

## ***Adi Shankara: Ten shlokas that summarizes his Teachings***

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Founder of Advaita Vedanta, one the most prominent sub-schools of Indian Vedantic thought, Adi Shankaracharya is praised as the greatest philosopher that India has produced.

Born in a humble Brahmin family in Kaladi, a village in Kerala, Shankara's mother Aryamba had the vision of Lord Shiva who said he shall incarnate in the family as her son. Having born with the blessings of Shiva, they named the boy Shankara.

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When Shankaracharya decided to enter 'samadhi,' the foremost disciple of Shankara, requested that the essentials of his teaching may be summarized and given to them.

Shankaracharya then said the Dasa Shlokas, or ten verses, which elaborated the omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of Brahman – the core concept of Hinduism (Sanatana Dharma).

### Dasa Shloki

This composition in ten verses – dasha shloka – is similar to the Nirvana Shatakam, and like it, a summation, in typically Shankara's way, of the unyielding non-dual vision of Advaita. Here too, Shankara's attempt is to deny everything else only to unequivocally assert the sole reality of Brahman. Each verse lists the number of things that have no worth, and each verse ends with the assertion, 'Shiva kevaloh ham' (Only Shiva am I). Given the similarities between the Nirvana Shatakam and Dashashloki, some scholars believe that it was the latter that Shankara recited when asked by Govindapada: 'Who are you?' This debate need not, however, detain us, for it is certain that whatever Shankara's reply was to his guru's question, it was sufficiently impressive for him to be immediately accepted as a disciple.

A. Take a look at those ten verses (in summary):

1. The five elements do not express my real nature; I am changeless and persist forever.
2. I am above castes and creeds. I am seen when 'maya' is removed, and do not need concentration or worship as shown in Yoga Sutras.
3. I have no parents, I need no Vedas as proclaimed in the scriptures, no sacrifices, no pilgrimages. I am the eternal witness.
4. All the teachings of various religions and philosophies do not reveal my true nature and are but shallow views of my deep being.
5. I pervade the whole universe and am above, in the middle and below, in all directions.
6. I am colourless, formless, light being my form.

7. I have no teacher, scripture or any disciples, nor do I recognize Thou or I, or even the universe and am changeless and the absolute knowledge.
8. I am neither awake, in deep sleep nor dreaming, but above consciousness with which the three are associated. All these are due to ignorance and I am beyond that.
9. I pervade everything, everywhere and the eternal reality and self-existent. The whole universe depends on me and become nothing without me.
10. I cannot be called one, for that implies two, which is not. I am neither isolated nor non-isolated, neither am I empty or full.

B. Take a look at those ten verses (in detail):

1. I am not the element earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor ether, nor any of the organs individually, nor all the elements or organs together as a whole. Because of variability (of the limiting adjuncts in the states of waking and dream), the self exists by itself only in deep sleep (without the limiting adjuncts in the form of the senses, mind, etc.). I am that most auspicious, attributeless, non-dual entity who alone remains (when all duality is negated).

2. Neither the division into castes and stages of life, nor the rules of conduct and duties of the various castes and stages of life apply to me. I have no need for dharana, dhyana or yoga, etc. Since the notions of 'I' and 'mine' which are due to identification with the not-self (body, mind and organs) have gone, I remain as the one auspicious self free from all attributes.

3. The srutis say that in deep sleep there is no mother, nor father, nor gods, nor the worlds, nor the Vedas, nor sacrifices, nor holy places. Nor is there total void, since I exist then as the one auspicious self free from all attributes.

4. Neither the Sankhya view, nor the Saiva, nor the Pancharatra, nor the Jaina nor the Mimamsaka view, etc., is tenable. Because of the realization of the partless Brahman generated by the Mahavakya, Brahman is absolutely pure (untainted). I remain as the one auspicious self free from all attributes.

5. Brahman has no such thing as upper or lower (part), it has no inside or outside, it has no middle or any 'across', and it has no eastern or western direction, because it is all-pervading like space (or pervades space also). It is one and without parts. I remain as the one auspicious self free from all attributes.

6. Brahman is not white, nor black, nor red, nor yellow; it is not tiny, nor big. It is neither short nor long. It is not knowable since it is of the nature of effulgence. I remain as the one auspicious self free from all attributes.

7. There is neither teacher nor scriptures, neither student nor instruction, neither you nor I, nor this world. The knowledge of one's real nature does not admit of different perceptions. I remain as the one auspicious self free from all attributes.

8. I do not have the state of waking, nor of dream, nor of deep sleep. I am not Visva, or Taijasa, or Praajna. Because all these three states are only the products of ignorance, I am the fourth (beyond these three states). I remain as the one auspicious self free from all attributes.

9. The Atma is all-pervading, is the desired goal, is self-existent, and is not dependent on any thing else, while the entire universe which is different from it is unreal. I remain as the one auspicious self free from all attributes.

10. It is not one; how can there be a second different from it? It has neither absoluteness nor non-absoluteness. It is neither void nor non-void since it is devoid of duality. How can I describe that which is the essence of the entire Vedanta!