

**Bhakti Movement: Love  
Devotion and Socio-Political  
Implications**

**(Proceedings of Seminar)**

**(Vol- III)**

**Editors**

Dr Abul Foyes Md Malik  
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**Bhakti Movement: Love, Devotion and Socio-Political  
Implications (Vol- III)**

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## Editorial

Bhakti Movement is primarily a religious movement with significant socio-cultural implications that flourished in South India during the sixth and seventh centuries AD. The movement gradually spread throughout India. Tukaram in Maharashtra, Mirabai in Rajasthan, the Sufis in Punjab, Kabir in Uttar Pradesh, and Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva in Assam are just a few of the Bhakti Movement's major saints. Although, the ways of religiosity were slightly different amongst the Bhakti saints, yet the basic character and motivation of the movement remained unchanged. Instead of Casteism dominated by Brahmanical priesthood, excessive ritualism as the ways of worship, the advocates of the movement believed that the best way to reach God is through love and devotion. The Bhakti saints communicated to the public through devotional songs, dances and other ways of art and culture. They believed that God is one and That can be reached through love and devotion.

In Assam, near the end of the fifteenth century, Srimanta Sankaradeva (1449-1568) founded the Bhakti Movement. His disciples aided him, the most notable of whom was Sri Sri Madhavadeva (1489-1596). Sankaradeva taught Neo-Vaisnavism as his religion. It was based on the Bhagavata Purana, or Bhagavata for short. As a result, his religion is referred to as both Neo-Vaisnavism and Bhagavati Dharma. It is known as Ekasarana Dharma because it believes in only one God Lord Krishna, a manifestation of Lord Vishnu. It is also known as the Naama Dharma because it emphasizes Naama ("quoting God's name") as a way of expressing devotion to God. Ekasarana Naama Dharma is another name for the religion. Because Sankaradeva is regarded as a "Mahapurusa" ("Great Person"), the religion is also known as Mahapurusiya Dharma.

In each form of Bhakti Movement the ways to reach God are open to everyone and there are no strict theocratic laws to follow. Bhakti movement aimed to teach people simple ways of life, religious equality for all regardless of caste or creed, non-violence, and rejecting the sacrifice of living beings in the name of religion. The complex and elaborate systems of rituals and practices associated with the propitiation of various gods and goddesses, as well as the exploitation of the

commoners in all possible ways by elaborate ritualism and the caste system have no place in the Bhakti Movement.

In this way, the Bhakti movement was a significant religious movement that aimed to bring religious reforms to all strata of the society by adopting the method of unconditional devotion to achieve salvation. The ideals and the principles propagated by the Bhakti Saints immensely contributed to the reformation of the religious and social scenario of Medieval India. The contributions of the Bhakti Movement in the sphere of spirituality are known universally. But the fact that remains rarely explorable is that the ideals of the Bhakti Movement impacted the freedom movement of India to a significant extent. The ideals of personal devotion without any condition, communal and religious harmony, religious tolerance, equality of mankind, a crusade against the caste hierarchy in the Hindu society, the promotion of vernacular language, emphasis on Karma without the expectation of any reward and emphasis on self-respect and individuality left a formidable influence on the freedom struggle of India, though not explicitly, yet implicitly. The principle of love and devotion to a single God nurtured by the Bhakti Movement encouraged the marginalized sections of the society to feel that they too can form a significant part of the main stream society. Bhakti Movement instilled a true sense of unity and nationalism among the Indian masses in the following ways:

- a. It emphasized the unity of all Indians, regardless of their caste or social status.
- b. It promoted the idea of a common Indian culture, based on the shared values of devotion to God and love for one's fellow human beings.
- c. It challenged the authority of the so-called upper castes, and it gave voice to the concerns of the lower castes and women.
- d. It inspired people to work for a more just and equitable society.

### **Editors'**

Dr. A. F. Md Malik  
Dr. Smita Rani Saikia

## CONTENTS

- Chapter –1 Love and Longing Ache: Analysing Themes, Motifs and Poetic Style in Thumri Lyrics/Dr Anurag Ambasta, Dr Aalia Khan/9
- Chapter–2 An Ethnographic Approach towards the Life and Teachings of Lord Caitanya Maha Prabhu, and Its Implications to the Present World/ Tamoghna Mandal/18
- Chapter–3 Educational philosophy of Srimanta Sankardeva in Bhakti Movement/Arnika Baruah, Kankana Borgohain/32
- Chapter–4 Bhakti Movement and Heartfulness Spiritual Practice for Human Well-being Mallepalli. Bhaskar/40
- Chapter–5 A Critical Study on the Confluence of the Contributions of Kabir and Sankardeva as Prominent Figures of Bhakti movement/ Kasturika Aniruddha, Rituparna Bordoloi/57
- Chapter –6 Sri Chaitanya’s Concept of Bhakti: A Study/ Sukanta Ghosh/66
- Chapter –7 Neo Vaishnavism and Its Practice by the Assamese People in Today’s Perspective/Dr. Pankaj Luchan Gogoi/68
- Chapter –8 Bhakti Movement in Medieval India: A Study on Kabir’s Political and Social Ideas/Sk Abdul Amanullah/72
- Chapter –9 Understanding Secular Ideologies of the Bhakti Movement/Ms. Divyashree Borah/79

- Chapter–10 Bhakti Literature as Therapeutic Narratives: Healing and Transformation in Religious Texts/ Bhaswati Baruah/86
- Chapter –11 The Birhors: A Unique Blend of Karma Marga and Bhakti Marga/Dr. S. Ejaz Ahmad/95
- Chapter–12 Ink of Devotion: The Bhakti Movement’s Penetrating Strokes on Indian Literary Canvas/ Upakul Patowary/ 103
- Chapter–13 অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱধৰ্ম প্ৰসাৰণৰ ভিত্তি আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা  
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# Love and Longing Ache: Analysing Themes, Motifs and Poetic Style in Thumri Lyrics

Dr Anurag Ambasta  
Dr Aalia Khan

## Introduction to Thumri

Aesthetically, a musical form is the internal organization within a work of art, where words convey emotions and expressions. In Hindustani music, the compositional form of Thumri exemplifies this concept. In Thumri, the tone primarily sets the tune, meaning the emotive impact of the words relies on how they are rendered with various nuances and embellishments integral to Thumri singing. A single word can express different emotions depending on the intensity of the notes, pauses, and breath control used in its delivery.

Thumri is a popular form of Indian music and, although it doesn't strictly adhere to the rigorous rules of pure classical music, it is classified as "light classical music." However, this does not imply that it is easy to understand. In fact, all compositional forms of Hindustani music are interconnected, with each distinguished by its unique approach and execution of the raga. Thumri is recognized for its tender appeal and gentle treatment of the raga, which aligns with its lyrical content and the treatment of words during performance. This subtle expression is a key aspect of Thumri.

Thumri is a vocal genre in North Indian (Hindustani) art music. It was traditionally used in songstress-courtesan

performance, in the early nineteenth century as an accompaniment to interpretive dance, and later as a lyrical and emotive song form. This work focuses on the lyrics of *thumri*, a vocal genre in the North India art music tradition. In this musical tradition there are three major vocal genres:

- **Dhrupad** (relatively the oldest and the most austere form, is now primarily appreciated by connoisseurs)
- **Khayal** (emerged in the eighteenth century to provide a lighter counterpoint to dhrupad, has become the dominant vocal form in North Indian art music) and
- **Thumri** (often labeled as “semi-classical” music, is lighter and more accessible than both dhrupad and khayal, and adheres less strictly to the rules of rag).

All the three genres have been in major studies on musicology, and hence researched extensively. Indurama Srivastava’s musicological work (1980) on dhrupad briefly touches on its texts, while Françoise Delvoye “Nalini” (1987) and Lucy Rosenstein (1997) have analysed the poetry of dhrupad texts, focusing on their linguistic and poetic aspects rather than their performance context. The dynamic interplay between performance and text in dhrupad has not been explored in these studies. Khayal, on the other hand, has been thoroughly examined in musicological studies by Wim van der Meer (1980) and Bonnie Wade (1984), who discuss the thematic content of khayal texts but do not delve into linguistic analysis. This is partly because khayal lyrics are often viewed as sets of syllables for melodic improvisation rather than semantically meaningful phrases. Thumri has been the subject of significant studies by Peter Manuel (1989) and Shatrughna Shukla (1983), with Manuel’s work heavily based on Shukla’s research. These studies include chapters on the linguistic aspects of thumri compositions but demonstrate a limited understanding of Braj Bhasa and Avadhi, and hence this study is required. The primary focus of the paper is to analyse Thumri’s textual closely.

### **Origin of Thumri**

There are different views given about the origin of this beautiful musical form. Thumri flourished in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,



when the aristocracy of Lucknow favoured it over the more serious offerings of *dhrupad* and *khayal*. And the most acceptable theory in this respect which is widely accepted and believed in the present time goes back to the royal court of the nawab of Avadh, Wajid Ali Shah (who ruled from 1846 to 1856). At times, Shah is accredited with having invented the form when he was exiled to Matia Bridge in Calcutta by the British. However, there are many historical evidences, claiming the existence and practice of the form even before Wajid Ali Shah. If we go back and look into the historical perspective, Bharata, in the 32nd chapter of *Natyashastra* (300 BC and 200 AD) deals with the verbal-tonal rhythmic compositional patterns and talks about five types of *Dhruva*, which gives rise to colourful delight and self-engrossing happiness. This type is specially allotted to the delineation of “*sringar-rasa*”. Matanga, when discussing *Prabandha*, speaks of *Nadavati*, which is specially fit for “*sringar-rasa*”. (Sharma 75). Nonetheless, the contributions made by Wajid Shah is immense. His composition of *thumri* was influential in assuring *thumri*'s prominence in nineteenth century musical history. However, following the exile of the nawab, and the subsequent consolidation of the colonial rule, this form suffered badly as there was a change in the patronage structure, and in the wake, there was a gradual decline in the courtesan tradition as well.

The oldest form of *thumri* is called *bandis ki thumri*, in which the composition tends to be ‘bound’: there is little scope for melodic elaborations, and improvisations are primarily rhythmic, suitable to dance. The text for this form of *thumri* is usually narrative in nature, providing the framework for the storytelling in dance performance. *Thumri* as a dance form was used as *tavayaf* performance, which was looked down upon as mere debauchery. As a result, there were private salons or the *Kothas* offering *thumri* gradually declined, and there emerged a new and the most prominent form called *bolbanav thumri*. This form of *thumri* has an association with Banaras musical Gharana; the speciality of this form is that it uses phrases extracted from the text as a vehicle for melodic improvisation. Moreover, phrases are reparative, offering different shades of emotional meaning. The text of this form of *thumri* has a

very strong gripping emotional hue, which is ample for melodic elaboration. *Bol banav thumri* emerged at the backdrop of Anti-Nach Campaign of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it flourished in through the reformist and the educationist era of India.

In the private space of the *mujras*, the courtesan performed thumri with appropriate emphasis on emotional expression, voicing the heroine's longing for her lover as she (tavayaf or the professional women dancer) charmed and enticed her male audience; in the public sphere of music; the same desire easily lent itself to a devotional interpretation when the content demanded it. Indeed, the distinction between eroticism and devotion in North India art form is indeterminate, and therefore the content of thumri can variously be used.

### **Thumri: Text and Context**

Thumri is usually described as being sung from a woman's perspective, narrated in the first person; sometimes thumri is contrasted to the Urdu *gazel*, which has a male narrator who is also the protagonist. (Manuel 1989: 18) In thumri the precedent is likely to be located in devotional verse, in which there is a long-standing tradition of the lyrical heroine expressing the pain of separation from her lover, as well as the joy of union. Radha in *the Gitagovinda* voices such sentiments in the sixth verse of the thirteenth song:

‘The sweet spring night torments my loneliness

—

Some other girl now enjoys Hari's favor.

