

Sri Vedanta Desika's view on "Adhikarana-s of Badarayana" Dr. Chakravarthy Raghavan

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"Adhikarana Sarartha Deepika," authored by the illustrious Vedanta Deshika, stands as a beacon of profound wisdom and scholarly insight into the Brahma Sutras, the foundational text of Vedanta philosophy. Vedanta Deshika, a revered philosopher, theologian, and poet of the Sri Vaishnava tradition, composed this seminal work to elucidate the intricate nuances of the Brahma Sutras and to illuminate the path to spiritual understanding and realization.

In this comprehensive commentary, Vedanta Deshika meticulously navigates through the dense forest of Vedantic aphorisms, providing lucid explanations, profound interpretations, and logical arguments to unravel the deeper meanings embedded within each adhikarana (topic) of the Brahma Sutras. With scholarly rigor and unwavering devotion, he unveils the timeless truths of Vedanta, shedding light on fundamental philosophical concepts such as the nature of Brahman (ultimate reality), the relationship between Atman (individual soul) and Brahman, the means to attain liberation (Moksha), and the role of scripture and tradition in spiritual realization. Drawing from the rich tapestry of Vedantic wisdom and the teachings of the Sri Vaishnava tradition, Vedanta Deshika's "Adhikarana Sarartha Deepika" serves as an invaluable guide for scholars, seekers, and practitioners alike, offering profound insights into the path of self-discovery, devotion, and ultimate liberation. Through his erudition, clarity of exposition, and unwavering commitment to truth, Vedanta Deshika continues to inspire generations of spiritual aspirants on their quest for knowledge, understanding, and divine realization.

In the realm of philosophical thought, the distinction between Astika (theist) and Nastika (atheist) perspectives is well-established. According to scholars versed in scripture, Astika philosophies are those aligned with Vedic authority, while Nastika philosophies are those opposed to it. In common parlance, philosophies positing an absolute absence of divinity are labeled Nastika, while those affirming the existence of a divine entity are labeled Astika. This classification is widely acknowledged in philosophical discourse.

It should be noted that neither the Sankhya nor the Mimamsa schools are considered Nastika. Both are rooted in Vedic authority. The great sage Jaimini, in his sutras, establishes the supremacy of the Vedas by emphasizing the primary role of injunctions, thereby underscoring their Astika nature. This assertion is explicitly stated in the works of previous acharyas.

Therefore, the validity of philosophical doctrines is firmly established through their alignment with Vedic authority. This principle, known as Shastra-yonitva, was endorsed by the revered sage Badarayana in the Brahma Sutras. The Vedas are considered apaurusheya (not of human origin), apurvapratipadaka (revealing unprecedented truths), devoid of contradictions, and inherently authoritative. This inherent authority of the Vedas is affirmed by Jaimini Maharishi, who states that the connection between words and their meanings is

inherent in the Vedic utterance, and instruction is the means of knowledge. Moreover, since Badarayana's assertions do not rely on any counter-examples, their validity is self-evident.

Furthermore, the transcendental nature of Vedic subjects, their inconceivability, and their contradiction with worldly and perceptible phenomena are established through argumentative treatises like the Siddhanta Paddhati. Therefore, it is firmly established that the Vedas are authoritative in matters beyond empirical perception and contradictory to ordinary experience.

The doctrine of the unity of the scripture as the sole means of knowledge for both karma (ritual action) and Brahman (ultimate reality) is a well-established principle in Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa. Hence, in revered texts like the Sri Bhashya, the great commentator has consistently reiterated the understanding that each and every aspect discussed therein is in complete alignment with the singular authority of scripture.

Therefore, the Vedas are inherently transcendental, revealing the ultimate good of karma and imparting knowledge of Brahman.

The Vedas are characterized by two main divisions: karma (ritual) and Brahman (knowledge). The Purva Kanda (ritual section) deals with karma, while the Uttara Kanda (knowledge section) deals with Brahman. This division is firmly established in scripture. The Purva Kanda expounds various types of karma: nitya karma (daily obligatory duties), kamya karma (desire-driven duties), and naimittika karma (occasional duties).

NITYAKARMA

Nitya karma includes rituals like agnihotra (fire sacrifice) as prescribed in statements such as "One should perform agnihotra throughout one's life." These rituals are part of the forty sanskaras (rites of passage). It is established in the scriptures that the performance of these rituals yields specific results, and their non-performance incurs negative consequences.

KAMYAKARMA

Kamya karma pertains to duties that are to be performed based on specific desires for worldly or otherworldly benefits. The Mimamsa philosophy dictates that such actions must be performed without any discrepancy in the means of performance, as determined by the specific injunctions. If there is any discrepancy in the means, the karma does not yield the desired result.

NAIMITTIKA KARMA

Naimittika karma consists of actions that are to be performed on specific occasions or events. These include expiatory rites. These types of karma have been extensively discussed in the sixth chapter of the Purva Mimamsa.

