

and eulogising Him, the seven sages of great austerity considered themselves blessed.

12. Then, as they were struck with surprise, they joined their palms in reverence, bowed to and addressed Śiva adored by all the worlds:—

13. The sages said:—“O most excellent of all, O great ruler, O Emperor of the heaven-dwellers, how can our fortune which is very excellent be described by us ?

14-15. Formerly we had performed three kinds of penance; we had studied the excellent Vedas ; we had made offerings in the fire, we had visited many holy centres; thus whatever merit we have acquired verbally, mentally and physically that entire merit has now accrued to us by your blessing in remembering us.

16. A man who worships you always shall be blessed. How can that merit be properly described, the merit of those whom you yourself remember ?

17. O Sadāśiva, we have become the most excellent of all people by your remembering us. Usually you never even come across the path of ambitions and aspirations of ordinary people.

18-19. O lord, your vision, very difficult to be acquired, is like the fruit stooping down within the reach of the dwarf, like sight to a man born blind, like eloquency acquired by a dumb man, like the indigent meeting with a treasure-trove, like the lame man reaching the top of a high mountain and like the barren woman bearing a child.

20. By seeing you today we have become the most respectable sages worthy of the worship of all the worlds. We have reached the highest position.

21. O lord of gods, by seeing you who are the lord of all gods we have become worthy of great respect. There is no necessity of talking more.

22. If any duty is assigned to us it will be a favour to us. An auspicious task befitting us, your utter slaves, shall be given to us.

*Brahmā said :—*

23. On hearing their words, Śiva the great lord, in conformity with the conventions of the world, spoke these