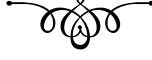

Artiharastotram

ఆర్తిహరస్తోత్రమ్ సార్థం

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ఆర్తిహరస్తోత్రమ్ సార్థం



Artiharastotram by Shri Shridhara Venkatesa.

This is a short poem consisting of nine verses. Herein the poet prays to Lord Shiva to remove the afflictions of the devotee. He asks if it is alright for the Lord not to respond to his prayers when He is reputed to protect those who even think of Him. Then he says that he is just the opposite of the Lord who is omnipotent and omniscient in that he is a weakling and ignoramus. How is it, he asks, that Lord has not taken pity on him. These verses are very moving in their appeal. The poem is a precious gem and the reader would like to add it to the collection of hymns they recite during their prayer.

వీఁగిమెదశ్లోకా

॥ అథ ఆర్తిహరస్తోత్రమ్ ॥

శ్రీ శంభో మయి కరుణాశిశిరాం దృష్టిం దిశన్ సుధావృష్టిమ్ ।
సంతాపమపాకురుమే మంతాపరమేశ తవ దయాయాః స్యామ్ ॥ ౧॥

అవసీదామి యదార్తిభిరనుగుణమిదమోకసోహసాం ఖలు మే ।
తవ సన్నవసీదామి యదంతకశాసన నతత్తవానుగుణమ్ ॥ ౨॥

దేవ స్మరంతి తవ యేతేషాం స్మరతోఽపి నార్తిరికిర్తిమ్ ।
కలయసి శివ పాహీతిక్రన్దన్ సీదామ్యహం కిముచితమిదమ్ ॥ ౩॥

ఆదిశ్యాఘకృతౌ మామన్తర్యామిన్నసావహూత్యేతి ।
ఆర్తిఘమజ్జయనే మాం కింబ్రూయాం తవకృపైకపాత్రమహమ్ ॥ ౪॥

మన్దార్థీరహం తవ మయి కరుణాం ఘటయితుం విబోనాలమ్ ।
ఆకృష్టం తాన్తు బలాదలమిహ మద్దైన్యమితి సమాశ్వసితి ॥ ౫॥

త్వం సర్వజ్ఞోఽహం పునరజ్ఞోఽనీశోహమిశ్వరత్వమసి ।
త్వం మయి దోషాన్ గణయసి కిం కథయే తుదతి కిం దయా నత్వామ్ ॥ ౬॥

ఆశ్రితమార్తతరం మామపేక్షనే కిమితి శివ న కిం దయనే ।
 శ్రీతగోష్ఠా దీనార్తిహృదితి ఖలు శంసంతి జగతి సంతస్తాస్వమ్ ॥ ౭ ॥
 ప్రహరాహరేతివాదీ ఫణితమదాఖ్య ఇతి పాలితో భవతా ।
 శివ పాహీతి వదోఽహం శ్చతో న కిం క్వాం కథం న పాల్యస్తే ॥ ౮ ॥
 శరణం వ్రజ శివమార్తీస్సతవ హరేదితి సతాం గిరాఽహమ్ త్వామ్ ।
 శరణం గతోఽస్మి పాలయ ఖలమపి తేష్విశ పక్షపాతాన్మామ్ ॥ ౯ ॥
 ఇతి శ్రీ శ్రీధరవేంకటేశ్వర్యకృతిషు ఆర్తిహరస్తోత్రం సంపూర్ణమ్ ॥

పద్యshloka

The author of this poem, Shridhara Venkatesa was a great devotee. He took immense delight

in chanting and singing the names of the Lord. One of the traits of a true devotee is his concern for the welfare of other beings. Krishna mentions (దయా భూతేషు) compassion to

others who are suffering, as one of the noble (దైవీ సంపత్) qualities that one should acquire to make spiritual progress. Great devotees like Shridhara have their minds firmly fixed in the Lord and so were not unduly worried about themselves. They knew that Lord will take care of their welfare. Thus, having been freed from worries about their own welfare, they show concern about the welfare of other beings.

They are moved by the sufferings and sorrows of others. Shri Shankaracharya points out this

quality of the great people in Vivekachudamani (37). They have themselves obtained God's grace and liberation. They are willing to help others also without any motive whatsoever. It is in their nature to do good to others. In this they are like the spring season.

పద్యshloka

శాస్తా మహాస్తో నివసన్తి సస్తో వసన్తవల్లోకహితం చరన్తః ।
 తీర్థా స్వయం భీమభవార్ణవం జనానహేతునాన్యానపి తారయన్తః ॥

పద్యshloka

The poet Shridhara who was a saintly person had done exactly this in this poem. Another popular verse from the Subhashita in praise of the hearts of good people says this with a nice example. Normally their hearts are compared

to butter since, like the butter they easily melt. But the verse points out that the comparison is not correct. The reason is that the butter melts only when it is exposed to heat. But the hearts of good people melt when they are exposed to other peoples' sufferings. The sanskrit word for heat is tApa తాపః and it also means distress.

Thus there is a pun on the word tApa.

బీగిన్మెదశ్లోకా

సజ్జనస్య హృదయం నవనీతం ఇతి యద్వదన్తి కవయః తదలీకమ్ ।
అన్యదేహవిలసద్వరితాపాత్ సజ్జనో ద్రవతి నో నవనీతమ్ ॥

ఏందశ్లోకబ

Keeping the helplessness of the vast number of people who have chosen to forget the Lord in their concern for their own well being, great saints and acharyas like Shridhara have composed short and long pieces of poems that show us the way to pray and seek His grace. The present piece is one such poem. This is a short poem consisting of nine verses. Herein the poet identifies himself with one such person - a weakling and an ignoramus - and consequently is afflicted with a variety of sorrows and prays to Lord Shiva to remove the afflictions.

ఆర్తిః means distress, affliction. Four types of people worship Me, says Krishna in Gita (BG-7-16). The first among them and the most common one is the distressed.

చతుర్విధా భజన్తే మాం జనాః సుకృతినోఽర్జున । ఆర్తో జిజ్ఞాసురర్థార్థో జ్ఞానీ చ భరతర్షభ ॥

The Lord welcomes all of them, calls them virtuous, and says He will respond to their prayers.

In this poem Shridhara appeals to the Lord for redressal of his sufferings.

These verses are very moving in their appeal. The poem is a precious gem and the readers would like to add it to the collection of hymns they recite during their prayer. The translations given are not exact, but will convey the meaning of the verses. Brief notes have also been provided. Some verses from other great acharyas are also given to show the similarity in their thinking. Happily, some of the names used to address the Lord refer to both Shiva and Vishnu and so one can take the verses as appealing to either or both. The following abbreviations are used in the notes.

