

## PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS IN PAÑCAKA -S OF ŚRI ŚAÑKARA

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Śri Śaṅkara, the founder of Advaita Philosophy as a system, has influenced directly or indirectly all later schools of Indian Philosophy. The word advaitism is generally associated with the celebrated system of Śaṅkara. Advaitism is invariably taken to mean the doctrine which establishes the oneness in the Supreme Reality or Braḥman by denying the reality of the world. Śaṅkara's view is that the Braḥman is the knower and the world is the object of knowledge. The former is pure consciousness while later is Inanimate.

Śaṅkara declares that he has derived the doctrines in his system from the synthesis of the following three vedic arguments. These are Ekamevadviṭyam<sup>(1)</sup> (Reality is one without a second).Nehaṅānāsti kiñcana<sup>(2)</sup>.yatova imāni bhūtāni Jāyante<sup>(3)</sup> from which all the beings etc. have sprung forth. Śaṅkara seeks to establish the nature of Braḥman on the authority of Śruti and logic. The article aims to review his insightful experiences elaborated in his various works.

### Works of Śaṅkara

There are large number of works in prose and poetry attributed to Śaṅkara. He is reputed to have completed all his major works before he attained the age of twenty four. After that he might have composed some devotional and philosophical hymns and didactic works. The whole works of Śaṅkara can be classified under four heads :- 1. Bhāṣya-s - The fundamental books of Advaitism.

2. Prakaraṇā-s - Books dealing with the fundamental concepts of Vedānta.
3. Stotras - contained with the devotional songs.
4. And Śāstra Mantra stotras- contained the devotional and philosophical aspects.

### Major works of Śri Śaṅkara.

The most important works of Śaṅkara are his commentaries or Bhāṣya-s-the ten upaniṣads, Badarāyaṇā-s Brahmasūtra and Bhagavadgītā popularly known as 'Prasthānatrai'. The vedānta system considers the upaniṣads as Śrutiprasthāna, the gītā as the smṛti-prasthana, and the Brahmasūtra as Nyāyaprasthāna. The Bhāṣyā-s serve as a guide in unfolding to the people the vast treasure chambers of wisdom contained in scriptures.<sup>(4)</sup>

### Minor works ascribed to Śaṅkara

#### Prakaraṇa Granthas.

Prakaraṇa granthas explain in the fundamentals of vedānta. Among them the following may be considered as important:-

Upadeśasāhasri, Ātmabodha, Vivekacūdāmaṇi, Aparokṣanubhūti, Vākyavṛtti, Advaitanubhūti, Sadācārānusandhanam, Pañcīkaraṇam, Prapañcāsaram, Śataśloki, Ātmanātmaviveka, Ajñānabodhini, Bhajagovindam or Mohamudgara etc.

#### Stotra-s of Śaṅkara

The devotional songs are called stotra-s. His stotra-s contain not only the devotional aspects but also the philosophical ideas expounding the highest truth of Advaita. Śaṅkara had laid out easier path through Bhaktimārga to reach the same goal. The hymns are not mere descrip-

tions, but they enshrine in simple language the ideas of great depth.

Sivānandalahari, soundarya lahari, Mānasapūja stotram, Deviṣaṣṭi, upacārapūja stotram, Kanakadhārastotram, Annapūrṇa stotram, Ardhanārīnateśvara stotram, Mīnakṣīstotram, Dakṣhāmūrti stotram are also been recognized generally as the works of Śaṅkara. These are widely recited and are very popular.

### **Bhujāṅga stotra-s**

Subrahmaṇya Bhujāṅga, Devi Bhujāṅga, Ganeśa Bhujāṅga,, Śarada Bhujāṅga, Śiva Bhujāṅga Prayata stotra, Viṣṇu Bhujāṅga, Prayata stotra, Bhavani Bhujāṅga and Sri Rāma Bhujāṅga stotra-s are the best known of among them of Śaṅkara.

