

CHAPTER-V

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF ŚAṆKARADEVA

5.1 Introduction :

Śaṅkaradeva was born in 1449 A.D. The ancient Kāmarūpa (Assam) with the seat of Sanskrit learning at Pragjyotishpur (Modern Guwahati) was a land of religious and social chaos in the 15th century. Worship of Śakti in different forms, *Tāntrik* practices, rituals and animal sacrifices etc. captured the popular minds of Assam. Traditionally associated with Hindu society the belief in one universal God, service to humanity and the principle of *Ahimsā* were forgotten under the cover of dark ritualism of the *Tantras*. Śaṅkaradeva was astonished and frustrated to see this type of affairs and set himself to study the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhāgavata*, the *SrimadBhāgavadgītā* etc. with a view to unveil the truth. Śaṅkaradeva visited different places of pilgrimage including Setubandha Rameswaram, Dwaraka, Brindaban, Mathura, Kashi, Goya, Puri, Kurukshetra, Ayodhya, Badarikasram and shared the thoughts and aspirations of devotees of these holy places as his religious ideas got an extra strength.

Śaṅkaradeva expounded *Neo-Vaiṣṇavite* cult in which he preached the belief in one universal God and the path of supreme devotion to him-the *Bhaktimārga*. Śaṅkaradevas' philosophic ideas resembled those of the qualified monism (*Bisistadvitavad*) of Rāmānuja in some respects.

According to Śaṅkaradeva *Bhakti* is its own reward as *Bhakti* finds its culmination in the intuitive realization of God Absolute. From *Bhāgavata* Śaṅkaradeva

took this cult of *Bhakti* which lays down that we must love God for his own sake and not for any reward and the soul which worships God and remains ever distinct from God is much happier than the one who becomes merged in God. Śaṅkaradeva preached devotional faith in one universal God. According to Śaṅkaradeva devotion requires no priest for the offering of love. Śaṅkaradeva propagated the *Vaiṣṇavite* cult of *Bhakti* about 550 years ago and flourished and radiated the eastern part of India at a time when the whole of India was pulsating with the *Vaiṣṇavite* renaissance.

This chapter is divided into two part. One is for the discussion of philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva and the other is for the discussion about the educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva.

5.2 Philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva :

5.2.1 Śaṅkaradeva's Concept of God :

According to Śaṅkaradeva All is *Brāhmaṇa* (*Sarvam Khalu idam Brahma*) because the world of multiplicity is born out of *Brāhmaṇa* and dissipates into it at desolution :

daśa digapāla same jagata samasta /
tohmātese upaje tohmāte yāya asta //
ātese samaste brahma mantragne radai /
*yena yaite bhari dile pṛthivīte paḍai //*¹

(The whole world with the ten *dikapālas* (deities) is born out of thee and dissolves into Thee. So the *Vedic* verses sing that all is *Brāhmaṇa* as wherever one sets his foot, it falls on the earth)

¹ *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā, Vedastuti, v.1651*

Vedas assert that the reality is essentially one and that is *Brāhmaṇa*.

Śaṅkaradeva opines that the Absolute Reality (*Brāhmaṇ*) is non-dual consciousness, pervading the world of multiplicity created by *Māyā* :

māyātesa dekhiyā vividha pariccheda /
svarupata tohmāra nāhike kichu bheda //
caitanyāsvarupa vyāpi eka nirañjana /
*tohmāka bulibe dvaita kona aññajana //*²

(Thou appear as multiple forms due to *Māyā*, but essentially Thou have no distinction whatsoever. Thou art in essence consciousness, all-pervading and indeterminate. Who is that ignorant that would call Thou a duality.)

Several verses can be culled from the writings of Śaṅkaradeva on the non-dual indeterminate Reality –one is quoted :

tohmāra advaita rūpa paramānanda pada /
tāte mora magna hauka cita ³

(Thy non-dual form is a seat of supreme bliss. Let my mind be engrossed there)

It is seen that Śaṅkaradeva regards the determinate God (*Īśvara*) as real and essentially identical with *Brāhmaṇa*. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the worshipful deity in Śaṅkaradeva's faith who is himself God incarnate as declared by the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (1-3-28). Lord Kṛṣṇa has been described as immanent and transcendent as determinate and indeterminate. As one takes the transcendental view-point the apparent contradiction melts away :

² *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā, Uresa Varnana*, v. 2122

³ *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā, Vedastuti*, v. 1669

tumi satyābrahma tohmāto prakāśe

jagata iṭo asanta /

jagatate sadā tumio prakāśā

antaryyāmī bhagavanta //⁴

(Thou art the true supreme self. This phenomenal world gets manifested in Thee. As inner controller, O Lord Thou too express Thyself in the world itself)

Again in an another verse it is quoted :

parama viśuddha gunahīna mai

jnāna-rūpa ātmā eka /

mote āchai ito jagata mai puau.

jagatata vyatireka //⁵

(I am the supreme self, knowledge in essence perfectly pure and indeterminate. This world existing but I am different from it)

Some other verses can quoted from the writing of Śaṅkaradeva.

The world of multiple names and forms is the creation of *Māyā* and so not real but apparent

yata dekhā yata śunā yetaka manata guṇā /

save māyāmaya svapna sama //⁶

(All that you see and hear and all that you think in your mind are illusive as dream)

⁴ *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā, Vedastuti*, v.1662

⁵ *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*-10-2389

⁶ *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā*, v. 1815

dekhi śuni māne ito jagata yateka

*māyāra racanā jānā //*⁷

(The entire world is seen and heard but a creation of *Māyā*, indeed of jugglery)

brahma vyātireke yata dekhā michā āna /

*jarita upaji yena āche sarpa jñāna //*⁸

(Wherever you see besides God is false as the perception of snakes in a piece of rope.)

Māyā takes the world as real and suffers a lot. *Māyā* generates ignorance in the individual self :

e bhava gahana vana āti moha pāśe channa

tāhe hāmo hariṇa beroāi /

phandilo māyāra pāśe Kālavṛyādhe dhāyā ase

*kāma krodha kuttā khedi khāi //*⁹

(This world is a dense forest strewn with the rope of infatuation. I, a humble deer, move about it. I get trapped by the fetters of *Māyā*; the hunter kala runs at me and his dogs of lust and anger devour me up)

saṁsāra gartte pari āchai loka /

*mohata andha nedāya duḥkha śoka //*¹⁰

(People are entrapped in the world pit. Blind with delusion they suffer from sorrows)

7 *Nimi-Navasiddha Samvada* v.132

8 *Bhāgavata Purāna*. v.12/171

9 *Śaṅkaradeva : Bargīt* /16

10 *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā. Bhāgavata Tatparyya*. v.2031

āpuni sraṇilā carācara dehā yata /
samasta aiśvarya bhāve āchā samastata //
jīva aṁśe tumi praveśilā gāve gāve /
*āve āmi tomāka bhajoho sarvabhāve //*¹¹

(Thou has created all the *jīvas* moving and non-moving and are present with all greatness in everyone. Thou have entered as souls into all bodied forms. Hence we worship thee by all means.)

The doctrine of inner controller (*antaryāmīn*) is a prominent feature in Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy. God has created the *jīvas* and the world and entered into them as the inner controller. Thus He makes the *jīvas* experience pleasure and pain and also guides and protects them and the world.¹²

R.G Bhandarkar gives his opinion that the doctrine of inner controller belongs to *viśiṣṭadvaitavāda*.¹³ Dr. Moheswar Neog also holds the same view, "This (The doctrine of inner controller) is a dualistic trait, distinguishing between the world and *Brāhmaṇa* as its controller and no attempt is made to reconcile it to the assertions made elsewhere in Śaṅkaradeva's works that the world is an apparent totality of names and forms and *Brāhmaṇa* alone is the real."¹⁴

Without denying the *Nirguṇa* aspect of God, Assam *Vaiṣṇava* scriptures have laid more stress on the *saguṇa* aspect. The personal aspect has been mainly extolled for the purpose of devotion. The adorable God is not only personal but also He is immanent

¹¹ *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā, Vedastuti. 1655*

¹² Neog, Maheswar.(2008) *Śaṅkaradeva and His Times*, p. 229.

¹³ Bhandarkar, R.G. *Vaiṣṇavism. Saivism and Minor Religious System*. p. 7

¹⁴ Neog, Maheswar.(2008) *Śaṅkaradeva and His Times*, p. 229.

and transcendental. “Śaṅkaradeva in his celebrated work *Kīrttana* describes the two fold aspect God and there he says that as characterless or indeterminate God is not comprehensible devotees including gods (devas) worship and adore His beautiful form in the person of Nārāyaṇa.¹⁵ Śaṅkaradeva states in *Nimi Navasidha-samvada* that the original unmanifested and undifferentiated reality is *Brāhmaṇa* and when *Brāhmaṇa* for the purpose of creation manifests, He is known as *Nārāyaṇa* or Vasudeva.¹⁶ In *Anādi - Pātan* Śaṅkaradeva says: “Because of confusion created by various scriptures, people cannot grasp the knowledge (*tattva*) of God and therefore those bewildered creatures think of God as the impersonal one”.¹⁷

In the words of Śaṅkaradeva, He is *Anādi* (without any beginning), *Ananta* (without any end), *Nirañjana* (Stainless). He is absorbed in knowledge and delight. He is himself the subject and the object of his own meditation. The creative principles of *Māyā* or *Prakṛti* remains in an unconscious state in the *Nirguṇa* or the indeterminate *Brāhmaṇ*. This is the *Nirguṇa* concept of *Brāhmaṇ* in the thoughts of Śaṅkaradeva. Śaṅkaradeva names it as the *Īśvara Puruṣa*.¹⁸ The immanent Lord, the lord in connection with the finites, the plurality, the becoming, and the multiplicity of the world is known as the *Saguṇa Brāhmaṇ*. *Nirguṇa Brāhmaṇ* becomes the *Saguṇa Brāhmaṇa* in order to create multiplicity. In the *Saguṇa* or the Determinate *Brāhmaṇ* the *Māyā* or the *Prakṛti* is made conscious. She is beginning less and inherits the half part of *Īśvara*. She

¹⁵ *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā. Uresavarnana*. vv. 84-85

¹⁶ *Nimi-Navasidha-Samvada*. vv. 187-188

¹⁷ *Anadi-Patan*, v.157, p. 35.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 38, 39, 40, 42.

is bestowed with all the power by the *Īśvara* for the purpose of creation. But otherwise, she is absorbed into the *Brāhmaṇa*.¹⁹

For the purpose of meditation it appears that Śaṅkaradeva lay little emphasis on the *Nirguṇa Brāhmaṇ*. For the mystical realization *Saguṇa Brāhmaṇ* as the God immanent in the world, serves the best purpose for a devotee who aspires. Śaṅkaradeva prefers Ramanujāchārya's deal for his practical purpose that "faith and emotional fervor are the bedrock of popular religion. No religion that banishes the personal God from its system has succeeded anywhere."²⁰

Śaṅkaradeva think that the *Nirguṇa Brāhmaṇ* or the abstract concept of God is not easily understandable. The worldly people in their life time may fail to realize it. Sanaradeva's main focus is to elevate the common masses. Śaṅkaradeva's main concern is to democratise his religious opinion. Śaṅkaradeva's main aim is to propagate devotion among the general people. Devotion enables man to have a direct communication with the personal God. Devotion is possible with the God who is *Saguṇa*, *Savisesa* and *Sākāra* (qualified, personal and with a form) Devotion is not possible without a *Saguṇa Brāhmaṇ*.²¹

Śaṅkaradeva consider the realization of the *Nirguṇa Brāhmaṇ* or the Absolute as supra-devotional in nature. The absolute will be realized in a state that will transcend devotion. Śaṅkaradeva says that our devotion should pave the way for the dedication to

19 *Anadi-Patan*, pp.49-50

20 Parthasarathy, R *Rāmānujacharya*. p. 56

21 Sarma, T.N. *Bhakti Vada*. p. 35

the *Nirguṇa* knowledge of the *Nirguṇa* and the highest concentration on the *Nirguṇa*.²² The *Nirguṇa Brāhmaṇ* is spontaneous and intuitive in the realization. The devotee has to undergo certain modes of discipline for the mystical realization of the *Saguṇa Brāhmaṇa*. Śaṅkaradeva stated that devotion is an active device. In a culminating stage of spiritual experience when the purpose of devotion is fulfilled. The *Nirguṇa Brāhmaṇ* is realized. A reconciliation between the *Saguṇa* and the *Nirguṇa* aspects of the One Supreme Reality was brought by Śaṅkaradeva in this manner.

Śaṅkaradeva like Rāmānuja “...conceives God as the Eternally, Beautiful, though He is beyond *Prakṛti* (matter) and its attributes, in order to attract the soft, He appears in the cosmos in a form of infinite beauty.”²³

Śaṅkaradeva’s mystical thoughts put importance on the nature and worship of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of the world, the blower of the flute, the accomplisher of all, the bestower of Salvation, the ruler of destiny and the most compassionate one to the poor. He dispels the sorrows and is pleased by devotion. He is the lotus eyed, the destroyer of fear. He incarnated many times to save the world. He is the refuge of the helpless one. His body is bluish black. He is calm and quiet and the abode of all the qualities. He is the wise one and the protector of the world who sustains creation. He is the friend to the devotees. He liberated the true devotees. He incarnated in ten forms in order to save the world from distress. Śaṅkaradeva also feels the necessity of describing the physical excellence of Kṛṣṇa.²⁴

22 *Guṇamālā*. p. 24

23 Parthasarathy, *R Ramanujāchārya*. p.69.

24 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. pp. 127-128.

Śaṅkaradeva says, “The absolutely foolish people wander about aimlessly in this world for enjoyment in this as well as in the next birth. Such vile desires can be done away with by devotion to God. Let God be my spiritual *Guru* and wipe out the egoism from my mind so that I may escape from drudgery of this world.”²⁵

Īśvara is of the nature of the *Ātman* and is the Supreme Bliss (*Paramā Ānanda*). In *Bhakti Ratnākara* of Śaṅkaradeva the Lord Kṛṣṇa is found to utter following words to Uddhava, “I am the soul as such and the Supreme Bliss who resides in the person that entrusts his mind in Me becoming completely impartial towards all. The happiness or the bliss that such a person, derives there from can nowhere be enjoyed by a person, whose mind is deeply engrossed in the worldly affairs.”²⁶

Śaṅkaradeva’s faith in God had a rational basis. Śaṅkaradeva did not propagate blind believe in God. About the existence of God Śaṅkaradeva did not make any intellectual inquiry. To make people understand about the importance of the path of devotion Śaṅkaradeva tried his best to invent new means. To turn people’s mind towards devotion Śaṅkaradeva insisted on loving cooperation of the masses and applied artistic ways.

According to Śaṅkaradeva, the existence of God is irrefutable and unquestionable. His *Eka-Śaraṇa- Nāma- Dharma* emphatically claims due respect and faith in Lord Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa’s supra mundane power has been presented in a way which will certainly awaken in the minds of the people an idea of astonishment. The idea of astonishment has resemblance with Rudolf Otto’s “feeling of awe” or the ‘mysterium

²⁵ *Bhakti-Ratnākara*. p.102

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 113

tremendum'. Kṛṣṇa's sportive performance (*lilā*) in his earthly life has been shown in a highly extraordinary way.²⁷

Śaṅkaradeva believes in the concept of *Avatāra* by following the *Gītā* and the *Purāṇa*. The *Gītā* and Śaṅkaradeva emphasize the necessity of a personal relation with God whom we can love and adore. Śaṅkaradeva is found to preserve this point throughout his entire preachings. Śaṅkaradeva seems to follow the *Gītā* in expounding the mystic consciousness. He seeks to establish an intimate personal relationship with God. God has been worshipped not merely as a Super person, but as the one who incarnates Himself for the well being of man and who shares people's joy and sorrow. God helps the devotees at the time of their troubles and difficulties.²⁸

Nārāyaṇa is the eternal, unstained, everlasting reality. He is neither an antecedent nor a consequent. The mystical thoughts of Śaṅkaradeva find contentment in describing outstanding personality of Kṛṣṇa, His humility towards His devotees, His perfect beauty and His esteemed position among all the deities. Śaṅkaradeva worship Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata*.²⁹ It is seen that the concept of personal God or the *Saguṇa Brāhmaṇa* of Śaṅkaradeva serves all the purposes in shaping the social, ethical, philosophical, religious epistemological and metaphysical concepts.

Śaṅkaradeva's concept of *Nirguṇa Brāhmaṇ* finds its expression in this way that He is the Pure Bliss, one soul in the form of knowledge.³⁰ In the words of Śaṅkaradeva, "Brāhmaṇ who is devoid of any quality is you the Lord. You are *Nirguṇa*, Hari, the Pure

27 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. p. 129

28 Ibid., p. 129

29 Asom Sahitya Sabha, *Kalirām Medhi Rachanāvali*, p.48

30 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. pp. 130-131

Bliss. Apart from this I do not perceive any other form³¹ Lord himself says, “I am the highest purity and devoid of any quality. I am the one soul in the form of knowledge.”³²

Nirguṇa Brāhmaṇ has never been explained in a spinozistic style that “all determinations are negations. In the mystical thoughts of Śaṅkaradeva we also have not come across the *neti-neti* concept of the *Upaniṣadic* thought. The cause is that the abstract monism can be better understood by the intellectual group of people. But Śaṅkaradeva’s systems are primarily meant for the mass people. For this reason, Śaṅkaradeva has adopted utmost restraint in the use of intellectual terminology. Instead of analyzing the *neti-neti* concept of the *Upanisads*, Śaṅkaradeva in clear analysis, make the common people know that the Indeterminate *Brāhmaṇ* is there within the power of human realization and can be realized in the stage of highest spiritual development.³³

In the philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva the finites have no existence apart from the infinite. They emerge from the infinite and return to the Infinite at the time of *Pralaya*. The Infinite can persist without the existence of the finites. The finites are only needed to express the Infinite. In addition to this, Śaṅkaradeva holds that the finites are created by the Infinite, only to show His Lila Divine Sportive power.³⁴

The monism of Śaṅkaradeva does not fully accept the *Advaita* view of “*Brahma Satya Jagat Mithyā, Jīva Brahmaiva Nāparaḥ.*” According to Śaṅkaradeva, *Brāhmaṇ* is *Satya*. He is the only reality; the world is the manifestation of the *Brāhmaṇ*. But, at the same time, showing the logical inconsistency of his thought, he has offered

31 *Bhakti-Ratnākara*. p.30

32 *Madbhāgavata*. X.v. 2390

33 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. p. 131

34 *Ibid*, P. 131

the other theistic view. He has asserted the ever-presence of God in the world in its creation, maintenance and destruction. He goes a step further and holds that God is the material stuff of the world. Thus the external world is not unreal. God transforms Himself into the world at His will. God plays the role of both the efficient cause and the material cause in the creation of the world. An earthen pot is nothing other than clay, even after destruction, the clay remains same; again before creation it is clay all the same likewise, God is in the beginning, middle and in the end to declare his omnipresence in the world.³⁵

It appears that though Śaṅkaradeva establish the supreme reality of the *Brāhmaṇ*, yet he does not deny the empirical reality of the world. *Bhāgavadagītā*'s influence on his theism enforces him to give stress on the ontological status of the world. To know the Being, the becoming or the world process cannot be neglected. On the other hand, the unqualified monism of Śaṅkaradeva fully affirms the truth of the *Jagat Prapancha*. According to him, the variety and multiplicity of the world originate from the principle of illusion and so are unreal. As a result, the realization of love and pity in the phenomenal world becomes absolutely impossible. Therefore, the unqualified monism of the *Advaitins* leads to the idea of utter impracticability of the human love and kindness and goes against the principal tenets of the *Vaiṣṇavism*.³⁶

“The Philosophers and seers of the *Upanishads* not only experienced the Absolute but the world process as well from the highest level of spiritual consciousness. Thus, he found the world as nothing else, but a free and spontaneous expression of the

³⁵ *Bhakti-Ratnākara*. p.33

³⁶ Ed. Utgikar, N.B *Collected Works of Sir R.G. Bhandarkar*, Vol.IV, p.72

Absolute and not as unreal or false.”³⁷ According to Śaṅkaradeva the world is not false as it is the expression of the Divine. Śaṅkaradeva found to suggest in many occasion the views of abstract monism along with the views of concrete monism. Śaṅkaradeva is found to cross the barriers of theists. Śaṅkaradeva speaks like the absolutists when he says that the reality of *Brāhmaṇ* or the unreality of the world is a matter of degree. Śaṅkaradeva agrees that the highest truth is no other than *Brāhmaṇ* or the Absolute. Although these are partially false and partially real, the finite objects and selves possess reality. For Śaṅkaradeva in the state of attainment of the Absolute truth, the world of appearance is negated and falsified.

