॥ श्रीपञ्चरत्रम् - वरदराजस्तवः ॥

.. shrIpa.ncharatnam - varadarAjastavaH ..
.. shriPancharatnam - varadarAjastavaH ..

॥ श्रीपंचरत्म - वरदराजस्तव : ॥

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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.

VARADARAJA STOTRAM.

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 (हस्तिगिरि). 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 (एकाम्रेश्वर). 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 renounced as a मोक्षपुरी।
अयोध्या मथुरा माया काशी काशी अचूत्कार।
पुरी द्वारकाति चैव सहेता मोक्षदायिकः ॥

Kanchi was also a seat of higher learning in Sanskrit studies during the 4th and 5th centuries AD. So it was known as चट्टिका 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 नगरीषु काैती।- 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, (श्रीपंचचरत्नम् ।), the name of the poem. The letter श्री is used as an honorific prefix to deities (श्री कृष्ण), distinguished persons (श्री व्यास) and great literary works (श्री भगवद्गीता) to indicate their glory. स्तोः 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. Since the stotras are so potent they deserve the honorific prefix श्री Shri. 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.

श्रीदेवराजमिनशं निगमान्तवेयं यहेः धर्मं विधि-महेन्द्र-हितेति-रक्ष्यम्।
लोकायतं नुवित्वं सविधा-खातिगो भवेत्॥ १॥
निगमान्तवेयं = having Hastigiri as residence;
निगमान्तवेयं = One who can be known with the help of the upanishads, the end portion of the vedas;
यवेयं = One who is the Lord of sacrifices;
विधिमेहद्रहितेन-रक्ष्यम् = One who has the welfare of gods such as Brahma and Indra prominently in His mind;
नवास्मुहस्मात्तुष्मानन्तु- शोभमानम् = having a shining body resembling new water bearing cloud; श्रीदेवराजं
वरदम् = Shri Varadaraja also known as Shri Devaraja;
अनिशाम् = always; प्रपचे = 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.
COMMENTS: निगमान्त-वेदम् = 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.

श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद्व वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य प्राणः।
चक्षुषार्थं-रतिमुखं धीरा: प्रेत्यास्मात्मोकादमृता भवति ॥ २।।

One has necessarily to depend on the vedas to know about Him.

Shri Krishna says this clearly वेदंश्रवण-रहमेव
वेदं: वेदान्तकुः। BG(15-15). He says that He is to be known by all 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. यज्ञश्रमं = One who is the Lord of sacrifices This is said as यज्ञपति:, यज्ञानं पाता, स्वामी वा यज्ञपति:, अहं हि सर्वयज्ञानं भोक्ता प्रमुखं च। (गीता ९।२४) इति भगवद्वचनात। I am the Enjoyer, as also the Lord of all sacrifices. says BG(9-24). Also हुतभुक्त = समस्तदेवतोदेशे न प्रबुल्लिपिः कर्मसु हुतं भुक्तं इति हुतभुक्त। =

He is the One who accepts the oblations offered in sacrifices which may be meant for any deity. VS(871). देवराजं =
He is foremost among the celestials. He also rules over and protects them, including Indra. देवेशः- प्राघात्येन
देवानामीशो देवेशः। देवान बिभिन्ति देवभृतं शकः,
तस्यापि शासितेति देवभृतं। VS(492,493) ..

वरदः = अभिमतान्तरान्तरात्मीति, वरं गां दश्यिणां
ददृति यज्ञमानन्तरेणेति वा वरदः। “गौँ वरः” इति
॥ श्रीवरदराजः - चर्दराजस्वतः ॥

श्रुः। = giver of boons. Also means the one who, as the one who performs sacrifices, offers gifts. VS(330).

नवयान्त्रवाह-सुप्रभाततु-शोभमाणम् = having a shining body resesembling 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 (सत्त्वगृह) is really white- the colour of the moon as is said in the popular verse शुक्लसंवर्षरं विष्णु शशिवर्षं चतुर्जुनम्।

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.

युत्संवगमेन च भ्राज्ज्वालिवर्षणं एव
निष्कृष्टसत्त्वगृहमात्रविवर्तमूर्तिः।
प्रते कृपारथरं विष्णु शशिवर्षं चतुर्जुनम्।

Meaning: I surrender to that Shri Varada who resides in Hastigiri; पंके हासन-कृतामल-वाजियः इत्यादि = in the sacred Aswamedha yagna performed by Brahma; बैतानके हुतभुजि त्वरया॥विरासीत = अनि in the sacrificial fire; त्वरया = in a hurry - in order to bless the devotee; मन्दमिताथितिमुखेन चतुर्जुन = with a smiling face and biting the oblation offered in the sacrifice; आविरासीति = appeared; तं वरदम् = that Shri Varada; प्रपचं = I surrender.
Hastigiri and who appeared in haste with a smile and biting the sacrificial oblation in the sacred Aswamedha sacrifice performed by Brahma.