- 1 - VS - Shri Vishnu Sahasranama with Shri Shankaracharya's commentary.
- 2 - SS - Shri Shiva Sahasranama (from Padma Purana) known as Vedaśara Sahasram with the commentary of HH Shri Paramashivendra Saraswati.
- 3 - LS - Shri Lalita Sahasranamam with the commentary of Shri Bhaskararaya.
- 4 - BG - Shrimad Bhagavadgita with Shri Shankaracharya's commentary.
- 5 - BH - Shrimad Bhagavatam.
- 6 - AS - Atmarpanastuti by Shri Appayya Dikshitar.
- 7 - SA - Shiva Ashtottarashata nama stotram with commentary "Shivstattva Rahasyam" by Shri Nilakanta Dikshita.

బీగిన్మెదశ్లోకా

॥ అథ ఆర్తిహరస్తోత్రమ్ ॥

శ్రీ శంభో మయి కరుణాశిశిరాం దృష్టిం దిశన్ సుధావృష్టిమ్ |
సంతాపమపాకురు మే మంతా పరమేశ తవ దయాయాః స్వామ్ ॥ ౧॥
ఎండ్శ్లోకా

Meaning:- O Lord Shambhu! please cast Your vision that is full of nectar like kindness on me and dispel my suffering.

Then only will I understand the truth about Your kind nature.

Note:- The Lord is addressed as శంభుః - శం సుఖం భావయతి ఉత్పాదయతీతి శంభుః | శివంకర ఇత్యర్థః | “శివ ఏకో ధ్యేయః శివంకరః” ఇతి శ్రుతేః | SA(3) and VS(38).

“Shambhu” - the name means one who will remove distress and give happiness.

Since the poet says he is distressed and wants relief he addresses the Lord appropriately as Shambhu. How does one get distress? It is the consequence of sins committed by one in this or earlier births.

This will be experienced in the form of a variety of sufferings like getting an inferior birth, bad tendencies, sickness, death, being tossed into hell etc.

Devotion to the Lord can make one escape these terrible sufferings. He is known as

బీగిన్మెదశ్లోకా

భూరిభారార్తిహర్తా | అధిక అసహ్యదుఃఖనివారకః భూరిభారార్తిహర్తా |
అవిద్యాస్మిత-రాగద్వేషాభినివేశ-పుణ్యాపుణ్య-మిశ్రకర్మ
గర్భజన్మ-జరా-మరణస్థావర-నారకదుఃఖ-రాగద్వేషాదిరూప
సంసార-మోచకః | 1స్కంధాత్వా దేవం ముచ్యతే సర్వపాపైః - ఇతి | SS(563).

Śaṇḍshloka

Another of His names says He removes the sorrows of His devotees even when He is just thought of.

శోకనాశనః - స్మృతిమాత్రేణ భక్తానాం శోకం నాశయతీతి శోకనాశనః । (VS-632)

Next, the poet describes the eye sight of the Lord. The eyes are cooling, implying they are comforting. Just as the moon light is soothing and brings relief to people who have been scorched by the sun's heat during the day time, the sight of the Lord's eyes brings immense relief to the people who are suffering from a variety of causes. As said earlier the word తాపః means both heat and affliction. So, the poet prays to the Lord to dispel his sufferings by casting His eyes on him. Shiva is the repository of mercy, compassion. Shiva's sight is comforting because they are overflowing with compassion. He has many names that allude to His kindness.

Some of them are:- దయాళుః - దయాశీలో దయాళుః । SS (155).

కృపానిధిః - కృపా పరదుఃఖప్రహాణోచ్ఛా, తస్యా నిధిరిత్యనేన సదా వర్తమానత్వముక్తం భవతి ।

తచ్చివస్య శ్రుతిప్రసిద్ధమ్ “అర్హన్నిదం దయసే విశ్వమబ్భవమ్ ।
న వా ఓజీయో రుద్ర త్వదస్తి” ఇతి । sa (30).

The Navavarṇaratnamala mentions that Shiva's eyes are brimming with compassion and as a result are moist. క్లిన్నేక్షణమతికృపయా ।

The Lord's vision is also like nectar. The word అమృతం or “Nectar” is used to refer to anything that is extraordinarily lovely or beneficial. Nectar is reputed to be the drink of the gods and it confers on them freedom from sickness and old age. So, it is considered to be great. But it cannot confer immortality. The Gita says that the gods like Indra and Brahma will be reborn and come down to the earth when their quota of merit is expended.

ఆబ్రహ్మభువనాల్లోకాః పునరావర్తినోఽర్జున । BG(8-16)

But the sight from the Lord is incomparably superior to the nectar.

The Lord is reputed to have most auspicious eyes as they can not only remove sorrows of His devotees, but also confer all that is good including immortality. So He has the name శుభేక్షణః - ఈక్షణం దర్శనం యస్య శుభం శుభకరం, ముముక్షూణాం మోక్షదం, భోగార్థీనాం భోగదం,

సర్వసన్దేహ-విచ్ఛేదకారణం, పాపినాం పావనం, హృదయగ్రన్థేర్విచ్ఛేదకరం,
సర్వకర్మణాం క్షపణం, అవిద్యాయాశ్చ నివర్తకం స శుభేక్షణః । VS(393).

Those eyes can give liberation to those who seek liberation, worldly pleasures to those who seek them, destroy the sins of the sinners, clarify all doubts, remove the knot of ignorance in the mind and dissolve the pile of accumulated karmas. Shri Lalita also has a name that implies this meaning. She is known as భవదావసుధావృష్టిః । భవః

సంసార ఏవ దావో వనవహ్నిః తస్య శామకత్వాత్సుధావృష్టిః, పీయూషవర్షమివ । LS(741). She

is like a shower of nectar that puts out the forest fire of cyclic existence (i.e) endless cycle of rebirth.

The question that arises now is what should one do to make the Lord look at him? Should one have to try hard and do anything extraordinarily difficult to get His favour? NO. It is very easy to please Him. Krishna has said that He accepts with delight a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water offered by a devotee. BG(9-26).

పత్రం పుష్పం ఫలం తోయం యో మే భక్త్యా ప్రయచ్ఛతి ।
తదహం భక్త్యుపహృతమశ్నామి ప్రయతాత్మనః ॥

Accordingly Shiva is pleased when He is offered some water or even some grass (like the panic grass considered sacred and fit for offering to deities).

This is implied in His name.

