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Veena BH

Researcher, Sanskrit,
Tumkur University, Tumkur,
Karnataka, India

Dr. GN Bhat

Professor V.S.K Chennhalli,
Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Comparative study of contributions of Nrsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji with that of Adi Shankaracharya

Veena BH and Dr. GN Bhat

Abstract

‘Stuck in the ever-revolving wheel of birth and death, all are dead and born again; but he alone is really born, because of whose birth the nation attains a height’ – Bhartṛhari.

There have been many lives on earth who are born to transform society and uplift the source of humanity. In that stream was Jagadguru Ādi Śhankarāchārya and his successors.

This thesis is a Comparative study of Contributions of Śrī Saccidānanda Śivābhinava Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji with that of Ādi Śhankarāchārya. Śrī Saccidānanda Śivābhinava Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji’s contribution towards spiritual attainment through stotras, along with which he pursues his life discovering places of devoutness related to Ādi Śhankarāchārya and elevates Veda Jñāna into a knowledge seeking centre. The study explores more in detail encompassing all his devotion and purposefulness in various facets of endowment.

Keywords: Nrsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji, Adi Shankaracharya, Indian philosophy

Introduction

“श्रीसच्चिदानन्दशिवाभिनवनृसिंहभारत्यभिधान्यतीन्द्रान्।
विद्यानिधीन् मन्त्रनिधीन् सदात्मनिष्ठान् भजे मानवशम्भुरूपान्॥४४॥”¹

This shloka is in the honour of Śrī Saccidānanda Śivābhinava Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji Composed by his disciple jagadguru Śrī Śrī Chandra Śekhara Bhārati Mahāswāmiji.

Jagadguru Ādi Śhankarāchārya, the incarnation of lord paramashiva, revived Sanātana Dharma and spread the Upanishadic import of Advaita vedānta touring all over the country, in a brief yet remarkable life, Śrī Ādi Śhankarāchārya accomplished his mission, and with great foresight established mutts in four directions of India. Among these, the Dakshinamnaya sri Sharadapeetham established at Śrīngeri has been adorned in an unbroken chain of acharyas right from Śrī sureshwaryacharya to this day.

Śrī Ādi Śhankarāchārya is one of the radiant star in the space of Indian philosophy. He was a philosopher, a Composer, an astounding genius, a profound thinker and a sage of the highest attainment. In addition to all these, a practical reformer and an able organizer.

Śrī Ādi Śhankarāchārya was a great towering personality who, within the course of Short life of 32 years, brought about a through revolution in Social, Religious, Spiritual and Philosophical life through India.

He laid the Foundations of modern Hinduism on a Composite, Comprehensive, and all inclusive Universal Basis. He had such a brilliant mind, scientific viewpoint, and rational approach that he appeals to the modern society.

He was also a versatile writer. His Sanskrit is mellifluous which sounds simple and pleasant, and at the same time very forceful, impressive and direct.

His Commentaries on the Upanishads, BrahmaSutra, and the Bhagavadgita and other works like the Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and Upadesha- sahasri, elucidate the different aspect and tenets of Advaita Philosophy and it’s practical, charming language, both in prose and verse, and Show

Correspondence

Veena BH

Researcher, Sanskrit,
Tumkur University, Tumkur,
Karnataka, India

¹ गुरुपरम्परा स्तोत्रम् - ४४

ways and means to the realization of the highest truth. His numerous beautiful and profound hymns exhort us to devote our self to the Lord and to strive for fulfilment in life by realizing the highest truth.

Śrī Ādi Śhankarāchārya being a philosopher he was a great scholar, reformer and a poet too. He was also a man of action, and a stabilizer of society by the resuscitation of ethical and spiritual values.

Another great lineage as Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda, appears in the pages of history who contributes equally in all the arenas and follows the same path of philosophy, literature and contributes massively as a reformer and theologian.

Jagadguru Saccidānanda Śivābhinava Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji, (referred as Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji henceforth) was 33rd Jagadguru in the unbroken chain of Ācāryas of Śrīngeri Śrī Śārādā Peetham, the foremost of the Mutt's established by Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda.

Jagadguru Śrī Śrī Saccidānanda Śivābhinava Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji, embellished the sacred peetham from 1879 to 1912. He was a great yogin and siddha of a very high decree. His devotion towards his guru and gods were exemplary.

