

Śaṃkarācārya to Sureśvarācārya: the flow of *Guru-Śiṣya-Paramparā* through *Sambandha-bhāṣya* and *Sambandha-vārttika***Dr. Chaitali Kanjilal**

Assistant Professor,

Department of Sanskrit, Ramsaday College, Amta, Howrah, West Bengal

Abstract:

Among the six orthodox systems of Indian Philosophy, Advaita Vedanta is regarded as one of the greatest philosophical systems. The concept of Advaita was found in Gauḍapāda's *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* and later it was expanded and popularized by the great Ācārya Śaṃkara in the 8th century A.D. Sureśvarācārya was one of the direct disciples of Śaṃkarācārya. Sureśvara, being a devoted disciple of Śaṃkara made great effort to enrich the Advaita Vedanta system of study with his original works and commentaries on *Śaṃkara-bhāṣya* on Upaniṣads. Śaṃkarācārya wrote commentaries on Principal Upaniṣads and his *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad-bhāṣya* is the greatest one among them. Sureśvarācārya wrote a voluminous *Vārttika* on it. Both the works of *Guru* and *Śiṣya* enriched the Advaitic thought and continued the *Guru-Śiṣya-Paramparā* in the Indian Philosophical wisdom. The introductory portion of the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad-bhāṣya* is very special because Ācārya Śaṃkara referred the *Sambandha* or connection between *Karma* and *Jñāna kāṇḍa* of Veda there. And Sureśvarācārya explained this connection vividly in the introductory portion in his *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad-bhāṣya- vārttika*, which is known as *Sambandha-vārttika*. The present paper makes an attempt to discuss the *Guru-Śiṣya-paramparā* in the light of the lives and works of Śaṃkarācārya and Sureśvarācārya and their Advaitic views regarding *Karma* and *Jñāna* in *Sambandha-bhāṣya* and *Sambandha-vārttika* respectively.

Key words: Śaṃkarācārya, Sureśvarācārya, *Sambandha-bhāṣya*, *Sambandha-vārttika*, *Karma* and *Jñāna***Introduction:**

The veneration of *Guru* (teacher) has been considered the highest cultural aspect in Indian wisdom since time immemorial. *Guru-praṇama mantra* is respectfully offered by pupils in their writings as a distinct salutation. Through this *Guru-Śiṣya-Paramparā* the knowledge flows across generations. There were two kinds of *Vaṃśa* (Lineage) admitted in the scriptures, one is *Vidyā-vaṃśa* (lineage of Knowledge) and *Janma-vaṃśa* (Lineage of Birth). Sometimes the *Vidyā-vaṃśa* was regarded the most. In Advaita Vedanta Philosophy, Śaṃkarācārya received the Advaitic concept from his *Guru* (Preceptor) and *Parama-guru* (great preceptor) and preached that to his disciples. The concept of Advaita Vedanta was found in Ācārya Gauḍapāda's *Māṇḍūkya-kārika* and later the concept was expanded and popularized by Ācārya Śaṃkara. From Śaṃkarācārya this knowledge was transmitted to his pupils. Sureśvarācārya was one of the direct disciples of Śaṃkarācārya who carried the Advaita view through his various writings. Śaṃkarācārya wrote his commentary on the Principal Upaniṣads. Those are referred in *Muktikopaniṣad* (verse-30) — *Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka*.

*īśa-kena-kaṭha-praśna-muṇḍa-māṇḍūkya-tittirīḥ/
aitareyaṃ ca chāndogyaṃ bṛhadāraṇyakaṃ tathā//ⁱ*

Among them, Śaṃkarācārya's commentary on *Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣad* is the greatest one. Sureśvarācārya wrote a voluminous *Vārttika* on this Commentary namely, *Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣad-bhāṣya-vārttika*. Both the commentaries of Śaṃkarācārya and Sureśvarācārya were special because being a supporter of the knowledge portion of the Veda Śaṃkarācārya mentioned the *Sambandha* or connection of the *Karma-kāṇḍa* and *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* of Veda. Again, Sureśvarācārya made an elaborate explanation on it to establish the theory of his *Guru*.