కారుణ్యనిధిః - కారుణ్యం కృపా అస్మిన్నిధీయతే ఇతి కారుణ్యనిధిః ।
అతిసులభ-చులక జల, దూర్వాది, తృణస్వీకారేణ భోగ-మోక్షప్రదత్వాత్ ।
“దలం కించిత్సమాదాయ చులకం జలమేవ వా ।
యో దత్తే నియమేనాసౌ తస్మై దత్తే జగత్త్రయం” - ఇతి ॥

శివగీతాయామ్ ॥ “ఘృణీన కపర్దిన” ఇతి శ్రుతిః । SS(872).

The devotee Shri Appayya Dikshitar regrets that even after knowing the fact that it is very easy to please the Lord with such simple offerings and get even salvation in return, he failed to worship Him as he was a slave to senses and consequently is hastening towards his downfall.

బీగినmedshloka

అర్క-ద్రోణ-ప్రభృతికుసుమైః అర్చనం తే విధేయం

ప్రాప్యం తేన స్మరహర ఫలం మోక్షసామ్రాజ్యలక్ష్మీః ।
 ఏతజ్ఞానన్నపి శివ శివ వ్యర్థయన్కాలమాత్మన్
 ఆత్మద్రోహీ కరణవివశో భూయసాఽధః పతామి ॥ AS(8)

ఏందశ్లోకబ

The poet Shridhara accepts the fact that he had committed many sins in the following verse and totally surrenders to Him saying "I am Yours now."

బీగిన్మెదశ్లోకా

అవసీదామి యదార్తిభిః అనుగుణమిదం ఓకసోంహసాం ఖలు మే ।
 తవ సన్నవసీదామి యదంతకశాసన నైతత్తవానుగుణమ్ ॥ ౨॥

ఏందశ్లోకబ

Meaning:- O Lord, I am suffering as the consequence of numerous sins committed by me. But, I am yours now. So, if I am suffering in this manner it does not behoove Your greatness.

Note:- It is clear that one should not commit acts of sin. But it is in human nature, an inborn weakness to commit sins.

But we have heard of expiatory rites (known as ప్రాయశ్చిత్త కర్మాణి).

Can not we resort to them and get rid of our sins? No, say the shastras.

These rites like performing some sacrifices, giving alms and gifts to deserving people, going on pilgrimages etc., are no doubt efficacious and will wipe off the sins. But, they are not comparable to devotion to the Lord in efficiency.

This fact is repeatedly stressed in Shri Bhagavatam.

బీగిన్మెదశ్లోకా

యమాదిభిర్వ్యోగపథైః కామలోభహతో ముహుః ।
 ముకున్దసేవయా యద్వత్తథాఽత్మాఽద్ధా న శామ్యతి ॥ BH(1-6-36)
 విద్యాతపః ప్రాణనిరోధపైత్రి తీర్థాభిషేక-వ్రతదానజప్యైః ।
 నాత్యస్తశుద్ధిం లభతేఽన్తరాత్మా యథా హృదిన్ధే భగవత్సన్దే ॥ BH(12-3-48).

ఏందశ్లోకబ

These verses say that learning (studying texts), regulation of breath, kindness, pilgrimages, gifts, repetition of mantras - none of these practices can purify the mind (that is smitten by likes, dislikes, anger etc.) so efficiently as the constant remembrance of the Lord. The reason is simple.

These expiatory rites, while they are capable of removing some sins,

do not make the mind give up its inherent tendencies (called vAsanA-s).

The senses will continue to exert their pull, and consequently we will, before long, fall a victim to their wiles. Even wise persons are helpless as the senses are very powerful. Krishna points out this in Gita.(2-60).

యతతో హ్యపి కౌస్తేయ పురుషస్య విపశ్చితః ।

ఇన్ద్రియాణి ప్రమాథీని హరన్తి ప్రసభం మనః ॥

The mind is powerfully influenced by evil tendencies inherited from previous births. So, attempts to restrain or mend its ways will not yield success easily.

సదృశం చేష్టతే స్వస్యాః ప్రకృతేరానవానపి ।

ప్రకృతిం యాన్తి భూతాని నిగ్రహః కిం కరిష్యతి ॥ BG(3-33).

This is discussed at length in Book six in the story of Ajamila.

The King ParikShit brings up the point giving the example of an elephant.

The elephant goes to a river for a bath. After enjoying a long bath,

it gets out. On going to the bank of the river it will toss

mud all over its body and get dirty again. Similarly, if the the mind is

left to itself, it will go in its old ways.

క్వచిన్నివర్తతేభద్రాత్ క్వచిచ్చరతి తత్పునః ।

ప్రాయశ్చిత్తమతోఽపార్థం మనేశ్ కుజ్జరసౌచవత్ । BG(6-1-10)

Then, is there no way to get rid of our sins? The only way is to tie the

mind to God by developing devotion to Him. The sage Shuka answers this by

narrating the story of Ajamila. A part of the story is a dialogue between the

messengers of the Lord and messengers of Yama. The following verses are

from the explanation given by the former about expiatory rites. The

translation given is not exact but gives the meaning of the verses.

నైకాన్తికం తద్ధిక్రృతేఽపి నిష్కృతే మనః పునర్ధావతిచేదసత్పథే ।

తత్కర్మనిర్హారమభీప్సతాం హరేర్గుణానువాదః ఖలు సత్త్వభావనః ॥ BH(6-2-12)

The process of expiation cannot be considered complete if one's mind runs

back to its evil ways after it is completed. Because of this reason,

for those who want the eradication of the stock of their sins the uttering of

the glory of the Lord is the only remedy since it undoubtedly purifies the mind.

గురూణాం చ లఘూనాం చ గురూణి చ లఘూని చ ।

ప్రాయశ్చిత్తాని పాపానాం జ్ఞాతోఽన్తి మహర్షిభిః ॥ BH(6-2-16)

The great sages have prescribed arduous and easy processes of expiation for the case of serious and small sins.

త్రైస్తాన్యఘాని పూయన్తే తపోదానజపాదిభిః । నాధర్మజం తద్ధృదయం తదపిశాఙ్గినేవయా
॥ BH(6-2-17)

The processes of expiation, such as penance, charity and chanting of prayers, do no doubt get rid of the sins. But the vestige in the form of impressions which is traceable to the unrighteous acts remains. These impressions (vAsanA-s వాసనా) too are eradicated by devotion to the Lord's feet.

The Narayaneeyam states this succinctly as follows. (22-7).

