

**SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION OF ŚAṆKARADEVA:
A STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF
KARL MARX**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Achyut Kumar Das
Department of Sankaradeva Studies
Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya
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CHAPTER -VII

DISCUSSION, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

7.1: Discussion:

This concluding chapter sums up the analytical findings of the entire discussion. The major discussion on the topic **‘Social Reconstruction of Śaṅkaradeva: A Study in the light of Karl Marx** is as follows -

Śaṅkaradeva was a revolutionary reformer of Assam. He has been one of the very rare personalities of multidimensional qualities. He worked for major societal infrastructural changes for the upliftment of Assamese society through *bhakti* movement. Śaṅkaradeva was essentially very humane and was a great humanist. Karl Marx’s teaching and critiques are well known all over the world. Marx was the first thinker and architects of a new ideology i.e. scientific socialism, who said that the world needs to be changed through a new polity of socialism, a new economic system for the proletariat as against the bourgeois section of society. But, much earlier than Karl Marx, from the eastern part of India, Śaṅkaradeva of Assam being a social thinker and reformer explained the world in his own way through *bhakti* cult. The saint founded a new religious order known as *Eka Śaraṇa Hari Nāma Dharma* and asserted that the only way to human salvation is *Kṛṣṇabhakti*. However, the time-gap of Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568) and Karl Marx (1818-1883) is 369 years. Śaṅkaradeva is an Assamese by birth and Karl Marx is a German. In their lifetime, both of them took upon the cause of the downtrodden and exploited humanity and fought against social

sufferings, inequalities and social injustices and showed a path of hope and emancipation through their reconstructive activities.

7.2: The Creeds of Śaṅkaradeva's Social Reconstruction Philosophy:

Śaṅkaradeva is essentially associated with the doctrine of *bhakti* or devotion. That is taken to be the be-all and end-all of his teaching. The creeds of Śaṅkaradeva's social reconstruction philosophy are ---

- *Bhakti* or devotion is necessary for the upliftment of the society. According to Śaṅkaradeva, the society can be reconstructed by sowing the seeds of selfless devotion, developing the mentality of surrender to the greater causes of humanity and rejection of discrimination in the path of *bhakti*.
- In his thoughts, it was found that in the name of God, it is wrong to make animal sacrifices. He made his religious cult free from the clutches of formal rites, rituals and costly pilgrimages. He believed that people should not waste their time and energy in search of God through pilgrimages. He wrote-

hari henaiṭo duguṭi akṣara
jīhvā agre thākai yāra /
gaṅgā gayā kāśī prayāga setuka
yaivāka nalāgai tāra /¹

It means one, who chants the holy name of *Hari*, the two-syllable word and keeps the same on the tip of his tongue, need not make any pilgrimage to *Gaṅgā, Kāśī, Prayāga* and *Setubandha*.

¹ *Kīrttan-ghoṣā, Ajāmilopākhyāna*. v. 204

- Śaṅkaradeva in his religion gave special stress on *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrttana* (hearing and chanting the name of the Lord). According to him, *Bhakti* is more important than *Mukti* or salvation. Through this he wanted to de-stress the people from the burden of ritualistic formalities and monetary expenses. It was a kind of economic release as well as religious hierarchy.
- According to him, for Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, there is no difference between man and man, between high caste and low caste. Real religion is found in the service of man. He said-

kṛṣṇara kathāta yīto rasika/

brāhmaṇa janma tāra lāgai kika//

smaroka mātra hari dine rāti/

nabāchai bhakati jāti ajāti//²

It means- one who is devoted to Lord *Kṛṣṇa* need not become a *Brāhmin*. If he keeps on remembering the holy name of *Hari* every day, his devotion will overpower all the barriers of high caste and low caste. It shows how egalitarian and democratic Śaṅkaradeva was. He disseminated the teachings of equality, human dignity and human security through such approaches.

- According to Śaṅkaradeva, the relationship between God and his devotees should be like the one between master and servant. He himself considered being a servant of Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, one of the nine kinds of *bhakti* known as *Dāsya bhakti*.

² *Ibid, Pāṣaṇḍa-marddan. v.129*

- Śaṅkaradeva believed that every individual, irrespective of his caste and creed has equal access to godhead and spiritual life. He thus wanted to eradicate the caste and class divisions as well as advocated for gender equality .He tried to rebuild the society on the principles of equality and justice .Relative deprivation was completely dismissed in his approach .The elements of safeguarding of human rights is also prevalent in his philosophical formulations. Hence, his religion was based on the centre of morality and spirituality.
- According to him, the function of the religion is to reconstruct society. Religion for Śaṅkaradeva was more of a socio-ethical force to fight against the odds and evils of the society and to proclaim the value of human life and human dignity.
- He believed that all human beings are equal in the eyes of God.

7.3: The Creeds of Karl Marx's Social Reconstruction Philosophy:

The thoughts and ideas of Karl Marx are very significant for the society because of its scientific and practical nature. As a scientific socialist thinker, Marx's crusade was much against the exploiting classes of society i.e. 'the haves'. The major creeds of Marx's social reconstructive philosophy are-

- To reconstruct the world and not to explain the origin of the universe.
- The courses of history were primarily economic in nature.
- The society is divided into two classes –owners and workers or 'haves' and 'haves not'.
- The class conflict is going on between the two classes.
- The workers are exploited by the owners. This is the result of the proletarian or worker revolution.

- The proletarian revolution can be put an end to by nationalization of the instrument of production or abolition of private property.
- The exploitation of workers is leading to greater and greater improvement of the workers. This growing improvement of the workers is resulting in a revolutionary spirit among the workers and the conversion of the class conflict into a class struggle and,
- After the class struggle, the workers are bound to capture the state and establish their rule, which was called the dictatorship of the proletariat, and socialism is inevitable.

7.4: Findings:

The topic of the study is ‘**Social Reconstruction of Śaṅkaradeva: A Study in the light of Karl Marx**’. In this study, four objectives were formulated.

