prAtahsmaraNam

ప్రతాహస్మరణం

Document Information

Text title: prAtahsmaranam
File name: prAtahsmaranam.itx
Category: suprabhata, misc
Location: doc_z_misc_misc
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Latest update: May 5, 2008
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September 17, 2023

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The Pratasmaranam consists of some verses that are to be recited in the morning soon after waking up from the bed. प्रात: = at dawn, and स्मरणः = remembering. They may be recited sitting in the bed itself before getting out of it. They are an aid to remembering many venerable people and auspicious things in the creation, and through them the Lord. There are many versions of this poem containing less number of verses or more. One well known version is that of Sri Sankaracharya and this consists of just four verses. These verses are highly significant as they contain thoughts about the godhead residing within us. These four can be easily memorised and are a pleasure to recite if one knows the meaning. The text of the verses is given below to help those who are interested in reciting them. Then each verse is given with its meaning. They are also followed by some comments.

॥ प्रातःस्मरणः ॥
कराघे वसते लक्ष्मीः करमध्ये सरस्वती।
कर्मूले तु गौरीः च प्रभाते करदशनम् ॥ १ ॥
समुदवसने देवी पर्वतस्तनमण्डले।
विश्वपदि नमस्तुम्य पादस्तरं श्रमस्व मे ॥ २ ॥
नमोदत्तु प्रियदत्ताय तुम्य देवि वसुधरे
लव माताः सर्वप्राकारां श्राव्यास्व श्रमस्व मे ॥ ३ ॥
ब्रह्मा मुरारिकृपारंगकारी भानुः शाशि भूमितुतो शुच्याः
गुरुश्च शुक: शनि-राहु-केतव: कुर्वंतु सर्वं मम सुप्रभातम् ॥ ४ ॥
सनत्रुमार: सनक: सनन्दन: सनातनो-द्यासुरि-पिभलो च।
सतस्वरा: सत रसातलानि कुर्वन्तु सर्वम मम सुप्रभातम् ॥ ५॥
ससारणवा: सत-कुटाकान्त्वात् ससारणो दीप-वनानि सत ।
भूरहिृक्तात् भुवनानि सत कुर्वन्तु सर्वम मम सुप्रभातम् ॥ ६॥
पृष्ठी सगन्धा सरसात्स्थाप: स्यर्था च वायुर्जर्तनं च तेजः ।
नमः सदावर्मद महता सहेव कुर्वन्तु सर्वम मम सुप्रभातम् ॥ ७॥
महेन्द्रो मलयः सहो देवतात्मा हिमालयः ।
ध्र्येयो चैवतको विन्यो गिरिशाराविलिस्तथा ॥ ८॥
गाङ्रा सिन्धुश्च कावेरी यमुना च सरस्वती ।
रेवा महानदी गोदा ब्रह्मपुरा पुनातु मम् ॥ ९॥
अयोध्या महुरा माया काशी काशी अवन्तिका ।
पुरी द्रारावती चैव सतेता मोक्षदायिका: ॥ १०॥
प्रयागा पाटलीपुत्रं विजयानगरं चैव ।
इन्द्रप्रस्थः गया चैव प्रत्येकः प्रायः स्मरतः ॥ ११॥
अरुणाखलनुपुरा च सावित्री जानकी सती ।
तेजस्विनीभी च पापधारी वन्दनीया निरंतरः ॥ १२॥
बेन्यो पृथुं हेमयमजुन्यं च ।
शाकुलेयं हैहयमजुनं च ।
रामं च यो वै समरतं प्रभाते ।
तस्यार्थातः विजयश्रेयस्तु हस्तः ॥ १३॥
दध्यवं मनुभुर्गर्सो हरिपूर्वन्तः
भृष्मार्जनं-श्रुवं-वशिष्ठं-शुकाद्यवः ।
प्रहाद–नारद–भगीरथ–विश्वकर्म–
वात्मीक्योऽन्तः चरित्रस्तुभुभामिथानाः: ॥ १४॥
अश्वत्थमाया चरित्रान्तः हनुमांश्च विभीषणः ।
कृप: परशुरामश्च सतेते चर्जीविन: ॥ १५॥
सतेतान् संसर्गश्चित्वं मार्कण्डेयमथापम् ।
जीवेत वर्षशास्त्याविस्मत्युविवर्जितः: ॥ १६॥
पुण्यश्रेष्ठो नलो राजा पुण्यश्रेष्ठो युधिष्ठिरः: ॥
पुणयश्चोको विदेहश्च पुणयश्चोको जनार्दनः ॥ १७॥
॥ फलशुरुः ॥
इत्यः प्रभाते परमं पवित्रं
पठेत ् स्मरे ् ् द्रुणयाच तदन ।
दुःखप्रभातात्मव सुप्रभाते
भवेत् नित्यं भगवद्ययादात् ॥ १८॥

INTRODUCTION:– The following abbreviations are used in the notes.
1- VS - Sri Vishnu Sahasranama with Sri Sankaracharya’s commentary.
2 - SS - Sri Siva Sahasranama (from Padma Purana) known as Vedasara Sahasram with the commentary of HH Sri Paramasivendra Saraswathi.
3 - LS - Sri Lalita Sahasranamam with the commentary of Sri Bhaskararaya.
4 - BG - Srimad Bhagavadgita with Sri Sankaracharya’s commentary.
5 - BH - Srimad Bhagavatam.
6 - MU - Mundakapanishad

The Pratasmaranam is a stotram स्तोत्रम or hymn. A stotram is defined as गुण सङ्कीर्तनम् । (VS) or stating the attributes. The Pratasmaranam may be taken as extolling the glory विभूतिः of the Lord. The glory that is extolled is His omnipresence: that He is every where and as every thing. The Upanishad says this clearly: that whatever is seen or heard of in this universe is permeated by the Lord, in and out.

