CHAPTER - 6

CONCLUSION
6.1 Conclusion

Bhakti has mainly come into human mind from religion. It does not matter whether the religion is Hinduism, Islam or Christianity. But there is a strong connection between religion and Bhakti. Bhakti is a mental curriculum because it is related to man’s feelings and emotions which cannot be expressed properly by words. In another terminology, Bhakti is a kind of religious opium. When one discusses religion then it can be said that religion is a composition of three elements - theology, myth and rites and rituals. But here a question arises – are all the stories found in mythology true? For answering this question it can be said that most of the mythology belongs to an oral tradition which have no real basis.¹

It has already been discussed in the fifth chapter how the spirit of Vaishnava Dharma or the Vaishnava Bhakti Movement inspired the whole of India between sixth to sixteenth century AD. From the discussion made in the chapter it has been realized that since ancient times India was a prominent center of Bhakti. The religious or spiritual life of India developed from the Vedas and Upanishada. But it is also a fact to be noted that the basic idea of religion was there in the mind of man since the beginning of human civilization. The four Vedas are considered as the basis of the Hindu religion. It is here, in the Vedas that God is described as Anadi, Ananta, Parameswar, Nirguna, Nirakara etc. When religion is brought into discussion it will come to one’s knowledge that since the beginning of civilization man has been confining him to some basic rites, rituals and customs. In the gradual course of time these rites, rituals and customs became an ideal part of life. These inspired them a lot in maintaining a decent life style, which went a long way moulding human civilization to perfection. As a result of this realization the people of older times termed such rites, rituals and customs as religion.
They said that religion is but praying to such powerful elements for fulfilling one's needs. It is true that all those things fulfilling human needs are worthy of appreciation. Keeping this in mind, since ancient times people have been worshiping rivers, trees, animals and reptiles etc. They felt that there was the existence of religion in those practices observed by them.

When the topic of religion is brought into discussion, it can be seen that religion has a significant place in every person's life. This is because religion can raise man's mind towards possibilities and prospects far beyond worldly achievements. Religion teaches man how to become true human beings. But this does not mean that man should strive for violence in the name of religion. The meaning of religion should be peace and non-violence. The objective of each religion is spreading the message of peace and love among all in society. It is true that religion cannot be confined to a particular concept or theory. It is larger than life and all-pervading. It has a wide scope. Each and every man has his own perspective of looking at religion or Dharma. From the general viewpoint religion or Dharma is such a process through which process or activity one can attain mental peace. The first and foremost condition to make this situation possible is that one should act in a moral way. One should not indulge in any immoral act in this process. Secondly this act or activity done should not do any harm to anyone or any life. Religion or Dharma is that process or task which does no harm to any living being, nor hatred for anybody attain peace through non-violence, an activity through which no one is made to feel hurt even though one cannot provide him or her happiness, where one cannot play the role of creator and at the same time also see to it that one is not playing the role of the destroyer even; where one does not create unrest.
in another one’s life even though he or she cannot bring tranquility to someone’s life and where there is a feeling of equality towards all.

It has been seen that many a social problem (issue) arises due to the moral degradation of human beings. Such issues are seen quite frequently in today’s world. The present society is infected with hatred, violence and more serious sensualistic activities. The society need to be rescued from such vices. Keeping this in view there is importance of religion in society as because religion can discipline irrational behavior of man that again restrains him from committing immoral acts, harmonizes and cultures man’s deeds. There is the presence of a spiritual being in human. This spiritual being of man becomes qualified through the experience of religion. The presence of religion in man gives a certain feeling of tranquility. It enhances the spiritual upliftment of man. The religious enthusiasm in man inspires man to nurture human values. But it is worthwhile to note that this religious fervour is incomplete without purity of thought and dedicated feeling of Bhakti. Similar to religion, Bhakti is also a mental faculty. The elements of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are associated with Bhakti. Bhakti or devotion is a kind of love or attachment (Anurākti) or infatuation (Anurāg). Citing the examples from the Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita, it can be said that this infatuation is towards God – infatuation towards the worshiped One.

