PREFACE

Sankaradeva, the founder of the Neo-Vaisnavite movement in Assam, was among the greatest saints of India. He appeared in 1371 Saka or 1449 A.D. and breathed his last in 1491 Saka or 1569 A.D. Sankaradeva spent his life in bringing before his people the ideals of a good life conceived on the background of a faith in a single Deity.

It is mentioned in the Guru-charitas that the ancestors of Sankaradeva had migrated from Kannauj to Kamarupa at the time of king Durlavanarayana of Kamata kingdom, Chandibar was the great grandfather of Sankaradeva. Kusumbar Bhuyan and Satyasandha was the father and mother of Sankaradeva respectively. Sankaradeva had lost his parents in the very early days of his life. Therefore, he had to be brought up by his grandmother Khersuti.

In this work, an attempt has been made to present the philosophical thoughts of Sankaradeva and his followers, specially Madhavadeva, the saints and social reformers of the fifteenth century of Assam. This outstanding thinkers initiated a progressive and democratic movement in order to redeem the society from the grip of socio-religious disharmony. Sankaradeva’s mission was to reawaken the spiritual consciousness in people, to teach them dharma in its proper sense, to bring social equality among all sections of people irrespective of caste and creed and to liberate people from ignorance and suffering. The present work is an attempt to correlate and compare the view points of Vedanta philosophy and the
Vaisnavism of Assam. However, so far as Sankaradeva concerned, though various eminent scholars of Assamese literature have attempted to understand the versality of his creative genius, yet he is the least explored personality from the field of philosophical thought. Though, we have a rich tradition of biographical literature on the life and works of Sankaradeva since seventeenth century, it is only in the nineteenth century that a more matured response of the Assamese society to the tradition of Sankarite culture can be found. There are volumes of works in the form of books, research papers, articles etc. highlighting the life and teachings of Sankaradeva. But, inspite of his versatility and immense contributions to the cultural life of North-East India, it is a matter of regret that uptill now not much research has been done on the philosophical thoughts of the great saint Sankaradeva.

As Sankaradeva’s whole philosophy is based upon the Bhagavata-purana, his teachings are more religious than philosophical. He propounded his religious philosophy to carry his messenger to the common people. It has been stated that although Sankaradeva is not a systematic philosopher yet his literature and culture are enriched with his profound religious and philosophical ideas He has made tremendous contributions to the different fields like religion, literature, education and culture.

In order to make a detail and comprehensive study of the Vedanta philosophy and the Vaisnavism of Assam, the proposed scheme of this research work has been divided into five chapters including Introduction and Conclusion.
III

In the introductory chapter, attempt has been made to focus on the meaning of philosophy in relation to Vedanta system of Indian thoughts, whatever it may be Advaita of Sankaracharya or Visistadaita of Ramanujacharya.

In the Chapter-II, my sincere effort is to deal with the background of both the Vedanta Philosophy and the Vaisnavism of Assam which includes the growth and development of Vedanta, the pre-sankarite period of Vaisnavism, the Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankaradeva and the unique feature of the Vaisnavism of Assam.

In Chapter-III highlights the influence of Vedanta in Assamese Vaisnavite literature and the reflection of Vedanta through the representation of writings of Ananta Kandali, Vaikunthanatha Bhattacharyya and Ramasaraswati.

In the Chapter-IV of this study, attempt has been made to focus how Vedanta represented in the literature of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva. In this regard, we have discussed all the literary works of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva.

The conclusion represents findings regarding the foregoing chapters and endeavours to arrive at the underlying principles of unity which is the chief concern of almost all the philosophers of the India. It also attempts at an appraisal of his thought along with the consideration of Sankaradeva's contemporary relevance.

Now, it is time to record my acknowledgement with great pleasure.
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