

20. श्रीगोविन्दाष्टकम् / Sri Govindashtakam

Introduction:

Adi Shankara composed this eight-versed "Ashtakam", in praise of Govinda. Govinda means - protector of cows, protector of earth. There is also a saying, "गोविदां पतिः / Govidaam pathih" - master of those who has good speech. He is the one who makes us attain speech (वाणी/vaani). These are a few of the many meanings of Govinda.

1. सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं नित्यमनाकाशं परमाकाशं गोष्ठप्राङ्गणरिङ्खणलोलमनायासं परमायासम् ।
मायाकल्पितनानाकारमनाकारं भुवनाकारं क्षमाया नाथमनाथं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् ॥

1. satyaṁ jñānāmanantaṁ nityamanākāśaṁ paramākāśam
gōṣṭhaprāṅgaṅṅarīṅkhaṅṅalōlamanāyāsaṁ paramāyāsam |
māyākālpitanānākāramanākāraṁ bhuvanākāram kṣmāmānāthamanāthaṁ praṇamata
gōvindaṁ paramānandam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं नित्यमनाकाशं परमाकाशं / satyaṁ jñānāmanantaṁ nityamanākāśam
paramākāśam

सत्यं - satyaṁ - eternal truth (not constrained by time and space); ज्ञानम् - jñānam - an embodiment of all the knowledge; अनन्तं - anantaṁ - endless; नित्यम् - nityam - an eternal entity (time aspect); अनाकाशं - anākāśam - beyond aakasha /space; परमाकाशं - paramākāśam - supreme aakasha/ supreme space;

He is the eternal truth, an embodiment of knowledge, endless, and is an eternal entity. He is beyond space and supreme space.

Notes:

सत्यम् - satyaṁ, ज्ञानम् - jñānam (representing "chit" in sat-chit-ananda), अनन्तम् - anantaṁ, नित्यम् - nityam. These are the qualities or attributes of the Parabrahman from Upanishads.

अनाकाशं/anākāśam and परमाकाशं/paramākāśam are the two beautiful contradictory phrases employed by Adi Shankara. Here, aakasha means all the five elements (Panchabhutas) and anākāśam refers to him as independent and beyond the five-elements. The five elements are his creation and depend on him and function because of his presence.

Paramākāśam means supreme space, which is the heart of Jiva. Dahara-vidya in the Chandogya Upanishad says that one should meditate in the heart (Dahara - space inside the heart), where

Bhagavan can be visualized and where realization can be attained (Sakshatkara). Veda mentions Paramākāśam in verses such as “परमे व्योमन् प्रतिष्ठिता / parame vyoman pratishtita.

Also, in Bhagavad Gita such beautiful contradictory phrases are quoted:

मत्त एवेति तान्विद्धि न त्वहं तेषु ते मयि | 7.1
matta eveti tāt viddhi na tvahaṁ teṣhu te mayi |

Those elements are manifested by my energy. They are in me, but I am beyond them.

Thus, Bhagavan is अनाकाश/anakaasha and परमाकाश/Paramaakasha. He is not bound by the elements of nature such as aakasha (Panchabhutas), which are transient and will get destroyed during Pralaya. But the supreme space remains with Jiva and endures with janmas / births even after pralaya as Bhagawan holds the jiva in a subtle form.

गोष्ठप्राङ्गणरिङ्खणलोलमनायासं परमायासम् / gōṣṭhaprāṅgaṇariṅkhaṇalōlamanāyāsam paramāyāsam

गोष्ठ - gōṣṭha - cow pen/ barn; प्राङ्गण - prāṅgaṇa - courtyard; रिङ्खण - riṅkhaṇa - crawling; लोलम् - lōlam - engaged/ pleases; अनायासं - anāyāsam - without any exertion; परमायासम् - paramāyāsam - supreme exertion;

He pleases by crawling in the courtyard of the cow pen and he has no exertion but appears to exert himself.

Notes:

अनायासम्/anāyāsam and परमायासम्/paramāyāsam are the contradictory phrases employed here.

anāyāsam - not exerting - being a विश्वम्भर/Vishwambhara, he is not tired of/ does not need to exert force for the creation, sustenance, and the destruction of the entire universe.

Paramāyāsam means - he appears to exert himself - when he carried the Govardhana Giri on his little finger as a child or while killing the demons, he appears to exert greatly, due to Maya. But in reality, he does this anāyāsam/ without any exertion.

मायाकल्पितनानाकारमनाकारं भुवनाकारं / māyākalpitanānākāramanākāram bhuvanākāram

माया - māyā - illusion; कल्पित - kalpita - created through imagination; नाना - nānā - various; आकारम् - ākāram - shapes; अनाकारं - anākāram - no form; भुवन आकारं - bhuvana ākāram - form of universe;

He created various shapes and forms with the power of Maya, but he is formless and manifests in the form of the universe.

Notes:

नानाकारम् / nānākāram - having created many forms and shapes (नाम/naama and रूप/roopa) like mountains, hills, waterways, insects, animals, humans, devas, asuras. Despite creating these many forms and shapes, he is not confined to any shape or form - so, he is अनाकारम् /anākāram. Parabrahmam manifests itself in so many forms - Lord Krishna, Rama, Shiva, etc., but the form itself is not the whole of Parabrahmam. Shastras mention about Nirguna and Saguna forms of Brahmam. Nirguna Brahmam is the true /basic Parabrahmam who manifests in various forms for the sake of conferring grace on devotees which is the Saguna Brahmam. That form doesn't define Parabrahmam in entirety, it is for the convenience of Jīva to worship him in a form. And he is also भुवनाकारम्/bhuvanākāram - a form of the entire universe, all beings in this universe are his form.

