

॥ தோடகாஷ்டகம்
ஸ்ரீஸங்கரதே³ஸரிகாஷ்டகம் ச ॥

.. toTakAShTakaM (praise of sha.nkarAchArya) ..

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Here is an article containing the toTakAShTakam, eight verses composed in honor of Adi ShankarAchArya.

A short description of the advaita paramparA and a short account of Shankara's disciple toTaka are included.

Invocation:

ஸம்கரம் ஸம்கராசார்யம் கேஸவம் பா³த³ராயணம் ।
ஸுத்ரபா⁴ஷ்யக்ரு³தௌ வந்தே³ ப⁴க³வந்தௌ புன: புன: ॥

I offer obeisances again and again to shrI Veda VyAsa, the author of the Brahma sUtras, who is none other than Lord VishNu, and shrI ShankarAchArya, the commentator on those sUtras, who is none other than Lord Shiva.

advaita guru-paramparA:

நாராயணம் பத்³மபு⁴வம் வஸிஷ்ட²ம் ஸக்திம் ச தத்³புத்ரபராஸரம் ச ।
வ்யாஸம் ஸாகம் கௌ³ட³பத்³ம் மஹாந்தம் கோ³விந்த³யோகீ³ந்த³ரமதா²ஸ்ய
ஸிஷ்யம் ॥

ஸ்ரீ ஸம்கராசார்யமதா²ஸ்ய பத்³ம்பாத³ம் ச ஹஸ்தாமலகம் ச ஸிஷ்யம் ।
தம் தோடகம் வார்திககாரமன்யானஸ்மத்³கு³ருன் ஸம்ததமான்தோ⁵ஸ்யி ॥

These two verses honor the advaita paramparA. The names mentioned here, in order, are 1) ShrIman nArAyaNa, 2) BrahmA, 3) VasiShTha, 4) Shakti, 5) ParAshara, 6) VyAsa, 7) Shuka, 8) GauDapAda, 9) GovindapAda, 10) ShrI (Adi) ShankarAchArya, and his four disciples, 11) PadmapAda, 12) HastAmalaka, 13) toTaka, and 14) Sureshvara, and other Gurus.

Sureshvara is also known as VArttikakAra because he wrote the famous vArttika's on the BRihadAraNyaka and taittirIya upaniShads.

ShrImannArAyaNa instructed the Vedas to BrahmA. The Vedas have no author, and are hence called "apauruSheya." Veda VyAsa authored the Brahma sUtra and other texts, such as the GIItA, to expound the knowledge of the Vedas.

Jagadguru Adi ShankarAchArya is a unique historical figure of India in that he combined within himself the characteristics of a poet, logician, an ardent devotee and a mystic and at the same time was the leading exponent of the system of philosophy called advaita. In his commentaries on the Prasthanatraya, he exhibited a rare faculty of relentlessly logical and concatenated argument and refutation, and such subtlety of reasoning as has been unsurpassed in the philosophical works of the world.

His main teachings may be summarized as the affirmation of SamsAra or succession of births and deaths due to Karma and its significance, the

realization of the essential relativity of phenomena in comparison to the reality of the Supreme Self, the realization of that Self not being a mere theoretical exercise, but in the nature of the direct realization and actual experience taught by the upanishadic saying, tattvam asi, “You are That.”

On the occasion of Shri Shankara Jayanti, I decided to post the popular stotra on Shankara known as “toTakAShTaka.” The hymn is so called because it has been composed in the difficult but beautiful meter called toTaka. There is an interesting history associated with this stotra. Anandagiri was one of the less scholarly disciples living with Shankara at Sringeri. But Giri, as he was called, was extremely devoted to the AchArya. Giri would always engage himself in the service of his Guru. Once it so happened that Shankara was about to begin his usual morning discourse on the upanishads and the other disciples started reciting the shAnti pAtha. But Giri was absent because he had gone to the river to wash his Guru’s clothes. So Shankara asked the other disciples to wait for Giri’s return. But PadmapAda, who was obviously proud of his erudition, said, “Giri is a dull fellow. He really does not deserve to learn the shAstras. What is the point in waiting for him to join us?”

Shankara decided to humble the pride of PadmapAda and other disciples. Out of sheer compassion for Giri, the AchArya blessed him with the knowledge of the shAstras, making use of supernatural powers to do so. As a result, Giri became a learned scholar instantaneously. Returning from the river, he composed the toTakAShTaka, eight verses in praise of his Guru. The other disciples were struck with wonder to hear him extemporaneously compose the aShTaka in the difficult meter. Giri also composed another work, again in the toTaka meter, called the ShrutisArasamuddharaNa. Due to the grace of the Guru, Giri became a knower of all scriptures, and he earned the respect of PadmapAda and other disciples. He came to be known as toTakAchArya, because he was an adept in composing verses in the toTaka meter. He became one of Shankara’s four most important disciples, and was later entrusted with running the JyotirmaTh at Badari.

