

.. GangAShTakam 2 ..

.. ଗଂଗାଷ୍ଟକମ୍ ୨ ..

GANGASHTAKAM by Shri Shridharavenkatesa of
Tiruvisanallur respectfully called as Ayyaval.

.. ଶ୍ରୀ ଅୟ୍ଯାବାଲ୍ ଇତି ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧେଃ ଶ୍ରୀଧରବେଙ୍କଟେଶାଭିପ୍ରେଃ ବିରଚିତମ୍ ..

Introduction:- Once, the author Shridhara had to
perform the

shrAddha ceremony wherein his ancestors are
propitiated. In this

ceremony three pious brahmins who are well versed in
the vedas

and are of exemplary character are invited. The
Manusmriti gives

details about the qualifications of the brahmins to be invited on

this occasion. The forefathers are invoked in them.

Then these

brahmins are honoured, as one would do his ancestors with food,

clothes and dakshina. In Shridhara's case the ceremony fell on

an Amavasya day in the month of Kartika (8th month of the solar

calendar). He had made all arrangements to conduct the ceremony as

ordained in the shastras, including inviting the three brahmins. The

food items to be served to the brahmins (who represent his ancestors)

were being cooked. As the preparations were in progress, he heard the plaintive cry of a beggar. The beggar was an outcaste. He said he had not eaten for hours, and so is famished and distressed. Shridhara, who was a very pious person, saw in this outcaste the image of Lord Siva and was immensely moved. He immediately gave the food items prepared for the shrAddha ceremony to the beggar and ensured his hunger was appeased. He beggar ate heartily and went away after invoking Lord's blessings on Shridhara and his family

members. Shridhara came to himself some time after the beggar went away and realised his ``folly". One is not expected to serve the food prepared specifically for serving to the ancestors (invoked in the brahmins) to anyone else till the ceremony was over. He was very upset and asked the brahmins as to how he should expiate for his act. They said that the only way to atone is to take a bath in the sacred Ganges. But Shridhara felt that this was impossible to be done as the trip to Ganges will take many weeks. This implied that

he will not be able to perform the shrAddha ceremony on that day.

So it will be an act of ommission and will invite serious sin.

Shridhara felt that the only thing to do in such a predicament is

to surrender to the Lord. So, in the following verses he explained

his predicament to Lord Siva and prayed to Him to release Ganga from

His matted locks as He did on an earlier occasion in response to the

prayers of sage Bhagirata. The kindly Lord could not bear to see

His devotee upset. So He released Ganga from His locks. The well

in Shridhara's house started to overflow. Many animals like fish, tortoises came out along with the gushing waters. The villagers were astounded at the sight and were wonderstruck at the intensity of Shridhara's piety. They realised his greatness. They requested him to control the flow of the water which was threatening to flood the village. Shridhara prayed and the flow from Ganges subsided. All, including the brahmins who had been invited specially for the ceremony were only too willing to accept that if Shridhara took

bath in the waters of the well it will be equal to a bath in the

Ganges. Shridhara was very happy at the decision of the brahmins. He

took bath in the water drawn from the well and completed the shrAddha

ceremony.

This incident is celebrated every year on the

Amavasya day in the month of Krittika at the village.

The faithful

throng in large number at the house in Tiruvisanallur village where

Shridhara lived on that day every year and take bath in the water

drawn from the well. They believe that the bath gives the same

benefit as a bath in the Ganges.

COMMENTS. The scriptures

assure that a true devotee will not encounter misfortune or problems

in life. ନ ବାସୁଦେବଭକ୍ତାନାଂ ଅଶୁଭଂ ବିଦ୍ୟତେ କ୍ୱଚିତ୍.

Vishnusahasranama in the phalashruti. Lord Krishna gives an assurance

to this effect in Gita (9-31).

ପ୍ରଶ୍ନାଶ୍ଚି.

Shridhara and many others like Prahladha face problems? The answer

is that the problems they face may be attributed to prArabdham or

deeds they might have committed in their past births.