Whom can I seek for refuge here?

My friend's advice deceives me.’ (Stoler Miller 1977:98)

Likewise, the poet-saint Mirabai, in her verse in Braj Bhasa, describes her state of separation in imagery similar to what we encounter in thumri tradition:

Without a vision of you my eyes have begun  
suffering;

Since you left, my lord, I have found no comfort’  
(Snell 1991b:106-107)

Rahim also has the same theme as his lyrical heroine expresses the same feelings:

‘Without seeing him there is no repose for these eyes;  
each and every moment passes like an age, O friend’ (Snell 1991b:126-127).

The convention of the first-person female speaker is also an important aspect of folk song and literature, most notably the *virahabrahmnds* tradition, which centres female lamenting the absence of her mate. The lamentation is always there against the backdrop of the changing seasons. The change of season is very symbolical here as the female speaker has been expecting the come-back of her mate with the change of season, but, unfortunately the mate does not come back, and hence lamentation looms. Although this genre has its provenance in the folk tradition, it has been a popular part of Indo-Aryan literatures from the fourteenth century onwards (Vaudeville 1986:32). Vaudeville suggests that many instances of the folk variety of *barahmasa* songs are likely to have been composed by women, but the more literary exemplars were (and continue to be) written by men who followed the custom of inserting their name in the last line of the poem (1986:x)

The first-person narrative voice in *thumri* tradition is very frequent, however there are few works in *bandis thumri*, which do not expressly use the first-person narration. Also, like *bolbanav thumri*, it is not always evident that the narrator is female. There are some instances of *thumri* texts with a third-person speaker, although very meagre. In fact, some texts are ambiguous to identify the gender of the narrator, but context helps understand the narrative situation and gender identity:

*Dekhebinnahin chain*  
*Suratiyaan II*  
*Din nahin chain, raatnahinnindiyaan*  
*Talpat hain din ratiyaan II*

Without seeing, there is no peace,  
Oh! my beloved!

Neither day brings peace, nor does night bring  
sleep,  
Just yearn and yearn  
Day and night. (Translation ours)

In some cases, the gender identity is revealed through narrator's  
corresponding relationship with the third person of the lyric. Here  
the third person Shaam helps reveal the narrator as Radha Rani:

*Kaise kejaavu Shyam rokedagariya ||*  
*Barabas karpakarat*  
*Mukh chum chumlet*  
*Laa j letdekho beech bajariya Shyam ||*  
*Nit ki raarkahoonkaise Binda*  
*Naahinbasutyajoon tori nagariya Shyam ||*

How can I go!  
Shyam blocks my way  
Grabs me and kisses me,  
Embarrassing amidst everyone.  
How can I speak of my daily longing, O Binda,  
If I don't dwell, I abandon your city, Shyam.  
(Translation ours)

*Baje baisiya tan rasbheeni re*  
*Suni sarvantere chit bhayouchhang*  
*Mujhserahiyonajay*  
*Bhavarisikardiyo*  
*Murli ki dhunsunvaayekahaan Brij*  
*Karat kalolan sab sakhiyan mil*  
*Aaiaaiaai re sitar chalat aur gaaye sab*  
*gunisaariratiya ||*

The melody of the flute resounds and charms  
It touches my ears, captivating my heart and mind  
Elated I stand,

But cannot bear it,  
AS it makes me crazy almost like a wandering  
bee.

Kanha plays the flute, enticing his friends of Braj

—

All get together and frolic.  
They (Sakhiyan) all tuned up,  
As the sitār plays  
And they sing the whole night. (Translation  
ours)

*Baatachalat mori chundar rang daari re*  
*Aise to be dardi Banwaari II*  
*Aise tonidardaratnakaahu son jabar*  
*Apnidheegadheengi karat hai langar*  
*He more Ram, he more Ram, he more Ram*  
*Itanedinanmosekabahoonnaatkyo*  
*Aavatjaatkunjanmeinkunwar Shyam*  
*Aavat Phaagunmatwaarbhayodekhdekh*  
*He more Ram, he more Ram, he more Ram II*

Going along the road  
My cruel beloved, Banwari—  
poured colour on my chunri stole.  
So fearless is he  
That he fears not anybody.  
Forcefully he does what is does!  
Oh!  
My Lord!  
We met earlier also but  
He, my prince Shayam never did so ever before  
Phagun, I guess,  
Has made him intoxicated  
Oh my god! oh my god! oh my god! (Translation  
ours)

With the analysis above, it becomes very apparent that the narrative voice in thumri is almost always in the first-person

feminine. This element of the first-person feminine voice is also very common in devotional poetry; Barahmasa is another genre, which is written exclusively from a female perspective.

### **Thumri and the Theme of *Virha***

One of the primary subjects in Thumri is Viraha. Metaphysically speaking, Viraha expresses the soul's desire for unity with the divine or the longings of lover for her beloved. The symbols of separation used in thumri arouse the yearning for intimacy and oneness with beloved or husband:

*Koyaliya kook sunaavesakhiri*  
*Mohebirahasataavepiyabinkachhunasuhaave*  
*Nis adhiyaarikaaribijurichamakjiya mora*  
*karvaaneII*  
*Itni binti mori kahiyojaunson*  
*Un binjiya mora niksojaat ab*  
*Umagejoban par mora saiyagharnaayeII*

The cuckoo sings and reminds me of him  
O friend!  
Longing aches haunts me  
Nothing pleases me without him.  
The thunder and lightning of this dark night  
Alarms me and anxious hovers all around  
Go, my friend and tell him this: without him my  
heart is steadily sinking  
And my youthful body and heart go unattended  
(Translation ours)

Similarly, in the Krishna tradition, Radha goes through viraha when she can't meet Kanha at night. The virha that Radha undergoes is sometimes because of her own situation at home, and, at times, it is because of the absence of Krishna from Braj. When Krishna goes to Mathura to live with the hunchbacked woman Kubja and later when he lives in Dwarka, Radha receives viraha from the gopis. Consequently, the Krishna tradition contains multiple motifs associated with viraha, each depicting the heroine(s) in a distinct state of mind. While the idea of viraha

appears in both bandis and bolbanav thumri, it is mostly found in the latter. In the former, it usually happens alongside descriptions of the rainy season—traits reminiscent of the barahmasa genre, which depicts the heroine’s suffering without her beloved in relation to the varying seasons of the year.

### **Conclusion**

In fact, Thumri is a timeless example of the rich musical legacy of India, which has its roots in the romantic-devotional writings of the bhakti movement. For decades, audiences have been enthralled by its soul-stirring melodies and sad lines, which give profound insights into the human experience through themes of love, longing, and separation. The complexity of Thumri’s themes has been explored in this essay, along with how these universal feelings are deftly incorporated into the song’s lyrics. Through an examination of the effects of language subtleties, performance circumstances, and geographical variety, we have shown the dynamic evolution of Thumri as a cultural artifact. We have attempted to shed light on the ways that Thumri lyrics reflect and influence the socio-cultural environment across many historical periods and musical traditions through an interdisciplinary lens that integrates musicology, literary analysis, and cultural studies. In the end, our research contributes to the scientific conversation about Thumri while also honoring its lasting legacy as a lively representation of India’s emotional and cultural environment.

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# **An Ethnographic Approach towards the Life and Teachings of Lord Caitanya Maha Prabhu, and Its Implications to the Present World**

**Tamoghna Mandal**

## **Introduction**

Born in the year 1407 Sakabda (corresponding to February 1486, by the Christian calendar) at Sridham Mayapur, in the city of Navadvîpa in Bengal, on the PhâlguniPûrnimâ evening, Lord Chaitanya's Krishna consciousness movement is to bring back all living entities back to their original identity. (Every word spoken by Lord Krishna on the battlefield has been deeply followed by Sri Chaitanya Maha Prabhu with purity and sanctity from the Bhramha-Madhy-Gaudiya sampradaya who established the Gaudiya Vaishnavism following the linear descending of Madhwacharya's Dvaita philosophy (Atma and Super soul are different) to his Achinta—Ved-Avedtattwa (philosophy) difference between quality and quantity (god and its energy ). Madhava sampradaya is one of the 4 authentic Vaishnav sampradayas (Sri, Rudra, Kumara, and Vishnu amongst the others). He came to the material world only to give Krishna bhakti which Sri Krishna couldn't give. Krishna gives material wealth and affliction or liberation but pure devotional service, he keeps it hidden (Adi Lila, CC 8:18)) The loving affairs of Radha and Krishna are the transcendental manifestations of the Lord's internal pleasure-giving potency. Although Radha and Krishna



are of different spiritual entities or bodies, they are one with their identity. (bhakti marga) Now these two transcendental identities choose to unite again in the kali yuga in the form of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Maha Prabhu. “I bow down to him, who has manifested himself with the sentiment and complexion of Srimati Radhamani although Krishna himself” – (Prem Thakur Sri Gaura Hari)

The concept of the bhakti movement is the acceptance of the Soul, and we are being the eternal servants of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Every living entity is originally a spirit soul part and parcel of Krishna and therefore our original constitutional position is as pure as God’s. (Matchless gift). Krishna spoke –

“Mamaivamso- jiva -loke

Jiva Bhuta Sanatana

Manah sasthanindriyani

prakiti-sthanikarsati” (BG 15:7)

“The living entities in this conditional world are my Fragmental parts, and they are eternal. But due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses which include the mind” (BG-15.7) (matchless gift). The composition of God’s body and the eternal spiritual body is the same—spiritual so it is proven that in uncontaminated form, we possess a body that is as good but as rain falls in the ground and becomes dirty similarly, we living entities are manipulated when we are born in this material world by the external material energy of Krishna called -Maya or Illusion. Lord Chaitanya Maha Prabhu’s teachings can only be understood with purity, humility, and a mind of servitude to develop Rupanuga-bhakti, the path followed by Srila Rupa Goswami a staunch follower and most humble disciple of Sri Chaitanya Maha Prabhu. (Bhajan Rahasya ) Lord Sri Caitanya Maha Prabhu, the great protagonist, and advocator of the pure Love of God is also considered the father of the World’s first congregational chanting (harinaam Sankirtana) which is chanting of the holy name of the Lord(Krishna) on streets and roads villages and places. He did attain his spiritual success mostly in South India so that all living creatures can be liberated, which is the only way to attain peace and go back to the Godhead by which we will never return in this material world of miseries and

unhappiness, (“Dukhalayamaseshwatam”) arrived Himself at He preached dharma is not being Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Muslim or any other caste and creed but it’s about believing in Universal brotherhood under one God as one true family feeling the most pristine love of Supreme Godhead experienced by Minute particles of spiritual substance -the Jiva—is Jaiva -dharma. (teachings of Lord Chaitanya)

Sri Krishna Chaitanya Maha Prabhu is “Sachal Jaganath” or living Bigraha (Living Deity) who had taught us how to achieve “Mahaprema” (complete and highest form of pure love for God ) and Lord. Sri Chaitanya Maha Prabhu is the embodiment of Gambira... which means Seriousness and deeply personifies all human beings by focusing on Pure bhakti (devotion) without any animosity to reach God. For this, he had prescribed certain rules to reach the stage of purity.

