


Infinite Wings®



The musical journey of
nirvana shatkam

By Yogishri Sudarshan Kannan

Adi Shankaracharya

Adi Shankaracharya is popularly believed to be a *Rudra Avatar* (the spiritual descent of Lord *Rudra*). He is called 'the Father of *Advaita*' (non-dualism).

He was born in 788 AD in the Kaladi town of Kerala, India. At the age of six he became a *Chaturvedi* i.e. one who had mastered all the four *vedas* (ancient ultimate holy books of India).

At the age of eight he met the great saint Govinda Bhagavadpada in the Himalayas. The master asked him, "Who are you?" Shankara replied with a spontaneous composition of six verses which later came to be known as the famous *Nirvana Shatkam* or *Atma Shatkam*.

He was a master of *Vedanta*, *Tantra*, *Kriya Yoga* and *Raja Yoga*. He travelled the length and breadth of India several times by foot and conducted spiritual discourses and discussions. He established four *mutts* (monasteries) and appointed one of his disciples as in-charge for each *mutt*. He wrote commentaries on twelve major *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Brahmasutras*, etc. He also authored several spiritual texts and composed many devotional hymns in praise of God.

He was indeed a mystic saint and *yogi* with a unique combination of *Karma* (selfless service), *Bhakti* (devotion) and *Gnana* (spiritual knowledge)!

Within a short span of thirty two earthly years he created a deep spiritual renaissance and guided humanity towards the ultimate goal of God realization.



निर्वाण षट्कम्

Nirvana Shatkam

(Translation by Yogishri Sudarshan Kannan)

Introduction

Nirvana means liberation. *Nirvana Shatkam* means six verses of liberation. Liberation implies freedom from the finite and total merger with the Infinite – ‘A State of Enlightenment.’

Non-dualistic Meditation

The six verses of *Nirvana Shatkam* highlight the method of *Advaita Dhyana* i.e. non-dualistic meditation. It is the process of negating the unreal and asserting the reality which is the infinite supreme power - God. All the aspects of finite matter are negated systematically and God is asserted by repeating the phrase *Shivoham* twice at the end of every verse. *Shivoham* (*Shiva+Aham*) means *Shiva* am I. Here *Shiva* refers to the infinite formless reality which is the essence of your personality.



Slokha 1

मनो बुद्धयहंकार चित्तानि नाहम्
न च श्रोत्र जिह्वे न च घ्राणनेत्रे ।
न च व्योम भूमिर्न तेजो न वायुः
चिदानंदरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥ १ ॥

Transliteration

*mano buddhyahaṅkāra cittāni nāham
na ca śrotra jihve na ca ghrāṇanetre |
na ca vyoma bhūmirna tejo na vāyuh
cidānandarūpaḥ śivo'ham śivo'ham || 1 ||*

Translation

Neither mind nor intellect nor ego nor conditioned consciousness am I
Neither ears nor tongue nor mouth nor eyes (am I)
Neither sky nor earth nor light nor air (am I)
The absolute existence-bliss form of *Shiva* (Infinite) am I, *Shiva* (Infinite) am I

Slokha 2

न च प्राणसंज्ञो न वै पंचवायुः
न वा सप्तधातुर्न वा पंचकोशः ।
न वाक् पाणिपादौ न चोपस्थपायू
चिदानंदरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥ २ ॥

Transliteration

*na ca prāṇasañjño na vai pañcavāyuh
na vā saptadhāturna vā pañcakośaḥ |
na vāk pāṇipādaū na copasthapāyū
cidānandarūpaḥ śivo'haṁ śivo'ham || 2 ||*

Translation

Neither the life-force energy nor the five vital airs (am I)
Neither the seven essential body constituents nor the five sheaths (am I)
Neither speech nor hands nor feet nor organ of evacuation (am I)
The absolute existence-bliss form of *Shiva* (Infinite) am I, *Shiva* (Infinite) am I

Slokha 3

न मे द्वेषरागौ न मे लोभमोहौ
मदो नैव मे नैव मात्सर्यभावः ।
न धर्मो न चार्थो न कामो न मोक्षः
चिदानंदरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥ ३ ॥

Transliteration

*na me dveṣarāgau na me lobhamohau
mado naiṅva me naiṅva mātsaryabhāvaḥ ।
na dharmo na cārtho na kāmo na mokṣaḥ
cidānandarūpaḥ śivo'haṁ śivo'ham ॥ 3 ॥*

