

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SOCIO-
ETHICAL THOUGHTS OF ŚRĪMANTA
ŚAṆKARADEVA AND KABĪR DĀS**

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Chapter –VII

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

7.0 Conclusions :

After careful study of the life and works of Śaṅkaradeva and Kabīr Dās and careful analysis of their religion, literature, culture, it has been found that both the saints have significantly contributed to the society their unique socio-ethical thoughts. The impact of the socio-ethical thought of Śaṅkaradeva is more prominent than that of Kabīr Dās on the people of the society. There is vivid impact of Śaṅkaradeva on the lives of Assamese people for more than five and a half century. The socio-ethical thought of Śaṅkaradeva has greatly influenced the lives of Assamese people in all aspects. Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* movement has enriched the Assamese people morally and spiritually. As a result of the ethical values of the religion and culture as propagated by Śaṅkaradeva, the people of Assam became more humane and cultured in comparison to the Pre-Śaṅkaradeva period. The impact of socio-ethical thoughts of Kabīr Dās is seen on some sections of the people of North India and Odisha. The all-embracing and versatile teachings of Kabīr Dās have been accepted by people of all religions and thus socio-ethical principles of the society have been given a solid foundation. As a result, the people of the society have become more amicable, tolerant to religions and morally strong. Kabīr's influence on the society is still visible in some sections of the people. The impacts of Śaṅkaradeva on the people of Assam are very much alive and can be seen in all sections of the society.

7.1 Findings of the Study:

The findings of the present study have been summarized as follows :

- (i) The aims of Śaṅkaradeva and Kabīr were to reform the society so that all sections of the people could live amicably and lead an ideal life. The ultimate objective of both the saints was to rescue the people from darkness to light, from chaos to peace. They wanted to unite all people belonging to different castes and creeds into one plane. However, their approaches were different.
- (ii) Although the religions propagated by Śaṅkaradeva and Kabīr Dās were different, their main objective was the same. In fact, Kabīr did not preach any definite religion; he preached universal messages to the people of all religions. Both the saints wanted to uplift the downtrodden people of the society and to treat all of them equally with the so-called upper caste people and people belonging to different religions. Both of them gave their message to all people irrespective of caste, creed and status. They even included muslims in their order. This humanistic approach uplifted the society morally and ethically to a higher level.
- (iii) All the people of the society irrespective of caste, creed and religion got a great positive signal from these two saints to live under one roof. This was the greatest contribution to society which was highly caste-ridden specially in the medieval India.
- (iv) *Sadācāra* or good conduct is very much important in the *Eka Śaraṇa Nāma Dharma* of Śaṅkaradeva. Cleanliness – both physical and mental is the basis of his faith. The prayer house established by Śaṅkaradeva is called *Nāmghar*. One has to take bath and wear clean cloth before entering *Nāmghar*. The *Nāmghar* is also kept clean.

Every activity performed in *Nāmghar* is hygienic in nature. There are set of rules in every activity in the *Nāmghar*. Such ethical norms followed in the *Nāmghar* educate the common people about the health and hygiene. Listening to the reading of religious books educates the people through different stories with the lesson of moral principles and endowed with spiritual thought. The religious scriptures written by Śaṅkaradeva are full of ethical, moral and spiritual knowledge. All the people of the society can take part in such prayers and discourses, of course, following certain set rules in the *Nāmghar*. Thus, the religion of Śaṅkaradeva is endowed with socio-ethical thoughts which help the people to lead a peaceful life. On the other hand, the *Dohās* of Kabīr are sung in company of common people irrespective of castes and creeds and thereby they impart an ethical value to the society.

(v) The religion of Śaṅkaradeva emphasis on the need of ethical life as an essential condition of spiritual realisation and *Bhakti* leads us to that path. *Nāmghars* and *Thāns* are the places where people learn to lead an ethical life. These institutions teach people the lessons of discipline and self surrender. The lessons of the scriptures cleanse the minds of the people and as a result, brotherhood is developed among the devotees. Kabīr's *Bhajans* also encourage the humanistic feelings among the devotees.

(vi) The *Śaṅkarī* music including songs, dance and dramas are endowed with moral spiritual values. The *Bargīts* of Śaṅkaradeva are full of spiritual thoughts. The presentation of these particular classes of songs in definite *Rāga* accompanied by the instruments *Khol* and *Tāl* is very attractive and such songs cleanse the minds of the people and inculcate the ethical values in them.

