



Dhanyaṣṭakam

Adi Sankara

Talks by Swamini Svatmavidyanandaji

2025 Year End retreat Pittsburgh.

Notes by Adiśakti Varalakshmi Niranjan

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This text with a total of 8 verses discusses the real wealth in all of us. It is the hidden treasure that we are sitting on but searching everywhere. Acharya gives the keys to unlock this hidden treasure in this text. This is a summary from the talks by Swamini Svatmavidyanandaji in the 2025 year-end retreat at Pittsburgh.

Introduction

Adi Sankara has written *bhashya* on Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Brahmasutra. These are called *prasthāna trayā*. In addition to that he has written prakaraṇas to explain the ultimate reality. These texts simplify the essence of Vedantic scriptures and make them more accessible. He has written about 45 prakaraṇas and Dhanyāṣṭakam is one of them. Dhana means wealth. Dhanya means the one who is blessed with wealth. This text describes the true wealth that seekers should strive for in their spiritual journey.

What is true Knowledge?

Verse -1

तज्ज्ञानं प्रशमकरं यदिन्द्रियाणां
तज्ज्ञेयं पदुपनिषत्सु निश्चितार्थम् ।
ते धन्या भुवि परमार्थनिश्चितेहाः
शेषास्तु भ्रमनिलये परिभ्रमन्तः ॥ १॥

Tat jnaanam prashamakaram yat indriyaanaam
tat jneyam yat upanishatsu nischitaartham;
te dhanyaah bhuvi paramaarthha nischitehaah
sheshaah tu bhrama nilaye paribhramantah. ॥ 1॥

This verse talks about what is true knowledge. That knowledge which quietens the senses is indeed knowledge and considered to be true wealth. Worldly knowledge helps us lead worldly life. They are called *apara jñana*. The knowledge about the truth, existence is the *para jñana*. That knowledge is well ascertained by Upanishads. The knowledge that we perceive through sense organs stimulate them and do not bring tranquility. The one knowledge that brings 'Sama' tranquil to mind is *Atma jñana*. Those who are bestowed with that knowledge are *dhanya*. While others who do not seek this knowledge, still in *samsara* and they continue to remain in delusion

Overcoming the six inner enemies to gain the kingdom of yoga

Verse - 2

आदौ विजित्य विषयान्मदमोहराग-
द्वेषादिशत्रुगणमाहृतयोगराज्याः ।
ज्ञात्वा मतं समनुभूयपरात्मविद्या-
कान्तासुखं वनगृहे विचरन्ति धन्याः ॥ २॥

Aadau vijitya vishayaan mada moha raga
dvesha aadi shatru ganam aahrita-yoga-raajyaah;
jnaatvaa matam samanubhooya paraatma vidyaa
kaantaa-sukham vanagrihe vicharanti dhanyaah. || 2||

This verse talks about the six inner enemies in Jīva which act as obstacles to obtain self-knowledge. In order to qualify to study this knowledge we need 4 qualifications. They are mentioned as Sadhana chatushtaya by Adi Sankara - Viveka, Vairagya, the six pack (Sama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha, Sraddha and Samadhana) and mumukshutvam. To earn these qualifications the six enemies within us have to be conquered. The enemies are Kama, Krodha, Moha, Lobha, Mada, Matsarya. Swaminiji discussed ways to overcome these enemies. The practical tips are summarized in this table.

Practical Tips to conquer inner enemies

| Enemies | How to tackle them |
|---|---|
| Kama- Rāga and Dveśa Strong preferences and strong aversions | Shake the likes and dislikes Allow them to drop one by one Learn to live without your favorite coffee or toffee Stop being picky in needing things the way you want them to be. |
| Krodha- Anger Comes out when desire is obstructed | Find ways to express them without hurting others or self Ask your family members to spot it when you are about to get angry Safest way to express anger is, to talk to Isvara You can shout, or cry in open sky or privately in bathroom to let it out |

| | |
|---|---|
| | |
| Lobha- Greed This is a sign of insecurity | Live in the moment One day at a time One meal at a time If you have two , give away one Stop accumulating things. |
| Moha – delusion This is a stubborn wall hiding the truth | Use the sickle of knowledge to cut this delusion With discriminative ability, I know the difference between real from unreal. Know the difference between Love and attachment Know that you are non-separate from whole. That helps removes the alienation and insecurity. |
| Mada- Pride I am the doer | Know everything is given Ability to think is given Ability to do is given Attribute all talents to Isvara |
| Matsarya- Jealousy | Honor the talents others have Be grateful for your own talents See Isvara in everyone that will eliminate jealousy. |