Objectives No.1: To evaluate the Concept of Social Reconstruction in General-On the basis of this objective, the third chapter is prepared. The title of this chapter is ‘**The Concept of Social Reconstruction**’. After investigating and deeply studying about the concept of social reconstruction, the following points are found-

- Society is composed of people. As a social animal man is endowed with special characteristics. There are no differences between human beings and others in the primitive stage. But, because of the physical structure and nervous composition human beings are different from other species. Due to these physical compositions and characteristics, human beings are transformed into beings with emotions and feelings. Human beings succeeded to climb the ladder of evolution because of these qualities possessed by them.

- Human being is a cultural and rational entity. Other species could not climb through the ladder of evolution because of dearth of emotion and rationality. The species having back-bone is endowed with a brain or thinking mechanism. But, unlike a human being, no other species can stand on their feet and work. This special physical feature of human empowered them to be rational.
- Men have created the society for the fulfilment of their various needs and make the life worth living. Society has to become an essential condition for human life to arise and to continue.
- Society is dynamic, not static. Man is the cause of changing society. Change is the law of nature. Human beings are the part and parcel of nature along with other species. The term revolution, evolution, development and progress are related to the change of society.
- The concept of social reconstruction identifies many traditional and social dogmas that need to be addressed to create healthy societies. The major significance of the concept of social reconstruction is to ensure greater solidarity, harmony among different forces.
- For the social well-being, social reconstruction includes two approaches. Firstly, it directly addresses the legacy of violent conflict through inter and intergroup conciliation and secondly, it indirectly builds social links by promoting reconciliation through community-based development and co-operation.
- Regarding reconstruction of society, the ancient Greek philosophers- Pythagoras (580-570 BC), Heraclitus (535-475 BC), the Eleatics, the Atomist

like Empedocles (495-435 BC), Democritus (460-370BC), Socrates, Aristotle, Plato and other western philosophers like Hobbes(1588-1679), John Locke(1632-1704) Rousseau's (1712-78) Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer(1820-1903), L. H. Morgan(1818-1881), Emile Durkheim(1858-1917), Henri de saint Simon(1760-1825), Henry Maine (1822-1888), and Haddon Clark(1902-1985) have lots of contribution, where these philosophers through their works and activities wanted not only to explain the world and society but also to reform it through their works and activities. Practically, their reformation was not meant merely to change the individual behaviour but to some extent change the basis of organized society.

- The ancient Indian Philosophers-Manu, Kauṭilya and modern thinkers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Bhagawan Das (1869-1959), Rabindra Nath Tagore (1861-1941), Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda had always a practical view regarding the reconstruction of society. They wanted to change the basis of individuals conduct so that it would be possible only to attain final goals of salvation or self-realization, which was not found in the ancient Greek and other western political thoughts.
- Śaṅkaradeva's theory of evolution asserted that the world of nature is an evolved *Prakṛti* or *Māyā* produced by God. His concept is based on *Sāṃkhya* philosophy with some modification.
- Śaṅkaradeva and his thoughts did not offer any concrete definition of a society, but offered some features and requirements that lead to a social setup.

- Karl Marx has furnished a scientific explanation of the origin of the society and state, its essence and role of social life. Marx discovers the law of evolution in human history where first of all one has to eat and drink and has shelter and clothing before it can pursue politics, science, religion and art.
- Some historical events particularly of the Western World i.e. the Middle age or Dark age, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Glorious Revolution, the Age of Colonialism, the Industrial Revolution, United States Independence, French Revolution and Russian Revolution signify the relevance of social reconstruction philosophy in the world including European society.
- In Indian socio-economic-political and cultural tradition and history, the Pre-Historic periods, Indus valley civilization, the Vedic period, later Vedic period, the religious movement, the Gupta Period, *bhakti* movement, the process of Sanskritization and Westernization has a great significance for reconstruction of Indian society.
- Before and after the advent of Śaṅkaradeva, the people of Assam were adherents of various religious beliefs like *Śaivism*, *Śāktism*, Buddhism and Ancient *Vaiṣṇavism*. Due to Mongoloid cosmopolitan and liberal culture people did not follow the caste and creed prejudice. No particular religion was followed by them. They were followers of Henotheism i.e. believer of all gods. During that time of Śaṅkaradeva, Assam was politically a fragmented political territory as it was divided into small political blocks ruled by different ethnic groups like the Chutiyās, the Koches, the Kachāris, the Āhoms and the Bhyūñās and also Mahamadians and other different tribes. These socio-

political-cultural and religious diversities deeply impacted Śaṅkaradeva and encouraged him to reconstruct of the Assamese society.

- For social reconstruction, spirituality should consist of the total orientation of human personality away from selfishness and directing it towards the good of all living beings and sharing their joys and sorrows. It is the conscious application to life inherent with a system of ethical and moral values unfolded by humanity.
- According to spiritual thoughts, social reconstruction means to love and work for well- being of the human society
- Materialism holds that the matter is the ultimate reality from which everything has evolved in this world, including life, mind and consciousness. According to materialistic thought, the creation of the world is mechanical and not teleological.
- According to materialism, humanism is the true religion, and the welfare of human beings is fulfilled by the society based on scientific laws.
- In India, materialistic philosophy is found in the thoughts of Cārvāka, the writings of Kālidāsa, Kṣemendra, Bhaṭṭhari and the Buddhist and Jain religion. On the other hand, in western philosophy, materialistic thoughts are found in the writings of pre- Greek philosophers like Heraclitus, Epicurus, Democritus, Plato and Aristotle.
- The social reconstruction philosophy is found in the ideals and works of both Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx. Śaṅkaradeva's social reconstruction was based on spiritualism and moral individualism, while Karl Marx's thoughts and work

were based on materialism. To avert inequality and to constitute a progressive society, Śaṅkaradeva adopted the ideals from religious viewpoints, while Karl Marx adopted them from economic viewpoints. Nevertheless, both of them fought for the well-being of society and all downtrodden people.