### **Pañcaka-s**

Among the songs with five stanzas are the Ganeśapañcarātra, the Mīnakṣī pañcarātra, the Lakṣmi Nṛsimha Pañcarātra, the Hanumatpañcaka, Kāśīpañcaka, Manīṣapañcakaṃ, Yatipañcakaṃ, Advaita pañcakaṃ, Upadeśapañcakaṃ, Māyāpañcakaṃ etc stand out prominent. The last of the five pañcakas contain the Advaitic truth in simple language.

### **Aṣṭaka-s**

Among the Aṣṭaka-s may be mentioned the Invocations to Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Annapūrṇa Devi, the Tripurasundari, the Jagannāthaṣṭaka, the govindāṣṭaka, Gurvaṣṭaka and the like. To this category belong the songs in praise of sacred rivers. Among them are the Gaṅgāṣṭaka, the Yamunāṣṭaka, the Narmadāṣṭaka and the Maṇikarnikāṣṭaka.

The devotional and philosophical hymns and didactic works reveal Bhakti or devotion to the Supreme Being and Jñāna as the true knowledge based on self-realization and the chief steps leading to

mokṣa or liberation.

## **Philosophical aspects in Pañcaka-s.**

### **1). Manīṣa Pañcaka.**

In Manīṣa Pañcaka. Śaṅkara mainly deals with the four great statements or Mahāvākya -s viz - 1 . Tattvamasi, 2. Aham Brahmāsmi, 3. Ayamātma Brahma, 4. Prajñanam Brahma. The philosophy of Advaita is founded on these four great statements. Śaṅkara reveals through Manīṣapañcaka that Brahman alone is the Reality, the world of plurality is just an illusion (Brahma Satyam Jaganmīthya). Contemplation and realization of the truth contained in such vedic statements as Ayamātma Brahma, Aham Brahmāsmi, Brahman is pure consciousness are also explained here. As. the true nature of the sun is hidden by a cloud, so the true nature of the eternal self is hidden by ignorance. The ignorance is produced by the three mental moods - the Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. It has no absolute existence for it disappears when one attains the knowledge of Brahman. Śaṅkara reveals through the five stanza-s the significance of the four great vedic statements. He connects with the great commandments of the vedas and arrives at his fivefold declaration of faith and conviction in the last verse. He establishes that the mind of a meditative Master is supremely quiet, and is capable to reach and reveal the ocean of Bliss, the Brahman the Reality.

### **2). Advaita Pañcaratna.**

It was written by the great teacher, with a view to facilitate the philosophical needs of the ordinary people. Since the work contains five precious germs of Advaita-vedānta in the form of five stanzas, it is rightly called Advaita pañcaratna. This work cleverly summarizes the entire teachings of Advaita vedānta. Further, it deals with the highest Reality postulated by the upaniṣads as well as the oneness of Brahma.

And also Śaṅkara established that the identity of jīva and Brahman is the essential doctrine of the Advaita vedānta. B.G emphasises that Ātman is immutable,

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचि-  
न्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।  
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो  
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे । (ए.क्र- २-२०)(५)

Ātman is not transformed when the body is transformed.

The self luminous Ātman manifests all material objects, such as the mind and the outside world, but itself cannot be manifest by them. The great aphorisms of Braḥmasūtra point out the non-duality of the jīva or the individual soul and Īśvara, the Reality behind them both being Brahman, or pure consciousness. The knowledge of this reality is the only means for the attainment of liberation.

### 3). Upadeśa pañcaka

It is also known as sopāna Pañcaka. It deals with the steps leading to knowledge and gives five steps - Karmasopāna the Sannyāsa, the steps of learning and meditating upon fruits, the steps of worldly life, and the steps of liberation or Jīvanmukti.

#### Qualifications of an aspirant.

Upadeśapañcaka aims at awakening the spiritual aspect of a student of vedānta. Śaṅkara emphasizes that the seekers of self knowledge are exhorted to practice four disciplines, known in vedānta philosophy as the Sādhana catuṣṭaya or four instruments of knowledge. They are viveka, vairāgya, śatsampatti and mumukṣutvam.

