

Dakṣiṇāmūrti

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Dakṣiṇāmūrti

Dakṣiṇāmūrti is an incarnation of Lord Siva. The Lord has many names like Siva, Vishnu etc. The Lord is called Siva because he is *maṅgaḷa svarūpa*, that is, all-auspiciousness. The Lord is also called Vishnu, because of being *sarva vyāpaka*, all-pervading. The entire universe has got its existence in *Īśvara*. Hence *Īśvara* is called Vishnu. *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* is an incarnation of the Lord. Every incarnation has a special purpose. *Jīva*, the individual, takes birth by virtue of karma-s performed in earlier lives. Those karma-s of the *Jīva* that have matured bring forth a life form for the *Jīva*; that of a human being or any other life form. In the case of *Īśvara*, the situation is entirely different. *Īśvara* takes up a life form by his own will (*svēcchā*), for accomplishing a special purpose. This purpose is two-fold as described by Bhagavan himself in the Gita (4-8):

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥ (४-८)

Paritrāṇāya sādḥūnāṃ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām ,
Dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yugē yugē .

For the protection of those who are committed to dharma, for the destruction (conversion) of those who follow adharma, and for the establishment of dharma, I come into being in every age.

This dharma is two-fold: Karma (action) and *Jñāna* (knowledge). It is said:

वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम् ।
Vēdōkhilō dharmamūlam .

The entire Veda is the source of dharma (righteous conduct).

Sri Sankara says in his introduction to Gita:

स द्विविधो हि वेदोक्तो धर्मः प्रवृत्तिलक्षणो निवृत्तिलक्षणश्च ।

*Sa dvividhō hi vēdōktō dharmah pravṛttilakṣaṇō
nivṛttilakṣaṇāśca .*

That dharma is two fold: righteous activity and withdrawal from it by knowledge.

The body of knowledge called the Veda is the repository of dharma. The Veda is broadly divided into two sections. The first section is *Karma Kāṇḍa*, which teaches activity-based dharma. It is also called *Pravṛtti dharma*. The second portion of the Veda teaches a totally different kind of dharma, called *Ātma-dharma*. It is also called *Nivṛtti dharma* (withdrawal from activity by the knowledge that Atman is not the agent of actions). Strategic advance into the world is dharma; so also deliberate withdrawal from the world is dharma. On the eleventh day of the lunar cycle, namely, on *Ēkādaśī* day, fasting is dharma, while on the next day, that is *Dvādaśī*, taking food early in the morning is dharma.

Dharma is normally taken care of by the society. However, when dharma declines in the society and adharma increases, corrective measures have to be taken. In such a situation Bhagavan comes forth and corrects the imbalance. Correction of the imbalance is also two-fold. In case of *Pravṛtti dharma*, Bhagavan comes in the form of *avatāra*, an incarnation and He punishes the wicked and rewards the virtuous. That is what, for example, Lord Rama has done and we have quite a few such *avatāra*-s like *Matsya*, *Kūrma* etc.

Ātma-dharma also declines over a period of time. Lord Sri Krishna explained this in the Gita in the following verse:

एवं परंपराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।
स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परंतप ॥
(श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता, ४-२)

*Ēvaṃ paramparāprāptamimaṃ rājarṣayo viduḥ ,
Sa kālēneha mahatā yōgō naṣṭaḥ parantapa .
(Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, 4-2)*

This lineage of two-fold dharma started with the originator of the universe, namely *Hiraṇyagarbha*, and percolated down into the human society through the great kings who were seers and sages in their own right. However, this dharma declined over a long period of time.

Dharma can never be destroyed. It only disappears temporarily. Some people claim that Sanskrit is a dead language. This is not correct. The fact is that the language is not in common use. But even that situation is quickly changing and once again Sanskrit is becoming popular. In the same way, this *Ātma-dharma* also declines in certain times. On such occasions, Bhagavan appears in a suitable incarnation and makes it prominent through his teachings. The Lord appeared in the incarnation of Sri Krishna and took care of *Pravṛtti dharma* by killing the wicked persons like Kamsa. He further re-established dharma by way of teaching the Gita to Arjuna. This is why Sri Krishna is called *Jagad-guru*, the teacher for the entire humanity. There is an interesting difference between the incarnations of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna. The sage Vasishtha teaches to Rama: *Tat*

tvam asi, that (the supreme reality) art thou. But Sri Krishna often proclaims himself thus: *Aham Brahmāsmi*, I am the Supreme reality of this universe.