Śaṅkaradeva accept the living presence of the *Brāhmaṇ* as an ethical principle. To realize the God in the Supreme level it is always necessary to realize him in the empirical level. The *Jīvas* are the parts or fragments of the one Supreme being was said by Śaṅkaradeva in his *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* and the *Srimadbhāgavata*. Śaṅkaradeva retain his stand on monotheism through out his teachings.

The important distinction between the *Jīva* and *Īśvara* is shown in the following way. “He is *Īśvara* who is all joy and who controls *Māyā*. *Īśvara* is conscious and ever released while *Jīva* is ignorant and ever chained to worldly existence. God is ever pure. *Jīva* is impure. He is immutable, *Jīva* is liable to change. He is the primeval *Puruṣa* without beginning and without end. *Jīva* has beginning and end, birth and death. He is glorious, *Jīva* is without glory. He is the lord of Three *guṇas* (*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*). *Jīva* is subject to them. He, with perpetual look, sees and knows all and exists as Viṣṇu

37 Misra, R.S. *Studies in Philosophy*, Introduction p. XXVIV

pervading and controlling the universe, *Jīva* sees nothing.”³⁸ Like Vallabhāchārya, Śaṅkaradeva take for granted that the *Jīva* is not different from the *Brāhmaṇ*, it is a part of *Brāhmaṇ*. It is in the ultimate stage of mystical realization; the oneness of the individual selves with the *Brāhmaṇ* is realized. According to him the *Ātman* or the *Īśvara* is present in the heart of all.³⁹

5.2.2 Śaṅkaradeva’s Concept of World:-

Śaṅkaradeva’s theory of creation is Vivartavada.

The world is unreal, but has the appearance of reality as it rests on *Brāhmaṇa*.

The world is not other than *Brāhmaṇa* -

tumi parāmatmā jagatara īśa eka /
eko vastu nāhike tohmāta vyatireka //
tumi kāryyakāraṇa samasta carācara /
suvarṇa kuṇḍale yena nāhike antara //
tumi paśupakṣī surāsura taru tṛṇa /
*ajñānata muḍhajane dekhei bhinna bhinna //*⁴⁰

(Thou art the highest self, the sole lord of the world. There is nothing different from Thee. Thou art the cause and the effect, that is the sensate and the insensate world. As an ear-ring is not different from gold, so thou art all beasts and birds, gods and demons, trees and herbs. The ignorant under the spell of *Avidyā* perceives multiplicity in forms)

38 Medhi, K. R. (Tr.), *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, vv 758, 760, 761, 762

39 Mādhavadeva, *Bhakti-Ratnāvali*. v. 138

40 *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā*. vv. 519, 520

yata dekhā carācara harimaya nirantara
harita pr̥thaka keho nohe /
yi jana bhakatihīna si dekhe harika bhinna
*harira māyāye tāka mohe //*⁴¹

(The world you see is Hari in entirety. No one is different from Him. One devoid of devotion, sees Hari in different forms being infatuated by His *Māyā*)

mukūṭa kuṇḍala yena suvarnaera bhinna nuhi
michā mātra nāma rūpa yata /
ahaṁkāra pañcabhūta tohmāta pr̥thaka nuhi
*prabhu paramārtha vicārata //*⁴²

(Gold crowns and ear-rings are not different from gold All names and forms are false O Lord, ego and five physical elements do not differ from Thee in supreme analysis)

yata jīva jangama kiṭa patangama
*aga naga jaga teri kāyā //*⁴³

(The entire world containing different creatures the worms, insets and the movable ones, the trees, the mountain Are Thy forms)

“God is the only reality; everything else is of the nature of illusion. There is nothing real besides Him. What appears real is actually false. “Whatever you see illusory and dream-like. Therefore, try to remove illusion by perceiving the Reality underlying all

41 *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*, v. 599

42 *Ibid.*, v. 1670.

43 *Bargit* / 4

phenomena.”⁴⁴ “Just as children take a mirage created by sun-shine for water similarly the ignorant believes or ascribes reality to false or illusory objects and phenomena of the world.”⁴⁵ Many other passages to quote these passages speak of God as the only reality and deny reality to the world of diversity of facts and multiplicity of phenomena.

World appear to be real as because of *Māyā*, the magical power with which God conjures up the world show. By using the jugglery of *Māyā* the Almighty assumes various form and shapes.⁴⁶

The ignorant being deceived by *Māyā* sees many objects instead of one reality. The inscrutable power of *Māyā* has a double function of concealing the real nature of *Brāhmaṇ* and making Him appear as something else. The aspect of *Māyā* that conceal is called *āvaraṇa* and the aspect that distorts our knowledge is called *vikṣepana*. Śaṅkaradeva has referred to this double function of *Māyā* in his version of Book II of the *Bhāgavata-purāna*.⁴⁷ People cannot differentiate the real from the unreal owing to the powerful influence of *Māyā*. Being the power of God, *Māyā* cannot over-power Him. Śaṅkaradeva speaks of the influence of *Māyā*, the nature of God and the world in the following way : “*Brāhmaṇa* alone is real ; the world-creation is illusion. The world is merely a projection of *Māyā* on Him (*tomār māyāye kare tomāte kalpanā*). *Māyā* which causes birth and death and envelops *jīvas* with ignorance is nothing but a power of God. God manifests Himself in the world by pervading it, but He is not destroyed with destruction of the world.”⁴⁸

44 Bhāgavata. Book XI. 19262 : Kīrtana. v. 1815. p.453

45 Rajasuya kāvya. v.419

46 Bhāgavata. Book II. v.498. p. 41

47 Ibid., v.650

48 *Kuruksetra*. vv.485-88

Śaṅkaradeva elaborately discuss about the problem of creation. The question how God has created the world out of the material stuff occupies a prominent place in his mystic-religious thoughts. While explaining the creation of the world, he takes the help of *Sāṃkhya's Satkāryavāda*. He does not go against the view of the *Sāṃkhyas* that essentially the effect is of the same nature as the cause. The cloth is not different from the threads in its essence. The effect must be potentially present in the causes prior to its production. But he differ from the *Sāṃkhyas* on an important matter that the *Prakṛti* of the *Sāṃkhyas* is an independent reality and has no cause; *Prakṛti* is material. On the other hand, *Prakṛti* of Śaṅkaradeva is caused by *Brāhmaṇ*; it is spiritual.⁴⁹

Śaṅkaradeva's discussion on cosmogony is derived from the scriptural interpretation. According to him, with the help of five *Mahābhūtas*, Nārāyaṇa created the world. At first the *Puruṣa* as the incarnated being enters the Pañca *Mahābhūtas* sportively. His sense organs are the sense organs of the *Jīvas* and his knowledge is the knowledge of the *Jīvas*. His life breath makes the *Prāṇa*, the strength and the efforts of the body and the senses. In His body, the three worlds of the earth, heaven and inferno exist. With the help of the three *gunas*, He creates preserves and destroys. He becomes *Brahma* with the help of *Rajaguṇa* and Viṣṇu with the help of *Sattvaguna* and *Rudra* with the help of *Tamaguṇa*.⁵⁰

5.2.3 Śaṅkaradeva's Concept of Nature of Reality :

God is the Supreme being viz, Nārāyaṇa possess the *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*, these three familiar attributes. God is pure bliss, self-differentiated and the ground of all life. In nature and attributes God is infinite. God is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent,

49 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. p. 135

50 *Anadi Patan* v. 66

creator, destroyer and sustainer of everything. In *Kīrttana* (*Haramohana* episode) Śāṅkaradeva writes : “God Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme soul and is the one and the only Lord of the Universe. Nothing exists without Him. He is the cause (*Kāraṇa*) as well as the effect of the creation (*Kārya*). Just as ornaments made of gold do not differ in substance from gold itself. Similarly, there is no distinction between God as the cause and God as the effect.”⁵¹ In the book X (ten) of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Assamese version) Śāṅkaradeva speaks of the all pervasive and transcendental nature of God – “Just as water, air, earth and sky are pervading the world, in the like manner. God is pervading mind, intellect and vital breath (*prāṇa*) of things and beings. He is pure, qualityless (*guṇahina*) and conscious self. In Him the world exists and yet He is beyond the world.”⁵² In another place of the same work it is stated that God with His incomprehensible power (*acintya prabhāva*) exists in the world and the world also exists in Him. The one Supreme Soul is pervading all things and beings like fire that remains invisible in all woods.⁵³ God has been further described in a considerable number of verses as the only reality underlying various objects and beings of the world. He is immutable (*avikārī*) being above the influence of *Kāla* (time) and *Māyā* (illusion)⁵⁴ “He (God) is the only reality and everything else that appears is illusory. There is no reality save and except Him.”⁵⁵

“He is the beginning, middle and the end of the world. There is nothing real except Him. Just as an earthen pot is nothing but the composition of soil and when broken, is reduced to soil again and just as before the composition of the pot the atoms

⁵¹ *Kīrttana*, section VIII, p.129

⁵² *Bhāgavata Dasama-Skandha* vv. 13030-32, p. 1041

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vv. 12219-12220. p. 966).

⁵⁴ Sarma, S.N. (2016) : *The Neo-Vaiṣṇavite Movement and The Satra Institution of Assam*, p. 29

⁵⁵ *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, v. III, p.19.

of soil that constituted it were there, in the like manner God remains at all stages of the creation”⁵⁶

“O Lord, you are the only unchangeable reality of this world ; others are liable to change and decay. Being the primal cause (*ādyā kāraṇa*) of the creation you are above the changes caused by birth and death. O Nārāyaṇa, you, being the primal and eternal *Puruṣa*, are free from change and decay and therefore, no limitation of any sort is applicable to you. Space, time and matter cannot measure or differentiate you. You are complete in yourself.”⁵⁷

The Supreme Reality or God is called by various names, viz. *Brāhmaṇ*, *Paramātmān* and *Bhāgavata*. Jiva Goswami, the well-known exponent of the Bengal school of *Vaiṣṇavism* works out a subtle and elaborate distinction between *Brāhmaṇ*, *Paramātmān* and *Bhāgavata* and comes to the conclusion that *Bhāgavata* represents the most perfect form of God. Assamese *Vaiṣṇavas* have not tried to show any discrimination or difference in degrees of perfection between the above three conceptions of God. In *Nimi-Navasidha-Samvada* Śaṅkaradeva has interpreted the above terms and has finally shown that those are but different names of the Supreme Reality seen through different aspects.⁵⁸

“God as the director and controlled of senses is known as *Paramātmān* and as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. He is *Bhāgavat* when God appears to *Yogins* in their meditation after the disappearance of ignorance, He is called *Brāhmaṇ*. *Brāhmaṇ*, *Paramātmān* and *Bhagavat* are the names of the one Reality. The same

56 *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, vv.130-132, p. 33

57 *Ibid.* vv.134-137, p. 33

58 Sarma, S.N. (2016). *The Neo-Vaiṣṇavite Movement and The Satra Institution of Assam*. pp 29-30.

Reality is called by different names owing to different characteristics seen from different angles (*ekereṣe tini nāmā laksana bhedata*)”⁵⁹

Pippallāyaṇa, one of the *Siddhas* of Nine *Siddhas* of *Nimi-Navasiddha samvada* of Śaṅkaradeva explains the characteristics features of Nārāyaṇa. “Nārāyaṇa is the ultimate cause of creation and dissolution; there is no other God superior to Him. He remains a *sākṣi* in all the activities of the world; in deep sleep as well as in the state of dreaming and awakening. It is He who infuses life and vitality to all beings and causes *jīvas* to suffer and enjoy the fruits of their activities. Hari, Hara and *Brahmā* carry out His orders and therefore, He is the God of all gods. When He directs and controls the senses, He is known as *Paramātmān*; when He appears to yogins in their meditation He is known as *Brāhmaṇ* and when He is looked upon as the creator, sustainer and preserver of this world, He goes by the name of *Bhāgavata*. These; viz., *Brāhmaṇ*, *Paramātmān* and *Bhagavat* are but names of the same Supreme Nārāyaṇa. He is not comprehensible to the mind, senses and intellect. Just as sparks separated from fire cannot illuminate its source, similarly mind and other senses, though originated from God, do not know Him owing to the over-powering influence of ignorance (*māyā*). Even the *Vedas*, unable to grasp fully the real nature of God, have tried to indicate His nature by negative method. Without whose aid nothing could be achieved and the knowledge of whom marks the culmination of all activities and spiritual urge, know Him to be Nārāyaṇa.”⁶⁰

59 *Nimi-Navasiddha-Samvada*, vv. 178-181, p. 40

60 Ibid. pp. 40-42

Nārāyaṇa's this description incorporates both *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* aspects of God without defining a clear-cut description. But *Saguṇa* aspect is more pronounced as because of its leaning towards *Saguṇa* aspect.

5.2.4 Śaṅkaradeva's Concept of Morality :

It was Śaṅkaradeva who stresses upon the control of non-moral actions. These actions are causes of crime, greed, anger, suffering etc. The *citta* and its ignorance is the source of all non-moral actions. Śaṅkaradeva viewed that God is not responsible for man's non-moral actions and other miseries, sorrows and sufferings. The choice to do good or bad it depends upon man's freedom of will. It is only one's mind and its mental states are responsible for its actions. Therefore through one's own choice or will power one can promote or demote its spiritual power.

In other words, man is the architect of his own destiny. Śaṅkaradeva gives greater importance to human values such as kindness, love, benevolence etc. than legal sanctions. Śaṅkaradeva considers these as *punya* and *dharma* in *Vaiṣṇava* terminology. On the other hand, the deception, oppression and inflicting pain to others were called *papas*. Throughout his life he tried to evaluate good deeds to the status of social prestige.⁶¹

Śaṅkaradeva says about the virtues, i.e. doing good to others in his writing⁶²

Śaṅkaradeva's appeal to man is –

*nāhi nāhi āna dharma jānā satya bina.*⁶³

(There is no other *dharma* except Truth).

61 Roy-Chowdhury, Bhupendra.(1999). *Social Ideals of Śaṅkaradeva*. Mahāpurushjyoti. Vol.-II. p.113

62 *Hariṣchandra Upākhyāna*. v. 491

63 *Hariṣchandra Upākhyāna* v. 262

Śaṅkaradeva gave the idea of an ideal society. Śaṅkaradeva laid emphasis on the need and actions of moral purity in daily life for a healthy society. Śaṅkaradeva wanted and advised the people to keep away from greed, selfish, falsehood, anger, desire etc. Śaṅkaradeva advised to live on self-discipline, non-violence, purity and praying the name of Hari. Śaṅkaradeva says –

“citta driha karā citta driha karā
*Nājauk ānata moti.’*⁶⁴

(Be firm and discipline your mind so that it will not move hither and thither.)

In many occasions when one suffers from any anxieties in which case one is prone to commit harmful acts for the society. For such situations Śaṅkaradeva insisted for self control-*kariya manaka baisya vidura samprati*, control your mind, Vidura.⁶⁵

To know Kṛṣṇa ; devotion alone can lead them to Kṛṣṇa, the highest truth. It is not necessary to have knowledge of the entire script of the *Vedas*. Śaṅkaradeva says – “one need not be gods, dvija, sage for devotion, one need not acquire knowledge of many scriptures. Penances, silent prayers, sacrifices, gifts are mere deceptions, because Nārāyaṇa remains content only with devotion.”⁶⁶

Śaṅkaradeva advocates the best and the easiest path to Kṛṣṇa –

sakalo prāṇīka dekhibeka ātmasama /
*upāyamadhyat ito āti mokhyatama //*⁶⁷

(When you realize spiritual oneness with all creatures , there you encounter with the best means of emancipation)

⁶⁴ *Bhakti Pradip*, v.123

⁶⁵ *Anadipatan*. v. 74

⁶⁶ *Prahlad Carita*. v. 381

⁶⁷ *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*. v.1825

The devotion to the ideal of Kṛṣṇa is possibly through self control –A complete surrender to Kṛṣṇa. In the path of the dark night Śaṅkaradeva's ideal of Kṛṣṇa is the sources of light. Through the entire writings Śaṅkaradeva teaches people to love his fellow beings – to search Kṛṣṇa through the welfare of people Śaṅkaradeva's message to mankind is that one should not search *Kṛṣṇatu bhagavan swayam* of *Bhāgavata* in any idols but in all beings of the earth. Śaṅkaradeva says – “Knowing the ultimate truth make firm your heart and perceive Me in all the creatures.”⁶⁸

The relation of religion and morality is a matter of controversy. Morality can be defined as the system of principles by which we judge our action as good or bad or right or wrong. Again, religion which is also man's conscious aspiration for the attainment of an ideal, naturally involves actions. It is the business of morality to judge these actions as good or bad, so morality and religion can be said to have close relationship. Man can be religious and moral at the same time.⁶⁹

Human beings are finite as well as infinite or phenomenal as well as nominal. This dual consciousness of man is said to be the origin of both religion and morality. So religious man will be moral and a really moral man will be religious.⁷⁰

Aristotle is of the opinion that it is useless to discuss what goodness is, but how to become a good man is our chief concern.⁷¹ Dr. Radhakrishnan view is that, “Morality is not merely a question of laws and conventions but one of purity of mind with actions

68 *Bhāgavata*-XI. v. 255.

