

17.श्रीविष्णुषट्पदी स्तोत्रम् / Sri Vishnushatpadi Stotram

Introduction:

Shatpadi means six verses or stanzas. Pada can mean a word or stanza. Six stanzas in praise of Vishnu. A famous Stotra by Adi Shankara that brings out everything one needs to know, all about human life and Vedanta. Kanchi Acharya Pujyashri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Swamigal (commonly known as Mahaperiyava) has given a detailed Upadesha on this Stotra.

1.अविनयमपनय विष्णो दमय मनः शमय विषयमृगतृष्णाम् । भूतदयां विस्तारय तारय संसारसागरतः ॥

1.avinayamapanaya viṣṇō damaya manaḥ śamaya viṣayamṛgatṛṣṇām / bhūtodayāṃ vistāraya tāraya saṃsārasāgarataḥ ॥

Meaning & Explanation:

अविनयमपनय विष्णो दमय मनः शमय विषयमृगतृष्णाम् - avinayamapanaya viṣṇō damaya manaḥ śamaya viṣayamṛgatṛṣṇām

अविनयम् –avinayam- arrogance, pride (absence of humility) ;अपनय –apanaya- remove; विष्णो - Viṣṇō – Vishnu (all pervading; resides in all the living beings);दमय –damaya- subdue, conquer; मनः - manaḥ - my mind; शमय –śamaya- bring peace;विषय -viṣaya- object that attracts the sense organs; मृगतृष्णाम् - mirage

Vishnu! Please remove my arrogance, make me humble, subdue my mind and bring peace and tranquility. Remove the agitation caused by the sense organs that are attracted by objects akin to thirsty animals deceived by mirages in the desert. Similarly, one is running after happiness that is elusive in nature and keeps moving away just like the mirage.

भूतदयां विस्तारय तारय संसारसागरतः / bhūtodayāṃ vistāraya tāraya saṃsārasāgarataḥ

भूतदयां - bhūtodayāṃ - compassion towards all living beings; विस्तारय - vistāraya – widen ; तारय - tāraya – please make me cross;संसार-saṃsāra- of the cycle of birth and death; सागरतः- sāgarataḥ- ocean;

Widen my compassion towards all living beings and enable me to cross the ocean of samsara.

Notes:

Adi Shankara mentions humility in the opening stanza as it is considered a basic virtue, absence of which is considered a bad quality. Without humility it is not possible to gain anything.

विद्याद दाति विनयम्- the more one studies, the more humble one should become. The idea of Vidya is to become humble. विद्या विनय सम्पन्ने – A Brahmana should have both Vidya and Vinaya. Avinaya is the worst of the bad qualities

दम and शम are part of Shamadi Shatka Sampatti. Gnana marga starts with Viveka, Vairagya, and Shamadi Shatka Sampatti or six-fold accomplishment. In order to progress in the Gnana marga this six-fold wealth of qualities is required. These are Shama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha, Shraddha and Samadhana.

Shama is quelling of mental agitation. **Dama** - subduing of sense organs.

Uparati means complete withdrawal; withdrawal of mind from deriving pleasure from the objects outside.

Titiksha means equanimity of the mind. Even if one has achieved Uparati one still continues to experience the vagaries of life that give pleasure and pain. In such situations, Shama and Dama should be active so that the person stays calm.

Shraddha according to Adi Shankara means complete faith in the Shastras and Guru Vakya (words) irrespective of the time and applicability. Rishis have already decided and documented what is and what is not applicable in Kaliyuga and individuals themselves should not decide on the applicability of the Shastras. To make progress in Gnana marga, one should have complete faith in the Guru.

Samadhana: Samadhana in gnana marga is equal to Samadhi in ashtanga yoga. Adana means placing/keeping/depositing. Samadhana means keeping or depositing wealth. Wealth here refers to Atma. If mind is destroyed/erased completely and it becomes one with atma, it leads to Samadhana where one completely loses sense of body and the surroundings.

