

ŚAṆKARADEVA AND HIS EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY – A STUDY

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Md. Anwar Siddique

Registration No.- MSSV-0015-005-00076

Department of Sankaradeva Studies

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya,

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CHAPTER- VII

MAJOR FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction :

The present study is designed with a view to investigate the educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. Information for the study gathered from writings of Śaṅkaradeva, *Guru-Carita*, scholastic works of scholars, books and other source of knowledge. The information has been sorted out and served to the best of our sincerity in chapter (v) under the caption of *Śaṅkaradeva and His Educational Philosophy – A Study*. The inferences of study of Śaṅkaradeva and his educational philosophy reflects some important findings in the present study.

7.2. The Major Findings are Described below :-

1. The present study reflects that the tenets of Śaṅkaradeva's *Vaiṣṇavism* is based on *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. The religion of surrender to the supreme one. Viṣṇu in the form of Nārāyaṇa is the only one God believed by Śaṅkaradeva. In *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* Śaṅkaradeva preached the fundamental equality of all religions Śaṅkaradeva protested vehemently against rituals and superficial formalities in the name of religion. He also protested against upper class domination upon lower class in the society.
2. In the study, it has been observed that to Śaṅkaradeva every living being is equal. Śaṅkaradeva said that the souls or *jīvas* are the parts of God. Śaṅkaradeva expressed his views distinctly in one of his spiritual *Bargīt* as follows –

jata jīva jangama kīṭa pataṅgama

aga naga jaga teri kāyā.

(All the movable and immovable are the creation of God.)

Śaṅkaradeva sings again in his *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā* –

tumi paśu pakhī surāsura toru tṛṇa

ajñānate murkhajane dekhe bhinna bhinna.

tomārese māyāye mohito sarbaksane

tumi ātmā tomāka nojāne ekojone

It state that all human being are God's part and God bound them with His illusion or *Māyā*)

3. In the study it is seen that Śaṅkaradeva saw the supreme being in all forms of life. He respected the inner souls of all the creation of God including the humblest creatures like dogs, foxes and asses. He wrote –

kukura sṛgāla gaeddabharo ātmārama

jāniyā savāko pari karibā praṇāma

(Śaṅkaradeva proclaimed that the souls of the dogs, foxes and asses are verily the same God and should be equally treated)

4. The study reflects that Assamese society was a mixture of tribal and non-tribal people inhabited by many types of Australoid, Mangaloid and Aryan people. The upper class Hindu dominated and never allowed the tribal and other lower caste people to mix up with them in any cultural and social activities.

5. The study shows that Śaṅkaradeva stood firm against casteism and untouchability. Hindu caste system had done immense harm to the society during that time. Śaṅkaradeva gave initiation to the so called lowly born people in the same way as he did it in case of higher classes. Bangoya, the younger brother of Śaṅkaradeva was going to marry a lower caste women. All the people of the society was against the marriage. Śaṅkaradeva, by supporting his brother took a remarkable step towards caste equality.
6. The present study records the positive role of Śaṅkaradeva's religious literature among all section of people. There are many verses in his writings in *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*, *Bargīt*, *Aṅkīyā Bhāonā* etc which speak about non- discrimination in the path of devotion between different castes and creed. One can find himself in the state of *Moksha* through true devotion. *Moksha* is the highest end of life.
7. The study flashes out that 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 –

devaro ishwar hori tanta mohā jatna kori
loio ek śarana sakṣat,
jār ichā mokṣa paibe nalāge duraka jaibe
āsā hari sabāro hiyāt.

(It 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.)

8. Religion as a factor for fostering the values Śaṅkaradeva preached the simple and liberal *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* when he saw the evil and irrational

religious practices in the society. Religion in the prevailing society became orthodox and many cruelties were carried out in the name of religious practices. The illiterate masses had to face hardships in the complex and expensive nature of religious practices. Śaṅkaradeva wanted common people to relieve from all these and change the society to be based on truth, morality, non-violence, humanism, peace and brotherhood.

9. The study reflects that Śaṅkaradeva believed in the basic principles of the *Bhāgavata*, the *Bhāgavadgītā*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Upaniṣadas* and others. These great books are the base of Śaṅkaradeva's religion. The basis of Śaṅkaradeva's *Ēka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* is the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa.
10. It is observed in the study that Śaṅkaradeva was an ardent humanist and strongly believed in the basic principles of humanism. Śaṅkaradeva stood for love for all and to bring peace in the society. Śaṅkaradeva has compassion for all living being and believed in the rights of all without division on the basis of caste, creed, religion etc.
11. In the study it has been observed that Śaṅkaradeva lived in a feudal society in which religion played the dominant role in moulding people's behaviour. Religion has been a source of inspiration and the trusted custodian of the higher values. Religion has consolatory power and it makes people adopt temperance behaviour. Śaṅkaradeva understood these positive quality of religion and took religion as a weapon for social reform. Śaṅkaradeva imbibed 'reason' in his philosophy so that people could cultivate the habit of rational thinking.