Objective 2: To evaluate the concept of social reconstruction in the philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva's and Karl Marx-

On the basis of this objective, the fourth and fifth chapters are prepared and presented. The title of these chapters are- '**Śaṅkaradeva's Concept of Social Reconstruction and Karl Marx's Concept of Social Reconstruction**'. The following observations are made from the discussion-

- Śaṅkaradeva's social reconstruction thoughts believed that the *Brahma* (supreme soul) is the supreme truth. *Brahma* and *Īśvara* (God) are the same. *Brahma* (God) is there in every entity. *Īśvara* or God and his creation are not different; they are complimentary to each other. *Jīva* or creature is a component of *Īśvara* or God. But, Karl Marx's social reconstruction philosophy is materialistic. It proceeds from the premise that matter and being are primary and consciousness is secondary. Marx's philosophy is also dialectical because it examines the material world in constant motion, developing, and regenerating. In their thoughts, it is found that the God or supreme soul was approved by Śaṅkaradeva, but Marx disapproved it. According to Marx, there is nothing called a supreme soul beyond its material existence and otherwise, it was an illusion. As against the philosophy of

Śaṅkaradeva, Marx believed that the supreme soul is nothing more than a material life itself – but a historical reflection.

- The social reconstruction philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva is specifically based on *Dāśya bhakti*, where *Kṛṣṇa* is taken as Lord and the disciple as a servant. In Sanskrit, it is called *Sevya* and *Sevaka*. He believed that to serve a devotee means to serve the Lord *Kṛṣṇa*. It in general, calls for service to the humanity, to the fellow beings. Serving men, serving society is the way to serving God. But, Marx believed that the whole life in a given society was determined by its mode of production with the main aspects of social activity emerging as different of production. Therefore, he believed that labour is the master not servant and source of all wealth and culture.
- Śaṅkaradeva believed that the whole world is *Māyā* (illusion) and hence, both *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* are governed by *Mādhava* or God. Therefore, Mādhavadeva, the chief disciple of Śaṅkaradeva says –

prakṛti puruṣa duiro niyantā mādhava/

samastare ātmā hari parama bāndhava/³

It means-*Mādhava* i.e. *Īśvara* is the creator and controller of both nature and individual self and Lord *Hari* is the soul of all creatures and he is the best friend even. Thus, Śaṅkaradeva's social reconstruction philosophy believed in the disappearance of distinction of the soul and merging with *Brahma* even in one's lifetime and not only after death. He says –

³ Mādhavadeva, *Nām-ghoṣā*. verse.405.

*ahamkāra gucile brhamaka jīve dekhe/
 māyā eri āpuni budhira gucai bhrama//
 nirmala hṛdayajīve dekhe parabrahma/
 yi kālata jñāna astre chede ahamkāra//
 chinḍe karma bandha jīve teve apunāra/
 hṛdayate parama ānanda hove jāta//
 paripūrṇa ātmā hovai manate sākṣāta⁴*

It means - Those who have forsaken pride can see God. They become free from the chain of material life. Those who are religious and tolerant, they can realize God's existence in themselves. God helps them to stay away from three miseries - *Ādhibhatika*, *Ādhidaivika*, and *Ādhyātmica*. Apart from its spiritual overtone, such statements actually stand for dignity of human life. Śaṅkaradeva believed that by inculcating the culture of tolerance and avoiding materialistic greed, an individual can upgrade himself. It consequently helps getting a more disciplined, ordered society. Here too Śaṅkaradeva is found to appeal to rectify the society from within, by developing the culture of work, selflessness, tolerance etc.

But, Marx believed that matter was the essence of the universe and social institutions were the manifestation of changing material that underwent the dialectical process because of its inherent tension until the achievement of perfect conditions. Marx asserted that the world develops following the laws of the movement of matter. The different social ideas and theories, which appeared at different periods of history,

⁴ *Bhāgavata*.Book-XII, Vv.177-79.

were merely a reflection of the material laws of society, where the matter was active and not passive and moves by an inner necessity of its nature.

In their philosophies, it was found that Śaṅkaradeva represented a metaphysical idealism and Marx represented dialectical materialism. Śaṅkaradeva put a strong faith in the existence of a deeper spiritual power i.e. the *Īśvara* or God. On the other hand, Marx was a rationalist and condemned mysticism and faith and criticized idealistic philosophy of social reconstruction.

- As a social reformer, Śaṅkaradeva was deeply concerned with the plight of the downtrodden with a vision of establishing an egalitarian society. Through his works and ideologies he fought against inequality and discrimination in society. He wanted to achieve that goal by following the path of *bhakti*. As an offshoot of a feudal family, Śaṅkaradeva ought to behave like a common devotee. His motto of life and thinking was of being kind-hearted and he had immense respect for every being. He did not indulge in any caste- creed differences, high and low of this world. To support him, Mādhavdeva, the chief disciple of the saint said-

noho jñānā āmi cāri jāti cāriyo āśramī noho āti
noho dharmaśīla dāna vrata tīrthagāmī /
kintu pūrṇānānda samudrara gopībhartā padakamalara
*dāsaro dāsara tāna dāsa bhailo āmi*⁵

It means- We are not divided into four castes i.e. *Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Sudra*. Nor do we adhere to four walks of Vedic social life i.e. *Brahmacarya*, *Gārhaṣṭhya*, *Bāṇaprastha* and *Yati* or *Sannyāsa* and we are not so wealthy also to

⁵ Mādhavdeva, *Nām-ghoṣā*. Verse. 670.

sacrifice wealth and money to the needy people, not performing *Yajña* and follow the rituals of *Vrata*, even we are not accustomed to visit religious shrines. But, we are out and out the mere slaves of that supreme soul, who is full of pleasure, and who is the master and of the hearts of the *Gopīs*, whose lotus-like feet is our ultimate goad.

Like Śaṅkaradeva, Karl Marx was also deeply concerned with the plight of the downtrodden. But, as a materialistic and scientific thinker, Marx believed that any meaningful change means a change in the mode of production. Without changing the production relations no meaningful change can be brought about. He believed that change was always sought by the oppressed and exploited class and class struggle is an inevitable product of the contradiction between the productive forces and production relations. When the contradiction between the relations of production and forces of production reaches a situation, the revolution occurs and the transformation of one mode of production into another and establishment a classless society occurs.

