

Sree Aadi Sankara Mandapam

***"Shruti smriti purananam aalayam karunalayam
Namami bhagwadpada sankaram loka sankaram"***

The place of the Most Venerable Sree Aadi Sankara (**Bllis Incarnate**) is not only unique in the religious history of Hinduism but equally unique in the political and cultural history of India, as a whole. Despite the horrendous partition of India in 1947, the geophysical land mass of the Indian sub-continent surrounded in the North, by the mighty Himalayas, and on the other three sides, the Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean-- named after it-is inhabited by people belonging to a composite culture, civilization and ethnicity. The people may belong to different religions but that has not changed their oneness as a race, having deep roots in India's ancient civilization a deep cultural unity amidst diversity. In the past over five thousand years of Indian history, several dynasties have ruled in different parts of the sub- continent but its innate basic cultural unity/affinity has never been broken amongst the majority of its inhabitants. Indianness or Bharatiyata has always prevailed.

Sree Aadi Sankara, born in Kalady (Kerala State), on the west coast of India, travelled on foot to all parts of the Indian sub- continent and established by four sacred Peetams(Monasteries) at the four geographical corners Sringeri (Karnataka), in the south, Puri (Orissa), in the east, (Gujarat), in the west, and Joshi Mutt(Uttaranchal), in the north, at the foot of the Himalayas. He placed four of his gifted disciples, in Charge of them. He reorganized the ancient Vedic order of Sannyasis and assigned to it the spiritual leadership of the Hindu Society.

There was a popular perception, in olden times that among rivers Ganga : among towns Kanchi among flowers Jati, among Men Pushottam (Vishnu) were the foremost. Besides these traditional beliefs, His Holiness the Paramacharya always used to say that Venerable Aadi Sankara during his short life span of 32 years, visited Holy Kailash to see his Parent (Lord Siva) who gave him five lustrous spatika Lingams for installation at five different places of his choice. Aadi Sankara installed the first Lingam at Kedarkshetra temple at Kedarnath, known as "Mukthi Lingam": the second at Nilkanta Kshetram- Pasupatinath temple Katmandu, known as "Vara Lingam", the third known as "Bhoga Lingam" at Sharda Peetam, Sringeri, the fourth known as "Yoga Lingam", at Kanchi and the last and fifth one "Moksha Lingam" at Chidambaram. It is, worth while, to note that all the five Sacred Lingams look alike and are known as "Chandra Mouliswara" H.H.the Paramacharya was also of the firm view that Aadi Sankara attained Kaivalya Jivan Mukti (Siddhi) at Kanchi. In tracing the metamorphosis of a mound into the glorious temple complex, the Board of Management of the Samaj have

been faithfully following the directions of His Holiness the Paramacharya on all religious issues concerning the consecration and the rituals, till he attained Samadhi. Thereafter, His Holiness Jayendra Saraswati Swamigal guides the Samaj. The Board of Management have always been looking to Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam for the conduct of religious ceremonies, including even the fixing of dates, thereof, for every important festival or occasion. Kanchi thus became a guiding centre for the Samaj, on all spiritual matters. In view of the very deep emotional Bhakti, we all had towards H.H.the Paramacharya, it is but, appropriate, to have on record, in the Sthala- puranam, the perception, His Holiness had of the Venerable Aadi Sankara-- the fountain head of the Sanatana Dharma,--who had realized Brahman and "attained the highest vision of the Absolute". His Holiness Swami Nikhilananda, in his introduction to "Atma Bodha Self Knowledge" of Sree Aadi Sankara has this to say of him:-

Quote " He (Adi Sankara) stated that the direct method for realization of Brahman is not worship, but the path of knowledge, which consists in hearing the instructions of a teacher, reflecting on its meaning, and lastly meditating on truth with single minded devotion. Philosophical discrimination (Viveka) and renunciation of the unreal (Vairagya) constitute for Sankara the basic disciplines for realization of Brahman. Yet he was aware that few aspirants are strong enough to climb this deep path. The majority require a tangible symbol of Truth, anthropomorphic or other wise and also a human relationship with a personal God. For them prayer and supplication form an indispensable form of worship. Out of compassion for these seekers Sankara composes many hymns in praise of such popular deities of Hinduism as Siva, Vishnu and the Divine Mother.

As one reads these hymns one is impressed by the magnanimity of Sankara, who having attained the highest vision of the Absolute, brought himself down to the level of the ordinary worshippers, smitten with the idea of many transgressions, assumed their attitude of insignificance and helplessness and prayed to the Lord for grace to attain liberation from the miseries of earthly life. These hymns are recited daily by countless devotees all over India, at times of prayer and worship." Unquote One will scarcely believe that Sree Adi Sankara achieved all this, treading on foot, all over the vast country, in his short life span of 32 years. In building the Aadi Sankara Mandapam, in accordance with the directions of His Holiness Kanchi Periawal, the Samaj has rightly honoured and perpetuated the sacred memory of the great Savant who reformed the Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal Religion of Hinduism and with that end in view, wrote commentaries on Holy Sri mad Bhagwad Geeta r the Brahma Sutras and the principal Upanishads and became a personification of the wisdom of the Vedas.

A beautiful mono quartz icon of Sree Adi Sankara r made from a single piece of quartz adorns the hall. It is about 15 inches in height and is placed against the background of an arc light adding lustre to the icon. The Mandapam constituting one more significant infrastructure to the temple complex is used extensively by the Bhaktas for the purpose

of meditation, and religious discourses. Cultural programmes such as music and dance performances are also held at the time of important festivals. The sanctity of the temple gets progressively enhanced by the provision of this infrastructural facility for the conduct of Bhajans and religious discourses. The opening ceremony of the Mandapam was performed by His Holiness Jayendra Saraswati Swamigal on the 9th of November, 1997. His Holiness Vijayendra Saraswati Swamigal also graced the occasion.

Padmashri Shri Muthiah Stapati, who had been entrusted with the sculptural work of the temples of Lord Sundar eswarar, Goddess Devi Meenakshi, Lord Karpaga Vinayakar and the Adi Sankara Hall, was kind enough to contribute an article in Tamil, to the souvenir published by the Samaj, on the occasion of the Mahakumbhabhi shekam on the 27th of June 2001. The article was on the subject of Temple worship, Art and Architecture and a wholesome description of the Malai Mandir Temple complex. The informative article is published in the Tamil section. It shows not only his in depth knowledge of the subject but also his deep religiosity.

**Maha Kumbhabhishekam in Progress.
His Holiness Blessing Devotees from the Top**

