তোটকাষ্টকং

{॥ তোটকাষ্টকং ॥}

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:

শংকরং শংকরাচার্যং কেশবং বাদরাযণম্ ।
সূত্রভাষ্যকৃতৌ বন্দে ভগবন্তৌ পুনঃ পুনঃ ॥

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:

নারাযণং পদ্মভুবং বসিষ্ঠং শক্তিং চ তৎপুত্রপরাশরং চ ।
ব্যাসং শুকং গৌডপদং মহান্তং গোবিন্দযোগীন্দ্রমথাস্য শিষ্যম্ ॥

শ্রী শংকরাচার্যমথাস্য পদ্মপাদং চ হস্তামলকং চ শিষ্যম্ ।

তং তোটকং বাতির্ককারমন্যানস্মদ্গুরূন্ সংততমানতো । অস্মি ॥

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) Shrl (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 taittirlya 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 GltA, 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 comparsion 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 Shrl 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-gaNa's . Here a sa-gaNa 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.

বিদিতাখিলশাস্ত্রসুধাজলধে মহিতোপনিষত্ কথিতার্থনিধে ।
হৃদয়ে কলয়ে বিমলং চরণং ভব শংকর দেশিক মে শরণম্ ॥ ১॥

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.

করুণাবরুণালয পালয মাং ভবসাগরদুঃখবিদূনহৃদম্ ।
রচযাখিলদর্শনতত্ত্ববিদং ভব শংকর দেশিক মে শরণম্ ॥ ২॥

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.

ভবতা জনতা সুহিতা ভবিতা নিজবোধবিচারণ চারুমতে ।
কলযেশ্বরজীববিবেকবিদং ভব শংকর দেশিক মে শরণম্ ॥ ৩॥

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.

ভব এব ভবানিতি মে নিতরাং সমজাযত চেতসি কৌতুকিতা ।

মম বারয মোহমহাজলধিং ভব শংকর দেশিক মে শরণং ॥ ৪॥

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.

সুকৃতে। অধিকৃতে বহুধা ভবতো ভবিতা সমদর্শনলালসতা।
অতিদীনমিমং পরিপালয মাং ভব শংকর দেশিক মে শরণম্ ॥ ৫॥

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.

জগতীমবিতুং কলিতাকৃতযো বিচরন্তি মহামহসশ্ছলতঃ।
অহিমাংশুরিবাত্র বিভাসি গুরো ভব শংকর দেশিক মে শরণম্ ॥ ৬॥

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.

গুরুপুংগব পুংগবকেতন তে সমতামযতাং নহি কো । অপি সুধীঃ ।

শরণাগতবৎসল তত্ত্বনিধে ভব শংকর দেশিক মে শরণম্ ॥ ৭॥

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.

বিদিতা ন মযা বিশদৈককলা ন চ কিংচন কাঞ্চনমস্তি গুরো ।

দ্রুতমেব বিধেহি কৃপাং সহজাং ভব শংকর দেশিক মে শরণম্ ॥ ৮॥

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.

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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