TWO CATEGORIES

Further more, these types of actions are classified into two categories: prakriti (natural) and vikriti (transformative). This classification is evident in the Mimamsa Shastra, specifically in its twelve chapters, which are divided into two sets of six chapters each. The first six chapters are referred to as the Upadesha Shatka (the set of six instructions), and the latter six chapters are known as the Atidesha Shatka (the set of six excesses). This division is a well-known convention in Mimamsa.

It is stated by the sage Jaimini, the proponent of the Mimamsa Shastra, in the twelfth chapter:

"Dharmas are inferred through twelve attributes, which are sequentially termed 'inference,' 'classification by means of evidence,' 'remaining distinctions in evidence,' 'conclusions,' 'sequence of terms,' 'special mention of a section,' 'superimposition of another section,' 'generalization,' 'specific mention of a section,' 'indication,' 'refutation,' and 'consequence.'"

ADHIKARANASARAVALI

The essence of this is also encapsulated in the Adhikarana Saravali:

"The first part of the Vedas, dealing with matters of right conduct and the like, is divided into sub-parts by means of evidence, and the order of instruction is thus determined. Then, with the help of this, and with the application of different means, the entities denoted by the deities are attained, one by one, through a sequential order, with each succeeding entity being subordinated to the preceding one, while being obstructed by relevant objections and entanglements in the sequence."

The Mimamsa, with its advocates of unity in the Purva and Uttara Mimamsas, employs the sixteen characteristics of Mimamsa. Hence, even in the section on deities (devata kanda), this verse is included.

1. Pramana: The validity of injunctions, meanings, mantras, and other sources is discussed initially.
2. Karma Bheda: The differentiation of actions based on different sources and the principle of refutation in all branches are discussed in the second.
3. Prayojya-Prayojaka Bhava: The relationship between the agent and the action performed and the enjoined and enjoined upon is discussed in the fourth.
4. Parartha-Apara Paryaya Sheshatvam: The remaining alternatives between different interpretations of the same text are discussed in the third.
5. Vitati-Vishesha-Rupa Krama: The sequence of extensive and specific discussions is discussed in the fifth.
6. Kartritva-Samanadhikarana-Bhoktritva-Rupadhikarasya Vichara: The examination of the nature of agency, equality of position, and the nature of the enjoyer is discussed in the sixth, concluding the discussion of the six principles.
1. 7 & 8 Tadanu Prakritivat Vikritih: The directive to perform actions resembling natural occurrences and transformations is discussed generally in the seventh and specifically in the seventh and eighth chapters.
2. 9. Navame: The investigation into mantras, melodies, and rites is conducted in the ninth.
3. 10. Dashame: The examination of the obstruction caused by the loss of meaning or other factors is conducted in the tenth.
4. 11. Ekadashe: The repeated performance of actions according to specific instructions is emphasized in the eleventh.
5. 12. Dwadase: General discussions are conducted in the twelfth chapter, concluding the topics of the chapters.
6. Following this, the fourth chapter, known as the Devata Kanda, which is structured into four chapters, deals with the Mimamsa Shastra regarding deities.

Some attribute the authorship of this section to Jaimini, while others attribute it to Kashakritsna Maharshi. On this matter, the commentators in the Saravali, including Sri Vedanta Deshika, state as follows:

"In the commentary text, the conflict arising from the composition by Jaimini is resolved by attributing it to Kashakritsna, as explained in the Tatva Ratnakara. Here, we state that in truth, we are not capable of conclusively deciding between the two due to our inability to understand the nuances. It is appropriate to

resolve the conflict through the conduct of a wise person, rather than foolishly attempting to remove it through mere ritualistic practices."

The meaning is that Bhagavan Bodhayana, also known as Jaimini Maharshi, is said to be the author of the Sankarshakanda. However, in the Tatva Ratnakara authored by Bhatta Parashara, it is attributed to Kashakritsna. There is doubt as to whose authority should be accepted. The resolution to this doubt is stated in the verse by the acharyas. Both of them are highly authoritative, firmly established in a sattvic assembly. In such a discussion, no one is worthy to reject the authority of either. Due to their mutual agreement, it is understood that both are accepted as authoritative. Following this logic, the subsequent sections explore the Brahmanakanda, Brahma-mimamsa, and Shariraka-mimamsa, which immediately follow the section on rituals and deities. This vision was promulgated by the venerable Sage Vyasa. It elucidates the ultimate reality of the self and encompasses all schools of thought. The significance of this doctrine is beyond verbal expression. It has been expounded in the form of commentaries by revered acharyas, comparable to great sages.

The Vedanta philosophy states that this vision is singular according to the followers of Vishishtadvaita. Others, however, assert that there are differences between the two scriptures. They argue that due to the existence of conflicting authors, subjects, and mutual contradictions, the Vedanta scriptures are diverse. But because of the consensus among sages like Bhagavan Bodhayana and the internal differences between chapters, it is firmly established in various authoritative texts such as the Shri Bhashya.

MIMAMSAPADUKA

This is clearly established in the Mīmāṃsāpādukā:

"Mīmāṃsetyekametat..."