- To spread social reconstructive activities of the society, the community centre i.e. *Kīrttanghar* or *Nāmghar* was an innovative and multi-dimensional institution founded by Śaṅkaradeva. It was a centre of community sentiment irrespective of all caste, creed, sex and religion, a place of core ethical values and spiritual realization with spreading the Neo- vaiṣṇavite faith. It was also a place to learn and excel in traditional crafts, music, acting, dance etc. The benefits and beauties of the group life can be best enjoyed in the *Nāmghar*. Equality and spirituality were the main messages of Śaṅkaradeva and it was found in his creation of the *Nāmghar* or village chapels. Similarly, to establish a classless society and the dictatorship of the proletariat, Karl Marx was associated with the International Working Men's Association' popularly

known as -The First International in 1864. He was the author of its first address and a host of resolutions, declarations and manifestoes to uniting the working-class movement of various countries.

- For the social reconstruction, Śaṅkaradeva's thoughts and works emphasized on i.e. *bhakti*, spirituality, human rights education, religious tolerance, caste upliftment and gender equality. Through these areas, he wanted to build up a society which has a strong moral and ethical foundation. Śaṅkaradeva had a clear vision of a society where all men would be equal and no repression of man by man would occur. Similarly, to establish a classless and stateless society, Karl Marx's social reconstructive philosophy stressed in these major areas i.e., class structure and class conflict between the haves and have nots or rich and poor, the workers ownerships and control over means of production and surplus value, establishment of the principle of communism, communist morality, social revolution, freedom, social justice, equality and common good.
- To improve the conditions of a society, Śaṅkaradeva's principal weapon was *bhakti*. Through *bhakti*, Śaṅkaradeva believed, common people could identify their position in society. Therefore, he writes-

tohmāra akāma bhṛtya āmi
tumiyo niṣkāma mora svāmī/

nāhi kāma āhmāra anyathā
nuhi rājasevakara yathā /⁶

⁶ *Kittana-ghoṣā, Pahlāda carita.* verse. 451.

It means I am a thine servant desireless; thou art also my master desireless. I have no other desires at all; as cherished by servants royal.

The Marxian thoughts on social reconstruction were inspired by dialectical materialism and materialistic interpretation of history. Marx believed that in a social production man enters into definite and necessary relations, which were independent of their will, namely relations of production corresponding to a determined stage of development of their material forces of production.

- Śāṅkaradeva's social reconstructive philosophy was based on a tolerant spirit. He believed that for well being of the society it is to be restructured on the basis of spiritual values and work. But, Karl Marx as rational thinker not at all appealed to the sentiment of justice by individual's self-sacrifice and believed that organized expropriation by the armed proletariat of the expropriator would destroy the evils of society.
- Human rights education was one of the important social reconstructive principles of Śāṅkaradeva. As human rights worker, Śāṅkaradeva raised his voice against social evils through religion. He believed in the recognition of the worth, value and dignity of every human life and so proclaimed that even the meanest soul should be respected and valued. It opened up a new hope with the message of faith in fraternity, equality, liberty and social justice. On the other hand, Karl Marx believed that the so-called rights of man had nothing to offer to man as such. These rights were designed to serve the interests of a particular class i.e. the exploiting class or the owners of the means of production. He believed that rights of man were secured by law but the law

was nothing and superstructures arise on the foundation of the material conditions of life- the mode of production, which is determined by the prevalent property relations in society.

- According to critic Medhātithi , the commentator on *Manusāṁhitā*, religion means-

dhāryate iti dharma: dhāraṇād dharma ityāhuḥ/

*dharmeṇa dhārayati prajāḥ/*⁷

The meaning of the above dictum is that the possession of patience is dharma; he who can held patience, this religion or dharma holds him together. Thus, *dharma* is a catalytic agent through which people live together, act together, realizes the vanity and vain, pleasure and pain of one another and dharma eliminates the dark ideas of man and leads him to become pious.

This meaning of religion is reflected in the social reconstruction philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva.. He tried to reconstruct society by purifying the spiritual life of the individual. Śaṅkaradeva preached *Eka Śaraṇa Hari Nāma Dharma*, a religion based on *bhakti*, supreme surrender to one God-Lord *Kṛṣṇa*. It is a religion, free from many rituals, scarifies and superstitions and strictly based on *bhakti* or devotion emphasizing the unity of godhead and all people. Unlike the existing forms of religion, it was minimalistic and more internalized. Character formation, building up of moral values and development of human dignity are insisted more through such religion than prescribing authoritative dictums on rituals, worships or sacrifices.

⁷ Commentary of Medhātithi, *Manusāṁhitā*. introduction,

On the other hand, Karl Marx as an advocate of dialectical materialism considers religion to be a reactionary force. He believed that religion is an ideology fitted to the production, organizations and relations of the time. Therefore, Marx rightly noted that religion is not only the sigh of the oppressed creature or the heart of a heartless world; it is also the spirit of a spiritless situation; religious distress is not only the expression of real distress, but it is also at the same time a protest against real distress.

- The principle of tolerance and non-violence (*ahimsā*) are also reflected in the social reconstruction philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. Śaṅkaradeva's attitude towards religious sects was quite tolerant. He says –

*parara dharmaka nihimsibā kadācīta/
karibā bhūtaka dāyā sakaruṇa citta //
huibā śānta citta sarva dharmata batsala /
ehi bhāgavata dharma jānā mahābala/⁸*

It means- never do any harm to other religions, be merciful to all beings, be compassionate to all sects, *Mahābala*, this is the religion of *Bhāgavata*.

Thus, Śaṅkaradeva's social reconstructive philosophy did not make any distinction between castes and creeds. 'His works and activities became a powerful catalyst in the process of acculturation of the people along with different groups'⁹. He

⁸ *Bhakti-pradīpa*. v.141

⁹ Sharma, Nath. Satyendra. (1966). *The Neo-Vaiṣṇavite Movement and The Satra Institution of Assam*. p. 43.

preached that everybody is equal in the eye of God and therefore, everybody has equal right to worship. Therefore, he says-

thira budhi kare save harikese dhāāna/

*eteke cāriyo jāti uttama samāna //*¹⁰

It means- Those who worship God sincerely, become equal and free of caste – prejudices.