The Sastric evidential proof of Maha Prabhu being the Lord (God) There have been many sastras and Vedic scriptures taken into consideration which are preserved to Study the Vaishnava literature and philosophy which directly and indirectly state the advent of lord Maha Prabhu in the beginning of kali -Yuga (the age of doom) where he will appear and show mercy of the Jiva’s. Adi purana, agni Purana, Bhagavata Purana, bhavisyapruana, Brahma puruana, Garuda Purana, Kurma Purnana, Markendeya Purana, Matsya Purana, Narada Purana, Nrsimha purana, Padma purana, Vamana Purana, Varahs Purna, Vayu purana, Srimad Bhagabatam, Vishnu Sahasra- Nama, Krisna-yamala -tantra, Ananta Samhita, and well as Upanishads, and other Vedic Sources. (Prema Thakura Sri Gaura Hari pg -11-20)

### **Advocating the Supreme Authoritarian principle approach by Lord Chaitanya**

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in his whole life had described the process of Pure devotional service in his unbending and uncompromising way which begins the truth about the living entity and the superexcellence of devotional service. (Grace)

He had always refuted ideas and spiritual invocation developed through mental speculation and mystic *yoga*. (*yoga*- the process of physical and mental exercises that are intended to give control

over body and mind). (Teaching of Lord Kapila). Lord Chaitanya had deeply focused and preached that all the living entity is recommended to accept the path of devotional service. It has been told by Ac Bhakti Vedanta Srila Prabhupada the most revered Acharya of Spreading Chaitanya Maha Prabhu's teachings all over the world and know as the Father of the ISKCON remarked that the speculative method of the so-called *jnanis* is considered useless. An intelligent person should abandon the processes of *karma-kâG*

*a*, (path of activities) *jnana-kaG*

*a* (path of knowledge), and mystic *yoga*. One should give up all these useless processes and take seriously the path of Krsna consciousness through devotional service. In this way, one's life will be successful. Prabupada mentions that if one takes to serious Krsna consciousness, then even an agitated soul due to having previously practiced mental speculation and mysticism like practice of Yogas, he will be saved by Lord Krsna Himself. The fact is that devotional service is bestowed by the blessings of a pure devotee (*samahatmasu-durlabha%*). (Bhakti Marga)

A pure devotee is the supreme transcendentalist, and one must receive his mercy for one's dormant K[cGa consciousness to be awakened. One must associate with pure devotees. If one has unflinching and unwavering faith in the words of a purified soul, pure devotional service will awaken. (Kr%cGadasaKaviraja Gosvami)

Several interviews personal discussions and room conversations recorded during this research phase amongst the vaishnavites and stalwart acharyas who are practicing and preaching Krishna consciousness in Iskcon and Gaudiya math came to a common methodical approach of Lord Chaitanya and deeply believe that Maha Prabhu-focused on 4 prime activities of human existence and to discard all other works. These are 1 Pious activity, 2 Non-violence, 3 Sense control, and 4 regulations for Vidhi bhakti stage (stage of regulative principles) which would then lead to sadhana bhakti (stage of ..... ) and then finally the stage of Prema-bhakti stage (stage of pure unbending love for God) which are not separated from devotional service in its pure form. It has been

proven by the previous acharyas of the Vaishnav disciples succession and by one engaged in devotional service, all good qualities follow the state above (piousness, nonviolence, sense control, regulation) One does not have to cultivate them separately. Spontaneous devotional service arises when one follows a pure devotee who is awakened to the spontaneous love of God. Sri Caitanya Maha Prabhu describes the symptoms of devotees who are already situated in the spontaneous love of God.

He had explained God as - K[ṛṇa is the nondual Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of

Godhead. Although He is one, He maintains different personal expansions and energies for His pastimes. (Kṛṇa Gadaśa Kaviraja Gosvami)

The works and reasons for the appearance of Lord Maha Prabhu Throughout his teachings and self-actions, he has cited important things to continue pure Krishna consciousness

1. Elaborated and incessantly spread the Divya Prema Nama (divine ecstatic name) of Prema maya Yugala murti (the divine loving couple) by chanting – “Hare Krishna hare Krishna Krishna Krishna hare hare , Hare Rama hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare”

2. Rejected Suska Gyana – (dry philosophical knowledge and preached Divya Prema -Nama)

3. Gave Nama Prema to all indiscriminately beggars, diseased, evil-minded, poor, rich, middle class, animals, all religious people) to create Prema-Taranga (waves of Love wherever he went).

4. He is Prema-Purushottama who relishes Krishna Prema and then gives to the others to taste the same!

Atmendra-ya-priti -bancha—tare boli “kama”

Kṛṇendriya -Priti ichha- dhare “Prema” Nama”

“The desire to gratify one’s senses is kama (lust), but the desire to please the senses of the Lord is Prema(pure and Real Love) (CC Adi- Lila 4.165)

5. Lord Chaitanya’s bhajan is known for Vipramlambha Prema (the song of separation from Krishna). Just crying, crying and crying.

6. His desire was-

Prithivite ache Joto nagara-Gram

Sorbotropracharito hoibe mor naam

In as many as towns and villages are there on the surface of the Earth, my holy name would be preached”

7. Maha Prabhu flooded the whole world with Krishna Nama-Prema. One is not getting this Nama Prema is Dina -Eva sah- ( Unfortunate, degraded, most ill-fated) (Chaitanya Chandamrita - 34)

8. Bhagwan is “madhurya-Maya (full of sweetness) and Bhagavan Gaur Hari (Lord Maha Prabhu’s loving name) is Audarya-Maya (full of magnanimity)

9. He came to shower mercy on all Jiva’s and to distribute which no one has distributed in any age -the holy name of the Lord.

Anarpitacarim Ciratkarunayarvatirnahkalausamarpayitum

Unnoto-ujjwalarasamsva-bhakti sriyam (CC-Adi Lila -1.4)

He came to show us -svabhakti,(self-devotion towards God) as his bhakti which is Krishna- bhakti, if one daily chants the holy name of the Lord without any contamination one will be free from the influence of Maya or illusion and get transcendental bliss.

The 5 most important precepts of Mahaprabhu

The correct guideline of Devotional Service as observed and noted among the Indian and foreign Vaishnavas in Mayapur, Kolkata, Krishnanagar, Dendur village, Puri, Remuna-Balashore, Malda, Kolkata, Ichhapur, etc has been compacted in 5 main amongst the 64 regulative principles.

Sadhu-Sanga (association with devotees or association with holy and likeminded people)

Mathura Vyasa (staying in Dham, where every living entity consciousness is the same which is Krishna -bhakti and Madhura Rasa)

Nama-sankirtana (Chanting the holy name of the Lord which is the only way and the easiest way for liberation in Kali-yuga and detachment from the material world)

Vigraha seva (worshiping the deities with Lordship to purify our consciousness)

Bhagavat Patha (reading sastras and Vedic scriptures for spiritual intelligence and transcendental knowledge) (Nectar of Devotion) “Vasudeva bhagabati bhakti yogamprayojitah

Janantyashu Vairagyam Gyanam cha yad ahaitukam”

(By rendering devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna, one immediately acquires causeless knowledge and detachment from the world)(SB-1:2:7)

If one has developed a strong devotional service with pure love and bhakti towards the supreme personality of Godhead, then he will develop pure transcendental knowledge and slowly he will develop unattachment towards material possessions and subjects.

(Krishnadasa Goswami)

Love and devotional service are much more important than other transcendental activities like yagna, austerities, giving donations, performing pious activities, and others. (Perfect questions, Perfect answers) For being a pure Vaishnava there are no restrictions to age, gender, caste, creed, religion, demographics, psychographics...etc one can join. Transcendental Knowledge of knowing your true self and detachment to worldly affairs are the two most important stages for attaining the process of devotional service. Renunciation doesn't mean going to the Himalayas and accepting the life of a mendicant. Here the sloka told by Mahaprabhu is noted in the Book Bhaktirasamrita Sindhu by Srila Rupa Goswami “anukulynam and pratikulyanamvirajito “

“Bhakti-anukalamatrakaryerasvikara

Bhaktirprarikula bhava—varjanangikara”

Pratikul is to discard, and Anukul is to accept. (Chaitanya's Life and teachings)

We need to believe in “pratikul” which means we need to discard whatever is a hindrance to bhakti and we should entertain or accept “anukulyam” and appraise or embrace whatever is favorable to bhakti. Bhagavat -bhakti will pave one's path to eternal bliss and knowledge and eternity and will refrain living beings from sense gratification. The 4 regulative principles that need to be regulated from the day of our bhakti are- no illicit sex, no meat eating, no gambling, and no intoxication.

”We will accept what is favorable to devotion and we will reject what is unfavorable to devotion.” If we do what is favorable to devotion and do not reject what is unfavorable to devotion, it will not work. It is necessary to understand and follow this. *Gramya-katha, prajalpa, niyamagraha, laulyancha, jana-sanganacha* (gossiping, talking nonsense, superficial attachment to rules and regulations, greed, associating with nondevotees). (prabhupadabooks.com) Chaitanya Charitamrita)

Teachings of Maha Prabhu -the reason for bhakti (devotion)

Lord Chaitanya believed in crossing the ocean of nescience and beyond the repeated cycle of birth and death, by relishing the Krishna- Naama sankirtana. Only pure love would end all issues of life which would all communal harmony and peace which the world talks about and making so many organizations like UN and others.

What is the foremost necessity of any human being? It is “Prema pum-artho Mahan”—which is the prayojanatattwa for the human being it is to have the Love of God. The Prema-bhakti is considered as pancham Purusartha (fifth goal of human life). The other four goals are- dharma, (Religion) Artha, (Finance) Kama, (material lust and Power) moksha (Supreme Liberation ). Without Prema dhana everything is dull and everyone is poor. (Hare Krishna Movement) Love has several stages- prema, (Ecstatic love for Godhead) Sneha, (Affection ) mana, (Abhorrence) Pranaya, (Love) Raga (Attachment), Anuraga, (Increased Attachment) bhava, (Ecstasy) Mahabhava. (Ultimate transcendental Ecstasy). Krishna is unable to understand the love of Radharani as he is Vishaya -vighraha (the object of love) but Radha Rani is Ashraya- vighraha (the abode of love). ( Sri Chaitanya Bhagabat) .Krishna unable to understand how much love she can have for Krishna took the form of Radharani with a golden complexion to become Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu with and full of bliss and mood of Prema- Madhura bhava.

Tathilagi pita varna Caitanya Avatara. (CC-Adi- 3.40) The religious practice of the kali yuga is to preach the glories of the Holy Name. Only for this Maha Prabhu has taken a golden complexion in yellow color, in the form of Chaitanya.

To understand this, we need to surrender wholeheartedly,  
Annayabhilasita Sunyam  
Gyana karmady -anavritam  
Anukulyena -Krishnan  
Silam bhakti Uttama  
Srila Rupa Goswami's (Bhakti-Rasamrita Sindhu/Nectar of  
Instruction -1.1.11)

and be humble and tolerant which is been narrated by Maha Prabhu  
in the following prose composed by him -

Trina dapisunechena, taroapisahishnuna

Amadina manadena ,kirtaniasada-hari

(Sri sikhastakam )—sloka no -3

Sri Chaitanya asked Ray Ramandanda one day: Among all riches  
what is the greatest wealth?

Sri Ray Ramananda replied- “One who has a love for Radha and  
Krishna. Is a very rich person”

The real love is Radha -Krishna Prema. (Chaitanya Bhagabat)  
Throughout his life, he traveled and preached the glory of Krishna  
and spread the Nama Sankirtana defeating many falsely acclaimed  
gurus of self-cheaters and pseudo-philosophers and defeating the  
Monistic Philosophy) that Jiva and Brahma are one. Jiva -Bramha  
Aikya bhava .This is Advaita- philosophy and it is for those who  
cannot understand the loving form of Bhagawan-Krishna.