69 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. p. 77

70 Ibid., p. 77

71 Aristotle, *Ethics*, p. 93

as its outward manifestation”⁷² Morality is therefore, found to exhibit two aspects internal or personal and external or social. There is evolution of morality. The personal aspect of morality implies that the evolution of morality is possible only with mental development. Without mental development it is not possible for morality to develop or ascend higher. Society is only a ground for testing the mental development of people.⁷³ Śaṅkaradeva advocates that the social life begins with the performance of negative virtues. According to him the spiritual upliftment of performance of negative virtues. A man cannot lead a social life unless all kinds of hindrances standing on the path of moral life are absolutely eradicated. First and foremost duty of a person is to train himself not to do harm to others. Only then the positive virtue of helping others will follow. The positive moral virtues like love, kindness, charity, hospitality etc. are the superior virtues.⁷⁴

Śaṅkaradeva accepted kindness, truthfulness, charity, humility, patience etc. are as moral virtues. Non-violence is also recognized as one of the great ethical virtues. Active love and mercy towards all creatures are non-violence. Śaṅkaradeva opined that a virtuous one is very much afflicted when witnesses the sufferings of living beings and extends his helping hands towards all according to his capabilities.⁷⁵

5.2.5 Belief in Rebirth :

The theory of rebirth, which is intimately connected with the law of *Karma* is in reality a theory of evolution of the soul from matter to spirit, from ignorance to

72 Dr. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western thought*, p. 107

73 Gopalon, S, *Hindu Social Philosophy*, p. 246

74 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. pp 79-80

75 Ibid., p.80

knowledge, from sorrow to delight. The human beings are required to undergo several births of plants and animals to take birth as human.⁷⁶ According to the *Vedānta*, the soul which is immortal does not undergo birth, death and rebirth. They are the terms applied to the threefold bodies that cover it. The threefold bodies are subtle body (*Sukṣma Śarīra*), the gross body born of the parents and of the *tanmātras*. Of these, the subtle body lasts, while the another two disintegrate. The subtle body is made up of the mind, the *buddhi*, the ten organs of sense and action and the five *Praṇās*.⁷⁷

According to Śaṅkaradeva, rebirth of the *jīvas* is possible, only for the non-destruction of the '*liṅga śarīra*.' It is this '*liṅga deha*' that migrates. The moment man can dissociate himself from the *liṅga śarīra* then and then only liberation is possible. Thus, it is not impossible to get rid of the *liṅga śarīra*. Actually *liṅga śarīra* means the accumulation of thoughts acquired in the past lives and also in the present lives. *Liṅga* should also be understood as *buddhi*. But it is not the *Samskara*. *Samskara* which is only a part of *buddhi*, contains those thoughts only which are essential for the next birth. On the other hand, the *linga* contains all sorts of thoughts acquired in the previous births. According to Śaṅkaradeva, the three *gunas* of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* and the longing for their *Karma* (*Karmavasana*) are responsible for the constitution of the *liṅga deha*.⁷⁸

The *Vaiṣṇavas* are generally convinced of the fact that the thoughts prevail at the time of death have great influence on the rebirth of the *jīvas*. People attain higher or

76 Phukan, R. *Theory of rebirth*. p.1

77 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. p.112

78 Ibid. pp.112,113

lower births in accordance with the thoughts of which they are influenced at the time of death. In the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, it is found that the saint king Bharata was born as a deer in the next life as his thoughts centered round his pet deer at the time of death.⁷⁹

Śaṅkaradeva repeatedly reminds people that after innumerable births and deaths they are blessed to be born as human beings. The *jīvas* undergo a long chain of births and deaths before they have the most desired human life.⁸⁰

This success of human life lies in the attainment of liberation, according to Indian philosophy. The *jīvas* get rid of rebirth, after attaining *Mukti*. Then the *jīvas* need not be directed by the illusory power of *Māyā*. No binding of *Karma* remains for the *jīvas*. In this moment of union of the *Jīvātmān* with the *Paramātmān*, the individuals experience supreme joy.

The philosophy of the *Vedānta* shows that liberation is attained through knowledge. The *Mīmāṃsā* tells that it is through action that the liberation is achieved. Śaṅkaradeva opined that it is devotion through which emancipation is attained. He explains that the liberation is not attained through knowledge or action. In the words of Śaṅkaradeva, “The span of life passes in idleness in this horrible *Kālikāla*. You cannot be rescued either by knowledge or by action. Do not make your life worthless. Listen to the glory of Kṛṣṇa and move by fastening the name of Rāma in the neck.”⁸¹

In Śaṅkaradeva’s philosophy the concept of *Mukti* is simple and clear. Śaṅkaradeva’s appeal is democratic and the aim is to see that the common people can

79 *Śrī Madbhāgavata*. v. 4694.

80 *Bhakti-Ratnākara*. p.9

81 *Śrī Madbhāgavata*. XI, v. 17677

easily understand the concept. It is also the chief characteristic of Śaṅkaradeva to forgo any complexity regarding his religious and philosophical thoughts. In order to explain *Mukti*, Śaṅkaradeva express in brief that through devotion, liberation is attained and it needs not any other help. In the religious philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva the thoughts that without the attainment of *Mukti* all *Sadhanas* are meaningless is unceasingly present. Śaṅkaradeva opined and claim that anybody need not wait for the other life to attain liberation. Only through devotion it is possible for one to achieve the goal even in this life.

It is found in certain occasions in the religious writing of Śaṅkaradeva that devotion not liberation is the greatest ideal. For the sake of liberation, the *jīvas* take the help of devotion. The liberation is the end and the devotion is the means for it. Śaṅkaradeva's assertion is that the present age is the age of knowledge and action. According to Śaṅkaradeva, in *Kalikāla*, knowledge or action cannot free us.⁸² The religion of devotion proclaim that final attainment is not possible by knowledge. The self realization is possible with the help of meditation and concentration but not emancipation. In the philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva, the concept of *Mukti* finds expression in other mood. Though Śaṅkaradeva consider *Mukti* as a state of absorption into the Supreme Godhead, yet it is matter of observation that *Moksa* has not been regarded by him as a summum bonum of human life.

The mind stands for the desire of people. By obeying the directions of the mind, the people perform various good or evil acts, feel proud, construct or destroy their plans. In a sense, the mind is responsible for the '*jīvas*' vision of *Samsāra*. All the sense

82 *Śrī Madbhāgavata*, XI. v.17677

organs are under the control of the mind. They obey the commands of the mind. Whenever the mind suffers, it is *jīva* who suffers, when the mind moves the *jīvas* thinks that it is he (the *jīva*) who moves. When the mind does something, the *jīvas* thinks that it is he who does.⁸³

5.2.6 The Goal of Human Life :

Śaṅkaradeva was one of the greatest Humanitarians of Assam. He realized the suffering of human life, the evil deeds, the degradation of moral standard and the chaos of society etc. Śaṅkaradeva took upon himself the historic mission of strengthening the shaky base of social life of Assam. Śaṅkaradeva tried for unity among various races and various religions believes by harmonizing them. Śaṅkaradeva induced all sections-all castes all religious people to come to the fold of his ideals of pure devotions. Śaṅkaradeva came forward to the midst of people of Assam with his simple doctrine of religion called *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. *Eka Sarana* means self surrender to the ‘ultimate one’ and *Nāmā Dharma* means chanting the name of Hari. In his *Bhakti Pradip* the essence of the religion of *Eka-Sarana Nāma-Dharma* has been found in the succinct form in the following verse –

parar dharmak nihimsibā kadācit /
karibā bhūtaka dāyā sakaruṇa citta//
huibā śānta citta sarba dharmata batsala /
*ehi bhāgavata dharma jānā mohābala//*⁸⁴

(Despise not other’s religion, be kind to all with merciful heart. With soul unperturbed be tolerant to all other faiths. This is the true spirit of pure religion of *Bhāgavata*.)

⁸³ *Anadi Patan.* vv. 65, 67, 68, 70

⁸⁴ *Bhakti Pradip.* v. 141

The basic teachings of Śaṅkaradeva's religion is the religious tolerance and Humanism, i.e. the love of all beings. With this view Śaṅkaradeva tries to induce all sections of people to come under the umbrella of his religion of pure devotion – and boldly asserted that

kirāta kachārī khaci gāro miri
yavan kaṅka govāla//
asama maluka dhobā je turaka
kuvāchā mleca caṇḍāla //
āno pāpī nara Kṛṣṇa sevakara
sangata pabitra hayā
bhakati labhiyā saṁasār toriyā
*vaikuṇṭhe sukhe calaya//*⁸⁵

(*Kirāt, Kachārī, Khaci, Gāro, Miri, Yavana, Kanka, Gowala, Asama, Maluka, Rajaka, Turaka, Kuvāca, Mlecca, Caṇḍala* and other sinners become chaste by associating themselves with the devotees of Kṛṣṇa and they are relieved of the agonies of life. They become fit for the attainment of divine peace).

This was the great force of humanism behind the call of Śaṅkaradeva, which creates a new hope in the minds of all people irrespective of caste, creed or social status. Therefore, within a few years of the propagation of his new religion Narottoma Ātā of the Nagās, Govinda of Gāros, Jayahari of the Bhutiās and even Chāndisāi of the Muslims embraced the pure monotheistic religion, *Eka-Sarana-Nāma Dharma* of

85 *Bhāgavata-II*. v. 474-475

Śaṅkaradeva. The care of his religion is self purification. Like the puritan movement in England, during 1620-1660, the movement of Śaṅkaradeva which is called the *Neo-Vaisnave* Movement in Assam is to be considered as an upgradation of the moral nature of Assam.⁸⁶

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavadgītā* was the base of Śaṅkaradeva's thinking and writing as a spiritual humanistic philosopher. Śaṅkaradeva says basing upon the *Gītā* that all human beings are the children of God, and all are equal. According to Śaṅkaradeva, one can enjoy the liberation-the ultimate bliss in this world if he can give the equal status to all people irrespective of caste, creed, colour etc. Basically there remains no difference between God, world and people. Each is *Brāhmaṇ*, the non dual ultimate principle. Therefore harmony in all sections of beings-living and non living is indispensable. Śaṅkaradeva feels and invites every individual to realize, cultivate and promote spiritual harmony in this world.

According to Śaṅkaradeva human being is the greatest and best being of all sections of being. Human being is the only self-conscious being and society is formed with these conscious beings. Human being are interdependent on each other and each one express himself to others by sharing and caring mutual responsibilities.

It is the moral obligatory for all to promote equality and altruistic love for the welfare of the society. Śaṅkaradeva says "Observing no caste distinction between *Brāhmaṇa* and *Cāṇḍāla*, paying equal attention to both the donors and the robbers,

⁸⁶ Choudhury, Parul (2013). *The Concepts of Purusa, Prakriti and Lila in Śaṅkaradeva's Philosophy*. p. 293

imbibing the spirit of some regards to the pious and the mean, the wise received applauses from all.”⁸⁷

Śaṅkaradeva’s religious literature reflects equality among all people. There are many verses in his writings which speak about non-discrimination in the path of devotion between different caste and creed. Śaṅkaradeva said that everybody is equal and anybody can find himself in the State of *Mokṣa* through true devotion. *Mokṣa* means liberation of soul. This is the highest end of life.

Śaṅkaradeva holds that the world with all things and beings is the manifestation of God himself. God is the truth behind all creations. In *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* Śaṅkaradeva states as follows –

deboro iśwar hari tānto mohā jatna kori
loiyo ek śaraṇ śākṣyat,
jār ichā mokṣa paibe nalāge durāk jāibe
*āsā hari sabāro hiyat.*⁸⁸

(That means God is in everybody’s heart. Man does not need to go long to find God. They can meet God in their own heart.)

Śaṅkaradeva again said that even the pyre lighter can become respectable like the *Brāhmiṇ* through devotion of God –

yito caṇḍālara kāya vākya mane
sadāye sumare Hari
*āche bāhravrata yito brāhmanara*⁸⁹
si si sreṣṭha āta kari

⁸⁷ *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*. v.1821

⁸⁸ *Ibid. Bhāgavata Tatparyya*. v. 2022

⁸⁹ *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā, Prahlād Carita*. v.441

Śaṅkaradeva expressed again –

brāhmaṇara cāṇḍalara nibicāri kula

*dātāta corata yena dṛṣṭī eka tula*⁹⁰

Śaṅkaradeva's equanimity manifests here. It is no use to neither command nor condemn. No use of being jealous of other's religion. All animates should be treated equally without any consideration being friend or foe. In this way Śaṅkaradeva propagated the concept of equality in the fifteenth century through his writings and deed for human emancipation.

Śaṅkaradeva's main aim was to preach and propagate *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* based on *Bhakti*. But Śaṅkaradeva was very much concerned about the malpractices prevalent in the society during that period. Śaṅkaradeva was born at a time when the society was divided on class and caste distinction. Śaṅkaradeva was successful to bring people of different religion, caste and creed under one umbrella. In his different literary works, teachings of equality and equal treatment to all are easily available –

bolanta acyute arjunara citta lakshi;

*samaste bhūtate samabhāva havā sakhi.*⁹¹

(Looking at Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa said, 'have equal eyes for every objects')

Śaṅkaradeva paved the way for establishment of an egalitarian society through his teachings. Even in the dark era of medieval period Śaṅkaradeva taught that caste did

90 *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā, Prahlād Carita*, v. 1821

91 *Bhakti-Pradīpa*. v. 144

not make people great, only the persons who are devoted towards the Lord are considered to be great. In the *Bhāgavata*-X Śaṅkaradeva states –

jānilā brāhmaṇa janma haibāka nalāge tāra,
yito kṛṣṇa kathāta rasika
yaite taite hoka janma sise janma narottoma
*yāra sradvā hari bhakatika.*⁹²

(One who takes interest in the story of Kṛṣṇa does not need to take birth in the *Brāhmaṇ* caste ; by way of devotion to Hari, one can attain the status of norottoma, the best of the best of man, even though he has taken birth in a low caste)

The life of every individual needs to be free from torture and violence to lead a dignified life and to use the potential. Śaṅkaradeva was a humanitarian per excellence. Śaṅkaradeva gave importance on non-violence. Śaṅkaradeva advised the people to follow the path of non-violence not only against human beings but also other living beings.

kare himsā dharma nopaje bodha /
nugucaya yena sarpara krodha //
hāsai vaiṣṇavaka yiṭo niṣkhala /
*pāpata samulañce yāya tala*⁹³

(A person who indulges in malice ; whose sense never downs, whose anger, like that of a serpent, never subsides ; if he laughs at a devoted *Vaiṣṇava*, he gets drowned deep in the ocean of sin)

92 *Bhāgavata*. x.v. 2449

93 *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā*. p. 91

nakare ākrośa dveṣa kiñcito manata ;

*sehi jana jānibā uttama Bhāgavata.*⁹⁴

(Only he is the *Bhagavata*, the wisest one, who never grines for and discriminates any one)

hena jāni asura svabhāva saveḍi /

*samasta prāṇīka pūjā viṣṇu buddhi kari //*⁹⁵

(knowing this leave aside your demonic nature and respect all animals as souls of Viṣṇu)

Śaṅkaradeva endeavoured to lead the masses through the path of non-violence and tried to make them true human beings devoid of demonic qualities. The aim of human life is to discover the spiritual man. Only then the individual will be able to realize his infinity and eternity.

Man is regarded as the epitome of the whole universe ; he is the microcosm of the macrosom. In the *Sāṃkhya* philosophy it is said that in man all the twenty five elements are there. Now here in the world we find these twenty five elements together except in man. So man has a special status in this universe. Without man the universe, God etc. are meaningless because only man has ascribed meaning to them. So man's status is central in the universe at least in its empirical scheme.⁹⁶

Man is also regarded as divine as the godly elements are there in him. Man may become a demon (*asura*) or a god. It is his choice. If he wants to be a god he can become so, and if he wants to be an asura he can become so. Everything depends on

⁹⁴ *Nimi-Navasiddhvā-Samvada*. v. 85

⁹⁵ *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā*. 6 v. 359.

⁹⁶ Baruah, Girish (2014). Śaṅkaradeva : *A Critical Appraisal of His Philosophy and Religion*, p.253

him. So either he can enhance his status or can diminish it. He can walk in the path of the divine. To be a god means to acquire the divine qualities. To be a *asura* means to acquire the demonic characteristics.⁹⁷

Everybody is potentially divine or Spiritual. Marx said, “Freedom is the consciousness of necessity.” Necessity is our bodily life and we can be free when we realize our spiritual life. But we cannot enjoy the spiritual life unless we are conscious or aware of this life. Through the consciousness of our bondage we feel free, as Rabindranath Tagore said, *Asamkhyā bandhanare mājhe labhibe muktira swad*. Thus through the consciousness of finitude we feel the taste of infiniteness. While our body implies our finiteness, the soul implies our infinitude.⁹⁸

One who can control his sense organs may be the wisest of all and he can make his mind stick to the soul. In this case even if one enjoys a worldly life sin does not touch him.

Śaṅkaradeva wants to tinge the worldly life with the colour of religious life. According to him without leading a religious life the worldly life is meaningless. He ask us to sublimate our biological needs. As our worldly life is inevitable, we cannot avoid it. But it is possible for us to transform this worldly life to a religious life. Then only we can lead a worthwhile worldly life.⁹⁹

5.2.7 The Concept of Society :

Being a bi-product of the *Neo-Vaiṣṇavite* movement Śaṅkaradeva tried to enunciate through congregational prayer, the *Nāmghar*, *Than* and other *Śaṅkari*

97 Baruah, Girish (2014). Śaṅkaradeva : *A Critical Appraisal of His Philosophy and Religion*, p.253-254

98 Ibid. p.254

99 Ibid. p. 255

Institutions are supposed to uphold the ideal of social equality in the field of religious practices. Being the creation of one God, there should not be any discrimination between men on the basis of their caste as stated by Śaṅkaradeva in his *Bhāgavata*. For, as creations of God, the soul of gods and jackals are also dear to the God as the soul of human beings.¹⁰⁰ Śaṅkaradeva thus visualized a society where members from all castes, tribes and communities would sit together for the prayer of God and dine and eat together. This great and revolutionary idea of the saint in a society where caste was and still is the hall mark of the society,¹⁰¹ truly reflects itself when he proselytized members from the Bhutia, Miri (Mising), Garo and many other tribal communities to form the embryo of an egalitarian society under the canopy of religious belief. On many occasions, Śaṅkaradeva asserted that his religion of *Bhakti* does not respect, and a *Cāṇḍala* whose body, word and mind are turned upon the remembrance of God, is superior to a *Brāhmaṇ* maintaining his twelve & virtues.¹⁰²

Bhattadeva, the writers of the *Kathā Bhāgavata* in Assamese, later remarked that the great saint Śaṅkaradeva, through his religion of devotion uplifted the low born to the rank of the high, and they could also get rid of the pangs of rebirth.¹⁰³ As a matter of fact, all irrespective of caste affiliation could sit together and dine together ; and that was what formed the greatest allegation leveled against Śaṅkaradeva by a section of the *Brāhmaṇas*.¹⁰⁴ Due to the movement, untouchability, as such up held by the scriptures

100 *Śrīmadbhāgavata*. v.53.

