CHAPTER V

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5/1. Introduction:

India is a religious country. In religious pursuits, Vedas are recognised as the root of religion and Vedic conduct as religion.\(^1\) Religion has been defined in different ways in the scriptures. All such actions are included in religion by Maharsi Kanad, which lead to attainment of worldly prosperity and salvation - \textit{Yatoaabhuyudaya nihsreyasa siddhi sa dharmah.}\(^2\) A study of the religious pursuits and cultural development in India would show that different thinkers have propounded different ways for the pursuit of prosperity and salvation according to the particular age. Sankardeva and Tulsidas also gave a new lease of life to religion by shaping it in the light of the contemporary environment. A comparative study of the religious thoughts of these two poets is presented below.

5/2. Decadence in contemporary religious consciousness:

Sankar and Tulsi both had deeply perceived and examined the religious assumptions of their society. They were religious reformers. They stretched the significance of the ideal in \textit{Gita-Bhagavata} and \textit{Ramayana - Mahabharata}. Rama and Krishna became their ideal. Religious irregularities in the contemporary life and society were attributed by them to \textit{Kali-Kala}.\(^2\) People were corrupt\(^3\) and it lead to many discrepancies in
religious life. It is depicted in detail by Śāṅkar and Tulsi and they found it fatal to society as can be seen below.

A. Vedic Karmakāṇḍa :

The life in general and religion in particular mainly follow the vedic traditions. It was propounded by brāhmans and seekers. But due to the decadence of varṇāśrama-dharma a disruption occurred in the flow of vedic tradition. It lead to decadence and disruption in religious life. Śāṅkar and Tulsi were gained by it and expressed their reactions in many places. That the decadence of vedic religion and conduct became a religious crisis in society. The society was shaken by it and Śāṅkar and Tulsi regretfully declare:

ĕribe ācāra dharma vedara vihita.
kulakriyā eko nathākiṣeka kalita.

- Śāṅkar, Bhāg, 12/40

āśrama- barana - dharama - birahita jaga,
loka- beda- marjāda gai ĥāi.

- Tulsi, V.P., 139/4

B. Tīrtha-Vrata :

People were spending money and undergoing suffering for pilgrimage, fast etc. as they were guided by superstitions.
It was so widely spread in medieval India that a mammon-like hypocrisy had practically replaced religion. It was causing harm to the society. It had become a means of exploitation of the innocent people. Both Śankar and Tulsi had seen through this religious superstition. Both of them attacked the show and the artificiality in religion:

śārīrasabaka mai bolai citte,
mamatā karoi putra vāryā bitte,
tīrtha ouli karoi jalata śuddhi,
pratimāta karoi devatā buddhi,
vaishnava nāhi esaba mati,
garuto adhama kṛṣṇa badati.

- Śankar, Kīr., 132-33

sura-sadanani tīratha purīna, nipata kucāli kusāja.
manahun mawāse māri kali rājata sahīta samāja.

- Tulsi, Doha, 558

C. Tāntrik ācār:

During the times of Śankar and Tulsi tāntric conduct had greatly influenced religious activities. All sorts of immorality was flourishing in the guise of religion. Their attention was drawn towards pancamakāra in vāmācāritā and they condemned its followers:
D. Artificiality in religion:

It is seen that deception, hypocrisy etc. prevailed in different forms at different levels whenever immorality appears in religious guise. In the times of Sāñkar and Tulsi such a condition was widely prevalent. Some people had started adopting the mere knowledge of scriptures as the soul of religion. To dress like a sanyāśī and cramming of the scriptural verses had become synonyms with religious conduct. Teli, Kumbhār, cāndāl etc. used to dress like sanyāsīs after the death of wives or loss of their property. People immersed in desire, passion, anger, greed etc. had been propagators of religion. The tradition of good conduct was being corrupted in the name of religion. The hypocritical conduct of persons who were trying to conceive corrupt character in sweet words was pronounced as evil by Tulsidāsa. Sāñkar and Tulsi both have
written about the prevailing hypocracy in society:

kalita yateka dwija erioe ācāra.
kapate dekhāibe mātra loka vyavahāra.
lobhe ākramibe haibe kula-kriyā hīna.
eke navaguna mātra thākibeka cina.

- Śankar., Bhāg, 12/25

besa subanāi, suci bacana kahain cuōāi.
jāi tau na jarani dharani-dhana-dhāmakī.
koṭika upāya kari lāli pāliata deha,
mukha kahiya gati rāmahī ke nāmakī.
pragatain upasana, duravain durabasanahi
mānasa nivāsaabhūmi looha-moha-kāmakī
rāga roṣa Īrṣā-kapatā-kuṭilāī bhare,
tulsī-se bhagata bhagati cahain rāmakī.

