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ADI GURU SHANKARACHARYA: POLITICAL THINKER & SOCIAL REFORMER OF UNITED INDIA-A CASE STUDY

Nidhi

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Baba Mastnath University, Rohtak

ABSTRACT:

शंकराचार्य के विषय में कहा गया है-

अष्टवर्षेचतुर्वेदी, द्वादशेसर्वशास्त्रवित् षोडशेकृतवान्भाष्यमद्वात्रिशेमुनिरभ्यगात् अर्थात् आठ वर्ष की आयु में चारों वेदों में निष्णात हो गए, बारह वर्ष की आयु में सभी शास्त्रों में पारंगत, सोलह वर्ष की आयु में शांकरभाष्यतथा बत्तीस वर्ष की आयु में शरीर त्याग दिया। ब्रह्मसूत्र के ऊपर शांकरभाष्यकी रचना कर विश्व को एक सूत्र में बांधने का प्रयास भी शंकराचार्य के द्वारा किया गया है, जो कि सामान्य मानव से सम्भव नहीं है।

So one can see the feet of a child in his pram' this proverb indicates that children show glimpses of their future endeavours in their childhood. This proverb perfectly suits for Adi Guru Shankaracharya. The Champion of ancient Hindu Philosophy and greatest intellectual. Shankara's teachings remain relevant to the present day. The modern Vedanta movement since Swami Vivekananda including Swami Rama Tirtha, Swami Chinmayananda and Swami Dayananda (Arsha Vidya) follows his inspiration.

KEYWORDS:

Vedanta-the end of Veda's, Philosophy-the study of reality and existence, endeavour-to achieve something.

INTRODUCTION:

"You never identify yourself with the shadow cast by your body, or with its reflection, or with the body you see in a dream or in your imagination. Therefore you should not identify yourself with this living body, either."

---Adi Shankaracarya, Shankara's Crest Jewel of Discrimination

He is one of the leading Indian philosopher and incarnation of ancient Sanatan Dharma. He is the greatest reformer of Hindu religion.

OBJECTIVE:

This paper intends to explore some of the important achievements of Adi Guru Shankaracharya as the political thinker and social reformer with his philosophy as guiding light.

LIFE:

According to the oldest Literature and biographies, Shankara was born in the Indian state of Kerala in 509 BCE in a village named Kaladi. He was born to Malayalam Brahman (Namboodri) parents. His father's name was Shivaguru and mother's name was Aryamba (noble lady). Shankara "Incarnation of Lord Shiva" so he named. He is really the giver of prosperity.

As a child he was very much influenced by Nachiketa about his conversation with Yama. In Hindu mythology Yama is considered as a God of death. From his childhood he tries to solve the mystery of life and have faith in life after death. Shankara want to become a Sannyasi and spend his entire life to find out the mysteries of life. He is always inclined and having soft corner for the saints. He decided himself that he will spent his life as a saint in search of truth. His father died while when he was very young. After the death of his father at early her mother was not ready to send her single ward to become a Hermit (Sannyasi). But soon he took permission from his mother and left home. He travelled entire Indian subcontinent and lastly died at the age of 32, at Kedarnath in the state of Uttarakhand.

STORY BEHIND SANNYAS:

Shankara at age eight going to a river with his mother to bathe, and where he is caught by a crocodile. He called out to his mother to give him permission to become a Sannyasin or else the crocodile will kill him. Finally the mother agrees, Shankara is freed and leaves his home for transformation and self-reincarnation.

JOURNEY AND LEARNING:

Shankara walked by foot around 2000 kilometer from Kerela to Madhyapradesh for spiritual knowledge. On the banks of the river Narmada, he met with a person named Govindapada. He was amazed by his personality and influenced by his teachings. Under his teacher's compassionate guidance, Shankara mastered all the Vedic scriptures and reminded there for four years. Shankara travelled throughout the life and gained deep knowledge about India's rituals, custom and its culture.

In Hindu religion one have to become a Sannayasi and left home for renunciation or attainment of Moksha. There are four life stages known as Ashramas in ancient Hindu mythology as under:

1. Brahmacharya (bachelor student),
2. Grihastha (householder) and
3. Vanaprastha (forest dweller, retired)
4. Sannayasi(dedicate his lives to spiritual pursuits)

At that time Hindu Religion is divided into number of sects. He propagate his philosophy through discourses, comments and debates. His philosophy propagates throughout the entire Indian subcontinent. He shows new path to deprived people. Now his aura spread all around and lately his guru called him Shanaracharya. He travelled throughout India on foot three times from Nepal to Rameshwaram preaching the Hindu philosophy of Advaita and moreover he travelled 12 jyotirlingas, 18 shakti-peethas and 4 Vishnu-dhaams to unify his motherland. He founded four mathas ("monasteries") in four different corners of India as a pilgrimage route:

- Dvārakā in the West,
- Jagannatha Puri in the East,
- Sringeri in the South and
- Badrikashrama in the North.

