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Report of Śāṅkara Anudhyānam
A Daylong Symposium in Honour of Śrī Śāṅkarācārya
30 May 2026

The Śāṅkara Anudhyānam — a daylong symposium of remembrance, recitation, and reflection — was organised on 30 May 2026 in commemoration of Jagadguru Ādi Śāṅkarācārya, the eighth-century philosopher-monk who illuminated the Advaita Vedānta tradition and transformed the spiritual landscape of Bhārata. The event brought together monastics, scholars, students, and devotees in a sustained engagement with Śāṅkara's life, thought, literary legacy, and enduring relevance.

The programme unfolded across two sessions — a forenoon session centred on *bhāṣya-pārāyaṇam*, and an afternoon session featuring a rich sequence of scholarly presentations, stotra-singing, and philosophical dialogue — forming a seamless whole that honoured Śāṅkarācārya both in the traditional mode of *pārāyaṇam* and in the modern mode of critical inquiry and devotional music.

The symposium commenced at 9:30 am with a Vedic invocation rendered by students of the Department. Swami Atmapriyananda delivered the opening address, welcoming participants and contextualising the day's programme within the broader tradition of Śāṅkara commemoration. He highlighted the significance of anudhyānam—not merely as a commemorative act but as an active dwelling-in-thought upon the Ācārya's life and teaching, allowing his presence to become vivid and instructive in the present moment. His address set a contemplative and intellectually engaged tone for the entire day.

Dr. Rakesh Das offered a thematic introduction to the symposium, tracing the principal threads that the day's proceedings sought to weave together: the philosophical vision of Śāṅkara, the devotional character of his poetry, his organisational legacy, and the bridge between classical Advaita and modern Vedānta. Dr. Das situated the event within an ongoing academic and spiritual engagement with the Vedāntic tradition.

Swami Shivapurnananda performed the *Toṭakāṣṭakam* — the eight-verse hymn attributed to *Toṭakācārya*, the devoted disciple of Śāṅkara, who is said to have composed it spontaneously out of the deep love he bore for his master. The rendering evoked the profound guru-bhakti at the heart of the Advaita tradition and was received with great warmth by the assembly.

The central activity of the forenoon session was the *Prasthānatraya-sambandha-bhāṣya-pārāyaṇam* — the systematic recitation of passages from Śāṅkara's introductory portions (sambandha-bhāṣya) to his commentaries on the three foundational texts: the principal *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the *Brahmasūtras*. This *pārāyaṇam*, paused briefly for a tea break at 11:30

am and resumed thereafter, formed the devotional and scholastic centrepiece of the forenoon and embodied the spirit of the symposium — a living, voiced encounter with Śāṅkara's own words.

The afternoon commenced on a devotional note with Swami Sarvabhadrananda singing Bhaja Govindam, Śāṅkara's celebrated didactic poem addressed to the wandering student who places undue confidence in grammatical scholarship. The song served as both an invocation and a gentle reminder of the Ācārya's insistence on the primacy of wisdom over mere learning.

Dr. Rakesh Das conducted a session on Advaita Vedānta based on Śāṅkarācārya's Ātmānātmaviveka, formatted in the traditional mode of śiṣya-ācārya saṁvāda—a dialogue between teacher and disciple. This pedagogical format, rooted in the ancient Indian tradition of inquiry through question and answer, allowed participants to engage directly with key Advaitic concepts: the distinction between the Self and the non-Self, the nature of the witness-consciousness, and the logic of non-duality. The session was lively and drew active participation from the audience.

Swami Sarvabhadrananda followed with a recitation of the Manobuddhyāhaṅkāra Stotram, a devotional hymn that surrenders the instruments of the inner life — mind, intellect, ego, and the vital airs — at the feet of the Divine. The performance was rendered with meditative depth.

Swami Atmapriyananda delivered a scholarly presentation on Śāṅkara's treatment of Brahma in the Upaniṣadic tradition, distinguishing between Upāśya Brahma — the Brahman as an object of upāsanā or meditation — and Jñeya Brahma — the Brahman as the object of direct Vedāntic knowledge (jñāna). The talk illuminated Śāṅkara's exegetical method and his careful integration of the paths of upāsanā and jñāna within a non-dualistic framework.

