

A Review on Life and Works of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya

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Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive review of the life, philosophy, and enduring legacy of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya (788–820 CE), one of India's most eminent philosophers and theologians. Recognized as the founder of Advaita Vedānta, Śaṅkara's teachings emphasized the non-dualistic nature of reality—asserting the ultimate unity of Ātman and Brahman. The study outlines his early life, spiritual awakening, and significant events such as his initiation into Sannyāsa, his Digvijaya (philosophical conquest across India), and his pivotal debates with contemporary scholars like Maṇḍana Miśra. The review highlights his contributions as a philosopher, poet, and reformer who revitalized Sanātana Dharma during a period of spiritual decline. Śaṅkarācārya's establishment of four principal Maṭhas (monastic centers) across India and his propagation of the Śaṅmātā system of worship underscore his vision of religious harmony and cultural unity. The paper concludes by acknowledging Śaṅkarācārya's literary legacy, including his profound commentaries on the Upaniṣads, Bhagavadgītā, and Brahmasūtras, as well as devotional hymns that continue to inspire spiritual and philosophical thought in India and beyond.

Introduction

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, an influential Indian philosopher and theologian survived in the eighth century CE, viz. 788-820 CE. He was the founder of Advaita Vedānta, which is a non-dualistic school of Hindu philosophy. In addition to being a philosopher, he was also a leader, a poet, a saint, a social reformer, and a historian. In terms of his love and sympathy for all people, he had a unique personality. His intellectual, religious, historical, and social achievements have left a lasting influence. He was, in the fullest sense of *Bhagavadgītā*, a man of action, a *karmayogī*. In order to create four maṭhas, he went from Kanyakumari to Kashmira and from Dwaraka to Jagannathpuri. He has offered commentary on lots of books, including the Upaniṣads, Brahmasūtras, *Bhagavadgītā*, and others, in order to support his Advaita-vāda, a doctrine of monism. Therefore, he was became a *jñānayogī*. He is the author of several devotional stotras dedicated to various gods, including Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, Śakti, and many other Gods. He was also known as *bhaktiyogī*. As he had studied different śāstras, he created his own and added to them with his deep learning. Hence, He was became a *śāstrayogī*. He dedicated his life focusing on preserving *sanātana* Hindu Dharma.

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya was the originator of an era. So, he was also as a *yugapuruṣa*. The entire India and its inhabitants were living in a dark age at the time of Śaṅkarācārya's birth. The entire country was split up into various regions, and the local members in those areas were became enemy with one another. The political situation did not improve the religious situation. The nation was suffering from terminal issues. It was not the role of the religious authorities to guide the common people toward righteousness. Sensual pleasure took the place of false monocracy like self control in society.

Regarding the date of birth and duration of Śrī Śaṅkara, all informations are controvertial and uncertainty. There isn't a single reference to another composition of his works which would at least assist the reader in identifying any quotes from Śrī Śaṅkara. Therefore, it is impossible to draw any conclusions about his dates and works.

It is possible that although Śrī Śaṅkara was an Advaitic philosopher, he focused a lot on Advaitic teachings. Therefore, scholars have a tendency to link Śrī Śaṅkara with solely the bhāṣyas on the *prasthānatraya*. However, emphasizing *prasthānatraya*, bhāṣya does not imply that his work was limited to the major Upaniṣads, *Bhagavadgītā*, and *Brahmasūtra* commentaries. Free from all bonds, Śrī Śaṅkara made pilgrimages to several temples and shrines in order to expand the Advaita religion and philosophy. Thus, the poetic intellect might shape extremely complements of the many Gods and Goddesses from the depths of his immense advaitic heart. He was not just a philosopher but also a well-known poet.

Birth of Ādi Śaṅkara

The problem of insignificance has been observed even regarding Śaṅkara's birth place and parentage also. A small village named Kaladi; spelled Kalati by others, was located on the bank of the Albai river in the state of Kerala. A knowledgeable and devoted Namboodiri Brahmana named Vidyādhiraṇḍya lived in that village. He was blessed with an only son, Śiva-guru. He was one of exceptional academician, gaining profound knowledge of sacred books such as the Vedas, the Vedāṅgas, and other śāstras. Although he was willing to become a Sannyāsī, he married Āryambā, a girl from a renowned and noble family, and took up household life as per the wishes of his religious master Guru. Both Śivaguru and Āryambā were great devotees of Lord Śiva.¹ After a long period, they blessed with a son by the grace of Lord Śiva. There was a story regarding the birth of Śaṅkara. When Śivaguru and Āryambā began their penance practices and reciting the mantras of Lord Śiva, one day Śivaguru had a dream in which God Śiva asked him if he would have many sons who would live long lives but possess few virtues or if he would have only one intelligent son who would live a short life. The father wisely chooses a knowledgeable son rather than many sons and had Śaṅkara as his son. For everyone who turns to him, the child is the greatest source of happiness. Therefore, Śivaguru named the child as Śaṅkara. However, he was named Śaṅkara since he was born by the mercy of Lord Śiva.² It has also been discovered that his parents were Viśvajit and Viśiṣṭa, and that he was born in Chidambaram in south Arcot.³ However, the earlier viewpoint is more acceptable.