Translation

Neither hatred nor attachment nor greed nor delusion do I have
Neither arrogance nor the feeling of jealousy do I have
Neither righteousness nor wealth nor desire nor salvation (do I have)
The absolute existence-bliss form of *Shiva* (Infinite) am I, *Shiva* (Infinite) am I

Slokha 4

न पुण्यं न पापं न सौख्यं न दुःखम्
न मंत्रो न तीर्थं न वेदा न यज्ञः ।
अहं भोजनं नैव भोज्यं न भोक्ता
चिदानंदरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥ ४ ॥

Transliteration

*na puṇyam na pāpaṁ na saukhyam na duḥkham
na mantra na tīrtham na vedā na yajñah |
aham bhojanam naiva bhojyam na bhoktā
cidānandarūpaḥ śivo'ham śivo'ham || 4 ||*

Translation

Neither virtue nor sin nor joy nor sorrow (do I have)
Neither holy chants nor holy water nor *Vedas* (holy books) nor sacrifice
Neither the food (experienced) nor the experience nor the experiencer am I
The absolute existence-bliss form of *Shiva* (Infinite) am I, *Shiva* (Infinite) am I

Slokha 5

न मे मृत्युशंका न मे जातिभेदः
पिता नैव मे नैव माता न जन्म ।
न बंधुर्न मित्रं गुरुर्नैव शिष्यः
चिदानंदरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥ ५ ॥

Transliteration

*na me mr̥tyuśaṅkā na me jātibhedah
pitā naiva me naiva mātā na janma ।
na bandhurna mitraṁ gururnaiva śiṣyaḥ
cidānandarūpaḥ śivo'haṁ śivo'ham ॥ 5 ॥*

Translation

Neither death nor doubts nor the distinction of castes do I have
Neither father nor mother nor birth do I have
Neither relatives nor friends nor *Guru* (spiritual guide) nor disciple (do I have)
The absolute existence-bliss form of *Shiva* (Infinite) am I, *Shiva* (Infinite) am I

Slokha 6

अहं निर्विकल्पो निराकाररूपः
विभुर्व्याप्य सर्वत्र सर्वेन्द्रियाणी ।
सदा मे समत्वं न मुक्तिर्न बन्धः
चिदानंदरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥ ६ ॥

Transliteration

*ahaṁ nirvikalpo nirākārarūpaḥ
vibhurovyāpya sarvatra sarvendriyāṇī |
sadā me samatvaṁ na muktirna bandhaḥ
cidānandarūpaḥ śivo'haṁ śivo'ham || 6 ||*

Translation

I am without any doubt or attribute or form
Enveloping everything from everywhere do I exist beyond the senses
Ever balanced am I with neither liberation nor bondage
The absolute existence-bliss form of *Shiva* (Infinite) am I, *Shiva* (Infinite) am I



The Musical Journey Begins...

Yoga Sankirtan

The musical composition for *Nirvana Shatkam* has been composed according to the principles of *Yoga Sankirtan*.

Sankirtan means devotional singing. It occupies an important place in *sadhana* (spiritual practice) in the *Bhakti marg* (the path of devotion).

Sankirtan is of four types – namely *Bhajana Sankirtan*, *Naama Sankirtan*, *Dhyana Sankirtan* and *Yoga Sankirtan*.

In *Bhajana Sankirtan* simple *bhajans* (songs in praise of God) are sung. This whips up the higher emotion of devotion from within.

In *Naama Sankirtan* the names of the Lord are repeated incessantly in a focussed way with utmost surrender due to which single-pointed devotion towards God is gained.

In *Dhyana Sankirtan* the pace of the song is varied from slow to fast and back to slow. This results in calming of the mind, making it very conducive for *Dhyana* (meditation) to happen.

Yoga Sankirtan, if practised regularly is a very effective *sadhana* (spiritual practice). It synergistically combines all the other types of *sankirtans* by using devotional music and chantings to create very powerful vibrations. As a result one's level of consciousness is raised.



*The Intoxicating Inner Journey
of Six Bhavas (Spiritual Moods)*

Bhavas (Moods)

The sanskrit word *bhava* has been translated as mood. But in reality it means much more. Thought, emotion, mood, motive and that which causes all these is *bhava*.

The feeling generated by the mind in its totality i.e. at the conscious level, sub-conscious level and further deep levels is *bhava*.

In spirituality all emphasis is laid on developing a pure *bhava* rather than effecting a change merely at the external level like words or actions.