Shubham Chakraborty offered a musical rendering of two of Śāṅkara's most beloved devotional compositions: the Annapūrṇā Stotram, addressed to the Goddess of nourishment who presides at Kāśī, and the Bhavānyaṣṭakam, a deeply personal eight-verse prayer of surrender to Goddess Bhavānī. The performances underscored Śāṅkara's synthesis of jñāna and bhakti — his capacity to compose works of philosophical precision alongside hymns of the most tender devotion.

Dr. Neeraj Kumar Bhargave delivered a substantive historical and philosophical lecture on the intellectual struggles of Śāṅkara in re-establishing the Vedāntic tradition. The presentation examined Śāṅkara's philosophical engagement on two principal fronts: his refutation of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā — particularly its insistence on the sufficiency of ritual action (karma) for liberation — and his critique of Buddhist metaphysics, including Vijñānavāda (Yogācāra) and Śūnyavāda (Mādhyamaka), all in the context of the Vedāntic aspiration for Ātma-Brahma-aikya-jñāna, the liberating knowledge of the identity of the individual self with Brahman.

Dr. Rakesh Das addressed the symposium on the theme of Śāṅkara's infinite compassion, drawing on the epithet lokaśāṅkara — 'the benefactor of the world' — embedded in his very name. The presentation explored how Śāṅkara's life, from his early renunciation to his tireless digvijaya across the length and breadth of Bhārata, was animated by compassion for suffering humanity, and how the gift of Advaita wisdom was itself the supreme expression of this compassion.

Swami Sarvabhadrananda sang the Kanakadhārāstotram, the celebrated hymn to the Goddess Lakṣmī said to have been composed by the young Śāṅkara when, as a wandering brahmacārin, he wished to relieve the poverty of a destitute woman who had given him her last āmalakī fruit in hospitality. The legend and its accompanying hymn beautifully illustrate the union of compassion, devotion, and miraculous power that tradition associates with Śāṅkarācārya.

Brahmachari Aditya Maharaj (Yogesh Chaitanya) presented on Śāṅkara's remarkable organisational achievements: the systematisation of six modes of worship (Ṣaṅmata-sthāpana — establishing the veneration of Śiva, Śakti, Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, and Kumāra as unified paths within the Vedāntic fold) and the founding of the Daśanāmi Sampradāya, the order of sannyāsins organised into ten sub-orders. The presentation highlighted how these institutions, which have endured for over twelve centuries, reflect Śāṅkara's concern not only for doctrinal correctness but for the social and institutional consolidation of Dharma.

Swami Japasiddhananda addressed Swami Vivekananda's celebrated aspiration that Advaita should be 'living and poetic in everyday life' — that its non-dual vision should not remain confined to monastic contemplation or textual commentary but should permeate the practical, social, and creative dimensions of human existence. The talk engaged with Vivekananda's interpretation of Advaita as a call to fearlessness, universal solidarity, and active service.

Swami Buddhidananda offered a reflective presentation bringing together Swami Vivekananda's concept of Practical Vedānta and Sri Ramakrishna's memorable instruction: 'Tie the knot of Advaita-jñāna in the corner of your cloth and do what you will.' He explored the complementarity of these two formulations — Ramakrishna's image pointing to an inward, ever-present awareness of non-duality that accompanies all worldly activity, and Vivekananda's vision of a Vedānta that expresses itself outwardly in service, courage, and the recognition of the divine in every human being.

The symposium concluded at 5:10 pm with a recitation of the Guru Stotram (tatah kim...) by Swami Vidyapradananda — a hymn that invokes the grace of the guru as the indispensable condition for liberation. The choice of this concluding piece was apt: Śāṅkara was himself, above all, a guru — the Jagadguru — and the entire day's proceedings had constituted, in their totality, an act of gratitude and remembrance before his feet.

The Śāṅkara Anudhyānam 2026 was made possible through the dedicated efforts of the organising committee, the faculty and students of the Department, and the generous participation of distinguished monastics and scholars. The organisers place on record their deep gratitude to all the speakers, performers, and participants whose presence and engagement lent the programme its depth, warmth, and scholarly distinction.

Report Prepared By

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