12. The present study reflects that Śaṅkaradeva established *Nāmghar* and *Thān* for propagation of religion explaining devotional code of life among the disciples. Śaṅkaradeva organized the system of *Nāmghar* as the centre of education and learning. The *Śaṅkari* Institutions have been rendering valuable branches of art, music, painting etc. *Śaṅkari* Institutions were the main literary centres which enriches Assamese literature. The door of the *Śaṅkari* Institutions were open for the people of every layer of the society. *Śaṅkari* Institutions institutions were serving to see that good social relations are maintained amongst the common people to develop spirit of co-operation, to provide adequate facilities for dissemination of ancient learning and to dispense justice on social and religious controversies.
13. The study also shows that Śaṅkaradeva established *Nāmghar* as the prayer hall. It can be regarded as the medium of spiritual and moral development of the people. Śaṅkaradeva planned to architect *Nāmghar* in a simple way with the help of local elements. In *Nāmghar* the common people sit together to discuss the different day to day problems regarding social, economical, political, educational matter. *Nāmghar* contribute in maintaining discipline and order among the people of society.
14. The study examined the influences of literature, music, drama, dance upon the illiterate masses regarding their education. Śaṅkaradeva provided a great leadership in fine arts. Śaṅkaradeva made many successful innovations in the field of art. *Bargūt* and *Ankīyā Nāṭas* initiated by Śaṅkaradeva have been the principal source of cultural pursuits. *Bhāonā* performance is at once a great entertainment as well as a source of education for common people. *Bhāonā* helped to evolve the system of

Śaṅkari dance. Like other Indian dance system the *Śaṅkari* dance today has given the position of classical dance.

15. It is also observed that Śaṅkaradeva educated the illiterate people himself on his new and liberal ideas. Śaṅkaradeva persuaded the people to give up those traditions like animal sacrifices, human sacrifices in the name of religion.
16. Use of language has been emerged as a significant factor in the attitude of common masses towards the teachings of Śaṅkaradeva. Śaṅkaradeva had done for the enrichment of Assamese art and literature single handedly. Departing from the path of the orthodox scholars who had been writing only through the medium of Sanskrit, Śaṅkaradeva composed his monumental works in a language intelligible to the masses. Śaṅkaradeva narrates the glory and greatness of the Almighty and expounded the abstruse philosophy of life in the medium of the common people. Śaṅkaradeva flung open the door of knowledge to the masses enabling the unlettered millions to drink deep into the eternal wisdom of this ancient land.
17. The study also flashes out that the great literary works of Śaṅkaradeva which are all permeated with great devotional fervour are the *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*, *Daśhama*, *Bhāgavata*, *Bhakti-Ratnākar*, *Bhakti-Pradīpa* and *Guṇamālā* etc show positive and modern out look towards the issues of education of moral values, status of women, caste, creed, religion, untouchability etc. Śaṅkaradeva also composed scores of noble verses called *Bargīt* and wrote plays and few other devotional narratives which enlightened the people and formed the major plank of Assamese literature. Śaṅkaradeva gave a new life and vigour besides reviving the monotheistic doctrine

which is the quintessence of Indian religious philosophy and new direction to the culture of the Assamese people.

18. The present study also records the positive role of *Ankīyā Nāṭa*, *Ankīyā bhāonā*, songs and poetry, *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā* etc in the formation of character, moral values, social and educational development of the common people. Śaṅkaradeva reforms society through the source of art, culture and literature.
19. The present study reflects and flash out some relevant and important observations in respect of education, philosophy and Śaṅkaradeva. For growth and enlightenment Śaṅkaradeva felt the necessity of education. With some democratic realities to his time Śaṅkaradeva's educational views were based on the traditional culture of India. For this reason Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy of education became idealistic and pragmatic.
20. It has been observed, in the study that Śaṅkaradeva put emphasis on physical education alongwith the necessity of religious, social and ethical education. Education unveils truth, makes man conscious of his socio-ethical responsibilities and makes him more humane.