More on this subject is discussed later on in this article. THE MORNING TIME:– The morning time, just before the sun rise and the evening time just before the sunset are recommended for prayer because the mind is calm and fresh at these times. So, they are ideal for prayer and meditation. The practice of meditating and praying at these times have been in vogue since time immemorial. The vedas say that one should meditate on the Sun as the Supreme Being at both these times. Doing so, one will be blessed with all good things in life and attain liberation.
Our scriptures also say that one should use this time only for meditating on the Lord and add that one who does not, but sleeps at this time, that sleep eats into his stock of punyam (result of doing good deeds).

In addition to losing punyam the person incurs sin. This is said by Bharata in Ramayana. He states that he who had any part in making Rama abdicate the kingdom and go to the forests should incur the sin of a person who sleeps at either of the junctions (of the day and night). Valmiki Ramayana (2-75-44).

Later on, when Bharata met Rama at Chitrakoot, Rama enquired about the welfare of his father and others. He then gave instructions in judicature. One of the questions he put to Bharata was I hope you do not fall a prey to excess of sleep and wake up early in the morning.

The junction of the day and night, (i.e) the time of sun rise and the sun set (the twilight hour) is known as सन्या (sandhya). There are two sandhyas; the morning one and the evening one. They are known as the the प्रातः सन्या and the सायं सन्या. We have to dedicate the sandhya time for prayers only and not for any other activity like eating and, much less for sleeping.

One should wake up before sunrise and think of his own welfare. He should salute his guru, Lord Vishnu, mother and father. We may recall that Rama and LakShmana accompanied the sage Viswamitra to the forests and rested for the night on the bank of the Sarayu river. Just when the day was about to break, the sage woke them up saying that the twilight
This verse is from Ramayana (1-23-2) and is very popular. It is recited as part of the Suprabhatam. We learn that Sri Krishna too used to get up very early in the morning and meditate on the Supreme Being. Then, He had bath and performed sandhya vandanam. He silently chanted the Gayatri mantra. BH(10-70-4,6).

These facts establish the importance of praying at the sandhya times. Why should we recite such verses as the first thing in the morning instead of going about our routine morning ablution? If we study our life we will find that it was not all smooth, but it had some stretches of happiness and also of sorrow. What is happiness and gives us joy and what is sorrow and causes pain and grief depends on time, place and circumstances. Thus there is no uniform definition of joy and sorrow. But our aim is to avoid sorrow in any form as much as possible and have happiness and happiness only. The question is whether such a condition is possible? It seems to be a dream like situation. Though the condition appears to be fanciful and impractical to achieve, our scriptures assert that such a life which is full of pure, unalloyed joy is achievable. The way to achieve to attain such a life is through devotion or bhakti. Sorrow is the result of the doing (prohibited) sinful actions and failing to do prescribed duties we have committed in this and earlier human births. Sage Yagnavalkya says this:

The big bundle of sins we
have accumulated in so many births is to be expended by experiences in the form of sorrow and pain by us. Sorrow afflicts the mind and pain affects the body. Since the stock of sins is huge, this one birth may not suffice to work it out. So one has to go through painful experiences in this birth and in addition, one may have to be born again and again many times to clear off the debt. The way out of this dreadful situation is to resort to bhakti. In the introduction to Shri Vishnuhasanasranamam the king Yudhishtira asks Bhishma the easiest way for one to get rid of sorrows and attain happiness. Bhishma replies that the way is to chant the glories of the Lord.

So, the Lord has the names पुण्यः - स्मृतिमात्रेण कल्पणाणि क्षयतीति पुण्यः । VS(687). He removes the sins of those who just think of Him. and हिरः - स्मृतिमात्रेण पुंसां पापं संसारं वा हरतीति हिरः । VS(359) and SS(542). पापनाशकरः - लोकाध्यक्षं स्तुवसिन्ति ते सर्वदा खादिरो भवेत ्। तथा पञ्चक्षरादिभिर्मित्रसः पूजित्व उमासहायतवादिरूपेण स्मृतस्तो ध्यानेन वा पापनाशकरः । SS(355). He destroys the sins of those who repeat His holy names or chant hymns or chant mantras such as the panchakShara.

As children, we were taught to worship God in pictures and idols in the home and in temples. This is necessary to get the mind fixed on the Lord. This form of worship is relevant to the beginners and also all through the life and is very important. One cannot view this as mere idol worship. In addition, we also listened to stories from puranas. We were told that God created the world. He first created Brahma who then created the world. He resides in places like Vaikunta and Kailas; but will come to rescue His devotees as He did in the case of Prahlada and Gajendrala. Listening to such stories made us know more about God and His qualities. In this way listening draws our minds to Him and
sows the seeds of bhakti or devotion. It is said that bhakti wells up in the heart of one who listens to the exposition of sacred texts like Bhagavatam. Such devotion dispels grief and fear. 

Please note the usage of the word स्वकृतिरूपायः meaning that devotion springs up in the hearts of people. This implies that devotion sprouts up in the hearts even where the seeds are absent earlier. Such is the glory of listening to the holy texts. Because of this fact chanting and listening to the glories of the Lord is highly recommended. The many hymns available to us are of great help to us in this matter. They elaborately describe the glorious attributes of the Lord. Since one has his own duties to perform throughout the day our tradition has introduced the practice of prayers at different times of the day, like the Pratashmaranam right from the time one wakes up in the morning till one retires to bed. This helps us to keep remembering the Lord. Our minds will not stray away from Him and so will remain pure and calm. Just as we take food at regular intervals to remain healthy and ward of pangs of hunger, similarly by indulging in small doses of bhakti at regular intervals in between our activities we can mitigate the adverse effects of past karma. This will cushion our journey through life.

