

अच्युताष्टकं श्रीधरवेंकटेशविरचितम्

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achyutAShTakam 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 Gajendra 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.

अथ अच्युताष्टकम् ॥

अभिलपननिसर्गाद्युताभ्ये ભજે ત્વાં
હરસિ મદ્ધબૃન્દં ત્વહ્લુબુક્ષાવશાત્ ત્વમ્ ॥
અઘહૃદિતિ તવાંબ પ્રત્યુત ખ્યાતિદોઢહં
ત્વયિ મમ વદ કા વા સંગતિર્દૈન્યવાચામ્ ॥ ૧ ॥

ચિરાતીતા સાન્દીપનિતનુભુવઃ કાલભવન-
પ્રપત્તિસ્તં પિત્રોઃ પુનરગમયત્ સન્નિધિમિતિ ॥
યશઃ કૃષ્ણસ્યેદં કથમહહ ન ત્વાં રસનયા
યદિ શ્રીકૃષ્ણાખ્યે ભજતિ સ તાદનીં મુનિસુતઃ ॥ ૨ ॥

હરેર્યચોરત્વં યદ્વપિ ચ તથા જાસ્યરિતં
તદ્દેતત્ સર્વાહસ્તતિકૃતે સંકથનતઃ ॥
ઈતીદં માહાત્મ્યં મધુમથન તે દીપિતમિદં
વદન્ત્યાઃ કૃષ્ણાખ્યે તવહિ વિચરન્ત્યા વિલસિતમ્ ॥ ૩ ॥

સભાયાં દ્રૌપત્યાડંશુકસૃતિભિયા તદ્રસનયા
ધૃતા તસ્યાશ્ચેલં પ્રતનુ તદ્વસ્થં વિદ્ધતી ॥
વ્યતાનીશૈલાભં વસનવિસરં ચાંબ હરતા-
મિયાન્ ગોવિન્દાખ્યે વદ વસનરાશિસ્તવ કુતઃ ॥ ૪ ॥

અધિરસનમયિ ત્વામચ્યુતાખ્યે દધાનં

વનજભવમુખાનાં વન્ધમાહુર્મહાન્તઃ ॥
સતુ વિનમતિ માતશ્ચાશ્વગોશ્વાદનાદીન્
ભવતિ નનુ વિચિત્રા પદ્ધતિસ્તાવકાનામ્ ॥ ૫ ॥

જનનિ મુરભિદાખ્યે જાહવીનિમ્નગૈકા
સમજનિ પદપદ્માચ્ચક્રિણસ્ત્વાશ્રિતાનામ્ ॥
પરિણમતિ સમસ્તાઃ પાદવાર્ધિન્દુરેકો
જગતિ નનુ તટિન્યો જાહવીસહજઘાઃ ॥ ૬ ॥

સમવહિતમપશ્યન્ સન્નિધૌ વૈનતેયં
પ્રસભવિધુતપદ્માપાણિરીશોઽચ્યુતાખ્યે ॥
સમવિતુમુપનીતઃ સાગજેન્દ્રં ત્વયા દ્રાક્ષ
વદ જનનિ વિના ત્વાં કેન વા કિં તદ્ભૂત્ ॥ ૭ ॥

યદેષ સ્તૌમિ ત્વાં ત્રિયુગચરણત્રાયિણિ તતો
મહિમ્નઃ કા હાનિસ્તવતુ મમ સંપન્નિરવધિઃ ॥
શુના લીલાકામં ભવતિ સુરસિન્ધુર્ભગવતી
તદેષા કિંભૂતા સતુ સપદિ સન્તાપભરિતઃ ॥ ૮ ॥

ઈતિ શ્રીશ્રીધરવેંકટેશાર્યકૃતૌ અચ્યુતાષ્ટકં સંપૂર્ણમ્ ॥

Encoded and proofread by N. Balasubramanian bbalu at satyam.net.in

{LIFE OF SHRIDHARA VENKATESA}

श्रीकण्ठमिव त्वास्वन्तं शिवनामपरायणम् ॥

श्रीधरं वेङ्कटेश्वर्यं 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 *नाममृतरसयानम्* (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.

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