क्षमाया नाथमनाथं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् / kṣmāyānāthamanātham praṇamata gōvindaṁ paramānandam

क्षमायाः - kṣmāyāḥ - of the earth; नाथम् - nātham - master; अनार्थ - anātham - no lord/master over him; प्रणमत - praṇamata - worship; गोविन्दं - gōvindaṁ - Govinda; परमानन्दम् - paramānandam - supreme bliss;

He is the master of the earth (Bhudevi) and has no master over him. Worship that Govinda who is the supreme form of bliss.

Notes:

When the earth was immersed in water, he incarnated as Varaha and uplifted the earth. Hence he is called क्षमायाः नाथ/kṣmāyāḥ nātha - master of the earth. Bhudevi is his consort.

Summary:

Worship Govinda who is supreme bliss, the embodiment of all knowledge, infinite, and eternal, who is free from space (five-elements) and who is the supreme space, who was eager to crawl in the cow-pen as a child, who is free from exertion, but appears to greatly exert, who created many forms and shapes with the power of māyā, who is formless, yet appears in many forms in the world, who is the Lord of the earth, and has no one above to control him.

**2. मृत्स्नामत्सीहेति यशोदाताडनशैशव सन्त्रासं व्यादितवक्त्रालोकितलोकालोकचतुर्दशलोकालिम् ।
लोकत्रयपुरमूलस्तम्भं लोकालोकमनालोकं लोकेशं परमेशं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् ॥**

2. mṛtsnāmatsīheti yaśodātāḍanaśaiśava santrāsaṁ

vyāditavaktrālokalokālokacaturdaśalokālim |

lokatrayapuramūlastambhaṁ lokālokamanālokaṁ lokeshaṁ paramēshaṁ praṇamata govindaṁ paramānandam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

In this shloka, Adi Shankara mentions various childhood leelas of Sri Krishna and his glory.

मृत्सामत्सीहेति यशोदाताडनशैशव सन्त्वासं / mṛtsnāmatsīheti yaśodātāḍanaśaiśava santrāsaṃ
मृत्साम् - mṛtsnām - soil; अत्सि - atsi - consumed; इह - iha - here; इति - iti - this way; यशोदा - yaśodā - Yashoda; ताडन - tāḍana - beaten; शैशव - śaiśava - childhood; सन्त्वासं - santrāsaṃ - gripped by great fear;

He (Sri Krishna) showed great fear during his childhood when Yashoda beat him for having consumed soil.

व्यादितवक्त्रालोकितलोकालोकचतुर्दशलोकालिम् / vyāditavaktrālokitalokālokacaturdaśalokālim
व्यादित - vyādita - opened; वक्त्र - vaktra - mouth; आलोकित - ālokita - was seen; लोक - loka - seen; अलोक - aloka - not seen; चतुर्दश - caturdaśa - Fourteen; लोक - loka - world; अलिम् - alim - row;

A row of fourteen worlds was seen but some could be seen and some unseen inside his opened mouth (by Yashoda).

Notes:

लोकालोक/lokāloka - Seen and Unseen can be interpreted in two different ways. The first being the row of fourteen worlds are inside his mouth one after the other and so Yashoda could see only some of them. The second interpretation is that - a row of the fourteen worlds is limited only to this Brahmanda. Many such crores of Brahmandas were created by him. So, only one Brahmanda was seen and the rest were unseen.

लोकत्रयपुरमूलस्तम्भं लोकालोकमनालोकं / lokatrayapuramūlastambhaṃ lokālokamanālokaṃ
लोकत्रय - lokatraya - three worlds; पुर - pura - the body; मूलस्तम्भं - mūlastambhaṃ - foundation pillar; लोक अलोकम् - loka alokaṃ - seen and unseen; अनालोकं - anālokaṃ - invisible;

He is the foundation pillar for the body of three worlds, seen and unseen, but remains invisible.

Notes:

Wherever it is mentioned as three worlds or fourteen worlds the relevant meaning should be considered. There are 7 worlds above Earth and there are another Seven including Earth and below Earth (Pathala Lokas) - totalling Fourteen Worlds. When it is referred to as three worlds - it means all the worlds above the earth is one, the earth is second, and the worlds below the earth is the third.

Adi Shankara mentioned Krishna as अनालोकम्/anālokaṃ - invisible in this verse. What a Jīva could see with his normal eye is the form of Krishna incarnated to shower the grace and compassion on Jivas. But that's not just what he is limited to. He cannot be seen by mere eyesight, he is beyond speech or thought. That is why Sri Krishna granted Arjuna with a divine eye/ sight to see him. Even the form visible to the divine eye cannot define him.

Also, the Saguna Roopam is लोकालोकं/ lokālokam - seen and unseen. It is unseen because all of his creations cannot be seen. Even in this physical world, we cannot see all his creations.