101 Nicholas B. Dirks, (2003). *Caste of Mind – Colonialism and Making of Modern India*, pp.Iff, 122, 276

102 *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*. vv. 129. 380. 441

103 *Bhāgavata*. 12/622-623

104 Daityari. *Śrī Śaṅkaradeva aru . Śrī Mādhavadeva Carita* v. 751.

for so long, suffered a set-back and a process of slow *Sanskritisation* followed. Thus in the *Vaiṣṇavism* developed by Śaṅkaradeva, [the non-Hindu population of the country found an attractive postal into Hinduism, and through it they entered a clean and disciplined way of individual and social life.” The old ways of unclean food, clothing and general behaviour were slowly replaced by cleanliness and decency.¹⁰⁵ During the days of Śaṅkaradeva the expansion of *Vaiṣṇavism* into the tribal territories and the villages of the so called Non-Hindu population was a historical reality. But after the demise of Śaṅkaradeva his sect got fractionalized into different contending divisions the old *Brāhmaṇical* conservatism with the practice of casteism and untouchability sprang up and entered the *Śaṅkari* Institutions fold. It was only to a limited extent that the ideological stand of the saint still holds ground, and a man like Mathuradas Burhā Ātā, a member of depressed class was allowed to head a *Śaṅkari* Institutions.¹⁰⁶ The tradition of *Sanskritising* the tribal and other, backward and non-Hindu or semi-Hindu communities, however continued in the *Kala Sanghati* branch, particularly in its *Mowmarā* or *Māyāmara* sect propounded by Aniruddhadeva (1553-1626), who was the son of a Bhūñā and a nephew of Śaṅkaradeva.¹⁰⁷

Contemporary society of Śaṅkaradeva was full of superstitions, magical practices, vulgar materialism and selfishness. Śaṅkaradeva sincerely wanted to lift the Assamese society to a spiritual dimension in which these vices would be nowhere. In

105 Kathā-Guru-Carita, p. 270

106 Cantlie, *The Assamese*. p.176

107 Barua, S.L. (2003). *Life and Teachings of . Śrī Śrī Aniruddhadeva*. p.p. (preface). 157ff

Śaṅkaradeva's time religion became a degraded and perverted phenomenon. Śaṅkaradeva tried his level best to defend it from the onslaughts of further degradations.

Before the advent of Śaṅkaradeva Assam was infested with *Sākta* religion with the prevalence of *Tantricism* and it gained prominence at the patronage of the Āhom and other kings. Ethnic rivalries and religious distress were prevalent at that time. The society was full of uncanny beliefs and superstitions. Both Buddhist *Vrajayana* and Hindu *Tantricism* predominated the society. Human sacrifices were sanctioned by the society and they were prevalent in *Kāmakhyā* and *Tāmreswari* temples.¹⁰⁸

Religious anarchism was a serious characteristics of Śaṅkaradeva's Assam. These anarchism created religious disquiet among the masses. During this time Śaṅkaradeva was born and he appeared as the messiah of people for relieving from this disquiet. Śaṅkaradeva kindled in the people a ray of hope and peace with his new faith in this religion. Śaṅkaradeva understood that the institutionally sanctioned *Tāntrik* notions and practices caused disquiet. Śaṅkaradeva entertained a distrust to the irrational habits and mechanical practices in the name of religion.

People suffered under the burden of sectarian faiths. They entertained perverse form of worldly enjoyment. As a result morality and spirituality left them. People felt a sense of alienation within themselves. Śaṅkaradeva was completely dumbfounded at these corrupt forms of Hinduism. He, therefore, made up his mind to revolt against the proliferation of different antagonistic cults and tenets. In these cults and tenets spirituality was wholly subdued. They cannot be said to be pure Hinduistic cults, but

108 Baruah, Girish (2014). Śaṅkaradeva : *A Critical Appraisal of His Philosophy and Religion*, p.37

semi-Hinduistic cults with the prevalence of animistic elements and perverted offshoots of Buddhism that Śaṅkaradeva stamped as a religion of *Vāmānaya Sāstra*. These elements debased Hinduism and effected a low ebb in the religious affairs as they gave rise to immoral rituals.¹⁰⁹

The vulgarities and crudenesses involved in these rituals Śaṅkaradeva was shocked. Śaṅkaradeva deemed these rituals quite uncivilized. Śaṅkaradeva was unable to bear these repugnant methods as because he had a sophisticated and scientific mind. Śaṅkaradeva realized the futility of all these practices and began to think seriously of an alternative. Śaṅkaradeva came away from traditional *Vaiṣṇavism* and introduced a reformed and refined form of the same. Śaṅkaradeva discontinued the method of *vgraha* worship of Viṣṇu as a *devata* (minor god). Śaṅkaradeva introduced the Kṛṣṇa religion in place of the image worship of Viṣṇu. Through his new religion *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* Śaṅkaradeva lifted all the debasements in the name of religion. Śaṅkaradeva used the religion as a tool to curb all the mal-practices prevalent during that time. Śaṅkaradeva presented Kṛṣṇa before the people as their ideal.

Śaṅkaradeva's time was full of political turmoils, social unrest, religious confusion and spiritual decadence. Even elements like hatred, fanaticism, discord and disharmony was prevailing in the society. Being a conscious person in social questions Śaṅkaradeva could not remain silent seeing these situations. Śaṅkaradeva enlightened himself with the *Vaiṣṇavite* philosophy by travelling extensively the places with *Vaiṣṇavite* faith. Śaṅkaradeva brought the message of peace and tranquility and wanted to spread this message among the people.

109 Baruah, Girish (2014). Śaṅkaradeva : *A Critical Appraisal of His Philosophy and Religion*, p.38

5.2.8 End and Means – The *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*:-

The *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* is the principle of strict monotheism, i.e., taking refuge only in the Supreme Godhead, Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. It is exceptional and to be found nowhere in India.

Śaṅkaradeva derives his principle of *Eka-Sarana* from the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* :

sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇam vraja /
*ahaṁ tvāṁ sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayisyāmi mā sucaḥ //*¹¹⁰

Śaṅkaradeva translated this as –

sarvadharmā eri eka saraṇa sāksāta/
sudṛḍha viśvāse sakhi laiyoka āmāta //
nakaribā bhaya herā karo angikāra /
*samasta pāpate mai karibo nistāra //*¹¹¹

(Abandon all varieties of *dharma* and just surrender unto Me. If in doing so any sin is incurred, rest assure, I shall protect you, do not get afraid)

tasmāttvamuddhavotsrjya codanām pravicodanām /
pravṛttañca nivṛttañca śrotavyaṁ śrutamevaca //
māmekameva śaraṇamātmānam sarvadehinām /
*yāhi sarvātmabhāvena mayā syā hyakuto-bhayaḥ //*¹¹²

110 *Gītā* /66

111 *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* 11/191

112 *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* . 11/12-14.15

Śaṅkaradeva translated this as :

eteke uddhava tumi tejā veda-pantha /
yiba jānā sunā save edā āna grantha //
eke mota matra tumi laiyoka sarana /
*nakariba bhaya mai karibo rakṣaṇa //*¹¹³

(Therefore, you Uddhava, give up the *śrutis* (revealed texts), the *smṛits* (canonical injunctions) your likings and disliking, things you have heard and ought to be heard and take complete refuse unto Me, the soul of all creatures. In doing so do not get afraid at all)

Śaṅkaradeva demands complete faith in the Supreme by the agent. Complete faith signifies that faith must be accompanied by self surrender. In the words of Śaṅkaradeva –

*“jñānata karmata kariyā harira kīrtana dharma gariṣtha//”*¹¹⁴

(Leaving aside knowledge and action keep faith in Hari)

According to Śaṅkaradeva, people's faith will be more effective than the combined functions of intellectual knowledge and bodily actions. Such thoughts of Śaṅkaradeva very aptly remind us of the modern existentialist Soren Kierkegaard's view. For Kierkegaard also God is unable to be intellectually understood. Intellect deals with the temporal, whereas God is eternal.¹¹⁵

113 *Bhāgavata-purāna*. 11/188

114 *Śrīmadbhāgavata*. xi. v. 1979

115 Mahanta.Nirupama (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva & Śrī Śrī Madhavdeva*, p.38

In case of Śaṅkaradeva as well as of Kierkegaard, we will notice that the extreme helplessness on the part of the people is the essential pre-condition of such faith.¹¹⁶

God is spiritually realized with the help of faith, love, devotion, dedication, worship, prayer, service, meekness and humility. Śaṅkaradeva emphasize these elements to realized God. Knowledge, devotion and action, among these three ways of God realization Śaṅkaradeva proclaim the power of devotion to be the highest in the spiritual realization of the supreme. According to Śaṅkaradeva the concept of devotion has wide meaning. Faith, love, worship, prayer, humility, aversion, helplessness, purification of mind, self service, all these are fall within the scope of devotion. Devotion stands as the means for achieving spiritual unification.

The devotional mysticism of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva are not in in favour of considering mystical experience exclusively as a kind of thoroughly private or introverted experience. Mystic experience is an integral experience. It is dependent on many other social factors for its fruition. From this perspective, one may not call them mystics in the conventional sense. The general concept of a mystic is the one who lives apart from the public life in order to absorb in God-realisation. Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva have shown that mysticism may have also other implications except the notion of “flight of the alone to the Alone”.¹¹⁷

116 Dutta, D.M. *Chief Currents of Contemporary Philosophy*. pp. 519, 522, 523

117 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. pp. 38-39

Devotion or *Bhakti* is an emotional process of realizing the supreme. It is not easy to define devotion. In religion, devotion means to worship God, to adore and to love God. More appropriately it means loving devotion.¹¹⁸

Faith is the essential pre. condition of devotion. Nobody can cultivate devotion without faith in God. Śaṅkaradeva, by faith does not mean superficial and blind faith. Faith is the opposite of agnostic notion. An agnostic cannot develop devotional relationship with the Supreme.

Faith is of four types. The *Sāttvika* type of faith (*Śraddhā*) keeps faith only in the *Ātman*. The *Rājasika Śraddhā* keeps it in the fruit of action. In *Tāmasika Śraddhā* one keeps faith in the vice regarding it as virtue. But the faith needed to serve Kṛṣṇa is called *Nirguṇa*.¹¹⁹

According to Śaṅkaradeva devotion should not be mechanical and sterio type. Love should be there in devotion. Love means attraction for the Deity. According to Śaṅkaradeva, love signifies absence of shame, fear and desire.

Someone has to love Kṛṣṇa he has to give up shame, fear and desire from his mind. Love generates joy in one's mind. Success of devotion consists in giving rise to joy Śaṅkaradeva says-

premabhāve bhabe yito Isvara Kṛṣṇaka

kikahibo tebe āra tāhāra bhāgyaka.

.....

118 Dhavamony, M. *Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta*, p.22.

119 *Bhakti Ratnākara*, p. 125

mādhavara janma karma līlā yata yata

śravaṇa- kīrttana tāke sadaye kariba

laja bhaya sprhā ādi samaste tejiba

ehimate priya mādhavara guṇa-nāma

śravaṇa- kīrttana mātra kare abisrāma.

eteke opaje prema-bhakati Kṛṣṇata

hove citta drava mile ānanda manata.¹²⁰

(One who thinks of *Īśvara* with love, in what ways his fortune' he expressed ! Always hear and sing about birth, activities and the *Līla* (feat) of Mādhava. Discard shame, fear, desire etc. In this way, constant hearing and singing of the glorious of beloved Mādhava give rise to the loving devotion of Kṛṣṇa (*Prema Bhakti*), *Citta* is dissolved and mind experiences joy).

According to Śaṅkaradeva, without aversion towards the material or worldly objects devotion cannot attain its fulfillment. Śaṅkaradeva thus says –

birakati bine mahāgati nalabhaya

yitojana biṣayate huya birakati

karaya Kṛṣṇata mantra ekanta bhakati

taka kibā kaibo sito paiba mahāgati.¹²¹

(Without aversion, salvation is not attained. One who is becoming averse towards the worldly objects, practices whole-hearted devotion, attains *Paramagati*)

¹²⁰ *Bhakti-Ratnākara. pp. 120, 123*

¹²¹ *Ibid. p.227*

Śaṅkaradeva speaks of four stages of aversion (*Bairagya*). At the first stage there is the will to abandon worldly objects. At the second stage, aversion towards the tasteful things arises. At the third stage, the person conquers the mind. Mind does not enjoy the worldly objects, though the sense organs may externally enjoy them. At last in the fourth stage both external and internal aversion towards the worldly objects arises.¹²²

Mind is the evolute of *Prakṛti*. The activities of mind are far from spirituality. For the mystical or spiritual realization, the activities of mind should be brought under control and they should be directed to follow the right path. Such a process is called the purification of mind (*cittaśuddhi*). Śaṅkaradeva following the *Mahabhāgavata* and the *Vaṃana Purāṇa*, gives an interpretation of mind (*citta*), its constituents and functions. To reach the ultimate goal of devotion, control of mind and the senses is indispensable. Śaṅkaradeva conceives of the mind in a comprehensive sense. Mind resides in the heart (*hṛdaya*) and discharges both right and wrong actions. Mind is one, but it has four forms. They are *Mana* (mind-organ), *Buddhi* (intellect), *Ahaṃkāra* (ego) and *Citta* (mind).¹²³

Śaṅkaradeva describes the functions of mind and its forms in this way, “Mind is that which proposes to do so many things, but is not settled in any of them. That is intellect which plans any making or unmaking. That is pride which considers itself as the author of all things. That is *Citta* which does all pious deeds from day to day. This world as a whole is the creation of mind. Waking, dreaming and sleeping are the three faculties of the mind.”¹²⁴

122 *Bhakti-Ratnākara*. p.225

123 Śaṅkaradeva, *Anādi-Pāṭan*. v. 62

124 *Anadi Patan*. vv. 63. 64. 65. 66.

Śaṅkaradeva considers the *Citta* as the subtlest and the most sensitive psychical entity. It is an active recipient of the good thoughts. But, the *Citta* cannot perform properly unless the evil effects of intelligence, self consciousness and the senses are removed.¹²⁵

According to Mādhavadeva, the natural function of the sense organs, mind, heart, self-consciousness etc. should be transcended and transmuted for the Divine realization. As the sense organs are in favour of pleasant things, they must be diverted towards the good things. Mādhavadeva says that the tongue knows only the essence of taste. He says that instead of sensual longing for taste tongue should be diverted to drink the nectar of the name of Nārāyaṇa¹²⁶ For the ear, the sweet sounds are pleasing. But, instead, it should always hear the praises of *Kṛṣṇanāma*, which is sweeter than thousand and thousand of nectar.¹²⁷ Determination (*Samkalpa*) are the indetermination (*Vikalpa*) are the nature (*Dharma*) of mind. It should be determined to utter always the name of Kṛṣṇa, which is the highest good.¹²⁸ The nature of heart is such that all the things of the universe cannot satisfy its cravings. It should give up these cravings and drink the eternal nectar of *Kṛṣṇanama* and obtain contentment of the heart right now and here?¹²⁹ It should be directed towards Kṛṣṇa *upasana*. Mādhavadeva advises, “Listen, O *Citta* to this great mysterious words; you are the repository of pure knowledge. Kṛṣṇa is the

125 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. pp. 41,42.

126 *Nāma-Ghoṣā*. v. 89

127 Ibid., v. 91

128 Ibid., v. 92

129 Ibid., v. 93

eternal and pure consciousness. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme *Īśvara*; do not leave His shelter or protection.”¹³⁰

In the intellectual state of mind, man can have the obscure impression of the Divine principle. The nature of intellect is such that it gives us the empirical knowledge of the most uncertain type. Intellectual knowledge must be transcended and supplemented in order to grasp the higher truth. Again similar to the other products of *Prakṛti*, *buddhi* has three *guṇas*. In its *Sattva* aspect, *buddhi* exhibits distinction in the observance of duty, knowledge, freedom from desire and divine power.¹³¹ In this connection, the intellect needs to be established on the *Sattva* (known as *Sattvastha*). To make the intellect *Sattvastha* means to fix the intellect on the contemplation of eternal truth. Mādhavadeva says, “He who wants to attain the Supreme should strive to fix his intellect on the pure being.”¹³²

According to Mādhavadeva, self-surrender is the best method to make the self free from all kinds of material bondage and worldly responsibilities. The spirit of self surrender is most essential factor to annihilate the anxieties and to concentrate one’s mind on devotion.¹³³

Śaṅkaradeva’s special innovation lies in the elaboration of the concept of surrender and its application in the realization of God. The theme of surrender to one Supreme has been discussed by Śaṅkaradeva, so extensively and profusely that his mysticism may be entitled as the *Eka-Śaraṇa* mysticism of sole surrender. *Śaraṇa*

130 *Nāma-Ghoṣā*, v. 96

131 Radhakrishnan, S ; *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II. p.207

132 *Nāma Ghoṣā*. v. 255

133 *Bhakti-Ratnāvali*. vv. 1135. 1136

means to take shelter. To obey without any choice, to express extreme submission, resignation and meekness to one. Four types of *Śaraṇa* are there i.e. *Śaraṇa* to the *Guru*, *Śaraṇa* to the deity, *Śaraṇa* of the *Nāma* and *Śaraṇa* to the devotee. Without *Śaraṇa* there is no alternative direct possible way to have spiritual attainment.

There is a difference in the views of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva regarding the practical application of *Śaraṇa*. Śaṅkaradeva makes no division between the *Śaraṇa* to the *Guru* and *Śaraṇa* to the *Deva*. He considers the deva or the Lord as the *Guru* or the preceptor Himself and thus upholds three types of *Śaraṇa*. But Mādhavadeva, by recognizing Śaṅkaradeva as the *Guru*, makes the concept of surrender more comprehensive.¹³⁴

According to Śaṅkaradeva for intuitive faith, *Śaraṇa* or surrender is unavoidable. The inner objective of these four types of *Śaraṇa* is the one, i.e. to arrive at the intuitive faith. The *Vaiṣṇava* order of Śaṅkaradeva is called *Eka Śaraṇa Nāma Dharma*, or the religion of surrender to one God. The *Śaraṇa Dharma* of Śaṅkaradeva has close affinities with the manner of *Śaraṇa* as mentioned in the *Svātata Tantra*.¹³⁵

Kṛṣṇa is the sole redeemer. The devotee must realize it with firm conviction. To quote from *Kathā Bhakti - Ratnākar* when Suniti told Dhruva. “O Dhruva ! Except the lotus eyed one there is nobody to relieve your sorrow” is the real expression of the feeling of the devotees who proceed to take *Śaraṇa* on the Lord.¹³⁶

With the ceremony of initiation *Śaraṇa* begins. The novice officially takes, oath in the name of *Guru*, *Deva*, *Nāma* and *Bhakat* in this ceremony. These will be his

134 Mahanta, B.C. 1997, *Nām-Ghoṣā Tattvadarsan*. p. 209

135 Ibid., p. 156

136 Dvija, Gopal Caran . *Kathā Bhakti Ratnākar*. p. 61

objects of concentration from that very moment. These four are the external objects of concentration. They become gradually more inarticulate and subtle till the spiritual truth is realized.