Certain *avatāra*-s like Sri Rama are meant to protect the *Pravṛtti dharma* exclusively. Certain others like Sri Krishna *avatāra* protected both *Pravṛtti* as well as *Nivṛtti dharma*-s. In the present context, the incarnation of the Lord as *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* is meant for safeguarding *Ātma-dharma* exclusively. This *avatāra* of the Lord is described in the *Sūta Saṃhitā* of the *Skānda Purāṇa*. The *Skānda Purāṇa* is a voluminous treatise, almost as big as the *Mahābhārata* (one hundred thousand verses). The *Sūta Saṃhitā* constitutes a moderately big section of that *Purāṇa*. The sage *Sūta* is said to have taught many a *Purāṇa* in the *satrayāga*-s (elaborate community rituals) performed by the sages of *Naimiśa* forest during the intervals between various parts of the lengthy ritual. The *Sūta Saṃhitā* is one such teaching. In the Vedantic tradition, it is believed that Sri Sankara studied the *Sūta Saṃhitā* eighteen times before composing the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*. This testifies to the greatness of the *Sūta Saṃhitā*.

तामष्टादशधाऽऽलोक्य शंकरस्सूतसंहिताम् ।
चक्रे शारीरकं भाष्यं सर्ववेदांतनिर्णयम् ॥

*Tāmaṣṭādaśadhālōkya śaṅkarassūtasamhitām ,
Cakre śārīrakaṃ bhāṣyaṃ sarvavedāntanirṇayam .*

Sri Sankara studied the *Sūta Saṃhitā* eighteen times before he embarked upon his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtra*-s. This commentary sets out all aspects of Vedanta in clear terms.

I personally feel that Sri Sankara composed the *Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stōtram* after completing the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*. The *Sūta Saṃhitā* describes the incarnation of *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* in the following verses:

प्रलंबितजटाबद्धं चंद्ररेखावतंसकम् ।
नीलग्रीवं शरच्चंद्रचंद्रिकाभिर्विराजितम् ॥
गोक्षीरधवलाकारं चंद्रबिंबसमाननम् ।
सुस्मितं सुप्रसन्नं च स्वात्मतत्त्वैकसंस्थितम् ॥
गंगाधरं शिवं शांतं लसत्केयूरमंडितम् ।
वीरासने समासीनं वेदयज्ञोपवीतिनम् ॥
सर्वेषां प्राणिनामात्माज्ञानापस्मारपृष्ठतः ।
विन्यस्तचरणं सम्यग् ज्ञानमुद्राधरं हरम् ॥
स्वात्मभूतपरानंदपरशक्त्यर्धविग्रहम् ।
मुनिभिस्संवृतं मायावटमूलाश्रितं शुभम् ॥
ईशानं सर्वविद्यानामीश्वरेश्वरमव्ययम् ।
स्वात्मविद्याप्रदानेन सदा संसारमोचकम् ॥
दक्षिणामूर्तिदेवाख्यं जगत्सर्गादिकारणम् ।
रुद्र यत्ते मुखं तेन दक्षिणं पाहि मामिति ॥
पुनर्देवो महादेवो दक्षिणामूर्तिरीश्वरः ।
प्रदत्त्वा स्वात्मविज्ञानं तस्मै विप्राय सुव्रताः ॥
बहवो दक्षिणामूर्तिप्रसादादेव जंतवः ।
अनायासेन संसाराद्विमुक्ताः परमर्षयः ॥ (मुक्तिखंडः, ४)

Pralambitajaṭābaddhaṃ candrarēkhāvataṃsakam ,
Nilagrīvaṃ śaraccandraçandrikābhirvirājitam .
Gōkṣīradhavalākāraṃ candrabibiṃbasamānanam ,
Susmitaṃ suprasannaṃ ca svātmatattvaikaṣaṃsthitam.

