

An overview of the Saṅkṣipta-Śaṅkaradigvijaya of Jayamaṅgalācārya

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The life of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya as it is known to us today is exclusively based on these works which are commonly known as the Śaṅkara-Vijayas. As far as the Śaṅkara-Vijayas are concerned, despite their central theme being the same, it is found that the biographical accounts are largely divergent and they differ from each other on several vital aspects of the Ācārya's life such as the age of renunciation, the place of meeting his Guru, the identity of his disciples, the place of his disappearance etc. Many accounts on the life of the Ācārya are found to be factually inaccurate in these texts which are of a hagiographical nature. Notwithstanding the aforesaid lacunae, these texts serve as the *terminus a quo* in an effort to reconstruct the life of the Ācārya on a factual and rational basis as each of these is a source of some or the other valuable information on the life of the Ācārya.

Over the centuries, poets from the various parts of Bhārata, belonging to different periods, right up to this date, have attempted to sanctify their poetic skills by retelling the life of the Ādi Śaṅkarācārya as a result of which, today we have about twenty biographical poems on the Ācārya. One of the recent additions to the vast inventory of biographical works on the life of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya is the *Saṅkṣipta-Śaṅkaradigvijaya* or *Śrīmad Ādya Śaṅkarācārya-caritam*¹ composed by Jayamaṅgalācārya (Svāmī Kāśikānanda Giri), one of the most erudite monks of the 20th Century who was known as Dvādaśadarśanācārya for his mastery over 12 schools of philosophy. His body of work consisting of about two hundred books includes commentaries, primers on philosophy, dialectical texts and devotional poems. Much like those of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, the diverse works of Svāmījī cater to persons at the different rungs in the ladder of spirituality. His works represent a rare combination of profundity, clarity and simplicity. Notable among his works are *Dvādaśa-darśana-saṃgraha*, *Advaita-Pariśuddhi*, *Advaita-Vaijayantī*, *Isāvāsyopaniṣad-vārtika*, *Divya-rasa-taraṅgiṇī*, *Vedānta-siddhānta-kusumāñjali*, *Vedānta-siddhānta-pīyūṣa-bindu* and *Vedāntasāra-mandāramālā*, *Śrīmad-bhāgavata-sāra-stotra* and *Saṅkṣepa-Śaṅkara-Digvijaya* to name a few, each one of which exude the essence of Advaita Vedānta.

As the name suggests *Saṅkṣipta-Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is an abridged version of the *Śaṅkara-Digvijaya* of Vidyāranya presented briefly in the simple *anuṣṭubh* metre. The poet has attempted not only to elucidate the work of Vidyāranya, but also to reconcile some of the inconsistencies and clarify the ambiguities in the original work in this biography comprised of 23 *sargas*. While most of the inconsistencies are resolved in the text itself, there are several places where the author presents his views in the form of explanatory notes in Hindi. The work is noteworthy for the systematic presentation of the *digvijaya* of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya to the four quarters and establishing an *Āmnāya maṭha* in each of them following his conquest.

The paper attempts to present a summary of the *Saṅkṣipta-Śaṅkaradigvijaya* with particular reference to its deviation from the work of Vidyāranya as well as to its resolving of some of the enigmas posed by the various biographical poems on the life of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya.

Observations:

The biography commences with the plea of the Devas to Lord Śiva to restore *dharma* on earth and the latter's resolve to descend as Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. As regards the descent of the Devas, Kumārila is said to have been an *avatāra* of Skanda and Sudhanvā as that of Indra. Padmapāda is mentioned as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, Hastāmalaka

