

## SPIRITUAL EDUCATION IN SRI SHANKARACHARYA'S PHILOSOPHY

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### **Abstract**

The paper deals with the spiritual education with special reference to the Sri Shankracharya's views on the Vedanta Philosophy in which his life and social philosophy influence spiritual education. The paper also deals with his educational philosophy based on the principles of 'Advaita Vedanta' which are the integral part of spiritual education. In this paper an attempt has been made to recognize, comprehend, find out, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and critically examine the dominant factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri Shankaracharya's philosophy. The paper concludes 'Spiritual Education' as "it is education which helps to fulfill the potentialities of the individuals through the virtues of Control of mind, control of senses, Purity, meditation, self- knowledge, self-interview, Wisdom, Sharda to Study of Vedanta, Truth, Tolerance, sanyas and solution to the problem and to prepare them to solve the everyday problems for life creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for attaining the highest knowledge and wisdom, if the teachers enable to modify such kind of behavior patterns of individuals, - this is spiritual education."

**Keywords: Spiritual Education, Sri Shankaracharya's Philosophy.**

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## Introduction

Why does the journey start from Shankaracharya's life and social philosophy to spiritual education necessary?

Sri Shankaracharya (788-820) is considered as the greatest exponent of Advaita Vedanta Philosophy and one of the greatest literary figures of India of eighth century. He was a writer, a philosopher, a scholar of Vedas, a Sanyasi, a Yogi, a spiritual leader, a man of God, a religious leader, a great teacher, a revivalist of Indian Culture, a Brahmachari, a patriot, a protagonist of Sanskrit, an educator, a social reformer, a revolutionary, a thinker, an educationist, saint, a mastermind of educational renaissance, a karma yogi, a humanitarian, a leader of thought and action and above all, also a great spiritualist.

In this connection, the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru (1946) significantly quotes as, "On the foundation of the early Vedanta, Shankara (or Shankaracharya) built a system which is called the Advaita Vedanta or non-dualist Vedanta. It is the philosophy which represents the dominant philosophy outlook of Hinduism today. -----It is based on pure monism, the only ultimate reality in the metaphysical sense being the Atman, the Absolute Soul. ---- Shankara is said to have helped in putting an end to Buddhism in India as a widespread religion, and that thereafter Brahmanism absorbed it in a fraternal embrace. But Buddhism had shrunk in India even before Shankaracharya's time. Some of Shankara's Brahmin opponents called him a disguised Buddhist. It is true that Buddhism influenced him considerably. (The Discovery of India, pp-188, 198-200)."

Sri Adi Shankaracharya (788-820), popularly known as Jagadguru Shankaracharya, was born in 788 in Kaladi of Kerala. His father's name was Shivagudi. He was sent to Gurukul at the age of 5 and he studied all the Vedas, Upanishads, Six System of Philosophy, and Smritis at the age of seven. He consolidated the theory and principle of Advaita Vedanta – monism which is a sub school of Vedanta Philosophy saturated with spiritual education. His teachings are based on the unity of the individual soul and the Absolute soul i.e. God. He travelled across through the length and breadth of India and other parts of South Asia to disseminate and publicize his philosophy which helped in the historical and cultural development, revival of Hinduism and spread of Advaita Vedanta Theory and Philosophy.

The Complete works of Sri Shankaracharya, 20 Volumes, published in 1910 by Sri Vani Vilas Press, Srirangam. His publications on Education are 'Brahmasutra –Bhashya,' 'Upanishad - Bhashya' Vol.1-7, 'Bhagad-Gita -Bhashya' Vol.1-2, 'Vishnusahasranama and Sanatsujatiya Bhashyas', 'Vivekachudamani, Upadeshasahasri', 'Miscellaneous Prakashan Vol.1-2', 'Stotras Vol.1-2', and 'Prapanchasara, Vol.1-2'.

