Relevance of Adi Shankara's Advaita Philosophy in Modern Terms

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This study aims to examine the relevance of Adi Shankara's Advaita Vedanta in contemporary philosophical and spiritual discourse. Adi Shankara, one of the most influential philosophers of 8th-century India, is believed to have been an incarnation of Lord Shiva. His intellectual achievements were remarkable, as he had memorized the Vedas by the age of seven and composed commentaries on foundational spiritual texts, such as the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, by the age of sixteen. The most significant contribution of Shankara's work is Advaita Vedanta, a non-dualistic philosophy that holds Brahman as the only ultimate reality, while the phenomenal world is seen as an illusion (Maya) caused by ignorance (Avidya). According to Advaita Vedanta, once individuals overcome their ignorance, they realize their true nature as one with Brahman, transcending the illusory separateness of the material world.The relevance of this philosophy in the modern world can be explored through Shankara's interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita, particularly in Chapter 6, which emphasizes the unity of all beings and the divine presence in everything. This spiritual insight aligns with contemporary efforts to foster interconnectedness, ethical living, and universal compassion. Shankara's teachings on the oneness of existence resonate with modern concerns such as environmental sustainability, global peace, and the search for deeper meaning in an increasingly fragmented world.This study seeks to illuminate the enduring significance of Advaita Vedanta by encouraging a modern reader to reconsider Shankara's profound ideas. By doing so, it invites a renewed understanding of non-duality and its potential for addressing today's philosophical and practical challenges. Through this exploration, the study aims to offer a deeper insight into how Advaita Vedanta can guide individuals in realizing their interconnectedness with all life.

Keywords: *Adi Shankara, Advaita Vedanta, Inclusivity, Mindfulness, Interconnectedness.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Adi Shankaracharya was an Indian philosopher and is known as Jagadguru. He was born in 788CE in a poor Nambudiri family in the town of Kaldi in Kerala. It is believed that he was an incarnation of lord shiva. Lord shiva appeared in the dream of his mother aryambaand told her that she would have a son. Adi Shankar's father

name was shiva guru and mother's name was aryamba. By the age of seven he had memorized all the Vedas and by the age of sixteen he had written commentaries on prasthantrayi (bhagvadgita, brahmsutra and Upanishads). It is amazing how he composed more than 300 text at the young age of thirty-two but most of these are probably the creations of his disciples, followers or other experts. The works considered to be authenticincluding commentary on Brahm sutra, bhagvadGita and ten Upanishads. Apart from this, almost 30Prakarangranthas, Stotra (meditation verses) and upadeshsahsri are also available.

Adi Shankaracharya is considered a great philosopher and religious scholar of Indian history and Sanatana dharma. He was the translator and codifier of Advaita Vedanta. He studied the Advaita the most advanced branch of the Vedas and the discoverer of spiritual truth, more than any other subject. He debated with many scholars of traditional philosophical system. In the debate he won over kumarilaBhatt, Prabhakar, Udyan acharya, murariMishra, Abhinav Gupta and many other learned persons. In which the debate between Mandana Mishra and Adi Shankaracharya is very popular. In which Shankar defeated not only Mandana Mishra but also his wife ubhayabharti. To spread Advaita wadand promote the concept of Sanatana dharma he undertook spiritual journey to India three time in his life time and established four maths(peethas) in the four directions according to the four Vedas.

- Sringeri Shardapeetha- It is located in Rameshwaram in the south of India. This peetha preaches 'अहंब्रह्मास्मि' (I am brahma) and was formed on the basis of Yajurveda.
- Dwarkapeetha- It is located in Dwarka in the western part of India. This peetha preaches 'तत्त्वमसि' (that is you). It was composed on the basis of Samaveda.
- Jyotimathapeetha- it is situated in Badrinath in the northern direction of India. This peetha preaches 'अयम्आत्माब्रह्म' (this soul itself is brahma). It was composed on the basis of Atharvaveda.
- GovardhanMatha- it is situated in Jagannath Puri in the eastern part of India. This stonepreaches 'प्रज्ञानंब्रह्म' (consciousness is brahma). It is composed on the basis of Rigveda.

Along with the propagation of Hindu religion, he also established the dasnami sect. in this, a person who takes Sanyas under any religion practices one of the sects of dasnami sect.

To remember the ideology of Adi Shankaracharya his birth anniversary is celebrated every year on the Panchami of Shukla paksha of the month of Vaisakha.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To compare modern philosophical movements, religious practices, and scientific advancements with Shankara's non-dualistic philosophy.
- To emphasise how, in the fractured world of today, Shankara's teachings on the unity of all beings encourage interconnectedness, universal compassion, and peaceful coexistence.
- To emphasize the ways that Advaita Vedanta's teachings can help with today's issues, such as world peace, ethical living, and environmental sustainability.
- To investigate the ways in which Advaita Vedanta's focus on transcending ignorance (Avidya) and discovering one's actual self can support mindfulness, mental health, and personal development.
- To examine the core ideas of Advaita Vedanta as expressed by Adi Shankara, including Brahman, Maya, Avidya, and Moksha.