GOD’S NATURE:- If we want to think more of God we would like to know more of His form and nature. The question, then, is what is His form and nature? Is His nature the ones stated above, namely those available in the idols and pictures and available in Vaikunta and Kailasa? The answer to this is discussed in detail in chapters 7 to 11 of Bhagavat Gita. God has two aspects. In His higher nature He is without form or any other attributes. He is therefore known as निर्गुणः। VS(840).

ISHVARA:- In His other aspect He is known as Ishvara and is accompanied by His power of maya. As Ishwara He is the cause of the universe. This is
the topic of discussion in this article. The universe which is the effect or product is born or made of Him - the cause. It is like saying the ornaments are made of gold - the cause. One may say that that to make the ornaments out of gold we require two causes - a goldsmith to fashion the ornaments. Thus we have the gold - the material cause and the goldsmith - the intelligent cause (the one who provides the expertise necessary to make the ornament using the gold). But in the case of the universe God is both the material and the efficient cause. He is known as कारणम् - उपादान निर्मित्तं च कारणम्। VS(379). He does not need the help of any external agency in this process. We have the example of the humble spider which is able to spin the thread from its mouth and withdraw it back into itself without any external help.

We may ask one question here. When we say that an ornament, say bangle, is made of gold - the cause, what is bangle? Is it something different from the gold? The answer is No. We can say that gold is bangle. This is because of the fact that what we call bangle is only the name given to a particular form of gold. If we take the gold away from the bangle by melting it, we will be left with gold and no bangle. Such a thing that seems to exist, but does not indeed exist separately is called मिथ्या or unreal. We have the familiar example of the mirage. In these मिथ्या cases we should note that gold only is seen as bangle and sand as water. Vedanta texts give the example of one seeing a snake in a rope and getting frightened at the snake. Thus the mithya objects can produce effects: but they do not exist. Things like the rope or gold that support the appearance of mithya objects like the snake and ornaments are known as अधिष्ठानम्। or substratum. For this reason, God, who is the substratum of the mithya universe has the name अधिष्ठानम् - अधिष्ठानम् भूतानि उपाधानकारणत्वेन ब्रह्मति अधिष्ठानम्,

मत्त्वानि सर्वेमूलानि (गीता ९-४) इति भगवत्वचनात्। VS(324). This is said more explicitly by the name मिथ्यजगदपिष्ठान - मिथ्यारूपस्य जगतोधिष्ठान
She (Lalitha) is the support of the unreal world, like the shell of silver. A shell shines like silver in the sun light and one may indeed mistake it for silver. Thus the real shell supports the appearance of the unreal silver. We said that God is the cause of the universe. This means that God is only seen as the universe, just as gold is seen as bangle. Thus the Lord has the name:- विश्वम्
कार्यरूप जगतः कारणत्वेन विश्वं इत्युच्यते बहम ।

He being the cause is seen as the product universe. VS(1).

The ornaments are many and different, but the gold is one and the same. Gold permeates the ornaments and gives them substance. So also, the whole world made up of numerous objects is permeated by the Lord. He gives them substance Every object is in Him but He is not in them. This is because the objects are only mithya and have no existence apart from the cause - the Lord Krishna says this clearly. BG(9-4).

मया तत्तमिदं सबं जग-द्व्यतं-मूलिना ।
मत्स्थानिसर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्यवस्थितः ॥

The fact that the universe is the form of God implies that all objects or products with names and forms, from Brahma the creator to an insignificant insect, are all His forms only. This is expressed in His name विश्वरूपी - विश्वानि सर्वाणि चेतनाचेतननात्मकानि रूपाणि अस्य सन्तीति विश्वरूपी He has the forms of all the animate and inanimate objects in the universe. SS(75). Arjuna, with the grace of Krishna, sees this form. The description of this form and Arjuna’s reaction to this is described in BG-Ch11. But as is the case with the rope snake, the objects in the world make us believe they are real. We see the cause and the product as separate things. We are beguiled by the forms of the ornaments to such an extent that we overlook the content - gold. In like fashion, we are so thoroughly lost in the world of names and forms that we miss the Lord who is really the substance behind them. This makes us see multiplicity. We see individuals as separate entities and as different
from us. From this arises a variety of emotions such as, likes, dislikes, jealousy, hatred etc. These feelings affect us. We express love for some, dislike for some and so on. We love some items - like wealth, very much because we feel they have some special qualities in them and work very hard to get them. We love our family more than other's family. These actions lead to conflict and strife. The result is sorrow.

BENEFITS OF THE NEW UNDERSTANDING: But when we are understand that what all we see is His forms only our outlook changes totally. We do not notice differences among them, but see only the substance God. We cannot hate any thing because every thing is divine. We can have only love for all beings. Further, love takes a special meaning and is replaced by devotion. This idea is impressed in our minds even as we are young by teaching us to respect our mother, father, acharya and the elders who may visit our house as God. The Taittariyopanishad (1-11) instructs us in this matter. 

We asked to worship our text books as Sarasvathi, the Goddess of learning. Every thing in the creation, be it animate or inanimate becomes an object of worship, since it is His form only. Thus we have the custom of worshipping trees, rivers, cows, etc., since we see divinity in them.

The great devotee Prahlada had this vision. He said that because the Lord is everywhere and in the form of every thing it becomes very easy to worship Him. BH(7-6-27).