- Tulsi, kavit., 7/119

Brāhmanas and sanyāsis were assuming the status of the self-born. Even so called religious people did not hesitate to kill brāhman and guru for wealth. Even teachers of religion were no exception in following the path of artificiality and hypocracy. An evil and proud man if prosperous was recognised as religious. On the other hand truly religious and good persons were harassed. The accusation of material wealth was being preached in name of religion:
mātā pitā bālakānhi bolāvahin.
udara bharai soi dharma sikhāvahi
- Tulsi, Mānas, 7/98/4

Under the circumstances the condition of saints had become pitiable as evident in Sānkari literature:

sahībe napāri pīdā pāche praśāgana.
dasōdise jāibe huyā desāra unchanna.
- Sānkar. Bhāg., 12/37

E. Conflicts in pantha:

Many religious sects were flourishing in the days of Sānkar and Tulsi. The ordinary man was unable to find true guidance. There are references to the various sects of their time in the writings of Sānkar and Tulsi, but it is more vivid in the latter. Tulsi has pointed out the purposelessness of the sects and expressed anxiety on the gullibility of their preachers:

śruti-sammata hari-bhagati patha, sanjuta-oirati-śibeka.
tehi pariharahin bimoha ēasa, kalpahin pantha aneka.
- Tulsi, Dohā, 535

Tulsi was deeply distressed by the indifference of these seckerians towards the ancient scriptures. -

sakala dhārāma oiparīta kali, kalpita koti kupantha.
punya parāya pahāra bana, dure purāna sugrantha.

- Tulsī, Dohā, 556

The condition was so terrible that all order was disintegrating:

bādahin sūdra owijana sana 'hama tuma ten kachu ghāṭi:\̣ jānahnin orahma so bipravara' ākhin dikhāvahan dānti.

- Tulsī, Dohā, 553

The so called drahma jñyāna had become superficial and

brahmagyāna binu nāri-nara kahahin na dūseri bāta.

- Tulsī, Dohā, 552

Similar was the case uith munis, sanyāsīs, dharmācāryas etc.

je muni te puni āpuhi āpako īsa kahāvata siddha sayāne.

- Tulsī, Kavit, 7/105

And the following words of Tulsī referred to such people -

jānapānī ko gumāna baço tulsī ke bicāra ganwāre mahā hāi.

- Tulsī, Kavit, 7/39

Tulsī perceives the evil effects of the various sects

on society and expressed anger at these sects and their preachers.

He cautioned people against them. The following illustrate his

response towards -

(a) Kabir panthis and Sufis

sākhī saapadi doharā, kahi kihanī upakhāna.
bhagati nirūpahin bhagata kali, nindahin beda purāna.
- Tulsī, Doha, 554

(b) Alakhiā pantha
hama lakhi, lakhahi hamāra lakhi, nama hamāra ke bīca.
tulsi alakhahi kā lakhahi ? rāma nāma japu nīca.
- Tulsī, Doha, 19

(c) Gorokha pantha
gorokha jagāyo jogu, ohagati ohagāyo logu,
nigama-niyoga tein so keli hi charo so hāi.
- Tulsī, Kavit., 7/84

(d) Jaina pantha
swāna sarāvaga ke kahein, laghutā lahai na gāngā.
- Tulsī, Doha, 383

(e) Sevarā (Buddha sramana):
surā sevarā ādarahin, nindahin surasari-bāri.
- Tulsī, Doha, 326

Similarly he is critical of aghories, śmasāna-sādhakas, the preachers of ghost worship, vāmārāīā sākta etc.

Like Tulsīdāsa Sānkardeva also took note of the different sects. The idea of Buddha's incarnations was condemned by him as a propagation of vāmānaya:
átā anantāre haiba buddha avatāra.
aneka pāśānda sāstra kariba pracāra.
beda patha eri yanja kariba asura.
bāde bimohiā karivanta yanja dūra.

- Śāṅkara, N. N. S., 314-15

bodha avatāre beda pantha kari channa.
bāmānaya sāstre muhi āchā sarvajana.

- Śāṅkara, Kīr., 13

Similarly he has pointed other panthas as well -

ureṣā bārāṇaśī thāwe thāwe.
kabīra gīta sīṣṭa sabe gāwe.
tathāpito ākhi phutila tāra.
hari kīrtanaka karai dhikkāra.

- Śāṅkara, Kīr., 104

It can also be seen in his description of the kali-uḥarma:

veda vichī oimukha haibeka dine dine.
nahaiha dharmata mati adharmata dine.

- Śāṅkara, N. N. S., 317

brāhmaṇa khatriya oaisya ito tini jāti.
nuṣūnibe hari bhakatika kāṇa pāti.

- Śāṅkara, Bhāg, 12/11C
pāśandara mukhata śikhibe dharma jñyāṇa.
kalita karibe pāśandaka bahu māna.

- Śāṅkar, Bhāg, 12/118

Thus, it is seen that both the poets took note of various sects and objected to the unsocial, immoral and hypocritical elements in them. It is true that Tulsī paid greater attention than Śāṅkar, but their aims were similar.

5/3. The standard of ideal religious life:

The two poets attempted to bring an end to religious decadence, the immoral and antisocial activities of their times. They re-established the true path of devotion along the lines of scriptures as also the propagation of an easy and simple religion for men and thus they gave a new direction to their age. With their ease and simplicity they became popular. A discussion in this regard follows.