Early life of Ādi Śaṅkara

Śrī Śaṅkara lost his father when he was a young boy. He was raised by his widowed mother, who was very patient, understanding and cooperative. It is possible that Śrī Śaṅkara was a posthumous child.⁴ At a very young age, Śaṅkara was initiated and sent to study at the *Gurukula*. At the age of eight, he learned all four vedas and vedāṅgas; at twelve, he learned all the

¹ Swami Mukhyananda, *Ācārya Śaṅkara, An Interpretation*, p. 107

² Vyāsācala, *Śaṅkaravijaya*, Introduction, p.1

³ Belvalkar, S.K. , *Shree Gopal Basu Mallik lectures on vedāta Philosophy*, p. 232

⁴ Ibid. p.233

scriptures and śāstras and he wrote his renowned bhāṣyas and commentaries at the age of sixteen and he departed from this life at the age of thirty-two. There is a verse that depicts his life –

aṣṭavarṣe caturvedī dwādaśe sarvaśāstravid I

*ṣoḍaśe kṛtavāṇ bhāṣyaṁ dwātriṅśe munirabhyagāt II*⁵

There are so many unbelievable incidents and events happened in his life. One day, while he was studying at the Gurukula, Śaṅkara went to a very poor lady's house to receive his *bhikṣā*. She had nothing to offer except an *amlaka* as her humble *bhikṣā* to Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara was moved by her selflessness and out of compassion prayed to Goddess *Lakṣmī* in a *śloka*. It is believed that after completion of this *stotraṁ*, Goddess *Lakṣmī* physically appeared and showered the poor lady's house with gold coins. This prayer of Śaṅkara has come down to us as the *kanakadhārā stotraṁ*. Reciting the *kanakadhārā stotraṁ*, on a regular basis is said to be a potent remedy for poverty.⁶ Śaṅkara continued studying many literatures after returning from Gurukula, taking care of his mother and eventually making everyone aware of his brilliance.

The mother of Śaṅkara used to travel a considerable distance each day to bathe in the Albai River. One day, the youth Śaṅkara discovered her lying unconscious on the way to river. After taking her home, he prayed passionately to the lord that he should make the river flow by the side of his house. And the following day, the river Albai began to flow beside Śaṅkara's house.⁷

Śrī Śaṅkara expressed his desire to become a Sannyāsīn at a very young age, but he did not receive his mother's consent. . He also assured his mother that he would always be ready to attend to her spiritual requirements. The next day, Śaṅkara and his mother went to the river to take a bath. Suddenly, Śaṅkara sensed that a crocodile was grabbing hold of his thigh. Then he shouted out to his mother that the crocodile is dragging him down. The crocodile had promised to let him free if he renounced worldliness. At these remarks, Śaṅkara's mother granted her permission, and the crocodile released him without causing him any significant harm. The sincere mother honored her promise, even though the pain of losing her beloved son was weighing heavily on her thoughts. But she took a promise from Śaṅkara that he would come back to her at the time of her death and perform the last rites. With pleasure, Śaṅkara granted his mother's request.

The story of Śrī Śaṅkara's willingness and interest in leading an austere life is nothing more than a dramatization of his acceptance of self-denial to free himself from a crocodile's grasp. One cannot devote so much time and effort to studying the philosophy of many branches if they have no genuine interest in leading an austere life. Owing to his lack of concern in material things, Śrī Śaṅkara could contribute greatly with his contributions to Advaitic philosophy.