On the other hand, Karl Marx's social reconstruction philosophy is based on a violent spirit. He believed that revolution would bring about the final emancipation of mankind because there is no class below the proletariat, which could be subjected to exploitation when the proletariat comes to power. Therefore, In the opening paragraph of *the Communist Manifesto* (1848) both Marx and Engels said that freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild- master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes. Hence, they started in the opening sentence of the *Communist Manifesto* that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle.

- Śaṅkaradeva believed in the concept of gender equality and upliftment of women. He was surprisingly modernist in the concept of gender equality. The philosophical thought of gender justice of Śaṅkaradeva was found in his work -*Anāḍipātana*, where he mentioned that *Puruṣa* or the God produced

¹⁰*Bhāgavata*, Book XII. v. 103.

Prakṛti from himself and *Prakṛti* was not an independent entity. He said that *Prakṛti* is the energy or free will of God and has no separate existence. After creation or at the time of dissolution *Prakṛti* gets merged in God. He says-

māyāra hātata karāo jagata prakāśa/

karo sṛṣṭi līlā āve binoda bilāsa.//¹¹

It means-Let me reveal the world through *Māyā*. Let me affect the spot of creation for dalliance and amusement.

On the other hand, Karl Marx's philosophy on gender equality holds that in a capitalist society there are two-fold divisions. These are men and women and capitalist and workers. In this system, capitalists as well as men are the beneficiaries of women's subordination. Therefore, Marx believed that the establishment of socialism is, therefore, the necessary condition for women's emancipation.

Objective -3: To bring out how Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx tried to extend and establish the concept of social reconstruction from individual to community level-

On the basis of this objective, the fourth and fifth chapters are prepared and presented. The titles of these chapters are '**Śaṅkaradeva Concept of Social Reconstruction and Karl Marx's Concept of Social Reconstruction**'. After complete analysis of these two chapters, the following points of Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx are observed regarding the establishment of social reconstruction thoughts from individual level to community level-

¹¹ *Anāḍipātana* , v.43.

Śaṅkaradeva-

- Śaṅkaradeva, through the ideology of *bhakti* tried to extend and establish the concept of social reconstruction from individual to community level. For him, *bhakti* is the summum -bonam of human life. He said that the omnipresent and the infinite God assume a finite shape within the devotee's heart, where *bhakti* becomes the chief weapon.
- His philosophy conveys the ideal of Lord *Kṛṣṇa* to his disciples. He said that Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is the symbol of divine pleasure and supreme bliss that a human being can hope to attain. Again he said, as a supreme being or entity of all creations, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* remains present in every creature as conscience and soul. In favour of Śaṅkaradeva's thought of *Kṛṣṇa* as a supreme bliss, Mādhavdeva, the chief disciple of Śaṅkaradeva said in his work, *Nām-ghoṣā* in the following verse-

kṛṣṇa hena śabda iṭo pṛthivī bācaka bhaila
ṇa ānandata pravarttaya/
duiro eka pada bhaile parama brahma rūpā kṛṣṇa/
nāma ānandaka mātṛa kaya//
īśvarara pada sevā karante jīvara yata/
kṛśatā gucaya nirantara//
ehi hetutese jānā īśvaraka buli kṛṣṇa/
prasiddha anvaya manohara/¹³

¹³Mādhavdeva, *Nām-ghoṣā*. Vv.140-141.

It means -the word *Kṛṣṇa* indicates the earth and *ṇa* denotes pure happiness. Both words together mean *Kṛṣṇa* in the form of Brahma and we derive pleasure from the Lord's name. Thus, Śaṅkaradeva asserted that each and every person shall remain active in the pursuit of supreme happiness only for the quest aided by the name of *Kṛṣṇa* or *Īśvara*.

- For the social reconstruction, Śaṅkaradeva opposed any kinds of social stratification. The community prayer hall i.e. *Kīrttanghar* or *Nāmghar* innovated by Śaṅkaradeva was the best example, where there were no differences among his disciples and all can sit together for prayers or discourse. According to hagiographies, *Kathā Guru Carit* and *Guru Carit Kathā*, among his devotees Kāliram was a boatman, Srī Ram was a bounded labourer, Balobhadra was an occultist, Nārayaṇ Thākura Dās was a wealthy merchant, Sanātan was fodder collector for horses and Jayanan Dās was an elephant attendant, Ananta Kandali, Bhāskar Vipra, Kaṇṭhabhūṣhan, Mahendra Kandali were distinguished Brahmin scholars. People from different ethnic groups also came together to this order. Among these devotees, Govinda was a Garo; Paramānanda a Mising, Madhai a Jaintia, Chand Sāi and Bura Rām belonged to the Islamic faith and so on. Thus, Śaṅkaradeva, through his religion *Eka Śaraṇa Hari Nāma Dharma* and by establishing community hall called *Kīrttanghar* or *Nāmghar* broke all barriers of caste and ethnicity and sent a message of unity, democracy and integrity for society.
- Śaṅkaradeva took his *bhakti* cult as a means for social reform. Through this religion, he taught his disciples how to maintain personal cleanliness

and correct socio-religious and ethical behaviour in a society. He insisted both on external and internal purity as only the sum total of body and mind leads to the purification of the person. Hence, universal brotherhood is one of the principal ideologies of Śaṅkaradeva's social reconstruction philosophy.

- Śaṅkaradeva's works and activities followed the principle of democratic social order. His unique innovations - the *Kīrttanghar* or *Nāmghar* or village chapels stand for his visionary aim of social reconstruction. Through such community or public spaces, Śaṅkaradeva tried to develop the collective culture, harmony and brotherhood in a society.
- Śaṅkaradeva tried to change the value structure of society. As a progressive philosopher, he has protested against paganism, polytheism, idol worship and ritualism. He was also vehemently against the malpractices of ritualism.
- Śaṅkaradeva believed that religion is the spiritual progress of humanity. As a humanitarian, Śaṅkaradeva looked for the welfare of man. He has tried to do away with the anti-humanistic tendencies. He said that before God, there are no differences. He says-

*kṛṣṇara kathāta yīto rasika/
brāhmaṇa janma tāra lāgai kika//
smaroka mātra hari dine rāti/
nabāchai bhakati jāti ajāti//*¹⁴

¹⁴ *Kīrtana-ghoṣā, Pāṣaṇḍa-mārdana*. v.129

It means- one who is devoted to the name of Lord *Kṛṣṇa* need not become a *Brāhmaṇ*.