The seers of ancient India had this wonderful vision. The famous vedic hymn Sri Rudram salutes the Supreme Being as Lord Rudra not by names as in a Sahasranama but as being resident in various objects and beings. It salutes Rudra as being dogs, the lowly outcastes, the cheat, the robber, the trees, the sand dunes and so on. Thus there can be nothing bad in the creation but the Lord only and so they all deserve
our respect. Saint Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had such a vision. When some prostitutes were introduced into the room to test his character, he rose and prostrated to them as he saw them as the images of Devi only.

Since everything is divine, we cannot destroy or pollute the environment because it will amount to showing disrespect to the Lord. Naturally, this is a very high stage in spiritual progress. Rarely one will find people who have got such a vision. However we have to understand this fact clearly, take it seriously and try to develop such a vision. But if we fail to do so and confine our worship of God to images and pictures in our houses and temples, we will stagnate. Lord, in His incarnation as Kapila, says this. BH(3-30-21 to 27).

Some select verses are given below.

अहं सर्वेणु भूतेषु भूतात्माविशिष्टाः सदा ।
तमवधाय मो मल्ल्यं दुरुलोकपीडितमनम् ॥ २१॥

यो भास्कर्यं भूतेषु सन्ततिमात्मानिधरम ।
हििवाच्च भजते मौद्याद्रस्मनेव जुहोिती सः ॥ २२।

The Lord says that He resides in all beings as their inner soul. Disregarding this fact, people make a show of worshipping Me through images. If one disregards My presence in all, but ignorantly offers worship only to images, such worship is wasteful as the sacrificial offerings poured into ashes. The worship of God in pictures and images is important. It should continue as this is the stepping stone to higher forms of worship. But we should not forget the fact that God is present not only in images but also as all things.

When we understanding the fact that God is in every thing and every where, we find that we can never be alone at any time, but are always surrounded by Him. Krishna makes this very clear. BG(6-30).

यो मां पशव्याति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मूष्य पशव्याति ।
तस्याऽऽ न प्रणाशयामि स च मे न प्रणाशयति ॥

A bird flying in the air is surrounded by air in all directions. Similarly we are surrounded by the Lord who is all pervading. He is before,
behind, to the right, to the left, below and above - manifests Himself in all forms.

Because of this reason, we have His company at all times and so we should feel immensely secure.

Though we hear that every thing in the creation is divine, but because our minds are not pure, but are coloured with likes and dislikes we feel some things are pure and holy and some are dirty or lowly. So we are not able to see Him in such objects. We want a way out of this awkward situation. Arjuna too, who had love towards some and hatred for some, had the same problem and puts the question to Krishna. He asked Him in which forms He can be meditated upon or worshipped. BG(10-17).

Krishna understands Arjuna's predicament and gives a list of items in which He may be worshipped or meditated upon. But He makes a significant observation. He says that the list is not exhaustive but whatever there is that has some special glory or strength etc., is part of His manifestation only. BG(11-41).

Uddhava, the friend of Krishna, puts the same question to Krishna and Krishna gives a list of items (BH 11- Chapter 16) in which He may be meditated upon. He concludes with a similar statement saying Wherever there is power, beauty, fame, prosperity, modesty, sacrifice, agreeableness, luck, strength, fortitude or knowledge, there am I manifested. BH(11-16-40).
From this we understand that any special quality or glory, like beauty, strength, talent etc., we observe anywhere or in any one, really belongs to God only. Because of this reason, whenever we think of an item or person with some special quality or greatness we should realise that we are thinking of a repository of His glory only. The hymn Pratasmaramanam mentions a list of such items that have some special glory. These includes a wide assortment including rivers, mountains, kings, sages etc. The greatness we observe in them really belongs to Him only and so we marvel at His glory and feel humble. Therefore by the remembrance of these items we learn to remember the Lord as being inherent in every thing. We can no more ask as to how to see God, because we are seeing Him all the time. It is said that once some one told Bhagavan Ramana Maharsh that he wants to see God and requested Bhagavan to help him. Bhagavan said that he cannot help the visitor in this task since what he is seeing is God only.

Accepting these facts takes us one step higher than worshipping Him in idols and images. With this kind of thinking permeating our mind, we can go out and face our day with confidence. It can only be auspicious. A popular verse says this and asks how can one who has made his heart as the abode of the Lord face failure?

लाभं जयं कुतं पराभवः।
येषां भगवान् मलायतनं हिरः॥

Let us now proceed to the stotram proper. The translations given are not exact, but will help to understand the meaning of the verses. Some comments are also provided. The comments are confined to some items only since many of the names and items mentioned in the stotra will be familiar to all.

Meaning: Laksmi (the goddess of wealth) resides in the upper part of hands, Sarasvati (the goddess of learning) resides in the middle,
and Gauri (the goddess of valour) in the lower part. Therefore, every morning one should respectfully have a look at one’s hands.

Notes: We have five organs of action - पद्ध कर्मन्द्रियाणि।
These are speech, the hands, the legs, the anus and the genitals. वाकः-पाणि-पादः-पायुपथानीति पद्ध कर्मन्द्रियाणि।
(Tattva Bodah). The organs are not the physical ones but the power behind them. Thus one may have his leg in tact, but may be unable to move it about because of some disease and the power is gone. This power resident in the organ is derived from the Lord only. This is said in the scriptures.

श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद्वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्रणस्य प्राणः।
चक्षुपश्चकुः रतिमुच्च्य धीरा: प्रेत्यास्मात्यकोकृतमृता भवन्ति॥ Kenopanishat (1-2).