In another view, it can be said that the crocodile incident is an allegory. This interpretation interprets the river as *saṁsāra*, or the river of life that gives rise to births and deaths. The crocodile is *māyā*, living in that river and preying on the *jīvās* or the individuals. The only way to

⁵ Tripāthi, Dr. Rudradev, *Saundaryalaharī*, p.21

⁶ Swami Tapasyananda, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya, The traditional life of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya*, p.113

⁷ Sastry, T. S. Narayana and Kumaraswamy, T.N. , *The age of Śaṅkara*, p.89

escape the crocodile's clutches is to renounce; thus, the crocodile, the illusory power, released Śaṅkara from its grasp when he declared, *saṁnyastoham* that I have renounced.⁸

Śrī Śaṅkara's Digvijayaṁ

After entrusting his mother under the care of his relatives and the protecting hands of the Lord, Śrī Śaṅkara set out alone in search of a Guru to get himself formally initiated into the holy order of Hindu *sannyāsa*. He eventually found his esteemed Guru Govinda Bhagavatpāda near the Narmada River. After, passing a test, he was formally initiated as a complete *sannyāsin*. Then Guru Govindapāda taught him the philosophy that he had himself learnt from his preceptor, Gauḍapāda. Śaṅkara also pays his respect to his Parama-Guru i.e. Gauḍapāda. Being brought up in poverty Śrī Śaṅkara must have developed his thought of adjuring worldly life. He put on the garments of an ascetic, disgusted by the absurdity of worldly existence. After attaining salvation or non- dual knowledge, he turned himself as a preacher and a prophet.⁹ Śrī Śaṅkara's existence came into light at that time, when, in India, Buddhism had already grown and flourished or almost 1200 years and reached great heights of achievements and establishments that had become a threat to Indian philosophy and culture. With the rise of Buddhism, the Hindu *sanātana dharma* became weak and almost extinct. Following a period of study, Śaṅkara began his journey to Kasi in accordance with his Gurudeva's wishes. Gurudeva wanted Śaṅkara to first travel to Banaras and then follow his destiny of becoming one of those wandering religious teachers that were so common in both pre and post Buddhist India.

This young sage Śaṅkara began studying the scriptures while he was reaching out to Kasi. While Śaṅkara and his students were strolling down the street to take a midday dip in the Gaṅges, an unforeseen event occurred. A *cāṇḍāla* walked by him with a few dogs. The *cāṇḍāla* did not cross the road when the students yelled for him to do so; instead, they got into a heated argument and questioned the Guru about how he could teach Advaitism and carry out such radical observances on a regular basis. Suddenly, Śaṅkara speaks the stotra *maṇiṣāpaṇḍaka*,¹⁰ which is full of the monism philosophy. Each stotra closes with the following that he who has learned to look on phenomena in this monistic light is his true Guru, whether he is a *cāṇḍāla* or a twice-born man. According to tradition, Lord Śiva appeared as *cāṇḍāla* in order to test Śaṅkara's beliefs.¹¹ After taking on his true form, he bestowed blessings and gave him the task of penning a commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa.

Once upon a time, while walking down Kasi's tiny street, this *sannyāsi* Śaṅkara noticed an elderly man who was learning the grammar. This great ācārya's compassionate heart melts with pity, and he writes his famous *stotra* that is *Bhāgavindastotram*.¹²

An additional insignificant incident in the life of this exceptional being was the composition of the *Devyaḥkṣamāparādhanaastotram*. It is said that once upon a time, an elderly man who was over 85 years old, approached Śaṅkara and asked him to write a prayer for mother Goddess because he was unable to write even a line. Out of pure compassion for that old man, Ādi

⁸ Swami Chinmayananda, *Śaṅkara the missionary*, p.67

⁹ Belvalkar, S.K. , *Shree Gopal Basu Mallik lectures on vedāta Philosophy*, p. 233

¹⁰ Aiyar , C.N. Krishnasami and Tattvabhushan, Paṇḍit Sītānāth, *Śrī Śaṅkarācārya*, p. 78

¹¹ Belvalkar, S.K. , *Shree Gopal Basu Mallik lectures on vedāta Philosophy* p. 237

¹² Patel, Gautam, *Ādi Śaṅkarā laghuprabandhavāliḥ*, Introduction, p.10

Śaṅkarācārya created the *Devyaḥkṣamāparādhanaṣṭotram*.¹³ This *stotra* was written by the great saint on behalf of that elderly man who had lived for almost 85 years, although Ādi Śaṅkarācārya had just lived only 32 years.