3. METHODOLOGY

- Analyse primary texts critically, including the Bhagavad Gita, the Brahma Sutras, and Shankara's commentary on the Upanishads.
- Examine how Shankara's teachings relate to contemporary movements such as mindfulness, deep ecology, or non-dual spiritual practices.
- Analyse how Advaita Vedanta responded to the philosophical issues of the day and how it changed over time.
- Examine the ways in which Advaita Vedanta principles can be applied to contemporary issues like mental health, environmental sustainability, and world peace.
- Examine how Shankara's concepts of universal consciousness and oneness can

promote harmony and understanding between different.

4. ADVAITA VEDANTA

The Upanishads and other ancient Indian texts serve as the foundation for the Vedanta philosophy's teachings. It is also referred to as Uttara-Mimamsa, jnana-Mimamsa and brahma-Mimamsa. Badarayana Muni, the founder of Vedanta philosophy, wrote a book called brahma sutra which is also called shariraksutra. Adi Shankaracharya wrote a commentary on that shariraksutra. According to Shankar'sAdvaitaVedanta there is only one true existence, which is brahman, the formless, eternal, and unchanging reality. Everything else, even the world in which we live is either an illusion based on maya or a manifestation of brahman.

"ब्रह्मसत्यंजगन्मिथ्याजीवोब्रह्मैवनापरः"
(ब्रह्मज्ञानवलिमाला-20)

"Only brahman is real, the world is false and the Jiva is not different from brahman."

According to Adi Shankaracharya the brahman, the ultimate reality, is the only everlasting truth that forms the basis of everything in the universe. Brahman is pure consciousness that permeates everything and is beyond space, time and change. The world is neither permanent nor independently real, not that it doesn't exist like a dream that seems real when you are dreaming but you realise it's not real when you wake up, it exists only in relation to brahman. The brahman and the individual self (Jiva) are two distinct entities. Due to ignorance, we are considered different. After attaining knowledge,we realize that the basic nature of a person is the same as brahman.

5. ADVAIT VEDAANT'S RELEVANCE IN MODERN TERM

**"योमांपश्यतिसर्वत्रसर्वंचमयिपश्यति।
तस्याहंनप्रणश्यामिसचमेनप्रणश्यति" ॥30॥**

Translation- The one who sees me, the soul of everyone, Vasudev, everywhere that is to say in all creatures(pervasive) and sees all the beings like Brahma etc. In me, the sarvaatma(Parmeshwar), in this way for the knowledge of the one who sees the oneness of the soul, I am never invisible to God that is to say never invisible and that knowledge also I never lose sight of Vasudev, because his and my nature are the one who sees the oneness from the omnipotence, is me.

This verse is taken from chapter-6, verse 30 of the Bhagavat Gita Bhashya by Adi Shankaracharya. This shloka emphasises the spiritual insight of perceiving the divine presence everywhere and the non-dualityphilosophy (Advaita Vedanta).

➢ Unity and interconnectedness- this shloka highlights the concept that there is a divine essence in everything and that all creation is interconnected. This gives us an understanding of how we are connected to nature, other living beings, and even the modern world. This knowledge promotes compassion and a sense of unity towards all living beings.

➢ Advaita and inclusion- As expounded by Adi-Shankara's Advaita (non-dualism) focuses on eliminating barriers associated with separation. This message can promote inclusion in today's globalized world, where conflict and division are often rooted in ethnic, religious or national identities. Recognising that all beings have the same essence promotes respect for each-other and reduces feelings of inferiority or isolation.

➢ Eco-consciousness- Modern concept of eco-consciousness coincide with the realization that divine is present in all living things including nature. This serves as a reminder of how important it is to preserve nature because to endanger it is to separate oneself from this divine essence. In the light of environmental degradation and climate change, this approach is highly relevant.

➢ Mindfulness and presence- Another level of consciousness described in the shloka is one in which one is constantly aware of the divine presence, whether in the external world or within oneself. This is comparable to contemporary theories of mindfulness and thoughtfully in the present moment becomes easier when one realizes how interconnected life is.

➢ Mental health and inner peace- In today's fast-paced, individualistic society feeling "lost" is a common problem. However, this shloka assures that a person who

recognizes this interconnectedness is never truly lost. It can also be interpreted as a source of inner peace, meaning that I can find a sense of purpose and belongingnessby feeling a sense of connection with a larger being. By realizing this view of unity and interconnectedness, people can deal with the challenges of the world.

Another verse of Adi Shankaracharya's Brihadaranyaka Upanishad commentary are applicable even in today's time.