The four fundamental elements of *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* i.e., *Guru*, *Deva*, *Nāma*, *Bhakat*.

The *Guru* : The *Guru* or the spiritual preceptor in the first form of *Śaraṇa*. There are three kinds of *Guru*. One's own father is called the *Ādya Guru*. Next *Guru* is he who leads a pure and dedicated life. Third and the best *Guru* is he who leading a pure and dedicated life, gives instructions about the path of devotion.¹³⁷ His instructions are based on his own spiritual experience. He is recognized as the spiritual hero and as the prophet seer. He is adored as the Lord. He is a living witness of all the great values including detachment.¹³⁸ The *Guru* leads the people from the life-temporal to the life eternal. The *Guru's* advice is the first and foremost step on the road of faith. *Guru's* advice can immediately influence one to lead a spiritual life. The respectful allegiance to the advice of *Guru* is extremely beneficial for mental concentration as well as physical help.

***Deva* :** *Deva* implies taking resort to the Lord. There is no lord except Kṛṣṇa. One should surrender to Kṛṣṇa because he is one who can rescue one from the world of bounds.¹³⁹ About His superiority nobody should ask any question. Passive faith is prevailing here. And in this stage, a devotee surrenders before Lord Kṛṣṇa and concentrates on His Name and Form.

137 Śaṅkaradeva , *Bhakti-Ratnākara*. pp.3,4

138 Śaṅkaradeva , *Nimi-Navasidha Sambada*, p. 13

139 *Bhakti-Ratnavali*. p. 38

Nāma: In the third step of *Śaraṇa* the devotee takes resort to *Nāma* or prayer. The devotee realises the nature of the *Nāma*, i.e. the object of *Nāma*, with the help of *Nāma*. According to Mādhavadeva, the spiritual power of *Nāma* increases gradually. It exhibits infinite spiritual power. *Paramānanda* or the supreme delight is the result of *Nāma*.¹⁴⁰

Abstract realization is not possible for a man of multiple personality rather deep concentration is required. *Sādhana* of *Nāma* is essential for the mental development of people. In an apparent sense, *Nāma* means unconscious words coming out of mouth, but to a *Sādhaka Bhakta* it is the awakening of subtle self-consciousness. It is akin to the Supra-sensual state experienced by a *yogin* in his *Vivekajñāna*.¹⁴¹

Bhakat : In the fourth step of *Śaraṇa* through *Nāma*, the devotee elevates himself from the level of self-consciousness to the level of social consciousness. The concept of *Bhakat* stands for the intimate social bond. A selfless devotee works for the benefit of the society. The devotee takes refuge in other devotees by realizing the Divine oneness. The devotee develops the consciousness of duty and obligation for fellow devotees as because his heart is full of love and compassion. The mystic *Sādhaka* longs for the company of the devotees in this way. 'Let the devotee be my friend as my life itself. It will be the gift for me who is very needy.'¹⁴² According to Śaṅkaradeva to have the grace of God, love for God must be mature. It must culminate into the deep love which satisfies each corner of the heart. He says, "Little devotion deepens love in the way as some people are satisfied with a small meal. Whole minded devotion produces intense

140 Mādhavadeva, *Nām-Ghoṣā*. vv. 454, 457.

141 Mahanta, Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*. p.45

142 Śrī *Madbhagavata*, v. 8.691

love in the manner an abundant meal gives somebody extreme satisfaction. Whole-minded loving devotion is rewarded by the supreme grace of Mādhava.¹⁴³

During the period of adoration the devotee experiences devotional love of Kṛṣṇa to a little extent. Afterwards by the grace of *Īśvara*, detachment arises. Subsequently, regular devotion to Kṛṣṇa generates the love Supreme (*Parama prema*).¹⁴⁴

Śaṅkaradeva considers that a devotee must always be conscious of his imperfection and ignorance. The devotee should always consider himself as a sinner and a ignorant and imperfect one.

There are nine forms of practicing devotion. Though there are nine forms of devotion they act differently, yet they have the same purpose of realization of God. The nine modes of *Bhakti* are *Śravaṇa* (hearing) ; *Kīrttana* (Prayer), *Śmarana* (remembrance), *Pādasevana* (Service), *Archana* (worshipping), *Vandana* (adoring) *Dasya* (attitude to serve), *Sakhya* (friendly attitude), *Ātma-Nivedana* (Self-surrender). According to Śaṅkaradeva these nine ways of devotion are complimentary to each other. All these ways are requires for a full fledged devotion to God. But Śaṅkaradeva gives utmost importance to *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrttana* forms of devotion. Śaṅkaradeva opines –

*adyapi bhakati navavidha Mādhavar
śravaṇa Kīrttana tāto mahā śreṣṭhatara.*¹⁴⁵

(Although there are nine kinds of devotion of Mādhava, *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrttana* are the best among them.)

143 *Nimi-Navasiddha Samvada*, vv. 75, 76

144 *Bhakti Ratnākara*, p.121

145 *Śrīmadbhāgavata*. I.v. 38.

Śravaṇa : *Śravaṇa* means hearing of God's virtues, sports in connection with His Divine Name and Form. *Śravaṇa* is the first step of hearing the God's greatness in the spiritual movement.

The inner enlightenment is urgently needed to know the God. Hearing the Divine life of Kṛṣṇa is indispensable for spiritual enlightenment. Even after the spiritual enlightenment the *Satsaṅga* or the association with the holy is another important aspect of *Śravaṇa*. Hearing of religious discussion purifies the mind from all mean and irrelevant thoughts.

According to Śaṅkaradeva, the virtuous deeds within the limit of *Bhakti* are fructified merely on hearing the glories of Hari. Śaṅkaradeva says :

hariguṇa bhakatar karṇa-alaṁkāra

badhya bhakati ati śravaṇe ihāra

bināśī bastuta mane hovebirakati

*pūrṇa brahma Kṛṣṇate hovaya dṛhamati.*¹⁴⁶

(The praise of the glories of Hari are like the ear-ring for the devotees. Devotion increases by hearing the praises of Hari. Aversion arises for the perishable things. Firm conviction arises on the perfect *Brāhmaṇa*.)

For spiritual realization hearing is a powerful medium. Hearing produces a strong impact upon the psychological make-up of people. But mechanical hearing does not work unless the subject can call off his mind from external engagement. Hence, with the great power of attention one should listen to the divine life of Kṛṣṇa.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ *Bhakti Ratnākara*, p. 62

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.50

Kīrttana : *Kīrttana* or prayer is singing of Lord's glories. It is an undeniable fact that music has a profound influence on man and it has the capacity of changing the minds of people in a more effective way. As *Kīrttana* is sweet and pleasant,, it can easily change the hearts of people.¹⁴⁸

For Śaṅkaradeva, prayer is the main path to attain Supreme Godhead. It is seen that “with the full respect whoever sings the name of Lord, all the desires vanish and his mind is purified.”¹⁴⁹

Kīrttana has such powerful impact that it washes away all sorts of dross and drain of the mental process. Like the rising sun which ruins darkness, the loving devotion to Kṛṣṇa (which arises due to the constant recitation of the holy name) also puts an end to all sorts of miseries and sufferings¹⁵⁰

According to Śaṅkaradeva, there is no other way than *Kīrttana* and all the thirty four castes of people can attain God's region in the Iron Age by *Kīrttana*. Salvation that had been attained through meditation in the Golden Age, through sacrifices in the Silver Age, through worship in the Copper Age, can be attained through *Kīrttana* in the Iron Age.¹⁵¹ The spiritual realization which occurs as result of constant *Kīrttana* has seven stages. “First it *Nāma Kīrttana* will burn out the sins. Second, it will arouse great merit. Third, it will create aversion for worldly pleasures. Fourth, it will develop loving devotion to God. Fifth, it will give birth to the mood of *Vaiṣṇava*, Sixth, it will and Seventh and last, it will merge (the devotee) in God who is all life and all joy.”¹⁵²

148 Swami Sivananda, *The Essence of Bhakti Yoga*, p. 30

149 *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, p. 78

150 Ibid., p. 40.

151 *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*, vv. 73,74

152 Ibid, p.31

Uninterrupted and habitual chanting of the name of the Kṛṣṇa with passionate love creates high stimulation in the hearts of the devotees. As a result of such an experience, the heart is filled with delight and the subject becomes madly God-intoxicated. This is ecstatic state which can be described as the emotional illumination. Ecstatic experiences are full of significance for a spiritual life. With the occurrence of ecstatic experience, the development and modification of the spiritual element is possible.¹⁵³

There are ten offences which people should not commit while chanting the glory of God. According to Śaṅkaradeva, these are to speak ill to the devotees, to differentiate the name and qualities of Viṣṇu and Śiva, to criticize the name of the Lord, to argue against the *Nāma*, to vitiate *Nāma*, to consider name as equal to the sacrifice, pilgrimage, fast etc. to be inattentive to *Nāma*, to show disrespect to *Nāma* and to dislike *Nāma*.¹⁵⁴

The chanting of the *Nāma*, the recitation of the glories of the Lord Kṛṣṇa, discussion of the spiritual matters including the singing of the *Gītā*'s and acting in the religious drama are considered as the five kinds of *Kīrttana*.¹⁵⁵

Smarana : *Smarana* is the remembrance of the Lord in all the moments. *Smarana* is a good method of introversion, to turn the extrovert mind inward. This is an unbroken memory of the name and form of the Lord. The mind meditates on what is known about

153 Thouless, R.H. ,*The Psychology of Religion*, p. 251

154 Kīrttana Ghosa .vv. 48-56

155 Mahanta , Nirupama. (2015). *The Mystical Thoughts of Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*, p. 53

the glories of God and His virtues, names etc. Constant remembrance is the fruit of all other spiritual *Sādhana*s. Remembrance is similar to the *Yogin's* concentration or meditation.¹⁵⁶

According to Śaṅkaradeva, the remembrance of God is the fruit of *Yoga*, *Sāṃkhya* and the ritualistic religions.¹⁵⁷ Like *Kīrttana Smarana* is also an important element of devotion. With the help of *Smarana*, one can attain the supreme state of beatitude. Like *Kīrttana*, *Smarana* purifies the mind. Because constant remembrances of Kṛṣṇa destroys the sin and establishes firm believe in Kṛṣṇa. Towards the material body the detachment is inevitable. The loving devotion and knowledge of God culminate in the mystical union with the supreme.

One can also attain the supreme experience even by hateful remembrance of God. Kings like Śiśupala, Śalva etc. also because liberated by constant remembrance of God as their enemy.¹⁵⁸ Śaṅkaradeva approves the loveful remembrance as the most ideal type of remembrance. Prahlada attained redemption with the help of such loving remembrance.¹⁵⁹

Archana-Vandana : By *Archana-Vandana* Śaṅkaradeva means worship. Śaṅkaradeva follows the instruction of the *Gītā* in depicting the manners of worship, which are simple and lack complicacy in contrast to the *Vedic*, ways of worship. God should be

156 Swami Sivananda , *Essence of Bhakti-yoga*, p.32

157 Śaṅkaradeva, *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, p. 84

158 Ibid., P. 123

159 *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*, v. 324

worshiped with the help of flower, water and leaf. God is appeared even while He is offered 'a handful of water', and a single leaf of *Tulsī*.¹⁶⁰

Some people again worship Kṛṣṇa with the desire for fruit. They might achieve the desired end; but self-centered achievements are temporary and lack lasting effect.¹⁶¹ But those enjoy the supreme delight who worship passionately without any desire.

According to Śaṅkaradeva, the selfless worship is the best kind of worship. The *Sakāmi* people worship Kṛṣṇa with a huge amount of offering. But, a selfless devotee worships Kṛṣṇa whole heartedly by dedicating his life at the feet of God. In such devout worship, the highest pleasure arises.¹⁶² The worship of Mādhava is the only way which arrests all kinds of worldly evils and provides peace.

Śaṅkaradeva uses the term worship in a wider sense. He has upheld that an ardent devotee should extent service towards all living beings including the trees, animals and the birds in proper manner. More than this, he should worship the mankind. Again, in addition to such worship he should worship the spiritual man more sincerely.¹⁶³

***Pādasevana* :** *Pādasevana* is serving the feet of the Lord. Physically it is impossible to serve God. Śaṅkaradeva by *Pādasevana* means the proper maintenance of *Nāmghar*, to arrange the offerings etc. This type of service gives rise to the thoughts of self humility.

160 *Bhakti-Ratnākara* , p.91

161 Ibid., p.92

162 Ibid., p.93

163 *Nimi-Navasidha-Samvada*. vv.150,151

Dāśya : The love of God through self submission is the *Dāśya-Bhakti*. Considering oneself as a servant of God-the Supreme Master, one expresses *Dāśya-Bhakti* by serving God and carrying out His wishes.

Śaṅkaradeva expresses the sheer helplessness before the Lord Kṛṣṇa, through his writings. For spiritual union with the Supreme Śaṅkaradeva took recourse to, the *Dāśya-Bhakti*. *Dāśya Bhakti* arouses immediate power in the minds of the devotees to withdraw pride or egoism. Pride stands as the main obstacle on the way of devotion.

Sakhyā : *Sakhyā-Bhāva* means the cultivation of the friendly sentiment with God. To think of God as the constant companion, as one's relative or friend, to love Him as one's own self, is the *Sakhyā Bhāvo*. *Sakhyā Bhāvo* is an important constituent element in the path of devotion. *Sakhyā Bhāva* , signifies the intimate relationship between man and God. The friendly sentiment towards God indicates that God is not a terrifying personality, but He is sweet and loving. People can approach Him without any hesitation. Friendly sentiment is encouraged by Mādhavadeva. He observes that a devotee can establish life long friendship with God without any fear of separation as He is ever present.¹⁶⁴

Ātma-Nivedana : *Ātma-Nivedana* means self surrender. The *Bhāgavata* and the *Bhagavadgītā* accept self-surrender of the self. The devotee no longer feels the existence of his ego, he has no personal or independent existence, he is the mere instrument of God. Self-surrender has been described by Miss Underhill in mystical language as the 'mystic death' or 'Dark Night' in which the self rises above the world of becoming.'¹⁶⁵

164 *Bhakti-Ratnāvali*. v.1126

165 E. Underhill, *Mysticism*. pp. 401,402.

In this way, when the nine forms of *Bhakti* co-operate proportionately, then the natural consequence is the “final triumph of the spirit”, which is the “flower of mysticism”¹⁶⁶

The above mention nine forms of *Bhakti* are not the unique features of Śaṅkaradeva’s religion. These are the common features of verities types of the devotional mysticism which prevailed in all India basis.

Śaṅkaradeva makes a brief discussion about the ideas empirical or the *Saguṇa* and the transcendental or the *Nirguṇa*. *Saguṇa* means to be under the control of the *guṇas* of *Prakṛti* which are the *Sattva*, the *Rajas* and the *Tamas*. *Nirguṇa* or the transcendental means to be free from the influence of the *gunas*.

At first the distinction between *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* finds manifestation in the nature of knowledge. The knowledge of Kṛṣṇa which is attained after overcoming the attachment of the bodily consciousness is called the *Sattvika* knowledge. The *Rājasika* knowledge is concerned with the body *Tāmsika* knowledge is the most immature type of knowledge *Nirguṇa* is the intuitive knowledge of *Īśvara*. Corresponding to the acquisition of these four types of knowledge, we also find four types of personalities : *Sattvika*, *Rājasika*, *Tāmasika* and *Nirguṇa*. *Sattvika* one leads and honest detached and just life ; *Rājasika* worldly and *Tāmasika* leads a passive life. Unlike the above, the *Nirguṇa* one leads the most enlightened life.¹⁶⁷

There are four types of agents. One who acts without desiring for the fruit of action is called the *Sāttvika* doer. On the other hand, *Rājasika* people are concerned with

166 E. Underhills, *Mysticism*, P. 473

167 *Bhakti-Ratnākara*. p. 124

the fruit of action. The *Tāmasika* people perform action in sheer perplexity, without understanding and knowledge. The *Nirguṇa* people take the food which is offered to the Lord.¹⁶⁸

The *Sāttvika* pleasure is the pleasure of the soul. *Rājasika* pleasure arises out of the worldly satisfactions. The pleasure coming out of the debate or misapprehension is called the *Tāmasika*, The delight which is the result of worshipping Kṛṣṇa is called the *Nirguṇa* pleasure.¹⁶⁹

Three kinds of action are there. The *Sāttvika karma* is done in the name of Kṛṣṇa. The *Rājasika* karma aspires for various fruits. The *Tāmasika karma* gives rise to the pride, egoism and jealousy.

From the above discussion it is seen that in the *Sāttvika* state and in the *Nirguṇa* state the only Divine realization is possible. For this type of realization *Rājā* and *Tāmas* are not conducive qualities.

Three types of devotions are possible again in the *Sattvika* state. These three types of *Sāttvika Bhakti* are called the *Uttama Bhakti*, *Antaraṅga Bhakti* and the *Saprema Bhakti* by Śaṅkaradeva.

When a devotee's mind is purified, detached and all the senses and their modifications are spontaneously directed towards Viṣṇu then only *Uttama Bhakti* can be cultivated. *Antaraṅga Bhakti* can be technically mentioned as the extrovert type of mysticism. Devotion of the *Antaraṅga Bhakti* type accepts *Íśvara* as immanent in this world. As a consequence, a devotee sees God manifested in everything. All the living

¹⁶⁸ *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, p. 125

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127

beings should be loved and served as the forms of *Īśvara*. God is present in the *Brāhmaṇa*, the *Caṇḍāla*, the thief, the donor, the crooked. A devotee by discarding shame, pride and honour should salute them knowing all these facts. Till the vision of the unity of God arises one should stick to honest practices with mind, body and speech. The *Saprema Bhakti* is related with some amount of rapture, ecstasy or emotional excessiveness. *Saprema Bhakti* is an emotional type of devotion which arises as a consequence of constant and incessant hearing and recitation of the glories of Kṛṣṇa. In this type of devotion a devotee feels the physical presence of the Lord. He wants to behave God like a friend and remembers the Lord with full of love and attraction. The devotee feels intoxicated in realizing the supreme love.

Nirguṇa Bhakti is the selfless devotion. Śaṅkaradeva was against the *Vedic* rituals. Śaṅkaradeva hold that in place of relying on the *Vedic* rituals, one should dedicate oneself to the Lord. *Nirguṇa* type of devotion needs complete indifference towards pleasure, pain and fear with the sole faith in *Īśvara*.

Śaṅkaradeva mentions about the evolution of the mystical thoughts in the minds of the devotees. The ultimate goal of the mystics is not attained within a short span of time. It requires a long process of development of the inner life. There needs a constant effort for self purification. It is full of arduous patience and endeavor in a mystical life. Śaṅkaradeva gives full of inspiration and hope for those who enter the mystical life. Śaṅkaradeva divides the devotees into three categories depending upon the nature and the depth of devotion. They are categories as the *Uttama Bhakta*, *Madhyama Bhakta* and the *Prakṛta Bhakta*. Among all these the *Uttama Bhakta*, is the best who attains the unitive vision.