Musical composition

The musical composition for *Nirvana Shatkam* takes you through an amazing inner voyage comprising of the following six *bhavas* :

Dhyana Bhava

Vairagya Bhava

Prasanna Bhava

Nruthya Bhava

Samarpan Bhava

Yoga Bhava

Dhyana Bhava (Mood of Meditation)

The spiritual journey starts with a sense of meditateness which directs the mind's attention from the external world to the inner happenings. When the direction of the mind is changed, it lays the foundation for deeper self-exploration.

This meditative mood has been created by singing the word *Shivoham* in different *swaras* (musical notes) at a very slow pace right at the beginning of the song (track 2).

The idea is to make things very conducive for the mind to calm down and become meditative. This allows the seeker to settle down.

Vairagya Bhava (Mood of Detachment)

External joys are superficial in nature. When the mind feels this shallowness and develops depth in perception it craves for deeper subtler joys which are spiritual in nature. This profundity in discernment prepares the ground for further intense *sadhana* (spiritual practice).

Detachment should not be confused with aversion for the world. Rather it is a state where the mind feels fully satisfied with respect to what the world has to offer and hence looks beyond.

The mood of detachment has been created by singing the six verses of *Nirvana Shatkam* at a slow pace in this portion of the song (track 3).

Prasanna Bhava (Mood of Divine Joy)

As you go deep within, a sense of euphoria is experienced which is bereft of any particular cause. The source of this joy is divine since it has no causative factors.

The deep joy which eludes the mind when you search for it in the external world, surprisingly floods upon it when you stop searching and start gazing within.

The mood of divine joy is experienced in this portion of the song (track 4) wherein the six verses of *Nirvana Shatkam* have been sung at a further fast pace.

Nruthya Bhava (Mood of Cosmic Dance)

As the consciousness rises further within, the mind touches upon a strange *bhava* – the seemingly paradoxical combination of an innate silence and the cosmic dance of Divinity. This is a baffling experience for the mind which is accustomed to set patterns, defined in a logical way. Indeed God is infinite, indefinable and unfathomable!

The mood of cosmic dance has been created in this portion of the song (track 5) by singing the word *Shivoham* in three sets of different *swaras* (musical notes).

Here the *Damaru* (Lord *Shiva's* divine instrument) and the *Sitar* (an Indian stringed instrument) have been alternated with the main song.

The beats of the *Damaru* represent the male energy and the notes of the *Sitar* represent the female energy. The main song acts as the fulcrum which balances these two energies and directs the mind towards the higher.

Samarpan Bhava (Mood of Total Surrender)

When even a fraction of the glory of the supreme power is experienced the ego is crushed. Total surrender happens with an attitude of “All is thine” – this body, emotions, thoughts – everything.

The mood of total surrender is experienced in this portion of the song (track 6) wherein the word *Shivoham* has been repeated at a rhythmic fast pace continuously.

Yoga Bhava (Mood of Complete Union)

Yoga means complete union. When **you** exist *Yoga* is not possible.

Total surrender results in self effacement where your personality merges with God. Every cell of the body, every fiber of the mind oozes out divinity.

The mood of complete union is experienced in this final portion of the song (track 7) wherein the word *Shivoham* has been sung at an express speed without any break.

Towards the end, *Shivoham* has been sung at high *swaras* (musical notes) in a slow and elongated manner. This runs parallel to the *Shivoham* which has been sung at a fast pace.

The fast *Shivoham* helps you experience Divinity within and the slow *Shivoham* (sung at high notes) reaches out to the Infinite at the macrosomic level as it were. This combination culminates in a potent spiritual crescendo.

The Complete Experience

Each of the six *bhavas* independently augments your inner tranquility which has a wonderful healing effect on the mind. This apart, they provide a unique devotional dimension which makes your inner experience a singular one.

This by itself is doubtless very powerful but wanes into insignificance when compared to the complete experience of listening to the full song - forty five minutes of chaste music.

On one hand the song takes you to deeper levels of silence. On the other hand it dynamically raises your level of consciousness with tremendous force.

The six *bhavas* together create a continuous flow of spiritual energy which results in an intense purificatory effect at all levels beyond one's conception.

The *Dhyana bhava* calms your mind.

The *Vairagya bhava* starts your inner journey.

The *Prasanna bhava* gives a lift to your mind.

The *Nrutya bhava* makes you stand perplexed in awe of the Supreme.

The *Samarpan bhava* roots out your ego.

The *Yoga bhava* fills you with infinite power.

From *Dhyana* to *Yoga* - a complete experience of divine self discovery !