लोकेशं परमेशं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् / lokesam paramesam pranamata govindam paramanandam

लोकेशं - lokesam - lord of the worlds; परमेशं - paramesam - supreme lord; प्रणमत - pranamata - worship; गोविन्दं - govindam - Govinda; परमानन्दम् - paramanandam - supreme bliss;

He is the lord of the worlds and a supreme lord (no lord above him). Worship that Govinda who is the supreme form of bliss.

Summary:

Worship Govinda, who is supreme bliss, who appeared as a fearful child when beaten by Yashoda while he was eating soil and in his opened mouth was seen the row of fourteen worlds, some visible and some invisible, who is the pillar of support of the three worlds, who is in the form of the worlds, visible and invisible, who cannot be seen, who is the controller of the universe and who is the supreme Lord.

**3. त्रैविष्टपरिपुवीरघ्नं क्षितिभारघ्नं भवरोगघ्नं कैवल्यं नवनीताहारमनाहारं भुवनाहारम् ।
वैमल्यस्फुटचेतोवृत्तिविशेषाभासमनाभासं शैवं केवलशान्तं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् ॥**

**3. traiviṣṭaparipuvīraghnam kṣitibhāraghnam bhavarogaghnam kaivalyam
navanītāhāramanāhāram bhuvanāhāram |**

**vaimalyasphuṭacetovṛttiviśeṣābhāsamanābhāsam śaivam kevalaśāntam pranamata
govindam paramanandam**

Meaning and Explanation:

**त्रैविष्टपरिपुवीरघ्नं क्षितिभारघ्नं भवरोगघ्नं / traiviṣṭaparipuvīraghnam kṣitibhāraghnam
bhavarogaghnam**

त्रैविष्टप - traiviṣṭapa - those who live in Swarga - Devas; रिपु - ripu - enemy; वीरघ्नं - vīraghnam - killer of the valourous; क्षिति - kṣiti - the earth; भार - bhāra - weight; घ्नं - ghnam - remover; भव - bhava - Samsara; रोग - roga - disease; घ्नं - ghnam - remover;

He kills the “enemies of those who live in Swarga” - demons/asuras who are valourous; reduces the “weight of the earth” - by eliminating evil forces and removes the disease of samsara.

Notes:

The incarnation of Lord Sri Krishna happened as a result of the earth in the form of a cow representing to Brahma that she could not bear evil forces anymore. Then, Brahma prayed to Vishnu and so, he incarnated as Krishna to reduce the evil forces - reducing the weight of the earth to maintain balance (not the physical weight, but the weight from evil forces). When evil forces dominate the good forces it becomes unbearable for the earth.

कैवल्यं नवनीताहारमनाहारं भुवनाहारम् / kaivalyaṃ navanītāhāramanāhāraṃ bhuvanāhāram

कैवल्यं - kaivalyaṃ - not affected by upadhis/detached; नवनीत - navanīta - fresh butter; आहारं - āhāram - food; अनाहारं - anāhāram - with no need of food; भुवन आहारम् - bhuvana āhāram - the whole world becomes food;

He is Kaivalya (not affected by upadhis) and has fresh butter as food. He doesn't need food and he consumes the whole world as food (during pralaya).

Notes:

Lord Sri Krishna is referred to here as अनाहारम् - anāhāram - who doesn't need any food. All the Jīvas need food as they have the body. Sri Krishna is beyond the physical body even during the avatars/ incarnations, appearing as the physical body. The food for the Jivas, is a necessity, while for him, it is a means to please others. (Krishna ate food for pleasing his mother and his friends)

Contrary to the above, Krishna is also referred to as भुवनाहारम् - bhuvanāhāram - as the whole world is consumed by him during Pralaya (destruction). Upanishads says that Lord Yama runs after the creation and keeps on consuming it through the grace of Bhagavan.

वैमल्यस्फुटचेतोवृत्तिविशेषाभासमनाभासं / vaimalyasphuṭacetovṛttiviśeṣābhāsamanābhāsaṃ

वैमल्य - vaimalya - without any impurity; स्फुट - sphuṭa - manifest; चेतोवृत्ति - cetovṛtti - mode of the mind; विशेष - viśeṣa - special; आभासम् - ābhāsam - shining reflection; अनाभासं - anābhāsaṃ - who cannot be revealed by anything;

The reflection of Krishna can be seen in pure and clear mental mode, but his true form cannot be revealed by anything.

Notes:

Mental mode means the various state of the mind - (happiness, grief, sorrow, shock, anger, etc.). The thoughts that manifest as various mental modes should be free of impurities and always be in Shanta Vritti. When the mind is in this mode one thinks of God alone.

“Bhasa” is Atma, which is self-shining. Other than Atma there is no self-shining entity in our body. Only Atma shines on its own. But there is shine in our eyes, hands, etc., which is due to the reflected shine that is Abhaasa. This reflected shine first happens in the mind hence called Vishesha Abhasa. When the mind is pure (Vaimalya), the reflection is also pure. Atma is reflected beautifully in the mind; this is the highest Vedanta that is described here along with Bala Leela which is the beauty of this verse. When the mind is crystal clear, Atma is reflected very well, at that time if one meditates the mind goes off (Abhasa goes off) and only Atma remains (Bhasa remains).

'Anaabhasam' - whatever reflection is seen in mind is not true as what is seen is a limited one only to help the jiva get rid of the upadhis and become one with Bhagawan. It is impossible to see his true form as he cannot be reached by thoughts or words as seen earlier.