But, though the

problem appears to be of serious nature to us, it does not appear to

be so to the devotees themselves. They do not lose their serenity in

the face of adversity, nor is there least change in their devotion.

ଘୃଷ୍ଣଂ ଘୃଷ୍ଣଂ ପୁନରପି ପୁନଶ୍ଚନ୍ଦନଂ ଚାରୁ ଗନ୍ଧଂ

ଛିନ୍ନଂ ଛିନ୍ନଂ ପୁନରପି ପୁନଃ ସ୍ବାଦୁ ଚୈ-ବେନ୍ଦୁଖଣ୍ଡମ୍ ..

ଦର୍ୟଂ ଦର୍ୟଂ ପୁନରପି ପୁନଃ କାଢ଼ଞ୍ଚନଂ କାଢ଼ବର୍ଣ୍ଣଂ

ନ ପ୍ରାଣାନ୍ତେ ପ୍ରକୃତିବିକୃତିଃ ଜାୟତେ ସଜ୍ଜନାନାମ୍ ..

This says that a piece of sandal wood, when repeatedly rubbed against a

stone emits only a pleasant flavour. Even when the sugarcane is cut into

many pieces it will continue to taste sweet only. A chunk of gold

when heated in the fire again and again will give out its natural

shine only. So also, the qualities of the great people will not

undergo the least change even at the end of their lives.

To repeat,

a devotee of the Lord will certainly encounter problems. They are

designed by the Lord to bring out the devotee's unshakeable faith

in the Lord so that others may understand his greatness. The

devotee himself never complains that he is undergoing immense

suffering. But he thinks of the Lord as usual for help. He gets it

and is happy that his problem is solved. In fact, Kunti-
the mother

of Pandavas, cleverly converted the problems into
advantage. She

found from experience that she thought of the Lord
whenever she

faced a problem. Krishna promptly appeared on the
scene and helped

her. So, she prayed to Krishna that she should face
problems every

now and then so that she can have His darshan often.

She said:

ବିପଦଃ ସନ୍ତୁ ନଃ ଶଶ୍ୱଭଦ୍ର ଚକ୍ର ଜଗଦ୍ଗୁରେ||

ଭବତୋ ଦର୍ଶନଂ ଉତ୍ସାଦପୁନର୍ଭବ-ଦର୍ଶନମ୍||

The verses of Gangashtakam are given below. The
translations of the

verses given here are not exact.

ଶଂଭୋ ଭବନାମ ନିରନ୍ତରାନୁସନ୍ଧାନ ଭାଗ୍ୟେନ ଭବନ୍ତମେବ .

ନନ୍ଦ୍ୟେବ ସର୍ବତ୍ର ତଥାନ୍ତ୍ୟଜ୍ଞେନ୍ଦ୍ୟ ପଶ୍ୟତ୍ୟହୋ କୋନ୍ତ୍ର କୃତୋପରାଧଃ .. ୧..

O Lord Shambhu! I am used to repeating Your name
all the time. As

a result I am blessed to see You only every where. So,
today I

saw You only in this outcaste also. Is there anything
wrong in

this?

ଅସ୍ତେଷ ମନ୍ତ୍ରଃ ପିତୃନ୍ନିଷ୍ଠେ ଗତାପୁବୋ ଯୋ ବିହିତୋପଚିତୈଃ .

ଦୁରାତୁ ତନାମଜପେନ ଶୁଦ୍ଧିଃ ନ ସ୍ୟାତ୍ କଥଂ ମେ ସ୍ମୃତିରର୍ଥବାଦଃ .. ୨..

Let me agree that a bath

in the Ganges is the proper atonement for my
transgression of the
rules pertaining to the shrAddha ceremony. But the
Smriti texts
say that even if one just repeats the name ``Ganga"
few times he
becomes pure. Can not I take recourse to this
expediency in this
situation?

ଭଲ୍ଲାନନିଷ୍ଠା ନ ହି ତାବତୋ ମେ ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ଯତଃ କର୍ମସୁ ନ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶ୍ୟା ।

ତ୍ରେଶଙ୍କବଂ ମେ ପସୁପାତ୍ରରାୟଃ ମୁତ୍ୟେୟଃ ତସ୍ମାକ୍ୱଥଂ ଆର୍ତ୍ତବନ୍ଧୋ .. ଣ..

