

தோடகாஷ்டகீ

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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:

ஸ்கரீ ஸ்கராசார்யீ கேஸவீ பாதராயணம் ।
ஸூத்ரபாஷ்யகதௌ வந்தே பகவந்தௌ புநஃ புநஃ ॥

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

advaita guru-paramparA:

நாராயணீ பத்மபுவீ வஸிஷ்டீ ஸக்தீ ச தத்புத்ரபராஸரீ ச ।
வ்யாஸீ ஸகீ கௌடபதீ மஹாந்தீ கோவிந்தயோகீந்த்ரமதாஸ்ய ஸிஷ்யம் ॥

ஸ்ரீ ஸ்கராசார்யமதாஸ்ய பத்மபாதீ ச ஹஸ்தாமலகீ ச ஸிஷ்யம் ।
தீ தோடகீ வாதிரககாரமந்யாநஸ்மத்குரூந் ஸீததமாநதோ । அஸ்மி ॥

These two verses honor the advaita paramparA . The names mentioned here,

in order, are 1) Shrlman 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 taittirIya upaniShads.

ShrlmannArAyaNa 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 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.

॥ தோடகாஷ்டகீ ॥

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.

விதிதாகிலபாஸ்த்ரஸுதாஜலதே மஹிதோபநிஷத் கதிதார்தநிதே ।
ஹதயே கலயே விமலீ சரணீ பவ ஸ்கர தேஸிக மே ஸரணம் ॥ ௧ ॥

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.

கருணாவருணாலய பாலய மரீ பவஸாகரதுஃகவிதூநஹதம் ।
ரசயாகிலதர்ஸநதத்த்வவிதீ பவ ஸ்கர தேஸிக மே ஸரணம் ॥ ௨ ॥

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.

பவதா ஜநதா ஸுஹிதா பவிதா நிஜபோதவிசாரண சாருமதே ।
கலயேஸ்வரஜீவவிவேகவிதீ பவ ஸ்கர தேஸிக மே ஸரணம் ॥ ௩ ॥

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.

பவ ஏவ பவாநிதி மே நிதரரீ ஸமஜாயத சேதஸி கௌதுகிதா ।

மம வாரய மோஹமஹாஜலதீ பவ ஸ்கர தேபரிக மே ஸரணீ || ச||

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.

ஸுகதே | அதிகதே பஹ,தா பவதோ பவிதா ஸமதர்ஸநலாலஸதா |
அதிதீநமிம் பரிபாலய மரீ பவ ஸ்கர தேபரிக மே ஸரணம் || ரு||

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.

ஐகதீமவிதீ கலிதாகதயோ விசரந்தி மஹாமஹஸம்ஸலதஃ |
அஹிமரீஸ,ரிவாத்ர விபாஸி குரோ பவ ஸ்கர தேபரிக மே ஸரணம் || ச||

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.

குருபிகவ பிகவகேதந தே ஸமதாமயதரீ நஹி கோ | அபி ஸுதீஃ |
ஸரணாகதவத்ஸல தத்த்வநிதே பவ ஸ்கர தேபரிக மே ஸரணம் || எ||

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.

விதிதா ந மயா விபுதைககலா ந ச கீசந காஞ்சநமஸ்தி குரோ ।
த்ருதமேவ விதேஹி கபர் ஸஹஜர் பவ ஸ்கர தேஸிக மே ஸரணம் ॥ அ ॥

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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