

Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

Gangadharendra Saraswati

THE MAIN TEXTS OF VEDANTA are the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, and the *Brahma Sutras*. They are referred to as *prasthāna traya*, triple canon of Vedanta, or three systems of knowledge. The Upanishads constitute the revealed texts; they are the *śruti prasthāna*, system of the Shrutis. The *Brahma Sutra* sets forth the teachings of Vedanta in a logical order and hence is called the *nyāya prasthāna*, system of Nyaya. And the *smṛti prasthāna*, system of the Smritis, is the Bhagavadgita, which is the quintessence of the entire Vedas.

There is another important group of texts known as *prakaraṇa granthas*, auxiliary philosophical texts. A *prakaraṇa grantha* introduces, elaborates, and clarifies some parts of the *prasthāna traya* and yet teaches something more. These texts help us prioritize the teachings of the scriptures. A popular verse defines a *prakaraṇa grantha*:

शास्त्रैकदेश सम्बद्धं शास्त्र-कार्यान्तरे स्थितम् ।
आहुः प्रकरणं नाम ग्रन्थभेदं विपश्चितः ॥

That book is called a *prakaraṇa grantha* which

is related to a particular part of the scriptures and also serves some purpose other than the scriptures.

Prakaraṇa is defined as: a short manual that confines itself to some essential topics of a Shastra, scripture. A *prakaraṇa* treatise has four indispensable elements or *anubandhas*, preliminary questions, to adhere to: *adhikārī*, the determination of the student's fitness for the study; *viśaya*, the subject matter; *sambandha*, the mutual relationship between the treatise and subject matter; and *prayojana*, the object to be attained by the study.¹

Vivekachudamani, *Upadesha-Sahasri*, and *Drig-Drishya Viveka* are some *prakaraṇa granthas*. *Svarajya Siddhih* of Gangadharendra Saraswati is one such text. It is one of a group of important texts of Advaita Vedanta called *siddhi-pañcakam*, pentad of *siddhis*, which are: *Naishkarmya Siddhih* of Sureshvaracharya, *Brahma Siddhih* of Mandana Mishra, *Ishta Siddhih* of Vimuktatman, *Advaita Siddhih* of Madhusudana Saraswati, and *Svarajya Siddhih* of Gangadharendra Saraswati.

The Book and Its Author

Svarajya Siddhih is divided into three *prakaraṇas*, sections. The first section, called *adhyāropa*, superimposition, logically refutes other systems of philosophy and establishes the principles of Advaita Vedānta. The second section, called *apavāda*, de-superimposition, shows that all notions of difference are illogical and the non-duality of Advaita alone is true. The third section, *āgama*, scriptural, establishes *śabda pramāṇa*, verbal testimony, as the means to self-realization.

The author Gangadharendra Saraswati was a disciple of Ramachandra Saraswati, who was a disciple of Sarvajna Saraswati. Ānandabodhendra Sarasvatī, pupil of Gaṅgādharendra Sarasvatī of the nineteenth century, wrote the *Tātparyā-prakāśa*. Gaṅgādharendra also is said to have written a commentary of the same name.² *Tātparyā-prakāśa* is a commentary on the *Yoga-Vashishtha*. Gangadharendra is considered to be the author of *Siddhanta-bindu-shikara*.³ We find the author's period mentioned elsewhere: 'Rāmabadrānanda had as his teacher Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, the author of the *Vedānta-siddhānta-candrika*, on which a commentary was written by Gaṅgādharendra Sarasvatī (AD 1826), pupil of Rāmācandra Sarasvatī and pupil's pupil of Sarvajña Sarasvatī, and the author of the *Sāmrājya-siddhi* [*sic*] with its commentary, the *Kaivalyakalpadruma*' (2.56). 'Gangadharendra is also credited with the works *Vedānta-Siddhānta-Sūktimanjari*, a commentary on Appayya Dikshita's *Siddhānta-Leśa-Saṅgraha*, *Pranavakalpa Vyākhyā*, *Siddhanta Candrika Vyākhyā*, and a commentary on *Ātmasāmrājya Siddhih* of Shankaracharya called *Kaivalyakalpa*.⁴ Interestingly, some scholars attribute the authorship of *Svarajya Siddhih* to Sureshvaracharya, while others claim it to be the work of Anandabodhendra Saraswati, the disciple of Gangadharendra Saraswati.⁵ However, this seems to be wrong

as almost all the extant texts of this book show Gangadharendra Saraswati as the author, who is also called Bodhendra by some. As there have been many other monks of the same name, the author of *Svarajya Siddhih* is called Gangadharendra Saraswati I.⁶

Gangadharendra Saraswati belonged to the Indra Saraswati order of South India. He was the fifteenth pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham, Kanchipuram. Apart from this, nothing is known about him.

Section on Adhyāropa

As is the tradition in India, this text too begins with a *maṅgalācaranam*, invocation. It is written in the *maṅdākrānta* metre.