Śaṅkara left kasi to write a commentary on vyāsa's vedāntic aphorisms for the benefit of all people, following Lord Śiva's directions. He composed his most wellknown commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa in the twelfth year while seated in Himalayan caves. A *brāhmaṇa* once approached Ācārya Śaṅkara with some inquiries concerning the first sūtra found in the third chapter of the *Brahmasūtra*. After eight days of intense conversation, the *brāhmaṇa* revealed his true form as Bādarāyaṇa, bestowed a blessing, and granted him an additional sixteen years of life. Ācārya Śaṅkara began his journey to Prayaga, after composing commentaries. He met Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, the founder of *Pūrvamīmāṃsā* school of Philosophy, and asked him to write a *vārttika* on his commentary. But he had made the decision to destroy himself already. So, he advised Ācārya Śaṅkara to meet Maṇḍana Mīśra, a great philosopher of that time and also known as Viśvarūpa, in Mahiṣmatī nagari, which is situated on the banks of the Narmada River. It was belived that he was an incarnation of *Brahmā*. After giving this advice, Kumārila surrendered his body.

Śaṅkarācārya gives a very intriguing account of the encounter between him and Maṇḍana Mīśra. Ācārya Śaṅkara encountered some maid servants who were carrying water from the well when he arrived at Mahiṣmatī. When he asked them for directions to Maṇḍana's house, they respectfully replied that where a female parrot, captured in the cage at the door, is uttering the words like has the Veda self-validity, know that to be the gate of Maṇḍana's house. Ācārya Śaṅkara arrived at the house and found that the gate was locked. There was no means to let the household know he had come for a visit. The Ācārya entered the house using his *yogic* power where Maṇḍana Mīśra was performing śrāddha ceremony of his father. The Ācārya then asked him for a *vedabhikṣā*, a *bhikṣā* that involves debates and discussions. Then a long discussion lasted between these two great scholars for several days. The woman who was appointed as the judge in this case was Maṇḍana Mīśra's wife, Ubhayabhārati. When it became impossible to determine the winner of the debate, Ubhayabhārati, removed two garlands of fresh flowers and placed one around her husband's neck and the other around Ācārya Śaṅkara. According to her, whoever's garland faded first would be deemed the loser of this dispute, and the loser would become the victor's disciple.

As fortune would have it, the garland put around Viśvarūpa's neck faded first, while that on Śaṅkara's neck was still fresh. As per the prior understanding, Viśvarūpa was inducted into the holy order of Sannyāsa and became Śaṅkara's disciple. Later, he was known as Suresvarācārya, the foremost disciple of Śaṅkara.

And that Even after the defeat of her husband, Ubhayabhārati, the wife of Viśvarūpa was not prepared to surrender. She challenged him that the wife being the better half of a husband, unless she was defeated the defeat would not be complete. Śaṅkara accepted the challenge and a fresh session of argumentation started between them. But she asked certain questions which were impossible to answer for a *brahmacārī*. Then Ācārya Śaṅkara demanded time for months, during which he entered the dead body of King Amaruka, and obtained certain expected experience and

¹³ Ibid, p.10

left the body and came back to answer the questions of Ubhayabhārati. She was satisfied by the answers and conceded full victory to Śaṅkarācārya. The most well-known Sanskrit poetry of passionate sentiment, Amaruśataka, was composed by Śaṅkarācārya while he inhabited the body of King Amaruka.¹⁴ It is believed that Ubhayabhārati was an incarnation of Sarasvatī, the Goddess of knowledge she was born as a human being as the result of a curse. She surrendered her body and returned to her heavenly dwelling when her husband, Maṇḍana Miśra, gave up the householder's life and embraced *sannyāsa*.

When Śrī Śaṅkara was in Kāśī, he acquired a disciple, named Sanandana. Later, this disciple came to be known as Padmapāda because the river Ganga caused lotuses to bloom at every step of his foot i.e. pāda to give support to him, when once in his extreme devotion to Śrī Śaṅkara, he walked right on the stream to fulfill a command of the master, who was on the other bank.

Śrī Śaṅkara then traveled to Badri on the Himalayas where his Guru Govindapāda and Paramaguru Gauḍapāda were living in the enjoyment *nirvkalpa samādhi*. He made them revert to world conscious -ness by singing the famous *Dakṣhināmurti Stotra* and received their blessings. Ācārya Śaṅkara moved from village to village, covering all important towns, temples and cultural centres of the country along with his four disciples as well as other learned disciples to spread the knowledge of supreme reality, Advaita Brahman. The Ācārya conceived India as one cultural unit from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari and from Kamarupa to Gandhara with his *digvijaya yātrā* for establishing universal brotherhood and the intimate experience of the non-dual reality.