When one speaks of Bhakti or devotion, the first thing that comes to one’s mind is devotion towards God. This is so because the Vedas, Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas and the Bhagavad – all indicate devotion towards God. Because the word Bhakti is associated with God so it can be considered as a part of Dharma or religion. Moreover, as Bhakti or devotion is a mental faculty and an outcome of the human mind. According to the Bhakti Sutra of Narada or the Bhakti
Sutra of Shandilya infatuation, attachment, affection and love towards God. So Bhakti can also be termed as ‘Prema Dharma’ (religion of love). From this particular viewpoint, as Bhakti is a mental process as well as exercise and that it rises from the heart, it can be termed both as Prema Dharma (religion of love) as well as ‘Antar Dharma’ (religion of the heart). When a devotee or Bhakta, out of intense love, binds God to his heart and surrenders before God, then such love can be termed as Bhakti. Even though the medium of expression of this attachment or affection towards God is of varied form such as Dashya, Madhujya, Sakhya etc., its significance is one and alone - attainment of mental peace.

This mental peace is the ultimate objective of Jeeva (self). Jeeva applies different ways and means in order to fulfill this objective. This love inspires man to become one with the universe. Moreover it inspires man to treat each and everyone equally and thus imports spiritual knowledge in man. Again, if seen from a different perspective, Bhakti or devotion is a kind of mental opium, Bhakti is mental opium because a Bhakta or devotee intoxicated with Bhakti Prema, is unable to think of aspects other than God. Such a Bhakta or devotee becomes so much engrossed in love of God that he recognizes nothing but his God. Such a Bhakta sacrifices his entire life to his beloved God, associating with religion and gets engrossed in the spreadth of the message of God.

All over the world people follow different religions and observe religious rituals and customs of their own. In India, such type of religious enthusiasm can be seen in large scale. It can be seen that since the period of the Vedas, the Indian society has been observing numerous rituals and customs either in the name of religion or in the name of Bhakti or devotion. In the early ages of human civilization when some natural
occurrences took place, such as storm, flood, earthquake, epidemic, etc. the people thought that the power whom they worshipped, was displeased with them. So, He was trying to destroy them through those occurrences. Due to that perception or out of ignorance, early man started performing some rites and rituals for gratifying their God. This included the sacrifice of human beings, animals and birds and offering prayer to trees and shrubs, snake and rivers, etc. This particular custom is still prevalent at some places in the twenty first century. But at this point it is a matter of concern as to how far it is practical and logical to sacrifice a bird, an animal or a live human being. The scriptures have talked of following religious rites and customs, but the scriptures have not talked about sacrificing of living things in the name of Dharma and Bhakti (except for the Kalika Purana and Yogini Tantra). It has been said in scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita and the Bhagavad that God resides there in every Jeeva (living being) in this universe. Each living being is a part of God- all powerful. According to Bhagavadgita, Sri Krishna said in canto 2 chapter 10

“na me viduh suragaṇaḥ prabhavaṁ na mahāraṣayaḥ I
ahamādirhi devaṁni mahāraṣṭīn ma sarvāṣaṁ” II²

(Bhagavadgita, Chapter 10, Canto 2)

(It means Lord Viṣṇu who is also known as Narayana, as Para Brahma, Supreme Lord who creates unlimited universe and enters each one of them as Lord of Universe.)

Now the question is- if God is there within each and every living being of this universe then how far is it acceptable for a Bhakta or a devotee to destroy the one whom he worships? Has someone given the right to a Bhakta or a devotee to kill or destroy a living being created by God? In the same way nature always maintains equilibrium. Is it wise to destroy or pollute the water bodies like lakes and rivers, trees
They took the help of Bhakti as media in order to establish non-violence in the society. Going through the books written on Sankaradeva and Kabirdas, it will come to notice that during their time conservativeness of religion and the superstitions associated with religion were at its height. The numerous rituals and customs and sacrifices associated with religion took an ugly turn and almost affected the mentality of the people in a negative way. A misconception took form in mass mentality where people started thinking that they would attain more virtue (*Punnya*) if they invest a lot of money on extravagant religious rites and rituals and perform religious ceremony or customs at a grand scale. It is important to note that prominent historians of literature such as Satyendra Nath Sarma and Dwarika Prasad Saxena had mentioned in their books that most of the people in society during the period of Sankaradeva and Kabirdas were economically poor. Only a handful of people were economically well off. As a result the society was divided into two classes of people. Apart from rituals, human and animal sacrifices gained importance then. At the initial stage there was the sacrifice of birds like duck and pigeons. This was followed by the sacrifice of animals such as goats, buffaloes etc. Moreover, at some instances, sacrifice of human was also made. In view of this the religious setup of the Middle Ages witnessed widespread chaos. Both Sankaradeva and Kabirdas came into the scene during such a chaotic state. Both these saints strongly opposed the performing of religious rituals, customs, sacrifices, etc. and announced that there is no need of such lavish and elaborate rituals to please God. The only thing needed is pure feeling of devotion or Bhakti from within the heart. It is only through pure Bhakti that God can be attained. It seemed as if the common people in society have been waiting for such a religion. Due to the liberal outlook of Sankaradeva
and Kabirdas, a large number of people coming from different sections in society accepted the religion established by them.

