

# Shankara's Citation of the *Samkarṣha Kāṇḍa* and His Authority as the Voice of Revival of Vedic knowledge

Shankara wrote:

तदुक्तं संकर्षे नाना वा देवता पृथग्ज्ञानात् इति ।

--Shankara, in *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣhya* 3.3.43

Shankara's citation refers to the following *Sūtra*:

नाना वा देवता पृथक्त्वात्

--Jaimini, in *Samkarṣha Kāṇḍa* II. 2. 36

This *Sūtra* from the *Samkarṣha Kāṇḍa* was also cited by Rāmānuja, and according to Atsushi, "the various commentaries on the *Brahma Sūtras* almost invariably quote the same *Sūtra* as that quoted by Shankara."

Adi Shankaracharya who lived about 2500 years ago, is perhaps the greatest voice of revival of the Vedic Tradition in antiquity. His highly successful mission to restore Vedic culture against the growing encroachment of Buddhism which rejected the Vedas, the Vedic Yagyas, and the Vedic teachings, was supported by his brilliant commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Brahma Sutras*, and the *Principal Upanishads*. His writings are well-preserved, and his life, travels and teachings are celebrated in a biography called *Digvijaya*. The Maths, or seats of learning which Shankara established in the four corners of India continue to thrive and to inspire and lead the spiritual life of the Indian people.

The reign of Shankara, 2500 years ago, and on similar lines, the reign of Yudhishtira, the king and central figure in the Mahabharata, 5100 years ago--if these dates are to be accepted--presents a picture of an Indian civilization that had reached unparalleled heights of intellectual maturity and sophistication long before the emergence of history and writing in the West.

The constancy of human civilization and human knowledge over countless millennia, sustained by the eternal religion of Sanatana Dharma was a picture that could not be accepted by Western scholars. The Western view of the recent emergence of humanity from barbarism, superimposed on a theory of evolution which saw the emergence of intelligence and reason itself as a convenient accident upheld by natural selection, required a radical shortening of Indian intellectual history. Consequently in the West, Shankara scholars have lived and died completely convinced that the first Shankara lived at about 800 AD, a time of revival led by one of Shankara's great successors. It is curious that scholars in the West continue to give great credence to speculations about the age of Shankara, based on word usage, concepts and citations, while overlooking the records of the Maths which Shankara established, that record the history of the Shankaracharya tradition going back to their founding 2500 years ago.

His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, writing in the introduction to his own commentary on the first six chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, insists on the earlier date for Shankara's life, and describes Shankara's place in Indian history as follows:

A wave of revival brought Shankara to reestablish the basis of life and renew human understanding. Shankara restored the wisdom of the Absolute and established It in the daily life of the people, strengthening the fields of thought and action by the power of Being. He brought the message of fulfillment through direct realization of transcendental Being in the state of Self-consciousness, which is the basis of all good in life.

Shankara's emphasis on Self-realization stems from the eternal philosophy of the integrated life expressed by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita when He asks Arjuna first to 'be without the three gunas' and then to perform actions while thus established in Being. That all men should at all times live the bliss-consciousness of absolute Being, and that they should live the state of fulfillment in God-consciousness throughout all thought, speech and action, this is the essence of Shankara's message, as it is the essence of Lord Krishna's and of the entire Vedic philosophy.

The greatest blessing the Shankara's teaching has offered to the world is the principle of fullness of intellectual and emotional development in the state of enlightenment, based on transcendental pure consciousness, in which the heart is so pure as to be able to flow and overflow with waves of universal love and devotion to God, while the mind is so refined as to enjoy awareness of the divine nature as separate from the world of action.

The spontaneous expressions of Shankara's mind and heart in this state of freedom and fulfilment have been a source of inspiration both to those who live by the heart

and those who live by the mind. His consciousness exemplified the highest state of human development; his heart expressed supreme transcendental devotion to God (para bhakti), while his mind expressed awareness of the Self as separate from the field of action (gyana). This it was that led Shankara's speech to flow into ecstasies of devotion and at the same time into clear expressions of knowledge, the dry and hard-headed truths concerning divine nature as detached from the world. These are the two aspects of the living reality of a life in complete fulfillment.

--Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in *Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation and Commentary*

Shankara's life is a beacon of enlightenment shining from antiquity. His authority as a voice of the ancient Vedic tradition of integration of life is unquestionable. India has gone through many changes since the time of Shankara, even enduring many centuries of foreign rule. The body of texts which comprise the Vedic Literature has expanded greatly in the intervening centuries, and it is often very difficult to discern which are the very ancient texts which have been handed down to us, and which may be more modern, not yet tested by the hard strokes of time on the anvil of eternity. The texts which Shankara had available to him: those which he commented upon, and those which he cited as authoritative in order to establish his logical arguments, present a codice of unquestionably authoritative works belonging to the Vedic tradition. Shankara's writings allow us to see through his enlightened eyes the body of Vedic Literature that he considered to be authentic and worthy of bringing to the attention of his audience. For this reason, we hold that the texts which he has cited are stamped with the highest possible mark of integrity, purity and value for all times. Among Upanishads, there are 15 which he either comments on, or cites in his Brahma Sutra Bhashya. In the field of Karma Mimansa, the Sankarsha Kanda is cited in Shankara's Brahma Sutra Bhashya, giving the Sankarsha Kanda also his stamp of authenticity.