శ్రుతిస్మృతాభ్యం విహితా వ్రతాదయః పునన్తి పాపం న లునన్తి వాసనామ్ ।
అనన్తనేవా తు నికృన్తతి ద్వయీమితి ప్రభో త్వత్పురుషా బభాషిరే ॥

The austerities like fasting etc., prescribed in the scriptures will destroy sins but not the impressions. But service to the Lord destroys both the sins and impressions.

Because of this fact, saints and acharyas have sought God's mercy to overcome their problems with their minds. The great acharya Shri Vedanta Desika in his Nyasa Dasakam (8) pleads to the Lord and says "You have to forgive my sins and make them inoperative. And also please make sure I do not again indulge in such sinful activities in future. It is possible for You to do this as You are all powerful and known to be the reservoir of mercy."

Thus he shows the way to pray.

త్వదేకరక్షస్య మమ త్వమేవ కరుణాకర । న ప్రవర్తయ పాపాని ప్రవృత్తాని నివర్తయ ॥

It is because of this fact that Lord is known as Hari - one who removes sins of those who surrender to Him.

హరిః । హరతి పాపానితి । SA(96) and VS(359) -

స్మృతిమాత్రేణ పుంసాం పాపం సంసారం వా హరతీతి ।

also as పాపనాశకరః । లోకికవైదిక-నామభిః కీర్తితః, తథా లోకికవైదికైః స్తోత్రైస్తుతః
తథా పంచాక్షరాదిభిః జప్తః పూజితశ్చ ఉమాసహాయత్వాదిరూపేణ స్మృతో ధ్యానేన వా
పాపనాశకరః । SS(355). Whether His names are uttered or praised by hymns or remembered by chanting mantras like the panchAkShara or worshipped or meditated upon He removes the sins. తవాస్మి "I am yours now" These words should at once bring to our mind the famous assurance of the Lord, in His incarnation as Rama,

given when Vibhishana surrendered to Him. Rama proclaimed (Yuddha Kanda- 18-33):
సక్యదేవ ప్రపన్నాయ తవాస్మీతి చ యాచతే । అభయం సర్వభూతేభ్యో దదామ్యేతద్
వ్రతం మమ ॥

“I assure security from all beings to him who comes to me once and asks for
protection saying “I am yours. This is my vow.

Shri Appayya Dikshita also says “I am no doubt a sinner, easily yielding to sense
pleasures, always transgressing the scriptural injunctions, petty minded, not
having even a trace of merit and so on. But now I have surrendered at Your
feet. It is not proper on Your part to ignore me now.

Beginmedshloka

పాపిష్ఠోఽహం విషయచపలః సంతతద్రోహశాలీ
కార్పణ్యైకస్థిరనివసతిః పుణ్యగర్ధానభిజ్ఞః ।
యద్యప్యైవం తదపి శరణం త్వత్పదాబ్జం ప్రపన్నం
నైనం దీనం స్మరహర తవోపేక్షితం నాథ యుక్తమ్ ॥ AS(28).

Endshloka

Why does the poet say that his suffering does not behoove Shiva's greatness?
Shiva is addressed here by Shridhara as అన్తకశాసనః । one who controls
Yama - the god of death. This implies that by getting His grace and protection
one can escape even death as the sage Markandeya did. The fear of death is the
worst suffering any living being can experience. But Yama himself is afraid
of Lord Shiva. So Shiva has the names kAlakAla and Mrityunjaya.

కాలకాలః । కాలయతి నాశయతీతి వ్యుత్పత్త్యా కాలో యమః, తస్యాపి కాలః,
కాలయితా ఉపసంహరకః ఇతి । SA (29).

and మృత్యుంజయః । మృత్యుః మరణం స్వభక్తానాం మృత్యుం జయతి
స్వోపాసనయా పరిహరతీతి మృత్యుంజయః ।

“త్ర్యంబకం యజామహే సుగంధిం పుష్టివర్ధనమ్ ।

ఉర్వారుకమివ బన్ధనాన్మృతోర్ముక్షీయ మామృతాత్” । ఇతి

“యస్మిన్యుక్తా ఋషయో దేవతాశ్చ, తమేవ జ్ఞాత్వా

మృత్యుపాశాఞ్ఞనత్తి” ఇతి శ్రుతేశ్చ । SA (71) and SS(123).

Yama being the destroyer of everything is known as kAla. Even Yama is destroyed
by Him and so Shiva is known as kAlakAla.

Beginmedshloka

దేవ స్మరంతి తవ యే తేషాం స్మరతోఽపి నార్తిరితి కీర్తిమ్ ।
కలయసి శివ పాహీతి క్రన్దన్ సీదామ్యహం కిముచితమిదమ్ ॥ ౩॥

ఏందశ్శ్లోకబ

Meaning:- O Lord, I have heard that those who think of You do not get exposed to suffering. I am crying "Shiva! save me, and still continue to suffer."

Is this proper?

Note:- As said earlier, Shiva has the name Hari. The name means that he removes the sins of even those whose hearts are loaded with evil tendencies.

హరిః । "హరిర్హరతి పాపాని దుష్టచిత్తైరపి స్మృతః" ఇతి ।

SS(542). Thus the author should not have been exposed to suffering.

How to express the fact that "I have surrendered to You and am yours now?"

This is answered by saying that I am crying and saying "Shiva, save me."

Keeping this idea in the mind, we have the habit of saying the following verse at the end of our daily puja or prayer

అన్యథా శరణం నాస్తి త్వమేవ శరణం మమ ।

తస్మాత్ కారుణ్యభావేన రక్ష రక్ష మహేశ్వర ॥

'O Lord, Maheshvara! I have no recourse other than You.

So, out of mercy, please protect me.'

ఏగిందశ్శ్లోకబ

అదిశ్యాఘక్యతౌ మామన్తర్యామిన్నసావహూత్యైతి ।

ఆర్తిషుమజ్జయనే మాం కింబ్రూయాం తవకృపైకపాత్రమహమ్ ॥ ౪॥

ఏందశ్శ్లోకబ

Meaning:- You are my inner Self. This being so, it is clear that it is by Your inducement only I committed various sins and as the result am now suffering.

What can I say in this matter? I deserve to be the recipient of Your grace.

Note:- An important qualification of one who claims to be the Lord's devotee is to desist from acts prohibited in the scriptures as wrong and sinful.