He is adorned as Śrī 'Abhinava Śhankarā', a spiritual reincarnation of the great saint Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda.

He has been honoured as Śrī Abhinava Śhankarā because of his numerous contributions in various different aspects. The contributions of Śrī Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji are so massive that summarising it in a few lines is very challenging but with hard efforts we abridge his contributions under various spheres.

Literature

Bhakthisudha Tarangini is a brainchild of Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji comprising various poetic compositions which was published by his earnest disciple Śrī. T.S. Balasubrahmanya Iyer in the year 1913.

Bhakthisudha Tarangini is a voluminous work

Like the great Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda, Śrī Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji composed many stotras in praise of various Gods and Goddesses at various Shrines through India. Stotras were the out pouring of an exuberant soul. Genuine flow of Bhakti could be traced in each of his poems. Mahāswāmiji defines Bhakti, discusses the nature of devotion and types of devotees the results that come from it and the ways in which it can be practised. This book is a collection of 170 stotras of different deities categorised as follows- Ganesha stotras, Devi stotras, Guru stotras, Vishnu, Shiva and Vedanta stotras.

The Goddess Sri Sharada occupied the foremost place in his compositions. He composed more than 30 hymns praising Goddess Goddess Sharada exclusively. The most renowned work is the Sharada stotra which comprises 163 shlokas. These were composed on different occasions during the navarathri Festivals in sringeri. The goddess would then be decorated in different ways on different vāhanās and each of them has been dilated upon by Mahāswāmiji 's गुरुपादुकास्तोत्रम् clearly indicates the qualities he attributed to his Guru.

similarly पृथ्वीधरपुत्र्यष्टकम् was uttered at the Narasimha mountain (Narasimha vana) when Mahāswāmiji was fully engrossed in Dhyana. In this stotra Mahāswāmiji appeals for himself to be out of worldly vanity just to attain the supreme bliss only with the virtues of pure sanyasin. He has also attempted writing vedānta stotras such as आत्मस्तवः, भवबन्धमुक्त्यष्टकम्, उपदेशचतुर्विंशतिः।

vivekodaya is another classic of Śrī Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji which is an elaborated versions of Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda's 'Vivekacūḍāmaṇi'. Which is one amongst the various texts of Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda which imparts the Knowledge of the non- dual truth (advaita). Śrī Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji spent ample time on Vivekacūḍāmaṇi and enfolded its principles in a simple way to benefit people and elucidated it selecting only its seven verses which itself throws lot of light on many matters and is absolutely worth imbibing.'

Melodious Sanskrit verses flowed as Śrī Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji stood transfixed before a diety, whether he was at Śrīngeri or touching the country on a Vijaya Yātra. Mahāswāmiji also penned a few short essays to convey the essence of Vedānta and the goal of human life.

Social Reformer: Preaching and Travel

Śrī Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji undertook three long Vijaya Yātra to foster the Vaidika Dharma in the minds of people. He tried to propagate philosophy through discourses, debates with other thinkers while dispelling erroneous notions of Vedas.

He co-ordinated the profound spiritual insights and realizations of the Vedic seers, recorded in the Upanishads, and expounded the philosophy of Vedantic Non-dualism (Advaita).

Śrī Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji gave daily discourses on vaidika-Dharma, to large crowds with rapt attention which created enthusiasm for the teachings of the Scriptures. The lectures were instinctively adapted to the capacity of the audience based on geography, language and culture which made him a versatile speaker. During his tour, a number of individuals for who modern education had turned them into agnostics, came under the spiritual influence of Mahāswāmiji, received Upadesha from him and began to devote a portion of the day to prayer and thoughts of God.

Approach to Rituals and practices

Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji 's Digvijaya Yātrā, he was able to exert his spiritual influence over a large section of the people and wean a good number of them from superstitious delusory habits and customs. To narrate an incident, he was once a part of the Navarātri celebrations at Ramanathapuram at the earnest invitation of Setupathi Bhaskara Raja of Ramnad, where he noticed the gruesome form of worshipping the goddess by animal sacrifice. Mahāswāmiji orated and opined about the genial approach towards rituals and God and its divinity and changed the norm by installing Śrī Rāja Rājeshwari and Śrī Chakra within the palace enclosure and arranged for the daily pooja according to the Vedic modus, innumerable influential events have transpired all along his travel and his discourse were respected with reverence which did bring transformation in lives and society to a high amiable degree.

