

॥ अच्युताष्टकम् ॥

achyutaaShTakam by Shri Shridhara Venkatesha.

The author Shridhara Venkatesha was a staunch devotee of Shiva but he had no dislike for Vishnu. He had even decried the differences displayed by people who claimed to be devotees of Siva or Vishnu to the exclusion of the other. He believed that in this age of Kali yuga when peoples' mind will be attacked by a million distractions making it impossible for one to devote himself seriously to God, they can take to chanting of His name as Shridhara believed that the name is as potent as Him in destroying the sins of the devotee. This theme is highlighted in this short poem. The poet addresses the name and not the Lord as is usually the case. The power of the Lord's name in destroying the sins is mentioned in the first verse. He cites with wonder instances when the name came to the rescue of His devotees in times of crises. One instance was the case of Draupathi when she was being subjected to humiliation and was in a helpless condition. She cried out for help and uttered Lord's name which produced unending piles of clothes to the amazement of all and frustrated the efforts of those who tried to dishonour her. The poet then cites the case of Gagendra who was caught in a tussle with a crocodile. After a long-drawn struggle the elephant, feeling helpless, called out loudly the Lord's name. This made Him rush to his rescue. The poet feels that it was the Lord's name that worked these wonders.

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अभिलपननिसर्गादच्युताख्ये भजे त्वां
हरसि मदघबृन्दं त्वद्भुवुक्षावशात् त्वम् ।
अघहृदिति तवांब प्रत्युत ख्यातिदोऽहं
त्वयि मम वद का वा संगतिर्दैन्यवाचाम् ॥ १ ॥
चिरातीता सान्दीपनितनुभुवः कालभवन-
प्रपत्तिस्तं पित्रोः पुनरगमयत् सन्निधिमिति ।
यशः कृष्णस्येदं कथमहह न त्वां रसनया
यदि श्रीकृष्णाख्ये भजति स तादनीं मुनिसुतः ॥ २ ॥
हरेर्यच्चोरत्वं यदपि च तथा जारचरितं
तदेतत् सर्वाहस्ततिकृते संकथनतः ।
इतीदं माहात्म्यं मधुमथन ते दीपितमिदं
वदन्त्याः कृष्णाख्ये तवहि विचरन्त्या विलसितम् ॥ ३ ॥
सभायां द्रौपत्याऽशुकसृतिभिया तद्रसनया

धृता तस्याञ्चेलं प्रतनु तदवस्थं विदधती ।
 व्यतानीशशैलाभं वसनविसरं चांब हरता-
 मियान् गोविन्दाख्ये वद वसनराशिस्तव कुतः ॥ ४ ॥
 अधिरसनमयि त्वामच्युताख्ये दधानं
 वनजभवमुखानां वन्द्यमाहुर्महान्तः ।
 सतु विनमति मातश्चाश्वगोश्चादनादीन्
 भवति ननु विचित्रा पद्धतिस्तावकानाम् ॥ ५ ॥
 जननि मुरभिदाख्ये जाह्नवीनिम्नगौका
 समजनि पदपद्माच्चक्रिणस्त्वाश्रितानाम् ।
 परिणमति समस्ताः पादवार्धिन्दुरेको
 जगति ननु तटिन्यो जाह्नवीसह्यजाद्याः ॥ ६ ॥
 समवहितमपश्यन् सन्निधौ वैनतेयं
 प्रसभविधुतपद्मापाणिरीशोऽच्युताख्ये ।
 समवितुमुपनीतः सागजेन्द्रं त्वया द्राक्
 वद जननि विना त्वां केन वा किं तदाभूत् ॥ ७ ॥
 यदेष स्तौमि त्वां त्रियुगचरणत्रायिणि ततो
 महिम्नः का हानिस्तवतु मम संपन्निरवधिः ।
 शुना लीलाकामं भवति सुरसिन्धुर्भगवती
 तदेषा किंभूता सतु सपदि सन्तापभरितः ॥ ८ ॥
 इति श्रीश्रीधरवेकटेशार्यकृतौ अच्युताष्टकं संपूर्णम् ॥

