

24. श्रीतोत्काष्टकं / Sri Tōtakāṣṭakam

Introduction:

Among the disciples of Adi Shankara, Giri was just an ordinary student, who later became Totakacharya. He composed this Stotram, popularly known as “Totakashtakam” in a very peculiar situation. One day Adi Shankara was about to teach his disciples - his bhashya patham (a class that is conducted every day during Chaturmasyam). At that time, Giri was away to perform Guru Seva. While Adi Shankara was waiting for Giri to finish the Guru Seva before starting the class, the other students were busy belittling Giri - being a mediocre student and thought that his absence was not going to make much of a difference. Adi Shankara overheard the murmur and wanted to teach a lesson to the other students. He called upon Giri to join the class and instantly transferred all the knowledge of Vedas and Shastras to Giri. In no time, the mediocre student became the wisest student of the class.

Upon receiving the supreme knowledge of Shastras and Vedas, Giri’s transformation was superhuman. In a state of bliss that comes with Guru’s grace, Giri ran and danced his way to the class, bursting forth singing an ashtakam set in the difficult “Totaka” metre. This impromptu stotram was composed by Giri, without any preparation, out of his bhakti towards his Guru. And his fellow disciples were awestruck by his knowledge.

1. विदिताखिलशास्त्रसुधाजलधे महितोपनिषत् कथितार्थनिधे ।
हृदये कलये विमलं चरणं भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् ॥

1. viditākhilāśāstrasudhājaldhē mahitōpaniṣat kathitārthanidhē |
hṛdayē kalayē vimalaṁ caraṇaṁ bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

विदिताखिलशास्त्रसुधाजलधे महितोपनिषत् कथितार्थनिधे / viditākhilāśāstrasudhājaldhē mahitōpaniṣat kathitārthanidhē

विदित - viditā - known; अखिल - akhila - all; शास्त्र - śāstra - Shastras; सुधा - sudhā - amrutam/Nectar; जलध - jaladha - Ocean; महित - mahita - glorious; उपनिषत् - upaniṣat - Upanishads (the end part of the Vedanta); कथित - kathita - conveyed; अर्थ - artha - meaning; निधे - nidhē - treasure;

You, (referring to Adi Shankara), know the complete nectarine ocean of Shastras and you are the treasure of the import conveyed by Upanishads.

हृदये कलये विमलं चरणं भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् / hṛdayē kalayē vimalaṁ caraṇaṁ bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam

हृदये - hṛdayē – in the heart; कलये - kalayē - meditate upon; विमलं - vimalam - Stainless or Pure; चरणं - caraṇam - feet; भव - bhava - You become; शंकर - śaṅkara - Oh Shankara!; देशिक - dēśika - One who shows the direction - Guru; मे - mē - for me; शरणम् - śaraṇam - refuge;

I meditate upon your pure feet in my heart. Oh, Shankara Guru! You become my refuge.

2. करुणावरुणालय पालय मां भवसागरदुःखविदूनहृदम् ।
रचयाखिलदर्शनतत्त्वविदं भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् ॥
2. karuṇāvaruṇālaya pālaya māṁ bhavasāgaraduḥkhavidūnahṛdam |
racayākhiladarśanatattvavidam bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

करुणावरुणालय पालय मां भवसागरदुःखविदूनहृदम् / karuṇāvaruṇālaya pālaya māṁ bhavasāgaraduḥkhavidūnahṛdam

करुणा - karuṇā - Compassion; वरुण- varuṇā - Ocean; आलय - ālaya - abode; पालय - pālaya - Protect; मां - māṁ - me; भवसागर - bhavasāgara - Ocean of Samsara; दुःख - duḥkha - misery; विदून - vidūna - distressed; हृदम् - hṛdam - heart;

My heart is distressed with the miseries caused by the Ocean of Samsara. Please protect me, you being the abode of the ocean of compassion.

रचयाखिलदर्शनतत्त्वविदं भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् / racayākhiladarśanatattvavidam bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam

रचय - racaya - make; अखिल - akhila - all; दर्शन - darśana - philosophy (about Parabramam); तत्त्व - tattva - the principles of the philosophy; विदं - vidam - knower; भव - bhava - You become; शंकर - śaṅkara - Oh Shankara!; देशिक - dēśika - One who shows the direction - Guru; मे - mē - for me; शरणम् - śaraṇam - refuge;

Make me a knower of all principles of the philosophy (so that I will not be deficient in knowledge). You become my refuge, Oh, Shankara Guru.