1. Viveka - determination between real and unreal - Brahman alone is real and all other things are unreal.

2. Vairāgya - renunciation - is the utter disregard of all pleasures, ranging from the enjoyment of the sensuous objects of these worlds to the experience of the happiness.

3. Ṣatsampatti - the six treasures - Śama, dama, uparati, Titikṣa, Samādhāna, Śradha - form the ethical foundation of spiritual life. Their practice prepares the inner faculties for the cultivation of higher knowledge. Endowed with this virtue the aspirant intuitively believes in the existence of ultimate Reality and in eternity of soul.

4. Mumukṣutvaṃ- Mumukṣutvaṃ (longing for liberation) is the intense longing of the student to free himself, through the knowledge of the true self, from all bondages pertaining to the body, the mind and the ego, bondages created by ignorance, lack of self control and also a lack of firm belief in the existence of Truth.

Anyone desiring to attain Samādhi should retire to a solitary place. Solitude is helpful for the control of the senses. When the senses are controlled, the ego is controlled. The control of the ego is followed by an unbroken realization of the Bliss of Brahman. Thus a free soul even when dwelling in a body after discarding the body attains supreme freedom in Brahman and completely merges in high peace, knowledge and Reality.

#### 4). YatiPañcaka.

This Pañcaka glorifies the greatness of four stages. The last line of each verse ends with "Kaupīnavantha-Khalubhāgya vanthaḥ". The sanyāsa stage is the last stage of life and this stage is entered into by those forest dwellers who give up the world in search of truth and freedom and they become bhikṣus, wandering monks - world renouncers - the realization of the supreme. Truth has been described as the light of alone to the alone.

The Sanyāsins study the upaniṣad-s - the concluding parts of the Vedas which describe the knowledge of Braḥman or the absolute and the disciplines for its attainment. They naturally hold in the highest esteem for their purity, detachment, unselfishness and utter devotion to truth. Fixing their consciousness in Braḥman and realizing that the very supreme Braḥman is their self. They renounce all actions and dwell in Braḥman alone - the supreme reality being their highest goal, their delight being solely in the unconditioned self. Braḥman is free from all attributes, good and bad, hence, the statement. :-

Nirdoṣam ḥi samam Braḥma

Tasmād braḥmaṇi te sthīāḥ (B.g -V - 19)(6)

Śaṅkara deals in this pañcaka mainly with sanyāsa which leads to the highest bliss. The renunciation of action leads to mokṣa as giving rise to knowledge. Having attained this knowledge one attains the highest self or paramātmān.

### 5. Māyāpañcaka.

It deals with the process of Māyā in an elaborate manner. Each verse ends with

अघटितघटनापटियसी माया । Māyā has to play a prominent part in Advaita Vedānta.

Śaṅkara speaks of Māyā as the power of the lord beginningless and composed of the three guṇa -s. The guṇas of Māyā or Prakṛti is known as sattva, rajas and tamas. The three guṇa-s are present in varying degrees, in all subjects, gross or subtle, including the mind, the buddhi and ego. In short everything belonging to the universe of Māyā contains these three guṇa-s (B.G. XVII-16)<sup>7</sup>. Śaṅkara states that the Non-dualists falsely super imposed the universe on Braḥman through Māyā, and the

superimposition cannot affect the real nature of Brahman.

### Conclusion

The Pañcaka-s of Śaṅkara occupies a prominent place in the field of Indian philosophical literature. The deep meta-physical thinking finds a concise exposition in these verses. Śaṅkara is successful to a great extent in revealing the truth of the universe through these verses. The ideas remain thickly composed in them. But the language is very simple and can easily be understood. Śaṅkara had laid out an easier path through bhaktimārga to reach the supreme soul or ultimate reality. Śaṅkara exhorts an individual to worship because, through worship of one's chosen deity, the devotees can with greater ease, reach the ideal behind the idols which is the supreme Truth, without a second. Ekamevādvitīyam. Śaṅkara's philosophy reveals unity in diversity of our nation.

### Notes and References

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