Kāśī PANCHAGAM

(1)

मनोनिवृत्ति: परमपशालति:
सा तीर्थवर्या पणिकरिणका च।
ज्ञानप्रवाहा विमलादिग्या
सा काशिकाहं निजबोधरुपा।

There is inactivity of the mind and complete cessation. And that foremost holy place is the manikarnika. There is the perennial flow of knowledge (in the form of) the pure Ganga (Ganges). I am that Kasika (Kasi) of the form of real knowledge.

(The word Kāśī is derived from the verbal root kāś meaning "to shine" and hence stands for something that is foremost. The sacred place Kasi is also known as Avimuktā and Vārāṇasi. Avimuktā means that Lord Śiva never discards this place. It is known as Varanasi because it is situated between the rivers Varuna and Asi, the two tributaries of the Ganges. Another speciality of the place is that the river Ganges flows northwards here.

There are many sacred ghats in Vārāṇasi (Benares). Among these, Manikarnikā and Daśāsvamedha are the foremost, the former located in the middle of the ghats, and the latter considered to confer immense benefits [of performing ten Asvamedhas (Horse sacrifices)] to the pilgrims who visit this ghat and take a holy dip in the Ganges.)

(2)

यस्यामिदं कल्पितमिन्द्रजालं
चराचरं भाभि मनोबिलासम्।
संधितसुखेका परमात्मरुपा
सा काशिकांह निजबोधरुपा।
This created illusory world of movable and immovable beings, a fancy of the mind, shines here. I am that Kasika of the form of real knowledge and supreme Self, that is itself Existence, Knowledge and Bliss.

(Indrajāla: merely magic that does not last long.)

(3)

कोशेषु पद्मस्ववदिराजमाना
बुद्धिर्भवानि प्रतिदेहेनहम् ।
साक्षी शिवः सर्वगतोन्नतसात्मा
सा काशिकां हि निम्बोपधरूपा ॥

Every body is the house. Goddess Bhavani is the intellect that holds sway over the five sheaths. Lord Siva, th witness, is the all-pervading indweller, the Self. I am that Kasika of the form of real knowledge.

(There are five sheaths (Kośā) supposed to cover the soul — the annamaya (the earthly body), the prāṇamaya (the vesture of the vital airs), the manomaya (the sensorial vesture), the vijñānamaya (the cognitional vesture) and ānandamaya (the vesture of supreme bliss).)

(4)

काश्यां हि काश्चेते काशी
काशी सर्वप्रकाशिकार॥
सा काशी विदिता येन
तेन प्रासा हि काशिका ॥
Kasi shines at Kasi. Kasi makes everything shine. One who has known Kasi *per se* has gained Enlightenment.

(The word *kāśī* denotes a kind of grass as well as its flower. Here the word *kāśī* has probably been derived to mean the place full of *kāśā*.)

(5)

काशीक्षेत्रं शरीरं त्रिभुवनजननी व्यापिनी ज्ञानगंगा
भक्तःश्रद्धा गजेयं निजगुरुचरणध्यानयोगः प्रयागः
विश्वेशोऽयं तृतीयं सकलजनमनः साक्षीभूतोऽन्तरालमा
देहे सर्व मद्दीये यदि वसति पुनर्स्थिरतमन्यत् किमस्ति

The body is the sacred place Kasi. The knowledge that is of the form of the Ganges is the mother of the three worlds and all - pervading. Devotional faith constitutes this Gaya. The path of contemplation at the feet of one's preceptor is Prayaga. The inner soul, the witness of the minds of all people - the fourth state - is the Lord Visvesa. When all (the holy places) dwells within my body, then what else is a sacred place?

(In this concluding verse, the author equates the body, knowledge and different religious spiritual practices with the three sacred places - Kāsi, Gayā and Prayāga which are held highly meritorious for the performance of ancestral rites. Prayāga (near Allahabad) is the place of the confluence of the rivers Ganges, Yamunā and the invisible Sarasvati. The feeling that the sacred places are present in one's own body sanctifies a person, and there is no need for that person to have any pilgrimage at all.)
There are three states of existence for all the human beings viz., the states of waking, dreaming and sound sleep. In the fourth (turiya) state the soul becomes one with the Supreme Brahman. Viśveśa or Viśvanātha, the Lord of the universe denotes Lord Śiva, the presiding deity at Kāśi. The inner soul is equated with Lord Viśveśa.

Although Kāśi has been the name of the place since olden days, the place is now popularly known as Vārānasi or Benares. Now Kāśi is a small station to the north of Vārānasi.)