

Vatapi Meaning

Word for word meaning

The basic *anvayam* (word order) is: “ahaM (vAraNAsyam, varapradaM, etc.) vAtApigaNapatiM bhajE” (I worship vAtApi gaNapati, with these attributes), and all the remaining phrases that end in the “M” or “m” (ma kAram) are in *dvitlyA vibhakti* (accusative case), qualifying the proper name “vAtApigaNapatiM”

pallavi

vAtApigaNapAtiM - the gaNapati of vAtApi

bhajE – worship, praise

ahaM – I (the composer, muttusvAmi dlkSitar)

vAraNAsyam – the one with the face (*Asyam*) of the elephant (*vAraNa*)

varapradam - one who bestows (*M*) of boons (*vara*)

shri - ever auspicious, blessed

anupallavi

bhUtAdisaMsEvitacaraNam - with feet (*caraNa*) well-worshipped (*saMEvita*) by the bhUtas and so forth (*bhUtAdi*)

bhUtabhautikaprapa-ncabharaNam – the support (*bharaNaM*) of the universe (*prapa~nca*) of the elements (*bhUta*) and the living beings (*bhautika*)

vtarAgiNam – who is devoid of (*vtA*) all desires or passion (*rAga*)

vinatayOginaM – who is prostrated (*vinata*) by the yOgis

vishvakAraNam – who is the cause (*kAraNaM*) of the entire universe (*vishva*)

vighnavAraNam – who is the remover (*vAraNaM*) of all obstacles (*vighna*)

caraNam

purA – once upon a time (long time ago)

kuMbhasaMbhavamunivaraprapUjitaM - who was worshipped (*prapUjita*) by superior Saint (*munivara*) agastya, born out of a pot (*kuMbhasaMbhava*)

trikONamadhyagataM – who resides (*gataM*) in the middle (*madhya*) of the (tAntrik) triangle (*trikONa*)

murAripramukhAdyupAsitaM – who is worshipped (*upAsitam*) prominently by (*pramukha*) Lord viSNu, the enemy of the demon mura (*murAri*), and others (*Adi*)

mUIAdhArakSEtrasthitam – who resides (*sthitaM*) in the location (*kSEtra*) of the (tAntrik) cosmic circle (*mUIAdhAra cakram*).

parAdicAtvArivAgAtmakAM – who is the embodiment (*AtmakM*) of the four levels (*catvAri*) of speeches (*vAg*) commencing with *parA* (*parAdi*) , namely *parA*, *pashyanI*, *madhyamA*, and *vaikharI*

praNavasvarUpavakratuNDaM – who has a curved (*vakra*) trunk (*tuNDaM*) in the shape of (*svarUpa*) the sacred mystic syllable “Om” (*praNava*)

nirantaraM – who is permanent (*nir* = without, *antaram* = interval)

niTilacandrakhaNDaM - who bears a crescent moon (*candra khaNDaM*) on the forehead (*niTila*)

nijavAmakaravidh.rEkSudaNDam - who holds (*vidh.rta*) the stack of sugar cane (*ikSu daNDaM*) in his (*nija*) left hand (*vAma kara*)

karAmbujapAshabljApUraM - who holds a noose (*pAsha*) , and a pomgranite fruit (*bljApUram*) on his lotus-like hand (*karAMbuja*)

kaluSavidUraM – who is without (or far away from) (*vidUram*) all blemishes (*kaluSa*)

bhUtAkAraM – who possesses a gigantic (*bhUta*) shape (*AkAram*)

harAdiguruguhAtOSitabiMbam – whose round form (*biMbam*) is pleasing (*tOSita*) to Lord shiva (*hara*), subrahmanya (*guruguha*), and others (*Adi*)

haMsadhvanibhUSitahEraMbam - who is the protector of the meek (*hEramba*), and is adorned by the *rAgam haMsadhvani* (swan sound).