The *Uttama Bhakta*, sees all creatures in God and perceives God in all creatures. He does not aspire for the enjoyment of the senses. Though he happens to enjoy them, yet he is aware of the fact that these are meaningless. Birth, death, hardship, hunger, thirst, fear etc. belong to the body, the senses, the vitality, the intellect and the mind. They are the laws of the cosmic process. These matters cannot distract the attention of the *Uttama Bhakta*,. Egoism or self pride does not arise in him. He is like the *Jivan Mukta* or the one who attains liberation in one's life time. Though he performs the worldly duties, yet he does not involve in them. He remains calm and balanced in all the circumstances of his life. He is guided by the 'oceanic feeling' of oneness in all his thoughts and deeds. His pleasure and satisfaction center round the Lord. He cannot pass a single moment without thinking about God. Such a devotee does not even long for liberation though spiritual liberation is the only goal of his life. He proves through his life that a devotee cannot develop love for devotion without the spirit of detachment. From the spiritual standpoint, he is self-satisfied. He is the spiritual leader who inspires others to lead a spiritual life.¹⁷⁰

The *Madhyma Bhakta* or the mediocre types of devotee is he who makes friendship with the people of his equal status, shows respect to the people of good qualities, forgives his opponents and is kind to the afflicted ones. These are but the four ways of serving the Lord. He also follows the advice of the spiritual leaders with great reverence. *Madhyma Bhakta* realizes the Supreme Being through the service of humanity.¹⁷¹

170 *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, pp. 128.129. 132. 133

171 *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139

The Neo phyte or the beginner who enters the spiritual life is called *Prakṛta Bhakta*. The *Prakṛta Bhakta* does not serve people unlike the *Uttama Bhakta* and the *Madhyma Bhakta*. This is the only preparatory stage. This type of devotee will gradually improve to become the best one.

In the devotional mysticism of Śaṅkaradeva, it has been repeatedly mentioned that even the sinners can purify themselves if they become penitents and lead a spiritual life. Śaṅkaradeva advises to forgive the sinners who want to rectify themselves with the aid of devotional love. God is love, so the sinner should seek shelter in God.¹⁷²

The *Eka-śaraṇa* of the *Gītā* super imposed upon the idealism of *Dāśya-Bhakti* with *Satsanga* or companionship with *Bhaktas* of the *Srī Madbhāgavata* and the *Hanumantī Kāsthā*, i.e., the unwavering and firm devotion and allegiance to one and the only one God as of Hanumān to Rāmchandra, is the main plank of Śaṅkara's creed. Self-surrender to the supreme God Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the Creator, Supporter and Destroyer and who is the Lord and Master of *Kāla* (Time) and *Māyā* (Manifestations) and to Him alone and not to any other minor god and goddess ; the chanting of the names of that great God and the meditating of Him are the instruction of which Śaṅkara's *Vaiṣṇavism* stands. That is why the *Vaiṣṇavism* preached by Śaṅkaradeva is called *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*-the religion of supreme devotional surrender to one, i.e., Kṛṣṇa, whose name is Rāma, Hari, Vāsudeva, Janardana and a thousand more.¹⁷³

172 *Bhakti-Ratnākara*, pp. 146.150

173 Bezbaroa Satiyarathi Lakshminath, (2014) '*History of Vaiṣṇavism in India*' Mahapursajyoti, p.15

Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva cultivated his new faith from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatagītā* and he established monotheism in religion

*sarbadharmān parityajya māmekam caranam braja,
aham twam sarba pāpebhyo moksyayisyāmi mā śucaḥ.*¹⁷⁴

Lord Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna to give up all other ways and submit himself. He assured that Arjuna will be redeemed of all sins. The entire concept of *Eka Śaraṇa* is an elaboration of this assurance of God to his earnest devotee

Śaṅkaradeva says –

*eka deva eka seva eka bine nāhi keva*¹⁷⁵

(One God, one devotion, there is none but one)

As per the opinion of Śaṅkaradeva, to offer devotion to the God, one neither needs to be a *Brāhmaṇ*, nor a sage, nor should he know all scriptures. All even the *Caṇḍāla* can offer his devotion to the God -

*nalāge bhaktita devadvija ṛṣi huive /
nalāge sambhṛta śāstra bistara jānibe //
tapa japa yajña dāna save biḍambana /
kevale bhaktita tuṣṭa honta nārāyaṇa //*¹⁷⁶

Śaṅkaradeva always advised his disciples to be kind towards all creatures of God—

174 Borkakati, Sanjib Kumar, (2015) *Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva a Multifaceted Genius*. p.49

175 Phukan Bimal, (2011) *Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva : Vaiṣṇava saint of Assam*. p.39

176 *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā, Prahlad Carita*, v. 380

sakala prāṇika dekhibeka ātmasama /
*upāya madhyata ito āti mukhyatama //*¹⁷⁷

In such a way the *Neo-Vaiṣṇavite* faith of Śaṅkaradeva gave the noble feelings like universal love, tolerance, brotherhood, democracy etc. Only because of these noble reason the integration of Assamese society became possible. *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* was greatly accepted by the people irrespective of caste, creed, class, age, sex and they took *Śaraṇa* from him.

The philosophy of the religion of Śaṅkaradeva centres on *Nāma-kīrttana*. Śaṅkaradeva's teachings were that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa who was his *aradhya devatā* (worshipful deity) dwelt only there where the single-minded devotees of Him *Sat* and *Sang*. The only way to worship Hari, the unmanifest God, was to chant His name. He is all pervading. He cannot be found by performing any rituals or ceremonies. He is formless.

Śaṅkaradeva gave *Bhakti* superior place to liberation (*mukti*). *Mukti* occupied a secondary position in his religion. Love towards God was the supreme theme of Śaṅkaradeva's teaching. Before the advent of Śaṅkaradeva the societal harmony was not at all there in Assam. Slavery, casteism, untouchability, practice of animism and human sacrifices were prevailing at that time. The upper caste was enjoying a high standard of life while the lower caste lived like slaves.

Śaṅkaradeva was a great reformer and he gave recognition of dignity of every single individual in the society irrespective of caste, creed, language and economic and social class. Śaṅkaradeva says –

177 *Kīrttana Ghōṣā, Vaikuntha Prayana*, v. 1825

kukura śṛgala garddabharo ātmārām /

*jānyā savāko pari karibā praṇāma //*¹⁷⁸

(It means that even in the souls of animals like the dog, fox and ass reside Rāma, so everyone should be respected and we must treat them in the right manner)

We all are the descendents of the same God. Therefore we need to treat everybody in the same manner. Śaṅkaradeva's ideology for removing the social difference was based on universal brotherhood. Śaṅkaradeva tried to bring equality among different social classes. Śaṅkaradeva's newly spread religion *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* was democratic in nature. Everyone of the society can become a member of this religion without any restriction. It is noticeable that all the leading disciples of Śaṅkaradeva belonged to various tribes and castes.

Due to creation of *Nāmghar*, Śaṅkaradeva was able to bring all the people from different social backgrounds under one roof. *Nāmghar* in the beginning was a place of worship. But immediately thereafter *Nāmghar* acted as a place of social and cultural integration. This gave a good opportunity to the people of lower class to interact with the upper class people. Gradually for this reason a good interpersonal relationship developed among the people. The *Nāmghar* becomes a social, political and cultural hub of the villages.

Śaṅkaradeva's religious philosophy was based on the philosophy of *Eka Śaraṇa*. It is the conception of taking refuge in only one God (Kṛṣṇa). Śaṅkaradeva's religion is monotheistic in nature. Śaṅkaradeva followed that since Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa is the God of all gods, what is the necessity to pray other manifestation/ forms of God. Śaṅkaradeva

believed in single divinity and brought people together to go against the ill social practices. In *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* Kṛṣṇa is the supreme entity and pure existence. *Eka-deva eka-seva eka-bine nāhi-keva* (There is only one God, there is only one place to take shelter in and beyond that we will find nothing fruitful) is the main motto of *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. Śaṅkaradeva instructs in the *Bhāgavata*-

anya devi deva nakaribā seva /
prasādo nakhaiba tāra /
murtiko nachāiba gr̥ho napaśiba /
*bhakti haiba vyabhicāra //*¹⁷⁹

Śaṅkaradeva is strictly abandons offering anything to other gods and goddesses, including worshipping of images of other gods and goddesses. It's strongly against the idol worship and says that if one sees and worship idol and take/eat the offering made into the other god and goddesses then one's merit as a devotee will be spoilt. These messages of Śaṅkaradeva has put the society back in the right track. Śaṅkaradeva help the people to think that all are equal and they have equal rights. Śaṅkaradeva's *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* established democratic values in the Assamese society.

5.3 Educational Philosophy Śaṅkaradeva

5.3.1 Certain Fundamentals of Śaṅkaradeva's Educational Ideas :

a) *Bhakti* : According to Śaṅkaradeva the best means of worship God is the *Bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the motion, the faith and wealth which is the highest desire of one's life. There is no other alternative way of attaining salvation except surrendering at the feet of God. Śaṅkaradeva recognized *Nāma* (Prayer), *Deva* (God), *Guru* (Preceptor) and *Bhakat*

¹⁷⁹ *Bhāgavata*, II, v. 124

(Disciple) as the basic principle of *Bhakti* and called them as the four pillars of *Neo-Vaiṣṇavism*.

Śaṅkaradeva believed that to show devotion to God, no need to belong to any particular caste or creed, everyone has equal right to pray to God and to show respect and devotion to him. In front of God everyone is equal and we should believe in it. No one should be deprived of this right.

b) Only one God: Śaṅkaradeva's religion has the view that Viṣṇu is the expression of all forms of God. That's why there is no need to offer worship to other god and goddesses who are supposed to be other manifestations of the divinity. On the basis of *Gītā* Śaṅkaradeva propagated the principle of *Eka Deva Eka Seva Eka Bine Nāhi Keva*. It means that there is only one God make obeisance to one there is none other than one God. Śaṅkaradeva viewed that –

samsasta bhūtate moi āso sarbakhyane

muhuka avangya ati kore jito jane

veda mantre pratimatra karaya archan

*nāhi tara fala kisu sabe birāmbana.*¹⁸⁰

- God is everywhere. He is eternal changeable spirit. *Bhakti* is the main way to worship the power. But who donot have meditation with closely attentive, worship is not success.

c) Nāma-Dharma : The doctrine preached by Śaṅkaradeva is termed as *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. Śaṅkaradeva showed the masses a new path to divinity through

180 Dutta Boruah, Harinarayan (ed.). (1998). *Śrīmadbhāgavata*. p. 135

Nāma (prayer) and *kīrtana* (recitation). Śaṅkaradeva built his system upon the ethics of the *Gītā* and *Bhāgavata*. *Hari-Nāma* is sufficient to destroy a hundred sins and in fact a sinner cannot commit enough sins for a single utterance of *Hari-Nāma* to destroy. Śaṅkaradeva opined that –

pāpa saṁhāraka hari-nām mahābali

jāra dhvani śuni kompi polāi pāpakali

jagotare parama suhrda hari Nāma

*jāni nirantare nara bola Rāma-Rām.*¹⁸¹

Hari nāma should be taken by the application of *kāya*, *manas* and *vākya*, (Body, Heart and Soul and voice) all suit together. Love for Kṛṣṇa is poured in through eyes, ears and the mind and then the sole attachment to the name of Kṛṣṇa is a natural process.

d) Simple way of worship: The worship way of Hindu religion was too much decorated, rich and difficult. The illiterate cultivators, farmers could not able to carry this means for their economic hardship. The general people wanted freedom from that difficult situation and want to worship God in a simple manner. With his great situation Śaṅkaradeva evolved a creed to wipe off the prevailing social and other evils that were current in the name of religion. To Śaṅkaradeva, religion does not mean practicing hard and complex rituals.

181 Dutta Boruah, Harinarayan (ed.). (1998). *Śrīmadbhāgavata*, p.134

e) **Humanity** : Non-violence, humility, kindness, sacrifice, control, patient, impartial etc. are the main values of *Neo-Vaiṣṇavism*. Śaṅkaradeva's religion teaches that only love for Kṛṣṇa and love the earth, love everything that create for us.

5.3.2 Significant Features of Śaṅkaradeva's Educational Thoughts :

- a) Śaṅkaradeva got all major elements from the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* and the *Gītā* for *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. The *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* and the *Gītā* was the base of Śaṅkaradeva's new faith.
- b) To the devotional faith the simplicity and the purity of the new faith of Śaṅkaradeva mostly attracted the unsophisticated masses. During that period the *Brāhmaṇical* cult was mainly ritual dominated.
- c) Śaṅkaradeva's new faith was kept wide open for all communities. No discrimination was made at the time of conferring initiation on the basis of castes and status.
- d) Regarding the Sanskrit language Śaṅkaradeva knew the feeling of the general people. Śaṅkaradeva took Assamese language instead of Sanskrit observing the psychology of the common people. Śaṅkaradeva realized that the Sanskrit language was a barrier among the tribal people in regard to religion and cultural unity.
- e) Śaṅkaradeva established socialist thoughts by allowing all the tribes of this region. Before that they were kept outside the doors of the *Brāhmaṇical* rituals, equal status in enjoying religious rites who have been regarded as untouchables and deprived of equality in the society. Śaṅkaradeva wanted equal behaviour among human society as well as neglected animals.

- f) *Śravaṇa, Kīrttana, Smarana, Pādasevana, Archana, Vandana, Dāśya, Sakhya, Ātmanivedana* out of nine modes of practicing *Bhakti* Śaṅkaradeva stressed on *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrttana* only.
- g) Śaṅkaradeva could enliven his talk with appropriate stories and parables. To the needs of the parables and democratized the monotheistic cult Śaṅkaradeva adopted *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*.
- h) Śaṅkaradeva knew that the general people had much attraction towards dramatic performances. Śaṅkaradeva used this technic for spreading his *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. To attract a large number of adherents to the devotional fold dramatic performances were regularly held. (Śaṅkaradeva composed six dramas – (a) *Patnī-Prasāda*, (b) *Kālī-Domana*, (c) *Rukmiṇī-Haraṇa*, (d) *Keli-Gopāla*, (e) *Pārijata-Haraṇa*, (f) *Rām-Vijaya*.)

5.3.3 *Nāmghar* as an Agency of Education :

A unique feature of Assam *Vaiṣṇavism* is *Nāmghar* network which provides a well-organised and decentralized educational and religious structure. Śaṅkaradeva constructed the 1st *Nāmghar* with the help of the initial followers in 1503. Śaṅkaradeva, himself composed the plays. In *Nāmghar* the religious and educational discussions and recitations from the *Bhāgavata* were held. The *Bargīts* based on *rāgas* were composed as devotional songs. Śaṅkaradeva was widely conversant with the *raga* based music. In the form of *Bargīts, Āṅkīyā Nāṭa* or *Bhāonas* Śaṅkaradeva popularized his cult with the help of a pantomime where he developed a genre of philosophy, art and music. The *Nāmghar* served as the ideal platform to showcase these art forms and attract the

general people to identify with the philosophy of the *Neo-Vaiṣṇavism*. *Nāmghar* carries the following significance:

The existence of the *Nāmghar* is noticed in almost all Assamese villages. The identity of village folks is closely related to the *Nāmghar* they attached. In fact the *Nāmghar* came to serve as a form of religious, socio-cultural and educational activities of the community. The *Nāmghar* has been serving as the village public hall with the multidimensional role of a village prayer hall, a cultural centre, a village court and village parliament, providing a common form from the villagers to assemble in an atmosphere of good will and co-operation for more than last five hundred years.

The word *Nam* means prayer and *Ghar* means house so the *Nāmghar* is known as the House of Prayers. The *Nāmghar* has been designed in such a way that people from all spheres of life can enter and take part in the congregational prayers and attain salvation by taking refuge in God. To symbolize the ideals of equality of all mankind irrespective of caste, creed, tribe, religion or language the *Nāmghar* is constructed without any walls or sometimes only with half walls. The congregational prayers (*Nāma Prasaṅgas*) are performed according to the *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. The *Nāmas* are led by *Nāma Loguwa*” who is a leader sits at the end of the central region facing the sanetum sanctorum. The west Land of the *Nāmghar* often leads to an independent room – the *Manikuth* which houses *Singhasana*, a wooden throne. *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* a sacred book by Śaṅkaradeva is kept on the throne. An *Aksay Banti* (bell metal lamp) is kept in front of the shrine.

Śaṅkaradeva laid down the foundation of local Self-Govt in the 15th century. The *Nāmghar* recognizes the importance of the collective wisdom and social progress through active participation of all for re-construction and stability of the villagers. The idea of community development and *Panchayat Raj* System was conceived by Śaṅkaradeva much before the concept was brought by the British *Raj*. A general body is formed consisting of the eldest members of each household of the village that is known as *Raij*. The *Raij* takes decisions on different important issues of their community life. It may be reconstruction of the *Nāmghar* to the establishment of educational institutions. The *Nāmghar* provides an effective forum of decision making for the determination of socio-educational development and allocation of resources to achieve them.

The *Nāmghar* provides a common platform for the villagers together and discuss on a collective basis and sort out their local disputes and problems in accordance with their local judicial procedures. The *Raij* tries out cases of moral and social delinquency. To try out their cases the parties in dispute appoint their own *Raij-Medhi* or the *Barmedhi* from their won Śaṅkari Institutions. According to the nature of the offence punishments are meted out and the rulings are binding to the accuser and the accused. Original cases are kept out of the jurisdiction of the *Nāmghar*. Minor cases of moral and civil in nature are resolve.

People from all walks of life can take part in the enactment of the *Bhāonās* in the *Nāmghar*. Śaṅkaradeva composed *Bhāonās*, a theatre form centering on the theme from the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* to educate the illiterate masses and make them conscious in socio-educational and cultural affairs. No discrimination is made while distributing the roles in the *Bhāonās* held in the *Nāmghar* on the basis of caste,

creed and religion. To make the *Bhāonās* successful the village folks contribute in cash or kind according to their capacity. The staging of the *Bhāonā* in the village *Nāmghar* brings all the village folks under an umbrella of common cultural activities.

The day to day life of an Assamese village moves centering round the village *Nāmghar*. The *Nāmghar* in its capacity as a proto type parliament has trading been a vibrant centre of community development activities. In the *Nāmghar* the collective decision are taken up regarding the various issues of community life ranging public works like construction of roads, water tanks, drains and setting up educational institution etc. The people of the village make decisions on the issues which are directly related to their daily life, The *Nāmghar* provides an effective form for decentralized planning and decision making.

The *Nāmghar* provides a place of shelter to the people of the village during flood and other natural calamities. The *Nāmghar* serves the purpose of community belongingness with having a community granary where in the village people contribute a portion of their livelihood for community purpose.