A. Nāma-dharma : Yuga-dharma:

It has been indicated earlier that Śāṅkar and Tulsī traced the evils of their time to kali-kāla. They pointed out the different ways of conduct for the different ages and prescribed nāma-kīrtana for kali-yuga. That is why we find the description of smarana, kīrtana and gāyana of the Deity's Name in their writings in great detail:
Thus, they recognised *nāma-kīrtana* as the proper religion of *kalikāla*. Tapa, japa, vrata, pūjā, tīrtha, darsāna etc. are...
found infactual. The meditative chanting of God's virtue is
found fruitful and practical. Nāma is referred to as the
essence of the Veda and supreme religion. All religions
are seen concentrated in Hari-nāma. Hence, nāma-kīrtana is
capable of fulfilling the objects of all forms of religion.
Tulsi has gone to the extent of proclaiming the superiority
of the Nāma to even Rāma. Both the poets are excepted the
Name of their Deity as equivalent to tapa, japa, yajña, yoga,
dhyāna, pūrṇa, koti tīrtha-snāna, dhana-jana, friends, parents,
protector etc.

mantra tantra yajña yata tapa tīrtha koti sāta
harināma adhika sabāte.

- Śankar., Kīr., 2246

nāme tapa japa yajña nāme yoga dhyāna.
nāme dāna pūrṇa nāme koti tīrtha snāna.
nāme dhana jana bandhu nāme pitā-mātā.
nāme nija suhrida nāmese gati dātā.

- Śankar., Bhāg, 10/564

nāmu rāma ko kalpataru, kali-kalyāna-nirvāsu.
jo sumirata bhayo bhānga ten, tulsi tulsīdāsu.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 1/26

For Śankardeva seven deeds are simultaneously fulfilled
through nāma-smaraṇa:
Men's mind become unstable and sins increased in kali-kāla. Hence, the importance of nāma-smarana in Śankar and Tulsi.

Discussing a comparative importance of nāma and nāmi. Tulsidāsa has stretched on the former.22 That nāmāparādha is recognised in vaiṣṇava-bhakti indicates the significance of nāmā-smarana. It is discussed by Śankardeva in his Kīrtan-ghosā's nāmāparādha-khanda.23 According to him there are ten nāmāparādhas:

1. To criticise of the devotees of nāma-smarana.
2. To distinguish between the Names, the virtues of Viṣṇu and Śiva.
3. To criticise the vedas.
4. To doubt nāma-māhātmya.
5. To equate nāma with vrata-tapa-tīrtha yajña etc.
6. To hatred of nāma.
7. To equate nāma-drohis with nāma devotees.
8. Pride and arrogance in nāma-smarāṇa.
9. To show callousness towards the words of religions superior persons like teacher etc.
10. To show indifference to nāma-smarāṇa by others.

Tulsidāsa has not described nāmāparādha at one place. However, a careful study of his works brings the ten aparādhas to our notice. Thus, both the poets have accorded supreme importance to nāma-smarāṇa.

B. Company of saints:

Next to nāma-smarāṇa comes the company of saints and devotees. Both Śankar and Tulsī ascribed sufficient importance to it. The reason is that in the gathering of saints Hari Kathā is always read and heard. Consequently it leads to the enhancement of the sense of devotion amongst the devotees. The place of the meetings of the saints is compared with places of pilgrimage and sometimes it is accorded even greater importance. Release from sins is more easily obtained through sānta-gārāṇa than pilgrimage and deva-gārāṇa.

The main reason for wide spread and effective importance of saints is their humble behaviour. By nature saints are calm, benevolent, truthful, evenminded, devoted to God and free from
The two poets have therefore described the glory of saints and devotees. Śankardeva would not like to differentiate between Viṣṇu and His devotees. To him the god is our friend and the saints our spirit:

\[
\text{devatā vāndhavah santah santa ātmāhameva ca.}
\]

- Śankar, B.R., 3/12

Tulsidāsa has described the characteristics of saints in Rāmacaritmānas in details. He goes to the extent of according a higher place to Rāma's devotee:

\[
\text{rāma te adhika rāma kara dāsā.}
\]

- Tulsī, Mānas, 7/119/8

The two poets felt that after nāma-smarana the company of saints and devotees would be keeping with the spirit of the age.

C. Guru:

The guru has always been recognised significant for religion. Different sects have accepted the significance of the teachers. Śāṅkar and Tulsī also recognised it. For them the place of the teacher is like that of God:

\[
\text{upadesā dātā jito guru thāke, tānte hari buli māne.}
\]

- Śāṅkar, N.N.S., 57
namo madhuripu rāma mora mahāgurū.

- Sánkar, N.N.S., 2

bandaun gurū pada kanja kripa sindhu nararūpa hari.
mahāmoha tama punja jāsu bacana rabi kara nikara.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 1/5

bandaun gurū pada paduma parāgā.
surūci subāsa sarasa anurāgā.
amiya mūrimaya cūrana cārū.
samana sakala bhava rūja parivārū.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 1/1

Sānkardeva has discussed the significance of the teacher in detail in first māhātmya of Bhakti-ratnākara. He conceived teacher-god from various scriptures. The devotion to teachers finds priority for the achievement of the devotion to God. One of his assumption is that the God is pleased more by the service to the teacher than the following different religions:

ijyā grihasadharmmam, prajātih orahmacāridammat māvikyām,
tapasā vanasthadharmmam, upasāmanā sannyāsadharmmam vāham
parameswaro na tathā tuscayam yathā sarvabhpūtātmāpi
gurususūrūṣayeti.