Vairagya born out of Viveka is the true wealth

Verse 3

त्यक्त्वा गृहे रतिमधोगतिहेतुभूताम्
आत्मेच्छयोपनिषदर्थरसं पिबन्तः ।
वीतस्पृहा विषयभोगपदे विरक्ता
धन्याश्चरन्ति विजनेषु विरक्तसङ्गाः ॥ ३॥

Tyaktvaa grihe ratim adhogati hetu-bhootaam
aatma-icchhayaa upanishad artha rasam pibantah;
veeta-sprihaah vishayabhoga-pade viraktaah
dhanyaah charanti vijaneshu virakta sangaah. ॥ 3 ॥

The next three verses begin with the word tyaktva- meaning to give up or renounce. This verse talks about giving up the attachment to the pleasures of the house. This means giving up the passion for one's possessions, belongings like car, house, material things etc. They give up this attachment with the full understanding that happiness is not in those objects that are outside. Happiness is in the sentient atma. This is Vairagya born out of Viveka. Those having given up these attachments, hold on to one deep aspiration for atma jñana. With that deep yearning, they seek only Atma jñana and they are the ones who are truly wealthy.

Give up the notions of 'Me and Mine'

Verse 4

त्यक्त्वा ममाहमिति बन्धकरे पदे द्वे
मानावमानसदृशाः समदर्शिनश्च ।
कर्तारमन्यमवगम्य तदर्पितानि
कुर्वन्ति कर्मपरिपाकफलानि धन्याः ॥ ४॥

Tyaktvaa "mama-aham" iti bandhakare pade dve
maana-avamaana sadrishaah samadarshinah cha;
kartaaram anyam avagamya tad arpitaani
kurvanti karma paripaaka phalaani dhanyaah. ॥ 4 ॥

This verse talks about giving up two things. They are the most difficult ones to renounce. They are the notions of 'Me' and 'Mine'. This is the basis of karma yoga. The ahankara is deep rooted in the doership and enjoyership. When that is surrendered to Isvara, one does the action without doership, without the attachment to the results of action. Isvarizing everything, surrendering all actions and results to Isvara helps one grow . Karma yoga helps to attain *chitta suddhi*. One has to develop equanimity to honor and dishonor. Those who have given up the 'me and mine' are indeed truly blessed.

Give up the three main obsessions that grow like thick forest

Verse 5

त्यक्त्वैषणात्रयमवेक्षितमोक्षमागा

भैक्षामृतेन परिकल्पितदेह्यात्राः ।

ज्योतिः परात्परतरं परमात्मसंज्ञं

धन्या द्विजारहसि हृद्यवलोकयन्ति ॥ ५॥

Tyaktvaa eshanaa trayam avekshita moksha maargaah
Bhaiksha amritena parikalpita deha yaatraah;
jyotih paraat parataram paramaatma sam-jnam
dhanyaah dvijaah rahasi hridi avalokayanti. ॥ 5॥

Renunciation is the essence of spirituality. The three things to be given up are

1. Wish for accumulating money,
2. Wish for progeny,
3. Wish for fame.

These three things are called *eshanas*-thick forest-like longings. Having given these things, the one who remains as a minimalist to sustain the body with basic amenities is wealthy. If the question arises ,What to pack for the yatra to moksha? The answer is trust. Trust in Isvara that food will come; money will come. The consciousness reveals everything. Even during the eclipse there is usually a diamond ring left. The yearning for moksha still lights up despite the dark ignorance. The one having given up these three things, revels in the darshan of atma jyoti and is truly blessed. The one who is able to have the svatma darshan is considered to be twice born. This second birth is a deathless 'as though' birth. They travel from ignorance to knowledge leaving behind no trace of travel like a bird in the sky. They go to solitary places or hangout only with like minded seekers. They are child-like, spontaneous and joyful.

