॥ श्रीपंचरत्नम् - वरदराजस्तवः ॥

.. shriipa.ncharatnam - varadarAjastavaH ..
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VARADARAJA STOTRAM.

These five verses are in praise of Shri Varadaraja - the presiding deity of the temple in Vishnu Kanchi in Kanchipuram. The city of Kanchipuram, also known as Kanchi, is an old historic city. It is mentioned in Puranas and literature too. The Brahmanda Puranam compares the cities of Kasi and Kanchi to the two eyes of Lord Shiva that can confer Lord’s blessings on the devotee.

Kanchi is known as the city of temples. There are numerous temples, but the most famous ones are those of Varadaraja, Ekamreshwara and KamakShi.
Great devotees have lost themselves in the ethereal beauty and qualities of Varadaraja and composed many paeans about Him. Vaishnavite saints known as Alwars have visited Kanchi and sung verses in praise of His enchanting form and qualities. The puranas say that the Creator Brahma himself came to earth and worshipped the Lord by performing a great sacrifice. Airavata, the divine elephant, is said to have worshipped Him and borne Him on his back. Today the temple of Shri Varadaraja is to be seen on a hillock in the shape of a kneeling elephant. So, the hillock is called Hastigiri (હસ્તીગીરી). Hasti means an elephant. Twenty four steps, representing the twenty four letters of the Gayatri mantra lead to the temple on the top of the mound. This signifies that the Lord is the true import of the Gayatri mantra. The next important temple is that of Siva. He is seated under a mango tree. So He is known as Ekamreshwara (એકામ્રેશ્વર). Amra means a mango tree. There is a puranic story that says that Devi wanted to demonstrate the power of devotion (bhakti) to the Lord. She came down to the earth and worshipped Him under the mango tree. Near this temple is that of KamakShi. Shri Shankaracharyas had established a Shreechakra in the temple. The records say that he spent his last days here and established a math here. The Mookhapanchasati, a poem consisting of 500 verses sung in praise of KamakShi is a famous work. The verses are soaked in devotion and known for the literary merit. The temple is known as Kamakoti. There are many temples of Shiva around Kanchi. A significant fact is that none of these temples will have a shrine for Devi. KamakShi represents all of them. So, one is advised to worship KamakShi at Kamakoti and get fulfilment. The city is mentioned as one of the seven cities where austerities
performed will lead to liberation. Thus it is renouned as a मोक्षपुष्किन.

Thus it is renouned as a मोक्षपुष्किन.

Kanchi was also a seat of higher learning in Sanskrit studies during the 4th and 5th centuries AD. So it was known as घटिका स्थलम्। Ghatika means a college where the vedas and the auxiliary sciences were taught in a systematic manner. Records show that some princes from neighbouring states studied here. Some princes from other states were also imported to teach some subjects. For all these reasons the city’s fame has lead to the saying नागरिकविल सची।- that Kanchi is the pearl among the cities.

Among the numerous poems in praise of Lord Varadaraja three in Sanskrit are outstanding and popular. They are the Varadaraja stavam (having 102 verses) of Sri Srivatsankhamisra (also known as Kuresha), a prime disciple of Shri Ramanuja, Varadaraja panchashat (having 52 verses) of Shri Vedanta Deshika and the Varadaraja stavam (having 105 verses) by Shri Appayya DikShita. They are renowned for the profusion of devotion and literary merit. And they are exegetic in their content. Shri Appayya DikShita has himself provided a commentary in Sanskrit for his Varadaraja stavam. He quotes liberally from various scriptures to substantiate his statements.

In the stotram given here one may notice that the first letter in these five verses put together read as Sripancharatnam, (श्रीपंचरतनम्।), the name of the poem. The letter श्री is used as an honorofic prefix to deities (श्री कृण), distinguished persons (श्री व्यास) and great literary works (श्री भगवद्गīता) to indicate their glory. स्तोत्र means a hymn or stotra. A stotra narrates
the qualities. By chanting these stotras regularly one can free himself from sorrows. Bhishma says this in his introduction to Vishnusahasranamam. बोधकार्यं स्वपनितं सर्वद्वन्तितं अवेदन्त। Since the stotras are so potent they deserve the honorific prefix श्री. The verses are given with the meaning. The meaning is not exact, but general enough to make one understand the purport.

The following abbreviations are used in the comments.
1- VS - Vishnusahasranama with the commentary of Shri Sankaracharya.
2 - BG - Srimad Bhagavad Gita with the commentary of Shri Sankaracharya.
3 - BH - Srimad Bhagavatam.