He also met Ray Ramananda on the banks of River Narmada and  
discussed the “Sadhya-sadhana Tattwa” .(the goal and meaning  
of Spiritual development). He explained the difference between  
Vidhi marga and raga marga and one who is not in the path of  
Raag marga or Raganuga bhakti, one cannot get the supreme bliss  
and happiness that all souls are searching for.

The reason and effect of true peace and tranquility in the material  
world

The two brothers Jagai and Madhai symbolize the sinful  
population of this Age of Kali. The whole society nowadays  
idealizes catastrophic elements as committed by the two brothers  
like meat-eating, drinking, womanizing, being rogues, and thieves.  
Yet Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu delivered them, to say nothing of  
others who were sober, pious, devoted, and conscientious. The



Bhagavad-gita confirms, that even the Brahminical qualified devotees and rajarsis (Kingly saints) (*kimpunarbrahmanah punya bhakta rajarsayastatha*), anyone who by the association of a pure devotee comes to Krsna consciousness becomes eligible to go back home, back to Godhead. In the Bhagavad-gita (9.32) the Lord thus declares:

*mam hi parthavyapasritya  
ye 'pi syuh papa-yonayah  
striyovaisyastathasudras  
te 'pi yanti param gatim*

“O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they are of lower birth—women, Vaisyas [merchants], as well as Sudras [workers]—can approach the supreme destination.”

The activities of such people have now become common practices. It is no longer considered abominable to be a drunkard, woman-hunter, meat-eater, thief, or rogue, for these elements have been assimilated by human society. As we all are in the clutches of Maya or materialistic pleasure these qualities of such persons will help free human society from the clutches of Maya or illusion. It is likely that humans the clutches of material illusion is so strong that the more we are involved in bad associations the more and more negative effects would arise as per the stringent laws of material nature. We all are performing under the influence of the modes of material nature (*prakrtehkriyamananigun aihkarmanisarvasah*). Because people are now associating with the modes of ignorance (tamo-guna) and, to some extent, passion (rajo-guna), with no trace of goodness (sattva-guna), they are becoming increasingly greedy and lusty, for that is the effect of associating with these modes. *Tada rajas-tamo-bhavahkama-lobhadayas ca ye:*

“By associating with the two lower qualities of material nature, one becomes too much in lust and greed.” (Bhag. 1.2.19)

In modern human society, everyone is greedy and lusty, and therefore the only means for deliverance is Sri Caitanya Maha Prabhu’s sankirtana movement, which can promote all the Jagais and Madhais to the topmost position of sattva-guna, or brahminical culture.

Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.2.18-19) states:

*nasta-prayesvabhadresu  
nityam bhagavata-sevaya  
bhagavatyuttama-sloke  
bhaktirbhavatinaisthiki  
tada rajas-tamo-bhavah  
kama-lobhadayas ca ye  
cetaetairanavidham  
sthitamsattveprasidati.*

Considering such catastrophic condition of human society, peace and tranquility, can only be identified and perceived if one takes to the real Krsna consciousness movement and engage always in Bhagavata-dharma. The bhakti yoga by Lord Chaitanya dissipates all ignorance and passion, then one becomes free from clutches greed and lust which leads to go to a higher stage of Brahminical qualification and on to a further advancement he becomes situated on the Vaishnava platform. It is only on this Vaishnava platform that it is possible to awaken one's dormant love of Godhead, and as soon as one does so, his life is successful. (CC Adi Lila 8:18) This material world currently is in the mode of ignorance (tamo-guna), although there may also be some symptoms of passion (Rajo Guna). We all are in the mode of Full of Kama and lobha, (lust and greed) ready to enforce ourselves to the point of fame and reputation. Prabhupada mentioned that Communism is a movement of Sudras, and capitalism is meant for Vaisyas. The amalgamation of the Sudras and Vaisyas, gradually engages in the abominable condition of society, the communists will emerge triumphant, and as soon as this takes place, whatever is left of society will be ruined. The only possible remedy that can counteract the tendency toward communism is the Krsna consciousness movement, which can give even communists the real idea of a communist society. The doctrine of communism states that any nation should be the proprietor of everything. But the Krsna consciousness movement, accepts God as the proprietor of everything as all came from Nature which is controlled by the Lord. People who do not perceive the meaning and believe in God fails to decipher this simple understanding due to lack of

God consciousness, but the Krsna consciousness movement can help them to understand God and to understand that everything belongs to God. He also states Since everything is the property of God, and all living entities—not only human beings but even animals, birds, plants, and so on—are children of God, everyone has the right to live at the cost of God with God-consciousness. This is the sum and substance of the Krsna consciousness movement.

### **Conclusion**

Chaitanya Maha Prabhu wanted an elusive Egalitarian society that summons all to be one and united irrespective of any religion. Sanatan dharma is the oldest in its roots and doesn't belong to any religion .After Lord Chaitanya disappeared many other similar movements exploded as Quasi movements and has its own spark and observance and tradition but without any denial the roots were formed by the bhakti movement of Sri Chaitanya. This movement is to be believed as deeply syncretic which hails the steadfast principles that love is above all. But there have been some odious means of practicing Self-realized Krishna bhakti like the growth of Sahajiya's after Maha Prabhu's disappearance which has confused and hindered the path of pure unflinching faith in the Bhakti movement There has been a preceding growth since the bhakti movement gain popularity through various Vaishnava Sampradayas and no sign of liminality of this movement has been found which has been spread throughout the world and people from all castes, creeds, and sects are now unanimously absorbed in Krishna bhakti all across the world and it's a sign of a consensus began with the growth of ISKCON by the Founder-Acharya A.C. Bhakti Vedanta Srila Prabhupada (International Society of Krishna Consciousness ) . many other contemporary Vaishnava institutions have made it a universal movement as the interreligious and intercultural thought process is evolving more rapidly. It's more of an institutionalized path than a mystic contemplation like the other Vaishnav cults who do not follow the principles and Shiksha of Maha Prabhu or Gaudian-Vaishnavism. The knowledge shared by Maha Prabhu has been purely based on faith rather than intellectual logic and it has been

spread through an authentic disciplic succession and though many Vedantists who are well versed with all kinds of physical and metaphysical knowledge.

There have been no paradoxical statements or verses with imprecise such simple shloka and teachings taught by Him as all context of his teachings leads to humbleness, complete surrender to God's head, humility, tolerance, end of misdeeds, and finding the love of God. There has been a propound investigative dialectical concept of turning down the Bhakti movement or proven it wrong by other religions but without the proven time and circumstances, the Bhakti movement and Lord Chaitanya's teachings will always remain true and sacral.

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## **Educational Philosophy of Srimanta Sankardeva in Bhakti Movement**

**Arnika Baruah  
Kankana Borgohain**

### **Introduction**

Srimanta Sankardeva was a 15th century saint and social reformer. He played an important role in the formation of society and culture of Assam. On that time, political instability and religious conflict, Sankardeva wanted to unite Society through spiritual devotion, cultural revival and social harmony. He established satras, namghars, educational institutions, etc. and integrated religious teachings with practical knowledge by promoting holistic education, centres of cultural activities . He is the father of Assam culture and his art has always inspired the people of Assam, he has initiated cultural and social reforms among the people of Assam and challenged the caste-based social system and promoted inequality and social equality.

Academic philosophy holds a lot of importance in roles in a society. Education and educational policy are most important in guiding society, and also its purpose, methodology and desirable are the results of society. Sankardeva's new Vaishnavism and the bhakti movement thought, creativity and problem-solving philosophy of North-East India solve social challenges and nurture individuals who have made meaningful contributions to their community. Understanding academic philosophy is an important aspect to understand the changing role of education in the formation and preparation of society.

## **Objectives of the paper**

1. To study the educational contribution of Srimanta Sankardeva in Bhakti Movement.
2. To find the educational philosophy of Srimanta Sankardeva.

## **Methodology of the study**

This paper is basically qualitative research methodology based on secondary sources of data. The study involves an extensive review of existing literature, articles, books, historical documents, and other relevant sources that provide insights into Srimanta Sankardeva's educational philosophy and its impact. The collected data is critically examined, organized, and synthesized to identify key themes, concepts, and findings related to Sankardeva's educational philosophy, its historical context, and its socio-cultural implications. The research methodology based on secondary data sources allows for an exploration of Sankardeva's educational philosophy within the existing scholarly discourse and contributes to the understanding of its significance and relevance in educational theory and practice of Sankardeva's Neo Vaishnavism and the Bhakti Movement in North East India.

## **Discussion and result**

### **Educational philosophy of Srimanta Sankardeva**

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva was not only a writer, preacher, social reformer, artist and play writer, he was also a philosopher and a great educationist. Srimanta Sankardeva's educational philosophy covered an overall aspect. His philosophy is mainly based on idealistic philosophy. He tried to reform the society by introducing 'Bhaona' to make amends. Through religion, knowledge was imparted through the mind and direct experience. Sankardeva is also a realist because 'realism' focuses only on scientific truth. In that sense, we can say that rules and He instructed devotees to follow in their domestic lives. Perspectives focusing on religious as well as spiritual knowledge and culture. In preservation, and social harmony, he believed in the observance of spirituality, emphasizing intellectual development as well as the moral dimensions of the individual. His educational institutions, known as satras, focused on study. It also emphasized on the revival of scriptures, devotional

practices, and compassion and moral conduct and he focused on the preservation of Assamese culture, language and tradition, the development of teaching literature, music, dance and drama. To know the great man Vaishnava Samaj There are many contributions to assamese language and literature.

He is one of the best poets, writers and playwrights in the history of Assamese literature. Sankaradeva was a great contributor to the Assam Vaishnava community everywhere. His literature can be divided into poems, devotional works, translations, plays, songs and name reference. Important among these are kavya-Harish Chandra Upakhyan, Rukmini Haran Kavya, Balichalan, Amritmanthan, Gajendra Upakhyan and Kurukshetra; Devotional: Bhakti Pradeep, Bhakti Ratnakar, Nimi Nava Siddha Samvad, Anadi Patan; Translations- Gita, Bhagavata- 1, 2, X, XII, Chapter XII and Uttarakhanda Ramayana; Nataka: patni Prasad, Kalia Daman, Kali Gopal, Rukmini Haran, Parijat Haran, Ram Vijaya; Songs: Bargeet and Bhatima. In addition, Sankardeva promoted sociality in the eradication of social divisions by advocating for equality, inclusion, and eradication, the Satras welcomed people from all backgrounds, promoting unity, mutual respect, and cooperation.

Academic philosophy developed individuals who were intellectually competent, morally straight and culturally and socially responsible. His literary works, such as Kirtan Ghosha and Bhakti Ratnavali, offer valuable insights into his educational ideals. Kirtan Ghosha, anthology of devotional songs highlighted the importance of music in spiritual education. These songs focus not only on serving as a form of worship but also on imparting religious and moral education to people. Sankardeva observed that through a sense of solidarity among the people by inculcating devotion to wake up love for God and moral values.

### **Sankardeva philosophy of role of a teacher**

A review of Sankardeva's life shows that he was indeed a great teacher. He had all the qualities that Necessary for a real teacher. Need such as truthfulness, skill, pure character, humour, eloquence, agility, etc. As a guru, there was a sweet relationship between Sankardeva and his disciples. He instructed the disciples



In order to gain in-depth knowledge on the subject. Through the guru's efforts, one of his disciples is an idealist and Personality also influenced his disciples. His teaching method was not 'teacher-centric', where the student or Devotees had to sit and listen. Instead, he kept his disciples active using methods of discussion, questioning, and so on. In short, he used all techniques that could easily learn everything. The disciples perceive themselves as 'servants of God' in order to regard himself as the world guru or the teacher of the world.