¹ (Source: *Saṅkṣipta-Śaṅkaradigvijaya* (*Śrīmad Ādya Śaṅkarācārya-caritam*), Anandavan Ashram, Mumbai, 2000)

as that of Vāyu, Totaka as that of Pavamāna, Udaṅka as that of Nandī, Sureśvara as that of Brahmā, Sanandana as that of Aruṇa², Ānandagiri as that of Bṛhaspati, Citsukha as that of Varuṇa and Bhāratī as that of Sarasvatī. Padmapāda is referred to as the son of brahmaṇa named Vimala³ and as a native of the Coladeśa located on the banks of Kāverī⁴. Hastāmalaka is mentioned to be the son of the learned ritualist Prabhākara of Śrībalī village who was introduced to the Ācārya by Prabhākara as his thirteen year old dull-witted son (Sarga XII. 28-36). The poet mentions that as a two year old child, Hastāmalaka drowned in the Yamunā while his mother was bathing in the sacred river entrusting the boy under the care of an ascetic during a pilgrimage. Moved by the grief of the bereaved mother, it is the ascetic who enters the body of the dead child by his yogic prowess.(XIII. 16-20). A devout disciple named Giri was derided by Padmapāda for his ignorance is said to have received the grace of the Ācārya and to have composed a philosophical text in the Toṭaka metre whence he is known as Toṭaka. Sureśvara's *pūrvāśrama* names are mentioned as Maṇḍana and Viśvarūpa. He is referred to as an inhabitant of Māhiśmatī situated on the banks of Narmadā. It is also mentioned that the it was Sureśvarācārya himself who was reborn as Vācaspati Miśra who composed a gloss on Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on the *Brahmasūtras*⁵.

King Rājaśekhara is mentioned to have constructed the temple of Vṛṣādrinātha. He is also referred to as being the author of three plays which he had recited during the childhood days of the Ācārya that were reproduced by the Ācārya later. Śivaguru, the son of Vidyādhīraja of Kālaṭī and Satī, the daughter of Makha Paṇḍita are referred to as the parents of the Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. Śivaguru is said to have passed away when Śaṅkara was three years old. Śaṅkara is said to have been sent to the Gurukula at the age of five following his *Upanayana*⁶. He is said to have returned from the Gurukula at the age of seven after mastering the *Vedas* and the *Vedāṅgas*⁷. The *Kanakadhāra* episode, diversion of the river Pūrṇa and the re- installation of the image of Kṛṣṇa are mentioned. As regards the lifespan of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, the author clarifies that he was destined to live only for eight years. It is the sages visiting his abode who extend his lifespan by eight more years and predict that Vyāsa would further grant an extension of his lifespan by another sixteen years. During the crocodile incident that takes place in the eighth year of Śaṅkara's life, he convinces Satī that he would live for another eight years as blessed by the sages only upon embracing Samnyāsa⁸. Śaṅkara is said to have been freed from the jaws of the crocodile representing Kāla upon mentally embracing Samnyāsa since Samnyāsa implies the death in the world of *samsāra*⁹. It is noteworthy that the author rejects the idea of the crocodile incident being a mere *līlā* to cleverly secure the mother's consent on ethical grounds and holds the entire episode as a the operation of the *prārabdhakarma*¹⁰.

² The author does not clarify whether this Sanandana who is an avatāra of Aruṇa is different from Sanandana aka Padmapāda or whether he intends to present both the two views of which one regarded Padmapāda as an avatāra of Viśnu and the other as that of Aruṇa, as Vidyāranya does.

³ जाते वृषाङ्के विष्णुश्च विमलादभूसुरादभूत्। पद्मपादं यमेवाहुर्लोका वादियशोपहम्॥. III.1

⁴ चोलदेशो समुत्पन्नः कावेरी यत्र भक्तिदा॥. VI.2.

⁵ प्रारब्धकर्मशेषाच्च भूत्वा वाचस्पतिः पुनः। विधास्यसे भाष्यटीकां त्वमाभूतलयस्थिताम्॥(XIII.45)

⁶ सम्पादितोपनयनः पञ्चमे हायने शिशुः। गुरोः कुलमुपेयाय वेदाद्यायनतत्परः॥ (IV.7)

⁷ अधीत्य वेदवेदाङ्गं शङ्करः सप्तहायनः। गुरोः कुलात्समावृत्य मातरं परिशिष्ट्रिये॥ (V.1)

⁸ पुनरष्ट लभेयाब्दान् संन्यसन्निति ते जगुः (V.37)

⁹ चेतसा सर्वसंन्यासः शङ्करेण तदा कृतः। संन्यासान्मृतमित्येव कालनक्रस्तमत्यजत्॥ (V.39)

¹⁰ Pp. 46.

