



The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom: and other writings of Sankaracharya

Sankaracharya, Adi Sankara, Shankara

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In the Crest-Jewel of Wisdom Sankara summarizes the traditional path of knowledge that leads to the bliss of eternal freedom and Self-Realization. Charles Johnston's translation is a classic which has withstood the test of time. This edition has all new Georgia 12 type for crisp clear easy reading. The other writings are: 1. The Awakening to the Self. 2. The Awakening to Reality. 3. The Essence of the Teaching. 4. The Song of the Self. Adi (the first) Sankara also known as Sankaracharya (Sankara the teacher) was one of the most prominent teachers in the religion the west calls Hinduism. Hinduism was in a great decline during the time in which Sankara lived and many view Sankara as having saved and revitalized Hinduism. Many of the modern teachings of non-duality and the path of knowledge trace their origin to or show a heavy influence from Sankara. Sankara's work, the manuals and catechisms for learners, are complete and perfect. They really teach, quite plainly and lucidly, the first steps on the path of wisdom; they point out, with clear insistence, the qualities that are necessary to make these first steps fruitful; qualities without which the learner may remain, hesitating and halting, on the threshold, through lack of the force and moral worth which alone make any further progress possible. These necessary qualities are not difficult to understand. They are not strange psychic powers that only flatter vanity; they are not mere intellectual tricks that leave the heart cold; they are rather the simple qualities of honesty, of freedom from selfishness and sensuality – which have formed the basis of every moral code; the virtues so common and commonplace on the lips, but not quite so common in the life and character. These treatises of Sankara speak to the common understanding and moral sense in an unparalleled degree. They are an appeal to the reason that has hardly ever been equaled for clearness and simplicity by the sages of the earth. Their aim is Freedom from the bondage of the world. This aim speaks to every one, awakens an echo in every heart, appeals to the universal hope of common humanity. But it is not enough for the mind to follow the lucid sentences of Sankara. Freedom from the bondage of the world demands something more. Sickness is not cured by saying the word Medicine, but by drinking it; so a man is not set free by the name of the Eternal, but by discerning the Eternal. The teaching must be woven into life and character if it is to bear fruit; it is not enough to contemplate the virtue of freedom from selfishness and sensuality in the abstract. The moral problem before us, is the liberation of our souls from the idea of personality; and the opening of the door to the life of the universal Self, which will enter our hearts, and rule them, once the personal idea is put out of the way. And there is no more potent weapon for combating the personal idea than the clear and lucid understanding that what we call our personality is, in reality, only one of many pictures in the mind, a picture of the body, held before our consciousness, viewed by it, and therefore external to it. If the personality is a picture in the field of consciousness, it cannot be consciousness itself; cannot be our real self; but must necessarily be unreal and transient. The whole problem for us is this, and it is one that recurs in every moment of life: to disperse this web of dreams which we call our personality, and so to let the pure and universal Will pour into our hearts, to follow out its own excellent purposes, and manifest its own beneficent powers. And thus we shall for the first time enter into our inheritance as undivided parts of the great soul of humanity; of that universal Self, whose own nature is perfect Being, perfect Consciousness and perfect Bliss.

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