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Shankara And Indian Philosophy (Suny Series, Religious Studies)



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It was a time when India's ancient Sanatana-dharma was attacked when Muhammad bin Qasim's army occupied the province of Sindh in Northwestern India in 711 A.D. The land was in a state of shock and diminishment. By then, the influence of Buddhism was also a serious challenge to the practice of Hinduism. At this time, India needed a spiritual master to conquer the mind and hearts of the masses to save the teachings of Vedas and acceptance of dharma as the principal guiding force in one's life. Then came the resurgence and spiritual unification with the appearance of Adi Sankara on the horizon in 788 A.D. Renouncing material life, he mastered India's ancient lore and cleared the cobwebs that obscured the eternal religion and interpreted Brahma-Sutra, the Upanishads and the Gita in the light of Advaita Vedanta. The spirit of Shankara prevailed and he was successful in revitalizing and rejuvenating the principles of jnana, dharma and moksha, the basic elements of a Hindu life. Sankara also inaugurated the vast area of stotra literature, which remains a part of a Hindu's daily practices of a devotional and spiritual life. He was not only a great reformer, an intrepid scholar, and an illustrious teacher, but also a great visionary and a fine poet. His mastery over the six philosophical systems of Hinduism, and philosophical thoughts of the Jainism and Buddhism was immense, and in this book, the author discusses some of his work. The main focus of this book is to examine the principles of Shankara's Advaita Vedanta; his concept of the identity of atman and Brahman, his understanding of causality and Maya. Shankara's closest teachers were Gaudapada, and his work Mandukya-Karika incorporated the ideas of Mahayana Buddhism with Vedanta.

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