CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
1/1. Argument:

The idea of essential oneness has been fundamental to the tradition of Indian thought: ekam sadwiprā bahudhā vadanti. The Indian land is rich in its variety and colourfulness of natural beauty as also in human conduct and ways of life. The present Indian culture is the result of the interaction and mutual assimilation of mainly Ārya, Drāḍida, Niṣāda and Kirāta elements. On the face of it, there are many provinces and many languages. But behind this variety is a unity that finds expression in their literature and culture. The literature or language of a particular region is essentially Indian in character. "India has been a field of cultural experiments. The cultural elements have been analysed from the practical point of view and Indian literature adopted some character or thought to the contemporary needs as its theme. It gave an abiding character to the work and at the same time gave a new direction to society and its taste." Indian literature is a component of Indian culture.

An important movement might have started in a corner of the country, but it assumed wide national proportions—be it social or cultural. It left its impact on the socio-economic life of the country. The medieval bhakti-āndolan was
such a movement. Its echo spread all over the country. The contribution of great personalities was immense, who gave it a national direction and made it a living force. Their thoughts were expressed in their regional languages, but essentially there was no difference in their outlook. Medieval Asamiyā bhakta-kavi Sānkardeva and Hindi bhakta-kavi Goswāmi Tulsīdāsa were in the first rank of the movement. They wrote in two different languages, lived and worked in different areas. But the thoughts and sentiments in their works are similar. Their works are living proof of the essential oneness of Indian spirit.

To understand the reality of the Indian spirit a study of regional literatures is essential. Comparative study is one of its methods. The importance of such study is recognised by great scholars like Dr. Dhirendra Verma. For a realistic assessment and comprehensive knowledge of the cultural movement of India, isolated regional studies are insufficient. A comprehensive historical and comparative study is unavoidable.

Today emotional integration is the need of the time. This can be achieved through the growth of good will amongst the people of different regions which in turn can be generated and advanced through the acquaintance with the regional literatures and culture of the country. We get the message in Sānkardeva. He pioneered the idea of national unity in Assam. There is no regional narrow-mindedness in his works.
Sankardeva gave a new consciousness to the people of Assam. He travelled far and wide from Kamrup to Kanyakumari, to Dwarka and Badarikāśram and provided the linguistic, cultural and religious link to Assam with the country.

Another great personality of the bhakti movement was Tulsīdāsa. His immense popularity shows the influence of his thought on the people. "The book (Rāmcaritmānas) is in everyone's hands from the court to the cottage, and is read or heard and appreciated alike by every classes of the Hindu community, whether high or low, rich or poor, young or old". The delegates who came from distant countries like Fizzi, Mauritius etc. to participate in the First World Hindi Conference in 1975, proudly declared that their link with Indian Culture was through Tulsī's Rāmcaritmānas.

In to-day's India the forces of disintegration are raising their heads. Vicious attempts are made to divide the country along the lines of languages, region, caste etc. "The slogan of national integration is very often heard but in practice we see something else. Movements are being launched in the name of language, region, community etc. It is weakening the integrity of country. Individual careerism is bent upon swallowing 'sambhutyaṁśmṛtam; astute'. We are forgetting that the loss of national identity would automatically lead to the destruction of individual howsoever powerful he may be. At this critical juncture in the life of nation the forces of
disintegration can be counteracted through the perception of unity in diversity of Indian culture. Research works based on a comparative study of different literatures can be of great help in fulfilling this end. Such studies can bring out unity of thought and sentiments which would protect the nation from the storm of disintegration. A comparative study of the thoughts of Śankardeva and Tulsīdāsa would help us in understanding the devotional Assamese and Hindi poetry in their entirety and also the contemporary national and cultural consciousness. In different context this kind of approach is supported by Dr. V.P. Singh, Dr. A.S. Nāgar, Ācārya H.P. Dwibedī etc. The study of the medieval Indian literature becomes more pertinent in this respect because it does not represent a region or language, but the entire country. With this end in view a comparative study of Śankardeva and Tulsīdāsa was felt to be of use here.

1/2. Earlier works:

It will be worthwhile to keep the works done on Śankar and Tulsī in perspective. There have been independent research and other works on the life, personality, poetry, thought etc. of Śankar and Tulsī.