Both Sankaradeva and Kabirdas have been great teachers who showed people a path to attain God through Bhakti. It can be observed that though Sankaradeva and Kabirdas were born as common men, yet they aimed at the reform of society. In addition to this their idea of establishing non-violence, introducing Bhakti Dharma as oppose to religious malpractices observed during that time made them rise to the position of Mahapurush and made them a part of a glorious history of revival and reform of religion in India in the Middle Ages. But it is matter of great concern that Sankaradeva who tried to input the spirit of humanism within the society, the work of that Mahapurusha in yet to be evaluated in the true sense. A comparative study of Sankaradeva and Kabirdas’ teachings and ideology shows that both of them have a lot of similarity as far as ideology is concerned. But compared to Kabirdas, Sankaradeva is not a widely known figure. The world community has seen and heard much more about Kabirdas than Sankaradeva. In the present social setup and times the teachings and ideology of Sankaradeva has much relevance. The humanistic appeal of his ideology need to be evaluated accordingly. Some research scholars and social scientists have made partial evaluation of Sankaradeva’s life, ideology and creative world. This is praise worthy but there is a lot more to do. The world community has much more to learn about Sankaradeva. The colossal figure Sankaradeva was not only the Grand Guru of the greater Assamese society, but also a great social reformer, philosopher and litterateur. He has been such an impressive personality who brought revolutionary changes to the Assamese society.
Today's age is an age of science and technology. Still now in the age of science and technology the teachings of Sankaradeva have much relevance. The relevance of Sankaradeva's *Ek Sharan Naam Dharma* in the twenty first century is due to its scientific outlook. From the general point of view, science aims at the enhancement of the lifestyle of human beings. The objective of the overall welfare of mankind has been there in the ideals of Sankaradeva and Kabirdas. They introduced the people to an elevated spiritual life through their preachings of the Bhakti Dharma so that the common people may get relief from worldly pain and sufferings. It also helped in enhancement of moral as well as ethical values among people of different caste, creed and sect so as to bring harmony and unity among all in society. Truth was the guiding light that enlightened their souls and it was this heavenly source of power which helped them in their spiritual endeavour for the welfare of mankind. They were individuals with extra ordinary qualities. They acquired these qualities staying in the company of pious minded beings (Satsanga), Guru (teacher) and their numerous pilgrimages to other places. Both of them aimed at establishing good will and harmony among different sects of people, different cultural thoughts as well as different communities.

Lives of the Mahapurushas are an excellent example of selfless service. Even in their teachings one can find the example of selfless service. There is the need of such Mahapurushas in today's world. Saints like Sankaradeva and Kabirdas has the ability to reinstate the society after having delivered the society of moral degradation and reassuring that human values are well preserved by the people in society. They are able to do this because they can realise the true meaning of religion. They can relate spirituality with genuineness. They can rise above petty thoughts and think for the welfare of one to all in society. In addition to this they have the ability to perceive the
presence of God in each and every living being. They dedicate their life towards the wellbeing of all living beings. They are of the opinion that the only way to achieve God is through non-violence, love and devotion. They feel that it is through self-realization that the idea of humanism gets implanted in man. It is after the fulfillment of such a realization in man that man forgets the difference of caste, religion etc. and unite to contribute towards a strong foundation of a healthy society-healthy in mind (spirituality) and body (material aspect). This was the ideology of the Bhakti Dharma propagated by Sankaradeva and Kabirdas. Both these dignified personalities assimilated the practical, mental, moral as well as spiritual factors present in man and worked for its all-round upliftment. That religion which cannot well balance or assimilate all these factors cannot be wholly perfect. As for the Bhakti Dharma propagated by Sankaradeva and Kabirdas was whole in itself, it has an universal appeal and acceptable for all.

In the conclusion it can be said that similar to the social condition before Sankaradeva and Kabirdas, the present society too, faces a chaotic scenario. In view of this degrading situation there is need of the teachings of Sankaradeva and Kabirdas to be evaluated in the new light and in accordance with the prevailing social situation of today. As a matter of fact, Sankaradeva and Kabirdas are not only the most distinguished religious preachers of all times alone; in fact they are the most prominent of social reformers in the history of human civilization.

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References


2. Edwin Arnold, *The Bhagavadgita*, Chapter 10, Vibhūti Yoga, Canto 2, p.188