The scriptures were given out by the Lord Himself. So, violating the scriptural injunctions amounts to disobeying His orders and as a result become a serious offence. This being so, how can one say 'I am a sinner' and claim to be a devotee and have surrendered to Him? The author puts forth a specious explanation to justify his sins of omission and commission. We too

would have heard the same statements from some people. They say that God is behind every act and thought of ours. The upanishads and Gita too have some statements that seem to support this view. For example, Krishna said that different kinds of dispositions of beings, such as intelligence, wisdom, non-illusion, patience, truth, self-restraint, calmness, pleasure, pain, birth, death, fear, security, innocence, equanimity, contentment, austerity, beneficence, fame, shame all arise from Him, the Lord alone. (BG 10-4,5).

బేగినmedshloka

బుద్ధిరానమసంమోహః క్షమా సత్యం దమః శమః ।

సుఖం దుఃఖం భవోఽభావో భయం చాభయమేవ చ ॥

అహింసా సమతా తుష్టిస్తపో దానం యశోఽయశః ।

భవంతి భావా భూతానాం మత్త ఏవ పృథగ్విధాః ।

ఏందshlokab

This being so, should not He be held responsible for whatever good or evil one does? The answer is that no doubt He is the cause behind all our mental dispositions. But He is the general cause, or the సామాన్య కారణమ్ । but our own deeds are responsible for our individual dispositions. An analogy will make it easier to understand. People plant different kinds of seeds on the earth. The earth supports all of them and they grow. But only a coconut tree comes out of a coconut seed, a mango tree out of a mango seed and so on. Thus, the earth is the general cause and the respective seeds are the special cause, or the విశేష కారణమ్ । In the same way, The Lord is the general cause, supporting all dispositions and our own deeds or karmas are the special cause. So, it is said that బుద్ధిః కర్మానుసారిణీ । or one's thinking is shaped by his deeds. God is behind the power to think, but responsibility to use the power properly and take the right decisions rests with the individual eventually. We may think of another example - a car. The car in the hands of a careful driver can take the passengers safely to places they want to reach. But the same car in the hands of a rash and negligent driver will become a vehicle of accident or even death. We cannot hold the car responsible for the accident. It just provides the motive power.

The result, a safe journey or an accident is in the hands of the driver. God has given us intelligence. We have to use it to travel in the right path shown by the scriptures. Because of this reason, the intellect is often compared to a driver. బుద్ధిం తు సారథిం విద్ధి says the Kathopanishad. (1-3-3)

The author of the popular hymn Sharada Bhujangam presents this situation from another angle, that is interesting to read. He is addressing Sharada Devi.

He says that, if She does not come to his rescue and relieve the distress in his heart, then She too will suffer since She is present in his heart, as in the hearts of all beings!

యది త్వం మదీయం శుచం నాపనుద్యాః తదా దుఃఖవహ్నిప్రతప్తేఽన్తరజ్ఞే ।
మదీయే స్థితాయాస్తవాప్యంబ ఖేదో భవఏదిత్యహం చిన్తయాఽఽర్తోఽస్మి భూయః ॥
Bēginmedshloka

మన్దాగ్రజీరహం తవ మయి కరుణాం ఘటయితుం విభో నాలమ్ ।
ఆకృష్టం తాం తు బలాత్ అలమిహ మద్దైన్యమితి సమాశ్వసిమి ॥ x ॥
Endshlokab

Meaning:- I am a dullard, and the foremost one at that. I have not known how to be worthy of Your grace and hence took the wrong path. I am just a wretched person. You should thrust Your grace on me and save me.

Note:- After putting forth the plausible argument, the author immediately feels remorseful and prays to the Lord to save him.

Why should the poet call himself a dull witted person?

The word “dullard” or మన్దః has a special meaning in the vedantic parlance. It is used to refer to one who lacks discrimination and does not have the wisdom to make the right choice when several options are open to him. For example, when a child is asked to choose between a big colorful baloon and a hundred rupees note, it will go for the baloon only. This is because the baloon appears colorful and it can derive joy by playing with the baloon. The child, being immature cannot understand the value of the currency note. Similarly, our scriptures present two options to us. One is the path that provides for material benefits that can provide worldly enjoyment. The other is the path that shows the way to benediction or blessedness that can give lasting happiness. But the latter being not visible and immediately available,

most opt for the first path that seems to give happiness here while living.

The scriptures say that such people are immature and lack deep wisdom. This is because the happiness one can get in this world is short lived. They will come to an end some day. And they are not unmixed with sorrow. So, they cannot be termed as real joy. Whereas the path that leads to God assures lasting peace and happiness though the results may not be evident here and now. Because of these reasons people who have not studied the scriptures deeply and lack full faith in what they say, stay away from the superior path shown by them. Yama, the god of death, says this to his student Nachiketas in Kathopanishad. (1-2-2).

శ్రేయశ్చ ప్రేయశ్చ మనుష్యమేతస్మా సంపరీత్య వివినక్తి ధీరః ।

శ్రేయో హి ధీరోఽభి ప్రేయసో వృణీతే ప్రేయో మన్తో యోగక్షేమాత్ వృణీతే ॥

How do such “dull witted” people spend their time? Shri Bhagavata says that they slog in pursuit of wealth, security etc. But these things so earned cannot assure happiness or security. So, the text terms the effort spent in search of money and such material gains as “frivolous pursuits” and calls these people as “unfortunate ones. They work hard during the day and by the end of the day they are totally exhausted. So, they drop off to sleep. Thus their lives are frittered away in sleep by night and in frivolous pursuits by day.

They miss the very goal of life. BH(1-16-9)

మన్దస్య మన్దప్రజ్ఞస్య వయో మన్దాయుషస్య చ ।

నిద్రయా హ్రాయతే నక్తం దివా చ వ్యర్థకర్మభిః ।

God is the power behind the mind as said earlier. But He had also given us scriptures to guide our conduct. They clearly state what constitutes the right deed and what acts are prohibited and so to be given up. One who wants to grow spiritually and seek the Lord’s grace should use his discretion and take the right path. Krishna says this to Arjuna and points out that if one still takes to neglect the scriptural injunctions under the impulse of desire or greed he will not attain happiness in this world nor the higher worlds. BG-(16-23,24).