A scientific study of the life, personality and literature of Śankardeva was initiated by L.M. Bezbaruā. It was followed by others. Some research works are also done.
Their main emphasis has been on religious and devotional aspects. There have been research and other studies of Tulsi’s thoughts relating to religion, philosophy, devotion, morals, poetics etc., independently as well as comparatively. 11

Comparative studies in the field of Asamiya and Hindi literature have been done. These studies have however not made a direct comparative study of Sāńkar and Tulsi which can be seen from the following :

1. Lalji Sukla  
   - Solahawin sati ke Hindi aur Assamiya vaisnava kavya : mukhyatah Sankardeva aur Madhabdeva ke sandarbha mein, Allahabad, 1960

2. Ramānāth Tripathi  

3. Indira Goswami  

4. Kṛṣṇanārāśī Prasād, Magadh  

5. Dharmadeo Tiwari  
The present dissertation is an attempt towards a comprehensive, comparative study of the thoughts of Śankar and Tulsī.

1/3. Subject of the thesis

The subject of the present thesis is the comparative study of the thoughts of Śankardeva and Tulsidāsa. The selection has been done with definite purpose. A question may be raised as to why their thoughts have been taken up for comparative study and not the work as much. The present subject has been selected on considerations of originality, newness and importance. The need of emotional and intellectual unity for the cultural and emotional integration of the nation. The emphasis on the thoughts of the two poets has also been given with a view to avoid repetition of the works of other scholars.

It is true that there were many poets before and after Śankardeva during the medieval Assamese period. Their works are of sufficient importance. However, there are some invaluable ideas and thoughts in Śankardeva which enabled him to claim not as religious teacher and preacher but almost God. It was his thoughts expressed in his various writings that were behind it. In a sense, his thoughts become of primary importance. That the vaiṣṇava period of Assamese literature is also known as Śankarī period is due to his originality of thought. In the midst of modern materialism his reflection can be seen
even in the present day literary works which shows the significance of his thoughts. To understand Assam as a whole a knowledge of Śāṅkar’s thoughts becomes essential. The first step to understand Śāṅkardeva and his contributions in entirety is necessary to understand his thoughts.

So far as Tulsīdāsa is concerned, his contribution in the field of unification of variety of thoughts is to be seen not only in Hindī devotional literature but also in entire thought content of medieval India. His Rāmcaritmānas found the place in the life of North-Indian Hindus as the Bible in Christian society. Its distinguished place amongst the writings in modern Indian language on Rāma owes to distinction of thought. The medieval Hindu life was politically dependent, socially disturbed and insecure, economically poor, psychologically depressed, religiously divided and disrupted. Tulsī made an attempt through the thoughts in his work, to uplift this society and gave a new lease of life to its moral, emotional and intellectual content. His contribution was not only religious but also social, economic and political, and it nourished the national consciousness.

It will be seen that Śāṅkar and Tulsī with their thoughts made almost similar contributions in their societies. Their works were forceful means or expressing their thoughts and a study of their thoughts has special significance. That is why in place of studying the works as such a comparative study
of their thoughts in these works has been made the subject of the present thesis.

1/4. Research materials

A. Primary sources:

As the present work is confined to a study of the thoughts of Śankar and Tulsi, only those works of these poets which were found relevant for this purpose have been made use of. Works of other writers have also been taken for strengthening the argument. In this sense the research material can be divided into two groups - main and secondary. Only the authentic works have been taken up.

The following is the list of the basic works:

ŚANKARDEVA:

Sanskrit: 1. Bhakti-ratnākara (Compilation of bhakti-theories)
         2. Totaya (Totaka hymn)
Brajāvali: 3. Bargīts (Total Nos. 34)
         4. Patnī-prasāda (Ânkiā nāt)
         5. Kālī -damana ( " ,)
         6. Keli-gopāla ( " )
         7. Rukmiṇī haraṇa ( " )
         8. Pārijāṭharaṇa ( " )
         9. Rāmavijoy ( " )
Assamese: 10. Bhakti-pradīp (Doctrine of bhakti)
11. Haris'candra upākhyān (Kāvya)
12. Rukminiharan kāvya ( " )
13. Gunamālā ( " )
14. Rāmāyaṇa, uttarā kānda ( " )
15. Bhatimā ( " )
16. Kirtan-ghoṣā12 ( " )
17. Bhāgavata13 ( " )