COMMENTS; मन्दिरमताधित्य-मुखेन वषां दशन।= with a smiling face and biting the oblation offered in the sacrifice; Here, दशन, literally means biting. It should not be taken in this sense. As a parallel we may cite the following popular verse -BG(9-26);

प्रेते पुष्पं फलं तोपं यो मे भतवा प्रयक्षति।
तद्हैं भतवुपहते अश्वामि प्रयत्नतमः।

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

चण्डांशु-शीतकिरणापित-नेत्रामुग्मि पद्रा-निवास-रमणीय-भुजात्तरं तम।
आजानुवाहे-मुररीकृत-ससतन्नु मातज-शौठ-सदनं बनदं प्रपचे।

मातज-शौठ-सदनं= The Lord who has His residence in Hastigiri;
चण्डांशु-शीतकिरणापित-नेत्रामुग्मि= who has the sun and the moon as His two eyes; पद्रा-निवास-रमणीय-भुजात्तरं= who has a chest made beautiful by Shri Laxmi Devi residing there; आजानु-बाह्रम= who has long arma that reach upto the knees; उररीकृत-ससतन्नु= who accepted the sacrifice offered by Brahma; तं बनदं त= Lord Varada; प्रपचे= 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; पद्रा-निवास-रमणीय-भुजात्तरं= who has
a chest made beautiful by Shri Laxmi Devi residing there; 
Sri Vedanta Desika puts this beautifully in his Sri stuti (1) 
as वैष्णवी मधुविजयिनो भूषयति स्वकान्त्या। 
= Shri Devi adorns the throne of the chest of Shri Vishnu by 
Her radiance.

रङ्गप्रकाशरचितं लस्वर्दराजपुण्ड्रे विश्राणमान्तकारिप्रियमित्रवर्यम्। 
शंखं च चक्रमभयाङ्गादे दधानं नागेन्द्रशैलसदनं वरदं प्रपंचे॥ ४॥

नागेन्द्र शैल-सदनम् = The Lord who has His residence in Hastigiri; 
अन्तक-रिपु-प्रिय-मित्रवर्यम् = who is very dear to Lord Shiva - 
the enemy of Yama; रङ्गप्रकाशरचितं लस्वर्दराजपुण्ड्रे विश्राणम् 
= who wears a mark made of precious diamonds on His forehead; शंखं 
चक्रं अभयाङ्ग-गदे च दधानम् = who is holding the conch, 
discus, the mudra that assures protection; वरदं = that Varada; 
प्रपंचे = 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 
भयकृत् = भयं कृति कृणातिति भयकृत्। VS(833). 
नन्दलम्बरे हलधरं दशकठकालं क्षत्र्त्रिपं बलगिरिपु नरसिंहवेषम्। 
कोलात्तम्कं कमठहुपघरं च मत्त्वं वेतन्दशैलसदनं वरदं प्रपंचे॥ ५॥

वेतन्द-शैल-सदनम् = The Lord who has His residence in 
Hastigiri; मत्त्वं, कमठ-रुप-घरं, कोलात्तम्कं, 
नरसिंह-वेषं, बलगिरिपु, क्षत्र्त्रिपं, 
दशकठ-कालं, हल-घरं, नन्दलत्तमम् = 
who incarnated as Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, 
Parasurama, Rama, Balarama and Krishna for the benefit of all; 
वरदं = that Varada; प्रपंचे = 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 अनेकमूर्ति: = अवतारेषु स्वेच्छया लोकानामुपकारिणीविविधमूर्तिभंजत इति अनेकमूर्तिः। (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. अन्तवान्तु फलं तेषा तद्वत्वतय्यमेधसाम्। देवान्देवयो यान्ति मद्रका यान्ति मामि। 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. 

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 entrancing beauty of Shri Varadaraja here in Kanchipuram, he indeed has no desire to go to even Vaikunta - the abode of the Lord.

निरस्तरं निर्विशेषत्तत्त्वदीयं  
अस्पष्टं चिन्तापदमभिमुख्यम् ।  
सत्यं श्रापे वारण शालनाथ ।
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 tattat..
॥ श्रीपंचरत्नम् - वरदराजस्वम् ॥