श्रीदेवराजमिन निगमान-वेठं बुढ़ि-मुद्र-विन्दौ-कवचम्
नव्याबुवाह शुषमात-तनु-श्री-बलं नव्याबुवाह-सम्बन्ध पद्धि ॥ १ ॥

श्रीदेवराजसङ्गम् = having Hastigiri as residence;
निगमान-वेठं = One who can be known with the help of the upanishads, the end portion of the vedas;
बुढ़ि-मुद्र-विन्दौ-कवचम् = One who is the Lord of sacrifices;
नव्याबुवाह-शुषमात-तनु-श्री-बलं नव्याबुवाह-सम्बन्ध पद्धि = I surrender.

Meaning: I always surrender to Shri Varadaraja also known as Shri Devaraja, who has Hastigiri as His residence, who may be known with the help of the upanishads, One who is the Lord of sacrifices, One who has the welfare of gods such as Brahma and Indra prominently in His mind and Who has a body shining like a new water bearing cloud.
The Lord cannot be known with the help of the instruments like sense organs or the instruments like the microscope that extend the power of the organs. This is because of the fact that He is behind the organs. For example it is with His blessings that the eyes see, the ears hear etc. The Kena Upanishad says this clearly.

Shri Krishna says this clearly वेदावृत्तकृति वेदारं श्रद्धास्य श्रद्धाः श्रद्धां मन्तर यद्वाचाह वाचं हवाचं हवां प्राणस्य प्राणः।

वर्दः अभमतारवरारदाति वरं गां दक्षणानि देवेशाः प्राधार्येन देवानामीशाः देवेशः।

He is the One who accepts the oblations offered in sacrifices which may be meant for any deity. VS(871). देवशः = He is foremost among the celestials. He also rules over and protects them, including Indra. देवशः- प्राधार्येन देववामीशो देवशः। देवानु निधनित्तिम देववृंतु शकः; तत्स्थायिः शासितिम देववृंतू। VS(492,493) ..

varadarajapancharatnam.pdf
 diplomat Yajamane, o Yajyamane, 
= giver of boons. Also means the one who, as the one who performs sacrifices, offers gifts. VS(330).

नव्यासुवाकः-शुष्मातनु-शोभमन्म = having a shining body resembling fresh water bearing cloud. Why, one may ask, is His body having the colour of the water bearing cloud? Shri Appayya Dixitar gives an ingenious reason in his Shri Varadaraja stavam. (27).He says that the cloud is white. But when it is laden with water it turns black. So also, Shri Varadaraja, because of His sattvic nature (सत्वगुण) is really white- the colour of the moon as is said in the popular verse शुक्लांनम्न्वं शष्वण्मचतुर्बुजम्।

Sattva guna is represented by white colour. But He is charged with (the water of) compassion and because of this He appears to have a dark complexion.

The Lord who has His residence in Hastigiri; पंकेहासन-करताम्बल-वाज्यज्ञेव = in the sacred Aswamedha yagna performed by Brahma; वैतानुके = in order to bless the devotee; आविवर्तस्वेत = appeared; तं = that Shri Varada; प्रपद्ये = I surrender.
Meaning: I surrender to that Shri Varada who resides in Hastigiri and who appeared in haste with a smile and biting the sacrificial oblation in the sacred Aswamedha sacrifice performed by Brahma.

COMMENTS; મચા� મતા ચટ - with a smiling face and biting the oblation offered in the sacrifice; Here, દશન્ literally means biting. It should not be taken in this sense. As a parallel we may cite the following popular verse -BG(9-26);

\[પત્રં પુંભા ફલં તાયં યાં મે ભયા પ્રયચ્છે \]

In the second line the word અશ્નામ literally means I eat. Shri Shankaracharya takes the word to mean ગ્ભામ - that is, I accept with pleasure. The same meaning should be applied to the word દશન્ - biting said above.

\[ચૃદાંશુ - શીતિકરણાિયત - નેત્રયુગ્મં \]

\[પદ્મા - િનવાસ - રમણીય - ભુરતરં \]

\[આનુબાહુ - મુરરકૃત - સપ્તત્રતું \]

\[માતઙ્ગ - શૈલ - સદનમ્ \]

\[ઉરરકૃત - સપ્તત્રતું \]

\[તમ્ \]

\[પ્રપદ્યે \]

\[૩ \]

માતઙ્ગ - શૈલ - સદનમ્ = The Lord who has His residence in Hastigiri; ચૃદાંશુ - શીતિકરણાિયત - નેત્રયુગ્મં = who has the sun and the moon as His two eyes; પદ્મા - િનવાસ - રમણીય - ભુરતરં = who has a chest made beautiful by Shri Laxmi Devi residing there; આનુબાહુ - મુરરકૃત - સપ્તત્રતું = who has long arma that reach upto the knees; ઉરરકૃત - સપ્તત્રતું = who accepted the sacrifice offered by Brahma; તમ્ that Lord Varada; પ્રપદ્યે = to Him I surrender.