The devotee Dhruva said this in praise of the Lord. BH(4-9-6).

योस्तः प्रविष्टः मम वाचमिमा प्रसुसः
स्नीववत्यविनिःशक्तिः स्वधाम्बा।
अन्यंश्च हस्तः-चरणः-अवणः-त्वगादीनः
प्रणान् नमो भगवते पुरुषाय तुभ्यम्॥

He salutes the Lord saying that He had entered into him through His intelligent power and roused his dormant power of speech. Being the Lord of all powers, He had also kindled to activity also all his other organs. Though He is the Lord of all powers, He weilds it through various deities. This is like saying that the President is the head of the country, but he exercises the power through many officers. It is so with the powers resident in the organs of the body. The power in an organ is called the presiding deity or अधिभाता देवता। Each of the organs has its own presiding deity. Even though all these organs are all equally important for leading an active and happy life, the hands are considered more equal than the other organs. They are needed for performing the obligatory duties known as the five great yagnas पद्ध महा यज्ञानि। They include worship of God, the manes, the rishis, the guests and the animals and plants. Because of this reason, the deity
presiding over the hands is Indra. Indra in this case means the Supreme Being. तत्समादिदन्त्रो नामेदन्त्रो है नाम तत्समादिदन्त्र सन्तामिन्द्र इत्याचक्षते परोक्षण | (Aitareyopanishad 1-14). He is the One who sees all. He helps us to use the hands and do the enjoined duties. He is on the other side accepting them and blesses us with the fruits of these actions. Thus, by discharging our duties we can achieve all the goals of life known as पुरुषायोः | So, the vedic hymn Sri Rudram says the hands are greatly blessed, in fact more blessed than the other organs. The reason is simple. It has the fortune to come into contact with the auspicious body of the Lord (in the form of idols) during His worship. He is called the universal physician. By worshipping Him one may get rid of his sorrows and achieve all the goals of life including the most prized one - salvation (mokSha) itself.

अयं मे हरस्ते भगवान्, अयं मे भववत्तरः। अयं मे विश्वभेषजोद्यं शिवाभिमर्शनः॥

The benefits one may get from the worship of the Lord include knowledge, wealth, stamina etc. These are very essential for living happily and to do our duties, both secular and religious. These are got by the blessings of the Goddesses LakShmi, Sarasvathi and Gauri - who are all the Lord's manifestations only. So all the Devis also said to reside in the hands. Thus, by looking at the hands we get to remember the Lord; and this in turn is equivalent to looking at the three Devis. Here too, we should remember that the Devis are one only. Thus we find the the names LakShmi, Sarasvathi and Gauri in the 1008 names of LakShmi.

समुद्रवसने देवी पर्वतस्तनमण्डले।
विष्णुपि नमस्तुभ्यं पाद्य्यश्च क्षमस्व मे॥ २॥

Meaning:- O Devi! You are wearing the ocean as a clothing on your body. The mountains are your breasts! O Consort of Visnu! I salute you and beg your pardon for having to set foot on your body for my routine activities.

Notes: - This verse is addressed to the goddess of earth, called Bhu Devi. She sustains all life on this earth and is verily the mother of
all living beings, including the plants and animals. Like the saree worn by a lady, the oceans cover most of the Goddess Earth. Like the milk flowing from the breasts of a mother provides nourishment to her child, the waters flowing down the mountains provide nourishment to the land and the people. Her glory is sung by the vedic hymn भू सूक्तम् and by many poets. Acharya Vedanta Desika’s poem Bhurstuti is very popular. In one of the verses he says that the Bhu Devi is very close to the Lord. This is evident from the fact that when we start reciting the Gayatri mantra the word भूः which represents Bhu Devi immediately follows ॐ which represents the Lord. तव व्याहिति: प्रथमव: प्रणव: प्रियस्वे संवेदत्यसिदम् नन्दं गणास्तमेव।

In fact the Lord Himself is in the form of the earth. भूः। VS(437, 942) and मेदिनीरूपी - मेदिनी पुर्वमेव रूप्यम् अस्य अस्त्तीति मेदिनीरूपी। "यो वै रूपस्य भगवानम् या च भूस्तस्य नमो नमः। इति श्रुति:।"

SS(360). So, it is natural that we should hesitate to put our feet on Her. But we cannot avoid doing so also. So we request Her to pardon our act. She being the embodiment of forbearance will, we may be sure, tolerate and allow it. The following verse is also in praise of Bhu Devi. नमोस्तु प्रियस्वे तुथ्यं देवि वसुः।

वल्लोकानां पादन्या भस्मद्वारे। भूः।

तव माता स्वर्गोद्वारा। भस्मद्वारे।

Meaning:– O Devi! I salute you and beg your pardon for having to set foot on your body for my routine activities. You are the giver of all that is dear to us. You are the mother and repository of all wealth.

Notes:– Earth is called the mother as She bears all like a fond mother bearing her child in her lap. In addition She sustains all living beings by giving food items in many forms like grains, fruits etc., besides water in abundance. These are most needed by all and so dear to us. वसुः = wealth, riches. The mother who gave birth to us may not be with us till our end and look after us, but may leave us any day before it. But the mother Earth bears and sustains us all through our life. Further, we may, without being aware of Her greatness, treat Her lightly. She bears all
the abuses patiently and so is the very embodiment of patience. Narada

describes Rama as the counterpart of Mother Earth in forbearance. 

Ramayana (1-1-18). The question is, how the earth

which itself is suspended in space is able to bear all beings and also

make plants grow? The Lord says that it is He who is behind the earth

and provides the necessary support. BG((15-13).