ADDITIONAL NOTES

mUIAdhAra kSEtram

tiruvArUr is popularly known as the *mUIAdhAra kSEtram*. The phrase also refers to the fountainhead of evolutionary energy located in each human being at the base of the spinal cord.

bhUta

This phrase has been used thrice in this k.rti with different meanings. It refers to the “bhUta gaNa”s for whom Lord gaNapati is the chief; the five primary elements, p.rthvI (earth), ap (water), vAyu (air), tEjas (fire), and AkAsham (ether) are collectively known as pa~nca bhUtams. The word, used the third time (**bhUtAkAram**), means “majestic” .

trikONa madhya gataM

The triangle here refers to the geometrical diagram used in tAntrik rituals. Also, the vAtApi gaNapati idol at tiruvArUr is enclosed in a triangle shaped frame. This could have also prompted dlkSitar to employ such a description.

parAdi catvAri vAgAtmakam

Vibrations due to sound produce speech (*vAg*). According to *shAktam*, there are four ranges of sound, namely, **parA**, **pashyantI**, **madhyamA**, and **vaikharI**. These are collectively known as “*shabda tatvam*”. The first one, *parA*, belongs to the range of frequencies that is inaudible to humans, and cannot be produced by humans; on the other extreme, *vaikharI* is in the frequency range of vibrations made by humans, and is audible to them. The remaining two, *pashyantI*, and *madhyamA* are the ranges somewhere between these two. In the commentary of kALidAsa’a kumArasaMbavam (2.17), the commentator, mallinAtha states:

vaikharI shabdaniSpattiH madhyamA sm.rtigOcarA |

dyautikAryasya pashyantI sUkSmA brahmaiva kEvalam ||

vaikharI manifests the words, *madhyamA* is seen through the mind, *pashyantI* throws light on the idea, and finally *parA* is the subtle voice, the undifferentiated casual immensity. In fact, muttusuVAmi dlkSitar refers to them again in his tOyavEgavAhini k.rti, “*vINApustaka dhAriNIm*”, where he describes goddess sarasvati as “*parAdyakhila shabda svarUpAvakAshAm*” (personification of the different forms of sounds beginning with parA).

Free Translation

I sing in praise of vAtApi gaNapati, who has the face of an elephant, and who is a giver of all boons. All the living beings worship his feet. He transcends the past, the future and the universe, comprising the five elements. He is devoid of passion, and is saluted by the yOgis He is the cause of the creation of the world and he is the remover of all obstacles.

In ancient times, he was worshiped by saint Agastya (born out of a pot). He resides in the middle of the mystic triangle. He is saluted by the prominent gods, viSNu and others. He resides in the *mUIAdhAra cakram* (cosmic circle). He represents the four forms of speech, beginning with parA. His trunk is curved in the form of the sacred syllable Om. He is eternal, and his forehead bears the crescent moon. In his left hand he carries the stack of sugar cane. He also carries a noose and a pomegranate fruit in his lotus-like hand. He is of a gigantic form, and he is faultless. He is hEraMba, and his figure is adorned by haMsadhvani rAgam.

Some episodes associated with this k.rti

There are several differing explanations in our *purANic* mythology dealing with the cause and the origin of the elephant face of gaNapati. We furnish below some of those episodes relevant to this particular k.rti.

1. **vAtApi** (a corrupt form of the place named **bAdAmi**) is located in the present day bljApUr district in karNATaka state. It was the capital of the cAlUkyan ruler, pulakeshin. After the pallava king narasiMhavarman (630-668 AD) conquered bAdAmi, an image of lord gaNapati was brought from there to the location of tirucce”ngaTTanguDi, near nannilam (tAnjOre). This was the home town of the pallava chieftain para~njyOti, who later became a devotee of Lord shiva, and changed his name to ciruttoNdar (one of the 63 nAyanmArs). The idol was later installed on the southern side of the arddha maNDapam in the temple, formally known as ciruttoNDa gaNapatIshvaram This gaNapati was formally called “vAtApi gaANapati”, since it originated in bAdAmi. At some later period, this served as an inspiration for a “**vAtApi gaNapati**” idol in the tiruvArUr temple complex. This is the idol that dlkSitar sings in his haMsadhvani composition. The temple at tiruvArUr is often known as “*mUldhAra kSEtram*”, and this phrase occurs in the caraNam line of the k.rti. There are subtle differences between the idols at tiruvArUr, and tirucce”ngaTTanguDi. The one in tiruvArUr is a “*valampuri gaNEsha*” (the trunk is curving to the right, which is very rare). There is a triangular shaped frame surrounding the figure of gaNEsha in the tiruvArUr idol, which might have prompted dlkSitar to use the phrase “**trikONa madhyagam**”.

