CHAPTER-5

CONCLUSION

The forgoing study of the religious and philosophical concepts of Sankaradeva with regard to some salient features has brought us nearer to the nature of Vaisnavism. On the basis of the discussion, it is to make an appraisal of the philosophical thoughts of Sankaradeva along with an examination of their contemporary relevance. Usually, a name denotes, the real subject matter and defines the essential qualities of a thing. The concepts and doctrines of the philosophy of Sankaradeva can be brought under a name and the name may be given Advaitabhagavatavada. The foremost point, that strikes the attention while evaluating the religious philosophy of Sankaradeva is the positive and firm belief in the oneness of God. The philosophy of oneness propounded by Sankaradeva demands in its religious aspect a supreme surrender to one supreme being by the devotees. This supreme being is called by different names such as Brahman, the supreme Brahman Visnu, parameswara, Narayana etc. Sankaradeva’s attitude towards ritualism is pragmatic.

Advaitabhagatavada means a theory of Supreme Reality which maintains that Bhagavana or Narayana is the only Reality in the universe who is second to none. Sankaradeva accepts ‘Bhagavana’ in the place of Absolute Truth or Parama-Brahman in his philosophy. Though, Sankaradeva is not a metaphysician like Sankaracharya, but a religious philosopher with
a socio-humanistic upsurge. Though, Sankaradeva believes in ‘Nirguna Brahman’, it is found that he puts very much emphasis on Bhagavana or Visnu or Lord krsna in all of his literary works. Sankaracharya’s philosophy is known as Advaita Vedanta or Advaita Brahmavada. Sankaracharya’s Brahman is identical to Sankaradeva’s Bhagavana.

Sankaradeva’s religion is known as Eka Sarana-Nama-Dharma; being a religious person in particular. This indicates his religious position as a pure monotheist and this leads to his philosophical position of being a monist or non-dualist. As a monotheist he accepts krsna being the supreme God and has supremacy over all other Gods. Girish Baruah rightly observes that though, the immediate base of Sankaradeva’s philosophy in the Bhagavata Purana, ultimately his base is the Vedanta in its theistic line (Nath Jiva Kanta (ed) (article by Baruah, G.: 2008 :3).

According to Sankaradeva an ardent devotee of God can only realise the ‘Lila-Swarup’ of the world through the process of his devotion to God. God is the eternal truth, the supreme Reality by nature. So, the name of the Philosophy of Sankaradeva must be derived from his firm belief in the Supreme Reality which is none but Bhagavana or God Himself. The name Advaita-bhagavata-vada is the only just and appropriate one to reveal the real nature of Sankaradeva’s philosophy. Ramanuja also maintained that the creation and dissolution of the world are due to the sweet will of God, they are His ‘Lila’ or Sports. (Sarma, C.D. 1987 : 358) But for such concept of the world as God’s Lila or ‘Bhagavata Lila’, Ramanuja’s Philosophy is
not known as Lila-vada or Advaitalilavada. It has been known by the name "visistadvaitavada". Because ‘Brahman’ of Ramanuja is qualitative (Saguna Brahman).

The Religious Philosophy of Sankaradeva can be included within the school of vedanta philosophy under the umbrella of Indian Philosophy either it is Advaitabhagavatavada or with any other name of it. All the vaisnavite Philosophers are more or less influenced by the Upanisadic Philosophy. Sankaradeva also greatly influenced by the Upanishads. So, Sankaradeva’s Philosophy may be rightly included under the Vedanta Philosophy in a sequence after the philosophy of Suddhadvaitavada of Ballavacharyya.

Inspite of having some mystical elements in him, yet the thoughts of Sankaradeva are not devoid of aesthetic sense of high rank. He is very much responsible for Aryanization of the Assamese society with his all India messages and has contributed a lot to assimilate the North-eastern region with the rest of India. He has brought to Assam the same message as Nanaka has brought to the Punjab and Kabira to the whole of India. Sankaradeva can be compared very well with other saint philosophers of medieval India as he has the equal rank with them. In this regard Radhakanta Phukan said that he could not understand the reason why the Mahapurusias (followers of Sankaradeva) disclined to admit the striking fact that Sankaradeva was the greatest philosopher in the world after Buddhadeva (1988:208). Therefore, the philosophy of Sankaradeva can be compared
with none except the philosophy of Buddha. He was actually a well-versed philosopher from every perspective.

Sankaradeva emphasised the need to integrate philosophy with religion and spirituality to create a new value based human society. His philosophy in a new path of social, ethical and spiritual regeneration with the emphasise on devotion to Lord krśna. He has laid the foundation of the ‘Satra institution thereby accelerating the pace of the emergence of Assam in the fields of literature, fine arts, performing arts etc. The role of the sattra institutions in the moral and spiritual upliftment of the Assamese people is really great. These institutions still today have instilled in the minds of the people the sense of co-operation, fellow feeling moral sense and communal harmony in the mind of Assamese people.

