

# Acharya Sankara: A Magnanimous Teacher

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*I bow to Sankara Bhagavatpada who was a world benefactor and the abode of mercy and knowledge of highest scriptures*

Just as a mother who looks after the needs of her children of different ages and temperaments feeds each according to one's taste, Acharya Sankara has given *Bhashyas* to intellectuals, *Prakarana Granthas* for the ordinary persons, *Tantras* for the passionate, litanies for devotees, and special works, such as *Dakshinamurti Stotram*, for persons enjoying the bliss of the awakening. The reason is not far to seek.

The spiritual future of our country at the time of the birth of Sri Sankara was under a cloud. Many kings and subjects were enchanted by the values preached by the Buddha and took up Buddhism as their philosophy. Most of the people were not only ignorant of the prime teachings of the Vedas but also did not want to learn the same. This was a bad trend. Ignorance can be excused but not the will to remain ignorant.

Sankara wanted to appeal to the intellectuals first and the *Prasthan Traya Bhashya* was written for them. If the intellectuals were satisfied by the life-giving philosophy of nondualism of the Upanishads and took up the same, others would automatically follow. That was his first task.

His compassion to the poor and downtrodden in the spiritual field was of no compare. He witnessed numerous sects each following a different philosophy with its own interpretation of Vedas. By his forceful logical arguments, he cut asunder their views and established six main modes of worship, which brought him the title 'Shanmata Sthapanacharya'.

Let us bow to Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada, who himself was the fitting example of a magnanimous and compassionate teacher.

*By Dr. Goda Venkateswara Sastri*