गंगा पूर प्रचलित जटास्रस्त भोगीन्द्र भीता-
मालिङ्गन्तीमचलतनयां सस्मितं वीक्षमाणः ।
लीलापाङ्गैः प्रणत जनतां नन्दयंश्चन्द्रमौलि
मोहध्वातं हरतु परमानन्दमूर्तिः शिवो नः ॥ १ ॥

Let Lord Shiva, who has the moon on his head and is supreme bliss incarnate, who smilingly sees Parvati—who embraces all and gives happiness by bestowing her grace on those who salute her—getting afraid of the serpent-king fallen from his locks, which have been shaken by Ganga's flow, remove the darkness of our ignorance.

The next part of the *maṅgalācaranam* salutes God and the guru:

स्मारं स्मारं जनिमृतिभयं जातनिर्वेद वृत्ति-
ध्यायिंध्यायं पशुपतिमुमाकान्तमन्तर्निषण्णम् ।
पायं पायं सपदि परमानन्द पीयूषधारां
भूयो भूयो निजगुरुपदाम्भोज युग्मं नमामि ॥ २ ॥

Thinking about the fear of birth and death again and again I developed dispassion, which made me meditate again and again on Pashupati [Shiva], the consort of Uma [Parvati]. I soon drank again and again of the flow of immortality of supreme bliss. I salute the lotus-feet of my guru again and again.

The next verse of the *mangalācaranam*, in *śārdūla-vikrīḍita* metre, is a salutation to the teachers of the unity of jīva and Brahman.

यस्माद्द्विश्वमुदेति यत्र निवसत्यंते यदप्येति-
यत् सत्यं ज्ञानं सुखस्वरूपमवधिद्वैतप्रणाशोज्झितम् ।
यज्जाग्रत्स्वपनप्रसुप्तिषु विभात्येकं विशोकंपरं
प्रत्यगब्रह्मतदस्मि यस्य कृपया तं देशिकेन्द्रं भजे ॥ ३ ॥

That in which this universe is born, stays, and gets dissolved and is of the same essence as the universe; that knowledge of truth that gives happiness and is beyond the limitations of space and time; that which shines in the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep; that is one and is the supreme, without any sorrow. I worship that illumined guru by whose grace I have got the knowledge that 'I am that Brahman' indwelling in all beings.

Now the author describes the qualifications required of the student of Vedānta. This verse is in the *śikharinī* metre.

अधीतेज्या दानव्रत जप समाधान नियमै-
र्विशुद्धस्वान्तानां जगदिदमसारं विमृशताम् ।
अरागद्वेषाणामभयचरितानां हितमिदं
मुमुक्षूणां हृद्यं किमपि निगदामः सुमधुरम् ॥ ४ ॥

We now clearly tell the truth that will be sweet to hear, will be dear to the heart, and will do good to the aspirants of liberation who have purified their minds by the study of the Vedas, sacrifices, charity, austerities, spiritual practices, control of senses, have no attachment, aversion, or fear, and are convinced that this world is not real.

The author proceeds to give evidence of superimposition from the Vedas in a verse written in the *śālīnī* metre.

ज्ञात्वा देवं सर्वं पाशापहानि
नान्यः पन्थाश्चेति भूयोवचोभिः ।
ज्ञप्तेः साक्षान्मुक्ति हेतुत्व सिद्धा-
वध्यासत्त्वं बन्धनस्यार्थसिद्धम् ॥ ५ ॥

The sentences of the Shruti proclaim that 'having

known the truth, all bonds are destroyed' [*Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 1.11] and 'having known that, one transcends death; there is no other path for liberation' [*Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 3.8]. Superimposition causes bondage. The direct knowledge of Atman born out of the sentences of the Shruti or Vedas is the cause of liberation.

The passages of the Shruti provide inference for the realization of Truth. The superimposition is destroyed by knowledge and the eternal Truth is revealed. Only false superimpositions like the snake on the rope are destroyed by knowledge.

Objection: As in the material world, objects are destroyed only through positive actions like cutting, hitting, and so on, ignorance can be destroyed only by doing meritorious deeds mentioned in the scriptures. Therefore, the unreality of the world cannot be established if the bond with meritorious deeds capable of producing happiness is destroyed.

This objection is answered in the next verse.

(To be continued)

References and Notes

1. See John A Grimes, *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy: Sanskrit Terms Defined in English* (New York: State University of New York, 1996), 235.
2. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1952), 2.231.
3. See *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 2.220.
4. See 'A Disciple of Sri Iṣṭa Siddhindra Saraswati Swami of the Upaniṣad Brahmenḍra Mutt, Kancheepuram', *Advaita Grantha Kośa* (Calcutta: Deva Vani Parishad, undated), xxxviii, 54, 136, 150.
5. See *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, ed. Karl H Potter, 13 vols (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), 3.19, 3.420; and *Catalogue of Tamil Books in British Museum Library*, ed. L D Barnett and G U Pope, 2 vols (Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995), 2.15.
6. See *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, 1.466-7.