Hari on her behalf, touching her feet. She went to serve Hari after stepping out of her body. Ādi Śaṅkara once developed an intuitive sense that his mother was approaching death when he was stationed in the north. His mother had only allowed him to take *sanyāsa* at the age of twelve after he had assured her he would be there for her when she passed away. Upon learning of his mother's grave sickness, he traveled to Kaladi by himself in order to be by her side as she lay dying. His mother was critically ill and laying in bed when he arrived. He prayed to Lord When Namboodiri Brahmins advised him not to carry out the ceremony because *sanyāsis* are not permitted to, that's when his issues with his mother's practice began. His neighbors and even his family turned against him, so he made the decision to perform all the rites by himself without assistance. He broke the body into pieces and carried them to the backyard of the home because he was unable to handle it alone. He prepared a pyre out of the plantain tree wood, but he lighted the fire alone in accordance with *Sanātana* Dharma's burial rites because none of his relatives showed up to join him.

The majority of India's significant contributions came from the sages huts, where austerity, self-control, and transcendental meditation were practiced. Śrī Śaṅkara had a similar peaceful environment in which transcendental insight inspired him to write a vast body of work in a variety of Indian philosophical and religious traditions, particularly Advaita.

Ṣaṇmātāsthāpaka

¹⁴ Patel, Gautam, Ādi Śaṅkara *laghuprabandhāvaliḥ*, introduction, p.13

Although Ādi Śaṅkara was regarded as the greatest Advaita philosopher in India, one of his most significant contributions was the founding of Śaṅmātā, which means he changed and standardized the six forms of worship—*Gāṇapatyaṁ*, *Kaumāraṁ*, *Vaiṣṇavaṁ*, *Saurāṁ*, *Śāktaṁ*, and *Śaivaṁ*.¹⁵ *Pañcāyatana Pūjā* was prescribed by him for his own disciples. At Śrīraṅgam and Tiruppati, he was claimed to have installed the *janākarṣaṇa* and *dhanākarṣaṇa* yantras, which have the ability to draw devotees and offerings.¹⁶

Particularly in Samayamata, a method of *tāntrik* worship and meditation, Śrī Śaṅkara had delivered numerous Hindu religious schools from violent methods and provided them the deserved purity for *Śakti* worship. Hindus have done this since his time. In *Saundaryalaharī*, the *Samayamata* discipline is called *swatantra tantra*, and it contains *jñāna*, *bhakti*, *mantra*, and other elements.

In this sacred territory, Ācārya Śaṅkara built four Pīthas at its four corners and a fifth at Kanci. They are *Govardhana maṭha*, *Śāradā maṭha*, *Kālikā maṭha*, *Jyotir maṭha*, and *Kanci Kāmakotī maṭha*. Tradition holds that Śrī Śaṅkara was bestowed by Lord Śiva with five - *Sphaṭika līṅgās* and a transcription of *saundaryalaharī*, a century-long collection of songs honoring the heavenly Mother. Unfortunately, Śaṅkara misplaced the remaining fifty-nine of these lyrics, which he eventually composed himself. The five sacred sites are where he dedicated the five Sphaṭika līṅgās *Muktilīṅga* at Kedāra, which is close to *Jyotir maṭha*; *Varalīṅga* at Nīlakaṇṭha Kṣetra in Nepal; *Mokṣalīṅga* at Cidambaram; and *Bhogalīṅga* at Śringerī, which is close to *Śāradā maṭha*. At *Kanci Kāmakotī maṭha*, yoga is practiced. His followers are still residing there and passing on the teachings of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, including the Upanisadic philosophy and *Sanātana* Dharma. Ten categories were used by the Ācārya to classify also spiritual leaders - *Sarasvatī*, *Purī*, *Bhārati*, *Vana*, *Āraṇya*, *Tīrtha*, *Āśrama*, *Giri*, *Parvata*, and *Sāgara*.¹⁷ All of the countries have adhered to these titles.

Govardhana maṭha

This eastern maṭha was established at Jagannātha Purī and the first Ācārya was Padmapāda. Lord Viṣṇu, also known as *Jagannātha*, is the deity worshipped here, and *Vimalā* is his *Śakti*.¹⁸ Within this *maṭha*, the Sannyāsins are called *vana* and *āraṇya*, and the brahmacārīs are called *prakāśa*. They take pleasure in studying the *Ṛgveda* in particular and meditating on the *mahavākya prajñānam brahma*, which appears in the *Ṛgveda's Aitereya Upaniṣad*. The Bay of Bengal, or Mahodadhi, is the *tīrtha* in this instance. This *maṭha* is tasked with the spiritual wellbeing of the eastern section of the country.