Meaning: Brahma (the Creator), Murari (Visnu), Tripurantakari (Siva, 

the slayer of Tripuras), the nine planets, Sun, the Moon, Mars the son 

of Bhumi, Budha (Mercury), Brihaspati (Jupiter), Sukra (Venus), Sani 

(Saturn), Rahu and Ketu; may all these make the morning auspicious for me.

Notes:- It was pointed out earlier that every thing in the universe that 

has a name or form is His manifestation only. Because of this reason, 

He is known as बहुरूपः - ब्रह्मादि स्थावरान्त्तकारेण बहुरूपः:। 

SS(393). Every object right from Brahma - the creator to a plant is His 

form only. The Kaivalyopanishad says that He is Brahma, Shiva, Indra, 

the immovable, the supreme, the Self luminous. He is Vishnu, Prana, 

the Time, the Fire and the Moon.

The famous hymn Siva Mahimna Stotram (26) says that those people who 

consider themselves to be wise hold the opinion that the Lord is the 

Sun, the Moon, the Fire, the Air, the Water, the Space, the Earth and 

the Self. But all these opinions are only limiting the Lord. The poet 

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The names mentioned here may be found in the list of names of the Lord. For example, one of His names is ब्रह्मा - ब्रह्मात्मना सर्वं सृजतीति ब्रह्म VS(663). He creates everything as Brahma. He is पुरुः - सुरशऽूणां पुराणां दारणात् पुरुः VS(335) SS(45). He destroyed the three cities of the asuras. and so on.

Meaning:—Sanatkumara, Sanaka, Sanadana and Sanatana (whom Brahma, the creator, begot by wish); Rsi Asuri (a disciple of Rsi Kapila, the founder of the Samkhya system of philosophy), Rsi Pingala (the author of Hindu Prosody); the Seven Svaras (tones) (i.e. Shadja, Rsabha, Gandhara, Madhyam, Panchama, Dhaivata and Nisada); and the seven nether-worlds (Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Talatala, Rasatala, Mahatala and Patala) —may all these make the morning auspicious for me!

Notes:—The four sages Sanatkumara etc., are said to be born of the mind of Brahma in the very beginning of creation. They were not interested in taking to the life of a householder. So, they took to a life of renunciation. They were great devotees and jnanis. They, being the first born, are senior to all, but they remain ever youthful. They move around the worlds unhindered teaching people about devotion and wisdom. Being great devotees they keep uttering the name of the Lord. हरि: शारणेवं हि नित्यं तेषां मुखे वचः।

(Sri Bhagavata mahatmyam.(2-48). We know that sage Narada was the guru of great devotees like Prahlada, Dhruva and sages like Vyasa and Valmiki. But, it seems, that the great Narada himself felt unhappy and missing a feeling of fulfilment. He approached Sanatkumara who taught him the famous Bhuma Vidya. It is said Sanatkumara is the incarnation of Lord Skanda. तैं स्कन्ददेव इत्याचक्ष्ये तैं स्कन्दा।
The story appears in the Chandogyopanishat. Such is the greatness of the four sages. Krishna says that these four sages are His manifestations only. BG(10-6)

Meaning:— The seven oceans (Lavanabdhi, Iksu, Suravarpa, Ajay, Dadhi, Ksira and Sva-d-jala); the seven mountains (Mahendra, Malaya, Sahydrī, Suktiman, Rkasavan, Vindhyā and Pariyatra): the seven Sris (Kasyapa, Atri, Bharadvaja, Visvamitra, Gautama, Jamadagni and Vasishta): the seven dvipas (Continents) (i.e. Jambu, Plaksa, Salmala, Kusa, Kroncha, Saka and Puskara): the seven vanas (forests) (i.e. Dandakaranya, Khandaranya, Champakaranya, Vedaranya, Naimisaranya, Brahmaranys and Dharmacaranya); and the seven bhuvanas (heavens) (i.e.) Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah, Mahah, Janah, Traph and Satyam)—may all these make the morning auspicious for me!

Notes:— Rishi is one who has these seven qualifications. (1) long life (2) should have divined mantras (3) power of lordship (4) divine vision (5) senior by personal qualities, wisdom and age (6) who conduct himself strictly according to dharmic ways and thus sets an example to others and (7) who founded a gotra. Vayupurana (61-93,94).

The rishis whose names are said here are known to us. Atri was the son of Brahma, the creator and is as great as Brahma Himself. Soma, the Moon (mentioned in an earlier verse) was born to him. He was the embodiment of nectar. Brahma appointed him as the chief of brahmins, herbs, plants and of the stars. This verse mentions the higher worlds (above our world). The world we reside in is the Bhu loka (भूः). The previous verse mentioned the seven nether worlds (below ourworld). One reaches
these worlds as a result of his deeds. By doing more of good than evil acts one earns more merit or punyam and goes to the higher worlds. Similarly by indulging in prohibited acts, one earns papam and goes to the nether regions. BG(15-18).

Meaning:- The Earth with its quality of smell, Water with its quality of taste, Air with its quality of touch, Fire with its quality of teja (glow), Akasa (space) with its quality of sabda (sound)— may all these elements along with the element of Buddhi (intellect) make my morning auspicious for me!

Notes:- The five elements are the constituents of the universe and the beings that inhabit them. They are the manifestations of the Lord only. He has the name पद्मभूतात्मा - पद्मभूताकानिभूतानि आकाशादीनि आत्मस्वरूपे यस्य स पद्मभूतात्मा " तत्त्वस्वदा तदेवासुप्रविष्टात। तदनुप्रविष्टात। तदुप्रविष्टात। सचत्ववा भवते। इति श्रुते। I SS(352).

