

मनीषापञ्चकं

maniishhaapaJNchakaM

Introduction¹

Maniishhaa panchakam was written by Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya. A biography of Shankara and his other compositions of vedic literature can be found in the shankara.itx document.

Shri Shankara has been criticized by modern western scholars for propounding sectarian beliefs in his commentary (bhashya) of Brahma sutra where he restricts the recitation of Vedas to the upper castes only. However, one should note that one is handicapped when writing a commentary on a text. Thus in independent compositions like the upadesasahasri and this short text, maniishhaa panchakam he expounds his Advaita philosophy in all its glory. Advaita, the non-dualistic philosophy expounded in detail by Shri Shankara, does not recognize differences between people based on caste, creed, religion, gender etc since we are all the manifestations of the same Brahman.

The scene is set in Varanasi (Kashi/Benaras), the ancient sacred city of India, and the home to the famous kashi visvanatha temple. Adi shankaraachaarya, the expounder of the advaitic, non-dualistic philosophy, was on the way to the temple after finishing his bath. Suddenly he saw a chandaala (an outcaste), on the way, and beckons to him to keep a distance, as per the practice and custom in those days. That outcaste is none other than the Lord sha.nkara (Shiva) Himself! At such beckoning, the Lord addresses his devotee sha.nkarAchArya, in the first two stanzas (the prologue), as under:

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मनीषापञ्चकं²

अन्नमयादन्नमयमथवा चैतन्यमेव चैतन्यात् ।

यतिवर दूरीकर्तः वाञ्छसि किं ब्रूहि गच्छ गच्छेति ॥

O great ascetic! Tell me. Do you want me to keep a distance from you, by uttering 'go away' 'go away' taking me to be an outcaste ? Is it addressed from one body made of food to another body made of food, or is it consciousness from consciousness — which, O, the best among ascetics, you wish should go away, by saying “ Go away, go away”? Do tell me.

प्रत्यग्वस्तुनि निस्तरङ्गसहजानन्दावभोधाम्बुधौ

विप्रोऽयं श्वपचोऽयमित्यपि महान्कोऽयं विभेधभ्रमः ।

किं गङ्गाम्बुनि बिम्बितेऽम्बरमणौ चाण्डालवीथीपयः

पूरे वाऽन्तरमस्ति काञ्चनघटीमृत्कम्भयोर्वाऽम्बरे ॥

Answer me. While the supreme Being is reflected in every object as the sun's reflection could be seen in the placid waveless water bodies why this doubting confusion and differentiation i.e. whether one is a brahmin or an outcaste ? who is the superior one etc ?. Is there any difference in the reflection of the sun in the waters of the Ganges or in the water present in the street of an outcaste? Likewise, is there any difference when the water- containers happen to be golden vessels and earthen pots ?

(Immediately shankaraacharya realises the presence of the Lord Shankara before him (who has apparently shown Himself with a view to removing the last vestige of imperfection in His devotee) and reels off the following 5 stanzas-constituting 'maniishhaapa.nchakam.h'-ending with a further stanza in the form of an epilogue).

जाग्रत्स्वप्नसंश्रुतिषः स्फुटतरा या संविदज्जृम्भते

या ब्रह्मादिपिपीलिकान्ततनूः प्रोता जगत्साक्षिणी ।

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सैवाहं न च दृश्यवस्त्विति दृढप्रज्ञापि यस्यास्ति चे-
च्चाण्डालोऽस्तः स तः द्विजोऽस्तः गरुरित्येषा मनीषा मम ॥ १ ॥

If one is convinced firmly, that he is that very Soul which manifests itself in all the conditions of sleep, wakefulness and dream, in all the objects from the great Brahma (the creator) to the tiny ant and which is also the vibrant, but invisible, witnesser of all, then as per my clear conclusion, he is the great teacher/preceptor, be he a twice-born (i.e higher castes) or an outcaste.

ब्रह्मैवाहमिदं जगच्च सकलं चिन्मात्रविस्तारितं
सर्वं चैतदविद्यया त्रिगुण्याऽशेषं मया कल्पितम् ।
इत्थं यस्य दृढा मतिः सखतरे नित्ये परे निर्मले
चाण्डालोऽस्तः स तः द्विजोऽस्तः गरुरित्येषा मनीषा मम ॥ २ ॥

I am quite convinced that he is the great Master, be he a Brahmin or an outcaste, who, dwelling on the pure and infinite Brahman thinks of himself as that very Brahman, of whose manifestation the whole Universe is, though apparently the Universe is assumed to consist of different things, due to ignorance and the three Gunas (Satva, Rajas and Tamas).

शश्वन्नश्वरमेव विश्वमखिलं निश्चित्य वाचा गरो-
र्नित्यं ब्रह्म निरन्तरं विमृशता निर्व्याजशान्तात्मना ।
भूतं भाति च दृक्कृतं प्रदहता संविन्मये पावके
प्रारब्धाय समर्पितं स्ववपुःरित्येषा मनीषा मम ॥ ३ ॥

I am fully convinced by the Preceptor's words that the entire Universe is a transitory illusion and that the human body is given to constantly meditate on the infinite and supreme Being with a serene and unquestioning mind and thus to burn in that sacred Fire the sins with which the human is born.

या तिर्यङ्नरदेवताभिरहमित्यन्तः स्फटा गृह्यते
यज्ञासा हृदयाक्षदेहविषया भान्ति स्वतोऽचेतनाः ।
तां भास्यैः पिहितार्कमण्डलनिभां स्फूर्तिं सदा भावय-

न्योगी निर्वृतमानसो हि गरुरित्येषा मनीषा मम ॥ ४ ॥

In my considered opinion that Yogi is great who has clearly grasped within himself the truth and quality of the supreme Being through which all our activities are performed and whose effulgence is hidden by ignorance [of an ordinary person] even as the sun's halo is covered/hidden by the clouds.

यत्सौख्याम्बुधिलेशलेशत इमे शक्रादयो निर्वृता
यच्चित्ते नितरां प्रशान्तकलने लब्ध्वा मग्निनिर्वृतः ।
यस्मिन्नित्यस्रवाम्बुधौ गलितधीर्ब्रह्मैव न ब्रह्मविद्
यः कश्चित्स सरेन्द्रवन्दितपदो नूनं मनीषा मम ॥ ५ ॥

I am convinced that whoever has his mind dwelling upon the Great Being who is being worshipped by Indra and other gods and is thus completely at peace with himself has not only understood Brahman but he is himself that great Brahman!

दासस्तेऽहं देहदृष्ट्याऽस्मि शंभो
जातस्तेऽशो जीवदृष्ट्या त्रिदृष्टे ।
सर्वस्याऽऽत्मन्नात्मदृष्ट्या त्वमेवे-
त्येवं मे धीर्निश्चिता सर्वशास्त्रैः ॥

Oh Lord ! In the form of body I am your servant. In the form of life, O three-eyed one, I am part of yourself. In the form of soul, you are within me and in every other soul. I have arrived at this conclusion through my intellect and on the authority of the various scriptures.

॥ इति श्रीमच्छङ्करभगवतः कृतौ मनीषापञ्चकं संपूर्णम् ॥

Thus ends the 'maniishhApaJNchakam.h' composed by the Adishankaraacharya.
