



Sree Narayana Guru as an Advaitin

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Abstract

It is not a matter of great wonder that Sree Narayana Guru became one of the greatest proponents and re-evaluators of Advaita Vedanta, the principle of non-duality put forward by AdiSankara, for both hail from the same pristine land of Kerala. Only a span of a thousand years separates both.

Sree Narayana Guru further extended this non dualistic principle into practical modes of self-realisation through spiritual education, compassion, and peaceful coexistence of humanity. Guru's philosophy emphasised the consistency between true existence of the "common reality" on earth and one Divine behind the creation and sustenance of the Universe, dismissing any concepts of illusory worlds.

This paper deals with Sree Narayana Guru as an advaitin, his concepts of consciousness, Non-consciousness, Bhana darsana, Unity of Jiva and Brahman etc. Guru's works are divided into Mystical, Metaphysical, Socio-ethical and Aesthetical, in which his Metaphysical works contains all his concepts of Advaita Vedanta. The famous philosophical works are Darsanamala, Atmopadesasatakam, Advaita Dipika, Daiva Dasakam, Brahnavidya Panchakam, Vedanta Sutra, Nirvriti Panchakam, Sloka Trayi and Homa Mantra.

Keywords: Sreenarayana Guru, Advaita, Brahman, Atman, Maya, Consciousness, Jiva, Nirvana

Introduction

SreeNarayana Guru as an Advaitin

SreeNarayana Guru, The great teacher of universal religion, accepted the true spirit of Vedanta. Romain Rolland referred to him as;

"Jnanin of action and a religious intellectual who had a keen living sense of the people and of social necessities"

-The Life of Ramakrishna, Almora

Like, Buddha, Mahavira and Sri Sankara, Guru also obtained enlightenment after undergoing continuous and long term penance and yogic practices, especially deep meditation for a long period, even without food, living on water and herbs in a cave in Marutuamalai in South India. Mahakavi Rabindranath Tagore says;

"I have never seen one who is spiritually greater than Swami Narayana Guru, of malayalam nay a person who is on a par with him in spiritual attainment. I shall never forget that radiant face illumined by the self-effulgent light of divine glory and those mystic eyes fixing their gaze on a far remote point in the distant horizon".

After the attainment of non-dual realization, i.e., Nirvana, Guru proclaimed to humanity that; there is only one God in different names or the non-dual *Sacchidanta*, nature, one only without a second, as the basis of the whole universe, as well as the nature of all the jivas or souls, in the world based on the Advaitic theory. Guru declares the vision of advaitic theory;

"Caitanyadagamat Sthoolasukmatmakamidam Jagat,
Asti Chedsadghanam Sarvam, Nastichedasti Chitghanam"
- Darsanamala.II, Sl.1

ie, if this world, which has come out of living consciousness exists, then everything is existent. If it, the inert world, is said to be non-existent, it exists as consciousness, *caitanya*. The purpose of the philosophical enquiry in the *Darsanamala*, in Sanskrit, *Atmopadesasatakam* in malayalam and other advaitic works of Guru is to get the true knowledge, the Vedas, the pure consciousness and thereby attain *Nirvana*, through the enlightenment and destruction of ignorance and suffering of humanity for the welfare peace and release of humanity.

Guru says the realisation of Brahman-Atman comes through enlightenment consequent on the instruction of the *Mahavakyas* of the Vedas. Just as the flowing waters disappear in the ocean casting off name and form so also the illuminated *Jiva* freed from name and form, attains the divine *Purusha*. The only obstacle to the realisation of Brahman is maya or *avidya* and there is no other hindrance to realisation or *Nirvana*, which is eternal with the *Atman*. Guru reveals the ultimate truth thus in *Darsanamala*. The consciousness that "I am Brahman" is acclaimed as the consciousness of the absolute. .

The Rigveda is the basis of *Advaita* view of Guru that *avidya* or *maya* remains with the ultimate reality even at the dissolution of the world, this *maya* or *avidya* is called ignorance of Brahman. The *ajnana* disappears at the time of realisation of Brahman. Guru says thus Brahman is everything to the *jeevanmukta*. If Brahman is known, everything is known. The self appears to be bound by the mind and its

actions. The mind is also a product of *maya*. Thus the mind is the cause of bondage. It is the instrument to attain *Nirvana* from the bonds of *samsara*.

The vision of *Advaita* of guru has proved the unreality of the duality. World is an illusion, perceptible, non-consciousness and limited. Guru says the wise man in his wakeful state sees the world as unreal like a dream world. The perceptible is unreal. This is substantiated by the Upanishadic passages like “*Atma va are drashtavyah*” [Brhadaranyakopanishad, 2/4/5]. The Brahman-Atman also would become unreal due to perceptibility.

The vision of Guru is that the object of consciousness is always superimposed. The world is not self-luminous. Its luminousness belongs to pure *Brahman* alone. Sruti says “that which is by itself directly cognised is Brahman-*Yadsakshadaparokshat Brahman*” [Brhadaranyakopanishad]. According to Guru the character of Brahman is not related to *drisya* but it is consciousness.

The vision of *Advaita* or *Bhava* is an important view of Guru. He tells the secret of Vedanta as;

“The self-luminous consciousness is beyond the threefold view ie, the subject, object and knowledge”
- *Atmopadesa Satakam*. Sl.14.

Guru says that basis of *Bhava* has four stages such as the gross or *sthula*, the subtle or *sukshma*, the causal or *karana* and the absolute or *turiya*. The consciousness appears through the outer objects owing to *nescience*. Sri Narayana Guru who realised Brahman-Atman says;

“*Atmaiva Mayaya Karma Karoti Bahurupadrik*
Asangah Swaprakasopi Nidrayamiva Taijasah.”
-*Darsanamala*. VI.1.

Atman is self-luminous and unattached, it does action through *Maya* as dream agent does in sleep. Guru describes the same nature of *Atman* in his text, *Atmopadesasatakam*.

Darsanamala occupies a prominent place in Advaitic literature since it abbreviates all the Advaitic doctrines. All the Advaitic aspects are explained in ten *darsanas*;

1. *Adhyaropadarsanam*- Vision of superimposition
2. *Apavadadarsanam*- Vision of negation
3. *Asatyadarsanam*- vision of non-truth
4. *Mayadarsanam*- Vision of illusive reality
5. *Bhanadarsanam*- Vision of consciousness
6. *Karmadarsanam*-Vision of action
7. *Jnanadarsanam*- Vision of wisdom
8. *Bhaktidarsanam*-Vision of adoration
9. *Yogadarsanam*-Vision of unification.
10. *Nirvanadarsanam*-Vision of emancipation

Darsanamala is the result of Guru's realisation of the *Advaita* from the three perceptions of the theology, psychology and cosmology.

Sri Narayana Guru was a great Yogi and absolutely an advaitin, who followed the way of life of Sri Buddha, Sri Sankara, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa etc. He got the Advaitic realisation through yogic *sadhana* knowledge and *bhakti*. He applied the great Advaitic principles for the benefit

of the humanity. Guru in his philosophical works like *Darsanamala* and *Atmopadesasatakam* has revealed the non-duality of *Jiva*. According to Guru qualified *Brahman* and its products are also perceptible and thus are unreal, but absolute *Brahman* alone is real. By considering the non-dual knowledge of the universe, Guru established his theory of “One caste, one religion and one god to the humanity”.

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