

“Eloquent silence” – unity of liberating knowledge and liberating grace in Śaṅkara’s Dakṣiṇāmūrti-hymn

This paper undertakes an analysis of some of the key concepts of the Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotra (the Hymn to the South-facing Śiva), a celebrated philosophical poem traditionally ascribed to Śaṅkara (circa 7th c. AD), one of the most influential thinkers of India.

A comprehensive introduction to the topic provides the reader with a faithful rendering of the poem as well as some details of the development of the figure of the divinity and the basic tenets of the non-dualistic (advaita) school of vedānta philosophy that are represented in the hymn. Then the essay attempts to highlight how the theme of liberating grace appears within the context of liberating knowledge or jñāna. Although in the soteriology of advaita vedānta jñāna is considered the single factor that is able to bring about liberation, in this hymn jñāna is set forth as a result of a kind of liberating “grace”, which however, as it is argued, is not a redemptive act of a personal divinity, but the self-revealing fullness of the impersonal reality, by which absolute transcendental Being reveals its obvious and immediate nature. The figure of the divinity is thus a symbolic representative of this act of self-revelation.