3. भवता जनता सुहिता भविता निजबोधविचारण चारुमते ।
कलयेश्वरजीवविवेकविदं भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् ॥
3. bhavatā janatā suhitā bhavitā nijabōdhavicāraṇa cārumatē |
kalayēśvarajīvavivēkavidam bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

भवता जनता सुहिता भविता निजबोधविचारण चारुमते / bhavatā janatā suhitā bhavitā nijabōdhavicāraṇa cārumatē

भवता - bhavatā - by You; जनता - janatā - the people; सुहिता - suhitā - agreeable/suitable (for practicing Dharma); भविता - bhavitā - become; निज- nija - one's own/self; बोध - bōdha - knowledge; विचारण - vicāraṇa - to enquire; चारुमते - cārumatē – excellent / beautiful mindset;

Because of you, people have become more agreeable to the practice of Dharma. You have an excellent mind to conduct the enquiry of the self.

Notes:

Adi Shankara was the epitome of the knowledge of self-enquiry and taught people to practice Dharma by various means - books, discourses and bhashyas. Knowledge of the self that Jiva and Paramathma are the same - is different from the knowledge of enquiry of the self. All Jnanis have knowledge of the self. But the knowledge of the enquiry of the self is difficult to preach, which was done by Adi Shankara. All the margas - Bhakti, Karma and Gyana were taught by him to help in acquiring the knowledge of the self. The knowledge here is that "Jiva is no different from Paramatma".

कलेश्वरजीवविवेकविदं भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् / kalayēśvarajīvavivēkavidam bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam

कलय - kalaya - make/perform; ईश्वर - ēśvara - Parabhraman; जीव - jīva - Jiva; विवेक - vivēka - discrimination; विदं - vidam - knower; भव - bhava - you become; शंकर - śaṅkara - Oh Shankara!; देशिक - dēśika - one who shows the direction - Guru; मे - mē - for me; शरणम् - śaraṇam - refuge;

You make me the knower of the non-difference between Eswara (Parabhramam) and Jiva. Oh, Shankara Guru! You become my refuge.

4. भव एव भवानिति मे नितरां समजायत चेतसि कौतुकिता ।
मम वारय मोहमहाजलधिं भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् ॥
4. bhava ēva bhavāniti mē nitarāṁ samajāyata cētasi kautukitā |
mama vāraya mōhamahājaladhim bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam | |

Meaning and Explanation:

भव एव भवानिति मे नितरां समजायत चेतसि कौतुकिता / bhava ēva bhavāniti mē nitarāṁ samajāyata cētasi kautukitā

भव - bhava - Parameshwara; एव - ēva - only; भवान्- bhavān - yourself; इति - iti - thus; मे - mē - to me; नितरां - nitarām - very much; समजायत - samajāyata - arose; चेतसि - cētasi - mind; कौतुकिता - kautukitā - curiosity/eagerness;

In my mind curiosity arose, and I found that you are no different from Parameshwara.

Notes:

The above can also be interpreted as, “as you are no different from Parameshwara, the curiosity arose in my mind to reap the full benefit”.

**मम वारय मोहमहाजलधिं भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् / mama vāraya mōhamahājaladhīm
bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam**

मम - mama - my; वारय - vāraya - remove/destroy; मोह - mōha - delusion; महाजलधिं - mahājaladhīm - great ocean; भव - bhava - You become; शंकर - śaṅkara - Oh Shankara!; देशिक - dēśika - One who shows the direction - Guru; मे - mē - for me; शरणम् - śaraṇam - refuge;

Remove the great ocean of my delusion. Oh, Shankara Guru! You become my refuge.

Notes:

Here the delusion is thinking the body is real and can be compared to the continuous waves of an ocean. Jiva is tossed continuously among waves of the ocean of delusion.

5. सुकृतेऽधिकृते बहुधा भवतो भविता समदर्शनलालसता ।
अतिदीनमिमं परिपालय मां भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् ॥
5. sukṛtē:’dhikṛtē bahudhā bhavatō bhavitā samadarśanalālasatā |
atidīnamimam paripālaya mām bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

**सुकृतेऽधिकृते बहुधा भवतो भविता समदर्शनलालसता / sukṛtē:’dhikṛtē bahudhā bhavatō
bhavitā samadarśanalālasatā**

सुकृते - sukṛtē - good Karma/Punya; अधिकृते - adhiṅkṛtē - increases; बहुधा - bahudhā - in many ways/ respects; भवतः - bhavatah - from you; भविता - bhavitā - happen; सम दर्शन - sama darśana - equanimity of mind; लालसता - lālasatā - being very eager/thirsty;

When my stock of Punya / good deeds increases in many ways, I will get the urge to acquire equanimity of mind through you.