However, in modern times, some focus solely on the Brahma-mimamsa scripture, without thoroughly studying it. This raises the question of how this situation arises. The solution to this is also provided by the revered Vedanta Deshika in the Saravali:

"Vidhyuktyadheetya vedan vidhibalaviratāvanyajādeva rāgāt kṛtsnaṃ mīmāṃsamānāḥ kramaś iha parabrahmacintāṃ taranti. Prāpte turye yuge'smin parimita baladhīprāṇatadvighnadr̥ṣṭyā kālakṣepākṣamatvāt katicana kṛtīṇaḥ śīghramante ramante."

Thus, this scripture remains singular, with differences only in its conclusions and chapters. It should be understood that there is no fault in scholars focusing on a particular part according to the time, place, and circumstances. It is stated that the essence of the Upanishadic principles, in the form of sutras, was compiled by Bhagavan Badarayana. There are many commentaries on these sutras authored by various revered acharyas. Among them, the commentary authored by Bhagavatpada Shankaracharya is prominent.

SRIBHASHYA

The Shri Bhashya, composed by Shri Bhagavad Ramanuja, and the Bhashya by Shri Bhagavad Anandatirtha Muni are also highly esteemed. The philosophy of Advaita is established in Shankarabhashya, that of Dvaita in Madhvabhashya, and that of Vishishtadvaita in Shri Bhashya.

The Shri Bhashya comprises four chapters, with each chapter containing four sections. The number of Adhikaranas (topics) varies in each section. According to the Vishishtadvaita Vedanta tradition, there are 545 sutras and 156 Adhikaranas. This subject matter is summarized in the Saravali as "In the auspicious head, in the Brahman section, there are 545 sautras."

Scholars follow different methods for counting and organizing these sutras. The term "Shubhashi" refers to the sautri number. The consonants Sha, Ka, Ra, Va, and Sha denote the number five. The consonant Bha represents the number four. Again, the consonant Sha represents five. Thus, the sautri number is 545. Similarly, the term "Chinmaya" denotes the number of Adhikaranas.

The consonant Cha represents the sixth, denoting Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha, and Nga.

The consonant Ma denotes the fifth, representing Pa, Pha, Ba, Bha, and Ma.

The consonant Ya represents the numbers Ya and Ra, which are counted as one unit. Hence, the number of Adhikaranas is determined to be 156 by the Acharyas.

In the sixteen sections, the number of Adhikaranas is also found to be there.

'On the banks of the river, among the hermitages, the essence of the sun, shining beyond the darkness, like sugarcane among sugar canes, is the essay of the sweet verses.'

Here is the summary:

1. *Aksha (senses)*: Eleven topics in the first chapter's first section.
2. *Waves*: Six topics in the first and second chapters.
3. *Hope*: Ten topics in the first and second chapters.
4. *Snake*: Eight major snakes in the first and fourth chapters.
5. *Sticks*: Ten topics in the second and first chapters.
6. *Elephants*: Eight great elephants in the second and second chapters.
7. *Sages*: Seven sages in the second and third chapters.
8. *Vasus (deities)*: Eight Vasus in the second and fourth chapters.
9. *Waves*: Six topics in the third and first chapters.
10. *Mountains*: Eight mountains in the third and second chapters.
11. *Elements*: Twenty-six in total in the third and third chapters.
12. *Atishakkari (a particular meter)*: This peculiar meter consists of fifteen syllables in one quarter. Hence, there are fifteen more topics in the third and fourth chapters.
13. Due to the eleven senses, in the first and second sections of the fourth chapter, each has eleven additional topics.
14. Due to the eleven senses, in the first and second sections of the fourth chapter, each has eleven additional topics.
15. The number of 'prayaja' (measures) is five. Hence, there are five additional topics in the fourth and third chapters.
16. The number of 'rasa' (essence) is six. As it explains the experience of ultimate bliss, there are six additional topics in the fourth and fourth chapters.

Thus, the total number of topics is determined by the acharyas as

$$11+6+10+8+10+8+7+8+6+8+26+15+11+11+6+5=156.$$

CONCLUSION

In comparison with other perspectives, the principle of adequacy is established. Considering the statement "Even if there are infinite topics, it is not appropriate to attribute fewer topics with little substance," it's all clear and consistent.

Similarly, in terms of chapters, sections, topics, subdivisions, and subjects, various arrangements are observed. This arrangement was also made by all previous acharyas in works like the Sri Bhashya. However, for those with slow comprehension, who might struggle with extensive texts or poetic works, it was deemed beneficial to create concise, comprehensive texts. With this view in mind, Acharya Sri Nivasurabhi composed a text called "Adhikarana (Sarartha Dipika)" or "The Illuminator of Topics," which serves as a comprehensive index of chapters, sections, subdivisions, and subjects. This remarkable text provides a wide-ranging understanding of the topics.

The collected works presented in this text. I consider myself fortunate due to the publication of this invaluable gem, which, through its completeness, clarity, and comprehensiveness, expounds the doctrine of Visishtadvaita. There is immense joy in realizing that it has been elucidated here.

With the presentation of this work, I express my gratitude to the revered Acharyas, my paternal ancestors, Shri Sengalipuram Anantarama Dikshitar, Nallan Chakravarti Satrayagam Rajaguru Kutappa Deshikacharyas, for their gracious blessings and guidance.