Meaning: I surrender to the Lord Varada who has His residence in Hastigiri, who has for His eyes the sun and the moon, whose chest is made beautiful by Shri Laxmi Devi’s residence, whose long arms reach upto His knees and who gracefully accepted the Aswamedha sacrifice offered by Brahma.
COMMENTS; चन्द्र-निवास-समाश्रय-पुजन-तर्कम् = who has a chest made beautiful by Shri Laxmi Devi residing there; Sri Vedanta Desika puts this beautifully in his Sri stuti (1) as वक्षः पीठं मधुविजयनी भूषण-नाथं रूपदानं।

= Shri Devi adorns the throne of the chest of Shri Vishnu by Her radiance.

नागेन्द्र शैल-सहनम् = The Lord who has His residence in Hastigiri;

अन्तर-निवास-विषय-विकल्पतम् = who is very dear to Lord Shiva - the enemy of Yama; शंकं च चक्रं अभयं गदेः च दधानम् = who wears a mark made of precious diamonds on His forehead; शंकं च चक्रं अभयं गदेः च दधानम् = who is holding the conch, discus, the mudra that assures protection; वरदं = that Varada; प्रपधिः = I surrender.

Meaning; I surrender to the Lord Varada who resides in Hastagiri, who is very dear to Lord Shiva, who wears a mark made of precious diamonds on His forehead and holds the conch, discus and a mudra that assures freedom from fear.

COMMENTS; He assures freedom from fear. So He has the name भयकृति = भक्तानं भयं कृति कृति कृति कृति। VS(833).

वेतुः शैल-सहनम् = The Lord who has His residence in Hastigiri; महाभारत-भक्ति, अर्जुन-वर्तमा, कृष्ण-नामकम, नक्षत्र-वैश्नाव, विश्वास-वैश्नाव, रामायण-वैश्नाव, नरक-वैश्नाव, वन-वैश्नाव, नदियाकम् =

who incarnated as Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Balarama and Krishna for the benefit of all;
વરદમુ = that Varada; પ્રધિ = I surrender.

Meaning: I surrender to the Lord Varada who resides in Hastigiri and who incarnated as Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Yamana, Parasurama, Rama, Balarama and Krishna for the benefit of all.

COMMENTS: The Lord incarnated Himself from time to time for the welfare of all. So He has the name અવતારસુ બ્લેછયા બોહનામુષ્ઠમુચે દયાલુઃ (VS 721).

The Lord is called in these verses as Varada. But He is better known as Varadaraja - the king or foremost among those who grant boons; firstly, because He grants them in great abundance. Sri Vedana Desika alludes to the episode of Kuchela, and says that the poor Kuchela could give Krishna only a handful of flattened rice and in return the Lord made him rich as Kubera - the god of wealth. He asks that when such a generous Lord is available, why should I go after anyone else? I am determined to worship Him alone.

The reason why one should not serve or worship any other deity is given by Shri Krishna. People and various gods are not permanent. So, whatever favours or riches they give cannot also be permanent. They will be ephemeral only. But the Lord is unlike anyone else. He alone is eternal and can confer boons that give benefits that last for ever. અનખાનુષ્ઠ્થુ તેવાં તદ્ભવત્ય પસારંગ્રામઃ। ટેવનેવશે વશનિ મહૂરભાવિતઃ બગ(7-23). Note that Shri Krishna calls those who worship other gods as dullards, because the amount of exertion to be put in the case of both kinds of worship is
the same. Still people go after other deities or kings and are bound to get finite results only.

The devotee Kuashekara puts across this idea forcefully in his poem Mukundamala. He says that the Lord is praised as the Supreme Being by the Vedas. He is the Lord of the three worlds. He can be easily worshipped without much effort in the mind. He is so munificent that He will give up even His position to His devotee. But, sadly enough we do not take to worshipping Him. Instead we stand at the door steps of kings who rule over few villages and who can confer petty favours only. He asks what kind of wretched creatures are we who do so? Please note the statement that He will give up even His position to His devotee. This idea is said in Srimad Bhagavatam also. This says that He will give even Himself to His devotee.

These verses briefly describe the beauty and glory of Shri Varadaraja that are really beyond conceptualisation. Great devotees have asked that when such a bewitching form of the glorious Lord is available for one to feast his eyes on, what else one can desire? For example, Shri Vedanta Desika declares in his Varadaraja panchasat (49) that besides daily worshipping and savouring the entransing beauty of Shri Varadaraja here in Kanchipuram, he indeed has no desire to go to even Vaikunta - the abode of the Lord.
Shri Appayya dikShita also says so in his Varadaraja stava. (7). He says that an intelligent person who gets delight here in Kanchipuram by looking at the wonderful form of Shri Varadaraja will have no desire to go to any higher worlds including Vaikunta.

This sentiment is in tune with what the Lord, incarnate as Kapila, told His mother Devahuti in His advice. (BH 3-29-13)

True devotees do not accept, even when offered, any of the five forms of liberation. They only want an opportunity to render service to Me.

.. OM tatsat..
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