Contributions of Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji's to the society:

His paramount contributions are to the society itself.

- ❖ Nṛsimha Bhāratī Mahāswāmiji instituted Vedapāṭhaśālā at Śrīngeri in the name of 'Sadvidyā Sanjivini Saṁskṛta pāṭhaśālā'. He also took a prodigious step towards enhancing advanced studies in Vedas & Shastras by establishing Śrī Śhankarā Mutt and 'Bhāratī Geervāna Prouda Vidyābhivardhini pāṭhaśālā at Bangalore.



The prime reason for establishing this institution in his observance during his travel and had witnessed the hourly increase of Adharma owing to the influence of the times. He had seen the decline of the Knowledge of the Vedas and Shastras and of the faith in them. As well as the obvious increase of the feelings of pride and egotism and absurd doubts and of the modes of life in keeping with these attributes and want of faith. He had also seen miseries and calamities with which these evil tendencies had afflicted both the country as a whole and the individual souls. He started Sanskrit college in the presence of Sri Sharada 'Sadvidyā Sanjivini Saṁskṛta pāṭhaśālā' at Sringeri.

These schools were instituted predominantly to create a pedestal for Sanskrit, Veda and Vedanta.

Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji was passionate about the vedic study. "The Vedas are the breath of God. Sincere recital of the Vedas constitutes true worship of God. The Supreme according to Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji had two specific prompts 1. Due to Vedic chanting mind will become peaceful and thoughts very clear and constructive. 2. Vedic Learning cultivated a strong indifference to Worldly enjoyments. Therefore "Shastric studies in the traditional way under a competent teacher" is very important in the minds of people. He started Vedapāṭhaśālā.

Pupils are trained in basics of Samskrita Sahitya, tarka and vyakarana, selected verses from Brahmasutra Bhashya. Purva mimamsa, Uttaramimamsa etc are also taught according to the ancient methods of imparting education.



- ❖ For giving momentum to the study of Shastras, One needs scholars, researchers, intellectuals and specialists. So, Mahāswāmiji instigated the annual gathering of Śāstra Scholars during the period of Chāturmāsa termed as 'Mahaganapathi Vakāyṛtha Vidwat Sabha'. During this period, an idol of Lord Ganapati, called Sabha Ganapati was installed and worshiped by Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji according to the established custom of the Mutt. Ever since Mahaganapathi Vakyaartha Vidwat Sabha has continued in the presence of the presiding Jagadguru Śrī Śrī Bhārati Tīrtha Mahāswāmiji encouraging and guiding scholars of all ages and providing a stage for more study and development. This sabha starts from Chāturmāsa and lasts 21 days. Scholars of Vedanta, Nyaya, Mimamsa and Vyakarana Shastras participate and deliberate on various topics. These discussions between great pundits contending with each other in their learning and capacity, immersed in an ocean of joy for everyone who participates.



- ❖ Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji conceded the need for a tranquil and serene place for his tapas where concentration is at forte. So he chose a discreet area on the bank of river Tunga and ear marked it as 'Narasimha Vanam' in memory of his revered Guru. Ever since 'Narasimha Vanam' has come to be the eternal abode to the Ācāryas of Śrīngeri with its special sanctity. Streams of devotees concur are heard at the placid banks of Tunga amidst of greenery sheltering several students at Narasimha Vanam which also has the Adhistanams of previous Gurus which commenced with Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji who stand today as Shrine of inspiration.
- ❖ Śrīngeri itself had a remarkable transformation during his period. Another notable contribution of Mahāswāmiji was the renovation of the temple of Śāradāmbā. Sringeri being one of the oldest and ancient shrine stands with its glory for centuries by notable work of preserving, Uplifting and developing it.
- ❖ Śrī ŚaṅkarāJayanṭhi celebration in India came to limelight due to Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji which is commemorated as Philosophers' Day declared by Government of both Karnataka and Kerala.



Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji innovatively gave an organisational touch up to Śaṅkarā Jayān̄thi and in continuation, the mutt organises a programme called the Śaṅkarā tatva Abhiyanam to educate present generation about Śaṅkarā's personality and the philosophy which he expounded. This programme lasts for a few months every year and Mahāswāmiji is credited for this vision. His Holiness Jagadguru Śrī Śrī Bhārati Tīrtha Mahāswāmiji heads the assemble of Vedic Scholars, students and devotees in praying obeisance to Śrī Śaṅkarā. A number of scholars from various branches of shastras and spiritual disciplines are honoured. Upanyasa or pravachanas by great scholars on Śrī Śaṅkarā's bhashya will be organised. To spread Śrī Śaṅkarā's messages with a view the planting the seed of spiritual insight in the mind of the suffering mortals caught up in the web of transmigratory existence.

- ❖ Śrī Śaṅkarā Granthavali', an exceptional work of Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda received its fame due to Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji



- ❖ While we look at Kālāḍy as the sacrosanct birthplace of this was discovered by Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji. Ādi Śhankarāchārya's works were in the minds of the followers of Sanātana Dharma, yet Kālāḍy remained neglected for about 11 centuries. Kālāḍy was revived in the beginning of the 20th century, when the 33rd Ācārya Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji established the exact birth location of Śhankarāchārya based on the descriptions from Mādhavīya Śaṅkaradigvijaya, a traditional and universally accepted work on the life of Ādi Śhankarāchārya written by the 12th Ācāryas of Śrīngeri Śārādā Pectam Jagadguru Śrī Vidyāraṇya. Mahāswāmiji consecrated two beautiful shrine for Ādi Śhankarāchārya and Goddess Śārādāmbā at Kālāḍy on 21st Feb 1910.



Amongst the contributions discussed above, The rediscovery of Kālāḍy establishment of Mutt at Bangalore and commencement of Śaṅkarā Jayān̄thi celebrations are identified as the major contributions of Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji because of which we recognise and understand

the teachings and philosophy of the great guru and also continue the legacy.

Identicals

The vital facts about Ādi Śhankarāchārya and Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji from a macro perspective extremely spellbinding, While we look at both their lives the similarities are pretty evident in most of the aspects.

Birth & Childhood

While we believe that the answer to the great penance of the couple Āryāmbā and Śivaguru was their adorned child Ādi Śaṅkarā the same history repeats with Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji's parents Kunigal Ramashastrigal and Lakshamma. Just like Ādi Śaṅkarā born of highly learned and pious parents he inherited at his very birth, all the learning and the religious fervour of his father, Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji also inherits the same chronicle where his parents were highly spiritual, reverent and Knowledgeable scholar.

The second interesting coincidence is that both accepted saṁnyāsa at the tender age of eight. After saṁnyāsa, both acquired knowledge of the scriptures, the Vedas and the Upanishads from their respective Gurus.

With the goal of spreading philosophy, the upliftment of Sanātana Dharma and to lead people from knowledge to wisdom, they both took Vijaya Yātras.

Ādi Śaṅkarā's birth in India was at a most critical juncture when both Buddhism and Jainism was growing itself as a widespread religion and when the Indian minds were overpowered by fake beliefs and practices and doctrines. Śaṅkarā being a peripatetic monk travelled the length and breadth of the country in his short span of life propagating his philosophy through discourses, debates with other thinkers dispelling the erroneous notion of the Vedas. The British rule and the Islamic invasion in the country post Śaṅkarā period for around 1000 years created a political turmoil which would bring a total end to the time honoured and traditional ways of life throughout the country. This was when Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji' came into the picture. Just like Ādi Śaṅkarā he made great efforts to re-establish the religion and uplift the Sanātana Dharma.

One of the major similarities we see is in their works. Both Ādi Śaṅkarā and Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji were gifted composers who scripted hundreds of verses in praise of the Gods and Guru in Sanskrit. There is hardly any diety or devi about whom they have not sung in mellifluous melody.

The गणाधिपपञ्चरत्नम् by Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji was an imitation of the Śaṅkara Bhagavadpāda's गणेशपञ्चरत्नम् for the purpose of recitation during the Ganapathi Sabha held annually in the presence of his holiness.

While Śaṅkara Bhagavadpāda wrote आनन्दलहरी, ललिता पञ्चरत्नम्, शारदाभुजङ्गप्रयातस्तोत्रम्, मन्त्रमालिका etc, Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji wrote शारदास्तोत्रम् of 55 shlokas, कमलजयिताष्टकम्, जगदम्बास्तुति: in praise of the goddess. The जगदम्बास्तुति: is an imitation of the मोहमुद्गरा of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya and is evidently incomplete and attempts at composing with the Bija mantras of Śrī Vidyā as initials of each shloka. But unfortunately all these are incomplete.