In Adi Shankara's stotras the emphasis is always on Gnana or Moksha. In the opening verse of this stotra emphasis is again made on attaining Moksha. In this verse, Adi Shankara asks the omnipresent Vishnu to grant him the Shatka Sampatti to cross the Ocean of Samsara (cycle of birth and death).

To be on the Gnana marga to cross the ocean of Samsara one needs a tranquil mind and compassion for all living beings.

2.दिव्यधुनीमकरन्दे परिमलपरिभोगसच्चिदानन्दे । श्रीपतिपदारविन्दे भवभयखेदच्छिदे वन्दे ॥

2.divyadhunīmakarandē parimaḷaparibhōgasachchidānandē | śrīpatipadāravindē bhavabhayakhēdachChidē vandē ||

दिव्यधुनीमकरन्दे परिमलपरिभोगसच्चिदानन्दे- divyadhunīmakarandē parimaḷaparibhōgasachchidānandē

दिव्य –divya- celestial; धुनी – dhunī- river (ganga); मकरन्दे – makarandē- honey (in lotus feet); परिमल - parimaḷa - fragrant; परिभोग- paribhōga- good enjoyment; सच्चिदानन्दे- sachchidānandē- represents beyond time and space; (sat- beyond time and space, chit- consciousness, ananda- supreme happiness of lotus feet;)

I worship the lotus feet of Sripati, which has the celestial river Ganga as the honey inside the lotus feet of Vishnu, which allows us to enjoy the beautiful fragrance of this entire world. He is the very form of Sat, Chit and Ananda.

श्रीपतिपदारविन्दे भवभयखेदच्छिदे वन्दे- śrīpatipadāravindē bhavabhayakhēdachChidē vandē

श्रीपति – śrīpati- consort of Lakshmi ; पदारविन्दे – padāravindē – lotus feet ; भव-bhava – samsara; भय -bhaya- fear; खेदच्छिदे - khēdachChidē – one who breaks /removes the misery ; वन्दे- vandē – I worship;

I prostrate at the lotus feet of Sripati, (consort of Mahalakshmi), who breaks the fear of samsara and removes my misery.

Notes:

In this verse, Adi Shankara prostrates at the lotus feet of Sripathi, consort of Mahalakshmi that has the river Ganga as the honey. Furthermore, MahaVishnu allows us to enjoy all good things in this world due to his compassion. Not only are these pleasures of human life, they are also indicative of Sat Chit Ananda; Sat - the only entity that is true and exists at all times (beyond time and space), Chit - embodiment of consciousness of which our consciousness is a fraction; and Ananda that we possess is a fraction of the supreme bliss or Ananda. Vishnu's feet also break the fear of samsara and remove the misery that we suffer in this life.

3.सत्यपि भेदापगमे नाथ तवाऽहं न मामकीनस्त्वं । सामुद्रो हि तरङ्गः क्वचन समुद्रो न तारङ्गः ॥

3.satyapi bhēdāpagamē nātha tavāhaṃ na māmakīnastvaṃ | sāmudrō hi taraṅgaḥ kvachana samudrō na tāraṅgaḥ ||

सत्यपि भेदापगमे नाथ तवाऽहं न मामकीनस्त्वं - satyapi bhēdāpagamē nātha tavāhaṃ na māmakīnastvaṃ

सतिअपि – sati api- –even though established; भेद-bhēda- difference; अपगमे - āpagamē – removal ; नाथ- nātha- oh lord; तवअहं – tava āhaṃ - I am yours; न - na –not; मामकीनः- māmakīna- my property; त्वं- tvaṃ-you -;

Oh Lord, even though all differences between you, the Paramatma and I, the Jeevatma have been removed by Gnana, I am yours, but you are not mine.