A picture of the original vAtApi gaNapati of tirucce”ngaTTanguDi can be viewed at:

<http://www.templenet.com/Tamilnadu/vatapi.html>

A plan of tiruvArUr temple, identifying the location of vAtApi gaNapati is available at:

<http://sky.prohosting.com/~guruguha/arurplan.gif>

2. There were two demons, vAtApi, and ilvalan who employed a strange technique to kill the sages. They used to invite the sages for dinner, and ilvalan offered them food prepared out of vAtApi’s body. After the sages have consumed the food, ilvalan would call the name of vAtApi, who would then spring to life from their stomach, thus killing them. To protect the sages from this mishap, Saint agstya worshiped Lord gaNapati, and with his blessings was able to prevent vAtApi getting his life back inside the stomach. Perhaps dlkSitar had this incident in mind when he stated “**purA kuMbhasaMbhava munivara prapUjitam**”. This particular story is given in the epic, *rAmayaNam*. Stories related to agastya are found in *mahAbharatam*, *rAmAyaNam*, and several *purAnams* (*matsya*, *pAdma*, *brahmAnDa*),.

3 According to *shiva purANam*, at one time, Lord shiva was performing a penance, and his consort pArvati wanted to have a child to protect her. She rubbed her body, and from some scurf she gathered, she created a son. She told him to guard the entrance to her abode while she was taking a bath. Meanwhile shiva returned home, but the boy prevented him from entering inside. Angered by this act, shiva cut his head off. When pArvati came to know of this, she was grief stricken, and she told him he had killed his own son. Shiva felt sorry for his act. He decided to bring the child back to life by attaching the head of first living being he saw, which happened to be an elephant. This is how gaNapati got the head of an elephant (**vAraNAsyam**). Also, as a good gesture, shiva made him the chief of his bhUta gaNas, hence he is called “**gaNapati**”.

Another version from *brahma vaivarta purANam*, states that the evil glance of shani (saturn) caused the head of the boy (gaNapati) to be blown off.

Yet, another version, this time from tiruj~nAnasambhandhar, in his tEvAram songs is: pArvati and shiva assumed the form of elephant, and vinAyaka was born with an elephant face.

4. Legend has it the elephant faced demon gajamukhAsura, received a boon of immortality from shiva, and caused suffering to humans. On hearing the prayers of the sufferers, Lord gaNapati went to war with him, and slayed him with his broken right tusk. The land is believed to have turned red, due to the blood spilled by the demon, and the place got the name tirucce~nkaTTa~nkuDi in tamil. Here, gaNapati worshipped shiva to rid of the sin he committed in killing the demon.

5. The following story is found in *skAnda*, and *maudgala purAnams*. The king abhinandana conducted a sacrifice, and did not invite indra. Angry at this act, indra invoked kAla (time, the destroyer) to disrupt the sacrifice. KAla took the shape of a vighAsura (demon of all obstructions), and started ruining the sacrifice, and killed abhinandana. Sages approached brahma for protection from this devil, and brahma in turn assigned the task to gaNEsha. Vanquished by gaNEsha, the demon finally bowed down, and agreed to serve him obediently. Thereafter gaNEsha was known as “vighnarAja, vighan nAshaka, or “**vighnavAraNa**”.

The lyrical beauties

MuttusvAmi dlkSitar was very proficient in adding literary beauties, alliterations, and *alaMkArams* in his compositions. In this particular k.rti, we find several of these features. The pallavi has the “*AdyakSara prAsam*” in the phrases “vAtApi”, “vAraNasyam”, and “varapradam”. The anupallavi also features “*AdyakSara prAsam*” in “bhUtAdi”, “bhUtaboutika”, as well as in “vIta, vinata, vishva, vighna”. The phrases “caraNam, bharaNam, rAgiNam, yOginaM, and vAraNam” contribute to the *antyAkSara prAsam*. All caraNam lines uniformly feature the *dvitlyAkSara prAsam*, namely purA, murAri, parAdi, nirantaram, karAmbuja, harAdi (the second syllable in all these phrases is “ra”). The fourth line has “ni”, and the last line has “ha” as AdyakSara beauties.. The phrases tuNDam, khaNDam, daNDam in the caraNam are again examples of some *antyAkSara prAsams*. Since all adjectives are in the accusative case, we have the pleasing “ma” ending in all these phrase, which is another refreshing feature. We find multiple meaning used for the word “bhUta” in this k.rti. The last line incorporates the *vAggEyakaraka mudra* (signature of the composer), “guruguha” that dlkSitar uniformly used in all his compositions, as well as the direct *rAga mudra* “haMsadhvani”.