शैवं केवलशान्तं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् / śaivaṃ kevalaśāntaṃ praṇamata govindaṃ paramānandam

शैवं - śaivaṃ - worshipper of Shiva/auspiciousness; केवल - kevala - pure/unalloyed; शान्तं - śāntaṃ - tranquility; प्रणमत - praṇamata - worship; गोविन्दं - gōvindaṃ - Govinda; परमानन्दम् - paramānandam - supreme bliss;

He is auspicious, worshipper of Shiva and is the pure form of tranquillity. Worship that Govinda who is the supreme form of bliss.

Notes:

शैवं - śaivaṃ - can be interpreted in two ways – one is auspiciousness ie., if one with pure mind is able to see his reflection and reach him, that is the highest auspiciousness; Two – he is known as worshipper of Shiva. There are many stories of Krishna describing his worship of Shiva.

Summary:

Worship Govinda who is supreme bliss, who killed the mighty enemies of the Devas and reduced the weight of the earth, who removes the disease of birth (from his devotees), who is not affected by upadhis, who had butter as his food, though he does not require any food, who swallows the world (during pralaya), who shines brilliantly in the pure and clear mental mode, who cannot be revealed by anything else, who adores Shiva, and who is auspiciousness incarnated.

**4. गोपालं प्रभुलीलाविग्रहगोपालं कुलगोपालं गोपीखेलनगोवर्धनधृतिलीलालितगोपालम् ।
गोभिर्निगदित गोविन्दस्फुटनामानं बहुनामानं गोपीगोचरपथिकं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् ॥**

**4. gopālaṃ prabhūlīlāvīgrahagopālaṃ kulagopālaṃ
gopīkheḷanagovardhanadhṛtīlīlālitagopālam |
gobhīrnigadita govindasphuṭanāmānaṃ bahunāmānaṃ gōpīgōcarapathikaṃ praṇamata
gōvindaṃ paramānandam ||**

Meaning and Explanation:

In this Shloka, Adi Shankara used the word "Gopalam" as a polysemy.

गोपालं प्रभुलीलाविग्रहगोपालं कुलगोपालं / gopālaṃ prabhūlīlāvīgrahagopālaṃ kulagopālaṃ

गोपालं - gopālaṃ - protector of the world; प्रभु - prabhu - the Lord; लीला - līlā - by his sport; विग्रह - vīgraha - form; गोपालं - gopālaṃ - cowherd; कुल गोपालं - kula gopālaṃ - protector of the race (of Yadavas);

The protector of worlds (gopalam), the Lord, sportingly assumed the form of a cowherd (gopalam) and is the protector of the race of Yadavas (kula gopalam).

गोपीखेलनगोवर्धनधृतिलीलालितगोपालम् / gopīkḥelanagovardhanadhṛtilīlālītagopālam

गोपी - gopī - Gopikas; खेलन - khelana - playing; गोवर्धन - Govardhana - the Govardhana mountain; धृति - dhṛti - holding; लीला - līlā - sport (the sport of lifting Govardhana mountain on his little finger); लालित - lālita - being entertained (Gopis); गोपालम् - gopālam - Protector of the worlds;

The protector of the worlds entertained Gopis and Gopas through several leelas including the leela of lifting the Govardhana mountain, where they used to play.

Notes:

When Indra sent down heavy showers, Lord Sri Krishna lifted the Govardhana hill on his little finger, to protect Gopis and Gopas.

गोभिर्निगदित गोविन्दस्फुटनामानं बहुनामानं / gobhīrnigaditagovindasphuṭanāmānaṃ bahunāmānaṃ

गोभिः - gobhīh - Cows/Shastras; निगदित - nigadita - chanted/uttered; गोविन्द - govinda - Govinda nama; स्फुट - sphuṭa - very clearly; नामानं - nāmānaṃ - that nama; बहुनामानं - bahunāmānaṃ - several names;

Although the Lord has innumerable names, the name Govinda was chanted very clearly by Cows and Sashtras.

Notes:

During the period of Krishna, even cows uttered “Govinda” when he appeared before them. When Garagcharya was asked to do Namakarana (naming the baby) he was wondering what to name as he knew the identity of the baby and also knew that the baby had innumerable names (Bahunamanam) which he mentions and names as Krishna. He also names his brother as Balarama.

गोपीगोचरपथिकं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् / gōpīgōcarapathikaṃ praṇamata gōvindaṃ paramānandam

गोपी - gōpī - Gopi; गोचर - gōcara - within the sight of/ understood by; पथिकं - pathikam - traveller on a path; प्रणमत - praṇamata – pray to; गोविन्दं - gōvindaṃ - Govinda; परमानन्दम् - paramānandam - supreme bliss;

He is on a path that is within the sight of Gopis (means always accompanying Gopas and Gopis). Worship that Govinda who is the supreme form of bliss.

Summary:

Worship Govinda, who is a supreme form of bliss, who is the protector of the world, who made his advent in the world as Gopala through his Leela, who is the protector of the race (of Yadavas) and of cows, who made the cowherds happy through his leelas including lifting up the Govardhana mountain where the gopis used to play, whose name “Govinda” was uttered clearly by the cows (or Shastras), who has many names, and who is always within the sight of the Gopas and Gopis.

