

PREFACE

I always found a deep interest in the study about the spiritual teachings and literal works of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva. I had an opportunity of studying about Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva in the course work (1st semester) of Ph.D programme at Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya (MSSV); Nagaon. After finishing my course work, I felt to select a topic for Ph.D. Thesis. Then I thought, the concept of God is a baffling subject. The more one studies, the more remains to be studied. All great philosophers have at first unraveled the mystery of the self and then moved on to the complex and unique nature of this world. All these have encouraged me from the very beginning. I, therefore, made up my mind to investigate deeply on this subject. It is also seen that particularly, the concepts of God, Self and Devotion in the philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva happens to be a subject not much researched about. So, I have selected a topic for my Ph.D. Thesis; that is, “ **A Study on the Concepts of God, Self and Devotion in the Philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva.**”

Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva was a Neo-Vaiṣṇavite saint and a great social reformer. He was born at Ālipukhurī in the Nagaon District of Assam in that time, when the society was in chaotic conditions. At that time, all sorts of evil practices, resulting from Śaktism, Tāntricism etc. were responded in society. Then, Śaṅkaradeva showed the real spiritual path enshrined in the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads* to the people. In other words, Śaṅkaradeva reformed the society when the people were under the dark clouds of evil religious practices.

Śaṅkaradeva propounded his religious faith in the light of the *Bhakti* cult of India, which is based on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. His religious faith is known as the Neo-Vaiṣṇavism, which is open to all men irrespective of caste, creed and status. Śaṅkaradeva's Neo- Vaiṣṇavism is also known as. *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. It is the religion of surrendering oneself with intense and selfless devotion to One God and that One God is Viṣṇu, Who manifests Himself in various incarnations in different ages. According to Śaṅkaradeva Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa is the supreme God of all the incarnations. So, complete surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa is the basic Principle of Neo-Vaiṣṇavism or *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*.

According to Śaṅkaradeva, Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Reality of the Universe. The soul and the matter exist in Him and these are inseparable from Him. But these are not identical with Him. This God is infinite and indeterminate, Who is the Lord of the Universe. Regarding the soul or *jīvātmā*, Śaṅkaradeva's view is that the soul or *jīvātmā* is immutable and immortal. It is a part or *aṁśa* of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Though associated with a body, the soul is distinct from that body.

According to Śaṅkaradeva, *bhakti* is the way to realize the Supreme Reality; that is Kṛṣṇa. Śaṅkaradeva's concept of *bhakti* gets shaped on the basis of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. A true *bhakta* is one, who is selfless and is not interested even in salvation or *mukti*. In other words, in Śaṅkaradeva's view, *bhakti* is superior to *mukti*. According to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, there are nine kinds of *bhakti*, viz – *śravaṇa*, *kīrttana*, *smaraṇa*, *vandana*, *arcana*, *pādasevana*, *dāśya*, *sakhitva* and *ātmanivedana*. Among these nine kinds of *bhakti*, *śravaṇa* and *kīrttana* are the principal forms according to Śaṅkaradeva. He lays stress on the *Kīrttana* covering the singing and

remembering the names and the deeds of the Lord Kṛṣṇa and paying of undivided attention to such acts, i.e. *Śravaṇa* as the main way to realize the Lord Kṛṣṇa. That is why the religious faith of Śaṅkaradeva is called *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*.

According to Śaṅkaradeva, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the source of all causes and He is the sumtotal of all effects. He is unmanifested, formless, impersonal and attributeless. This *Parama Puruṣa* is all-powerfull, all-pervasive, omniscient, omnipresent and infinite, Who is without beginning and end.

The present study is related to the above subjects. It is tried to discuss and explain the concepts of God, Self and Devotion in the thoughts of Śaṅkaradeva, which is reflected in this thesis.

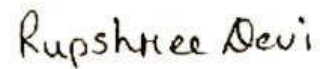
This thesis contains eight chapters. I have put forward the significance of the study, objectives, statement of the problem, methodology, limitations of the study, definition of some key words and chapterisation in the introductory chapter. In the second chapter, the review of related literatures is presented. The third chapter contains the analysis of different Vedāntic philosophers regarding the concepts of God and Self. The fourth chapter deals with the concepts of Neo-Vaiṣṇavism of Śaṅkaradeva and his philosophical thoughts. The fifth chapter discusses the concept of God in the philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. The notion of the self or *Jīva* in the thoughts of Śaṅkaradeva is presented in the sixth chapter. In seven chapter, the concept of devotion or *bhakti* and its different kinds are analysed. In the last chapter, I have presented the observations and conclusion of the study.

I have collected data from primary and secondary sources like books, articles published in different journals and magazines to make the present study a fruitful one.

In this thesis, I have used APA (American Psychological Association) style in Bibliography portion. Further, I hope the information provided in this thesis will pave the way for future research activities in this domain.

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