The above mentioned major findings of the study, exhibit some of the determinants and problems of the study. It is necessary to understand that the factors and elements are supposed to affect the positive orientation of the philosophy and education which are the primary requirements for progressive development of the society. It is hoped that these findings may help to formulate some useful measure for the development of educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. In this light few

suggestions may be put forward for the progressive development of educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva.'

7.3 Suggestions :

1. The present study reveals that education influences the cognitive realism of the individual. It unearth the factors responsible to broaden mental horizon and out-look of the common masses. Peoples need changes for suitable development and fostering of values and attitudes in proper direction. For such desired changes in the society an appropriate and well-planned education system is very necessary. To ensure education for every one it requires government, voluntary organizations, teachers, citizens and private bodies to provide all possible assistance. For the progressive development of the society it requires proper value system. It is largely depends on educational system.
2. The study also observed that education emerge as a significant factor for fostering the progressive outlook among the common masses. It suggests that educational activity facilitates positive and proper cognitive change among the people. Education make the blue print for living in the society. Education is valued as on organised effort imparting skills, moulding attitudes and behaviour of the individual controlling and dictating activities.
3. Value oriented education is the urgent need of the present times. In the modern world of national feuds and international conflicts unless the proper system of education is recognized it will difficult to save the human society from the crises of values. Scientific achievement has to be counter balanced with progress in human values. Value oriented education takes its account to

develop the physical, emotional, moral, spiritual, social and intellectual capacities of an individual. Education highlighted the problems, needs and aspirations of youth and the challenges of the changing world. It is therefore imperative that education should be a core of primary education to higher level education youths and adults alike.

4. Śaṅkaradeva and his disciples engaged themselves in the work of propagating knowledge and wisdom in their own ways. Śaṅkaradeva authored many songs, plays, prayers and philosophical writings. When Śaṅkaradeva's plays were enacted, songs were sung, hymns were chanted people received the very knowledge which made one educated by the standard of those days. But there were more in the teachings of Śaṅkaradeva and that was value education imparted by him. This is the crucial ingredient in modern education too. Science based programme should be made an integral part of the educational systemic different level.
5. Śaṅkaradeva was not only a religious leader but also an educationist. Śaṅkaradeva helped the people to acquire knowledge of the scriptures and behavioural science. There were elements of social science in his writings in a primitive form. Śaṅkaradeva's teachings were always full of advices for an ideal life-style. Ethics constituted the main component of his teachings. Śaṅkaradeva was a global pioneer in adult education programme. There was no intrinsic difference between man and man, all being creations of the same God, this message was conveyed to all.

6. In *Bhakti* there is no distinction of castes. Everybody has equal right to chant the *Hari-Nāma*. Śaṅkaradeva simplified religion to such an extent that even the most ignorant and the humblest of all could join religious worship. Even today one can see in the Śaṅkari Institutions, the *Nāma-prasangas* where people belonging to different castes join without any distinction of castes, creed or colour. All these was intended mainly to establish harmony in society and to promote fellow feeling. These thinking should be given more emphasis for a prosperous and peaceful Assamese nation. Because Assam is a land of multi language, religion and caste.
7. *Thān* and *Nāmghar* play a diverse role in all spheres and has made manifold contributions towards the Assamese society. In the present study prime importance has been given to its education system only. To mean the total educational environment of the Śaṅkari Institutions and *Nāmghar* institution the term education system has been used by the investigator. Śaṅkari Institutions and *Nāmghar* should be given much importance for the formal and non-formal education of the future generation. It is an urgent call of modern time.
8. Śaṅkaradeva was in firm believe that the development of society depended upon the education of the common masses and their active participation in matters affecting them most. Śaṅkaradeva's main concern was to mould the character and life of the people. Śaṅkaradeva achieved all these by drawing the attention of the multitudes to religious and ethical literature. Śaṅkaradeva translated the *Bhāgavata* and other Sanskrit texts into the Assamese language so that the common man might read and understand them easily. Śaṅkaradeva also introduced *Ankīyā Nāṭas* based on religious themes to educate the

ignorant. Transliteration of different language and famous personalities of national and international arena should be encouraged properly and carefully for the moral and character development of the future generation.

The above mentioned suggestions of action may help the planner and social thinker to draw a comprehensive scheme for the proper and progressive development of educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva among the general people. The development of proper educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva is a big task. It requires the joining hands from every corner of the society including government officials, teachers, parents, social organizations and educational institutions. Right types of educations are the basic pre-requisites for balanced development of the society and individual and it requires every possible effort.