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LIFE OF SHRIDHARA VENKATESA

श्रीकण्ठमिव भास्वन्तं शिवनामपरायणम् ।
 श्रीधरं वेङ्कटेशार्यं श्रेयसे गुरुमाश्रये ॥

Shridhara Venkatesa lived about 300 years ago in
 Tiruvisanallur, a village in Tanjavur district in Tamilnadu. He was called
 Tiruvisanallur Ayyaval (deeply respected person) out of great respect
 people held for him. Even today he is known by that name only. He was
 the son of Lingayaryar who was a minister to the Maharaja of Mysore. Even
 as a young boy Ayyaval was deeply religious and in particular had great
 devotion to Shiva but he made no distinction between Shiva and Vishnu. He
 studied Vedas, shastras and puranas and had a great desire to travel and
 spread the message of the puranas and in particular the glory of Lord's
 name among the people. After his father's death the Maharaja wanted
 him to take his father's job but he politely declined and left Mysore
 state with his wife and mother. He came to Tiruchirapalli in Tamilnadu
 and stayed for some time giving talks. He was supposed to have brought

back to life a woman who had died by praying to the Lord. This attracted people who wanted him to solve their problems. Ayyaval did not like this and left the place. He proceeded to Tanjavur. It seems that King Shahaji (1684-1710.AD) who was ruling at that time in Tanjavur wanted him to stay in Tanjavur but Ayyaval wanted to lead a quiet life. King Shahaji was inviting scholarly brahmins to stay in his kingdom. He renamed the village Tiruvisanallur as Shahajirajapuram. One street was allotted for their stay. Ayyaval also stayed in a house there. Ayyaval was a proponent of the view that in this dark age Kali chanting the lord's name will ward off its evil effects. He was the senior contemporary of Bodhendra Swami who was the 59th pontiff of the Shankara Math at Kanchipuram and who was an ardent advocate of the glory of the lord's name. Ayyaval wrote a book भगवन्नामभूषणम्(Bagavannamabhushanam) on the subject which is sadly not available now. Bodhendra Swami had also written a book नामामृतरसायनम्(Namamritarasayanam)on the subject wherein he had made references to the work of Ayyaval. Once Ayyaval had to perform a sraddha ceremony in his house. Therein food is prepared and offered to the departed forefathers who are invoked in three brahmins invited for the occasion. When every thing was getting ready Ayyaval saw an outcaste with his family in a famished condition begging for food. His heart melted with compassion at their condition. Without any hesitation he offered them the food that was being prepared for the ceremony.He then had the house washed and prepared to conduct the ceremony again. But the brahmins in the village considered this act reprehensible and refused to conduct the ceremony again. Ayyaval pleaded with them quoting texts from the scriptures to support his action but the Brahmins were not convinced. He asked them what he should do to remedy the situation. They said that the only atonement was having a bath in the Ganges. But there was no time to go to Varanasi and return. So he prayed to Lord Shiva (in Gangashtakam) to release the waters of Ganga from His matted hair as he did on an earlier occasion for Bhagiratha. Water started flowing out of the well in his house and flooded the streets of the village. The villagers got scared and prayed to Ayyaval to forgive them and stop the flood that was threatening the village. He accordingly prayed again to stop the flooding and requested her to appear in the well every year on that day. Even now people flock to that place every year on that day and take bath in the waters of the well in the belief that Ganga is present in the well on that day. Ayyaval had composed a number of works some of which are not yet been printed and some not available. Some of his works are listed below. (1) Bhagavannama Bhushanam. (2) Akhyashashti. (3) Daya satakam. (4) Matrubhtasatakam. (5) Stuti paddati. (6) Shivabhakthikalpalatha. (7) Shivabhaktha lakshanam. (8) Taravali stotram. (9) Artihara stotram. (10) Kuliresvarashtakam. (11) Jambhunathashtakam. (12) Doshapariharashtakam. (13) Krishnadwadasa manjari. (14) Achyuthashtakam. (15) Dola navarathnamala. (16) Padamanimanjari - a sanskrit dictionary. (17) Shahajiraja charitam.

Please send corrections to sanskrit@cheerful.com
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