O Lord, I accept that I have not

got that intense faith in Your name that I can give up
performance

of duties like shrAddha. Thus I am in an awkward situation, like

king Trishanku. How do I get relieved from this situation?

ନନ୍ଦ୍ୟଦ୍ୟ ଡେ ଶ୍ରୀଜିବିନଷ୍ଟିରିଷ୍ଟା କୋଃହଂ ତତୋଃନ୍ୟକରିତୁଂ ସମର୍ଥଃ .

ଶ୍ରୀଜେ ବୃତାଃ ପୂର୍ବଦିନୋପବାସାଃ ନାନ୍ୟତ୍ର ଭୁଞ୍ଜୀମୁଃ ଇଦଂ ତୁ ଖ୍ଦେୟ .. ଧ..

If it is Your wish that the shrAddha

should be missed let it be lost. I cannot go against Your will.

But, what about the brahmins who have been specially invited for the

occasion? They have been fasting since yesterday and will not take

food at any other place.

ଶ୍ରୀକାଳବଃ ଶ୍ରୀକବିଘାତଭୀତ୍ୟା ସ୍ଵାମ୍ନୋପରୋଧଂ ବିଘଣନ୍ୟ ଧୀରାଃ .

ୟସ୍ମେ ।ତୁରତ୍ରାପଚିତିଂ ମହାକ୍ତଃ ତତ୍ରୋଚିତଂ ନ୍ଦଦନ୍ୟା ବିଧେହି .. ୫..

These brahmins

are noble souls. They have prescribed the expiation,
not with any

selfish motive but only to make sure that the shrAddha
should not

become deficient in any manner. They have not taken
into account

the inconvenience that they will face in the process.

ଗଙ୍ଗାଧର! ଦ୍ଵଦ୍ଭଜନାକ୍ରରାୟ ଭୀତ୍ୟା ଗୃହେ କୃପକୃତାବଗାହଃ .

ଜାନେ ନ ତୀର୍ଥାକ୍ରରଂ ଅଦ୍ୟ ଗଙ୍ଗାଂ ଆସାଦନ୍ୟେନ୍ନଂ କଥମାର୍ତ୍ତବନ୍ଧୋ! .. ୬..

On account of the

fear that the chanting of Your name should not be
interrupted

even for a moment, I have been taking bath only in the well in

the house itself. I do not know any other holy river or waters.

This being the case, how will I go in search of Ganga?

ନାହିଁ ତପସ୍ୱୀ ସଗରନ୍ଦ୍ରବାୟଃ ଜାନେ ନ ଜହସ୍ତୁଃ ଚରତି କୃବେତି .

ଶଂଭୋ! ଜଗାଜୁଚମପାବୃଣୁଷ୍ଟେତ୍ୟଭ୍ୟର୍ଥନେ ନାଲମୟଂ ବରାକଃ .. ୭..

I am not an ascetic like Bhagiratha nor do

I know the whereabouts of the sage Jahnu. I am not qualified

even to pray to You to release Ganga from Your locks.

ଗଙ୍ଗାଧରାଖ୍ୟା ଗତିରତ୍ର ନାନ୍ୟା ତାମାଶ୍ରୟେ ସଙ୍କଟ-ମୋଚନାୟ .

ହ୍ରତ୍ତ! ପ୍ରବାହଃ କଥମତ୍ର କୃପେ ବିସ୍ତୃର୍ଜତୀଶଃ ଖଲୁ ତେ ପ୍ରସନ୍ନଃ .. ୮..

So, Your name Gangadhara is my refuge. I see

no other way out. Oh! What a wonder! Even as i say
this, I see
the well overflowing! surely, the Lord has shown
mercy.

ଗଙ୍ଗେତି ଗଙ୍ଗେତି ହରତି ଗୁଣ୍ଡୁନ୍ ଆପ୍ଲାବିତୋହଂ ଦୟୟା ପୁରାରେଃ .