- Sānkar., J.R., Pratnamamahātmya
In the beginning of *Rámcaritamānas* Tulsīdāsa has mentioned in detail the *guru-pada-padmaraja*. To him the dust from the teacher's feet is pure like the ashes on the body of Sāṅkar; it purifies the heart, it is pleasure-giving, inspires for knowledge, makes the approach to God easy, creates the purity of conscience through knowledge. It is proved of Tulsī's devotion to teachers in its highest form.

He declares:

rākhai gurū jō kopa bidhātā.
guru birodha nahin kou jaga trātā.

- Tulsī, Mānas, 1/165/3

gurū binu bhavanidhi tarai na koi.
joun oiranci sankara sama hoi.

- Tulsī, Mānas, 7/92/3

These statements of Tulsī are not merely doctrinaire. He has also presented its examples. Bhusūndi had become the object of Śiva's anger in his previous life as *sūdra*. He was redeemed from it by his teacher. It was through the medium of the teacher that Dasaratha could enjoy the bless of being a father. Thus in the eyes of Tulsī, the importance of the teacher is unlimited and God like.

It may be seen that the benedictory verses in the beginning of their writings give second place to the prayer.
of the teacher of the God's prayer. Besides the glory of the teacher the two poets have also warned of crimes against the teachers. Tulsi writes –

je sațha guru sana irișā karahīn.
raurova naraka koți juga porahīn.
trijaga joni puni dharahīn śarīrā.
ayuta janama bhari pāwahīn pīrā.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 7/106/3

It is not different from Sankardeva's idea in relation to crime against the teacher as presented in his ekasāriṇīyā mata.

It is quite possible that there were some false teachers also during the days of Sānkar and Tulsi. Such teachers are object of bitter criticism of Tulsi. They exploit the wealth of their disciple but fail to relieve them of any mental sufferings:

harai sisya dhana soka na harai.
so guru ghora naraka mahun parai.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 7/98/4

In Sankardeva there is no such clear statement, but it is not unacceptable to him. The phrase 'biśiṣṭa guru' in the following verses is worthnoting:

biśiṣṭa gurūka akapate sevā kari.
mānibe gurūse ātmā deva hari.

- Sānkar, N.N.S. 139
It shows that he did not give importance to all sorts of teachers. He obviously had a special kind of teacher in his mind.

Thus, for both the poets the teacher finds a distinguished place in the religious world. Without the teacher's grace there can be neither guidance to God's devotion nor can one see the true light of knowledge.

D. The renunciation of artificiality and false rituals:

There is no place for artificiality in the *ahakti-dharma* propounded by Śankar and Tulsi and the standards established for religious life. During their days all sorts of *yoga, japa, tapa, tirtha, vrata, jñāna, vairāgya* etc. were prevalent. Both the poets tendered advice against it. Tulsi referred to it as the net work of *kali-kāla*. The devotion to God was essential for them and in its absence the mere study of scriptures, cleverly talk, pilgrimage etc. appeared artificial. During those days it was believed that wealth was fundamental to religion. It degenerated to such an extent that even religion become commercialised. Hence, the two poets opposed it:

\[ yadi bolā dhana hante dharma upajaya. \]
\[ sehi dhana hante swarga sukhaka pāwaya. \]
\[ śuniyo swargata āche yata yata sukha. \]
\[ samaste bināśi sadā pāwe mātra dukha. \]

- Śankar, N.N.S., 134
damu durgama, dāna dayā mākha, karma,
sudharma adhīna saboi dhanako.
tapa, tīratha sādhana joga, oirágason
hoi nāhin driḍatā tanako.

- Tulsi, Kavit., 7/87

A special mental attitude is necessary for religion. If penance, pilgrimage etc. fail to create such mental attitude they can be seen as no more than hypocrisy. Among other artificial forms the two poets had indicated towards scriptural studies and devotionless idolatry. In fact the religion that they were preaching stressed upon the purity of the heart. Tulsi has preached for keeping the mind, the speech and actions away from the mire of evil ways :

besa bisada bolani madhura, mana katu karama mulīna.
tulśi rāma na päīye bhaye biṣayā-jala-mīna.

- Tulsi, Dohā, 153

mākhī, kāka, ulūka, baka, dādurā se bhaye loga.
bhale te suka, pika, mora se, kou na prema patha joga.

- Tulsi, Dohā, 331

He further states 'taji de-baka-bāyasa kī karanī' (Kavit, 7/32). Things like this are acceptable to Sānkar also.