### **Sankardeva's philosophy on role of discipline**

A review of The Academic Philosophy of Sankardeva shows that the role of the discipline is also important in his education system. His discipline 'Mahapurush Madhavdeva' gave the highest place to 'Guru'. He didn't hesitate to do anything to get something He presented Sankardeva as a unique guru among the devotees. In short, the relationship between Guru Sankardeva and his disciples is God, philosopher, friend and It was instructive.

### **Institution and Practices**

#### **Education through Satras and Namghars**

With the rise of the Sankardeva movement, the responsibility of imparting education came under its control. Satra and Namghars took on the noble responsibility of enlightening people through its toll. All the important satras maintained a regular principle whose duty was to impart education, especially in the field of ancient science and scriptures. Along with Vaishnavite texts and Vedic and Puranic vidya, other branches of study such as grammar, nyaya and kavya were also taken up for study. The Satras provided both formal and informal education and were more effective than ever before in the public, consisting of sermons, scriptural demonstrations, and discussions on philosophical and religious issues during the prayer service. Over time many established new satras at various places, and institutions helped spread education and culture throughout the country. In this way, the Satras created successful teachers and missionaries as well as prominent philosophers, scholars and poets.

Namghars were ceremonies that served as community centres for communal religious .Cultural activities although not widespread

in this field education, namghars played an important role in religious preaching and provided spiritual guidance to society in promoting cultural practices, enhancing a sense of collective identity, and providing spiritual guidance to society in imparting. Both satras and namghars contributed to the transmission of knowledge and preservation of cultural. The emphasis was on the development of tradition, and the religious and moral values within it.

### **Education through literature**

**Bhakti Theory:** The major educational significant can be seen from Bhakti theory of Sankardeva is that through the religious principle, Sankardeva tried to establish a classless society by removing untouchability and intolerance. Besides, Bhakti theory also emphasis on imparting democratic value like brotherhood, unity, equality and adopting right value like love, affection, peace etc. among the people which is most important relevancy in present world. The important educational aspect of Srimanta Sankardeva's plays is that informal education was a great tool to provide spiritual, cultural and moral education to the illiterate people.

**Borgeet:** Borgeet has made a profound contribution to achieving the liberal goal of education in the Indian educational system. Along with a deep understanding of the sense of devotion, Srimanta Sankardeva's vision behind The Borgeet empowered individuals with broad knowledge, values, morality and a strong sense of civic engagement.

**Drama:** Drama is the major educational significance of Srimanta Sankardeva is that these are the great instrument of informal education to impart spiritual, cultural and moral education to the illiterate people of Assam.

**Sattriya Dance:** This dance form vibrates the body and mind. It's a kind of addition. To learn Sattriya dance, a student must have training From which a student can learn discipline and patience which is most important in human life. A dancer's body movement so that the dancers has complete physical fitness and control over the body and depends on the dancer's way of expressing her inner feelings. This dance is based on mythology. So, when a student learns this dance, he is obliged to know the

stories of Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhagavata. In this way, a student can be motivated to learn Indian ancient literature. The dance has deep significance in promoting the best Indian cultural heritage among the students

**Poetic work:** Through simple and colloquial language, poetic work of Srimanta Sankardeva can be recognized as a fit strong vehicle for the dissemination of Bhakti among the students. It helps to purify the state of mind of the students by eliminating negative thoughts and feeling. The reflection of spiritual significance based on the life and exploits of Lord Krishna through the poetry of Sankardeva promote strong moral character formation of students. Sankardeva's poetic work can be considered as a very rich source of aesthetic development of the students.

### **Socio cultural impact**

There was depth of the academic philosophy of Srimanta Sankardeva in Assam. Socio-cultural influences as well as his educational institutions, satras and namghars played an important role in promoting communal harmony, these institutions created a sense of unity by bringing in different people and the satras in particular served as social centres for shared purposes. Cultural exchange and spiritual development as well as class transcending race, and ethnic and the overall environment propagated by it. He contributed to the development of the academic philosophy. On the other hand he integrated society in which individuals from different communities can learn, worship and engage in cultural activities together. The educational initiatives of Sankardeva played an important role in the preservation of Assamese language and literature. Satras have become important centres for public outreach. Assamese education as a medium helped in instruction in these institutions. Sankardeva's literary works, such as Kirtan Ghosha and Bhakti Ratnavali, also served as an Assamese repository along with spiritual and moral teachings. The educational institutions established by Sankardeva became important protectors of Assam's cultural heritage, He focused on contributing to the preservation and transmission of the language of Assam, as well as literature, and traditional practice.

## **Comparative analysis of Sankardeva Philosophy**

In the case of contemporary academic philosophy, his ideas are in line with the vision of holistic education and in line with the emphasis was on character learning and value-based learning. His emphasis on integrating religious and spiritual knowledge with academics is echoed with the concept of education and spiritual intelligence. However, the philosophy of Sankardeva. Some give priority to contemporary academic philosophy. Secularism and multiculturalism were on his religion. Sankardeva's unique contribution lies in his ability .A holistic educational system that doesn't just provide an educational orientation It also encouraged spiritual, moral and cultural development. His emphasis on cultural conservation, social harmony and integration Distinguishes, builds his philosophy of art and spirituality from others. It is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural context of Assam and Vaishnava.

### **Conclusion**

Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva made an important contribution to academic philosophy through a focus on religious and spirituality. Including establishing knowledge, cultural preservation, and social harmony Educational institutions like satras and namghars were provided. Integrating the holistic educational approach, it focused on educational education, cultural practices, and moral education. In the philosophy of Sankardeva Bringing about communal harmony, social equality, and cultural resilience Different communities come together and promote inclusive education Created an society.

In educational policy and practice, The philosophy of Sankardeva emphasized the importance of promoting moral values, cultural understanding, and inclusiveness. The specific methods employed in the academics of Sankardeva need to go too very deeply. Their long-term impact on institutions, as well as individuals and societies, exists. To evaluate the different cultural contexts and its effectiveness in modernity that explores the adaptation of Sankaraeva's educational philosophy the educational system contributes to a broader understanding.

At the last we can conclude the educational philosophy of Sankaradeva is very relevant . Sankardeva, a figure of great importance in the cultural and religious history of Assam chose religion as the best form of education. The use of Namghar and Satras as a medium of knowledge and education is still playing an important role in Assamese society. His Philosophical thoughts and educational teachings have enriched the Assamese society.

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## **Bhakti Movement and Heartfulness Spiritual Practice for Human Well-being**

**Mallepalli. Bhaskar**

### **Introduction**

During the Indian mediaeval period, there were many distinctions and diversity based on religion, caste, and beliefs, which caused many conflicts and problems in human life styles. Some philosophers and spiritual practitioners comprehended the predicament and have devised a method to unite all humanity behind a single narrative form or common belief system of God or the ultimate goal of creating human happiness. The Bhakti movement began in south India in the seventh century and is supported by several systems. Meditation, Bhajana, and keertans are important aspects of the Bhakti movement for developing Love and Devotion. Meditation has long been recognised as one of the most effective methods for cultivating Bhakti. Sri Ramchandra of Fategarh rediscovered Heartfulness Meditation, a 72-generation-old method that existed prior to King Janaka. Universal brotherhood is the core point of Heartfulness, which is present in over 160 countries. By practicing heartfulness meditation on a regular basis, practitioner will cultivate heart qualities such as love, empathy, compassion, and tolerance, which are the foundation of Bhakti. The Guides of the Heartfulness expressed the sense of oneness within as God and his creation are one and the same.

As per Deswal (2021), the name Bhakti, which is derived from Bhaj and meaning “dancing,” “singing,” “sharing,” etc., brought

about a significant change in Indian philosophy's religious and caste structures. Bhakti is even mentioned as a route to liberation in the Bhagavad Gita and the Shvetashvatra Upanishad. It is one of the four paths to God, the others being Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Jnana Yoag. It was initially discovered in south India's Tamil Nadu. Bhakti Marg has emerged as a means of elevating the status of the average person in society. Saints like Mirabai and Chaitnaya danced in a joyous state of mind while in a Bhakti trance, demonstrating an individual's mental health. Masses for the upper classes included dancing and travelling together, regardless of caste or social position. Kabir worked very hard to bring Muslims and Hindus together via this Bhakti Yoga. Kabir, explains that the God lives inside the sincere hearts of people rather than in temples or mosques. Desires for material things and longings are absent from a pure heart. When someone gives up their identity—such as their caste or community—eternal freedom begins.

### **Bhakti Moment**

Bhakti, as defined by Ahlawat (2022), is bhaj+kin, a sanskrit word that meaning to serve or participate (Ramachandran 31). Bhakti is considered to be strong enough to taste heaven and have a strong desire to serve God. Bhakti is defined as “living for God and living in God, in thought, emotion, and action,” according to K.S. Narayanachar. “Love that is persistent and fearless” is how Sri Ramanuja describes bhakti (snehanupurvam anudhyanam bhaktih). Tenth among the rasas, Bhakti is also known as the fifth Purushartha and is an aesthetic form. (Bhaktischa Jnanavisesha eva Shemushi Bhakti rupa) Bhakti cultivates love.

According to Farek (2017), scholars from both Western and Indian orientalist schools have discussed the idea of equality in the context of religious instruction. The highest kind of dharma is bhakti, or love of God, as described by the Chaitanya school and the Bhagawat Purana. The saints were entirely focused on the relationship between God and humanity; yet, they did not give much attention to human struggles or campaigns against caste and untouchability. They emphasised the spiritual approach to the gospel, not that all people are equal, Instead, they preached that all men are equal in God's eyes. (Ambedkar 2014, 337).

During the Indian Dalit movement, even reformers and saints shared their beliefs in a single divine force through folk culture and their contributions to reform. Social issues including those that are pro-poor, pro-women, and anti-caste are resolved by Bhakti.

According to Kumar (2021), the Bhakti movement was vital in fostering the development of simplicity, tolerance, directness, friendliness, and love. Bhakti teachers practiced and taught tolerance, and to a large extent, tolerance was raised to promote Bhakti ideas of mutual understanding. According to Namdeva of Maharashtra, Tirthas cannot wash away sins and samskars of the heart; stones cannot speak and cannot find God within. Kabir's importance was equality, which is made possible through Bhakti and denounced in equality that is owing to caste and religion.

According to Suryawanshi (2020), Bhakti honours him in this way, or honours anything that made him come to mind, and opposes everything that has nothing to do with extolling his splendour and the reality that he is everywhere.

As per Yadav (2022), asserts that in light of Kabir, the absolute mind or intellect is comparable to Sunya. The mind is everything; it has no foundation and should be fair, unrestricted, and burden-free. Join the mind like salt in water by practice. Through the sadana, or condition of sunya generates bliss, Bhakti achieves that mind.

As per Bennett (2016), A person experiencing devotion may experience a sense of altered identity in which their normal state vanishes and a devotional emotional flavour that is either universalist (Vedanta bhakti), fear-based (folk bhakti), heart-centered (emotional bhakti), or patriotic (political bhakti) arises. The emotional encounter is a psychological breakthrough that situates itself within the broader context of human aspirations. emotional and rational response directed towards the divine.

### **Heartfulness of spiritual practice**

According to Thakur (2024), Heartfulness Spiritual Practice Techniques— Relaxation, Meditation, Cleaning, and Prayer— help to expand awareness and purify it, leading to the divine consciousness that is the fundamental goal of Bhakti. Impressions



were eliminated by the cleaning procedure, and consciousness would expand to achieve permanent awareness. The system's distinctive feature is yogic transmission. Throughout the meditation, the practitioner is led to believe that they are being drawn inside by the light source already there in their heart. This hypothesis fosters an awareness of the sensations that emerge from inside. (Pollock & Patel, 2018).

