when we go through the names we find that there are some that clearly say that the god that is praised is the Supreme Being. So, there is no question of one being superior or inferior to the others. They all are in praise of one and the same Being.

Where is the Supreme Being and how to worship it - one may wonder. It is everywhere and every thing according to the scriptures.

We find the name in the Vishnu sahasranama (25) also. For the convenience of those who want to worship the Lord, He has assumed various forms such as Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Devi etc. We may worship Him in anything as He is every thing. So, we have the habit of worshipping Ashwattha tree, rivers like Ganga, books like the Gita or Ramayana and so on. But for the sake of convenience we have the practice of worshipping Him in idols, shaligrama and lingam. It is known that the mind is wavering by nature and so is difficult to concentrate for a long time during the worship. This kind of worship is easy and most suitable for those who require an external object to help them to focus their mind during the worship. After proper installation with mantras the idol is no more an inanimate idol, but the living prescence of the Lord. As the worship of the Lord in such a consecrated idol has to be done with great deal of devotion the external object helps in paying attention to the Lord in the object. So, one may say that it is most suited during the early stages of worship for one whose mind is not steady. But as one continues with the worship he progresses steadily on the spiritual path. Devotion swells in the heart and the Lord slowly creeps into his mind. The mind is gradually purged of undesirable traits such as likes, dislikes, anger, lust that pollute and distract the mind. In such a mind that is pure and steady the Self within reveals Itself. Such a devotee who has made great progress on the
spiritual path may worship the Lord within himself - in the space (called 'cave' or தூத்தை). The Katha Upanishad (1-2-20)says this as follows.

\[ \text{காதா உபநிஷத் (1-2-20)} \]

For this reason, Lord Subrahmanya is also known as Guha (குகை:1). SS(865).

The word swami (ஸ்வா) means owner. What does the Lord own? He owns the entire universe and so is the Supreme Being. The name Subrahmanya may be split as su (ஸ்வ) and brahmanya (ப்ப்னஸ்வா). Brahma means protector of dharma. The name appears in the Vishnu and Siva sahasranamas. The commentators Shankaracharya define the word as follows. ப்ப்னஸ்வா: - “ப்ப்னஸ்வா ப்னக்கந்தம் ப்னக்கந்தம் ப்னக்கந்தம் ப்னக்கந்தம் உ ப்ப்னஸ்வா ப்ப்னஸ்வா” VS (661). Tapas or austerities, the vedas, those who study and abide by the vedic injunctions and have got the knowledge of the Self, and the spiritual wisdom are known as brahma (not the creator Brahma). The Lord supports them. The name is defined similarly in SS(562).

The late Paramacharya of Kanchi math pointed out that the name swami (ஸ்வாமி) occurring in the third verse is unique to Lord Subrahmanya and identifies Him with the Supreme Being. He quotes the verse from Amarakosha in support. குகை: ப்ப்னஸ்வா ப்ப்னஸ்வா ப்ப்னஸ்வா ப்ப்னஸ்வா: 1 The word swami (ஸ்வாமி) means the owner. What does the Lord own? He owns the entire universe and so is the Supreme Being. The name Subrahmanya may be split as su (ஸ்வ) and brahmanya (ப்ப்னஸ்வா). Brahma means protector of dharma. The name appears in the Vishnu and Siva sahasranamas. The commentators Shankaracharya define the word as follows. ப்ப்னஸ்வா: - “ப்ப்னஸ்வா ப்னக்கந்தம் ப்னக்கந்தம் ப்னக்கந்தம் ப்னக்கந்தம் உ ப்ப்னஸ்வா ப்ப்னஸ்வா” VS (661). Tapas or austerities, the vedas, those who study and abide by the vedic injunctions and have got the knowledge of the Self, and the spiritual wisdom are known as brahma (not the creator Brahma). The Lord supports them. The name is defined similarly in SS(562).

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We find from the Skanda Purana that Lord Subrahmanya incarnated to quell the asuras and bring the dharma back on its feet. This is in accordance with what the Lord said in the Bhagavad Gita in the following verses that are quite popular. (4-7 and 8).

But we should notice one difference with Lord Subrahmanya’s fighting the asuras like Shura and Taraka. According to the puranas, He no doubt fought with them, but did not kill them (unlike in other avatars). He subdued them and made them His servants in the form of the peacock etc. This shows His extraordinary kindness. Shri Sankaracharya points this out in his Subrahmanya Bhujanga stotram. He says that there are gods who shower their grace on the sages and their devotees. But I do not know of a god who showers His grace even on one belonging to the lowest category.

Let us pray to Lord Subrahmanya and seek His grace.

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