


Shatpadi and Saptapadi: The Divine Bee and the Sacred Steps

 General Collection

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 **Description:** A deep dive into Adi Shankara's Shatpadi Stotram, the 24 Gurus of Dattatreya, and the spiritual vows of Saptapadi.

 **Tags:** adi-shankara, mahabharata, upanyasam, saptapadi, dharma, vedic-wisdom

Introduction: The Symphony of Six and Seven

In the spiritual traditions of Bharat, metaphors often serve as bridges between complex philosophy and daily life. This discourse explores the profound connection between the **Shatpadi** (the six-versed prayer of Adi Shankara) and the **Saptapadi** (the seven sacred steps of a Vedic wedding). Through the lens of Dushyanth Sridhar, we examine how the six-legged bee (*Shatpada*) teaches us to navigate the mind, while the seven steps of marriage ground us in the duties of Dharma.

The Metaphor of the Shatpada (The Bee)

The bee is more than an insect in these teachings; it is a Guru that represents the soul's ability to extract truth from the world's vast garden.

Dattatreya's 24 Gurus: Wisdom from the Bee

In the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the Avadhuta Sannyasi, identified as **Dattatreya**, explains that his wisdom was gleaned from observing nature through 24 different Gurus .

Among these, the **Bee** taught him the principle of *Madhukari*:

- **Discrimination-free Learning:** A wise person (*Kushalo Naraha*) should gather knowledge from every source, just as a bee gathers nectar from both tiny (*Anu*) and massive (*Mahat*) flowers.
- **Minimalism:** The bee takes only what is necessary without harming the flower. Similarly, we are taught to consume only what the body requires (*Deho Vartheta Yavatha*) to preserve mental clarity .

Verse by Verse: The Shatpadi Stotram

Adi Shankara's *Shatpadi Stotram* uses the "six legs" of the bee to structure a path toward Lord Vishnu .

Verse 1: The Conquest of the Ego

Avinayamapanaya Vishnu damaya manah...

The journey begins with a plea to remove arrogance (*Avinayam*). The speaker emphasizes that while knowledge should bring humility, it often brings pride; this verse asks for the grace to stay humble and control the unbridled senses .

Verse 2: The Celestial Nectar

Divyadhuni-makarande...

The Lord's feet are envisioned as a celestial lotus. The devotee is like a bee seeking the nectar (*Makaranda*) of Truth-Consciousness-Bliss (*Sachidananda*) found only in the Lord's presence.

Verse 3: The Ocean and the Wave

Satyapi bhedapagame natha tavaham na mamakinastvam...

Shankara declares: "The wave belongs to the ocean, but the ocean does not belong to the wave". Even though the soul and the Divine are linked, we are dependent on Him; He is the independent ocean, and we are but His waves.

Verse 4: The Divine Protector

Uddhrita-naga nagabhidanuja...

This verse uses intricate wordplay to praise Krishna, the lifter of the mountain (*Uddhrita-naga*), and Vamana, the younger brother of Indra . It highlights the Lord's role as a shield against both external foes and internal demonic traits .

Verse 5: Healing the Three Afflictions

Matsyadibhiravatarair...

By invoking the Lord's various avatars, the devotee seeks relief from the **Taapa-trayam** (Three Afflictions) :

- **Adhyatmika:** Suffering arising from one's own body and mind.
- **Adhidaivika:** Suffering caused by divine or natural forces.
- **Adhibhautika:** Suffering caused by other living beings.

Verse 6: The Churner of Samsara

Damodara gunamandira...

The devotee prays to the Lord to act as the Mandara mountain and churn the "Ocean of Existence" (*Bhava-jaladhi*). This prayer asks the Lord to guide the soul through the whirlpools of worldly life into the safety of liberation.

Mahabharata Reference: The Rana-Nadi (The River of War)

To illustrate the necessity of the Divine Boatman, the discourse describes the Kurukshetra war as a treacherous river (*Rana-nadi*) .

- **The Two Banks:** Bhishma and Drona.
- **The Water:** The blood of Jayadratha .
- **The Predators:** Karna, Duryodhana, and Shakuni appear as dangerous whirlpools and crocodiles .

- **The Boatman (*Kaivarthaka*):** Lord Krishna steers the boat of the devotee safely across this dangerous current to the shore of liberation .
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Saptapadi: The Seven Sacred Steps of Dharma

The spiritual "six steps" find their practical grounding in the **Saptapadi** . In a Vedic wedding, the groom (seen as Narayana) and the bride (seen as Lakshmi) take seven steps, each a vow toward a shared life of Dharma :

1. **Nourishment:** Pledging to provide food and hospitality collectively.
 2. **Mutual Respect:** Vowing to care for and respect those who support the household .
 3. **Spiritual Partnership:** Commitment to observe fasts and religious duties together.
 4. **Global Welfare:** Working for the happiness and prosperity of society.
 5. **Environmental Care:** Pledging to protect animals, specifically the cow (*Pancha Pashubhyaha*) .
 6. **Harmony:** Vowing to remain joyful through all six seasons (*Shad-rutu*) of life.
 7. **Spiritual Continuity:** Performing sacred rituals (*Homams*) to maintain the spiritual energy of the home .
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Conclusion: Becoming the Shatpada

The discourse concludes by reminding us that the goal of both the *Shatpadi* and the *Saptapadi* is to align the individual soul with the Divine Will . By adopting the qualities of the bee—skillfulness, humility, and essence-seeking—we transform our daily actions into a sacred pilgrimage toward the Lord's feet .

References: * [YouTube: SHATPADIYUM SAPTAPADIYUM](#)



Acknowledgment & Disclaimer

These articles are based on discourses by **Sri Dushyanth Sridhar**, who renders discourses in English & Tamil on Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, Bhāgavata, Vishnu Purāna, Bhagavad Gitā, Vishnu Sahasranāma, and Divya Prabanda in the upanyāsam, pravachanam, or kālakshepam style. Visit <https://desikadaya.org> for more information. These notes are presented solely for educational purposes to help viewers download and benefit from these teachings. Any incorrect interpretations or inaccuracies are mine and unintentional—please forgive me. For any feedback, please send an [email](#).



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