Notes:

The word sukṛtē - refers to good Karma/ good deeds performed, which ultimately leads to Punya. Possessing the quality of Sama darśana / equanimity of mind is the basic qualification for becoming a Jnani (scholar). This aspect of a Jnani is mentioned extensively in Bhagavad Gita (5-18)

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥

vidya-vinaya-sampanne brahmane gavi hastini |
suni caiva sva-pake ca panditah sama-darsinah ||

The pandita (scholar) is the one who can see the presence of Paramatma in both the Brahmana endowed with vidya/ knowledge and Vinaya/ humility and the Chandala who eats dog's meat. For one to advance towards the path of becoming a Jnani or becoming interested in attaining equanimity, one should first have a stock/ heap of Punya acquired from performing good deeds and avoiding any deeds that lead to sins.

अतिदीनमिमं परिपालय मां भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् / atidīnamimam paripālaya mām bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam

अति - ati - very; दीनं- dīnam - wretched (in terms of stock of Punya); इमं - imam - this fellow/ me; परि पालय - pari pālaya - protect in every way; मां - mām - me; भव - bhava - you become; शंकर - śaṅkara - Oh Shankara!; देशिक - dēśika - one who shows the direction - Guru; मे - mē - for me; शरणम् - śaraṇam - refuge;

I am very miserable in the stock of Punya and so ineligible for your compassion and protection in all respects. Oh, Shankara Guru! You become my refuge.

6. जगतीमवितुं कलिताकृतयो विचरन्ति महामहसश्छलतः ।
अहिमांशुरिवात्र विभासि गुरो भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् ॥
6. jagatīmavitum kalitākṛtayō vicaranti mahāmahasaśchalataḥ |
ahimāṁśurivātra vibhāsi gurō bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

जगतीमवितुं कलिताकृतयो विचरन्ति महामहसश्छलतः / jagatīmavitum kalitākṛtayō vicaranti mahāmahasaśchalataḥ

जगती - jagatī - this world; अवितुं - avitum - for protecting; कलित - kalita - adorned; आकृतयो - ākṛtayō - various shapes and forms; विचरन्ति - vicaranti - move around; महा - mahā - great;

महस - mahasa - shine/brilliance; छलतः - chalataḥ - pretend/cheating (disguising their appearance)

Great people with shine (Jnanis) are moving around the world adorning various shapes and forms for protecting this world.

Notes:

Jnanis cannot be recognized by their looks and actions. They move unknowingly in different various forms like a beggar, an ordinary brahmachari, or even as a mad man (avadhoota). Though they disguise their appearances, their aim is to protect this world.

अहिमांशुरिवात्र विभासि गुरो भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् / ahimāṁśurivātra vibhāsi gurō bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam

अहिमांशुः - ahimāṁśuhu - sun; इव - iva - like; अत्र - atra - right in front of me; विभासि - vibhāsi - shining; गुरो - gurō - oh Guru; भव - bhava - you become; शंकर - śaṅkara - Oh Shankara!; देशिक - dēśika - one who shows the direction - Guru; मे - mē - for me; शरणम् - śaraṇam - refuge;

You are shining like a sun right in front of me. Oh, Shankara Guru! You become my refuge.

Notes:

In this verse, Totakacharya has used “Guro” explicitly to emphasize his bhakti towards his guru. The word अहिमांशुः - ahimāṁśuhu can be split as अ + हिम + अंशु - not cool rays - the one who does not have cool rays is nothing but “Sun”. Adi Shankara is shining like a sun, and he cannot disguise himself like other Jnanis.