Heartfulness meditation, according to Kaniamathan (2021), tries to assist people in connecting with their inner selves in order to achieve serenity and a balanced mental state. Prior research has provided mechanistic insights into the ways in which heartfulness meditation improves psychological, emotional, and social well-being in addition to physiological and cellular functioning.

### **Heartfulness Meditation and Bhakti**

According to Daaji (2018), most people understand Bhakti to mean devotion. Actually, it's much more. Everything was perfectly one before creation. That stage can only be reached by a confluence of determination, zeal, commitment, faith, bravery, and most importantly, love. When something is truly valued as much as Bhakti, it ultimately becomes everything to us. If Bhakti is stimulating thinking or behaviour, it is spirited. Bhakti is glitter in mind and expression in action. The precise translation of the Greek term "enthusiasm," "to put God into," is "bhakti." Bhakti is for the love of love; it is not for the expectation of worldly or heavenly wants; experience is required rather than knowledge. Regular meditation is one of the finest ways to cultivate Bhakti inside. Additionally, spiritual consciousness grows, broadens, and reaches ever-higher heights. The vision grows endless. In Bhakti, a devotee may be in a state of akarma where they are oblivious of their beloved's love, a state known as bhakti, in which they love God but are unaware of their love. The concept of love vanishes. Approaching God is like waiting for your sweetheart while your heart burns with restlessness. Although it may be challenging to begin, regular meditation practice makes it easier and may yield new insights. It progressively merged into our daily lives. When karma is carried out with love, vikarma

grows. Love vanishes as well, even if it permeates every thought and action. Even though we adore God, we are not aware of our love for him since we are in the state of akarma, or Bhakti. We need to approach God like a restless heart that is anticipating its beloved. We can burn like wet wood, producing a lot of smoke, or like dry wood, which burns easily and produces very little smoke or sparks since it doesn't contain water, or like electricity, which burns without producing any smoke, feelings, or the need for show. We have the option to approach the Lord in a grandiose, flamboyant manner or in a humble, inconspicuous, and nameless manner while silently loving what He has created. Even loving God is insufficient if creation is forgotten, as God created it.

According to Babuji (nd), bhakti differs greatly from flattery, despite the common misconception that it is merely flattery in the true meaning. It is a straightforward and unbreakable commitment to the Divine.” The term “love and devotion” is Bhakti. Bhakti Yoga, sometimes referred to as the Path of Love-Devotion, is a spiritual path that emphasises total surrender to love and devotion as the primary means of achieving oneness with God. Therefore, by heart-centeredness and impurity-cleaning, frequent practice of heartfulness meditation contributes to the development of pure Bhakti and devotion.

### **Heartfulness spiritual practice and human well-being**

As per Arya (2017), Heartfulness spiritual practice create inner transformation. Transmission is also called Pranahuti (Pranasya Pranaha) which is the uniqueness of the Heartfulness spiritual practice. The practice of heartfulness is inner journey. The inner transformation is the key to develop Bhakti, which is no for the sake of any worldly affairs. Its purely love which can only possible through inner transformation. Heartfulness as a spiritual practice works incredibly well. Heartfulness meditation was found to enhance both physical and mental well-being in a review of numerous studies.

Accprding to Wu (2023), the 4th Spiritual Guide of the Heartfulness Meditation (Sahaj Marg), Kamlesh D. Patel, affectionately known as Daaji, also identifies awareness as “the basic canvas of the manifested universe” (2020, p. 61). To change

the manifested universe, the canvas must be altered; our subconscious mind is the fundamental architect of our life experiences. According to Lipton (2015), 95 percent of our conduct and impressions in life are the result of the subconscious mind, which was shaped by our surroundings. Inner transformation begins with inner transformation, and inner transformation is facilitated by meditation. Heartfulness has long-term effects on the body, mind, and consciousness of people. It demonstrated a beneficial effect on stress and anxiety. (Kumar, 2019),

According to Timmapuram (2017), Wellness is defined as a prosperous, healthy lifestyle that includes self-awareness and balance in the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social realms. Thus, the best technique for lowering stress and enhancing well-being is meditation. A straightforward Heartfulness meditation technique cultivates mental balance.

As per Krishna (2017), Heartfulness meditation was examined for its effects on physiological and psychological states. Heartfulness practice helps people achieve common goals including inner serenity, self-connection, and achieving a balance between mind and body. Kindness has been shown in numerous scholarly studies to modulate the autonomic nervous system. The occipital area exhibited gamma activation in earlier Heartfulness investigations. A few studies also demonstrated the beneficial effects on the brain and heart. Reduced sensitivity to negative life experiences.

According to Kwee (2021), The core of the heartfulness practice is relating to people and keeping an eye on our hearts. The mind is in the heart by definition, hence the term “inter-heart.” Cultivating here-now affective awareness is referred to as the practice of heartfulness.

Sumati (2017), Explains that Heartfulness meditation, the changes were observed in the various characteristics of students. The degrees of tolerance, positive thinking, inner peace, and empathy increased the most, by more than 45%. Stress and anger decreased by 30%. There was also a sense of peace, harmony, better sleep

quality, and more joy and empathy within. Negative features were decreased. The practice of Heartfulness meditation had a good effect on the practitioners.

According to Selvaraj (2017), mindfulness meditation helps practitioners achieve inner balance and transformation that will enable them to lead an ethical life, which in turn helps them achieve personal excellence. It also brings about inner transformation and balances people's tendencies, which helps practitioners focus, achieve ethical behaviour, and realise their full potential. Mindfulness meditation also helps practitioners evolve at the highest level even in the face of challenges in life.

Conclusion :

Bhakti is the qualities of faith, love, devotion, gratitude, surrender and dedication which are the qualities of heart, hence those will be cultivated by meditation on the heart. Heartfulness spiritual practice of Meditation, cleaning and prayer cultivate the bhakti in aspirant by developing love, as well cleaning removes the impressions which are barriers to the developing love. As per the results of the review in Bhakti individual well-being to universal well-being is highlighted. Humans divided by various aspects such as caste, religion and social classes but in Bhakti all social issues solved by connecting with divine within. Through Heartfulness meditation adoration in the presence of divinity with the subtle suggestion of divine light which develops the love towards beloved which called Bhakti. If properly understand the meaning and purpose of Bhakti we can grasp the importance of Heartfulness spiritual practice to develop Bhakti ones heart and develops the overall well-being. The bliss of Bhakti creates the well-being. We observed since ancient times the well-being of saints and devotes by dancing and remembrance of divinity by completely merging in ones beloved. They overcome the all barriers through only the path of bhakti. Even in modern era Bhakti must become part of human life with the help of regular meditation on the heart which cultivates the qualities of heart to overcome the stress, anxiety, depression, and social problems. The study also observed the various benefits of heartfulness meditation such as physical, mental, social and spiritual wellness of its practitioner.

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## A Critical Study on the Confluence of the Contributions of Kabir and Sankardeva as Prominent Figures of Bhakti movement

**Kasturika Aniruddha  
Rituparna Bordoloi**

### **Introduction**

The literal translation for 'Bhakti' is Love or Devotion. In the nonpareil *Bhagavad Gita*, a replete of words substantiates the prominence of the *Bhakti Marga* — one of the four principal *Marga* or path for communion with God. The *Bhakti Marga* essentially teaches the religion of devotion and love, which views all living creatures as one whole unit as opined by Krishna in the *Bhagavadgita*

It was between the 7<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> centuries when the philosophy of Bhakti initially arose into a movement in Southern India. It rooted for religious equality and social roles debarred from any hierarchies. In the south, the movement was mainly spurred by the Vaishnava Alvar Saints and Saiva Nayanar saints while preaching the message of Bhakti, irrespective of caste, class, and sex. It is chiefly treated as a literary movement or at best an ideological phenomenon that had religion as the basis of its inspiration. The preachers, instead of using the elite Sanskrit language opted for Tamil language as their medium to expound the inspirations in the form of poems and songs of the Bhakti movement. As the movement that started in the South reached a

crescendo along with the constraints, it began to fall apart. However, it resurfaced under Acharya Ramanuja of north India and other followers of his school of philosophy, including Srimanta Sankardeva of Assam and Sant Kabir of Banaras. Saint Kabir, born in 1440 in Varanasi, India, is revered as one of the most influential figures in Indian spiritual history. According to some sources he was born to a Brahmin widow who abandoned him after his birth and he was raised in the home of a Muslim weaver. However, his exact parentage and birth circumstances are uncertain. Ramananda, a prominent saint and Vaishnavite leader during Kabir's time, had a significant influence on Kabir's spiritual journey, and later on, Kabir became a disciple of the celebrated Hindu ascetic Ramananda, marking a pivotal moment in his life. Despite the social and religious barriers of the time, Kabir sought initiation into Ramananda's spiritual lineage, demonstrating his openness to cross-cultural spiritual wisdom. Under Ramananda's guidance, Kabir delved deeper into the path of devotion (bhakti) and the mystical traditions of India. Ramananda's teachings likely provided Kabir with a foundation in Vaishnavite philosophy and practices, while encouraging him to explore the universal principles of love, compassion, and spiritual realization. Kabir's contribution to the Bhakti movement was profound. He advocated for a direct and personal connection with the divine, transcending the barriers of caste, creed, and religion. His verses, known as *Dohas* are simple yet profound, touching the essence of spirituality and human existence. He often spoke of the divine as a living presence within himself and all of creation, guiding him along the spiritual awakening. Kabir's influence extended beyond his lifetime, as his teachings were preserved and spread by his disciples, known as Kabir *Panthis*. One of Kabir's significant contributions was his staunch opposition to the caste system and social discrimination. He preached the essential oneness of all human beings and the idea that the divine resides within everyone, regardless of caste, creed, or gender. This inclusive message resonated with the marginalized and oppressed sections of society. Kabir's role in promoting the Bhakti movement was pivotal. Through his poetry and teachings,



he emphasized a direct and personal experience with God, critiqued the socio-religious norms of his time, and championed the cause of social equality. His legacy continues to inspire spiritual seekers and social reformers, making him one of the most enduring figures of the Bhakti movement.

Often hailed as the *Mahapurush (great man)*, Srimanta Sankardeva was a saint scholar and a playwright. He was born to his father Kusumbar Bhuyan and his mother Satyasandha in Alipukhuri, Nagaon in 1449. His major literary creations are the *Kirtan Ghosa, Gunamala, etc.*

*There are poets and composers, there are saints and religious teachers, there are music masters, there are preachers, but Sankardeva was a genius in whom all these qualities were rolled into one- Adhyapak Basudeva Agrawal*

Sankardeva was a versatile highbrow who spurred a revolution in the Assamese community. With the inspiration of the Bhakti, he remodeled the religious practices in society. He was the first religious leader to introduce the faith of single divinity. He attempted to expand his religious and spiritual knowledge through his Neo-Vaishnavism. He founded this pantheistic religious tradition in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, known as Ek-sharan-naam Dharma, which translates into Shelter-in-one religion. The movement was a rebellion against idol worship. Inspired by the aspiration of the Bhakti movement, the Neo-Vaishnavism played a crucial role during the medieval times. It permeated into the Assamese society through Sankardeva's devotional compositions, known as the *borgeets* and holy scriptures. His literary and musical compositions are the unconstrained articulation of his mystical vision. The loftiest adulations for the infinite form the leitmotif of his oeuvre.