5.3.4 Innovative Educational Thinking of Śaṅkaradeva as Nucleus of Education :

a. Musical instruments as new invention :

Śaṅkaradeva introduced new musical instruments like as *khol*, *tal*, *mandira*.

Khol is the most important part of Śaṅkari culture. *Khol* was first made by Śaṅkaradeva in 1468 AD at Bordowa in the district of Nagaon at the age of 19 years old. The instrument is in use since *Cinhayātrā* till today mainly in religio-cultural functions of Assam. *Khol* was originally made of potter's clay

in a potters wheel and hardened for use in the potters kilns, in the manner an earthen pitcher made. 30 inches long with a in the ratio of one part is to two (1:2) of the length, one towards the left and two to the right. One side of the *khol* is much smaller than the other. Its profile is cylindrical. The cross sections of the two ends are of different diameter. The right is of about 5 inches and the left is 9 and the hump is 12 inches.

The *khol* is used independently for *Gāyana-Bāyana* (*Ganika*), with devotional songs like *Bargīt* and with *Ankīyā Gīt* (which includes dance also). There are some dances taken from the Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva's drama which are now recognized the *Sangeet Natak* Academy as *Sattriya* dance which is also performed in the help of *khol*. Śaṅkaradeva's drama are both *melodrama* (*gitinataka*) and dance drama (*nṛtyanāṭaka*). Without having any knowledge about sound waves it might not be possible to produce such loud sound from a *khol*. In this case sound forms a transverse wave instead of a compression wave, since the energy required to compress solid material is much greater than a liquid or gas. Depending on their density, solid can transmit sound more than ten times faster in air. From this unique creation one can imagine that must had some scientific knowledge.

- b. Natural resources as innovative use as writing equipment :** Śaṅkaradeva used various natural materials while writing his compositions like *Ghoṣā*, *Padas*, *Bargīt*, *Bhatimās* and *Nāṭas*. These natural materials are *sanñci* leaves (*acquilaria agallocha*), *Tulāpat* (made by pressing cotton) etc. These natural materials are long lasting and also eco-friendly. Blank ink was used for writing

purposes which was prepared from *Śilikha* (*Terminalia citrina*) taking as main ingredients. The ink is characterized by its tenacity to slippery and glossy surface. The ink does not fade easily and it is also water-proof. All these introduces the knowledge of chemicals and proper use of them by Śaṅkaradeva.

- c. ***Bhāonā* Creation : As drama presentation style** : Śaṅkaradeva wrote seven *Aṅkīyā Nāṭa* (a play) in *Brajawālī* language (*Cinḥayātrā* lost) to convey the religious as well as educational messages to the illiterate masses. These *Nāṭas* were staged at *Nāmghar* and *Śaṅkari* Institutions which are regarded as the holy places. The staging of the play is called *Bhāonā*. Śaṅkaradeva used songs, dances etc to make the *Bhāonā* more effective, understandable and refreshing to the common people. *Bhāonā* has the potential of making the learning experience enjoyable for the viewers and even memorable because it is interactive and visually appealing. Śaṅkaradeva was conscious about the principle of active learning and motivation which is a scientific approach.
- d. **Eco-friendly use of colours in paintings** : Śaṅkaradeva was an expert in paintings. Śaṅkaradeva used indigo, *geruāmāṭi* (yellow ochre), *heṅgul* (vermillion), *hytāl* (yellow arsenic), lamp black. etc. for painting. Śaṅkaradeva used *tulāpāt* as canvas while painting for his first play *Cinḥayātrā*. *Carita puthi* says that after writing the book, *Guṇamālā* Śaṅkaradeva painted a picture of an elephant on *tulāpāt* with *heṅgul* ‘and *hytāl* and pasted it on the wooden book case where the manuscript was placed. Śaṅkaradeva did it apparently to depict with the paint-brush the metaphor of ‘elephant in a pot.’ Śaṅkaradeva

also painted *Sapta* (seven) *Vaikuṇṭha* on *tulāpāt* to show his devotees. All these materials were found in local areas and could give the basic colours and even a few composite ones. All the component were harmless and non-pollutant. Because of their eco-friendly character, their uses also supported by science.

- e. **Scientific reality of Yoga, clapping Hands etc :** Śaṅkaradeva used and popularized *Padmāsana* as sitting style. The *Āsana* can calm the brain and stimulate the spine, abdomen, bladder and pelvis. It helps to stretch the ankles and knees. This *Āsana* also improves the flexibility and mental state of an individual. As *Yoga* helps to increase concentration and relaxation of the mind, it might have helped them making the decision more fruitful and effective at the time of important discussion. Śaṅkaradeva popularized the tradition of clapping hands at the time of singing devotional songs in *Nāmghar* and *Śaṅkari* Institutions. Clapping has a proper effect in making the song more rhythmic and effective. According to theory of acupressure, acupuncture and reflexology, the hands and palm have various reflex points, that when stimulated, engage the body's healing response and prompt a gradual improvement in any type of ailment clapping activates our neurological receptors which is present in our hands, clapping in turn activates a fair portion of the brain which itself leads to the activation of various body systems. Moreover, clapping stimulates blood circulation, the lifeline of human body and this helps with literally everything.

f. ***Mahāprasāda* as religious offering and uses of Banana leaves** : *Prasāda* is a material substance of food that is a religious offering in *Neo-Vaiṣṇavism*. Śāṅkaradeva introduced a mixture consist of various vegetarian elements like Mung Bean, Chickpea, chopped Ginger, finely chopped coconut, *Āroi chawal* (a kind of rice made without boiling but by simply drying in the sun before husking), and various kinds of fruits. This kind of religious offering is popular in Assam as *Mahāprasāda*. This meal is considered as left overs of God. But each and every elements have high nutritions values and health benefits. The cells of mung peels can absorb the water. It can be used as natural remedy to the constipation. *Mung* bean also protects from fever and beneficial for eyes. Chickpeas are a rich source of protein, fibres, manganese, zinc, calcium, vitamin K, A, D and E etc. Fibres help lower the total amount of cholesterol in the blood thereby decreasing the risk of heart diseases and cancer. *Āroi chawal* works as an antacid and kills virus. It contains fluorine and protects from bone diseases. Ripe banana helps in weight-loss and regulate heart rhythm. A 6 inch banana has more than 2.5g of total fibre, about half of which are insoluble. As insoluble fibre travels through our digestive tracks, it sweeps up waste and helps push it out. Banana consist potassium which is important to regulate the heartbeat. Ginger contains gingerol, a substance with powerful medicinal properties. It reduces muscle pain and soreness, helps in osteoarthritis lowers cholesterol levels. It also improve brain function and protect against Alzheimer's disease and fight infections. Coconut is rich in calories, vitamins and minerals, lauric acid etc. It is also a very good source of B-complex

vitamins. It supports immune system of the body as it is anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti fungal and anti-parasite. It provides a natural source of quick energy. It improves digestion and absorption of nutrients, improves intestine secretion, restores and supports thyroid function, helps protect against kidney diseases etc. Salt was also used to make the meal tasteful. Sodium chloride helps in the activities of protein, carbohydrates and fats in our body. Moreover, the '*Mah Prasad*' was served in green banana leaves. Banana leaves have some health benefits. The leaves are packed with plant based compound called polyphenols. It is a natural anti-oxidant and battle free radicals and prevent diseases.

g. Introducing and Promoting traditional activities regarding Health and

Hygiene : Śaṅkaradeva promoted the habit of early morning bath. According to scientific analysis a bath in the morning increases strength, radiance and bestows longevity. A bath before sunrise can purify conscious and subconscious minds. Śaṅkaradeva recommended fasting as other religion-Śaṅkaradeva understood the importance of fasting for body and mind. Fasting gives perfect rest to the overworked digestive organs. Fasting helps in undigested foods get digested. The digestive juices which are poor in quality, quantity regain their normal condition.

Śaṅkaradeva popularized the use of *Kharikā* (a bamboo shoot) as a natural toothpick. It contains lignans which may fight cancer, bacteria, fungi and viruses. Phenolic acids are also found in bamboo shoots which have anti-oxidants and reduce the risk of hardening of the arteries.

Śaṅkaradeva also introduced a custom of covering the mouth tightly by a special cloth called *Gamoca* while distributing the *Prasāda*. The person who were engaged in the preparing and distribution of the *Prasāda* among devotees were bounded to cover up their mouth by *Gamoca* for the whole time. They were not allowed to talk to each other during the *Prasāda* preparation and distribution process. The science behind this custom was that if they talk to each other, bacteria and other micro-substances from his/her mouth may come in contact with the *Prasāda*. From the scientific point of view one can come to the conclusion that this process was mainly circulated by Śaṅkaradeva to maintain the proper hygiene.

- h. **Use of Scientific logic in mythological facts :** Śaṅkaradeva used scientific logic at the time of explaining the religious mythological facts to his disciple. Śaṅkaradeva tried to propagate the doctrine of one Lord among common people. Śaṅkaradeva explained that it is value less effort if one pour water on leaves and branches of tree. But if one pour the water in roots of the tree then the tree will be benefitted. Śaṅkaradeva compared other gods and goddesses as leaves and branches of a tree while Lord 'Viṣṇu' or 'Lord Kṛṣṇa' as the root of the tree. This very example shows Śaṅkaradeva's indepth in scientific knowledge or facts.
- i. **Classical music and dance as innovative thinking :** Śaṅkaradeva was the creator of *Bargīt*, a special kind of devotional classical songs, *Gāyana-Bāyana*, classical music and *Śaṅkari* dance, a kind of classical dance form. This classical music has recognized to a mathematical precision to which sound can sound what. This type of singing classical songs can help

minimizing vocal disorder associated with many neurological disorders. Nandu Radhakrishnan, a professor of communication science and disorders in the school of health professions said, in *Hindustani* singing, performers use, *Taan* modulate pitch voluntarily, while classical singers use *vibrate* to vary pitch involuntarily. One may be able to develop a specific therapy with this knowledge to cure laryngeal tremors. From this point of view one can predict the contribution and possibilities of *Bargīt* in medical science. Among the 8 principal classical Indian dance tradition, *Śaṅkari* dance is one where emphasis lies in the motion form, speed, range and pattern. *Māti Akhara* is the basic unit and exercise of a *Śaṅkari* dance form can help in burning calories, weight loss process. It raise the heart beat through movement. It also tones and tightens the major muscle groups of the body.

j. For the sake of gods and goddesses animal killing is strongly protested :

Assam is the living place of several tribes like as the *Kirāta*, *Kachārī*, *Gāro*, *Miri & Bhutiā*, *Morān*, *Chutiā* and so on and castes like *Kāyasṭha*, *Gaṇak*, *Kalitā* etc. All they followed the ritualistic mode of worship. It allowed open drinking of liquor, sacrifices both human and animal and sexual union. Śaṅkaradeva considered for peaceful and harmonious society. Śaṅkaradeva believed the practice of sacrificing human and animal cannot be considered as right and justice. Śaṅkaradeva considered ‘dog’ which is considered as the lowest of the animal had *jīva* (life). Śaṅkaradeva wrote in *Kīrttana* –

kukura sṛgāla gardhabharo ātmārāma
*janiyā sabako porī korio proṇām.*¹⁸²

182 *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*, v. 1823

By this line Śaṅkaradeva classified his view that every living being is equal and has the right to live together. On the other hand he supported the protection of biodiversity by rejecting and protesting the animal worship.

5.3.5 The Medium of Instruction :

When a man himself becomes the source to inspire all other man in the society, his life and work not only speaks volumes but emphasis the fact that his deeds have left behind an empire of thoughts and impressions in the mind of man forever. Śaṅkaradeva's acts, deeds and thoughts were not one of a mere preacher but of a doer. Śaṅkaradevas innumerable plays. *Kīrttanās* left a landmark in the history of Assamese literature, language and arts.

Language is an important medium of writing one's thoughts. Śaṅkaradeva picked of writing one's thoughts. Śaṅkaradeva picked up the spoken dialect of the masses. Śaṅkaradeva added luster and sacredness to it as he used it in writing the *Bargīts and Āṅkīyā Nāṭas*.

The twelve years pilgrimage in northern India was the baking ground for his formative adaption of the local dialect. The impact of Vidyāpati's *Brajāwalī* songs and his witnessing of some social performances combined with the direct experience and intermingling with the local people appears to have helped him develop the script and dialect.¹⁸³

Śaṅkaradeva uses three types language in his writings such as (i) *Brajāwalī*, (ii) Assamese, (iii) Sanskrit. Śaṅkaradeva used *Brajāwalī* in his *Bargīts* and *Āṅkīyā Nāṭas*.

183 Darbari, Janice . (1998), *Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, The Living Legend*, p.171.

Śaṅkaradeva wrote and translated other books in Assamese. Śaṅkaradeva wrote *Bhakti-Ratnākara* in Sanskrit.

Historically and linguistically it is confirmed that Assamese *Brajāwalī* has not been brought from outside; it has evolved on the soil of Assam at least in the thirteenth century AD, if not earlier. The texts of the two inscriptions are as follows:

a) *adilya sama śrī samudra pāla rājye prabala sabaśika*

sattra saguṇa krīḍa / sanvasin bole dāna puṇya saja/

*yogihati / śaka iśa bana cakra / mudha bhanati /*¹⁸⁴

b) *sima eriya yavana davakata gayata / (śaka)*

vedastarasi ganana / iti śrī viṣṇu

basundhara sailakara / sakata mleccha

ithana uyasa/ dekhahu satatrisa baira /

bangala vahukaryya (ta) ihata phanda /

vahakha jala / tosabha sanjata yasa

di jalasri / panyakakhya badyarola

*jalasenai bairika bhathi –jaantasesa khadabi*¹⁸⁵

This type of language was regarded as a standard colloquia of the general people in medieval or ancient Assam. Credit goes to Śaṅkaradeva that he revived the *Brajāwalī* language through his *Bargīts* and *Aṅkīyā Nāṭas*. Śaṅkaradeva thus inspired the *Vaiṣṇava*

184 *Ambari Stone Inscription*

185 *Gachtal Stone Pillar Inscription*

detovees of Assam to continue it till the 18th century. The *Brajāwalī* language Śaṅkaradeva developed was easily understood by the common people. The general people were not conversant in Sanskrit, the language of the upper educated people. By writing in *Brajāwalī* Śaṅkaradeva became the architect to bridge the gap created by the dialects of different community of this area. *Brajāwalī* language gave the initial essential drive to the spreading of the *Vaiṣṇavite* movement in the north-east. As a result *Brajāwalī* language became a lingua-franca of the people of eastern India. Through *Brajāwalī* language the people of this area exchanged their views, composed songs and produced literary works documents including inscriptions.

Śaṅkaradeva's language is never mystical. Symbolism he uses no doubt, but within an understandable limit. The salient feature of his writings is his adoption of the language spoken by common people instead of Sanskrit, which has been the conventional medium of writing of learned scholars. He has made open the knowledge that is hidden in Sanskrit books. Though he is well grounded in Sanskrit he has not written in this language except compiling in a small book of some Sanskrit verses. Therefore his writings have left behind a great cultural heritage for the people of the region.¹⁸⁶

Śaṅkaradeva has written in Assamese because he knows that it is easier than Sanskrit in regard to learning, pronunciation and understanding. As he is expert in Sanskrit, we see in his writings a happy blending of Sanskrit and Assamese vocabularies. His poetry writings have become a model for subsequent medieval poets.

186 Baruah, Girish. (2014). *Śaṅkaradeva A Critical Appraisal of His Philosophy and Religion*. p.33

He has composed songs in lifting style to the time of which man can dance at ease. The contents of his poems and songs cast their spell on the minds of the reciters/ singers and listener. His musical compositions are also well known. His songs have a profound musical tenor.¹⁸⁷

Śaṅkaradeva has tried his best for spreading the message of his religion through the medium of the language. Śaṅkaradeva sometimes stumbles in interpreting the philosophical elements of *Vaiṣṇavism* in the local language. Sometimes the local syntax does not allow to speak clearly a philosophic theme. Śaṅkaradeva has tried best to localize the universal *Vedānta* philosophy and was fully successful in this regard.

5.3.6 Place of Religion in Education :

From every angles religion and education appeal closely and are related to one another. Both are unique in kind and spiritual in nature. Both are essential for life and living. Religion and education are products of human behaviour for the existence. At the same time and in the same context both only make man exist. Education helps in preparing man to live a better life in the changing society. Religion beautifies life with moral and spiritual values. Religion and education with their collective and mutual efforts lead an individual towards perfection which includes realization of self.

With some spiritual obligations a society is always under some form of religion. On the other hand society makes and regulates religion and spirituals ideals. 'Society, instead of being the offspring of man's invention, becomes now the parent of his spiritual being.'¹⁸⁸ Education for social living refers to religion, this or that sort.

187 Baruah, Girish. (2014). *Śaṅkaradeva A Critical Appraisal of His Philosophy and Religion*, p.33

188 Nunn, Sir Percy .(1945). *Education, Its Data and First Principles*, p.II

Religious education does not mean something separable from general education. Religious education is pure, honest and beautiful education for life and living. Education is religion and religion is education. In actual sense, religion is the purest form of education upon which individual exists and the society survives. This is the reason why man and woman had to decide to live together in a permanent form. Every individual in a society has a responsibility to utilize his life and education towards religion. A society is a combination of some common unities and religion is one unit among the many. The ancient Indian history of education was rich in religious learning. Only knowing of one single word *Rāma* and one single letter *Om*, of course with efforts and sincerity was literacy at the *vedic* time.¹⁸⁹ Religious education helps in building character and forming personality of an individual. It brings the person to the holy company of the wise and leads to a way of living a good and perfect life. Religious education is not at all a narrow learning but a widened social study for purification of self. This kind of purification of self with good company is another aspect of religious education which is much superior to bookish education imparted in modern formal institutions. Most of the educational leaders of east and west stressed on all round development of body, mind and soul. The development of soul is only possible through knowledge of religion. Religion is not anything about the unseen and unheard non-existing divine spirit. Religion means everyday life activities on live and let live principles. Religion has an intimate relation with worldly life, human miseries and comforts, pains and pleasures. Experiences and human pains and pleasures give rise to certain faiths and feelings which are the basic needs of a religion. Saheb Kamaluddin

189 Bhabe, Binova. *Siksha Tatta*, p.10

opines, “*Majhab* (i.e. religion) is the way to the perfection of life and *Ilim* (i.e education) is the guide to that goal.”¹⁹⁰

Like a family tree education and religion are twin brothers. Society is the father. Culture and customs are the other members of the family. Right from the birth till to the last breath people have to learn and follow customs and religion.

