

Sree Dakshinamuthy Ashtakam

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(Adhi Sankara has written very many great Stotras (prayers) but here is a unique prayer, which is not only a prayer but the summary of all the philosophy that he has taught. Even during his time, this stotra was difficult to comprehend and it became necessary for one of his disciples called Sureshwaracharya to write a commentary called Manasollasa to this stotra. There are large number of books and commentaries on this commentary itself. What I am trying to do is to make a very feeble attempt to translate the stotra in to simple English. This is done with the grace of God and blessings of Adhi Sankara, as I clearly understand that I am not capable of such a great venture.

It has an introductory sloka, followed by eight slokas, which is again followed by a sloka of Phala sruthi.)

Mouna Vyakhya prakatitha, para,
Brahma thathwam yuvanam,
Varshishtha anthevasad rishiganai,
Ravrutham brahma nishtai,
Acharyendram kara kalihtha chin,
Mudram ananda roopam,
Swathmaramam mudhitha vadanam,
Dakshinamurthim eede.

I praise and salute that Dakshinamrthy,

* My grateful thanks are due to Sri.S.N.Shastrri of Madras who is an expert in Vedanta, for going through my translation critically and suggesting changes. I have carried out all of them.

Who faces the south,
Who explains the true nature of the supreme Brahman,
Through his state of silence,
Who is young in looks,
Who is surrounded by disciples who are old Sages,
Whose minds are fixed on Brahman,
Who is the greatest of teachers,
Who shows the Chinmudhra* by his hand,
Who is personification of happiness,
Who is in the state of extreme joy within himself,
And who has a smiling face.

*He joins the edge of the thumb and first finger, which indicates that God and soul are one. This is called Chinmudhra." Chinmudra denotes the identity of the individual soul and the supreme Self or Brahman. God is the Brahman associated with Maya. The identity is between the individual soul or self (jivatma) and the supreme self (paramatma) and not God."

Viswam darpana drusyamana nagari,
Thulyam nijantargatham,
Pasyannathmani mayaya bahirivoth,
Bhutham yatha nidraya,
Ya sakshath kuruthe prabodha samaye,
Swathmanameva dwayam,
Thasmai sri guru murthaye nama idham,
Sree Dakshinamurthaye.

2

Similar to the image of a town as seen in the mirror,
When one sees the image of the world within him,
The world appears as if it is outside.
It is similar to his seeing due to illusion,
During the state of sleep,
That the one real fact appears as many different truths,
And he realizes ,when he wakes up and sees the reality,
That he is really the one and only one soul.
Salutation to the God facing the south,
Who is the greatest teacher.

The above stanza tells us that the world which is outside us is same as our soul but we see them as different entities due to the veil of ignorance. As soon as we wake up, we realize that the dream is false and even while seeing our image in the mirror, we know that we are not seeing us in the mirror but our image. When we get knowledge from the guru we are in the wakeful state without the veil of ignorance.

Beejasyanthari vankuro jagadhidham,
Prang nirvikalpam puna,
Mayakalpitha desa kala kalanaa,
Vaichithrya chithrikrutham,
Mayaveeva vijrumbhayathyapi maha,
Yogeeva yah swechaya,
Thasmai sri guru murthaye nama idham,
Sree dakshinamurthaye.

3

Like the germ inside the seed is its part ,
But becomes different after development
The many places and time which are before us ,
Are drawn by illusion in the board of life in a peculiar manner,
By a great savant or an expert Siddha,
Who can create them as per their will,
Salutation to the God facing the south,
Who is the greatest teacher.

When the net of illusion is lifted and when we reach the stage of manifestation, we would find that what we think as different is but one and the same.

Yasyaiva sphuranam sadathmakamasath,
Kalparthagam bhasathe,
Sakshaath thathwamaseethi veda vachasa,
Yobodhyathyasrithhan,
Yath saksht karanath bhavenna punara,
Aavrithir bhavambhonidhow,
Thasmai sri guru murthaye nama idham,
Sree dakshinamurthaye.

4

He who exists as the real light of truth,
And shines in the false world of appearance,
And He who teaches disciples the great saying,
"Thou art that" after realizing its import,
Gets away from this cycle of life and death.
Salutation to the God facing the south,
Who is the greatest teacher.

"That Thou Art is the famous Grand Pronouncement (mahA-vAkya) found in the Chandogya-Upanishad of the Sama Veda, meted out by AruNi to Svetaketu. It is repeated nine times to him and explained nine times. It is not supposed to be a casual statement. It is the summum bonum of all Upanishadic teaching. It says: That brahman which is the common Reality behind everything in the cosmos is the same as the essential Divinity, namely the Atman or the Self, within you." This realization which is extremely difficult to achieve makes you understand that you are in fact this absolute reality called "Brahman".

Nanachidhra ghato dhara sthitha maha,
Deepa prabha bhaswaram,
Jnanam yasya thu chakshuradhi karana,
Dwara bahi spandathe,
Jaanameethi tham eva baandham anubathi,
Yethath samastham jagat,
Thasmai sri guru murthaye nama idham,
Sree dakshinamurthaye.

5

Like the light emanating from a lamp,
Kept in a pot with many holes,
Goes out in all directions,
In the person in whom the wisdom goes out
Through the openings of ear , eye , mouth and thought,
And when that person realizes that 'I know myself",
This whole universe shines after Him alone ,
Who shines in the consciousness as the knower.
Salutation to the God facing the south,

Who is the greatest teacher.