TULSIDĀSA :

1. Vairāgyasandipani
2. Rāmājñāprasna
3. Rāmlalānahchu
4. Rāmcaritmānasa
5. Jānakimangal
6. Pārvatimangal
7. Gitāvalī
8. Srikṛṣṇagītāvalī
9. Vinoypatrikā
10. Dohāvalī
11. Barvai Rāmāyan
12. Kavitāvalī (and Hanumānbāhuk)

B. Secondary sources :

All those works on Sankardeva and Tulsidāsa which relate to their lives, thoughts and creative career have been consulted in connection of present investigation. Such secondary sources are both voluminous and various. A description of these
works here is well-nigh impossible. Moreover, it is not essential for the present work. It is sufficient to state here that necessary mention has been made of these works at proper places in the text of this thesis. A bibliography is also provided at the end.

1/5. Present Study:

This dissertation is limited to a comparative study of thoughts of Sankardeva and Tulsidasa, in which lie its originality, newness and distinction. By its very nature of being a comparative study it is distinguished from those studies which were limited to development or inspiration of their thoughts respectively.

A comparative study of the influential and inspirational factors on Sankar and Tulsī in the second chapter of this work is followed by a comparative discussion of their philosophical thoughts, in the third chapter. Their devotional ideas are comparatively analysed in the fourth chapter and the fifth chapter deals with their religious thoughts. The sixth Chapter is a comparative discussion of their social and economic ideas whereas the seventh chapter presents an account of their thoughts on political matters. The eighth chapter is devoted to their concepts of poetics.

On word more. As the present work is first of its kind, the method of discussion is mainly factual and descriptive. The main object of this thesis has been to expose the thoughts
of the poets under study to comparatively verify their thoughts of similar importance and to arrive at conclusions and to make an assessment accordingly.

The conclusions based on the present study and analysis have been presented at proper places and cumulatively presented in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

References:

1 K. N. Prasad 'Magadh' - Surdasa aur Sankardeva ke krsna-bhakti kavyon ka tulinmak adhyayan - D. Litt. thesis (type copy), P. 15.

2 See the preface of Jagadish Gupta's 'Gujrati aur brajbhasa krsna kavya.'


4 Nagendra (edited) - Tulsidasa : His Mind and Art, P. 1.


6 V. P. Singh - Hindi aur Telegu bhakti-sahitya, bhumikā, P. 1.

7 A. S. Nagar - Surdasa aur Narasingha Mehtā, prākkathān, P. 7
The number of works done on Tulsi of various kinds has been increasing. It is therefore, not possible within the limits of this dissertation to refer to those works. However, a good idea in this regard can be had from Dr. Agwal's 'Sodh Sandarbha' pp. 364-386.

This book is the compilation of total 2264 verses in which 189 kirtanas (verses) are compiled under 29 independent titles. According to KGC Sankardeva composed another two books namely 'Rukminir - prema-kalaha' and 'Bhrou-parikshā'. Thus the numbers of titles rise up to 21 and total verses become 2321, which may be accepted.

The 'Bhāgavata' includes the first, second, third (Anādipātan), Sixth, Eighth (Amṛta-manthana, Bali-calana), Tenth (Ādi-dasama, Kurukhetra), Eleventh (krṣṇa-prayāna and Pāncava-niryāna, Niminavasiddha-sambāda) and Twelveth cantos (scandhas). The total numbers of verses are 7155 / 421 + 261 + 299 + 429 + 426 + (640 + 617) + (2463 + 602) + (846 + 42) + 538 /. In some
copies the 97 verses of 'Haramohana' are also inserted in 'Amrta-manthana'. Thus with these additional verses the total numbers of verses rise up to 7252. Considering the epilogue and conclusion of the following works, Anādipātan, Ajāmilopākhyāna, Amrta-manthana, Bali-calana, Ādi-dasāma, kurukṣhetra and Niminavasiddha sambād are usually treated as independent books.