National Curriculum for School Education, NCERT (2000) has observed that curriculum has to provide learning experiences which will improve individual's thoughts, feelings and actions. Very few researches have been developed to study spiritual education with respect to Sri Shankaracharya's Philosophy in India and its contribution to the field of education, spiritual education is less explored. The study is philosophical in its nature because it indicates normative aspect of education with respect to aim of education, curriculum, and method of teaching, discipline, students, teachers and schools. This study has sociological bases of education because of being related to social needs according to society. This study covers psychological aspect of education for instance growth and development of the students, learning, motivation, personality development and adjustment, etc. It is well known to all that Indian society is a spiritual based society. Some of the scholars felt that after independence the spirituality gradually disappear and it will have no impact on Indian educational system. India is a neither developed nor undeveloped country but where development is required in each and every sphere of human life. Spiritual education and its implications are increasing day by day. For the appearance of the spirituality in the development of the educational system, in this connection, Kothari Commission (1966) points out, "In the development that we envisage in the future, we hope that the pursuit of men, material affluence and power would be subordinated to that of higher values and the fulfillment of the individual. This concept of the mingling of 'Science and Spirituality' is of special significance for Indian Education."

The article indicates that an analysis of the various problems of spiritual education in India in the philosophical, sociological and global perspectives, may be accepted by the researchers and practitioners of spiritual studies for carrying out research on what is required is that the individuals as well as society internalize the understanding of the Spiritual Education and bring about a dynamic change in their living patterns. It seems that in a country like ours programmes

of identification and nurturing of talent should receive a very high priority. In a nutshell there is need and significance that we subscribe to the emerging spiritual culture. It is clear that Sri Shankaracharya's philosophy is playing a significant role in determining the process of spiritual welfare of mankind within the framework of modern spiritual society.

In this paper an attempt has been made to recognize, comprehend, find out, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and critically examine the dominant factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri Shankaracharya's philosophy and its impact on education of today and tomorrow in Indian society. This study may help the students to understand and to solve the problem of education more efficiently. They may flower into excellent of our nation. Hence the investigator has decided to conduct the present study.

The study is needed and significant from several points of view not only in bringing excellence among individuals but also in revealing the probable interplay between cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of education. Besides cognitive competence and skills, there is a need of social skills which will build up spiritual development

On this background, the problem for the purpose of investigation may be stated as: "*Spiritual Education in Sri Shankaracharya's Philosophy*"

### **Delimitation of the Study**

Keeping in view the limitation of time, resources and energy, the study is limited to one aspect of the subject which is spiritual education in Sri Shankaracharya's philosophy. It is entirely based on the secondary data as for examples-books, journals, periodicals, newspapers etc. this constitutes a major constraint of the study as the journals and periodicals are sometimes subject to manipulations and information available in them is in historical nature.

### **Purposes of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to find out Sri Shankaracharya's contribution regarding Advaita Vedanta Philosophy and its metaphysical thought and action in the field of spiritual education and its impact on present educational system.

### Methodology

Methodology takes a significant role in any type of research as the reliability and validity of the findings depend upon the methods adopted and applied in the study. This paper is descriptive in nature. It is mainly based on secondary data and is largely collected from different sources like books, journals, articles, and periodicals. This study is conducted mainly by drawing upon the works of Sri Shankaracharya's philosophy by applying analytical cum descriptive method for the research. The investigator has made effort to express spiritual education in the light of Sri Shankaracharya's Advaita Vedanta Philosophy.

### Analysis and Interpretation

The concept, meaning, aims, curriculum, methods and principles in the term of spiritual education regarding Jagadguru Shankaracharya have been dealt with clarity and deep insight. Before we discuss the factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri Shankaracharya's philosophy, it is essential for us to know the meaning of spiritual education. The special focus is on the realization of the aspirations, ideals and values as Sri Shankaracharya's philosophy. The term 'spiritual education' has different meanings to different thinkers in different context. The education for spirituality, according to Sri Shankaracharya, as "Education is the realization of the self." According to Isha Upanishad. 6-"He, who sees all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings, feels no hatred by virtue of that realization." Why does Sri Shankaracharya give so much emphasis on Advaita Vedanta Philosophy in the sphere of spiritual education? He gave emphasis on the revival of the Hinduism on the basis of preaching Advaita Vedanta Philosophy based on the Vedas and Upanishads which means that there is only and only one reality – 'Brahma' God- the Supreme Being and preaches spiritual essence and doctrines telling us that every human being has inherent to grow and develop in proper way in the healthy environment. Sri Shankaracharya's view on Advaita Vedanta Philosophy is best illustrated in his writing 'Brahma Sutra Bhasya' that "Brahma Satyam, Jagat Mithya, Jiva Brahmatiya Na Parah". This means that the Brahma is only truth or real, the world / universe is untruth i.e. illusion and individual soul is non-different from the Brahma. The Brahma- God –the Supreme Being, is called by a lot of names, immortal, the creator, preserver and destroyer. Illusion is nothing but ignorance. Spiritual Education enables the individual soul to realize the reality of the Brahma.