ब्रह्मवाइदमग्रआसीत्, तदात्मानमेवावेत्, अहम्ब्रह्मास्मीति।तस्मात्तत्सर्वमभवत्, तद्योयोदेवानाम्प्रत्यबुध्यतसएवतदभवत्, तथार्षीणाम्, तथामनुष्याणाम्; तद्वैतत्पश्यन्नृषिर्वामदेवःप्रतिपेदे, अहम्मनुरभवंसूर्यश्चेति।तदिदमप्येतर्हिएयवंवेद, अहम्ब्रह्मास्मीति, सइदंसर्वम्भवति, तस्यहनदेवाश्चनाभूत्याईशते, आत्माह्येषांसभवति; अथयोऽन्यांदेवतामुपास्ते, अन्योऽसावन्योऽहमस्मीति, नसवेद, यथापशुरेवसदेवानाम्।यथाहवैबहवःपशवोमनुष्यम्भुञ्ज्युः; एवमेकैकःपुरुषोदेवान्भुनक्ति; एकस्मिन्नेवपशावादीयमानेऽप्रियम्भवति, किंउबहुषु? तस्मादेषाम्तन्नप्रियम्यदेतन्मनुष्याविद्युः॥१०॥

(बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद्शंकरभाष्य)

Translation-This (self) was indeed Brahman in the beginning. It knew only Itself as, 'I am Brahman'. Therefore, it became all. And whoever among the gods knew It became That; and the same with sages and men. The sage Vamadeva, while realising this (self) as That, knew, 'I was Manu, and the sun' And to this day whoever in like manner knows It as, 'I am Brahman 'becomes all this (universe). Even the gods cannot prevail against him, for he becomes their self. While he who worships another god thinking, 'He is one, and I am another' does not know. He is like an animal to the god. As many animals serve a man, so does each man serve the gods. Even if one animal is taken away, it causes anguish, what should one say of many animals? Therefore, it is not liked by them that men should know this. (https://www.archive.org)

This verse is taken from Mantra 10 of Brahman 4 of chapter 1 of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad by Adi Shankaracharya's commentary.The profound philosophical idea that the individual self (Atman) and the universal consciousness (Brahman) are one is expressed in this verse. This idea is extremely pertinent to Indian philosophy's view of sustainable development. In line with the central tenets of Indian philosophy, sustainable development places a strong emphasis on intergenerational responsibility, fair resource distribution, and harmony with nature.This timeless insight can be understood as follows:

➤ Ecological balance and the unity of all existence- According to the verse, Brahman, theultimate reality, is expressed in everything in the universe. The realisation of the interdependence of all living things and the environment follows naturally from this comprehension. This concept emphasises the significance of coexisting peacefully with nature in the contemporary framework of sustainable development. When a person accepts the reality that "I am Brahman," they cease to perceive a distinction between themselves and their surroundings. This perspective makes it incompatible with using natural resources for personal benefit since damaging the environment is equivalent to damaging oneself. This idea promotes international responsibility and solidarity and is consistent with the Indian concept of "वसुधैवकुटुम्बकम्" or "the world as one family."

➤ Living Morally and Sharing Resources Equitably-The concept of Aparigraha, ornon-possessiveness, is a prime example of the moderation and self-discipline that Indian philosophy promotes. An ethical viewpoint that values fair resource sharing is fostered by the verse's emphasis on the indivisibility of the self and the universe. As stated in the text, worshipping a different god as distinct could be seen as the contemporary propensity to exalt material wealth or power, which results in unsustainable resource exploitation. Understanding how everything is interconnected allows one to adopt sustainable and equitable practices that protect resources for coming generations.

➤ Personal Development for the Benefit of All-The text emphasises how understanding one's unity with the universe can have a profoundly transformative effect. This

insight encourages a change from selfishness to the good of the group in the framework of sustainable development. People are motivated to make sustainable decisions regarding energy use, waste management, and consumption when they realise how their actions affect the greater good. The ecological consciousness required to meet global sustainability goals is comparable to the spiritual awakening outlined in the Upanishad.

➢ Overcoming Division and Fragmentation- The verse criticises the separation mindset, in which a person worships an external deity or views themselves as different from others. This concept is especially pertinent when tackling the disjointed methodology frequently observed in development models. According to Indian philosophy, which has its roots in holistic thinking, sustainability cannot be attained by disjointed policies and discrete acts. Echoing the spirit of Brahman, an integrated approach is necessary, taking into account the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic aspects.

6. CONCLUSION

People can better navigate the complexity of the modern world with increased empathy, awareness, and spiritual grounding by putting this vision of unity and interconnectedness into practice. Its declaration of unity promotes social responsibility, ethical behaviour, and ecological balance. Adopting this all-encompassing viewpoint makes sustainable development more than just a set of regulations; it becomes a way of life that respects the interdependent web of life. This method, which has its roots in Indian philosophy, fits in perfectly with international initiatives to build a fair, just, and peaceful world for both the current and future generations.

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