Significance of the Bhakti movement: It is the non-adherence to any caste, creed, or gender that made Bhakti accessible to every individual to connect to the divine in their unique way. This universality of the Bhakti movement propagated through devotional songs, bhajans, poems, and mantras, has bound all individual beings into one unit. Thus, the significance of the

movement lies not only in the spiritual growth of an individual but in the community as a whole. It is an avenue to deepen their relationship with each other, with the surrounding nature, and the supreme essence that permeates all of them. The movement is thus an explicit message of unity and inclusivity.

### **Objectives**

The paper aims to draw attention to the astounding similarities in their unique approach to preaching Bhakti. The paper delves into the aspects where the literary contributions of the two noteworthy bhakti saints converge despite having come from two distinct backgrounds. Besides, this paper also analyses the metaphysical elements they have employed in their literary contributions.

### **Methodology**

This research paper employs the study of various scholarly articles, and research papers and includes textual analysis to examine the path toward divinity followed by the two Saint scholars and how they have played pivotal roles in shaping the Bhakti tradition.

Perusing the parallelism in the mystical vision of Sant Kabir and Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva

The Bhakti movement spurred an instinct of pure devotion, a sense of heightened love that was bathed in spirituality while transcending the barriers of the man-made world. The followers of the Bhakti cult across parts of India were driven by a common cause that gave the monotheistic movement its fundamental unity. Although the backgrounds they hailed from differed greatly, they stood united in one perception: their unflinching belief in one Divinity. Additionally, the preachers emphasized on the graveness in the repetition of the divine, the spiritual gurus, community singing of devotional songs (Kirtan), and companionship of the saints.

While rooting for similar aspirations, the paths they walked through differed greatly. Yet, the spirit of mutual understanding and resemblance of thoughts were reflected in the Literature, music, and their eclectic spiritual attitude.

This section of the paper juxtaposes two Bhakti saints; Sant Kabir and Srimanta Sankardeva and thereafter carries a descriptive

analysis of their Literary and musical contributions and how they both confluence while on their common destination.

1. Non adherence to austerities

Kabir was essentially non-adherent to the mindless following of rituals in the name of worshipping. The following *Doha* by Kabir is imbued with his criticism against the traditional beliefs and superstitious rituals for attaining love and connection with God in the external:

*Pothi Padh Padh Jag mua, Pandit Bhao na koi,  
Dhai akhar Prem ka, Padhe so Pandit hoye.*

The *Doha* elucidates on the critique of the meaningless chase of religious knowledge bereft of any sincere understanding. The divinity which he eulogized was independent both of ritual and bodily austerities; “the God whom he proclaimed was neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash”. This *Doha* is an explicit advocacy for a direct reconciliation with the supreme power rather than any intermediaries.

On a similar note, Sankardeva too was an exponential figure who favoured an unmediated devotion to the supreme power by seeking freedom from indulging in any austerities. The following verse from one of his devotional *Borgeets* substantiates his disclination of any rigorous efforts that man tends to make in the pursuit of salvaging himself from corporeal bondage.

*Teertha Barata Tapa Japa Jaga Jaga Juguti  
Mantra Parama dharama Karam karata nahi mukuti*

2. Emphasis on oneness

*Moko kaha dhundo re bande, main to tere paas mein,  
Na teerath mein, na murat mein  
Na ekant mein*

In this *Doha*, Sant Kabir insists on the impressionistic idea that the divine resides with oneself and is not sought elsewhere. He opines that divinity is more accessible to “the washerwoman and the carpenter” than any holy man. It is suggestive that one need not go afar and put on an elevated appearance of themselves to attain God which is inherently present in all beings.

Likewise, in his *Ek-Sharana Naam Dharma*, Sankardeva establishes his faith in a single God. *Ek sharana* means

surrendering the earthly senses to the feet of one divinity. One of his famous verses encapsulates this philosophy:

*Ekadeva Ekaseva ekabina nahi keva*

The verse translates to “One God, one devotion, none other”. This succinctly captures the essence of a monotheistic devotion and the central theme of his religious teachings.

### 3. Metaphysical love

The theme of metaphysical love essentially reverberates throughout which fuelled the bhakti movement. His notion of love transcends the materialistic understanding which is rooted in erotic pleasure. His poetry drips of love with utmost purity and intensity. They carry implications of spiritual love over superficial ones. The metaphysical love in Kabir’s compositions is focused on the union of the divine, underscoring the connection between the individual and the universal consciousness.

*Piya ke saang laagi kaise chute re*

*Jab laag jhootha tootein nahi re*

*Preet puraani sneha bhari*

*Binu piya adhoora taan bhaari*

In this verse, Kabir expresses his longing for his beloved, the divine to permeate his body and thus attain the sacred union.

Sankardeva too had a vision of metaphysical love through which he advocates for seeing the divine in all beings and loving others as one’s extended self.

*Tomaro charana kamala bandha re mon*

*Aami je bandhiya pashor moto*

*Pashor mote pora*

*Marama painu tora*

*Gokule krishna bolo, bolo re mon.*

The verse expresses a profound sense of metaphysical love where the soul finds a deep heartfelt connection with the divine despite its bondage to the terrestrial entanglement.

Most of his verses imply the notion of a metaphysical love that goes beyond mere worship but a seeking an intimate personal experience of the divine. Much like Kabir, Sankardeva’s vision

of love too implies a transcendence of the illusions created by the ego by focussing solely on the divine presence.

#### 4. Omniscient Reality

*Mou ko kaha dhundo bande, mein to tere paas mein*

This doha highlights the delusional state of human nature as they have a tendency to seek God in a form rather than locating within themselves. It is where we are and as such there is no need to move an inch to perceive it elsewhere.

*Tumi Pakshu pakshi surasor toru trino*

*Agyanot murkho sobe delhe bhinno bhinno*

*Xomosto bhutore tumi aasa Hridayot.*

*Tatwa napai tumak bisare bahirot.*

In the above verse from his *borgeet*, Sankardeva illumines the ubiquitous nature of the supreme power that pervades the entire existence, including ourselves. This implies the insanity of the pursuits of humans to seek a ‘concrete, God elsewhere.

#### 5. Emphasis on Nirguna Rama

*Dasharatha Suut Tihu Loka Bakhana*

*ya*

*Nirguna Ram, Nirguna Ram Japahu re bhai*

In this verse by Kabir, *Ram* is not being alluded to as the character of Dasharatha’s son but as a *Nirguna* essence that reverberates upon chanting ‘Rama’ devoid of any attributes.

In parallel verse:

*Bulohu Rama Nashe mukuti nidana*

*Bhaiva Boi toroni sukho Sarani*

Sankardeva draws a similar opinion, akin to Kabir. The mere chanting of the Lord paves the way to freedom. Here as well, *Ram* is not being alluded to as a concrete form, but rather a reference to a *Nirguna*, i.e. formless essence of the divine.

#### 6. Escaping the matrix, the *Maya*

*Avadhu, maya tajin a jay*

*Grih taj ke bastar baandhaa, bastar taj ke phere*

*Kaam taje ten krodh na jaye, krodh taje ten lobha*

*Lobh taje ahankaar na jayee, maan-badaai-sobha*

*Maan vairagi maya tyagi, sabd mein surat samaye*

In this *doha*, Kabir gives the impression that it is imperative to overcome the illusions of human existence, i.e. *Maya*, to attain spiritual understanding. He is preaching the importance of inner power and self-control of the senses i.e. anger, lust, greed, pride, and envy.

Likewise, a few of the devotional *borgeets* of Sankardeva are pervaded with allegorical elements decreeing that one should be wary of the cobweb of *Maya* built of kama (lust), moha (infatuation), lobha (greed) krodha(anger) and matsarya (envy). The following verses from one of his popular *borgeets* substantiate this observation:

*E bhava gahana vana                      ati moha pase channa  
Tahe hamu harina berai  
Phandilo maya pase                      kalavadhya dhaya ase  
Kama Krodha kutta khedi khaya  
Harailo cetana Hari                      najano kimate tari  
Sunita dagadha bhel ajiva  
Lobha moha duhu vagha                      satate nachare laga...*

### **Conclusion**

At the closure, we observe that both Kabir and Sankardeva were dexterous in their respective mystical literature that stoked the Bhakti movement in preaching the message of devotion and love and an understanding of oneself as having direct communion with the universal power. It can be inferred from the above analysis that although Srimanta Sankardeva and Sant Kabir hailed from two diverse temporal and spatial milieu, yet had been mirroring each other in a parallel universe. They had diversity in themselves yet they stood united in their motive and especially in expressing their thoughts in the form of their literary works and musical compositions. The similarity of the expressions is another reflection of how the flaws present in their respective societies resemble each other. It implies that the works of both legendary figures carry the tone of universality.

Lastly, it is imperative to take note that their works bear testimony to the prowess they had in mysticism and how they were way ahead of their time.

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## Sri Chaitanya's Concept of Bhakti: A Study

**Sukanta Ghosh**

The Word bhakti is derived from the root bhaj, which means to share, to allot, to distribute, to divide, to assign etc. Bhakti or devotion means supreme love for God. <sup>1</sup> According to Tapasyananda, the conception of bhakti has played an important role in the religious history of India. It is not the exclusive legacy of any sect or religion; on the contrary, it forms the core of every theistic religion. It may be defined as an ardent and hopeful devotion to a particular deity in grateful recognition of aid received or promised. It often assumes the form of a passionate love of the deity, whether God or Goddess. Its marks are surrender of the self to the divine being and acts of devotion either in some sanctified place or in private life and thought.

Bhakti is deeply rooted in Indian tradition. Moksa or liberation can be attained by three ways, i.e., karma, jnana, and bhakti. The first important literary recognition of bhakti-marga as a true way of salvation was made in the famous Bhagavad-gita. The service of the senses through the senses is called bhakti.

The bhakti movement can be clearly divided into two distinct periods. The first was from the time of the Gita to 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the second from 14<sup>th</sup> century to 16 century. The first phase of the bhakti movement was only an individual sentiment, where as the second phase was both emotional as well as spiritual.

In the Chaitanya Bhagavata it is said that the roots of the bhakti movement, which Madhavendra Puri (guru of Isvar Puri) is said to have started in Bengal and which Chaitanya carried



forward and definitely shaped, must be sought in such traditions as originated from Sridhara's great commentary on the Bhagavata which was accepted with much veneration by the Vaisnavas. The Bhagavata preaches the cult of unmotivated devotion (ahetuki bhakti) to God, That is the highest religion of man from which selflessness and uninterrupted devotion to God arises, which fills the soul with bliss. In this sense, bhakti is described as "sa paranuraktir Isvare " in the Sandilya bhakti Sutra. Absolute devotion or utter adoration is the keynote of this emotion. Bhakti is the only and the primary sentiment. It is super natural. There is no i-ness of self in this feeling. Devotion as a method to attain supreme bliss has a rival in the method of knowledge, because knowledge uncovers the true nature of any object, while devotion establishes most intimate relationship with even the most attainable one. Devotion leads to Him, devotion uncovers Him. According to Narada, bhakti comprises three elements: it is the highest love for God, a surrender of actions to Him, and agony when He is forgotten. Thus, it can be said that devotion can be described as a bridge between the devotee and God. It is firmly rooted in faith and fervor. He holds that that devotion is higher than action, higher than knowledge and higher than concentration of mind. It is higher than any other means of salvation, because it is its own reward. Knowledge and action are motivated by egoism and pride. So, they cannot excite God's compassion.

It is said in the Chaitanya Bhagavata that a life of devotion is not necessarily a life of inaction. That is real action, which pleases God. In other words, the actions those are done for the pleasure of God without any desire for their fruits. The complete surrender of the soul to God is needed for reaching the ultimate goal. We should purge ourselves of egoism for this.