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya wrote the प्रश्नोत्तरमालिका which means a necklace of gems consisting of questions and answers. This 'Guru-Shishya Samvada' is the method adopted commonly in our tradition. There are very direct and short questions and

answers which provide a suitable introduction to advaitic thought. Similarly Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji wrote the मल्लिकार्जुनमालिका स्तवः which is analogous to Śaṅkara Bhagavadpāda's composition.

Both Śaṅkara Bhagavadpāda's and Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji categorically emphasised the importance of tradition. The essence of tradition involves the submission and total surrender of the Shishya to the Guru. Śaṅkara Bhagavadpāda wrote गुर्वष्टम् while Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji wrote गुरुपादुका स्तोत्रम्, गुरुसुवर्णमालास्तोत्रम् in praise of his Guru Vruddha Narasimha Bharathi; the विद्यातीर्थाष्टकम् and विद्यातीर्थपादारविन्दस्तुतिः in praise of 12th acharyas of sringeri

sharada peetham jagadguru sri vidyaranya. And गुरुस्तोत्राणि in praise Śaṅkara Bhagavad pāda of too.

Another major similarity that I came across was in the figures of speech and meters in their stotras. Both of them used the same meters such as पञ्चचामरवृत्तम् for गणेशस्तोत्रम्, भुजङ्गप्रयातम् for शारदास्तोत्रम् and चित्र in कालभैरवाष्टकम्. Similarly they also composed other stotras using different meters like शिखरिणि, वसन्ततिलक, मालिनी etc.

Comprehensive outlook of stotra contribution to various deities

क्र.सं	विषयः	श्रीशङ्करविरचितस्तोत्राणि	श्रीनृसिंहभारतीविरचितस्तोत्राणी
१	विनायकस्तोत्राणि	गणेशपञ्चरत्नम्	गणाधिपपञ्चरत्नम्
		गणेशभुजङ्गम्	गणाधिपस्तुतिः
२	ईश्वरस्तोत्राणि	शिवानन्दलहरी	शिवनवरत्नमालास्तवः
		शिवपञ्चाक्षरस्तोत्रम्	श्रीशिवस्तुतिः
३	श्रीदेवीस्तोत्राणि	सौन्दर्यलहरी	श्रीशारदाशतश्लोकीस्तवः
		शारदाभुजङ्गप्रयाताष्टकम्	शारदाभुजङ्गप्रयातस्तुतिः

Conclusion

From the above description we can understand how Śaṅkara Bhagavadpāda could have combined in himself both veneration for the various concrete symbols of godhead and impersonal contemplation in the ecstasy of ultrasonic consciousness-how the two maybe useful each in a particular stage of spiritual advancement but that both may coexist though in different moods.

While we comprehend the contributions of Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavadpāda, it is unprejudiced outlook to say that Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji contributed to various facets of philosophy, theology, literature and society amidst of limitations and conventions which were already prescribed as a system and editing that was not tolerable at any circumstances. Inspite of these challenges, Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji impacted, aided and bought many changes which is indeed a commendable accomplishment.

For the rest the Śrī Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji was content to walk humbly in the footsteps of the great master Śaṅkara Bhagavadpāda whom he worshipped as god incarnate on earth, to establish righteousness and whose image, he set up at Kalady, his birth place. He was a realised soul, a master of the Shastras, a benign 'Guru', an accomplished Yogi, a magnetic personality and an excellent poet, indeed Jagadguru was a sage par excellence.

His disciple, Jagadguru Śrī sri ChandraŚekhara Bhārati mahāswāmiji in his Guru Stotram befittingly said:

“सच्चिदानन्दभूतेश नवीन नृहरिं गुरुम्
श्रीशङ्कराचार्यरूपं नमामि शिरसान्वहम्॥२॥”²

“I bow down before Jagadguru Śrī Śrī Saccidānanda Śivābhinava Nṛsimha Bhārati Mahāswāmiji Guru who is Adi Shankaracharya personified”

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² जगद्गुरु श्री चन्द्रशेखरभारती महास्वामिविरचित गुरुस्तोत्रम् - २