If he keeps on remembering the holy name of *Hari day* in and day out, his devotion will overpower all the barriers of high caste and low caste. Therefore, Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy did not give importance to caste, colour and class.

- According to Śaṅkaradeva, religion is a means for social upheaval. As a social reformer, Śaṅkaradeva exerts his efforts with the belief that end determines the means. Therefore, he has aimed to establish a rational order for social upheaval.
- Śaṅkaradeva's social reconstruction philosophy presents a scheme of values to be possessed by man and indicates the ultimate ideal to be realized. By inculcating the values internally and by executing them in their daily lives, individuals can attain betterment in their lives .It will ultimately lead to the upliftment of the entire society.
- Śaṅkaradeva aimed to establish a healthy social order for social upliftment. In his social reconstruction philosophy, he has not been directly involved in resolving injustice but has encouraged people spiritually to resist social prejudices.
- Śaṅkaradeva in his social reconstructive thoughts emphasizes the social norms, which needs to be followed by a man. He believed that man as a social being is not alone in society; other creatures are also social beings.
- Social consciousness was one of the cardinal principles of social reconstruction thoughts of Śaṅkaradeva. He believed that religion helps people understand the value of community life and also made them socially

conscious. It also teaches the people about the value of mutual understanding and spirit of cooperation and creates an atmosphere, where the bond of friendship, brotherhood and unity of society are enjoyed by the people.

Karl Marx:

- Marx's philosophy of social reconstruction indicated that dialectical materialism and economic determinism is a basis of social change. Marx postulated that matter was the essence of the universe, which embodied the force behind all manifestations of social reconstruction. Again, he believed that the social institutions were shaped by the material conditions of life and it was determined by the mode of economic production in society.
- According to Karl Marx, dialectical materialism is a philosophical basis of social reconstruction. In support of Karl Marx, his friend F. Engels in his work- *Anti Dhüring* (1878) defined dialectics as the science of the general law of motion and development of nature, human society and thought. Therefore, F. Engels identified three laws of dialectics from the material world. These are- the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa, the interpenetration of opposites and the negation of the negation. According to Engels the negation of negation was a basic principle of social progress in every stage of social development.
- According to Marx, the historical materialism states that in any given epoch, the economic relation of society, the means whereby men and women provide for their sustenance, produce, exchange and distribute the things are regarded

necessary for the satisfaction of their needs. In other words, Marx asserts that all types of social relations at any stages of historical development is determined by economic conditions. Marx in his work –*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859)* observed that in the social production of their life men enter into definite relations of production. The total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure and the real basis, on which rises a legal and political superstructure.

- Karl Marx in his thoughts on historical materialism mentioned four major successive modes of production in the history of mankind after the first stage of primitive communism. These are the Asiatic, the Ancient, the Feudal and Modern Bourgeois. Marx believed that each of these came into existence through contradictions and antagonism for mode and control of production.
- Marx as a rational theorist considers that society is fundamentally dynamic and not static. Marx regards conflict in society as normal and not an abnormal process. He believes that in every condition of any society, it contains the seeds of future social change.
- Marx's principle of social reconstruction is much interlinked with his concept of social classes and class conflict. Marx believed that class struggle for surplus-value between the haves and have nots are the driving force of social equality, which establishes a classless society.
- For reconstruction of society, Karl Marx's believed that the character of social and cultural forms was influenced by the economic base of society, specifically by the mode of production that is used by the relationships that exist between

those, who own and those who do not own the means of production. Marx believed that history holds stories of conflict between the exploiting and exploited classes and that conflict repeats itself again and again until capitalism is overthrown by the workers and a socialist state is created. For him, socialism is the forerunner to the ultimate social form of communism.

- Marx in his social reconstruction thoughts believed that the theory of class is not a theory of stratification, whereas it can be treated as a comprehensive theory of social change. Again, he believed class to be considered as a tool for the explanation of changes in the total societies.
- As a scientific social thinker, Marx was never dependent on the *status-quo* position of a society. As against it, in his analysis of social reconstruction, he has placed a crucial emphasis on economic factors and has given less importance to the religious, political and other factors for social change. Therefore, he believed that man is the main instrument of social change and reduced man to the level of a helpless creature.
- Marx believed that for social reconstruction, revolution is an integral part. For him, any significant social changes in society are always the product of a revolution, because a revolution is the indispensable midwife of social change. Marx and Engels made it clear in the concluding part of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and wrote that the communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. Both of them openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Thus, Marx and Engels called for the development of a revolutionary class- consciousness and a strong

organization of the proletariat to fulfill their historic mission –a classless society.

- Marx believed that to establish a classless and stateless society, there is need of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He asserted that under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the classes cease to exist along with the oppressive mechanism of state and the state would undertake the fullest development of the new productive forces with maximum technological development. It will also include gearing up of productive processes to meet social needs instead of raising private profit and pave the way for the evolution of a classless society and the withering away of the state.
- Marx believed that for the development of the individual, the community, and the society, the establishment of communism will blossom from the soil of socialism, where there will be no new revolution needed to bring about communism.

Objective-4: To bring out a comparative study in the Social Reconstructive thoughts of both Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx. On the basis of this objective, the sixth chapter is presented. The title of this chapter is ‘**Comparative analysis of social reconstruction thoughts of Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx**’. The following points are covered under this chapter.

Similarities of Thoughts:

- The major common point of similarities betweenand Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx’s philosophy of social reconstruction is that both had an extreme concern for the suppressed and the oppressed, the resourceful and the

ignorant and the starving section of humanity. Both of them were concerned about the plight of the common men and realised the fact that there needs an urgent revolution which would uplift the condition of the common man.