*Gaṅgādharaṃ śivaṃ śāntaṃ lasatkēyūramaṇḍitam ,
Virāsanē samāsīnaṃ vēdayajñōpavitīnam .
Sarvēśāṃ prāṇināmātmājñānāpasmārapṛsthataḥ ,
Vinyastacaraṇaṃ samyag jñānamudrādharaṃ haram .
Svātmabhūtaparānandaparaśaktyardhavigraham ,
Munibhissaṃvṛtaṃ māyāvaṭamūlāsritaṃ śubham .
Īśānaṃ sarvavidyānāmīśvarēśvaramavyayam ,
Svātmavidyāpradānēna sadā saṃsāramōcakam .
Dakṣiṇāmūrtidēvākhyāṃ jagatsargādikāraṇam ,
Rudra yattē mukhaṃ tēna dakṣiṇaṃ pāhi māmīti .
Punardēvō mahādēvō dakṣiṇāmūrtirīśvaraḥ ,
Pradattvā svātmavijñānaṃ tasmai viprāya suvratāḥ .
Bahavō dakṣiṇāmūrtiprasādādēva jantavaḥ ,
Anāyāsēna saṃsārādvimuktāḥ paramarṣayaḥ .*

(Muktikhaṇḍaḥ, 4)

He has tied down his matted hair. He has adorned the head with the crescent moon. His neck has blue hue. He is shining brilliantly in the light of the autumnal moon. He is calm and smiling, being established in his own Atman. He holds Ganga on his head. He is all-auspicious and serene. He is adorned with bracelets on the upper arms. He sits comfortably in *Virāsana*, a yogic posture. His sacred thread represents the Vedic knowledge. The ignorance of Atman, of all beings, in the form of the demon *Apasmāra*, is held under check below his feet. He removes the ignorance of the devotees with the fingers of the hand held in *Jñāna mudrā*, a specific configuration signifying the essential identity of *Jīva* and *Īśvara*. His body is half-woman, the woman being his own Supreme power of infinite happiness, not different from himself. Dharma in the form of a bull is besides him. The sages who live a life of

dharmā (righteousness) and who are well versed in the Vedic knowledge are all around him. He is sitting under the banyan tree, which stands for the *Māyā*. He is the repository of all branches of knowledge. He is the Lord of lords, immutable. He relieves the devotees from the clutches of *samsāra* by giving them knowledge about their own Atman. This Lord of creation, sustenance and annihilation is known by the name of *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*. The devotee prays to Him thus: ' O Rudra (one who drives away sorrow)! You are facing south. Please protect me '. Praying thus, the devotee worshipped the Lord again and again. O sages of severe austerities! The Lord *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*, greatest among all the celestials, bestowed upon that Brahmin devotee the knowledge of Atman. O great sages! Many *Jīva*-s gained liberation from *samsāra* easily by the grace of Lord *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*.

Apasmāra, the inability of the mind to grasp the higher truths, is metaphorically presented as a demon, who is kept alive but, of course, under the right foot (control) of the Lord *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*. In the Gita, Lord Sri Krishna declares that memory, knowledge, and forgetfulness are all caused by Himself (who is present in the heart of the *Jīva* as the awareness, Atman).

मत्तस्मृतिर्ज्ञानमपोहनं च । (१५-१५)

Mattassmṛtirjñānamapōhanaṃ ca . (15-15)

This *apōhana* is *Apasmāra*. Lord *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* shows *cinmudrā* in His right hand. His is *Ardhanārīśvara svarūpa*, one half male and the other half female, the latter being none other than His *Māyā Śakti*. There is an ear-ring in

the left ear of *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*, indicating the female nature of the left half. The right half is *Īśvara*, and a snake serves as a ring in the right ear. He is the cause of the universe (and also of its sustenance and dissolution). His seat is under the banyan tree, which stands for His creative faculty, the *Māyā Śakti*. Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara are the four disciples receiving knowledge from Him.

Propitiation Of Guru

It is well known that the configuration of the nine planets has an important bearing on the events in the life of a person. Among these nine planets, Jupiter (the planet Guru) occupies an important place and influences the life of the person in a big way, especially the knowledge-based life of the person. Generally, we propitiate Guru not only when he is in an unfavourable position, but also when one or more of the other planets are unfavourable, since Guru influences the effects of other planets also. The best way to propitiate the planet Guru is to visit the temple of *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* and recite *Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stōtram*, since Guru as a planet is related to knowledge in the life of the person, and these verses contain the supreme knowledge presented in the form of an encomium. Thus, recitation of *Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stōtram* is one of the best methods for warding off the ill effects of the planets in general, and of the planet Guru in particular, in one's life.

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