The above story is from the Shankara digvijaya of Madhava-Vidyaranya.

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The toTakAShTaka has been composed in the toTaka meter, in which each pAda (quarter) has four sa-gaNas. Here a sa-gaNas is made up of two short syllables followed by a long one. The hymn naturally lends itself to be set to music. A suggested RAga is (HindustAni) toDi.

விதி³தா²கி²ஸா²ஸ்த்ர²ஸு²தா⁴ஐ⁴லதே⁴ மஹி²தோ²பனி²ஷத்² கதி²தா²ர்த²னி²தே⁴ ।

ஹ்ரு³யே கலயே விமலம் சரணம் ப⁴வ சம்கர தே³ஸிக மே ஸரணம் || 1 ||

O knower of the nectar-ocean of the scriptures, the expounder of the knowledge of the great upanishadic treasure! I meditate on Your pure lotus feet in my heart. O Preceptor Shankara, be my refuge.

கரு³ணவரு³லய பாலய மாம் ப⁴வஸாக³ரது: ³க²விதூ³னஹ்ரு³த³ம் |
ரஸயாகி²லத³ர்ஸனதத்தவவித³ம் ப⁴வ சம்கர தே³ஸிக மே ஸரணம் || 2 ||

Save me whose heart is afflicted by the misery of the ocean of births,
O (You who are) the ocean of compassion! (By Your grace) make me the knower of the truths of all the systems of philosophy. O Preceptor Shankara, be my refuge.

ப⁴வதா ஜனதா ஸுஹிதா ப⁴விதா நிஜபோ³த⁴விசாரண சாருமதே |
கலயேஸ்வரஜீவவிவேகவித³ம் ப⁴வ சம்கர தே³ஸிக மே ஸரணம் || 3 ||

The people have found happiness due to You, who have the intellect adept in the inquiry into Self-knowledge. Make me understand the knowledge of God and the soul. O Preceptor Shankara, be my refuge.

ப⁴வ ஏவ ப⁴வானிதி மே நிதராம் ஸமஜாயத சேதஸி கௌதுகிதா |
மம வாரய மோஹமஹாஜலதி⁴ம் ப⁴வ சம்கர தே³ஸிக மே ஸரணம் || 4 ||

You are Lord Shiva Himself. Knowing this my mind is filled with an abundance of joy. Put an end to my sea of delusion. O Preceptor Shankara, be my refuge.

ஸுக்ரு³தே⁵தி⁴க்ரு³தே ப³ஹுதா⁴ ப⁴வதோ ப⁴விதா ஸமத³ர்ஸனலாலஸதா
|
அதி³னமிமம் பரிபாலய மாம் ப⁴வ சம்கர தே³ஸிக மே ஸரணம் || 5 ||

Only after numerous virtuous deeds have been performed in many ways, does a keen desire for the experience of Brahman through You arise. Protect (me who am) extremely helpless. O Preceptor Shankara, be my refuge.

ஜக³தீமவிதும் கவிதாக்ரு³தயோ விசரந்தி மஹாமஹஸஸ்²லத: |
அஹிமாம்ஸூரிவாத்ர விபா⁴ஸி கு³ரோ ப⁴வ சம்கர தே³ஸிக மே ஸரணம் || 6 ||

For the sake of saving the world, (Your) great (disciples) wander assuming various forms and guises. O Guru, You shine like the sun (among them). O Preceptor Shankara, be my refuge.

கு³ருபும்க³வ பும்க³வகேதன தே ஸமதாமயதாம் நஹி கோ⁵பிஸுதீ: ⁴ |

ஸரணாக³தவத்ஸல தத்த்வனிதே⁴ ப⁴வ ஸம்கர தே³ஸிக மே ஸரணம் ॥ 7 ॥

O Best among the Gurus! The Lord whose flag bears the emblem of the bull! You have no equal among the wise. You who are affectionate to those who seek refuge! The treasure of truth! O Preceptor Shankara, be my refuge.

விதி³தா ந மயா விஸதை³ககலா ந ச கிம்சன காஞ்சனமஸ்தி கு³ரோ |
த³ருதமேவ விதே⁴ஹி க்ரு³பாம் ஸஹஜாம் ப⁴வ ஸம்கர தே³ஸிக மே ஸரணம்
॥ 8 ॥

I have neither understood even one branch of knowledge clearly, nor do I possess any wealth, O Guru. Quickly bestow on me the compassion which is natural to You. O Preceptor Shankara, be my refuge.

இதி ஸ்ரீமத்தோடகாசார்யவிரசிதம் ஸ்ரீஸங்கரதே³ஸிகாஷ்டகம் ஸம்பூர்ணம்
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More Information:

A life-sketch of Shankara and information on advaita may be found at:
<http://www.cco.caltech.edu/vidya/advaita/advaitatml>

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