7.4 Conclusion :

The present study is planned with a view to investigating the educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. An attempt has been made to examine the influence of some socio-educational variables such as caste, creed, colour, untouchability, religion, morality, socio-educational condition, language, literature, culture etc. These investigations explore and highlighted various aspects in respect to education, philosophy and Śaṅkaradeva towards the social issues undertaken in this study.

The study reflects some important and interesting observations in respect to educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. It is highly encouraging that the educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva bear the modern thinking, values and attitudes which are necessary pre-requisites for progressive and all round development of the society.

Necessary efforts are to be taken to provide education to all as far as possible. In the field of education, undoubtedly religious education is of vital importance for each and every people in the society. With this purpose Śaṅkaradeva launched his Vaiṣṇavite movement to mark an important role in religious, spiritual, mental, social and moral aspects of the common masses of this region. Prior to Śaṅkaradeva Assam was glanced with different casteism, religionism and disintegration.

By introducing *Nāmghar* and *Śaṅkari* institutions Śaṅkaradeva brought unity amongst the different castes into one. *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* of Śaṅkaradeva is a unique form of democratic system of religious education. Śaṅkaradeva picked up disciples from each and every caste from each and every corner of Assam and gave initiation to them. Śaṅkaradeva established a vast Assamese nation of integrity in the name of devotional community. Rise and fall of dynasties among the Kachārīes, the Chutiyaś, the Āhoms, the Kochas, the Bhutiyas and the like was a frequent and common matter at that time. By this time the caste feelings like high caste and low caste, *Brāhmiṇs* and non-*Brāhmiṇs* had already been deeply rooted in the society. Touchables and untouchables feelings were badly rooted in the society.

Śaṅkaradeva arise in 15th century and left a remarkable mark on the religious, social, educational and cultural life of Assam. Śaṅkaradeva through his teachings, integrated the different caste and groups of people into one cultural unit. In Śaṅkaradeva's mind the concept of one culturally united India was always foremost. *Śaṅkari* Institutions and *Nāmghars* brought *Bhakti* to the common masses and produced people of high moral character. To inculcate good values in illiterate masses, the people

of high moral character have tremendous influence. Śaṅkaradeva made systematic and scientific attempt to spread the ideals of *Vaiṣṇavism* through the media of art, culture and literature. Śaṅkaradeva realized and believed firmly that literature, art and culture always have a great influence over the thoughts of an Individual. It focus the different aspects of social and educational life and Śaṅkaradeva had used this powerful weapon.

Self sacrifice, co-operative spirit and fellow-feeling are some noble values through which the progress and prosperity of the society is possible. Kindness, sacrifice patient, humility, impartial, non-violence, etc. are the main values of *Neo-Vaiṣṇavism*, Śaṅkaradeva's teachings teaches the common masses for love for Kṛṣṇa and the earth and everything that God creates.

Śaṅkaradeva provides education to the illiterate people through the *Śaṅkari* Institutions and *Nāmghars*. Śaṅkaradeva's aims of education was to give importance on the development of all round personality, moral character, universal brotherhood, spiritual and vocational aim. Śaṅkaradeva also emphasis on the development of values and thought of culture and mutual consciousness. Śaṅkaradeva emphasized on the learning of three languages viz Assamese, Sanskrit and *Brajāvalī*. To provide the knowledge of moral education Śaṅkaradeva included the *Purāṇas*, *Tantras* and *Saṁhitās* as subjects of teaching. Alongwith the teaching of ancient scriptures the knowledge of *Vyākaraṇa* was imparted for composing variety of *Vaiṣṇavite* literatures. *Yoga* was included by Śaṅkaradeva in the curriculum of teaching as he realized the importance of healthy body and mind or soul, both are essential in one's life. The ideals of equality, compassion, love and non-violence as preached by Śaṅkaradeva would

continue to inspire the common people for great deeds of national and spiritual unity. The life and achievements of Śaṅkaradeva, the ideals of *Neo-Vaiṣṇavism* becomes more relevant for the present society.

Śaṅkaradeva, the creator of a renaissance in every aspect of Assamese society i.e. religion, society, art, language, literature, music etc. and gave Assamese society a new identity. Śaṅkaradeva is described as ‘All in One’. It is very difficult to find out such an excellent personality. Śaṅkaradeva was the genius having the qualities of an expounder religious teacher, saint, poet, musical master. Through innumerable excellent contributions Śaṅkaradeva enriched Assamese society. Śaṅkaradeva’s contribution towards Assamese society is deeply rooted. Without Śaṅkaradeva it is unthinkable to imagine the cultural, social and educational aspects of Assam.