యః శాస్త్రవిధిముత్సృజ్య వర్తతే కామకారతః । న స సిద్ధిమవాప్నోతి న సుఖం న పరాం గతిమ్ ॥

తస్మాచ్ఛాస్త్రం ప్రమాణం తే కార్యాకార్య-వ్యవస్థితౌ । జ్ఞాత్వా శాస్త్రవిధానోక్తం కర్మ
కర్తుమహర్హసి ॥

The sages have also said this in their Smriti texts. Sage Yagnavalkya had said
in his work thus -

విహితస్యాననుష్ఠానాత్ నిన్దితస్య చ సేవనాత్ । అనిగ్రహాచ్ఛేన్ద్రియాణాం నరః
పతనమృచ్ఛతి ॥

By failing to do the prescribed duties,

by doing deeds that are prohibited by the scriptures and by not having control
over the senses one seeks his fall. Keeping this in mind, Shri Vedanta Desika
admits his failings and prays to the Lord. (Nyasa Dasakam. 9). He says -

అకృత్యానాం చ కరణం కృత్యానాం వర్జనం చ మే । క్షమస్య నిఖిలం దేవ ప్రణతార్తిహర
ప్రభో ॥

You, the Lord known to be the one who removes the sufferings of the devotees
who surrender to You, have to pardon me for committing the acts prohibited by
the scriptures and failure to perform those acts that are prescribed by the
scriptures. Shri Appayya DikShitar also appeals to the Lord to excuse his
transgressions that he had made knowingly. He is going about without shame
or fear of the consequences of such transgressions. And he says he had
done so in his previous births also. He wonders how he can get away from his
innumerable problems without Lord's grace.(AS-11).

బీగినmedshloka

ఉల్లఙ్ఘ్యజ్ఞాముడుపతికలాచూడ తే విశ్వవన్ద్య
త్యక్తాచారః పశువదధునా ముక్తలజ్జశ్చరామి ।
ఏవం నానావిధభవతతిప్రాప్తదీర్ఘాపరాధః
క్షేణాంభోధిం కథమహమృతే త్వత్ప్రసాదాత్తరేయమ్ ॥

ఏందshlokab

Mind is known as one of the organs like the eyes and ears. The word mind is
used to refer to the intellect, memory and the capacity to recollect also
according to the context. Only, it being invisible is called an inner organ
and it leads the external organs to act according to its dictates. Because our
mind is scattered in many directions due to our attachments and vicissitudes
in our lives it is restless. It is difficult to control and focus it on a

specific object like God. Even the great warrior Arjuna had accepted this fact and said that the mind is indeed restless, turbulent, strong and obstinate.

Therefore it is virtually impossible to restrain it. It is as difficult as restraining the wind.

బీగినmedshloka

చక్చలం హి మనః కృష్ణ ప్రమాథి బలవద్ దృఢమ్ ।

తస్యాహం నిర్లహం మన్యే వాయోరివ సుదుష్కరమ్ ॥ BG (6-34).

ఏందshlokab

A question may arise at this point that if the mind is so difficult to control, but is fickle and insubordinate why have we been provided with such an instrument?

The reason is that, though the mind may be turbulent and difficult to control, it is a powerful instrument given to us. The minds of the animals have vastly reduced capacity compared to our minds. They are controlled by instincts and have no free will. The animal birth is meant solely to expiate for the sins committed in the previous births. In such a birth one cannot do acts, like going to the temples and offering prayers to the Lord, that will improve its quality of life in the ensuing births. On the other hand, we can do all of them. Using the free will we may discard courses that are not beneficial to us and choose the path that appears right to us. Thus, God has blessed us with a powerful organ with which we can achieve great goals. The greatest goal, said in our scriptures is mokSha or liberation from cyclic existence.

This can be attained by humans only. To help us to achieve this objective, the kindly God has also given us scriptures which talk in detail about the way to attain the goal. Since all of us cannot be expected to read and understand the texts, He has also sent us great saints who are willing to guide us.

We are only required to heed their advice, get hold of the mind and channelise it towards God. It is admittedly a difficult task. The task is comparable to capturing a wild elephant and taming it. The elephant is a very strong animal. But, once it is tamed, it can be trained to do very difficult jobs.

Our mind is like the wild elephant - difficult to train. If we try hard and tame it and train it to do our bidding it can lead us to liberation itself.

So the upanishad says:

మన ఏవ మనుష్యాణాం కారణం బద్ధమోక్షయోః । బద్ధాయ విషయాసక్తం ముక్తం
నిర్విషయం స్మృతమ్ ॥

Mind is the cause for both bondage and liberation. Attached to the objects it becomes the cause for bondage. Freed of attachments it becomes source of freedom. It is in our power to realise the wrong deeds we commit. We have to stay away from such acts in future.

beginmedshloka

త్వం సర్వజ్ఞోఽహం పునరజ్ఞోఽసీశోహమీశ్వరత్వమసి ।

త్వం మయి దోషాన్ గణయసి కిం కథయే తుదతి కిం దయా నత్వామ్ ॥ ౬ ॥

endshlokab

Meaning:- I confess I am an ignoramus and a weakling. In contrast, You are omniscient and omnipotent. Because of Your omniscience You are aware of my faults.

What shall I say? Does not Your compassion prod You to overlook my faults?

Note:- By saying that he is ignoramus, the author implies that the teachings of the holy texts have not fully sunk in his mind. As a result his mind still lacks total faith in the teachings of the sacred books and saints. It is wavering and has many doubts. Such people will encounter difficulty in the path of spiritual progress. Krishna says this. BG(4-40).

అజ్ఞశ్చైశ్రద్ధధానశ్చ సంశయాత్మా వినశ్యతి ।

నాయం తోక్తోఽస్తి న పరో న సుఖం సంశయాత్మనః ॥

By saying he is a weakling the poet is referring not to physical weakness but to that of the mind. A weak mind is not settled in a particular pursuit but goes after many objects. It had been doing so not only in this birth but in the innumerable births we had prior to this present birth also. It is not used to being controlled. When the mind is not under control, it is easily swayed by emotions like desire or anger. One whose mind is thus out of control cannot be expected to have discrimination and judgement. Krishna said:

ఇన్ద్రియాణాం హి చరతాం యన్మనోఽనువిధీయతే ।

తదస్య హరతి ప్రజ్ఞాం వాయు-ర్నావమివాంభసి ॥ BG (2-67)

The upanishads state this clearly. They say that the supreme Being cannot be obtained by one without strength of mind. He should have his goal clearly in mind and work for it with determination.

నాయమాత్మా బలహీనేన లభ్యః । MU (3-2-4) and again in Kathopanishad (1-3-24).

Yama says that the Supreme Being is not obtained by one who has not abandoned evil conduct, whose is not calm, who has not subdued his senses and mind, though the person be endowed with sharp intellect.

నావిరతో దుశ్చరితాన్నాశాన్తో నాసమాహితః । నాశాన్తమనసో వాపి ప్రజ్ఞానేనైనమాప్పుయాత్
॥

So, it is very necessary to get control over it and turn it to the other direction, namely the spiritual path.