Our body prevents us from seeing the truth(the light from outside) that we are the Brahman and lets out light through the sensory organs and makes us deceive ourselves by feeling that we are happy. This simile of a pot with holes for the body occurs in many places in Indian philosophy.

Deham pranam api indryanyapi chalaam,
Budhim cha soonyam vidhu,
Stree balandha jadopamasthvaha mithi,
Brandha brusam vadhina,
Maya sakthi vilasa kalpitha maha,
Vyamoha samharine,
Thasmai sri guru murthaye nama idham,
Sree dakshinamurthaye.

6

Those great philosophers , who think that,
The body , the soul and the fickle intellect,
The concept of emptiness and all other nothingness,
Are nothing but themselves,
Are similar to the women children , blind and the ignorant.
It is only He who can destroy, this veil of ignorance,
And wake us up from this state of deceit.
Salutation to the God facing the south,
Who is the greatest teacher.

This is a sample of the approach of negation in identifying the truth about the concept of self. Senses, the body etc cannot be the absolute truth as they are transient.

Rahu grastha divakarendu sadrusho,
Maya samachadanath,
Sanamthra karanopa samharanatho,
Yo abhoot sushuptha pumaan,
Pragaswapsaamithi prabodha samaye,
Yaa prathyabignayathe,
Thasmai sri guru murthaye nama idham,
Sree dakshinamurthaye.

7

Similar to the Sun when being masked by the serpent Rahu,
Knows that it was existing , once the eclipse is over
That man whose senses are suppressed
When he is asleep,
Because of the veil of illusion,
Realizes that he was in the state of sleep,
When he wakes up.
Salutation to the God facing the south,
Who is the greatest teacher.

Similar the sun existing even when there is eclipse, we exist when we are sleeping. This is denial of the Buddhist theory that , when we are asleep there is nothingness.

Balyadishwapi jagaradhadishu thadha,
Sarva sva avasthaswapi,
Vyavrutha swanuvarthamanamaha ,
Mithyanth sphurantham sada,
Svathmaanam pragatikarothi bajatham,
Yo mudraya bhadraya,
Thasmai sri guru murthaye nama idham,
Sree dakshinamurthaye.

8

Salutations to him who shines and exhibits,
Himself by the beatific Chinmudhra of the hand,
That he exists within the humans as self,
Forever and non changing,
Even during the changing states of childhood , youth and old age
And even during the states of sleep, dream and wakefulness.
Salutation to the God facing the south,
Who is the greatest teacher.

The truth as represented by the concept of Brahman, exists always.

Viswam pasyathi karya karana thaya,
Swa swami sambandatha,
Sishyacharya thaya thadaiva pithru,
Puthradhyathmana bedatha,
Swapne Jagrathi va ya esha purusho,

Maya Paribramitha,
Thasmai sri guru murthaye nama idham,
Sree dakshinamurthaye. 9

The world sees as cause and effect,
The differences between us and our lord,
The distinction between teacher and the taught,
The distinction between father and son,
And so the man is confused by illusion,
And believes in these differences,
During the times of dream and wakefulness.
Salutation to the God facing the south,
Who is the greatest teacher.

The ignorance of the truth because of the veil of ignorance Maya is reemphasized.

Bhoorambaamsya anilo ambhara,
Maharnadho himamasu puman,
Ithyabhathi characharithmakamidham,
Yasyaiva murthyashtakam,
Nanyath kinchana vidhyathe vimrusathaam,
Yasmath parasmath vibho,
Thasmai sri guru murthaye nama idham,
Sree dakshinamurthaye. 10

To the sake of which supreme Brahman,
The universe is shining as self ,
Which is Movable and immovable , with its aspects?
Of water , fire, air, space,
The sun, moon and the individual soul ,
And also to those who examine the truth behind ,
The meaning of this universe and find ,
That it Consists of nothing but,
The God who is every where.
Salutation to the God facing the south,
Who is the greatest teacher.

Sarvathmathvamithi sphutikruthamitham,
Yasmadamushamin sthave,
Thenasya sravanath thadatha mananath,
Dyanascha Sankeerthanath,
Sarvathmathva maha vibhuthi sahitham,
Syadheeswarasthvam svatha,
Siddhyeth thath punarashtadha parinatham,
Chaisvaryamvayhatham. 11

The concept of the Athma,
Which is explained in this poem of praise,
Hearing which , understanding which,
Meditating which and singing which,
One would attain the state of the godliness,
And the great state of self realization,
And also you would get the eight powers of occult ,
Without any problems in between.

Appendix:

The following three stanzas as well as the first stanza are
chanted after the main stotra:-

Chitram Vata tharor mole vruddha,
Sishya, Guror Yuva,
Gurostu mounam vykhyanam,
Sishyasthu china samsaya

It is strange to see,
The very old disciples ,
And the very young teacher,
Who sit under a banyan tree,
With the teacher always observing silence,
And the students getting all the doubts cleared.

Om nama pranavarthaya,
Suddha jnanaika moorthaye nama,

Nirmalaya prasanthaya,
Sri Dakshinamurthaye nama.

Salutations to that Dakshinamurthy,
Who is the meaning of the pranava , "om",
Who is the personification of unalloyed wisdom,
Who is crystal clear in his thought,
And who is the epitome of peace.

Gurave sara lokaanam,
Bishaje bhava roginaam,
Nidhaye sarva vidhyanam,
Sri Dakshinamurthaye nama.

Salutations to that Dakshinamurthy,
Who is the teacher of the entire world,
Who is the doctor to those,
Afflicted by the disease of birth and death,
And who is the treasure hose of all knowledge.