- Both wanted to establish a social order, which would make the masses co-share the gifts of nature. Therefore, Śaṅkaradeva insisted upon adherence to *bhakti* or devotion for achieving this objective and Karl Marx did not care about the quality of the means but provided for achieving the end as quickly as possible.
- Both believed in the philosophy of egalitarianism, where Śaṅkaradeva took religion as a means for social upheaval and tried to assimilate it with Lord or God for social duties. Through *bhakti*, Śaṅkaradeva established a rational social order and was directly involved in eradicating the social injustice. He believed that when a man is enriched spiritually, the social condition automatically takes shape and social prejudices are wiped out. But, Karl Marx as a calm thinker and passionate fighter lays importance on matter and not the spiritual idea or the ultimate reality. He said that the world by its nature develops following the laws of the movement of matter. Hence, Marx believed that the different ideas and theories, which appeared in different periods of history, were merely a reflection of the material laws of society, where the matter is active and not passive and moves by an inner necessity of its nature. In his thoughts, he believed that production and the exchange of things produced is the basis of every social order. The ultimate cause of all social changes was not found in growing insight into the eternal truth and

justice but in the changes of modes of production and exchange. Therefore, Marx believed that the economic structure is the base, where political, philosophical, religious, cultural, ethical and other structures are determined by the economic foundation of society.

- Both Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx have a common destination- a free society, but the paths paved by them were different. Both of them conceived the course of action as per the socio-political climate of their times. Śaṅkaradeva was born in Assam at a time when costly religion was practised and Karl Marx has seen the state of exploitation under the system of capitalism and industrialization in the west.
- In Assam, the Neo-vaiṣṇavite movement under the leadership of Śaṅkaradeva paved a new way for the social life. Like Śaṅkaradeva, in the west under the inspiration of Marx's ideology, a new socialist movement has been started to establish a classless and stateless society. As a whole, both were the harbinger of hope to mankind. Both of these philosophers tried to change the existing state of humankind and to give them a better, justified and democratic society.

Dissimilarities of Thoughts:

The differences between the social reconstruction philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx are obvious in their own different ideas. Śaṅkaradeva puts forth the social reconstructive ideas about *bhakti*, spirituality, moral upliftment, individual liberty and democratization in social life. As against of Śaṅkaradeva, Karl Marx's ideas were about class war and its end through the dictatorship of the proletariat,

expropriation of land, mines and other material sources of wealth, state capitalism, nationalization of industries and regimentation of life and labour. But, in reality, both Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx fought for establishing equality, freedom, brotherhood, democracy and classless egalitarian society in their respective areas. The major differences of social reconstructive thoughts of both thinkers are as follows-

- Śaṅkaradeva in his social reconstructive thoughts represented a metaphysical idealism with the conception of an omnipresent fundamental spiritual reality. He inherited a strong faith in devotion or *bhakti* and in the existence of a spiritual power i.e. Lord *Kṛṣṇa*. But, on the other hand, Karl Marx represented dialectical materialism. As a rationalist, Marx condemned mysticism and faith and criticized idealistic philosophy.
- Śaṅkaradeva in his thoughts believed in ethical absolutism. He said that *Kṛṣṇa Bhakti* or devotion is a force of religion for self-purification. Śaṅkaradeva also said that religion is a moralizing force and the individuals in a society should have equal respect for all religion without caste and creed. On the other hand, Marx believed in ethical relativism. As an advocate of dialectical materialism, Marx considered religion to be a reactionary force. He said that religion as an ideology is fitted to production, organizations and relations of the time and an ideological instrument for the protection of private property. Therefore, Marx rightly noted that in the material world religion was not only the oppressed creature or the heart of a heartless world; it was also a spirit of the spiritless situation. Religion de-stressed not only the expression of real distress but at the same time, it was also a protest against the real distress.

- Śaṅkaradeva said that *bhakti* is the main weapon of soul force for salvation. His thought is essentially spiritualistic in nature. On the other hand, Marx said that there are no such things as self –suffering or change of heart. Spirituality was absent in the Marxian philosophy.
- Śaṅkaradeva worked for the inner-self to improve the social environment. He believed the individual as the starting point of self-regeneration, whereas Marx worked from the outside to the inner. Marx held that working class had to destroy the laws of bourgeoisie system and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat through revolution. He believed that matter is the ultimate reality and rejected the existence of spirituality and said spirituality is to be best a by-product of matter.
- Marx in his thoughts believed in violent revolution i.e. dictatorship of the proletariat to end an inequitable, unjust and anti-social order. But, Śaṅkaradeva believed in real spirituality and non-violence i.e. *bhakti* revolution to end the injustice and oppression of the weak by the strong through the fundamentals of moral law and devotion to Lord *Kṛṣṇa*.
- Śaṅkaradeva wanted to initiate the economic changes by *bhakti* .Though he prescribed for chanting or *Nāma*, he never asked the devotees to be idle. Rather mental devotion and physical labour should be done simultaneously .Karl Marx believed that the ultimate causes of all social changes were economic - the mode of production and exchange. He said that production is a process, which creates definite relations between man and man. The economic structure is the base and political, philosophical, religious, cultural, ethical and other

structures are determined by the economic foundation for reconstruction of society.

- Śaṅkaradeva was not a philosopher of history. As a social reformer, he accepted theological determinism. He believed that nothing could happen without devotion and sanction of God or Lord *Kṛṣṇa*. But, Karl Marx as a materialistic believed in the power of reason to create a better society. He believed in the power of man, society and science to satisfy all human wants.
- Śaṅkaradeva's social reconstructive philosophy took into consideration not only the ends but also the means through *bhakti* culture. But, Karl Marx did not care for the means, but wanted to achieve the ends as quickly as possible.
- Śaṅkaradeva preached the social reconstruction philosophy through *bhakti* and encourages people to love all creatures. As a reformer, he stood for democracy. But to establish a classless and stateless society, Karl Marx advocated hatred through proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie section of society. Marx did not believe democracy and supported violent revolution or class struggle for social change.
- Śaṅkaradeva social reconstruction movement is a movement by consent .It is a kind of silent and internal strategic movement that should be started within the prevailing socio-cultural setting .But Karl Marx's revolution is first a blood bath disobeying all accepted values and norms and ruins of the old structure from which a new society shall come into being.
- To achieve a classless society, Śaṅkaradeva in his philosophy recognizes 'the equality of all class and caste at the spiritual level and boldly asserted that a

devotee belonging to the lowest stratum is superior to a Brahmin without faith and devotion.’¹⁵ On the other hand, Karl Marx believed that to overthrow capitalism and social ownership, means of social production is necessary to achieve. He asserted that universal labour was very important because labour is the source of all wealth. Therefore, in one of his important works -*The Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx said that ‘the emancipation of labour demands the promotion of instruments of labour to the common property of society and co-operative regulation of the total labour with a fair distribution of the proceeds of labour.’¹⁶