5. गोपीमण्डलगोष्ठिभेदं भेदावस्थमभेदाभं शश्वद्गोखुरनिर्धूतोद्धतधूलीधूसरसौभाग्यम् ।
श्रद्धाभक्तिगृहीतानन्दमचिन्त्यं चिन्तितसद्भावं चिन्तामणिमहिमानं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् ॥
5. gopīmaṇḍalagoṣṭhibhedam bhedāvasthamabhedābham
śāśvadvagokhuranirdhūtodgatadhūlīdhūsarasaubhāgyam |
śraddhābhaktigrhītānandamacintyaṃ cintitasadbhāvaṃ cintāmaṇimahimānaṃ praṇamata
govindaṃ paramānandam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

गोपीमण्डलगोष्ठिभेदं भेदावस्थमभेदाभं / gopīmaṇḍalagoṣṭhibhedam bhedāvasthamabhedābham
गोपी - gopī - Gopis; मण्डल - maṇḍala - small group/circle; गोष्ठि - goṣṭī - bigger group; भेदं -
bhedaṃ - different groups; भेद - bheda - different; अवस्थम् - avastham - forms; अभेद आभम् -
abheda ābham - the shine of being one and only one;

This line describes the Rasaleela during which Govinda appeared to be with every gopi, thus forming a group with each gopi in a circle and appeared at the centre of the circle too. Thus alluding to his presence in the many different forms that we see. He is omnipresent and shines forth as being the one and only.

शश्वद्गोखुर निर्धूतोद्धतधूलीधूसरसौभाग्यम् / śāśvadvagokhura
nirdhūtodgatadhūlīdhūsarasaubhāgyam

शश्वद् - śāśvad - always; गोखुर - gokhura - cow hooves; निर्धूत - nirdhūta - emanated/ thrown out;
उद्धत - udhata - raised up; धूली - dhūlī - dust; धूसर - dhūsara - dust-coloured; सौभाग्यम् -
saubhāgyam - good fortune;

Govinda and the gopis had the good fortune of being smeared by the sacrosanct dust thrown out and raised from the hooves of the grazing cows.

Notes:

In this verse, Adi Shankara highlights the sanctity of the dust raised by cows (through their hooves) when they walk and run by mentioning that even Gopala was fortunate to be smeared by that dust. A cow shed or goshala is considered sacred and free from impurities of any sort and is thus recommended for performing dharmic activities like nithya anushtanams, japams, homams, etc.

**श्रद्धाभक्तिगृहीतानन्दमचिन्त्यं चिन्तितसद्भावं / śraddhābhaktigrhītānandamacintyaṃ
cintitasadbhāvaṃ**

श्रद्धा - śraddhā – unflinching/unshakeable faith; भक्ति - bhakti - devotion; गृहीत - grhīta - caught/attained; आनन्दम् - ānandam - bliss; अचिन्त्यं - acintyaṃ - beyond thought; चिन्तित - cintita - meditated; सत् - sat - virtuous people; भावं - bhāvaṃ - his presence;

He who is bliss and beyond thoughts can be grasped or attained only through unflinching faith and devotion and whose presence is always meditated upon by the virtuous.

Notes:

In this verse, Adi Shankra explained how a Jiva can reach Govinda. It is only possible through both Shraddha and Bhakti. Shraddha without Bhakti or vice versa will not help. Shraddha is complete faith that he is there to protect us. Bhakti is nothing but keeping the Shraddha alive with continuous focus on Bhagavan with love. Since Jiva's mind is always a wavering one and devoid of concentration, both Shraddha and Bhakti should be there to reach Govinda. Govinda is beyond words, deeds, and thoughts. Virtuous people by their nature have unflinching faith and devotion and so they can meditate continuously on Govinda.

**चिन्तामणिमहिमानं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् / cintāmaṇimahimānaṃ praṇamata govindaṃ
paramānandam**

चिन्तामणि - cintāmaṇi - wish fulfilling Gem; महिमानं - mahimanam - great/glorious;
प्रणमत - praṇamata - worship; गोविन्दं - gōvindaṃ - Govinda; परमानन्दम् - paramānandam -
supreme bliss;

Govinda's greatness is like that of the gem Chintamani (wish-fulfilling gem). Worship that Govinda who is the supreme form of bliss.

Notes:

Govinda's glory is compared with Chintamani here. He can grant any wish including Moksha.

Summary:

Worship Govinda who is supreme bliss, who was present in each of the different groups of gopis, who appears in different forms, who is one and non-dual, whose beautiful form was covered always by the dust raised by the hooves of the cows, whose blissful nature is realized by shraddha and bhakti, who is beyond imagination, whose true existence is known only to the wise, and whose greatness is like that of the gem Chintamani.

**6. स्नानव्याकुलयोशिद्वस्त्रमुपादायागमुपारूढं व्यदित्सन्तिरथ दिग्वस्त्रा ह्युपदातुमुपाकर्षन्तम् ।
निर्धूतद्वयशोकविमोहं बुद्धं बुद्धेरन्तस्थं सत्तामात्रशरीरं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् ॥**

**6. snānavyākulayoṣidvāstramupādāyāgamupārūḍhaṃ vyaditsantīratha digvastrā
hyupadātumupākarsantaṃ |**

nirdhūtadvayaśokavimohaṃ buddhaṃ buddherantaḥsthaṃ sattāmātraśarīraṃ praṇamata

govindaṃ paramānandam

Meaning and Explanation:

In the first two lines of this shloka, Adi Shankara refers to “Gopika Vastraapaharanam” Leela of Sri Krishna (Krishna’s sporty act of stealing Gopikas’ clothes) and moves to Vedantic entity of Krishna.