The poet said that his mind is still not fully established in the Lord's feet.

So he still has a long way to travel before he can call himself a devotee. We should remember here that the author Shridhara is saying this as our representative.

బీగిన్మెదశ్లోకా

ఆశ్రితమార్తతరం మామపేక్షనే కిమితి శివ న కిం దయనే!

శ్రితగోష్ఠా దీనార్తిహృదితి ఖలు శంసంతి జగతి సన్తస్తామ్ ॥ ౭॥

ఏందశ్లోకాబ

Meaning:- I depend on You. Still why do You ignore me? Cannot You show some mercy towards me? The saintly people say that You take care of those who depend upon You and remove the distress of those who are destitute and helpless.

Note:- God had assured this in Gita. (9-22).

అనన్యాశ్చిన్తయన్తో మాం యే జనాః పర్యుపాసతే ।

తేషాం నిత్యాభియుక్తానాం యోగక్షేమం వహామ్యహమ్ ॥

Shri Shankaracharya puts this idea in a very nice way in his Shivanandalahari (14).

He says that he is the foremost among the weak and destitute. And Shiva is renowned to be the protector of the weak and destitute. Thus there exists a unique relationship between them. Because of this reason, his protection is the responsibility of Shiva. HE has to overlook all his weaknesses and faults and save him.

బీగిన్మెదశ్లోకా

ప్రభు-స్త్వం దీనానాం ఖలు పరమబంధుః పశుపతే

ప్రముఖోఽహం తేషామపి కిముత బంధుత్వమనయోః ।

త్వయైవ క్షన్తవ్యా శివ మదపరాధాశ్చ సకలాః

ప్రయత్నాత్కర్తవ్యం మదవనమియం బంధుశరణిః ॥

ఏందశ్లోకబ

బీగిన్మెదశ్లోకా

ప్రహరాహరేతి వాదీ ఫణిత-మదాఖ్య ఇతి పాలితో భవతా।

శివ పాహితి వదోఽహం శ్తోతో న కిం త్వాం కథం న పాల్యస్తే ॥ ౮ ॥

ఏందశ్లోకబ

Meaning:- I have heard a story that You blessed a dacoit leader because he was unwittingly repeating Your name “Hara whenever he said prahara ప్రహర to mean “beat him up, and Ahara ఆహర to mean “kill him. I am wittingly uttering Your name “Shiva and saying “save me. Am I not dependant on You? Do I not deserve to be protected by You?

Note:- Even when uttered casually or unwittingly, the Lord’s names purify.

They are so powerful. This is said in Shivagita. This says that even if one utters His name as an exclamation in surprise, or in fear or distress like hunger, he is purified and gets the highest goal.

ఆశ్చర్యే వా భయే శోకే క్షుతే వా మమ నామ యః ।

వ్యాజేన వా స్మరేద్యస్త స యాతి పరమాం గతిమ్ ॥

A similar statement is seen in Shri Bhagavatam also.

సాంకేత్యం పారిహాస్యం వా స్తోభం హేలనమేవ వా ।

వైకుణ్ఠ-నామ-గ్రహణం అశేషాఘహరం విదుః ॥

Lord’s names uttered as a gesture or in joke or in the midst of a song or even out of disrespect washes away all sins.

యథాగదం వీర్యతమముప్యక్తం యదృచ్ఛయా ।

అజానతోఽప్యాత్మగుణం కుర్యాన్మన్త్రోఽప్యదహృతః ॥ BH(6-2-14,19)

Just as a potent medicine will certainly produce its salutary effect even when taken by one who is unaware of its efficiency, though by chance, so does the Lord’s name reveal its efficacy even when it is uttered by someone without being aware of its power. DakShayani put this forcefully to her father DakSha when he insulted Shiva in a sacrifice conducted by him. He did not invite Shiva and His wife DakShayani. Her father added insult to the injury by not making any offering to Shiva, her husband. She was greatly outraged by all this and in her reply said the two letters (శివ) SIVA uttered by one even casually in the course of a conversation will

remove the sins quickly.

యద్ ద్వయక్షరం నామ గిరేరితం నృణాం సకృత్-ప్రసజ్ఞాదఘమాసు హన్తి తత్ ।
పవిత్రకీర్తిం తమలజ్ఞ్యశాసనం భవానహో ద్వేష్టి శివం శివేతరః ॥ BH(4-4-14).

beginmedshloka

శరణం వ్రజ శివం ఆర్తిం స తవ హరేదితి సతాం గిరాహమ్ త్వామ్ ।
శరణం గతోఽస్మి పాలయ ఖలమపి తేష్విశ పక్షపాతాన్మామ్ ॥ ౯ ॥

endshloka

Meaning:- I have heard noble people say “surrender to Shiva. He will remove your distress. Having faith in those words I surrender to You. I admit I am a mean person. Will not You save me atleast to make their statement true?

Note:- Surrender to the Lord is the only way for one who wants to walk the new way of life that will free one from sorrows. In particular this is suited to one who does not have great deal of scholarship and had not lead a disciplined life. The poet says this in Sharada bhujanga stotram thus.

న మన్తం న యన్తం న వా స్తోత్రరీతిం విజానేఽమృ వక్తుం చ మద్దుఃఖరీతిమ్ ।
త్వదంఘ్రిప్రణమ్రో న పాత్రం శుచః స్యాదితి త్వాం ప్రపద్యే తవైవ ప్రసాదాత్ ॥

He says “I do not know mantram, tantram, the manner of praising You and not even how to express my distress. One who prostrates at Your feet will not suffer any more. Knowing this I surrender to You by Your grace only.