True education, according to Jagadguru Shankaracharya, is that which helps the individual to realize the individual to perceive the unity of the individual soul and Brahma. His philosophy aims at producing a realized spiritual personality to develop the individual soul to become the Brahma that adequate control over ignorance or illusion enjoys with Absolute Soul i.e. Brahma for spiritual happiness and reconstruct and recreate spiritual society as whole in our country. He prescribes the spiritual development, cultural development, character formation, acquisition of knowledge, and the Ancient Indian aims- Dharma, Artha, Karama, and Moksha is the highest aim of life as well as Moksha i.e. salvation is attained by the removal of the illusion and individual soul becomes one with the Brahma.

Modern education, however, lays great emphasis on moral education. Perhaps, this is precisely the cause why the learner seeks only to learn and study about the Great Soul. With this consideration of mind, the Sri Shankaracharya's Philosophy based on Vedas and Upanishads, is purely and surely to please the modern learner. It is, however, a spiritualized education in which there is emphasis on education is the development of the individual into the Brahma through removal of the illusion. Sri Shankaracharya' Philosophy helps a lot in curriculum development and transaction in modern education regarding spiritual learning. In this connection, Mathur (2011) remarks, "To remove tensions, to lead a life of bliss and annanda the knowledge of only some subjects in the school or college curricula is not sufficient. The spiritual knowledge alone can uplift the soul to a state of eternal bliss. But equally important is complete devotion and bhakti and moral actions or performance of good deeds."

### Major Findings

To be quite honest and fair, the field of spiritual education with respect to Sri Shankaracharya's philosophy is too much vast and it is not easy to achieve a well balanced perspective of what is really happening and what is lacking in our research work. The study under consideration has been carried out with the recognizing, comprehending, examining critically, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating that the spiritual vision of Sri Shankaracharya's philosophy has great relevance to the present-day inside schools, colleges, and universities or outside and it can bring about a dynamic change in the educational system not only of the country, but also the world. Here, the impact of modifying patterns of the Indian educational system in the light of

Jagadguru Shankaracharya's Philosophy in the terms of 'Advaita Vedanta Theory' based on Vedas and Upanishads has been analyzed in depth and thus it can contribute in solving the everyday problems of individuals' life creatively and constructively in the new situation for their wellbeing. The spiritual gains of light, bliss and happiness and its impact in the field of education- the concepts which have been identified based on the analysis of Sri Shankaracharya's Philosophy are mainly based on the essential metaphysical epistemological and ethical doctrines in Vedas and Upanishads.

The most dominant factor of strengthening spiritual education is the introduction of an idea of the three kinds of Sattas like as Vyavaharika Satta, and Paramathika Satta which embodies the essence of Indian metaphysical thought and action imparting spiritual knowledge and wisdom as well as attaining Eternal Knowledge.

### Conclusion

As a promoter of monism principle and spiritual leader, Sri Shankaracharya is naturally concerned with spiritual education. All his constructive and creative works are correlated with spiritual education. After studying related literature on Sri Shankaracharya, it is felt that there is a great deal has been done by him to trace the development of Advaitvad and its philosophical and non-material thought and action with special reference to spiritual doctrines and assumptions, much has also been done to spiritualize education by establishing Centers for the Education of Masses- the four Dhams (the Abode of God) or four different Mutts (Places of Pilgrimage) in four different parts of India to draw in broad an outline of spiritual wealth and much has so far been also done to investigate the spiritual intelligence of individuals' work at Jyoti Mutt at Badrinath in the North, Shiringiri Mutt at Rameswaram in the South, Gobardhan Mutt at Jagnath Puri in the East, and Sharda Mutt at Dwarka Puri in the West for recreating and reconstructing a spiritual society in our country. Sri Shankaracharya introduced Vedic centred Education, the correlation and co-ordination of Vedas based curriculum such as preaching Rigveda and a great verse of Aitareya Upanishad- Pragyana Brahman for the people of East-Anga, Banga, Kalinga, Utkal, and Magadha, Yajurveda and a great verse of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad- Aham Brahmasim for the people of the South- Andhra, Tamilnadu, Karnatka, and Kerala, Samveda and a great verse of Chhandogya Upanishad- Tatvamasi for the people of the