The hermitage of Govindabhagavatpāda is referred to as being located on the banks of Narmadā. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya is said to have been formally initiated into Saṁnyāsa by Govindabhagavatpāda after imparting him the nuances of Vedānta. There is a reference to Ādi Śaṅkarācārya checking the floods of Narmadā and Govindabhagavatpāda identifying him as the author of the commentary on the Brahmasūtras as per the words of Vyāsa. Govindabhagavatpāda is said to have revealed the prediction of Vyāsa to Śaṅkara and exhorted him to visit Vārāṇasī. It is at Vārāṇasī where Sanandana is said to have become a disciple of the Ācārya and got initiated into Saṁnyāsa. This is said to have been followed by other divine incarnates resorting to the Ācārya at Vārāṇasī and becoming his disciples¹¹. There is a reference to the Caṇḍāla episode and Śiva commissioning Ādi Śaṅkarācārya to compose the commentary. Interestingly, the work refers to a few commentaries composed before Ādi Śaṅkarācārya that could not sustain the attacks by the Buddhists¹².

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya is said to have composed the *bhāṣya* on the Brahmasūtras at Badarī at the age of twelve along with his commentaries on the ten principal Upaniṣads, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Sanatsujātīya* and the *Nṛsiṁha-Tāpanī Upaniṣad* as well as the *Prakaraṇa-granthas* such as the *Upadeśa-sāhasrī*. Upon observing the jealousy of the other disciples over Sanandana, the Ācārya calls the latter who was standing on the opposite bank of the river Gaṅgā. Sanandana rushes towards his Guru instantly and his feet are supported by lotuses at every step that he places on the water. He thereafter becomes known as Padmapāda. At Uttara-Kāśī, the Ācārya is said to have refuted the Kāpālikas. There, Vyāsa in the guise of an old man enters into an argument with Ādi Śaṅkarācārya over the latter's interpretation of a particular *sūtra* which lasts for eight days. Padmapāda who identifies Vyāsa reveals the same to Ādi Śaṅkarācārya who is then blessed by Vyāsa with an extended lifespan of sixteen years. It is noteworthy that the author takes the Maṇikarnikā mentioned in the Mādhavīya to be the one at Uttara-Kāśī. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya who approaches Kumārila Bhaṭṭa to compose a gloss on his commentary is directed to meet Viśvarūpa as Bhaṭṭa had already undertaken a vow of self-immolation as an expiation. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya is said to have visited the abode of Viśvarūpa during a *śrāddha* being performed by the latter wherein Vyāsa and Jaimini are invoked as the guests. It is Vyāsa who pacifies Viśvarūpa and exhorts him to extend due hospitality to Ādi Śaṅkarācārya whose arrival discomforts Viśvarūpa. It is Vyāsa and Jaimini who propose the name of Bhāratī as the referee for the debate between Ādi Śaṅkarācārya and Viśvarūpa. Bhāratī is said to have posed questions on erotics to the Ācārya since she desired her husband's Guru to be omniscient¹³. In the translation, the poet notes that Bhāratī being Sarasvatī herself had foreseen the contingency of the Ācārya's ignorance of erotics at the time of *Sarvajñapīṭhārohaṇa* and therefore posed questions on erotics to induce him to learn the science¹⁴.