The Introductory portion of the *Śaṃkara-bhāṣya* is called *Sambandha-bhāṣya* as the *Sambandha* or the connection of *Karma* and *Jñāna* is mentioned here. Again, the introductory portion of the *Vārttika* of Sureśvarācārya is called *Sambandha-vārttika*. Thus, the present paper attempts to discuss the lives and works of Śaṃkarācārya and Sureśvarācārya, the *Guru* and *Śiṣya* and their Advaitic concepts to describe the relation between *Karma* and *Jñāna* as reflected in *Sambandha-bhāṣya* and *Sambandha-vārttika*.

Śaṃkarācārya and his *Guru-Śiṣya paramparā*:

Śaṃkarācārya wrote his commentary on *Prasthāna-traya*, of Vedānta i.e., Upaniṣads, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* and *Brahmasūtra* and established the theory of Advaita Vedānta through these writings. Though the concept of Advaita Vedānta *Darśana* was introduced by Gauḍapādācārya, but with the logical power, subtle unique thought and philosophical insight of Śaṃkarācārya, the Advaita Vedānta philosophy is regarded as the most significant and widely accepted treatise in the Indian philosophical system.

Śaṃkarācārya was born in the Southern part of India in the 8th century AD. S.N. Dasgupta said about Śaṃkara's date and place that—

“It is regarded as almost certain that he was born between 700 and 800 A.D. in the Malabar country in the Deccan.”ⁱⁱ

Śaṃkarācārya's teacher was Govindapādācārya, a great Advaitin and he was the disciple of Ācārya Gauḍapāda. So Gauḍapādācārya was the *Paramaguru* (the great preceptor) of Śaṃkarācārya. In the first verse of his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Śaṃkarācārya offered his great reverence to his own *Guru* and to God, who is the guru of Gurus by this verse—

sarvavedāntasiddhāntagocaraṃ tamogocaram/

*gobindaṃ paramānandaṃ sadguruṃ praṇato 'smyaham/*ⁱⁱⁱ

(I bow to Govinda, who is Bliss Supreme, who is the *Sadguru* (the highly qualified preceptor), who can be recognized only from the import of all Vedānta, and who is beyond the reach of tongue and mind.)

Śaṃkara in his works introduced himself as the pupil of Govindapādācārya. Śaṃkarācārya learnt the main principles of Advaita Vedānta philosophy from this venerable teacher.

Pupil of Śaṃkarācārya:

| Sl. No. | Name of the Pupil | Their Work/-s | Time (Approx.) |
|---------|-------------------|---|----------------|
| 1 | Padmapādācārya | <i>Pañcapādikā</i> | 800 AD |
| 2 | Hastāmalakācārya | <i>Anubhavavedāntaprakaraṇa</i> and <i>Vivekamañjarī</i> | 800-900 AD |
| 3 | Toṭakācārya | <i>Śrutisārasamuddharaṇa</i> | Do |
| 4 | Sureśvarācārya | <i>Naiṣkarmyasiddhi</i> , <i>Brhadāraṇyakopanisad-bhāṣya-vārttika</i> , <i>Taittirīyopaniṣad-bhāṣya-vārttika</i> etc. | Do |

Śaṃkarācārya established four *Maṭhas* (monastery) in the four points of India to spread Advaita thought all over the country. And for this purpose, he appointed his four above mentioned disciples as the President of these four *Maṭhas*.

| Name of the Pupil | Name of the monastery | Situated at |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Padmapādācārya | <i>Govardhana-maṭha</i> | Purī in the East |
| Hastāmalakācārya | <i>Sāradā-maṭha</i> | Dvārakā in the West |
| Toṭakācārya | <i>Jyotirmatha</i> | Badarināth in the Himalayas |
| Sureśvarācārya | <i>Śṛṅgerī-maṭha</i> | Mysore province |

S.N. Dasgupta described the *Guru-paramparā* of Śaṃkara as -

“About the period 780 A.D. Gauḍapāda revived the monistic teaching of the Upaniṣads by his commentary on the *Māṇḍukyākārikā*. His disciple Govinda was the teacher of Śaṃkara (788-820 A.D.). Śaṃkara’s commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* is the root from which sprang forth a host of commentaries and studies on Vedāntism of great originality, vigour, and philosophic insight.”^{iv}

Identity of Sureśvarācārya:

Sureśvarācārya was one of the direct and most principal disciples of Śaṃkarācārya. Sureśvara’s identity is a disputed area. Traditional belief identified Sureśvara with Maṇḍana Miśra. It is said that Sureśvarācārya’s household name was Maṇḍana Miśra. This tradition probably started with Vidyāraṇya’s *Śaṃkara-dig-vijaya*. Vidyāraṇya further said in his *Śaṃkara-dig-vijaya* that Sureśvara’s former name was Maṇḍana Miśra and he received the name Sureśvara from his *Guru*, Śaṃkarācārya after conversion. But S.N. Dasgupta expressed his doubt about this matter which is described in *Śaṃkara-dig-vijaya* of

Vidyāraṇya and called it ‘a mythical biography’—

‘But the *Śaṅkara-dig-vijaya* is a mythical biography, and it is certainly very risky to believe any of its statements, unless corroborated by other reliable evidences.’^v

But many Scholars accepted this traditional biography about Sureśvara. Asutosh Bhattacharya in his *Vedāntadarśana- Advaitavāda* following the tradition, expressed his view that Sureśvara and Maṇḍana Miśra is the same person. A brief discussion on the traditional belief about Sureśvara is given here. Maṇḍana Miśra was a strict follower of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā philosophy (based on the ritualistic portion of Veda). He was the son-in-law of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, who founded a new treatise in Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā philosophy, namely *Bhāṭṭa-sampradāya* and composed three commentaries on *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra-bhāṣya*, namely *Śloka-vārttika*, *Tantra-vārttika* and *Ṭup-ṭikā*. Śaṅkarācārya wanted to establish Advaitism all over the country and Mīmāṃsakas were the strongest opponents to him. Thus, to defeat the Mīmāṃsakas with logical argument which is known by the term- *vāda* in scriptures he came to Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and called him in a debate. But Kumārila refused him because at that very moment he decided to sacrifice his life by burning himself as a punishment for having revolt against his teacher (*gurudroha*). Thus, he suggested Śaṅkara to meet Maṇḍana Miśra who was the favourite disciple of Kumārila and the best scholar in Magadha. He also told if Śaṅkara would be able to defeat Maṇḍana Miśra then it would be accepted that Kumārila Bhaṭṭa has been defeated. Śaṅkarācārya went to Maṇḍana and engaged in the debate. In this debate Maṇḍan’s wife Ubhayabhārati was the judge because she had the expertise in both the *Karma* and *Jñāna kāṇḍa* of Veda. With the originality, intellect, unique skill and Philosophic insight, Śaṅkarācārya succeeded to defeat Maṇḍana Miśra. Being defeated by Śaṅkara, the staunch follower of the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā philosophy became an ascetic adherent of *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* (knowledge portion) of Veda. Maṇḍana Miśra took religious mendicancy from Śaṅkarācārya and received the name Sureśvarācārya from his Guru. Gradually refuting all opponent-theories Śaṅkarācārya established Advaitism all over the country. Then Śaṅkarācārya established four *Maṭhas*, i.e. monasteries in the four points of the country. The monastery in southern zone is known as, *Śṛṅgerī-maṭha* and Śaṅkarācārya appointed Sureśvarācārya as the President (*adhyakṣa*) of it. So, there is a space for accepting the tradition that under the spell of a great personality like Ācārya Śaṅkara the strict follower of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsa *darśana*, Maṇḍana Miśra changed and modified his views and became a devoted disciple of Śaṅkarācārya under a new identity of Sureśvarācārya.

Professor S. Venkataramana Aiyar in the preface of his translated work on *Sambandha-Vārttika* refers this tradition as—

“He was known in his secular life by the name of *Maṇḍanamiśra* and also as *Visvarūpāchārya*, and was a staunch follower of the *mīmāṃsā* School and a hater of the philosophy which gave preference to knowledge over ritual. On conversion by Sankara to the latter school, he became an ascetic and assumed the name of Suresvaracharya”.^{vi}

The time of Sureśvarācārya which is widely regarded is 8th or 9th century AD.

Some Popular works of Sureśvarācārya which enriched the Advaita Vedānta philosophy are- *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*, *Taittirīyopaniṣad-bhāṣya-vārttika*, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad-bhāṣya-vārttika* etc.