सामुद्रो हि तरङ्गः क्वचन समुद्रो न तारङ्गः - sāmudrō hi taraṅgaḥ kvachana samudrō na tāraṅgaḥ

सामुद्रो –sāmudrō- of ocean; हि - hi – but; तरङ्गः - taraṅgaḥ - waves; क्वचन –kvachana- no time/no place; समुद्रो –samudrō-ocean; न - na – is not part ; तारङ्गः - tāraṅgaḥ- of waves

The waves are part of the ocean, but the ocean is, at no point of time, part of the waves.

Notes:

This verse refers to the relation between Jeevatma (me) and Paramatma (Vishnu). Although it has been established that there is no difference between you (Paramatma) and me (Jeevatma), I am yours but you are still not mine. You, being the Paramatma, is higher and I, the Jeevatma, lower, as I still possess the body and have not merged with you. The remaining distinction can only be removed when I merge with you attaining Sayujya after dropping the body.

As long as the body remains, Prarabdha karma is experienced even by Jeevan Muktas – those who have attained gnana, the highest knowledge. Even Jeevan Mukthas like Ramana Maharishi and Ramakrishna Paramahansa endured cancer until complete merger with the Paramatma.

I am like a wave, but you are the ocean. Just like the waves are part of the ocean but the ocean is not part of the waves, you are the master and I am your servant. The wave is not different from the ocean in the sense that it emerges from the ocean only to merge back. But unlike the waves, the ocean does not die down.

Jeevatma in the human form (body) dies like the waves and merges with Paramatma, the ocean. Water in the wave is seen separately as long it is a wave (Jeevatma possessing a body). Once it merges with the ocean (Paramatma), it disappears.

4.उद्धृतनग नगभिदनुज दनुजकुलामित्र मित्रशशिदृष्टे । दृष्टे भवति प्रभवति न भवति किं भवतिरस्कारः ॥

4.uddhṛtanaga nagabhidanuja danujakulāmitra mitraśāsīdr̥ṣṭē | dr̥ṣṭē bhavati prabhavati na bhavati kiṃ bhavatiraskāraḥ ||

उद्धृतनग नगभिदनुज दनुजकुलामित्र मित्रशशिदृष्टे - uddhṛtanaga nagabhidanuja danujakulāmitra mitraśāsīdr̥ṣṭē

उद्धृत - uddhṛta - holding aloft; नग- naga -mountain (Govardhana) भिद् - bhid - break;अनुज – anuja – younger; दनुज – danuja – asuras; कुल – kula – lineage, family; अमित्र – amitra - enemy;मित्र –mitra- sun; शशि- śāśi - Chandra (moon); दृष्टे - dr̥ṣṭē- eyes;

One who is holding the mountain, younger to the one who broke the mountains (Devendra), always enemy of asura lineage, one who is having Sun and Moon as his eyes

दृष्टे भवति प्रभवति न भवति किं भवतिरस्कारः- dr̥ṣṭē bhavati prabhavati na bhavati kiṃ bhavatiraskāraḥ

दृष्टे - dr̥ṣṭē- your seeing; भवति –bhavati- your; प्रभवति - prabhavati –when it happens ; नna – let it not; भवति- bhavati- happen; किं - kiṃ- when; भव – bhava – samsara;तिरस्कारः tiraskāraḥ - removing with contempt;

When your vision falls on anyone, then is he or she not relieved from samsara? (cycle of birth and death).

Notes:

In this verse, MahaVishnu is addressed as Upendra – younger to Indra. Indra was born to Kashyapa rishi and Aditi while Vamana was born to the couple after Indra fulfilling a boon given by MahaVishnu. Adi Shankara addresses MahaVishnu as the younger brother of one who broke the mountains. There is a story from Rig Veda that alludes to this reference. The asura Vritrasura took a form of a large cobra blocking the flow of waters from the mountains to the plains, true to his asuric swabhava (nature of asura). The Sadhus and other dwellers of the plains complained to Devendra who not only killed the cobra but also broke the mountain to free the water from the hold of Vritrasura.