E. Rejection of apadevata :

Besides the vedic and non-vedic ideas, the worship of
evil gods, ghosts, spirits etc. was prevalent among the people of the time of Sankar and Tulsi. Their attention was drawn towards it and they opposed it. In this respect Sankardeva's eyes were more penetrating than Tulsi's. He insisted on the worship of one God to the exclusion of the other gods and goddesses. He also rejected the sacrificial forms of worships. Both of them attacked the worship of many gods and goddesses, ghosts and spirits etc.

apadevātaka pūji haibeka piśāca.
pretara lagata phuribeka bali khāi.
- Śankar, Bhāg, 11/820
tulsī parihari hari harahi, pānwarā pūjahi bhūta.
antā phajīhata hohinge, ganikā ke se pūta.
- Tulsi, Doha, 65

Their attitude towards superstitions of different kinds was critical. The following is an example from Tulsi in which he has attacked the superstitions relating to the grave of Āśji miyān:

lahī ānkh kajo āndharen, bājhan pūta kaba lyāya?
kaba koḍī kāyā lahi, jagā vaharāica jāya.
- Tulsi, Doha, 496

In Sankardeva there is no such direct mention. However, from
his invariable doctrine of the worship of one God it may be inferred that the worship of any evil god is meaningless. The criticism of the worshippers of ghosts etc. in Sāṅkar and Tulsī actually derived from scriptures. It is said in Gītā:

\[ \text{yānti devavrata devāna pitṛnyānti pitṛvrataḥ.} \]
\[ \text{bhūtāni yanti onūtejyā yānti madyājinopi māma.} \]

- 9/25

F. Religious tolerance and integration:

The two poets adopted an attitude of religious tolerance towards the traditional ways of virtuous worships continuing during those days. The sense of mutual integration and sympathy between vaiśnava and śāiva sects can be taken as its examples. Here Tulsī appears more tolerant than Sāṅkar. In fact the vaiśnava religion was never intolerant towards other religious assumptions.

Some statements of Sāṅkara-deva, eg., *vedara bihita karma karibāka, bhakatara yogya nui* (d.P. 128) or *anya devi deva nakaribā seva* (Bhāg. 2/1341) are misinterpreted and it is concluded that he was religiously intolerant, but such statements should not be taken as his authentic declaration. Sāṅkara-deva also provided for respect to scriptures other than vaiśnava.
Sankardeva’s idea of vaiṣṇava ācāryas and dharma-gurūs was broad based. He appears to be showing respect to the traditional religious sensibility like pilgrimage, śrāddha, image worship etc.

The traditional religious sensibility is incorporated in Tulsi at a larger scale. His prayers to Ganesa, Sūrya, Śiva, Pārvatī, Gangā, Yamunā, Kāśi, Citrakūta, Hanumāna, Vinod-mādhava etc. in the first sixty-four verses of Vinoy-Patrikā can be taken as proof of his tolerance and traditional religious sensibility. Its examples can be found in his other writings as well. Besides scriptural gods and goddesses Tulsi also accorded significance to the folk-god, the village-god, the serpent-god and the forest-god:

pujahu ganapati gura kuladeva.
- Tulsi, Mānas, 2/5/4

pujīn grāmadebi sura nāgā.
kaheu bahori dena balibhāgā.
- Tulsi, Mānas, 2/7/3

banedevin banadeva udārā.
karihahin sāsu sasura sama sārā.
- Tulsi, Mānas, 2/65/1
It does not mean that Tulsi supported polytheism. It is in fact an expression of the broad mindedness of vaisnava devotee for whom the entire world is instinct with Siyārāma. It also shows his respect to peoples opinion and directives of grhasūtras like Yathā mangalawā.

There is mention of oneness of Viṣṇu and Śiva in scriptures also. It is stated in Bhāgavata- 'Vaiśṇavānām yathā sāmōhuh' (12/13/16). It compares with Sankardeva's verses -

guṇa nāma yata viṣṇu śivara.  
tāka bhinna buodhi karo jito nara  
nāmaśa siyo mahā aparādhi.  
narākata parai daive nabādhi.  

- Śankar., Kir., 50

āta nakariba kheda kinciteko nāhi bheda,  
tomhāre āmhare eke kāyā.  

- Śankar, Kir., 594

Not only of Śiva, he also refers to the oneness of Brahmā and viṣṇu. Prahlād's prayer to blessing is respectively to brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu as forms of the Trinity. In the story Mārkenaeya there is the unity of the Trinity - eke mūrti jānā brahmā-viṣṇu-trinayaṇa. (Śankar, Bhāg, 12/436). Elsewhere Śankardeva mentions:

mai-brahmā -viṣṇu āmi tiniyo iśwara.  

- Śankar, Bhāg., 12/438
Sankardeva refers to the principle of Śiva’s worships in a Śivālaya after bath in his Oresā varnan. It is an illustration of his acknowledgement of Lord Śiva. In Amrit-manthan also he refers to the oneness of Viṣṇu and Śiva. These examples show that Sankardeva was in favour of the idea of oneness of Viṣṇu and Śiva (also uranmā). It illustrates his sense of religious tolerance and unity.

There was an atmosphere of envy and enmity between Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva sects in Tulsi’s time. He tried to eradicate it in an effective way. It was with the view to integrating the two that he wrote Śiva-kathās along with the Rāma-kathās and Parvatīmangal with Jānakīmangal. In his idea of the four steps in Rāmcaritmānas Śiva is presented at the very first step and story develops through Yājñāvalka:

prathamahin mein kahi siva carita, būjhā maramu tumhāra. suci sevaka tumha rāma ke, rahita samasta bikāra.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 1/134

Further he has established oneness of Rāma and Śiva. For him nobody can claim to be a devotee of Rāma without worshipping Śiva, nor can one be the object of Rāma’s grace. In the words of Tulsi’s Rāma’s –

śiva drohi mama bhagata kahāwā. so nara sapanehun mohi na pāwā.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 6/1/4
Through Kakbhusundi Tulsi has stated in obedience to his father's wishes while remembering not only Śiva but the entire Śiva family:

\[ \text{ganapati gauri girisu manai} \]

- Mānas, 2/80/1

Thus it is apparent that Tulsi made attempts to establish complete integrity and oneness of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects. It had no doubt laudable impact in the Northern region.