S.N. Dasgupta points out an interesting story about Sureśvara after his conversion to Advaita Vedānta

School--

“Mādhava (1350), in his *Śaṅkaravijaya*, recites an interesting story about it. He says that Sureśvara received Śaṅkara’s permission to write a *vārttika* on the *bhāṣya*. But other pupils objected to Śaṅkara that since Sureśvara was formerly a great Mīmāṃsist (Maṇḍana Miśra was called Sureśvara after his conversion to Vedāntism) he was not competent to write a good *Vārttika* on the *bhāṣya*. Sureśvara, disappointed, wrote a treatise called *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*.”^{vii}

Introduction to *Sambandha-bhāṣya* of Śaṅkarācārya and its significance:

Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad is the greatest one among the Upaniṣads. Śaṅkarācārya’s *bhāṣya* on the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* is likewise the greatest one of his Upaniṣad-commentaries. Also, Śaṅkarācārya’s commentary on *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* was very special because of its position. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* belongs to *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* of *Śukla-Yajurveda* and is found immediately after the *Pravargakāṇḍa*, which is an elementary part of *Karmaprakaraṇa*; therefore, it is placed under the domain of *Karma-kāṇḍa* of Veda. But characteristically it bears the nature of *Jñāna-kāṇḍa*. Therefore, Śaṅkarācārya asserts that he ought to discuss first of all the relation of the Upaniṣad with the *Karma-kāṇḍa* of Veda—

tasyāśya karmakāṇḍena sambandho 'bhidhīyate'^{viii}

It means- Of that (viz. the knowledge portion) the relation to the ritual-portion will be declared. Therefore, the introductory portion of the commentary is known as *Sambandha-bhāṣya*. This Upaniṣad begins with the description of *aśvamedha yajña* (Vedic ritual of Horse sacrifice). Hence, Ācārya Śaṅkara while explaining the introduction of this Upaniṣad mentioned the relation between the *Karma-kāṇḍa* and the *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* of Veda. Being an adherent of *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* how he explained the relation of *karma* and *jñāna* that makes this *bhāṣya* on this *Upaniṣad* very special. Latter Sureśvarācārya explained this connection of *Karma* and *Jñāna* in his *Sambandha-vārttika*. Here, in the *Śāṅkara-bhāṣya*, the relation of the Knowledge portion with the Ritualistic portion of Veda is mentioned by Ācārya. And to describe the connection of *Karma* and *Jñāna*, the introductory portion of Sureśvarācārya’s *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad-bhāṣya-vārttika* which is called *Sambandha-vārttika* contains more than eleven hundred verses.

The relation of *Karma* and *Jñāna* as explained in *Sambandha-vārttika* of Sureśvara:

Sureśvarācārya determines to explain the relation of *Karma-kāṇḍa* and *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* of Veda in his *Sambandha-vārttika*. Sureśvarācārya explained that the mind has been purified through the performance of the obligatory rites. With this purifying mind one being non-attached and renounce all works attains the Self-knowledge by listening the *Mahāvākya* texts like, *that thou art*. This is the method to the attainment of Self- knowledge. Thus, obligatory rites to the knowledge are remote auxiliaries (*ārādupaāraka*) and they are not direct means to Self- knowledge.

Ārād evopa kurvanti nityānyātmaviśuddhitah/

Ātmajñānāvirodhitvāt sāṅgāt natvātmabodhavat//

(*Sambandha-Vārttika*-1133)^{ix}

The obligatory rites help by way of purifying the mind, being not inconsistent with the knowledge of self. But they are not direct means like the knowledge of the self. So, Sureśvara concluded, Action may be beneficial for purification, but it is knowledge alone which leads to liberation. Ānandagiri, one of the

commentators on Sureśvara's *Vārttika*, very clearly explained the connection of *Karma* and *Jñāna* in his *ṭikā*, namely *Śāstraprakāśikā* as-

Actions are the means to Knowledge through purification, the Upaniṣad, viz. Knowledge, however, the direct means to the knowledge of the Supreme Self, thus in this verse through *ityeva* etc. is concluded by receiving the desirable meaning of the *bhāṣya* of Śaṅkarācārya regarding the relation of these two *kāṇḍas*, *Karma-kāṇḍa* and *Jñāna-kāṇḍa*—

karmaṇām śuddhidvārā dhīhetutvam upaniṣadām tu sākṣād eva iti bhāṣyābhīṣṭām kāṇḍayoḥ sambandham upapāditam upasaṃharati/ ityevam iti^x

Conclusion:

In conclusion it can be said that Śaṅkarācārya, being a great *Advaitin*, engaged to discuss the relation between *Karma-kāṇḍa* (Ritualistic portion) and *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* (knowledge portion) of the Veda. Sureśvarācārya, following Śaṅkarācārya's *Sambandha-bhāṣya*, refuted the theories of the opponents and explained vividly the connection of these two *kāṇḍas*. As the supporter of the *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* of Veda, Śaṅkarācārya adore the victory of the Knowledge portion of Veda over Ritualistic portion and Sureśvara who was a dedicated follower of Śaṅkarācārya, established the desirable explanation of his *Guru* in his *Sambandha-vārttika* by stating - *Karma* is *ārādupakāraka* to *Jñāna*- (*karma* is the remote auxiliaries to *Jñāna*). Sureśvara was formerly a supporter of the Ritualistic portion of the Veda and after conversion to Advaita Vedanta school, he became a devoted disciple of Śaṅkarācārya. *Guru* is like a guiding light to his disciple. *Guru* shows the path to his disciple in the darkness. So, since time immemorial, *Guru* has been worshipped and is considered identical with *Īśvara* (God) in the tradition. Śaṅkarācārya was like that guiding light to Sureśvarācārya. By the divine touch of his *Guru*-Śaṅkarācārya, Sureśvara made the effort to refute the theories of Mīmāṃsā *Darśana*, which he had previously supported. Thus, the *Guru-Śiṣya-paramparā* of Advaita Vedanta continues through the profound philosophical contributions of Śaṅkarācārya and his successor Sureśvarācārya in their *Sambandha-bhāṣya* and *Sambandha-vārttika* respectively. So, The *Paramparā* which started with the *Parama-guru* Gauḍapādācārya, significantly flourished and popularized by Ācārya Śaṅkara and later enriched by the eligible disciples like Sureśvarācārya.

References:

ⁱ Cf. Sitanath Goswami, *Lectures on Advaita Vedānta*, p. 37.

ⁱⁱ Cf. Surendranath Dasgupta, 'The Śāṅkara School of Vedānta' in *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 432.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Swami Lokeswarananda, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* of Śaṅkarācārya, p. 1.

^{iv} Cf. Surendranath Dasgupta, *op.cit*, p. 418.

^v Cf. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. II, p. 82.

^{vi} Cf. S. Venkataramana Aiyer, *The Sambandha-Vārttika of Sureśvarācārya*. Preface (p. i).

^{vii} Cf. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol.-1, pp. 418-419.

viii Cf. Durgacharan Sāṃkhya-vedānta-tīrtha. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*. vol. I, p.3.

ix Cf. T.M. P. Mahadevan, *The Saṃbandha-Vārtika of Sureśvarācārya*, p. 600.

x Cf. Mahadev Chimnaji Apte. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣyavārtikam* with *Śāstraprakāśikā tīkā*, p.101.

Bibliography:

Bhattacharya, Asutosh. *Vedāntadarśana-Advaitavāda* (Bengali), Vol. I. Kolkata: Sri Saraswati Press Ltd., 1942.

Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad. Ed. & Trans. Durgacharan Sāṃkhya-vedānta-tīrtha. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*. Vol. I-IV. Kolkata: DSKPL, 2011 (5th imp.).

Dasgupta, Surendranath. *A History of Indian Philosophy*. Vol. I. and II Delhi: MLBD, 2012 and 2014 (7th rpt.) (1st ed. 1922).

Goswami, Sitanath. *Lectures on Advaita Vedānta*. Kolkata: The Dacca Students' Library, 2015.

Śaṃkarācārya. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*. Ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (Bengali), Kolkata: RMIC, 2011.

Sureśvara. *Saṃbandha-vārttika*. Dineshchandra Sastri. *Saṃbandha-Vārttika*. Kolkata: Sakti Press, 1357 (Bengali Year).

Sureśvara. *Saṃbandha-vārttika*. Ed. Mahadev Chimnaji Apte. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣyavārtikam* with *Śāstraprakāśikā tīkā*. Anandashrama Mudranalaya, 1892. PDF.

Sureśvara. *Saṃbandha-vārttika*. Ed. & Trans. T.M.P. Mahadevan. *The Saṃbandha-Vārtika of Sureśvarācārya*. Madras: University of Madras, 1958 (1st pub.).

Sureśvara. *Saṃbandha-vārttika*. Trans. S. Venkataramana Aiyar. *The Saṃbandha-Vārtika of Sureśvarācārya*. Benares: E.J. Lazarus and Co., 1905. (rpt.).

Upaniṣad. Ed. Swami Nikhilananda, *The Upanishads* (Abridged ed.). Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2012 (1st rpt.).