There is another story that connects Devendra with mountains. In earlier times, mountains had wings and a mention can be found in the Sundara Kandam of Valmiki Ramayanam. Siddhas, Charanas and other celestials found it very difficult to fly with the mountains taking off without notice and without any due concern for others flying. So, the Siddhas and Charanas complained to Indra. Hence Indra cut off the wings of all mountains, thereby taking away their ability to fly.

Asuras are referred to as Danujas in this verse. Danjuas were born of Rishi Kashyapa and Danu. Kashyapa also had Aditi and Diti as his wives. Devas were born of Kashyapa and Aditi, whereas Diti gave birth to asuras who are known as Daityas and Danu gave birth to asuras who are known as Danavas.

5.मत्स्यादिभिरवतारैरवतारवताऽवता सदा वसुधां । परमेश्वर परिपाल्यो भवता भवतापभीतोऽहं ॥

5.matsyādibhiravatārairavatāratāvatā sadā vasudhāṃ । paramēśvara paripālyō bhavatā bhavatāpabhītōhaṃ ॥

मत्स्यादिभिरवतारैरवतारवताऽवता सदा वसुधां- matsyādibhiravatārairavatāratāvatā sadā vasudhāṃ

मत्स्यादिभिः-matsyādibhi- by Matsya (fish) etc; अवतारैः-avatārai: - coming down (incarnation);अवतारवता- avatāra- one who takes the various avatars or forms;अवता – āvatā - protector; सदा - sadā -always; वसुधां- vasudhāṃ- earth (one who holds wealth)

One who comes down for protecting the world, by taking various incarnations like Matsya (fish).

परमेश्वर परिपाल्यो भवता भवतापभीतोऽहं - paramēśvara paripālyō bhavatā bhavatāpabhītōhaṃ

परमेश्वर - paramēśvara – Parameshwara! Supreme Eshwar ; परिपाल्यो - paripālyō –to be protected; भवता- bhavatā- by you;भवताप-bhavatāpa-the heat of samsara; भीतः - bheeta: afraid of; अहं - aham – I am.

Supreme Eshwara, fit to be protected by you, I am afraid of the heat of the samsara or cycle of birth and death. So please protect me.

Notes:

In this verse, Adi Shankara extols MahaVishnu for incarnating and protecting the earth, starting with Matsya avatara alluding to other well-known avatars of MahaVishnu. MahaVishnu takes the form of humans, animals, and others to protect the world. In Bhagavatham, a mention of 28 avatars is made although 10 among the 28 are famous and well-known.

6. दामोदर गुणमन्दिर सुन्दरवदनारविन्द गोविन्द । भवजलधिमथनमन्दर परमं दरमपनय त्वं मे ॥

6.dāmōdara guṇamandira sundaravadanāravinda gōvinda । bhavajaladhimathanamandara paramaṃ daramapanaya tvaṃ mē ॥

दामोदर गुणमन्दिर सुन्दरवदनारविन्द गोविन्द - dāmōdara guṇamandira sundaravadanāravinda gōvinda

दामोदर - dāmōdara – oh Damodara; गुणमन्दिर- guṇamandira-abode of qualities;सुन्दर-sundara-beautiful; वदनारविन्द –vadanāravinda-lotus face;गोविन्द –gōvinda-protector of entire creation/world;

Oh, Damodara! with a beautiful face, you are the abode of qualities, and you are the protector of the entire creation.

भवजलधिमथनमन्दर परमं दरमपनय त्वं मे- bhavajaladhimathanamandara paramaṃ daramapanaya tvaṃ mē

भव-bhava- Samsara; जलधि-jaladhi-ocean; मथन – mathana– churning; मन्दर- mandara - mandara mountain;परमं- paramaṃ-supreme;दरम् –daram-fear, dread;अपनय –apanaya- remove; त्वं-tvaṃ- you;मै-mē- my;

Oh supreme! You are the Mandara mountain for churning the ocean of Samsara; please remove the fear of death and help me cross the ocean of samsara.