स्नानव्याकुलयोशिद्वस्तमुपादायागमुपारूढं / snānavyākulayoṣidvastramupādāyāgamupārūḍhaṃ

स्नान - snāna - bath; व्याकुल - vyākula - busy with; योशित् - yoṣit - women; वस्तम् - vastram - clothes; उपादाय - upādāya - taking; अगम् - agam - tree (one that doesn’t move - tree or a mountain); उपारूढं - upārūḍhaṃ - climbed;

Govinda climbed a tree taking with him the clothes of women who were busy with their baths.

व्यदित्सन्तिरथ दिग्वस्त्रा ह्युपदातुमुपाकर्षन्तम् / vyaditsantīratha digvastrā

hyupadātumupākaraṣantaṃ

व्यदित्सन्तिः - vyaditsantihi - desiring to get back; अथ - atha - after that; दिग्वस्त्राहि - digvastrāhi - without clothes; उपदातुम् - upadātum - to give back; उप आकर्षन्तम् – upa ākaraṣantaṃ - called near;

After stealing clothes, Krishna called unclothed Gopis, who had a desire to get back their clothes, near to him to give back the clothes.

Notes:

Through this Leela, Krishna wants to teach a lesson to Gopis. As per Shastras, it is a sin to take bath without any clothes, particularly in a river. Rivers are considered as Devatha as per Shastras.

निर्धूतद्वयशोकविमोहं बुद्धं बुद्धेरन्तस्थं / nirdhūtadvayaśokavimohaṃ buddhaṃ

buddherantaḥsthaṃ

निर्धूत - nirdhūta - completely washed off; द्वय - dvaya - the two; शोक - śoka - grief; विमोहं - vimohaṃ - great delusion; बुद्धं - buddhaṃ - ever aware of/awake (aware of his real existence); बुद्धेः - buddhe - of the intellect; अन्तस्थं - antaḥsthaṃ - present inside/dwell;

He is completely devoid of grief and great delusion, ever awake, and always dwells in one’s intellect.

Notes:

Here विमोहं / vimohaṃ refers to the worldly delusions. Being a jiva, one thinks that this materialistic world, physical body as real and this causes शोक / śoka. Once Jiva learns that Govinda is the ultimate reality, he/she will be devoid of grief.

Govinda is बुद्धं /buddham - meaning he is ever aware of his existence. He is "aatma raama". Jivas are only aware of the body, world, and materialistic things but not the real existence.

सत्तामात्रशरीरं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् / sattāmātraśarīraṃ praṇamata govindaṃ paramānandam

सत्ता - sattā - existence; मात्र - mātra - only; शरीरं - śarīraṃ - body; प्रणमत - praṇamata - worship; गोविन्दं - gōvindaṃ - Govinda; परमानन्दम् - paramānandam - supreme bliss;

He is pure existence. Worship that Govinda who is the supreme form of bliss.

Notes:

As Jiva, one's body is made of Panchabhutas. But the form of Govinda, who is Sat-chit-ananda is not connected with Panchabhutas, it is rather only existence. With the power of Maya, he takes a form (Like Rama, Krishna..).

Summary:

Worship Govinda who is supreme bliss, who climbed up the tree carrying the clothes of women busily engaged in their bath and who made them come close to him for the purpose of giving the clothes to them who were unclothed and who desired to get back their clothes, who is devoid of grief and delusion, who is ever conscious, who dwells in the intellect, and whose form is pure-existence.

7.कान्तं कारणकारणमादिमनादि कालमनाभासं कालिन्दीगतकालियशिरसि सुनृत्यन्तं मुहुरत्यन्तम् ।
कालं कालकलातीतं कलिताशेषं कलिदोषघ्नं कालत्रयगतिहेतुं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् ॥

7. kāntaṃ kāraṇakāraṇamādīmanādīṃ kālaghanābhāsaṃ kālindīgatakāliyaśirasi sunṛtyantaṃ muhuratyantam |

kālaṃ kālakalātītaṃ kalitāśeṣaṃ kalidoṣaghnaṃ kālatrayagatihetuṃ praṇamata govindaṃ paramānandam ||

Meaning and Explanation:

कान्तं कारणकारणमादिमनादि कालमनाभासं / kāntaṃ kāraṇakāraṇamādīmanādīṃ kālamanābhāsaṃ

कान्तं - kāntaṃ - handsome one; कारण - kāraṇa - cause; कारणम् - kāraṇam - root cause; आदिम् - ādim - source; अनादिम् - anādīṃ - eternal/ without beginning; कालम् - kalam - the concept of Time; अनाभासं - anābhāsaṃ - non-reflected consciousness;

Who is handsome, root cause of all causes, and source of the universe, who has no beginning, who constitutes Time, and consciousness, pure and unreflected.