Sankaradeva always stressed on the purity of human mind. He said throughout his writings and teachings that one can see the Lord within Himself. The places of pilgrimage cannot wash away sins. We should clean our heart first. It is notable point towards humanism of Sankaradeva. Fasting and other observations are meaningless unless the mind is purified. Sankaradeva’s humanism is not a mere extension of traditional spiritualistic humanism. His humanism is creatively concerned with the re-organization of society as a necessary condition for the ethico-spiritual development of man. “Like Aristotle, Hegel and Maru, Sankaradeva recognized the importance of the social nature of man.” (Sarma, N. (ed) : 2008 : 333) His philosophy of the culture needs a reformation in modern terms to suit the
demands of man, the concrete human person who is always found to be a man-in-society and also man-in-the world. Sankaradeva boldly came out with the declaration that in the matter of devotion to the Lord, all are equal and there could be no caste and race distinctions. He said as -

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kirata kachari} & \quad \text{khasi garo miri} \\
\text{yavana kankana govala} & \\
\text{asama muluka} & \quad \text{rajaka taruka} \\
\text{kuvaca mlechcha candala} & \\
\text{ana jata nara} & \quad \text{krsna seva kara} \\
sangata pavitra haya & 
\end{align*}
\]

\text{(Bhagavata :53)}

[The kiratas, the Khasis, the Garos, the Miris (Mising), the Yavanas, the Kankas, the Govalas, the Asamas (Ahoms), the Malukas, the Rajakas, the Turukas, the Kuvachas, the Mechas, the Candalas and all others become pure in the company of the servants (devotees) of Krishna].

Sankaradeva was a saint, preacher whose primary mission was to spread the message of the bhakti movement in the North-eastern region with its accent on liberalism and humanism which had been sweeping over northern India in those days. But Sankaradeva, the unparalleled, genius did not keep itself confined within the boundaries of religion and spiritualism. It spilled over in an abundant flow in the fields of literature and art, enriching, Assamese culture with invaluable treasures. The main aim of the saint was the reform and reconstruction of the society on democratic and humanitarian
lines. He said as -

kukura srigala gardabharo atmaram
janiya savako pari kariba pranam

(Kirtanghosa :1823)

[We should respect all the creatures, dogs, foxes, asses, as God residing in them as souls].

Sankaradeva had made his thoughts extremely simple and free from all ritualistic complexities, excessively rigorous banal formalities. His great disciple Madhavadeva gave cogent expression to this attitude in his Namghosa as -

harinama kirtana nahi desa kala patra
niyama samyama eko vidhi

(Namghosa :29)

[In the singing of the praise of God there are no rules of place, time, qualification, rituals and rigorous].

Sankaradeva had galvanized the people of Assam with his message of devotion to one supreme God and of love and compassion towards fellow men. He had unified the diversified racial, social and cultural elements of the region with his wonderful capacity for synthesis and had also imbued the newly-welded society with the spirits of liberalism and open heartedness that have stood the test of time. If love is not awakened in the heart then, rituals and ceremonies are of no avail. Sankaradeva in that way believed in
the simple and direct approach to God through Seavana, Kirtana bhakti with dasyavhava. Sankaradeva was a conscious reformist and simplified the mods of religious practices with great emphasis on bhakti which was made accessible even to the lowest in the society by rendering the holy scriptures into the language of the common masses. He set all irrespective of caste or status distinction in the same footing, when he declared that one need not be a great scholar or of high birth to become a bhakta, one need not acquire knowledge of many scriptures.

nalage bhaktita deva dvija rsi huibe
nalage sambharta sastra visitra janibe

(Kirtanghosa : 380)

Sankaradeva was deeply concerned with the inculcation of the moral and spiritual values among the masses. He advises all to keep away from greed, falsehood, desire, anger etc. and to live on purity, non-violence and self-disciple, such disciplined life of the individual promotes ‘social peace’ to a great extent. Due to moral disturbances and anxieties man may commit acts that may be harmful for the others. Keeping such situations in mind, Sankaradeva advises the necessity of self control - ‘Atman Sudhi’. The ‘self control’ is the best ethical code of Sankaradeva, not for his age only but it is more valuable and relevant to the present age of society. He could realise that without moral consciousness, social awakening is impossible. His ‘Mukti mangal bhatima’ bears the ideal of the human welfare and
arouses social consciousness of the people. Sankaradeva could use the connotation of the term ‘secularism’ in the same sense, centuries before India’s political independence in which constitution of India has, used it. Gandhiji’s sarva dharma samabhava was taught by Sankaradeva in the 15th century. As he says -

parara dharmaka nihingsiba kadacit

(Bhakti-Pradipa :141)

[Hurt not other people’s religious sentiments].

nakariba ninda anyapanthi samastak

(Bhakti-ratnakara :268)

[Censure not the followers of other religions].

Sankaradeva’s ideology including his ethical principle’s and socio-religious ideals has the capacity to protect the evil doers from violence, drug abuse, alcoholism an all other satanic vices that allure them and lead them to self-destruction. Although, Sankaradeva lived and preached about five hundred years ago, his democratic thought have great relevance to the present day society. Indeed, we should regard him as a prophet and teacher of all times. The moral degradation of today in our society of Assam as well as in India also due to the degradation in value systems. The ultimate dictum of Sankaradeva for emancipation is detachment to mundane allurements - which should be cultivated. Sankaradeva’s philosophy is about the philosophy of life which teaches us the art of living, a successful and
happy life. The teaching of Sankaradeva, basically convey universality and oneness of mankind. He is a universal messiah - a world class personality and teacher. Socio-religious organizations with his ideology can play a pivotal role to reach a constructive stratum of our social well being. The message of love, universal brotherhood, equality between man and man, service to mankind and peace which Mahapurusa Sankaradeva propagated are indeed the source of solace to man in the contemporary society. Because, thematizing of human being and creativity is to be seen together. For man, authentic human person reveals himself in his creativity has to be understood as man's authentic power. Sankaradeva said as --

\[
\text{kshanekate sajila pratima} \\
\text{dekhi raja parama mahima} \\
\text{bulilaha bismaya vachan} \\
\text{noha nara tora duyojan}
\]

(Kirtanghosa :185)

[Thou have erected an image in a moment, viewing your creative power, the king expresses astonishment, no no! You are not an ordinary man].

Sankaradeva’s creative humanism adopts a secular ethics which stresses upon the reformation of the individual first and then society be reformed gradually.