Notes:

In this verse, Adi Shankara extols MahaVishnu as Damodara. Dama means rope and udhara means belly. An allegory in Srimad Bhagavatham mentions how Yashodha tried and failed to tie a rope on Krishna's waist to keep him away from mischief while she was working. Only upon pleading with Krishna was Yashoda able to tie Krishna. Similarly, only bhakthi can tie down God. God cannot be tied down by any other means.

Adi Shankara prays to MahaVishnu to be the Mandara Mountain to churn the ocean of samsara. Just like the Mandara Mountain was used to churn the milk ocean and get immortality, Adi Shankara prays to MahaVishnu to churn the ocean of samsara and get the nectar to cross the ocean.

7.नारायण करुणामय शरणं करवाणि तावकौ चरणौ । इति षट्पदी मदीये वदनसरोजे सदा वसतु ॥

7.nārāyaṇa karuṇāmaya śaraṇaṃ karavāṇi tāvakau charaṇau | iti ṣaṭpadī madīyē vadanasarōjē sadā vasatu ||

नारायण करुणामय शरणं करवाणि तावकौ चरणौ - nārāyaṇa karuṇāmaya śaraṇaṃ karavāṇi tāvakau charaṇau

नारायण - nārāyaṇa – Narayana ; करुणामय- karuṇāmaya- full of compassion; शरणं- śaraṇaṃ- refuge; करवाणि - karavāṇi- take; तावकौ - tāvakau – your; चरणौ - charaṇau- feet;

Oh, Compassionate Narayana, I take refuge in your feet.

इति षट्पदी मदीये वदनसरोजे सदा वसतु - iti ṣaṭpadī madīyē vadanasarōjē sadā vasatu

इति –iti- this: षट्पदी - ṣaṭpadī – stotra of six verses; मदीये- madīyē- my; वदन –vadana- mouth; सरोजे –sarōjē- lotus; सदा –sadā- always; वसतु –vasatu- abide;

These six verses should always be in my lotus mouth.

Notes:

Narayana is potent and a well known name of MahaVishnu. Narayana has two meanings:

- 1) नरस्य अयनम् - the destination for naras or humans.
- 2) नारः यस्य अयनम् – resting / lying on water (on Nara). Narayana lies on a Banyan leaf in the ocean after pralaya (destruction)and Narayana is also known to always lie on the ocean of milk.

There is also another shloka for the name Narayana.

आपो नारा इति प्रोक्ता आपो वै नरसूनवः।
अयनं तस्य ताः पूर्वतेन नारायणः स्मृतः॥

Apo naaraa ithi prokta apovai Narasunava :
ayanamtasya taa: poorvamtana narayanana smrita:

Waters are called Naara because they are the nourishers of the humans. Waters are also the resting place for him and therefore he is called Narayana.

Adi Shankara ends the six verses with a prayer to MahaVishnu for the six shlokas to abide in his lotus mouth all the time. Shatpadi can mean the last six words of this verse starting with Narayana karunamaya or the six shlokas that comprise the entire shatpadi. Adi Shankara refers

to his mouth as lotus mouth to bring out the third meaning of shatpadi namely the six-legged bee that draws honey.

This famous shloka is often quoted by advaita scholars. Mahaperiyava too has quoted this verse because sharanagathi tatva is common to all aspirants. No one individual or group can claim sharanagathi/prapatti to be their exclusive principle. Sharanagathi is not new to the advaita siddhantha (philosophy). It is considered as a part of bhakti marga.

॥ श्रीविष्णुषट्पदी स्तोत्रम् संपूर्णम् ॥
॥Sri Vishnushatpadi Stotram Sampurnam ॥