From the above discussion one may conclude that Śankar and Tulsi were religiously tolerant and that they work for the integrity and unity between the Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇava sects. Of course Tulsi's view in this respect is comparatively more liberal.

G. Moral basis of religion:

Morality is the fundamental basis of religious assumptions of Śankar and Tulsi. They insisted on allegiance to one's religion and provided it a moral and conscientious direction. They pleaded for the control of desires, anger, greed etc. and acknowledged the value of truth, purity, self-discipline etc. They found it to be helpful in developing a man of stable character, simple nature, benevolent, kind, graceful etc. Following the Bhāgavata Śankardeva represented religion as moral based.
The concept of 'vijayaratha' in Tulsidās's Manas is nothing but that of 'dharma-ratha'. The main idea behind it is moral based:

sauraja dhīraja tehi ratha cākā.
satya sīla dṛha dwajā patākā.
bala bibeka dama parahita ghore.
chamā kṛpā samatā raju jore.
īsa bhajanu sārathī sujānā.
birati carma santōṣa kṛpānā.
dāna param budhi sakti pracandā.
bara bigyāna kāthina kodandā.
amala acala mana trona samānā.
sama jama niyama silimukha nānā.
kavaca abheda bipra gura pūjā.
ehi sama bijoy upāya na dújā.

- Tulsī, Manas, 6/79/3-5
It points to the fact that discipline over desires, mind and speech is essential for religious conduct.

Sankardeva and Tulsidāsa looked at religion in very wide sense. It was means of betterment in this world and the other world also of prosperity and salvation. That is why they always insisted upon the purity of life. According to Tulsi -

karaba sādhumāta lokamāta nṛpamāta nigama nicori.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 2/258

It is a result of his ability to unify the moral, the emotional and the intellectual. The following clearly states the role of truth, non-violence and the path of virtue in religion:

dharamu na dūsara satya samēnā.
āgama nigamē purāna bakhānā.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 2/94/3

parahita sarisa dharama nahin bhāi.
para pīḍā sama nahin adhamāi.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 7/40/1

raghubamsina kara sahaja subhāū,
manu kupantha pagu dharahi na kāu.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 1/230/3

Similarly, Sankardeva also stressed on truth, faith and non-violence in religion and exhorted for following the virtuous
path. He was clearly opposed to violence. :

devako uddesi pasu nakaribe himsā.

- Śankar, N.N.S., 348

It derives from his faith that the body is the abode of God in the form of the self :

ātmā rūpa īśwara parara śarīrata.

- Śankar, N.N.S., 356

H. One God :

The concept of one reality has been prevalent in Indian thought. It has been variously described in the scriptures and other texts. In Bhāgavata -

yathā tarormulniṣecanena
trpyanti tatskandhbjopasākhāh.
prānopahāracyca yathendriyānām
tathaiva sarvārccanmucyatebhyā

- 4/31/14

Accordingly, Śankar and Tulsi tried to propagate the idea of the supreme Deity in their works. It can be seen in his declaration of kṛṣṇa rūpe parama īśwara (Keligopāl nāt) in the words of Śrīkṛṣṇa himself -

skeśware ācho āmi ādi niranjana.
srīsti je nāhike moka nakare śobhān,
caidhaya bhuvana hṛdayate dilo ṭhāi.
prakṛti devīo āchā garbhate lukāi
jaḍa huyā āche tāra nāhike cetana.
āmi mahā caitanya purūṣa niranjana.

- Śankar, A.P., 41-42

It can further be seen in his eka dev eka sev, eke pinā pāhi
key or Visnuta pare āna nāhin key. Other gods and goddesses
are subordinate to the supreme.

The idea of one God is there in Tulsī also. A reflection
of the verses quoted above from ṇaḍgavata can be seen in the
following words of Tulsidāsa :

pāta pāta kai sincibo, oari barī kai lona·
tulsī khote caturāpana, kali dahake kahu ko na

- Tulsī, Doha, 546

It may be concluded that both the poets emphasised the
importance of the worship of one supreme Deity above all gods
and goddesses.

5/4. Religious worship and secterianism :

The goal of devotee is the achievement of Divine shelter.
For this purpose he adopts his specific attitude of worship.
Thus he establishes the relationship of the devotee as worshipper
and God as the object of worship. They have their separate
Nearness to God is the goal of all worship. Viṣṇu is the object of worship of Śankardeva and Tulsidāsa in His different names. One worshipped as Kṛṣṇa and other as Rāma. However, there is sufficient difference in their forms of worships. Their ways of worships are distinguished by individual characteristics which is studied under the following headings.