କୃପୋଭିତୋୟଂ କରୁଣାପ୍ରବାହଃ ଗାଙ୍ଗଶ୍ଚିରାୟାତ୍ର ଜନାନ୍ ପୁନାତୁ .. ଚ..

As I repeat the name ``Ganga'', the very mercy
of the Lord has taken the form of a flood and
submerged me. May

this flow of the waters of Ganga purify the people in the
days to
come.

CONCLUSION. One may ask as to how it was possible
for

Shridhara to have a vision of Siva in a beggar. The answer is that

he was convinced that every thing in this world is the Lord only

and there is no second thing. Krishna says this in the Bhagavad

Gita. He explains that He manifests Himself as the world using the

power of maya. Though He is every thing in the world, people are

deluded by the powerful maya. Their vision is veiled.

They see the

objects and overlook the God behind them. As an example, we see that

several ornaments are made of a piece gold. They are given various

names like bangle, chain etc. If we think a bit we will find that

the word ``bangle" is not a substance but only a name given to a

particular shape of gold. Gold can exist as gold but bangle cannot

exist without the gold. Similarly, a person can go to sleep and

have a dream. The dream is not substantial and is dependant on the

dreamer; but not the other way round. Such things as the ornament

that have no separate existence but have shape and name are called

unreal objects or ମିଥ୍ୟା ବସ୍ତୁ

existence. A bangle may be melted and made into another ornament

any number of times. They are therefore impermanent or ଅନିତ୍ୟମ୍.

But the items like gold that lend substance to them are known as

real or ସତ୍ୟମ୍ . They are permanent or ନିତ୍ୟମ୍ not change when the ornament is changed. We may say that gold

pervades the bangle as, really speaking, there is no such thing

as bangle. Krishna says He pervades the entire universe.

ମୟା ତତମିଦଂ ସର୍ବଂ ଜଗଦବ୍ୟକ୍ତ-ମୂର୍ତ୍ତିନା।

knowledge will, then, be to understand first that the ornament

is gold. Overlooking the very existence of gold will be a major

error and will have serious consequences. Extending this idea, we

should be able to see that every thing in this universe
ବିଶ୍ୱନ୍

is impermanent and changing. People and animals come and go. So do

the seas and mountains. We learn that even the sun and the stars

are not permanent but have limited life only. Thus, the universe is

ଅନିତ୍ୟନ୍

names and forms of the Lord only. In other words God is the real

thing or ସତ୍ୟନ୍।

substratum or ଅଧିଷ୍ଠାନନ୍।

says the right vision is to see Him every where. But we are taken

by the world and do not see the God hiding behind it.
To start with,
we do not see the Lord within us, but identify ourselves
with the
bodies. This results in numerous problems. We have to
take care
of the body, ensure it is fed and clothed properly. We
require so
many things to protect it and keep it happy and secure.
To get all
these things we have to work hard. The need for
comfort and security
makes us desire many things. We get a family and
friends around
ourselves. We import their joys and sorrows on to
ourselves. This

leads to likes and dislikes. We like things and people who add to

our joy and comforts and dislike those who do not.

This corrupts

our minds. As we go on working hard for ourselves and our family and

friends, we do many things that are right and many times compromise

with values and do wrong things. The results are puNyam and pApam.

We have to enjoy the fruits of the puNyam and pApam in our account

and to do this we have to take one or many births.

Repeated births

and deaths is sorrow only. The only way out of this problem is to

have the right vision that shows that God is in every thing and every

where. Yama tells this to Nachiketha in Kathopanishad. (2-1-10).

ୟଦେବେହ ତଦମୃତ୍ତ ଯଦମୃତ୍ତ ତଦନ୍ୱିହ୍ନଃ|

ମୃତ୍ୟୋଃ ସ ମୃତ୍ୟୁମାପ୍ନୋତି ଯ ଇହ ନାନେବ ପଶ୍ୟତି||

He says that one who sees plurality is

condemned to be born and die again and again.