7. गुरुपुंगव पुंगवकेतन ते समतामयतां नहि कोऽपि सुधीः ।
शरणागतवत्सल तत्त्वनिधे भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् ॥
7. gurupuṅgava puṅgavakētana tē samatāmayatāṁ nahi kō:’pi sudhīḥ |
śaraṇāgatavatsala tattvanidhē bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

गुरुपुंगव पुंगवकेतन ते समतामयतां नहि कोऽपि सुधीः / gurupuṅgava puṅgavakētana tē samatāmayatāṁ nahi kō:’pi sudhīḥ

गुरु - guru – Guru; पुंगव - puṅgava - bull; (greatest among Gurus); केतन - kētana - flag; ते - tē – of you; समता - samatā - equality; मयतां - mayatāṁ - being; नहि - nahi - no; कोऽपि - kō:’pi - who else; सुधीः - sudhīḥ - brilliant intellect;

You are bull among gurus with the flag as a bull. No intellectual can equal you in terms of brilliance.

Notes:

The phrases “Bull among gurus” or “Lion among gurus” means “Greatest among gurus”. And Totakacharya also mentions “Your flag has a bull” thus emphasizing that Adi Shankara (Guru) is none other than Parameshwara (He is the one whose flag has a bull), though he appears as a Sanyasi.

शरणागतवत्सल तत्त्वनिधे भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् / śaraṇāgatavatsala tattvanidhē bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam

शरण - śaraṇe – Protection / refuge; आगतः - āgatah - arrival/come under; वत्सल - vatsala - kind (like parents towards child); तत्त्व - tattva - truth; निधे - nidhē - treasure; भव - bhava - You become; शंकर - śaṅkara - Oh Shankara!; देशिक - dēśika - One who shows the direction - Guru; मे - mē - for me; शरणम् - śaraṇam -refuge;

You are compassionate towards those who seek refuge in you and you are a treasure of truth. Oh, Shankara Guru! You become my refuge.

Notes:

In Samskrut, kindness is expressed using different words depending on the relationship one has with the other. Usually, “Vatsalaya” is the kindness shown by parents towards children. The word “Prema” is used when the same kindness is shown by a friend. Here, Totakacharya used the word “वत्सल - vatsala” - referring to Adi Shankara showing parental love and kindness.

As Sri Rama mentioned in Yuddha Kanda:

सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते |
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद्व्रतं मम ||
sakṛdēva prapannāya tavāsmīti ca yācatē |
abhayaṁ sarvabhūtebhyaō dadāmyētvratam mama ||

"If one seeks refuge in me just once, declaring 'I am yours', my solemn pledge is to give them assurance of safety against all types of beings."

Similarly, oh Guro! You are śaraṇāgatavatsala - showing extreme compassion towards those who take refuge in you.

8. विदिता न मया विशदैककला न च किञ्चन काञ्चनमस्ति गुरो ।
द्रुतमेव विधेहि कृपां सहजां भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् ॥
8. viditā na mayā viśadaikakalā na ca kiñcana kāñcanamasti gurō |
drutamēva vidhēhi kṛpām sahajām bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

विदिता न मया विशदैककला न च किञ्चन काञ्चनमस्ति गुरो / viditā na mayā viśadaikakalā na ca kiñcana kāñcanamasti gurō

विदिता - viditā - known; न - na - not; मया - mayā - by me; विशद - viśada - clearly; एक - eka - one; कला - kalā - art; न - na - not; च - ca - and; किञ्चन - kiñcana - even a little bit; काञ्चन - kāñcana - Gold; अस्ति - asti - is; गुरो - gurō - oh Guro!

I do not clearly know a single art. Oh Guru, even a little bit of gold is not with me.

Notes:

According to the Shastras, Vedas are one of the 64 arts. Here, Totakacharya is mentioning the incompetency of him (Sadhaka). He claims lack of knowledge as well as wealth. And for this very reason, he is requesting Adi Shankara to shower his compassion quickly.

द्रुतमेव विधेहि कृपां सहजां भव शंकर देशिक मे शरणम् / drutamēva vidhēhi kṛpām sahajām bhava śaṅkara dēśika mē śaraṇam

द्रुतमेव - drutamēva - quickly; विधेहि - vidhēhi - show; कृपां - kṛpām - compassion; सहजां - sahajām - inborn nature; भव - bhava - You become; शंकर - śaṅkara - Oh Shankara!; देशिक - dēśika - One who shows the direction - Guru; मे - mē - for me; शरणम् - śaraṇam - my refuge;

Show your inborn nature of compassion towards me very quickly. Oh, Shankara Guru! You become my refuge.

॥ इति श्रीमत्तोत्काचार्य विरचित श्रीशङ्कर देशिकाष्टकं सम्पूर्णम् ॥

|| Iti Srimat Totakacharya Virachita SriShankara Deshikashtakam sampurnam ||