When the servants of the king set fire to the body of the Ācārya, the latter who re-enters the body invokes Varuṇa to quell the flames and not Nṛsiṁha, as mentioned in several other biographies. As Bhāratī departs to her celestial abode, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya requests her to manifest at places such as Śṛngarī where she would be consecrated. In the Kāpālika-episode, the author convincingly refers to the manifestation of Narasiṁha from the heart of Padmapāda unlike Mādhava Vidyāraṇya who refers to Padmapāda himself turning into Narasiṁha. Construction

¹¹ काश्यां वसन्तमासाद्य सर्वे देवांशजाः क्रमात्। आशिश्रियुर्मुष्यैव शिष्यभावमुपागताः॥(VI.1)

¹² तत्र व्याख्या विशिथिला कैश्चिद्विरचिता मृषा। दूष्यतामुपयाताश्च बौद्धादेस्ता न संशयः॥(VI.24)

¹³ सर्वज्ञेन भवेद्भाव्यं गुरुणा भारतीपते:। इत्याकर्षमहं प्रश्नं कामशास्त्रे क्षमस्व तत्॥ (X.35)

¹⁴ Pp. 102

of the Śāradāmbā temple at Śrṅgagiri situated on the banks of Tuṅgabhadra and his long stay there are mentioned¹⁵.

The discomfiture of the disciples over Sureśvara being assigned the task of composing the gloss, the composition of the *vārtikas* by Sureśvara after securing the confidence of his fellow monks following the composition of the *Naiṣkarmyasiḍḍhi* and the curse of Sureśvara that no other gloss upon the commentary would survive are mentioned. (sarga. XIII). The family of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya mentioned to have followed the *Taittirīya-Śākhā*, while that of Sureśvara is mentioned to have belonged to the *Kāṇva-Śākhā* as mentioned by Vyāsācala, Rājacūḍāmaṇi Dīksita and Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya. The composition of a gloss by Padmapāda, its destruction of the gloss and emasculation of Padmapāda's intellect by his uncle and the revival of the *Pañcapadikā* portions by the Ācārya are mentioned. Sensing the final moments of his mother, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya visits her and imparts her the highest knowledge of the Nirguna-brahman. When told by his mother that the *Nirguna-Brahman* does not appeal to her mind, he invokes Śiva by reciting verses in the *bhujaṅgaprayāta* metre. Observing that his mother was still not satisfied with the vision of Śiva along with Durgā and Gaṇapati, he invokes Śrī Kṛṣṇa, their family deity upon whose appearance the mother gives up her mortal body meditating upon his form. It is noteworthy that the author unambiguously states Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the *kuladevatā* of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya¹⁶. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya pronounces a curse upon his kinsmen who despise his calls to support him in the cremation of his mother that they would be excluded from the study of the Vedas, cremate the dead in the precincts of their houses and become ineligible to offer alms to monks. Interestingly, the author identifies the cursed kinsmen with the Ambalavāsī community of Kerala¹⁷. After the death of the mother of the Ācārya, the disciples join him at Mahāsurālaya, which the author identifies with Anantaśayana¹⁸. There is also a reference to the revival of the dramas of Rājaśekhara by the Ācārya by recollecting them as well as his order to the former to enforce upon the residents of Kālaṭī are mentioned.

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya is said to have commenced his *digvijaya* from Setu along with his disciples and king Sudhanvā. There are also a references to the encounter between Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's retinue and the group of Kāpalikas led by Krakaca, Krakaca's invocation of Bharava to kill the Ācārya and the eventual destruction of Krakaca by the deity for his malicious intent of destroying Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, who was Bhairava himself. At the end of his conquest of the South, the Ācārya is said to have established a maṭha at Śrṅgerī before commencing the conquest of the West. (Sarga. XVI). Ādi Śaṅkarācārya is mentioned to have established the Śāradā-maṭha at Dvāraka after the conquest of the west. (Sarga. XVII). The Jyotiṣpīṭha is said to have been founded by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya after the conquest of the North. (Sarga. XVIII). The Ācārya is also mentioned to have composed "Bhaja Govindam" when he sees a man in ripe old age engaged in the study of grammar at Kāśī during his conquest of the East¹⁹. The establishment of the Govardhana maṭha on the shore of the Eastern sea near the abode of Jagannātha after the conquest of the East is referred to. (Sarga. XIX). In the description of the *digvijaya* of the Ācārya, the poet's

¹⁵ तुङ्गभद्रापगातीरशोभं शृङ्गगिरिं ययौ। अद्यापयंश्चिरं तत्र भाष्यादीन् देशिकाग्रणीः।
प्रासादं शारदाम्बाया देवताया अकल्पयत्॥ (XII.47)