The dramas of Śaṅkaradeva are based on the stories of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. They are also based on moral and ethical values. The dance introduced by Śaṅkaradeva is based on the stories of Kṛṣṇa, who is endowed with all heavenly attributes which attract the devotees. These dances also spread the spiritual wisdom among the people. The main objective of all these is to instill devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa, whose noble qualities purify the mind and heart of the people and thereby impart the spiritual feelings among them.

Similarly, Kabīr's songs played with *Ektārā* and *Khartāl* are performed in public gathering and they give immense pleasure thereby enrich the minds of the people with moral values.

(vii) The religious festivals related to the religion and culture of these two saints encourage the people to cultivate good will and fellow feelings among themselves. These are some of the positive impacts of the socio-ethical thoughts on the people of the society.

(viii) The literature of Śaṅkaradeva are also full of moral and spiritual values. The *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* is the *magnum opus* of Śaṅkaradeva's literary works. This scripture has been exercising tremendous impact on the people of Assam. This work is a storehouse of moral and ethical principles. Even the formalities maintained in recitation of the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* impart a sense of discipline and morality. The literature composed by Śaṅkaradeva propagates the feeling of good will and universal brotherhood among the people. Another scripture written in Assamese verses is the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* which is the storehouse of *Bhakti*. In the path of *Bhakti*, all the noble qualities such as non-violence, love, compassion, love for nature etc. are there. This scripture propagates the

message of universal brotherhood and humanistic approach towards all kinds of living creatures.

Similarly, the literature written on Kabīr Dās is also full of good will and humanistic values.

(ix) Śaṅkaradeva advocated that through devotion to Kṛṣṇa one can eliminate the unethical and immoral thoughts from the minds of the people. He prescribed chanting and listening to the good attributes of Kṛṣṇa in the company of devotees of Kṛṣṇa. Such practices enable a devotee to purify his or her mind and remove the negative feelings from his or her mind, which are unethical and immoral.

Similarly, the chanting of and listening to the *Bhajans* and songs of Kabīr Dās elevate the minds of the people from debased state to peaceful state, thereby make them morally sound. The chanting and listening to the recitation and singing have universal appeal and they touch every human heart and as a result, the people become morally and ethically sound.

(x) The traditional performing arts of Śaṅkaradeva such as *Bhāonā* (originally *Aṅkīyā Bhāonā*) have great ethical and moral impact on the minds of the people of the society.

Kabīr Dās on his part, has not written any religious scripture, but his poems and songs are known as *Sākhī* and *Bhajan* which were his verbal literature, that prescribe human culture, rules and regulations for an ideal human life. Kabīr's *Sākhī*, *Sabad* and *Ramainī* are great contributions to eliminate the bad elements of our culture and religious rules. All these uphold the moral and ethical principles of the society.

(xi) The contributions of Śaṅkaradeva include vast and diverse areas like literature, culture, religion, different art forms such as performing art, handicrafts, art on fabrics, sculpture, music including dance, drama and songs; establishment of social institutions like *Thān*, *Nāmghar*, *Satras* (originally *Thān*) etc.

Thus, the impact of Śaṅkaradeva on the Assamese society is all embracing and is much more prominent than that of Kabīr Dās on the people of some parts of North India. Śaṅkaradeva has given new outlook about life, new culture, religion, literature, and religious institutions which are still living and sustaining. Śaṅkaradeva was a great litterateur, musician, dramatist, artist, dancer and a great social reformer. The impact of Śaṅkaradeva is very much visible in every Assamese Hindu family and every village where there is one *Nāmghar* besides numerous *satras* and other cultural institutions established for disseminating the ideals of Śaṅkaradeva.

In conclusion, we can say that both Śaṅkaradeva and Kabīr Dās contributed greatly towards building a new society based on humanistic approaches in the medieval India when the people were engulfed with superstitions and ignorance.

7.2 Suggestions for Further Research :

The researcher likes to put forward the following areas for further study:

- (1) The contributions of Śaṅkaradeva and Kabīr Dās to the society should be compared taking into consideration of all the aspects such as social, educational, cultural, spiritual and moral.
- (2) Study may be undertaken to investigate the influences and conditions that moulded the lives and works of Śaṅkaradeva and Kabīr Dās regarding their humanistic approaches and philosophy of an egalitarian Indian society.