A. The object of worship:

Both Śankar and Tulsī have elaborately described their objects of worships. There is a detail discussion of the deity in Śankaradeva’s Bhakti-ratnākara (Fifth māhātmya) based on the interpretation of the Bhāgavata byŚrīdhar Swāmī. For him the destination of the world is Śrī Kṛṣṇa with His nine attributes of sarga, visarga etc. He recognises the sopādhik swarūpa of advaita as avikalpam nirvedam and ānandamātram. In Śankar’s catuvims‘ati avatāra varṇana we find that Kṛṣṇa has been taken as incarnating himself in different ages in different forms. Śankardeva’s conception of the deity and the way of worship is fully reflected in the following verses of Bhakti-ratnākara:

ekam sāstram davavākīputragitana
eko devo devākīputra eva.
karmmāpyekam tasya devasya sevā
mantroaśyakah tasya devasya nāma.

- 5/30
In reality this Kṛṣṇa is no other than Viṣṇu—Viṣṇute pare āna nahin keu. It is this Kṛṣṇa that has been described by Śankardeva in his various writings. Śankardeva is never tired of singing in praise of his god's qualities like dākshinyā, bhaktavatsala, dayālu, pāpahāri, śaranāgatapanna etc. In the following Barṣet tells us about the various qualities of Śankar's God:

jaya jaya yādava jālanidhi jagadhava dhātā,
srutmātrākhilatlātā, smarēnē karaya siddhi.
dīna dayalanidhi, bhakata mukutipadadātā.
jagajana jīvāna ajanajānārdoana,
danujadama dukhahārī.
mahādānānanda, kanda paramānanda,
nanda nandanabanaacārī.
bibidha bihāra, biśārda sārada,
indunindi parakāsī.
śēṣa sāyana sīva, kesibināsana,
pitabasana abināsī.
jagatbandhuoidhu mādhava madhuripu,
madhuramūrati mūranāsī.
kesāva caraṇa sarorūha kinkara,
śāṅkara ehu aohilāsī.

- Bar. 1
Sankar's Lord Kṛṣṇa himself declares:

bhakataro pūro manoratha, dion kāma moksha dharma artha.

- Kir. 449

Inspite of the fact that Tulsidāsa's object of worship Rāma is Dasaṛatha suta and Ragaḥubandāmanī, He is also cosmic. When He is pleased with the devotee He shows His cosmic form to him:

dekharāwā mātahi nija, adbhuta rūpa akhandा.
roma roma prati lage, koti koti bramhandà.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 1/201

In the words of Lakshmana:

rāma brahma paramārtha rūpā.
abigata alakha anādi anūpā.
sakala bikara rahita gatahēdā.
kahi nita neti nirūpahin bedā.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 2/92/4

His qualities and deeds are limitless. Even Lord Śiva finds it as such:

rāma carita sata koṭi apārā.
sruti sāradā na barnai pārā.
rāma ananta ananta gunānī.
janma karma ananta nāmānī.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 7/51/1,2
Tulsi has described the form of his Lord Rama at many places in his writings. His characteristics are innumerable. In comparison to other divine sustainers, kośalpāla Rāma is unique:

bhūmipāla, byālapāla, nākapāla, lokapāla,
kārana-kṛpālu, mein sabaike jī ki thāh lí.
kádar ko ādarū kāhu kein nāhin dekhiyeta,
sabani sohāta hai sevā-sujāni tāhalī.
tulsi subhāya kahai, nāhin kachu pachapātu,
kaunēnīsa kiye kīsa bhālu khāma mahalī.

- Tulsi, Kavit, 7/23

Tulsi's Rāma is protector, nourisher and the friend of the poor:

ālasī-abhāgi, aghi- ārata-anāthapāla,
sāhebu samartha eku nīken mana gunī mein,
doṣa-dukha-dārida-dalaiyā dīnabandhu rāma,
tulsi na dusro dayānīchānu dūnī mein.

- Tulsi, Kavit., 7/21

Rāma is not given even to thinking evil of His enemies - arihunka anabhala kīnha na rāma (Mānas, 2/182/3). He is absolutely given to the welfare of His worshipper - prāṇa humār sevaka hitakārī (Ibid, 1/128/3). It is therefore, quite reasonable that Tulsi selected Rāma as the object of his worship.
From the above discussion it may be concluded that the objects of worships of Sankar and Tulsi are not different from Visnu. If the beauty of their forms is attractive their simplicity is captivating.

8. The form of worship:

'Upasana' means sitting closure. In other words it means the achievement of closeness to the deity. In Indian tradition there are three ways of worships - sātwiki, rājasi and tāmasi. The two poets under discussion adopted the first one. Personally they rejected the rājasi and tāmasi worships.

An aspect that distinguishes their worship is their undeviating faith in the deity. Sankardeva admonished his followers over and again:

\begin{align*}
\text{anya devī deva nakaribā seva,} \\
\text{nakhāibā prasāda tāra,} \\
\text{mūrtiko nacībā grho napasīboā,} \\
\text{bhakti haibo vyābhicāra.} \\
\text{eke kṛṣṇa deva kariyoka seva,} \\
\text{dharīyo tāhāna nāma.} \\
\text{kṛṣṇa dāsa huyā prasāda bhunjia,} \\
\text{haste karā tāna kāma.}
\end{align*}

- Sankar., Bhāg, 2/1341-42

And Tulsidāsa used the illustration of cātaka and mīna to propound his faith and sincerity.
Simplicity is another quality of their worships. Excluding the complexities of all sorts, they adopted the simplest form of worships chanting the name of the deity. It was given so much importance in Śankardeva that nāma-dharma itself became its synonym. Like Śankar, Tulsi also accepted chanting of the name as the simplest and the best form of Rāma's worship. Laying down the principles of Rāma's worships through the name he has said:

**bandaun nāma rāma rāghubara ko.**

**hetu kṛṣānu bhānu himkara ko.**

x  x  x

mahāmantra joi japata mahēśū.

kāsi mukuti hetu upadesū.