Meaning:- Mahendra (in Orissa), Malaya (in Mysore) Sahyadri (Western Ghats), Himalaya (the soul of numerous gods—in Northern India), the adorable Raivataka (Giranara—in Kathiawad), Vindhyachala (from Gujarat to Bihar) and Aravali (in Rajasthan)— all these mountains are to be remembered with veneration. Notes:- The mountains are great as they are the birthplace of many rivers. They also have many holy places located in them. Great rivers like the Ganga, Sindhu are born in the Himalaya mountain. Holy places like Amarnath, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Rishikesh and mount Kailas—the abode of Lord Siva, are located in the Himalaya mountain. So it very holy and is देवतात्मा. Kalidasa
uses the term in the opening verse in his classic Kumarasambhava to describe the Himalaya. He describes the glory of the Himalaya in several verses that follow the opening verse. Similarly the Vindhyachala is reputed to be the abode of Devi Lalitha. She has the name - . The mountains are also the abode of many sages who perform penance there.

Meaning: Ganga, Sindhu, Kaveri, Yamuna, Sarasvati, Reva (Narmada) Mahanadi, Godavari, and Brahmmaputra—may all these rivers consecrate me.

Note: The sacredness of these rivers are well known. So we think of them before taking our daily bath. It is said that thinking of them is enough to wash our sins. We invite their presence during pujas also. We recite the following verse and pray to them to be present in the water to be used in the puja.

Meaning:— Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya (Haridwar), Kasi, Kanchi, Avantika (Ujjain), and Dwarka Puri all these seven puries (cities) bestow moksa (emancipation) on human beings. Note:— These cities are holy since they are associated with the Lord. Rama was born in Ayodhya and later He ruled over it. Mathura is linked with Krishna. It is said that the Lord is ever present there.

Meaning:— Prayaga, Pataliputra (Patna), Vijayanagara (Hampi-south) Jagannathapuri, Indraprastha (Delhi) and Gaya — all these holy places are to be remembered everyday in the morning.
अरुङ्गल्भत्त्वनुसूया च सावित्री जानकी सती।
तेजरिवीनीः च पान्जांवि वन्दनीया निरन्तरम् ॥ ११ ॥

Meaning:- Arundhati (wife of Vasistha), Anusuya (wife of Rsi Atri), Savitri (wife of Satyvan), Janaki (Sita ji), Sati (daughter of Daksa, wife of Siva), and the noble - spirited Panchali (Draupadi) — all these great women deserve our reverence for ever.

वैपृथुं हैहयमजुनं च शाकुलेयं भरतं नलं च।
रामं च यो वै स्मरति प्रभाते तस्यार्थव्यति विजयवश्य हस्ते ॥ १२ ॥

Meaning:- He who remembers Prthu (Son of King Vena), Arjuna of Haihaya dynasty (known as Kartavirya), Bharata (son of Sakuntala), Raja Nala, and the ideal king Sri Rama the morning acquires affluence and always comes out successful in his endeavours. Note:- King Prutu was the son of king Vena - a descendant of the the great devotee Druva (mentioned in the next verse). Prutu was an part incarnation of Lord Hari. 

विष्णू: भगवतः कला। BH(4-15-3) He got the name because soon after his birth sages foretold that he will be the foremost among rulers and will be very famous. BH(4-15-5). The earth got the name Prithvi from him.

अयं तु प्रतमो राजाः पुमानू प्रकृतिया यक्षः।
पृथु-नाम महाराजो भविष्यति पुनःवशः। ॥

Arjuna, also known as Kartavirya was the king of Hehaya. He worshipped Lord Dattatreya and became very powerful and invincible. He acquired immense wealth and supernatural powers etc. He could defeat Ravana and became very proud. He was killed by Parasurama. His story is mentioned in BH(9-15-17 and 18).

हैहयानामधियति-रजुनः क्षेत्रसिंहः।
दर्तं नारायणस्यांसमाराघ्य परिपूर्णम्। ॥

बाहुन्मदशाघातं तण्डे दुर्धर्षत्वमराघातिषु।
अव्याहतेन्द्रियोऽश्री-तेजो-वीर्य-वशो-वधुम्। ॥

दश्यद्रु मनुरुहस्रो हरिपूर्ववंड्रो
भीमार्जुन-श्रुव-विश्रय-शुकाद्यथ।
प्रहाद-नारद-भगीरथ-विश्वकर्मः।
Meaning:- Rsi Dadhichi, Manu, Bhrigu, the truthful King Harischandra, the iron-willed Bhisma, Arjuna (the wielder of the famous bow Gandiva), Bhakta Dhruva, Rsi Vasistha, Sukadeva (son of Vyasa), Bhakta Prahlada, Muni Narada, Bhagiratha (one who brought the Ganga from the Heaven to the Earth), Visvakarma (the first architect), Valmiki (the first poet)—all these sacred names are worth remembering for ever.

Meaning:- Asvatthama (son of Drona), Raja Bali, Vyasa (the first spiritual preceptor), Hanuman (a devotee of Rama), Vibhisana (a favourite of Rama) Kṛpacharya and Parasurama—all these seven are immortal beings. He who remembers them everyday along-with Markandeya (a devotee of Siva) will live for a hundred years. He will never meet with an untimely death.

Meaning:- Raja Nala, the truthful Yudhisthira, Janaka the king of Videha, and Janardana (i.e.) Lord Krishna—the very utterance of these names sanctifies the tongue.

