పంచరాతం - వరదామం 

.. shriIpa.ncharatnam - varadarAjastraH ..

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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.

The Purana also makes a mention about Kamakoti.

Shrimad Bhagavatam also talks about Kanchi city. (BG-10-79-14).

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 (హస్తిగిరి). 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 (ఏకమ్రేశ్వర). 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 Shankaracharys 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 place where 

Kanchi was also a seat of higher learning in Sanskrit studies during the 4th and 5th centuries AD. So it was known as a centre of higher learning. 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 కంచి సమాధానం చేసి - 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, (శ్రీపంచారతం) the name of the poem. The letter శ్రీ is used as an honorific prefix to deities (శ్రీ దేవతలం), distinguished persons (శ్రీ సమగ్రలం) and great literary works (శ్రీ లక్షణలం) to indicate their
glory. పంచరత్ 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. ఆభాగుశోభం మహాగుశోభం పదార్థా రచయిత నాయి. Since the stotras are so potent they deserve the honorific prefix ॐ Shri. The verses are given with the meaning. The meaning is not exact, but general enough to make one understand the purport.

The following abbreviationa 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.

అభాగుశోభం మహాగుశోభం పదార్థా రచయిత నాయి = having Hastigiri as residence;
ఆభాగుశోభం మారించగా = having a shining body resesembling fresh water bearing cloud.

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.
One who can be known with the help of the upanishads, the end portion of the vedas.

The Lord cannot be known with the equipments like sense organs that we have 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\(^\text{BG(15-15)}\). He says that He is to be known by all the Vedas. He is the author of the Vedas too. He has, out of immense mercy, made them available to us to enable us to reach Him.

He is the Enjoyer, as also the Lord of all sacrifices. says\(^\text{BG(9-24)}\). Also\(^\text{VS(871)}\).

He is foremost among the celestials. He also rules over and protects them, including Indra.\(^\text{VS(492,493)}\)
= giver of boons. Also means the one who, as the one who performs sacrifices, offers gifts. VS(330).

= 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 (sattva) is really white- the colour of the moon as is said in the popular verse

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; = in the sacred Aswamedha yagna performed by Brahma; = in the sacrificial fire; = in a hurry - in order to bless the devotee; = with a smiling face and biting the oblation offered in the sacrifice; = appeared;


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; 

"మనో طفالతం" - with a smiling face and biting the oblation offered in the sacrifice; Here, దశం literally means biting. It should not be taken in this sense. As a parallel we may cite the following popular verse -BG(9-26);

పతుం ఒషం ఫలం యం ఇభుషాయ పయతం వతోనం శక్తం ముతం యచ్ఛతోన� ి॥

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

చంం-ఒట్టుతంఓతంవేసంమాతుంబంతరం తమ్మం-మాతంమంపంతం తమక్షం తంతరం తంతరం తంతరతం ి॥

పంతం-పంతం-పంతం = The Lord who has His residence in Hastigiri; 
పంతం-పంతం-పంతం-పంతం = who has the sun and the moon as His two eyes; 
పంతం-పంతం-పంతం-పంతం = who has a chest made beautiful by Shri Laxmi Devi residing there; 
పంతం-పంతం-పంతం-పంతం = who has long arms that reach upto the knees; 
పంతం-పంతం-పంతం-పంతం = who accepted the sacrifice offered by Brahma; 
పంతం-పంతం-పంతం-పంతం = 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; పంచరత´పవదȋజస ¯వః = who has a chest made beautiful by Shri Laxmi Devi residing there; Sri Vedanta Desika puts this beautifully in his Sri stuti (1) as అష: హోరు మామారర ేరూంది సురడి = Shri Devi adorns the throne of the chest of Shri Vishnu by Her radiance.

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 భయకృణ = భూత భయం కృణ = VS(833).

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

Meaning; I surrender to the Lord Varada who resides in Hastigiri and who incarnated as Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, 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 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. BG(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.
॥ BH(10-80-11). 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 devotes 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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