Notes:

Food is the cause of one's existence, and the very cause of food lies in Paramatma, so he is the root cause of everything. The use of the words adi, anadi, which are contradictory to each other is seen here. The source of existence of all beings, lies in Paramatma, as Brahma was created to start the creation of the world, hence the term ādi (beginning). Paramatma doesn't have a beginning, and so he is known as anādi (eternal). Paramatma is the very concept of Time, though he is beyond Time. The word ābhāsa refers to the reflected truth while bhāsa means the original truth. Mind is like a mirror that shows the reflected consciousness like the image reflected on the mirror, which is not real. Reality is outside the mirror and He is Anabhāsa the truth.

कालिन्दीगतकालियशिरसि सुनृत्यन्तं मुहुरत्यन्तम् / kālindīgatakāliyaśirasi sunṛtyantam muhuratyantam

कालिन्दी - kālindī - Yamuna river; गत - gata - living in; कालिय - kāliya - serpent named Kaliya; शिरसि - śirasi - on the head; सुनृत्यन्तं - sunṛtyantam - dancing beautifully; मुहुः - muhuh - quickly; अत्यन्तम् - atyantam - excessively;

Dancing beautifully, quickly and excessively on the head of the serpent Kaliya, who was living in the river Yamuna.

Notes:

Kalindi is the daughter of Kalinda, popularly known as the Yamuna. Sri Krishna as part of his Leela, danced excessively on his 1000 hoods, to punish Kaliya. He moved so fast from one hood to the other as if he was dancing on each hood at any point in time, and this excessive dance led to Kaliya spitting blood.

कालं कालकलातीतं कलिताशेषं कलिदोषघ्नं / kālam kālakalātītam kalitāśeṣam kalidoṣaghnam
कालं - kālam - concept of Time (yuga to yuga); काल - kāla - time; कला - kalā - measure; अतीतं - atītam - beyond; कलित - kalita - forms/ knows; अशेषं - aśeṣam - without leaving anything; कलिदोष - kalidoṣa - the evil associated with the Kali Yuga; घ्नं - ghnam - destroyer;

He, who manifests as Time, who is beyond measure of time, who knows everything, who is the destroyer of the evil of the Kali Yuga.

कालत्रयगतिहेतुं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् / kālatrayagatihetum praṇamata govindam paramānandam

कालत्रय - kālatraya - the three times (the past, the present and the future); गति - gati - progress; हेतुं - hetum - cause/ reason; प्रणमत - praṇamata - worship; गोविन्दं - gōvindam - Govinda; परमानन्दम् - paramānandam - supreme bliss;

He is the cause of the progress of the three times (the past, the present and the future), worship that Govinda who is the supreme form of bliss.

Summary:

Worship Govinda who is supreme bliss, who is handsome, who is the ultimate cause and source of everything, who is without beginning, who danced excessively and speedily on the hood of the serpent Káliya inhabiting the river Yamuna, who manifests as Time, who is beyond measure of time, who knows everything, who is the destroyer of the evil of the Kali Yuga, who is the cause of the three times (the past, the present and the future).

8. वृन्दावनभुवि वृन्दारकगणवृन्दाराध्यं वन्देऽहं कुन्दाभामलमन्दस्मेरसुधानन्दं सुहृदानन्दम् ।
वन्द्याशेषमहामुनिमानसवन्द्यानन्दपदद्वन्द्वं वन्द्याशेषगुणाब्धिं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् ॥

8. vṛndāvanabhuvi vṛndārakagaṇavṛndārādhyaṁ vandeḥaṁ kundābhāmalamandasmerasudhānandaṁ suhṛdānandaṁ ।
vandyāśeṣamahāmuni mānasavandyānanda padadvandvaṁ vandyāśeṣaguṇābधिṁ praṇamata
govindaṁ paramānandaṁ ॥

Meaning and Explanation:

वृन्दावनभुवि वृन्दारकगणवृन्दाराध्यं वन्देऽहं / vṛndāvanabhuvi vṛndārakagaṇavṛndārādhyaṁ
vandeḥam

वृन्दावन भुवि - vṛndāvana bhuvi – in the land of Vrundavana; वृन्दारक - vṛndāraka - Devatas; गण - gaṇa – large number; वृन्द- brnda - group; आराध्यं - ārādhyaṁ - worshipped; वन्दे - vande - prostrate/ worship; अहं - aham - me;

I worship the one who is worshipped by many groups of Devatas in the land of Vrundavana.

Notes:

During the childhood of Sri Krishna, many Devatas came to Vrindavana (or Brindavana) to have the darshan of Krishna as mentioned in Srimad Bhagavatam (a few came in person such as Indra, and a few watched his special leelas from the skies).

कुन्दाभामलमन्दस्मेरसुधानन्दं सुहृदानन्दम् / kundābhāmalamandasmerasudhānandaṁ
sumahānandaṁ

कुन्द - kundā - Jasmine; आभ - ābha - shining; अमल - amala - pure; मन्द - manda - gentle; स्मेर - smera - smile; सुधानन्दं - sudhānandaṁ - nectar-like happiness; सुहृत् आनन्दम्- suhṛit ānandaṁ – source of happiness to all his friends;

Having a jasmine flower-like white, pure, and gentle smile, he gives nectar-like happiness to all his friends.

Notes:

“suhrit” actually means a well-wisher, a friend. Friends refer to all those who came in contact with him during his 120 years of a long lifetime on earth including Kauravas, friends in Mathura, Dwaraka, etc.

