

Invocation

Homage to Ganesa

Let us fix our minds upon and worship
the Lord who bears the divine elephant's head,
whose food is balls of rice,
who, seated on high Mount Meru,
wrote the history of the great Bharata War,
snapping off one white tusk for a pen,
child of the supreme Lord himself,
whose body, like a great mountain of red coral
glittering in the moonlight,
is smeared with beautiful white ash
that glistens on the green-hued body of His consort,
as He stands with Her, dancing the holy dance.

Siva at Chidambaram

1

We make obeisance to the splendid feet of Him
who, united with His pleasure-bestowing Consort,
permeates all the variously constituted worlds,
just as the life-force permeates the body,
and shines forth as the radiant light of true knowledge;
He who performs his cosmic dance in Chidambaram,
as hand drums and large kettle drums sound out a richly sonorous rhythm.

Sivagami

2

We bow down in worship to the delicate lotus-feet,
adorned with gleaming anklets, of the beautiful Sivagami,
who resides in Chidambaram's Golden Hall;
She who joyfully wears the garment of blissful happiness,
sharing half Her form with Lord Nataraja,
whose cosmic dance dispels all affliction;
She whose presence fills all the universe,
as perfume pervades a flower.

Lord Murugan

3

As He dances closer with anklets tinkling,
and a string of tiny, beautiful bells ringing at His waist,
delighting Uma's motherly gaze,
let us fill our arms with flowers,
and praise the tripping feet of Lord Murugan,
younger brother to the noble elephant-headed One,
whose bulging temples run with rich juices.

Subject of the Work

4

Eight times eight is the number of that ocean of tales,
in which the venerable sage of Mount Pothiyam,¹ to his greater glory,
gracefully describes the blissful sports of Lord Siva.²
I shall now begin, mere dog that I am,
to tell the story of how lightning-swift horses were given,
to banish the woes of the Tamil-speaking Pandyan King, enthroned in Madurai.

5

May our troubles now be banished as we tell
how the author of the *Tiruvachakam* came to holy Perunturai,
and dwelling in the place of the wondrous Lord,
attained to realisation of his divine nature,
and through great devotion,
born of many lifetimes of arduous austerities,
freed himself from the cycle of births.

¹ A mountain in the Pandya country, abode of the sage Agastya. Agastya is said to have learned the Tamil language from Siva himself and then settled on Mt Pothiya, where he wrote a Tamil grammar and taught it to twelve pupils, thus founding the language and causing it to prosper. (For one version of the story see note to v. 41 of Agattiyappadalam of Kamba Ramayana.)

² The sixty-four holy sports of Siva at Madurai were recounted in Tamil verse by Parajoti Mamunivar in the Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam, a section of which appears to have been amplified to form the present work.

Author's Apology

6

Since these verses tell of the deeds of that devotee,
who, by the grace of the Lord,
whose throat is like a great black cloud,
became His humble servant,
and composed sweet Tamil hymns to his glory,
may those who are versed in that excellent tongue
approve this work, regardless of its faults,
and not deem it worthless.

Benefit to the reader

7

Those who lovingly speak this good and noble tale,
who meditate upon it in their thoughts,
and who fill their ears with its telling,
their hearts filled with joy,
will be in this life protectors of the earth itself,
and in the next they shall dwell in the holy assembly of Lord Siva.