Notes:- In this and the preceeding verses the names of several great seers and kings are mentined. Some of them, like king Nala, Harischandra and Rama had gone through severe ordeals. But they did not get despondent and swerve from the path of righteousness. For example, when Rama was told that he would not be made the king but will have to go to the forest his countenance did not show any change, nor was he upset.
Ramayana. (2-19-23). These men were great, because they did not act according to their own likes and dislikes. But they did what they thought was proper. Such an act may produce results that are not pleasant but they were willing to accept it as God’s gift. What is proper and not is given in the shastras. What the shastras say is dharma. The shastras are given out by the Lord. The Lord’s words are supreme and are to be followed implicitly without consideration of the results. The Lord had said the above clearly. BG(2-47).

These great men were confident that dharma will protect them and were convinced that one should not stray from the path of dharma under any circumstance. They surrendered to the God’s will as expressed in the shastras. It is said in Mahabharata that dharma is eternal and so one should never give that up. On the other hand, joy and sorrow are not lasting. So, one should not give up dharma under any circumstance: from desire, fear, greed or even for the sake of one’s life.

Such people, Krishna says are wise (jnanis) and are qualified to attain immortality (mokSha) BG(2-15).

The kings are known as rajarshis or royal sages. Thus, Valmiki calls king Dasaratha as महिषकरो राजिषः (1-6-20) rajarshi, as great as a maharshi. So, showing respect to such persons is equivalent to showing respect to God. Even uttering their names is as good as uttering the names of God and so is purifying as was seen earlier. Because of this reason, we will see that our puranas give in some places a long list of
names of kings who were royal sages in the solar or lunar dynasty. The Brihadaranyopanishat gives a list of names of gurus who were jnanis and transmitted their knowledge to their disciples.

Further, our scriptures say that those who praise, serve and worship the wise person (jnani) get the results of the meritorious actions (punyam) done by the wise man. Those who criticise, hate or cause pain to the jnani get the results of sinful actions (papam) done by the wise man. (Tattva Bodha).

In view of this, we, by mentioning the names of the great people listed in the above verses with reverence, stand to gain much because we will get a share of the punyam from their account.

As an aside we may take a scene in Ramayana - the one wherein the queen Kausalya, mother of Rama blesses Rama before he departs to the forest. This is narrated in canto 25 of the Ayodhya Kanda. In her blessings she prays that the seven rishis, Indra and the gods subordinate to him, the seasons, the moon god, Brihaspati, the seven principal mountains, the oceans etc., should protect Rama. Some verses forming the prayer are given below.

चकार माता रामस्य महल्लानि मनसिविनि ॥ १॥ The high minded mother Kausalya performed the rites conducive to the welfare of Rama (and said as follows).

स्वस्ति साध्याय विश्वे च मनुवश महर्षिय: ॥
स्वस्ति धाता विधाता च स्वस्ति पूषा भगोपर्यमा ॥ ८॥

लोकपालाः ते सर्व वास्त्रप्रमुखास्तथा ।
ऋतः: षड़ च ते सर्वं मासं: संवत्सरं: क्षण: ॥ ९॥
Kausalya prays to many divine beings and many other things (animate and inanimate) to protect Rama when he is in the forest. Those whom she prays to in the above verses include the following: the Sadhyas and the Viswedevas (two different classes of gods), the wind-gods, eminent rishis, the Cosmic Person, the creator, gods Pusha, Bhaga, Aryama, the guardians of the spheres headed by Indra, the deities presiding over the six seasons, the months, years, nights, days, and hours, the Vedas, the smriti texts, dharma, Lord Skanda, the moon god, sage Brihaspati, the seven rishis, sage Narada, siddhas, the four quarters along with their guardians, the seven principal mountains, the oceans, Varuna the king of the oceans, heaven, earth, the intervening region, the atmosphere, the animate and inanimate creation, the stars, the sun, planets along with their gods, deities presiding over the day and night, morning and evening twilights, deities presiding over the six seasons, the intercalary months and the years containing such months, divisions of time such as minutes and seconds, the rishis, the seven oceans, Dwipas
(principal divisions of the globe), the four Vedas, the three spheres and the four quarters also. What can be Kausalya’s idea in praying to so many beings as listed above? If we read the above carefully we may notice that this prayer, sounds similar to the prayer contained in the Pratasmaranam. Evidently Kausalya was aware of the fact that God is present everywhere and in every thing. The sage Valmiki carefully uses the adjective मनि मनि meaning wise or jnani to describe her in the first verse above. She knew the fact not only in theory but also from experience. This implies that she knew that Rama, while in forest, will always be surrounded by the Lord in one form or the other and so she prayed to such an omnipresent Lord to offer him protection. The prayer may be different but when we look at it from the right perspective appears sensible as emanating from a pious person.

Meaning:— Any one who reads, remembers or hears this superior and purifying Pratasmaranam early in the morning every day, in that manner, will, by God’s grace, have an auspicious day and be free from disturbing dreams. Notes: This verse states the fruits of reciting or hearing the Pratasmaranam. फलम् means fruit. The stotram is said to be superior and purifying because it talks about the glory of the Lord. It gives the benefits stated when it is read or heard with proper understanding of the meaning. So, it is said तद्वत् (i.e) in the proper manner. Bad dreams are the results of latent tendencies, known as vasanas. Thinking of the Lord destroys these latent tendencies and the bad dreams that come up from them. So, the Lord has the name दु:स्वप्नाशनं - भाविनोदनर्थस्य सूचकान् दुःस्वप्नाशनं नाशयति ध्यात्, स्मरत्, कीर्तित्, पूजितश्चेति दुःस्वप्नाशनं।

VS(926). The verses in the Pratasmaranam help to keep alive the thought
of the Lord all through the day and as a result there is no place for vasanas to hide in the mind and disturb our peace.

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