वन्द्याशेषमहामुनिमानसवन्द्यानन्दपदद्वन्द्वं /

vandyāśeṣamahāmunimānasavandyānandapadadvandvaṃ

वन्द्य - vandyā - to be worshipped; अशेष - aśeṣa - without any balance/ all; महा - mahā - great; मुनि मानस - muni mānasa - mind of munis/ sages; वन्द्य - vandyā - worshipped; आनन्द - ānanda - bliss; पदद्वन्द्वं - padadvandvaṃ - a pair of feet;

All great sages, who are to be worshipped, worship, and meditate in their mind the twin feet (of Sri Krishna) of bliss.

वन्द्याशेषगुणाब्धिं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् / vandyāśeṣaguṇābधिṃ praṇamata govindaṃ paramānandam

वन्द्य - vandyā - always to be worshipped; अशेष - aśeṣa - all; गुण - guṇa - virtues; अब्धिं - abधिṃ - ocean; प्रणमत - praṇamata - worship; गोविन्दं - gōvindaṃ - Govinda; परमानन्दम् - paramānandam - supreme bliss;

The one to be worshipped always, who is an ocean of all virtues, worship that Govinda who is the supreme form of bliss.

Summary:

Worship Govinda who is supreme bliss who, in the land of Vrindāvan, is worshipped by many groups of Devatas, whose spotless smile resembles Jasmine flower, who brings nectar-like happiness to all his friends, whose twin feet are worshipped in the minds of great sages who are to be worshipped by us, and who is an ocean of all virtues, ever to be worshipped.

**9. गोविन्दाष्टकमेतदधीते गोविन्दार्पितचेता यो गोविन्दाच्युत माधव विष्णो गोकुलनायक कृष्णेति ।
गोविन्दाङ्घ्रिसरोजध्यानसुधाजलधौतसमस्ताघो गोविन्दं परमानन्दामृतमन्तःस्थं स तमभ्येति ॥**

9. govindāṣṭakametadadhīte govindārpitacetā yo govindācyuta mādhave viṣṇo gokulanāyaka kṛṣṇeti |

govindāṅghrisaroadhyānasudhājalahautasamastāgho govindaṃ paramānandāmṛtamantassthāṃ sa tamabhyeti ||

Meaning and Explanation:

This shloka is phalashruti as well as the direction given to us by Adi Shankara.

गोविन्दाष्टकमेतदधीते गोविन्दार्पितचेता यो / govindāṣṭakametadadhīte govindārpitacetā yo

गोविन्द - govinda - Govinda; अष्टकम् - āṣṭakam - Ashtakam/Eight verses; एतत् - etat - this; अधीते - adadhīte - one who studies; गोविन्द - govinda - Govinda; अर्पित - arpita - dedicated; चेतः - cetah - mind; यः - yah - the one;

If one studies this Govinda Ashtakam with mind dedicated to Govinda,

गोविन्दाच्युत माधव विष्णो गोकुलनायक कृष्णोति / govindācyuta mādharma viṣṇo gokulanāyaka kṛṣṇeti

गोविन्द - govinda - Govinda; अच्युत - ācyuta - Achyuta; माधव - mādharma - Madhava; विष्णो - viṣṇo - Vishnu; गोकुल नायक - gokula nayaka - The master of Gokula; कृष्ण - kṛṣṇa - Krishna; इति - iti - thus;

Govinda, Achyuta, Madhava, Vishnu, Master of Gokula, Krishna...

Notes:

While reciting this Govinda Ashtakam, all these various names of Govinda are revolving in his mind and he is chanting these names.

गोविन्दाङ्घ्रिसरोजध्यानसुधाजलधौतसमस्ताघो / govindāṅghrisaroadhyānasudhājalahautasamastāgho

गोविन्द - govinda - Govinda; अङ्घ्रि - āṅghri - feet; सरोज - saroja - Lotus; ध्यान - dhyana - meditation; सुधा जल - sudhā jala - amruta/nectar water; धौत - dhaut - washed off; समस्त - samasta - all; अघ - agha - sins;

Meditating on the Lotus feet of Govinda is the nectarine water which will wash off all the sins of the one who reads this stotram.

गोविन्दं परमानन्दामृतमन्तःस्थं स तमभ्येति / govindaṃ paramānandāmṛtamantassthaṃ sa tamabhyeti

गोविन्दं - govindaṃ - Govinda; परमानन्दम् - paramānandam - supreme bliss; अमृतम् - amṛtam - nectar; अन्तस्थं - antassthaṃ - who's inside the heart; सः - saha - the one who studies this; तम् - tam - that Govinda; अभ्येति - abhyeti - attains;

One who studies this Stotra attains that Govinda who is supreme bliss and is inside the heart as nectar (not satiated with meditating upon him).

Notes:

In Tamil, he is referred to as “Aravamudan” which means the nectar that one never gets satiated with meditating upon.

Summary:

He, who recites this Govinda ashtakam by fixing his mind on Govinda and uttering the names of Govinda, Acyuta, Madhava, Vishnu, Gokulanayaka, and Krishna, gets all his sins washed off by the nectarine water of meditation on the lotus-feet of Govinda, and attains Govinda residing inside the heart as the nectar and supreme bliss.

॥ श्री गोविन्दाष्टकम् सम्पूर्णम् ॥
॥ Sri Govindashtakam Sampurnam ॥