Each math was headed by one of his four main disciples and propagate Advaita(non-dualist maxim) though them. Till his death at the age of 32 he remain as a spiritual leader and laid the foundation stone of Advaita school of Philosophy.

LITRARAY CONTRABUTION:

- 72 poetic work (stotras) and tertiary notes or monograph (vivran)like Soundarya Lahari, Sivananda Lahari, Nirvana Shalkam, Maneesha Panchakam. Sankaradigvijaya by Vidyaranya and Sankaravijaya by Anandagiri are the most cited.
- 18 commentaries on the major scriptural texts including the Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita and major Upanishads.
- 23 books on the fundamentals of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy.
- Brahmasutrabhasya (literally, commentary on Brahma Sutra), a fundamental text of the Vedanta school of Hinduism.

SHANKARA'S PHILOSOPHY:

During 5-6th century people were confused towards the existence of the One God. Budh and Jain religion were getting stronger and stronger. So he tries to simplify and unify Hindu religion. He had a great faith in Nirguna Brahman being the only reality. After Vyasa he was first scholar to connect Vedic Hinduism to Puranic Hinduism. Adi Guru Shankaracharya described the six sect system of worship – Vishnu, Siva, Shakti, Muruka, Ganesha and Surya. He formulated the common rites and rituals for worship in major temples in India.

“By fulfilling his dharma a man marches along the path of progress until he attains the supreme dharma of all beings, namely, the realization of Truth. (p. 28)”

— **Adi Shankaracharya, Self-Knowledge: Sankara's "Atmabodha"**

He propounded the principles of the non-dual Brahman or Advaitvad. In “Brahman, Pure Consciousness, is the Absolute Reality. Brahman (the whole) is real energy of universe and we are only his elements. We can unite to supreme god through Atman (the self).The world is unreal.

“Of the plant of birth and death, the seed is Darkness, the sprout is the thought that body is Self, the shoot is rage, the sap is deeds, the body is the stem, the life-breaths are the branches, the tops are the bodily powers, sensuous things are the flowers, sorrow is the fruit, born of varied deeds and manifold; and the Life is the bird that eats the fruit.” — **Adi Shankaracharya, The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom and other writings of Sankaracharya**

He was really a founder of Advaita philosophy. His valuable contributions towards Hinduism was the reordering and restructuring.

ABOUT BRAHAM:

Shankara's primary objective was to understand and explain how moksha is achievable in this life, the doctrine of Advaita Vedant: The term Advaita refers to the idea that Brahman(Supreme Spirit) alone is ultimately real and the world is an illusory appearance (maya) of Brahman. In essence the individual is not different from Brahman.” Thus by the statement “Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya, Jeevo Brahmaiva Na Para”. The aim of life is to realize our identity with the Supreme Spirit.

ABOUT REALITY:

There are four kinds of reality.

- Paramarthikasatta– The ultimate metaphysical reality (of Brahman).
- Vyavaharikasatta–The empirical reality which is experienced by human being for all time.
- Pratibhasikasatta–The apparent reality (objects of illusions, hallucinations and dreams)
- Tuccasatta– The self-contradictory reality.

ABOUT ATMAN:

The Atman is the individual human .This soul is essentially the same Brahman and is therefore self-luminous, unlimited and free.

ABOUT STATES OF EXPERIENCE:

According to Advaita Vedanta there are four state of soul experience:

- The waking state (Jagrat avastha)
- The dream state (Svapna avastha)
- The deep sleep state (Sushupti avastha)
- The pure consciousness state (Turiya)

ABOUT MAYA:

Maya is the cosmic illusion .It is the medium for the reflection of Brahman (as jivas) and for the projection of this world. Maya has no real entity and has only an apparent existence and the moment truth is known it is dissolved.

ABOUT MOKSHA:

It is describes as state of self-realization. Only through a systematic approach can this is achieved through Shravana (formal study), Manana (reflection) and Nididhyaasana (meditation).

CONCLUSION:

The credit for reviving the Sanatana Dharma and rescuing the Vedic culture from foundering goes to Adi guru Shankaracharya.

“When your last breath arrives, Grammar can do nothing.”

– **Adi Shankara**

He was one of the greatest political thinker and excellent debater of prevailing time. Always he was memorised as a noble soul, a sage, a philosopher, a scholar, a poet and a socio-religious reformer.

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