7.5: Conclusion:

After a detailed study of the –‘**Social Reconstruction of Śaṅkaradeva-A Study in the light of Karl Marx**’, it is found that both of these philosophers share some commonalities regarding the major area under study ,though the means and methods may be different .Both Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx wanted to have a classless society in their lifetime, in which there would be no distinction between class, rich and poor and everyone would be appreciated for his or her qualities. Both believed that class consciousness has created a rift in society and thus resulted in exploitation.

In their social reconstruction thoughts, both the thinkers had a very soft corner for the down-trodden. Marx used to say that history is the witness of hitherto existing struggle, in which the labourers and the poor were being constantly exploited by the

¹⁵Sharma, N.S. (1966).*The Neo- Vaiṣṇavite Movement and the Satra Institution of Assam*.P.17

¹⁶Marx, Karl. (1875).*The Critique of the Gotha Programme*.P.20.

rich, who control the means of production. Marx, therefore, gave the slogan that workers of the world should unite and the depressed classes would come up for their rightful place in the society. Similarly, Śaṅkaradeva also had a soft corner for the down-trodden and the so-called lower caste and class in society. He said that everyone should be provided with equal opportunities for getting justice and the door of justice should not be closed to any particular class and caste, simply because of their inability to afford or to purchase justice.

No doubt, *prima facie* that there are lots of similarities between Śaṅkaradeva and Karl Marx's on the philosophy of social reconstruction. But there has also been lots of differences between the two as well. For the social reconstruction of society, Śaṅkaradeva had a deep faith in religion. He considered it to be a fruitful, positive weapon. On the other hand, Karl Marx believed that religion has no place in the reconstruction of a society. Marx said that religion is opium for the people and a method for making the people fatalist. He felt that it was a method through which capitalist tried to contain the poor.

Śaṅkaradeva had a deep faith in the existence of God, which for him was a mysterious powerful force guiding our affairs. On the otherhand, Marx did not believe at all in the existence of God and for him, a man was the architect of his own fate and there was no heavenly or superhuman power to guide the destiny of mankind.

Regarding the social reconstruction, Śaṅkaradeva philosophy was based on spiritualism and Marx's on materialism. For Śaṅkaradeva, an individual was only the means to an end, whereas according to Marx, the same was an end in itself. Śaṅkaradeva had very high consideration for the individual and other living

creatures in the universe. But, Marx asserted that the main purpose of human beings is to live and think rightly and to conquer his habits. Both, therefore, had altogether different approaches to the problems of individual liberty. While Śaṅkaradeva believed in rightful means for having lasting and durable ends, Marx did not believe in this idea of Śaṅkaradeva. He believed that ends justify the means and therefore, he said that the aim should be to achieve an end and it does not matter whether the means for achieving those ends are right or wrong.

Śaṅkaradeva, in his social reconstructive philosophy, had a moral view about the evil-doer and the evil. He believed that one should hate the evil and not the evil-doer because the evil-doer is a product of an evil and unhealthy social system. He writes-

*śatru mitra sava kariyo sama/
ehise kṛṣṇara bhakti uttama/¹⁷*

It means- to treat equally friends and foes is the best way of performing devotion to *Kṛṣṇa*. Through such words, Śaṅkaradeva urged for developing the qualities of mercy and tolerance which are equally important for the personal and collective development of an individual as well as of a society.

On the otherhand, Marx believed that both the evil and the evil-doer should be hated. Therefore, he said that he hated both the capital and the capitalist. In his thoughts, there was no place for the capitalist because they represented an evil institution and as long as it existed, social justice could not be achieved.

¹⁷*Kīrtana-ghoṣā, Prahlāda- carita*, v. 392.

Śaṅkaradeva was a very strong and ardent believer of non- violence. For him, one should be non-violent both in thought and action. He believed that non-violence was not only a method of religion, but also a creed for social reconstruction. Rejection of violence and opting for bloodless resolution of problems has been identified as the most progressive means to initiate peace .From this standpoint, Śaṅkaradeva was undoubtedly a preacher of one of the mostly valued elements of social reconstruction. On the otherhand, Marx believed that there was no harm in using violence for achieving the ends. He suggested that violence should not be used as the primary method for securing the ends, but demanded all purposes and forces to be used until capitalist order or evil institution could be brought to an end. Marx, therefore, stressed on violence rather than non-violence for reconstruction of the society.

Śaṅkaradeva does not believe in embarrassing the opponent and always intended that the opponent should be made to realize his mistake. Here Śaṅkaradeva is found to believe in a win-win philosophy of conflict resolution where repairing of the intent is given priority than giving penalties. But, Karl Marx believed that the enemy should be put in a most embarrassing position so that they were obliged to agree to the demands put forth by them.

From the above analyses, it can be concluded that both Śaṅkaradeva's and Karl Marx's *prima facie* agree on certain basic principles for social reconstruction, but as they proceed, the differences also widen up. It is very evident that both do not agree at all on the means for achieving the ends set forth by them; Śaṅkaradeva's approach on the reconstruction of the society was multi-dimensional, combining spiritualism, religion, economy, art and culture for efficient functioning and development of a

healthy society, whereas Karl Marx's approach was economic in nature and emphasizing only on the economic upliftment of the worker sections of society. Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy of social reconstruction combined with spiritualism is altogether different from Karl Marx, but both the leaders wanted an egalitarian society to achieve greater benefits of the human being.