West- Maharashtra, and Saurashtra and Authurveda and a great verse of Mundakya Upanishad- Ayamatra Brahm for the people of North- Delhi, Punjab, West Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana.. Sri Shankaracharya appointed his four disciples as Acharayas, also known as Shankaracharyas today, like as Acharya Totak in the North, Acharya Sureshwar in the South, Acharya Padampad in the East, and Acharya Hastamalak in the West for disseminating and publicizing the Theory and Principle of Advaita Vedanta Philosophy in all over the country by the methods of teaching and instruction including lecture, contemplation, discussion, question-answer, reasoning, illustration and storytelling. He gave emphasis on the three types of content points related to individual soul, the universe and the Absolute Soul. In the present educational system, psychology, philosophy, literature etc. related for individual soul, modern science, geography, geology for the universe and Vedanta Philosophy related for the Brahma content point. According to Jagadguru Shankaracharya self- control is the essential quality for the human being for the Brahmagan. It includes control of mind, control of senses, sanyas, tolerance, solution and sharda to believing in Vedanta. Greater emphasis is being paid to spiritual world and a great deal has also been done.

In his writings, Sri Shankaracharya made a considerable contribution for attaining of the spiritual goal of education. Thus, his viewpoints based on Advaita Vedanta Philosophy are therefore, a knowledge-hub of spiritual education. All the books and writings of Sri Shankaracharya, of course, yield useful information regarding spiritual learning and training, and also give details of spiritual basis of education as well as help in progressive basis of education for the betterment of the pupils of the Indian society.

Although, the author has no much intelligence, competence and skill to evaluate the Sri Shankaracharya Philosophy with special respect to spiritual wealth and essence and its subsequent doctrines and assumptions as well as its development, yet when he thinks of the Sri Shankaracharya's philosophy, the feeling science arises in his mind that his viewpoints based on virtues of self knowledge, freedom, Wisdom, simplicity, and contemplation significantly remarks, of course, he was a practical Vedantic-Spiritualist.



To have an access to the realization of thought and action with respect to Sri Shankaracharya's Philosophy which serves as a foundation of nurturing spiritual education, He significantly teaches us the Advaita Vedanta Philosophy which reflects spiritual education for achieving highest aim of education and beneficial for human engineering and soul doctoring. Keeping in view the Sri Shankaracharya' Philosophy, the author concludes the '**Spiritual Education**' as **"it is education which helps to fulfill the potentialities of the individuals through the virtues of Control of mind, control of senses, Purity, meditation, self- knowledge, self-interview, Wisdom, Shardha to Study of Vedanta, Truth, Tolerance, sanyas and solution to the problem and to prepare them to solve the everyday problems for life creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for attaining the highest knowledge and wisdom, if the teachers enable to modify such kind of behavior patterns of individuals, - this is spiritual education."**

Thus, his philosophy is a looking glass that reflects the ever-changing faces as well as the cerebral aspect of spiritual science and its implication to the society. It not only encompasses all the ideas of spiritual essence in the field of cognitive science, but also equally concentrates on affective and psychomotor sciences.

Sri Shankaracharya was successful in building a new system of education in respect with Ancient Indian System of Education and emphasized much importance to the movement of the revival of Hinduism on the line of Advaita Vedanta Philosophy for spiritual development and believed that a spiritual revolution would take place in the country. His spiritual vision based on Vedas and Upanishads, is considered as scientific instrument in bringing about a peaceful and silent spiritual revolution in terms of harmony, love and sympathy, emotional and national integration, progress and prosperity of the country. There, of course, would be a revolution in the field of the spiritual education in the way of Sri Shankaracharya's Monism Philosophy. That is why, therefore, it may be said that he appears to have made a considerable progress and development by bringing before us the light of Vedic knowledge and wisdom to spiritual instruction, spiritual learning, spiritual training and spiritual teaching as well as spiritual education. So, therefore, he was a great spiritually intelligent and competent personality not only in India, but also in the world.

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