The main motto of all religions and all religious books are the same. Jesus love towards man, Ramchandra’s devotion towards his parents, truthfulness of Hazarat Mohammad, Non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi, Sacrifice of Karṇa and Hatem Tai should include in the school curriculum for the character formation and value based education for the future citizen of India. The child, the father of man is to be trained for a perfect father. It is only education through religion which makes an individual fit for fatherhood. The ancient three-fold ways of life-perfection included knowledge, work and devotion which are at the same time the fundamental aspects of religion. Education is superior and good than instruction. This superior and good aspect is the end that religion aims at. Educators like Rousseau, Pestalozzy, Froebel, Herbert Spencer, Dewey, Montessori, Gandhi, Tagore, Vevekananda, Arabinda Ghosh at a voice utter education as the means to make men good. This good must be with only Him, whom one call the great Allah, another call the supreme God and the other one call Bhagawan. Hindu-Muslim-Christian are the three with three different religion to say the same on education. By *bahujana sukhāya*, *bahujana hitāya* a Buddhist educates men to work and behave for the welfare and happiness for masses, by *atmavat sarvabhūtesu* a Hindu means that education should teach an individual to realize that all lives are as important as to his own.

190 Ahmed, Baharuddin (1986). *Sikhat Dharmar Sthan*, (Sreyasi’, a magazine)

A Christian will teach people to realize that his neighbour is the best soul. It is education that is good for one. It is that religion that is fine for one. It is that good and fine that man is meant for. *Janami dharmanm nachame pravritti*¹⁹¹ I know what is to be done and I do not do it, and *Janami adharmanm nachame nivritih*.¹⁹² I know what is to be undone and I do it, are the basic and main problems of a good and fine life. Education can give a proper way. All human activities are the only intent of the supreme guide, religious education more broadly is of utmost importance for social, national and international living.

The holy *Qorān* has prescribed education as the only path of getting rid of sins. Unquestionably this education refers to religious education. The holy *Qorān* has strongly bounds the ends of education with the high walls of religion. For this knowledge of religion He has created man. Allah gives everything to us for His use - Allah has given the individual the mind to think of Him. He has given the individual, the voice to speak of Him. He has given the individual the memory to recognize that He is in exist. Religion is everything for the individual, his education, his state, his organization, his bread, his life from womb to grave. Religion makes one's life complete, morality makes it perfect. According to Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, education is one's second birth. According to Ross every civilization is the cause of Religion. Plato did not admit anything in education which does not continue to the promotion of virtue. For the desired harvest of the higher ideals, human qualities are to be cultivated in the fertile soil of religion with the manure education.

191 Bidyanath, Kaliprasanna. (1974) *Kabachmala*, p.10.

192 Ibid. p.10

Śaṅkaradeva through his philosophy of education and religion made a history of civilization in this part of India. Śaṅkaradeva's thoughts and ideals, his creation of *Nāmghar* and *Śaṅkari* Institutions and his ways of preaching reflect the real aim of education. Although Śaṅkaradeva does not give any organizational details of modern school system with prescribed curriculum, yet he gives us an education, an Art of living which is the true essence of teaching-learning. The necessity of moral life, the impact of 'satsaṅg' and the mental, physical, emotional and social discipline of *Śaṅkari* life provides and offer a broad blue print on which a system of education can be erected. *Nāmghar* provides the concrete foundation on which society can construct a system fit for approximating to the ideal system. Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy and teaching preaching provides an inspiration for organizing a 'complete education.' It would go a long way in making the lives of common people worth living. Śaṅkaradeva introduced all of education through religion, of course in different forms to his time and need. Śaṅkaradeva had the system of reward and punishment, examination and preparation, regular hours of coaching, debates and discussions, prayer and amusement, literary activities like sports and competition and a rigid and declared form of administration strictly related to and dominated by religion.

5.3.7 Śaṅkaradeva's Views on Women :

Feminism adopts a rationalistic outlook and takes the shape of understanding social reality of gender relations and tries to get rid of the male dominated society. When feminists regard the end to sexual oppression and injustice as a moral imperative at the level of thoughts and practices is called 'Feminist ethics.' From this point Śaṅkaradeva's attitude towards women during his time and what his ethical concepts regarding a women in case of right, justice, duty, virtue, pleasure, quilt shame etc. were.

Regarding the status of women in Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy and religion, the question which frequently arose in the feminist mind is the fundamental aspect of his theory of ethics that has not been neutral in gender. The status and the rights of women in the society were not depreciable in the social system of Śaṅkaradeva. It seemed that Śaṅkaradeva probably was not in favour of women to mix with men in conjugational prayer.

From gender justice point of view, Śaṅkaradeva was not free from controversies. In the religious ceremonies of men it is often said that women were not allowed to participate. Dr. B. Kakati points out – “They carry on their devotional chanting in the courtyard of the temples in a separate group, and that too not simultaneously.”¹⁹³ It is also said – “ Śaṅkaradeva had made it a rule not to accept as his disciple a king, a *Brāhmaṇa* or a woman.”¹⁹⁴

It can be mentioned here that women had practically no equal status in the society in the 15th century Assam. Women had no right to receive education in those days. A girl child was not allowed to have education as child marriage was prevalent in the society. Apart from men irrespective of caste, creed and colour, but Śaṅkaradeva gives equal status to all women among themselves. Śaṅkaradeva speaks of women appreciatively as follows -

*karma samayata toka mantrī hena lekhi,
rangara balāte yene toi prāṇa-sakhī /
snehara prastāve tai mātṛ hena thāna
śayana belāte toi dāsīra samāna //*¹⁹⁵

193 Taid, Tabu & Deva Goswami, Ranjit. *The Man and His Works*, p. 213

194 Vasu, N. *Social History of Kamrupa*. p. 108

195 *Kīrtana-Ghosā, Harischandra Upakhyāna*, v.436

(In time of work, you offer counsel like a minister. In sports you are my dearest mate. In respect of showing affection you resemble my mother. At bed time you serve me as a faithful maid.)

At social level it is seen that the women folk take part in singing the name of Hari i.e. *Kīrttana* and hearing the qualities of Hari, i.e. *Śravana* in almost all *Nāmghars* and *Śaṅkari* Institutions from Śaṅkaradeva's time to till date.

Śaṅkaradeva gives an honourable status to women in his writings. In *Rukmiṇī Harana Naṭa* Rukmiṇī enjoyed the liberty of women as she is taking her important decision in choosing her life partner, Kṛṣṇa. In this way Śaṅkaradeva gives importance to the liberty of women. Śaṅkaradeva thought the way of liberation not only for male or the higher classes of people but also for the lower classes of people and the women folk of the society. Śaṅkaradeva says :

strī sūdra nare yadi āmāta bhakati /
tahāta kahibā ito jñāna mahāmoti //
āka bhakti kari padhe yito jñāniloka /
mahā sādhu huyu jnāna-dvipe dekhe moka//',¹⁹⁶

(This knowledge should be imparted to the women and sudras too, if they practice *Bhakti*. The learned who studies this with devotion and pure heart, sees me with the light of knowledge.)

Through his Assamese version of the *Uttarā-Kānda Rāmāyaṇa*, Śaṅkaradeva is a pioneer in advocating the cause of women emancipation. The concept of woman

¹⁹⁶ *Bhāgavata*-XI, v.262

emancipation is found in nineteenth century literature. Mr. Henry Isben is acclaimed as the upholder of women emancipation in the nineteenth century world through the medium of his famous lady *Nora* in the *A Doll's House*. In this respect Śaṅkaradeva was far advance by more than 314 years when he described the protest of Sītā against the authority of her husband Rāma as depicted in the *Uttarakāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*. Valmiki's Sītā was never vocal against her injustice perpetrated by Rāma, and the contemporary poets of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are also silent on the injustice on Sītā. But Śaṅkaradeva's Sītā is vocal and she had openly challenged in the royal court violating the age-old tradition of meek submission for women as prevailed in ancient Indian tradition. Sītā has pleaded in the royal court against her husband and cross-examined him. Such a character of rebellious women is not found in the medieval world literature. Therefore Śaṅkaradeva can claim to be the pioneer of women emancipation in the world.¹⁹⁷

The time of Śaṅkaradeva's advent was a horrible time. In those days women had no honour in the society. At any time a woman could be taken by the *Bhogī* (a man selected for sacrifice before the deity). This type of situation was arise from the *Tāntriks*. In the name of *Sahajīā* path women was making an object of enjoyment. The *Tāntrik* cult gave rise to adultery among some people. Śaṅkaradeva redeemed women from that degraded position and elevated her to equal status with man in the performance of the religion of devotion.

In the *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* preached by Śaṅkaradeva women had the right to arrange offerings in the *Kīrtana-ghar*, perform *Nāma-Kīrtana* etc. All these were not possible in other branches of *Sanātana* religion. Śaṅkaradeva initiated

197 Das Prabhat Ch. (Com), *Dr. W.L. Smith on Śaṅkaradeva*, p. iii

women in *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. Śaṅkaradeva advised the married couples to offer their *Bhakti* to God together. Women played a crucial role in the propagation of the *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*.

For construction of a dam at Tembuwani, Radhikā alias Yogamāyā was made the leader of the volunteer-force. This is an important instance that Śaṅkaradeva accorded honour to women. Śaṅkaradeva was conscious and progressive in this thought. In his maiden book *Harischandra Upakhyana* a revolt against the traditionalist was brewing. The people who torture women are strongly condemned by Śaṅkaradeva like as :

streeka durbala kare konano niskhale

*jvalanta bahnika bandhe bastrara añchale*¹⁹⁸

Śaṅkaradeva recognized the strength of women by comparing her with burning fire in this verse. There is a seeking of apology by men from women in his writings :

keli koutuhale asilihi mora pāśa

krirāta karilo toka jība parihasa

yena bhaila rangara samaya mana roṣa

*ehi tota sadho tata nadharibi doṣa*¹⁹⁹

The above description by Śaṅkaradeva of king Harischandra seeking apology from his wife Śaibyā is recognition of the rights of women and the self- respect of women.

198 *Harischandra Upakhyana*/75

199 *Harischandra Upakhyana*/438

In Indian society women are considered as subservient to men. The wife must follow her husband's duty. The wife has no right to behave in other way. Śaṅkaradeva showed in his personal life that he recognized women's independent thoughts. Śaṅkaradeva never forced his wife Kālindī to follow his *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. Śaṅkaradeva initiated Kālindī to *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* only when she wanted to get initiated of her own interest.

The way Śaṅkaradeva depicted the character of Sita in Assamese rendering of *Uttarakāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* is a solid proof of his support in the concept of rights of women. The reaction of Śītā is different from the depiction of her meekness in the original *Rāmāyaṇa*. Śītā humbly accepted the order of Rāma in original *Rāmāyaṇa*. But the Śītā of Śaṅkaradeva's *Uttarakāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* makes decisive comments to Rama.

awe rama swami sukhe bhunjan toka rāja

*mari jao moi nimakhiti bana mājā*²⁰⁰

This comment by Śītā carries the meaning that she did not accept her banishment. Śītā said with vengeance even when Rāma sent Hanumāna, Bibhīṣaṇa and others to the *Āśhrama* of Vālmīki for bringing her back. Śītā reacted that it would be a great shame for a woman on earth if she again spoke of herself as Rāma's wife.

bolaibo gharaṇī āro rāghavara ghare

*nāi teve nārī nilājini mota pare*²⁰¹

- Śītā also said that she would have given up her life in Laṅkā itself had she known Rāma to be so cruel.

200 *Uttarakanda Ramāyāna/23*

201 *Uttarakanda Ramāyāna/299*

moi jeve jāno rāma enuwa nirdaya

*laṅkāte tejilo hante prāṇaka nischaya*²⁰²

5.3.8 Śaṅkaradeva's Views on Adult Education :-

Śaṅkaradeva was not only a founder of a new religious order but also an educationist. Śaṅkaradeva was a practical visionary. He saw the vision of an egalitarian and sophisticated society. Śaṅkaradeva relentlessly tried his best to realize that dream. Śaṅkaradeva's mission of life was to educate the illiterate masses. Śaṅkaradeva's religious activities were great educational exercises. The people were ignorant and illiterate in the medieval society. Due to ignorance the people were easily misled and exploited by the unscrupulous priests. Śaṅkaradeva tried to enlighten the people in order to escape them from that painful situation. Śaṅkaradeva guided his disciples to read the scriptures and distributed his invaluable writings to them for encouragement of habit formation. Reading and writing (copying) gradually became a habit with these disciples.

Śaṅkaradeva tried to give instruction to the people about maintaining a high degree of morality and ethics. The writings of Śaṅkaradeva can easily be termed as lessons in behavioural science. These aspects were very prominently highlighted in the stories of Azāmil and Bāli. Śaṅkaradeva always helped the common masses to get knowledge of the scriptures and ethics by his writings. All these were full of advices to the people for an ideal life style. Śaṅkaradeva utilized every evil character in his writings to highlight the negative fall-out at individual and societal level of taking recourse to evil designs. Rukma, Kaṁsa, Jarāsandha, Kāli-nāga, Kāl-yavana,

202 *Uttarakanda Ramāyāna*/303

Hiranyakaśipu etc were such characters; all they had to pay dearly for their misdemeanour.

Śaṅkaradeva was a pioneer in adult education programme. The plays, discourses and prayers session of Śaṅkaradeva were always full of elderly people. The general illiterate people were greatly benefitted by the teachings and preachings of Śaṅkaradeva. They got to learn many things from these teachings to be fitting them for day-to-day life. All the writings bear educative value as Śaṅkaradeva was a born teacher. The elderly people found Śaṅkaradeva as a source of perennial knowledge. A session with Śaṅkaradeva meant a session for education. In this way the illiterate people learnt many things even in their old ages. All these were done in the garb of entertainment or deliberations. These scientific technique of teaching-learning has been adopted by the literary campaigners in modern time.

From the ancient time, the concept of extra curricular activities became more popular. Extra-curricular activities plays an effective role in the field of education. The curriculum includes in education system are dancing, singing, drama, art, craft, various games, debates and different social services etc.

Through *Nāmghar*, *Than* and other *Śaṅkari* Institutions Śaṅkaradeva introduced Non-formal education among the illiterate masses. It helps in acquiring knowledge intellectually. It helps socially, morally and aesthetically. The *Śaṅkari* Institutions and *Nāmghar* tried to all round development of the individual. It provides all kinds of knowledge regarding different aspects. These institutions tried to bring unity among the people of the society. It was done without discriminating caste, creed and colour.

Śaṅkaradeva emphasized on serving man as the service to God. Śaṅkaradeva realized the need and importance of mass literacy for spreading religious faith in the society. Śaṅkaradeva made the *Śaṅkari* Institutions and *Nāmghars* as the institution of learning. The *Nāmghar* even today play an important role as *village parliament*, *village court*, *village school* and *village church*. Even today in some places, the *Nāmghar* is used to educate the Adult Education programmes introduced by Government. In the *Nāmghars* the cultural activities are performed. Śaṅkaradeva paved the route for removing illiteracy among the village folk. Śaṅkaradeva enriched this system through self-control and self discipline found in his system of *Śaraṇa and Bhajana*. In the initiative of Śaṅkaradeva the village crafts and art, drawing and painting was developed. Being a forerunner of cottage industries Śaṅkaradeva made cottage industries and crafts as the means of community development. Some of the modern concepts like community development, adult education and *Panchayati Raj* were introduced by Śaṅkaradeva through social organization. Śaṅkaradeva imparted knowledge of vocational education. Śaṅkaradeva supervised the making of musical instruments and other items used in his plays.

The teachings and philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva provides an inspiration for organizing a “complete education”. Śaṅkaradeva realized that this type of education would go a long way in making the lives of the common people worth living. Śaṅkaradeva introduced all education including distance mode of education through religion. Of course it is in-different mode peculiar to Śaṅkaradeva’s time and used. Śaṅkaradeva had the systems of term, proceedings and preparation, regular hours of coaching and counselling, debates and discussions, prayer and amusement, reward and punishment, literary activities and criticisms, counselling and guidance, extra curricular

activities like sports and competitions and a rigid and declared form of distance education administration strictly related to and dominated by religion. The literatures and languages of Śaṅkaradeva immensely contributed in making his works for proper distance learning materials. The *Aṅkīyā Nāṭas* and *Bargīts* based on Kṛṣṇa activities in *Brajaadhāma* was interesting in nature and devotional in kind. These were readable, acceptable and understandable to common learners even at a distance. Śaṅkaradeva's poetry, *Bargīts*, *Bhatimas*, *Totoyas*, *Dramas*, *Translation of Bhāgavata (upākhyāns)* and other devotional lyrics and works can still now serve the purpose of print media to distance learners without having any prior basic knowledge of the matter. Śaṅkaradeva himself like any courses of distance education. The writings of Śaṅkaradeva had been clearly divided into readable units called *adhyāyas*. Most of the writings are the details on *Bhakti* education and with moral teachings to all ages and all communities. Young and old, ordinary and scholars fulfill their learning desire through the teaching and writings of Śaṅkaradeva as distance mode. As the fountain of nectar (*amrit*) the *Rukmiṇī Harāṇa* of Śaṅkaradeva is praised to be the best writing, sweet and lucid. The *Guṇamālā*, is a small book to be read and recited within a short span of two *dandas* (less than one hour), the big *Bhāgavata* being summed up to the small *Guṇamālā*. The *Bhāgavata* has been simplified and summerised in his unique work *Kīrtana*. It is readable and understandable by even any ordinary reader without prior reading of it. Śaṅkaradeva's *Aṅkīyā Nāṭas* and *Bhāonās* are better device of distance mode of learning. Dramas are the best means of teaching without a teacher. Śaṅkaradeva's *Bargīts* substitute for the audio aids in other sense. Śaṅkaradeva as the distance educator to teach the those people who are far away from him. For spreading his ideals of

education to distance and through a distance mode Śaṅkaradeva accepted the device of these kinds of songs as the media.

The influence of the *Nāmghar*, *Thān* and other *Śaṅkari* Institutions as the study centres like modern distance education programme is worth mentioning. There were provisions for both face to face and distance modes of teachings the ways of *Vaisnavite* life through these institutions. The common masses learnt, through the *Nāmghar*, *Thān* and other *Śaṅkari* Institutions events a lot at a distance and from a distance without physically attending the central institutions. There was no bar of sex, age, community and even literacy the *Nāmghar* and *Śaṅkari* Institutional education was open to all. It prescribed no course of study and no examination. There was no pass or fail. In the fullest sense and spirit it was rather continuing education. There were unprinted reading materials in these institutions. Of course verbal explanations and individual's guidance were there. Śaṅkaradeva discovered some effective devices like written scripts to read, theatrical performances (*Bhāonās*) to enjoy, *Śaṅkari* dances, *Bargīts* and other lyrics as audio and visual aids and *Śaraṇa* as direct face to face teaching. Through all these techniques Śaṅkaradeva teaches the common people being at distance and entered in every home of Assam. Śaṅkaradeva as a distance teacher felt that for distance preaching a first hand knowledge of face to face practical and on the spot knowledge is effective and helpful. Śaṅkaradeva's teaching demanded no extra time and trouble, no strict rules and regulations. There were no social bindings and formalities. Śaṅkaradeva always taught, spoke and wrote for the common masses with common goal and easy examples. All the valuable deeds of Śaṅkaradeva still act as the distance study materials without any teachers. The mode of education applied by Śaṅkaradeva can be called a distance mode in a way of course which is different from that of today.