Krishna says that

by intense devotion one gets an understanding of the Lord's true

nature and gets such a right vision. Gita (18-55).

ଭକ୍ତ୍ୟା ମାଂ ଅଭିଜାନାତି ଯାବାନ୍ୟଶ୍ଚାସ୍ମି ତତ୍ତତଃ|

Thus a true devotee is able to see the Lord in every being.

ବିଦ୍ୟାବିନୟ-ସଂପନ୍ନେ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣେ ଗର୍ବି ହସ୍ତିନି |

ଶୁନି ଚୈବ ଶ୍ରୀପାଳେ ଚ ପଞ୍ଚିତାଃ ସମଦର୍ଶିନଃ॥

He says that a person endowed with wisdom sees the same

brahman in a brahmin endowed with wisdom and humility, in a cow, an

elephant as also in a dog, and in an outcaste who eats a dog. Sage

Narada said the same in his advice to Yudishtira.

Bhagavatha (7-14-9).

ମୃଗୋଷ୍ଠ-ଶର-ମର୍ଜାଶୁ-ସରୀସୃପ୍ତଗମକ୍ଷିକାଃ ।

ଆତ୍ମନଃ ପୁତ୍ରବତ୍ ପଶ୍ୟେତ୍ ତୈରେଷାମନ୍ତରଂ କିନ୍ନତ୍ ॥

One should look upon a deer, camels, donkeys, monkeys, rats, reptiles,

birds and flies as though they were his own children.

What is it

that makes them separate from these (own children)?

The vedic seers had this grand vision. The great vedic hymn Shri Rudram has three hundred salutations to the Lord, not by His names, but as being available in various beings, both animate and inanimate. He is saluted as being the one available in the streams, shoals, clouds, lightnings, trees, grass, animals like horses, vultures and even in cheats and thieves! Because the hymn contains such a lofty idea its recitation is very inspiring. But, everyone may not be expected to study the scriptures like the upanishads, Gita and Shri

Rudram. Understanding this limitation of the people in general our

rishis had incorporated these valuable ideas in the popular hymns.

We see these names encountered above ବିଶ୍ୱନ୍ , ସତ୍ୟଃ , and

ଅଧିଷ୍ଠାନନ୍

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the substratum of this unreal universe, says this fact explicitly. As

we keep on reading or reciting these prayers, the great vedantic

truths contained in them will gradually enter our mind and change

our concept of God. That is why we have the practice of pArAyaNam or

reciting such stotras daily. By repeated reading we will understand

that God is not a Being residing in remote places like Vaikuntha or

Kailasa, but He is very intimately available in any thing we see or

hear about - including our bodies. This is said in the Narayana Suktam

ଉତ୍ତମ କି.ଞ୍ଜିଗନ୍ତର୍ବଂ ଦୃଶ୍ୟତେ ଶ୍ରୁତ୍ୱତେଽପି ବା ।

ଅନ୍ତର୍ବହିଷ୍ଠ ଉତ୍ତର୍ବଂ ବ୍ୟାପ୍ୟ ନାରାୟଣ-ସ୍ଥିତଃ ।

Understanding and accepting the facts stated above will cause a great

change in our personality and attitude. We will know that we are

surrounded by God resident in all things and beings.

So, we are

never alone or away from Him. This idea will give us great sense

of security, as we can get His help at any time or place.

Krishna says this in Gita(6-30).

ଈଶା ମାଂ ପଶ୍ୟତି ସର୍ବତ୍ର ସର୍ବଂ ଚ ମୟି ପଶ୍ୟତି ।

ତସ୍ୟାହଂ ନ ପ୍ରଶଶ୍ୟାମି ସ ଚ ମେ ନ ପ୍ରଶଶ୍ୟତି ॥

Since He is in all things and beings we will show great

respect and love for them. We will enjoy immense peace of mind and

confidence. This is how the great men like the sages and saints could

be calm and enjoyed happiness. Thus Shridhara's experience teaches

us an important lesson to be followed in life.

Written, encoded, and proofread by

N.Balasubramanian bbalu at sify.com

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