¹⁶ अथ कृष्णं सरोजाक्षं श्यामलं कुलदेवताम्। अस्तवीत्परया प्रीत्या प्रीणाति स्म न तन्मनः॥(XIV.25)

¹⁷ अद्यापि वेदरहिता गृहान्तिकचिताजुषः। यतिभिक्षाविहीनाश्च सन्त्येकेऽम्बलवासिनः॥(XIV.33)

¹⁸ pp. 162 (translation)

¹⁹ काश्यां कदाचिदाचार्यो वृद्धं मरणसन्निधिम्। अधीयानं व्याकरणमिदमाह महाशयः॥
भज गोविन्दमधुना मरणे समुपस्थिते। न दुर्कृत्करणे रक्षां धातुरेष करिष्यति॥(XX.17-18))

depiction of the encounters of the Ācārya with the scholars of various sects and the Advaitic interpretation of their practices and symbols is particularly noteworthy.

There is also a reference to the Ācārya suffering from incurable fissures due to the black-magic of Abhinavagupta. The work briefly mentions the arrival of the Aśvinas in the guise of brāhmaṇas who inform the Ācārya about the cause of the disease and the subsequent application of the mantras to reverse the effects of black-magic leading to the destruction of Abhinavagupta. There is also an interesting account of the Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's vision of Gauḍapāda, the latter blessing him to become the 'Jagadguru' pleased with his commentary on the *Māṇḍukyakārikas*²⁰.

Referring to the Sarvajñapīṭha located at Kāśmīra, the abode of Śāradā, the author mentions that the eastern door was opened by Kapila and others, the northern by Dattātreya and others and the western by Vyāsa and others²¹. It is also stated that upon learning this Ādi Śaṅkarācārya who was a Southerner resolves to open the Southern door. As the Ācārya proceeds to ascend the throne of omniscience, he is challenged by the Vaiśeṣikas, Naiyyāyikas, Sāṅkhyas, Pāśupatas, Vaiśnavas, Jainas and the Bauddhas who are all convinced by his explanation and declare him the "Śaṅmatasthāpaka". When prevented by the Mother Goddess from ascending the throne on grounds of impropriety of a Samnyāsī learning the science of erotics, he ascribes it to *parakāyapraveśa* and asserts his eligibility which the Goddess concedes to. The text clearly mentions the installation of Hastāmalaka, Padmapāda, Sureśvara and Toṭaka as the pontiffs of the maṭhas at Dvārakā, Purī, Śringerī and Badarī respectively²². Interestingly the author also refers to Ādi Śaṅkarācārya as the founder of the Agni, Āvāhana, Ānanda, Aṭala, Jūnā, Nirañjanī and Nirvāṇī Akhāḍas²³. The Ācārya is said to have visited Kedāra and created the Taptakuṇḍa. It is here that he is said to have completed the 32nd year of his life. The Devas such as Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Candra etc, descend on the earth and exhort the Ācārya to return to his abode as his mission on the earth was accomplished. As the Ācārya prepares to depart, Nandī appears and mounting upon the back of Nandī, the Ācārya assuming his real form of Śiva proceeds towards Kailāsa.

²⁰ कारिकाभाष्यसन्तुष्टो जगदगुरुपदं द्रुतम् । लभस्वेति वरं दत्त्वा ततोऽन्तर्धिमगादृषिः ॥(XX. 22)

²¹ प्रागद्वारं कपिलाद्यैश्च दत्ताद्यैरुत्तरं पदम् । दक्षिणद्वारविवृत्यै तु सशिष्यो निरगाततः ॥(XX.26)

²² संस्थाप्य हस्तामलकं पद्मपादं सुरेश्वरम् । तोटकं च मठे प्रत्यक्षप्रागवागुदगाश्रिते ॥(XIII.40)

²³ अग्निमावाह्य चाषाढानानन्दानटलान् गुरुः । जूर्णान्निरञ्जनांश्चैव निर्वाणांश्च व्यतिष्ठपत् ॥(XIII.41)