Krishna says that even if a person had lived an evil life, but had decided to turn a new leaf and worships Him, the Lord considers such a person to be a righteous one and saves him. BG(9-30,31).

beginmedshloka

అపి చేత్సుదురాచారో భజతే మామనన్యభాక్ ।
సాధురేవ స మన్తవ్యః సమ్యగ్వ్యవసితో హి సః ॥

క్షిప్రం భవతి ధర్మాత్మా శశ్వచ్ఛాన్తిం నిగచ్ఛతి ।
కౌన్తేయ ప్రతిజానీహి న మే భక్తః ప్రణశ్యతి ॥

endshloka

Krishna assures that one who turns to Him and becomes devoted to Him will not perish. In a similar situation, Shri Vedanta Desika surrenders to the Lord accepting his weaknesses.

beginmedshloka

అజ్ఞానవారిధి-మపాయధురన్ధరం మాం

అజ్ఞావిభజ్ఞాన-మకిచ్చినసార్వభౌమమ్ ।

విన్దన్ భవాన్ విబుధనాథ సమస్తవేదీ

కిం నామ పాత్రమపరం మనుతే కృపాయాః ॥ Devanayaka Panchashat.(49).

endshlokab

The poet says “O Lord! You are omniscient. I am an ocean of ignorance. I am the first among sinners. I have broken all Your mandates regarding the Do’s and Dont’s. I have no virtue to claim or take to the path of devotion or surrender. Thus I am the most indigent person. Thus I am the one who needs Your mercy most. Why then are You looking for another person to show Your mercy? It is seen that in these verses the poet repeatedly says he is a weakling, sinner etc. Obviously such statements do not sound nice. They sound like cringing and whining. Should one keep on making such statements before God who is said to be kind and merciful? All of us do make mistakes. Sometimes such mistakes are made knowingly and often unknowingly also. But no one likes to think of them, not to speak of admitting them before someone else. It is not in one’s nature to confess one’s serious sins to another person. Our ego stands in the way of doing so. In the normal case any person has no means of knowing other person’s mistakes unless he witnesses the act. A criminal has to confess his crimes to a judge when confronted with strong evidences. If he denies the charges or tries to evade them by telling lies etc., he will get into more trouble. On the other hand if he confesses and pleads for mercy explaining he was forced to commit the crime under force of circumstances, the judge may consider his case with sympathy. He may let the offender off with the minimum penalty. But in our case, many of our sins might have been committed in privacy with no one seeing them. Sins are committed not only by way of bodily actions but by words and thoughts also. The question, then, is why not keep quiet without talking about them? The answer is that we may be able to hide our mistakes from other people, but not from God who sees all and knows all, including our innermost thoughts. Aptly

He is known as the Great Witness or sAkShI.

సాక్షీ - సాక్షాదవ్యవధానేన స్వరూపబోధేన ఈక్షతే పశ్యతి సర్వమితి సాక్షీ । VS(15).

So, there is no question of hiding anything from Him. But, if we are devoted to Him and sincerely repent our past mistakes He may take a lenient view and rid us of the sins that pollute our minds. Krishna tells that just as the blazing fire burns the faggots put into it to ashes quickly, devotion to Him destroys the sins of a devotee. BH(11-14-19).

యథాగ్నిః సుసమృద్ధార్చిః కరోత్యైధాంసి భస్మసాత్ ।

తథా మద్విషయా భక్తిః ఉద్ధవైనాంసి కృతస్సశః ॥

Because of this reason God gets the name

పాపనాశనః - కీర్తితః పూజితో ధ్యాతః స్మృతః పాపరాశిం

నాశయన్ పాపనాశనః । VS(992). Whether by chanting of His names, or worshipped or meditated upon He destroys the heaps of sins of His devotee.

And also

పవిత్రః - పావనః పరమస్తు పుమాన్ ధ్యాతో దృష్టః కీర్తితః

శ్రుతః పూజితః స్మృతః ప్రణతః స సర్వాన్ పాపాన్ ఉన్మూలయతీతి ॥

పుష్కరమహం పవిత్రమహ మితి శ్రుతిః ॥ SS(90).

Fully knowing this, great devotees have repeatedly prayed to Lord to forgive their sins. They say that they have been unable to resist the pull of senses and fallen a prey to petty desires, anger, lust, greed etc., and have committed many mistakes. They have now realised that they cannot win over these powerful enemies with their volition and have come to the Lord as the final recourse. So, it is now incumbent on Him to rescue them who are now full of repentance.

ఇతి శ్రీ శ్రీధరవేంకటేశ్వరకృతిషు ఆర్తిహరస్తోత్రం సంపూర్ణమ్ ॥

Artiharastotra

O Lord Shambhu! please cast Your vision that is full of nectar like kindness on me and dispel my suffering. Then only will I understand the truth about Your kind nature. 1

O Lord, I am suffering as the consequence of numerous sins

committed by me. But, I am yours now. So, if I am suffering
in this manner it does not behoove Your greatness. 2

O Lord, I have heard that those who think of You do not get
exposed to suffering. I am crying “Shiva! save me, and
still continue to suffer. Is this proper? 3

You are my inner Self. This being so, it is clear that it is by
Your inducement only I committed various sins and as the result
am now suffering. What can I say in this matter? I deserve to
be the recipient of Your grace. 4

I am a dullard, and the foremost one at that. I have not known how
to be worthy of Your grace and hence took the wrong path. I am just
a wretched person. You should thrust Your grace on me and save me. 5
I confess I am an ignoramus and a weakling. In contrast, You are
omniscient and omnipotent. Because of Your omniscience You are
aware of my faults. What shall I say? Does not Your compassion
prod You to overlook my faults? 6

I depend on You. Still why do You ignore me? Cannot You show
some mercy towards me? The saintly people say that You take
care of those who depend upon You and remove the distress of
those who are destitute and helpless. 7

I have heard a story that You blessed a dacoit leader because he
was unwittingly repeating Your name “Hara whenever he said prahara
to mean “beat him up, and Ahara to mean “kill him. I am
wittingly uttering Your name “Shiva and saying “save me. Am I
not dependant on You? Do I not deserve to be protected by You? 8
I have heard noble people say “surrender to Shiva. He will remove
your distress. Having faith in those words I surrender to You.
I admit I am a mean person. Will not You save me atleast to make
their statement true? 9

Thus ends the Artiharastotram composed by Shridhara Venkatesha.

LIFE OF SRIDHARA VENKATESA


శ్రీకణ్ణమివ భాస్వంతం శివనామపరాయణమ్ |
శ్రీధరం వేఙ్కటేశార్యం శ్రేయసే గురుమాశ్రయే ||

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 kali age 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 భగవన్నామభూషణమ్ (Bhagavannamabhushanam) on the subject which is sadly not available now. Bodhendra Swami had also written a book నామామృతరసాయనమ్ (Namamritarasayanam) on the subject wherein

he had made references to the work of Ayyaval. Once Ayyaval had to perform a shrAddha 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) Matrubhutasatakam. (5) Stuti paddhati. (6) Shivabhakthikalpalata. (7) Shivabhakta lakShanam. (8) Taravali stotram. (9) Artihara stotram. (10) Kuliresvarashtakam. (11) Jambhunathashtakam. (12) Doshapariharashtakam. (13) Krishnadwadasha manjari. (14) Achyutashtakam. (15) Dola navarathnamala. (16) Padamanimanjari - a sanskrit dictionary. (17) Shahajiraja charitam.

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Artiharastotram

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