Meditation on Brahman

Verse 6

नासत्र सत्र सदसत्र महसत्रचाणु
न स्त्री पुमात्र च नपुंसकमेकबीजम् ।
यैर्ब्रह्म तत्सममुपासितमेकचित्तः
धन्या विरेजुरित्तरेभवपाशबदधाः ॥ ६॥

Na asat na sat na sat-asat na mahat na cha anu
Na stree pumaan na cha napumsakam eka beejam;
Yaih brahma tat samanupaasitam eka chitaih
Dhanyaah virejuh itare bhava-paasha badhaah. ॥ 6॥

This verse describes the nature of Brahman. They are as follows.

1. Brahman is neither existent as an object nor non-existent.
2. It is not a mixture of existence and non existence .
3. It is neither huge nor tiny .
4. It is not female, male, neuter or transgender. It transcends gender.
5. It is the seed for the manifest and unmanifest universe.

Atma has no signs. There is no scope to describe or visualize it. Samsara is like a cocktail of *sukha* and *duhka*. It keeps giving *sukha* as intermittent reinforcements keeping jiva addicted. That is why jiva keeps getting trapped. Those who have understood the trap of samsara can get out with atma *jñana*. They gain the true self. They shine away from the ropes of becoming and are free. They are truly liberated while others are trapped in the binding desires of becoming.

An Ode to Samsara

Verse 7

अज्ञानपङ्कपरिमग्रमपेतसारं
दुःखालयं मरणजन्मजरावसक्तम् ।
संसारबन्धनमनित्यमवेक्ष्य धन्या
ज्ञानासिना तदवशीर्य विनिश्चयन्ति ॥ ७॥

Ajnaana pangka parimagnam apetasaaram
Duhkha aalayam maranajanma jaraa avasaktam;
Samsara bandhanam anityam avekshya dhanyaah
Jnaana asinnaa tat avasheerya vinishchayanti. ॥ 7 ॥

This body is given as a vehicle to attain moksha. With single minded focus if atma jñana is pursued, the silken chord of samsara shackles can be torn. The doership and enjoyership can be shaken with the help of Isvara. Transferring our emotions to Isvara is a safe way to come out of this samsara. Listening to one Vedanta class a day is a good practice to stay in touch with shastra after retreats. The sludge of samsara can pull jiva back. So one has to be careful . The samsara is actually a dried guard but appears juicy. The juice belongs to the inner being. Knowing this truth allows one to escape from the duhkalya now and here itself. All the enjoyments of samsara belong to the sentient being atma. This knowledge acts like a sickle to cut through the upside down tree of samsara. The non attachment- *asangatva* is the true nature of atma and it is the strength. It is a sadhana at first, but later one understands it is their true nature. After understanding the truth one can sing an ode to samsara and stay unattached by it.

The true companion of Atma jñani

Verse 8

शान्तैरनन्यमतिभिर्मधुरस्वभावैः
एकत्वनिश्चितमनोभिरपेतमोहैः ।
साकं वनेषु विजितात्मपदस्वरूपं
तद्वस्तु सम्पग्निशं विमृशन्ति धन्याः ॥ ८॥

Shaantaih ananya-matibhih madhura swa-bhaavaih
Ekatva nishcita manobhih apeta-mohaih;
Saakam vaneshu vijita aatma pada swa-roopam
Tat vastu samyak anisham vimrishanti dhanyaah. ॥ 8 ॥

After gaining atma jñana one is in sweet disposition. They remain calm, and their minds are tranquil. They watch the mind as though standing on a riverbank, watching the river flowing. Thoughts come and go without affecting them. Thoughts are not coming from one's own raga dveśa. Both the Vishyananda vrutti and Brahmananda vrutti have Atma as the base. Initially with the Satvik mindset relative śanti is attained. With atma jñana absolute śanti is gained. Contemplating with single pointed focus and well ascertained knowledge, doubts, errors and vagueness are removed. Atma jñani remain happy with the best companion Atma in solitude. It is not loneliness. It is only ness. The unconscious mind with all conditions and fears is interrogated into the adult by consistent śravanam, mananam and Nididhyasana. The realized souls live happily with spontaneous joy overflowing.

॥ इति श्रीमद् शङ्कराचार्यविरचितं धन्याष्टकं समाप्तम् ॥