- Tulṣī, Mānas, 1/18/1,2

Śankardeva accepted the name chanting in the following form:

**bhāi muke rāma bola, hṛdaye dharā rūpa.**
eteke mukuti pāibā, kahilo swarūpa.

- Sāṅkar., Kīr., 113

Tulsi also indicates in the same way —

rūpa oisēṣa nāma binu jānen,
karatala gata na parahin pahicāne.

- Tulsi, Mānas, 1/20/3

It can be seen that both the poets favourably looked at the harmony of chanting the name of the deity and recollecting His shape. The main aim behind the chanting of the name is to continuously remind one of the form and virtue of the deity. Tulsi has said:

samujhi samujhi gunagrāma rāma ke ura anurāga badāu,

- Tulsi, V.P., 100

This form of worship is actually so simple and easy that time and place do not become any obstacle. Tulsidāsa possibly wanted to further simplify the worships. It is said by him that Rāma’s affection for the devotee and the devotees affection for Rāma are the same in as much as either can be performed as form of worships:

kai tohi lāgahi rāma priya, kai tu prabhū-priya hohi.
dui mein rūcai jo sugama so, kībe tulsi tohi.

- Tulsi, Doha, 78
Sankardeva and Tulsidasa continued to preach and spread the simple and easy way of worships among the people. It was the effect of namopasana that made Tulsi (of wild plant) into Goswami Tulsidasa and Sankar Bhuyan into Dharmaguru Sankardeva.

C. Sectarian distinction:

As vaisnavas, there are similarities in the previous ideas of Sankar and Tulsi. However, from the sectarian point of view there are differences too that the deities and sects are different as also that the traditions inspiring them.

The devotional sect that Sankardeva adapted came to know as ekasaranitya dharma or ekasaranitya nama-dharma or nama dharma or mahapurusiya dharma. After his death it is spread in the forms of samhatis and satras. The vaisnava doctrine propagated by Sankar was later divided into four samhatis- Brahma, Purja, Kala and Nikai. They developed into separate satras. Daily rituals were organised in the satras. Some rituals are organised for specific occasions. For enunciation in the sattras and organisation of the rituals separate, negative and positive order were maintained. In some satras even image worship was given place. But fundamentally the worship of holy scriptures found the place of prominence.

Today in the villages and towns, satras and namgharas scattered all over Assam. They have become the medium of engaging the mind of the people in the devotion propounded by Sankardeva.
Tulsidāsa comes under the Rāmānandī tradition of Rāmānuja sects. Attempts have been made to relate him to the vairāqi sect. In fact Tulsī's tradition of devotion did not ossify in his life time or thereafter, either into a particular sect or tradition. That is why Rāmchandra Sukla has referred to him as 'śmārt Vaiṣṇava'. Tulsī and his ideas are respected amongst all the Hindus of Northern India. It is a proof of the greatness of Tulsī and his way of worship. He remained above sectarianism. In most of the vaiṣṇava sects specially those worshipping Rāma in Northern India equally respect Rāmacarit-mānas. Even Nirguṇa Kabīrpanthis read and respect it.

Following Sankardeva many sects and sub-sects developed which are flourishing in the life of contemporary Assam. Tulsī made no attempt towards initiating any sect and became a guide for a very large number of people.

5/5. Conclusion:

From the above discussion of the religious thoughts of Śankar and Tulsī it is obvious that they took religion in the traditional sense of man's development and salvation. This traditional meaning of religion had degenerated during their time. Its place was taken by various artificial and hypocritical forms. Both the poets severely attacked those observances that were done in the name of the religion. Both of them expressed more or less similar views on religious standards.
They tried to rejuvenate the religious consciousness following the scriptural way of devotion and propagated a morally oriented humanitarian religion. With this end in view they adopted Viṣṇu as the supreme Lord. The ideal of their religion was the discipline of mind and the achievement of God's grace. They acknowledged the role of teacher, the company of the good and rememberance of the deity as essential for religious consciousness. Both the poets stressed the purity of the conduct, morality and life of action as foundation stone of religion.

Neither of the two poets by themselves desires to be founder of religious sects. The religious goal of both the poets were well-being of humanity. It is another thing that Śankardeva's ekāya nāma dharma, which he propounded as the religion of humanity, latter developed into the samhāyas and became dogmatic. Tulsidāsa too did not preach for any sectarian religion. However, there have been tendencies to make his ideas appear in Rāmānand's and vairāgī sects. Inspite of the difference between Śankar and Tulsī from sectarian point of view there is on the whole no difference in their religious ideas and ideals.
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