Śāradā maṭha

The first Ācārya of this southern *maṭha* was Suresvarā, who founded the city of Śringerī, which is today in the state of Karnataka. Lord Śiva is the deity worshipped here, and *Śrī Śāradā* is his

¹⁵ Śaṅkara and Shanmata, preface.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Mahadevan, T.M.P, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, p.51

¹⁸ Swami Chinmayananda, Śaṅkara the missionary, p. 116

Śakti.¹⁹ The sannyāsins of this *maṭha* are called *Sarasvatī*, *Bhāratī*, or *Purī*. The name *caitanya* belongs to the brahmacārīs. They take pleasure in studying the *Yajurveda* in particular and reflecting on the *mahāvākya aham brahmāsmi* found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, a text from the *Śuklayajurveda*. Here, the river Tungabhadra serves as the *tīrtha*. This *maṭha* is charged with the spiritual wellbeing of the southern region of India. In this *maṭha*, the great Advaitic teacher Śaṅkara is believed to have meditated due to which the authorities erected as a memorial to him, attest to this. It is thought that this *maṭha* is the intended home of the Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission.

Kālikā maṭha

This western *maṭha* was founded at Dvārakā, in the state of Gujarāt and the first Ācārya was Hastāmālaka. This *maṭha*'s sannyāsins are called *Tīrtha* and *Āśrama*, while the brahmacārīs are called *Svarūpa*. They are instructed to study the *Sāmaveda* in particular and to focus on the *mahāvākya tattvaṁasi*, which appears in the *Sāmaveda's chāndogya upaniṣad*. This place is dedicated to the worship of Lord *Śiva* and his *Śakti, Bhadra Kālī*.²⁰ Here, the river Gomatī serves as the *tīrtha*. This *maṭha* is charged with the spiritual wellbeing of the western section of India.

Jyotirdhāma

This northern *maṭha* was founded at Jyotirdhāma in the Himālayās, close to the well-known pilgrimage site at Badarīnātha. Here, Totaka was the first Ācārya. The sannyāsins assigned to this *maṭha* are called *Girī*, *Parvata*, and *Sāgara*. *Ānanda* is the title of the brahmacārīs. It is enjoyable for them to study the *Atharvaveda* in particular and to ponder about the *mahāvākya ayam ātmā brahma*, which appears in the *Atharvavedic māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad*. Here, the river Alakānandā serves as the *tīrtha*. Lord *Viṣṇu* is the deity adored, and *Pūranagiri* his *Śakti*.

Kāñci Kāmakoti Pīṭha

This *maṭha* was first established in Kāncipuram by Advaita vedānta teacher Śrī Śaṅkara and later, it was shifted to Kumbakonam, the temple city of south, in the mid 18th century. This *maṭha* was a branch of Śringerī *maṭha* and became involved with the Kāmakṣhi temple in Kāncipuram. The first Ācārya was Śaṅkara himself. The Kāñci Kāmakoti Pīṭha authorities constructed Śrī Śaṅkarastūpa as a tribute to Śrī Śaṅkara's birthplace, Kālāti in Kerala.

Sarvajñapīṭha

Kashmir is an important spiritual center that nurtures the *Śakti* aspect of ultimate truth for sādhakas. According to the traditions, Ādi Śaṅkara founded *sarvajñapīṭha* in Kashmir²¹ as he had established himself as the omniscient in front of Devi *Śāradā*.

Mahāsamādhi

¹⁹ Swami Chinmayananda, *Śaṅkara the missionary*, p.117

²⁰ Ibid, p.118

²¹ Mahadevan, T.M.P, *Śrī Śaṅkarācārya*, p.39-41

According to Śringerī pīṭha, Śrī Śaṅkara surrendered his body in Kailasa. Also to scholars, he had left his body in the Himalayas whereas other people pointed it to be happened in Kerala. But, in general, it is believed that after being omniscient, he had travelled to Badarīnātha and entered the bila Holy cave. Śaṅkara was fortunate enough to see Devī Darshana, or the Goddess' vision, in that cave, after which he had never, came out from that place. He had dedicated the Śrīcakra in front of her image.

A gigantic life size stone image of Śaṅkara is brought to the *muktimanḍapa*, on the banks of Sarvatīrtha, on *vyāsapujā* day every year as a tribute to Vyāsa, the place where Śaṅkara was supposed to have attained nirvana.²²

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²² Mahadevan, T.M.P., *Śrī Śaṅkarācārya*, p.47-55