Bhakti is said to be a rasa. Bhakti is a feeling and it is the function of the heart. Rasa means relish or that which is tasted or relished. If any sentiment combined with other sentiments or feelings becomes more delicious and creates an ineffable wonderfulness of bliss in the heart, it is said to be transformed into rasa. If the senses, the external and the internal, are concentrated in tasting the wonderful bliss is called rasa.

The word bhakti is classified variously by various texts, each adopting certain criteria of its own. The Bhagavata for instance refers to four kinds of bhakti, these are Tamasa, devotion to God actuated by violence, hypocrisy or malice.

Rajasa, motivated by fame, sensual enjoyment, acquisition of power etc.

Sattvika, which arises out of a sense of duty leading to destruction of karma, and

Nirupadhika, unmotivated and aroused by the sole urge to realize the glory of God.

The Brhannaradiya Purana refers to three kinds of bhakti, tamasa, rajasa, and sattvika each having three sub-varieties, viz., low (adhama), middle (madhyama) and high (uttama) in the ascending order.

The Bhagavata enumerates the several methods as outlined by Prahlada.

Sravanam is listening to the glories of God with an understanding heart.

Saint Parikshita adopted this method also.

Kirtanam is praising or chanting the glory of God. It is adopted by the Nayanmars and Alvars, Tulasi Das, Sri Chaitanya etc., and is surely one of the means of mukti.

Smaranam is constant reflection on His glory with no other fruit than to ever think of him and to love him. Prahlada is cited as an example. His only plea to Mahavisnu was that the thought of him may never cease in his mind. Sivasmaranam (repeated remembrance of Siva), says Adi Sankara, are the arrows which destroy the internal foes of man, viz., the sinful qualities of kama, krodha, lobha, mada, moha and matsarya. These arrows are discharged from the bowstring of bhakti by bending the bow of bhava.

Padasevanam is to resort to the feet of God. Men of the contemplative kind can worship the feet of God in the inner sanctum of one's own mind.

Archanam is the worship of God by offering him fruits and flowers and chanting His name.

Vandanam is to offer obeisance to God. This sort of Vandanam enables a man to be free from karma, the nalvinai and tivinai, will prevent the soul from going to hell or other evil ways. Therefore, chant the thousand names of Lord Krsna.

Dasyam is service at the feet of God.  
Sakhyam is friendship with God, and  
Atmanivedanam is self-surrender.

Gaudiya Vaisnavism is essentially a system of practical religious emotionalism. Therefore their emphasis is not so much on epistemology as on the delineation of various types of religious emotions, their nomenclature and classification. For this, they thought that Sri Chaitanya appeared to illuminate the world by shedding the glow of emotional fervor or bhakti.

Bhakti is the means (sadhana) as well as end (sadhya). Though bhakti destroys all obstacles, and results in preman, one should not on its strength desire for something else. bhakti can be alloyed with three types of desires, which are called as sakama, kaivalya-kama, and bhakti-matra-kama.

Though the Gosvamins (Rupa and Sanatana) have extolled the way of bhakti, they have not denied the efficacy of other ways of devotion. In fact, Jiva Gosvami's attempt was not to denounce karma and jnana as means of salvation, but to prove the superiority of bhakti over them.

The gopis of Vraja came out to meet Lord Krsna in the dead of night when they heard the sounds of Lord Krsna's flute. By leaving home in that way, the gopis have transgressed the Vedic regulations of household life. This indicates that when natural feelings of love for Lord Krsna become fully manifest, a devotee can neglect conventional social rules and regulations. In the material world, we are situated in designative positions only, but pure devotional service begins when one is freed from all designations. When love for Lord Krsna is awakened, then the designative positions are overcome. 21 There is a great increase of mellow in the unwedded conjugal mood. Such love is found nowhere but in Vraja.

According to the Chaitanya Charitamṛta, Radha and Kṛṣṇa are one and the same, but they have assumed two bodies. Srimatī Rādhikā is the transformation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's love. She is His internal energy called hlādinī. Hlādinī is the personal manifestation of the blissfulness of the supreme personality of Godhead. hlādinī is His aspect of bliss; sandhinī, of eternal existence; and samvit, of cognizance, which is also accepted as knowledge. The essence of the samvit potency is knowledge that the supreme personality of Godhead is Lord Kṛṣṇa. All other kinds of knowledge, such as the knowledge of Brahman, are its components. The essence of the hlādinī potency to love of God is bhava (emotion), and the ultimate development of bhava is mahabhava. Śrī Rādhā Thākuraṇī is the embodiment of mahabhava. Rādhā is the one who gives pleasure to Kṛṣṇa, and she is also the enchantress of Lord Kṛṣṇa. She is the Be-all and End-all of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and the crest jewel of all His consorts. The divine love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is not an ordinary human affair; it is fully transcendental. In order to understand Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, worship Them and engage in Their loving service.

Śrī Chaitanya School views bhakti as an inherent quality of Bhagavan and also believes that an atom of bhakti remains present in the jīva in a potential manner, although it is in an unmanifested form. The manifestation of bhakti takes place only when the jīva realizes his own nature; it becomes possible only when he develops faith in Lord Kṛṣṇa.

### **Classification of Bhakti**

Bhakti is classified in several ways. The classification is based on the quality involved in it, on the intention of the devotee, on the relation between the devotee and God etc. There are three categories of devotion based on quality, namely, one, which is dominated by purity,<sup>23</sup> the other, which is dominated by passion and the third, which is dominated by inertia. Bhakti can also be categorized on the basis of the intention of the devotee, such as the *āria*, i.e. he who prays God to remove his calamity; *artharthī*, i.e. he who prays God for some material gain such as wealth, progeny, success etc.; and *jijñāsu*, i.e. he who prays God in order

to have knowledge of the ultimate reality and he who is a realized soul and still continues to meditate upon God because it becomes his inner nature.

The third classification is para bhakti and apara bhakti. Para-bhakti is considered to be superior to the apara-bhakti. In the latter kind of devotion a devotee considers himself as separate from God yearning for His vision. From this stage when he goes further on the spiritual path he becomes one with God. Still he is fond of the sweetness of the ambrosia, which he relishes when he remembers God. Even after experiencing the union with God, he desires to consider himself separate from him to continue with the enjoyment of the nectar of the bliss, which is the outcome of his devotion towards Lord. So he imagines himself as separate from God even though he is fully aware of the unity. This is the stage of parabhakti, the Supreme devotion which is known as jnanottara-bhakti- post knowledge devotion, which is the ultimate goal of the endeavor of a devotee.<sup>24</sup> God cares only for devotion. There is nothing small or great to Him. He is considered only with the spirit in which it is offered.

The Bhagavata glorifies the bhakti-yoga, and classified it into three major types according to the three gunas, sattva, rajas and tamas. Each is again subdivided into three minor types according to the specific type of inclinations on the part of the devotee. Apart from this, it also emphasizes upon the classical navadha-bhakti (nirguna or niskama-bhakti), which represents the highest type.

This is marked by a desire less state of mind, which is directed towards Bhagavan. Such a direction of the mind to Bhagavan is described as natural (svabhavika), not vitiated by any partisan outlook (avyavahita), selfless (ahetuki) and is not interrupted by any other thought. The Bhagavata, thus, views devotion as an act of dedication to God and objectively, the duty of a man lie in the performance of all his actions in complete dedication to God.

According to Jiva Gosvami, though bhakti is being the central theme, its efficacies remain universal in nature. So, bhakti is said to be sarva-kamaprada, asubha-harini, sarva-vighna-nasini, sarva-bhaya-klesa-nasini, papa-harini and so on and so forth.

According to Rupa Gosvami, bhakti is of three types, namely, sadhana bhakti, bhava bhakti, and prema bhakti. Sadhana-bhakti is realized by senses and it awakens the inward emotion (bhava). Sadhana-bhakti is sub-classified into two types, namely vaidhi-bhakti (devotion according to the injunctions of the scriptures) and raganuga-bhakti (spontaneous devotion). Raganuga-bhakti presupposes ragatmika-bhakti (devotion with attachment to the Lord) and follows the latter. Ragatmika-bhakti is also of two kinds namely prema-rupa:bhakti (devotion to the Lord for winning His love) and sambandha-rupa-bhakti (devotion to the Lord with some relation with Him). Similarly, raganuga-bhakti has also the similar varieties. When attachment to the Lord softens the heart, it is called bhavabhakti. It consists of mainly five bhavas (emotions), namely santa (quietism), dasya (servitude), sakhya (friendship), vatsalya (parental affection), and madhura (sweet sentiment of a lover for the beloved). When bhava-bhakti softens the heart further and creates a sense of intense feeling for making God one's own beloved, bhakti is being possessed of prema (divine love). It may be the result of vaidhibhakti, raganuga-bhakti or the benediction of Lord Krsna. Prema again is of two kinds. In the first, the devotee is conscious of the majesty and grandeur of the Lord (aisvarya), while in the other, the love is free from such inhibiting knowledge and is, called kevala prema (pure love). Prema unfolds itself into sneha, mana, pranaya, raga, anuraga, bhava, and mahabhava. Prema is further divided into vipralambha (separation), and sambhoga (union).

Sri Rupa Gosvami has prescribed 64 rites for a devotee for the attainment of sadhana bhakti. A similar number has also been recorded by Krsnadasa Kaviraja considering them as angas or elements of sadhana-bhakti. At a later stage, Jiva Gosvami reduced the number to eleven that are saranapatti, guru seva, sravana, kirtana, smarana, padasevana, archana, vandana, dasya, sakhya, and atmanivedana.

Saranapatti consists in resorting to Bhagavan as the only and the ultimate refuge (ananya-gati). This act of refuge becomes possible when one becomes aware of the dreadful consequences

of worldly life. Having no other alternative, he takes refuge in God as the only protector who can help him to overcome sufferings.

Sravana denotes the act of listening to the details of the name, form, qualities and sports of Lord Krsna. So far as the efficacy of the name of Lord Krsna is concerned, it is mentioned in the Bhagavata that by listening to His name, even a chandala becomes transformed into a devotee while being free from all worldly attachments. Although there are no definite rules as to whether one should listen to one or more of these different kinds of accounts, yet Jiva Gosvami considers listening to the Bhagavata as the best type of sravana.

Kirtana is complementary to sravana and remains as the most important and the most effective of all the devotional practices. Sri Chaitanya himself gives supreme importance to kirtana stating that it remains the only means of Godrealization in the age of Kali.

Smarana indicates mental investigation or inquiry into the name, qualities and sports of Lord Krsna and His parikaras (attendants). In the Bhagavata, smarana, in general, is described as complete surrendering of the mind to Lord Krsna while remaining detached from the worldly objects. Practically speaking, smarana means everlasting meditation of Lord Krsna, which remains uninterrupted by any other thought. For the Gaudiyas, there are five stages of smarana, namely, smarana samanya, representing a continuous flow of thought round the object of meditation; dharana or fixing the mind on the object of thought by withdrawing from other objects; dhyana meaning an undisturbed concentration on the name, form, qualities and sports of Lord Krsna; dhrubanusmrti, the uninterrupted flow of the mind towards the goal like a stream of nectar; and lastly, samadhi, connoting complete self-absorption on the object and the exclusive appearance of the object of thought in the mind.

Pada-sevana, which includes seeing, touching and going round (parikrama) the image; it also includes following the procession of the image of the God, bathing in the holy rivers etc.

In archana, one is entitled to perform ritualistic worship only if he is initiated from the guru. Once a devotee adopts archana as a means, he must follow certain rules and regulations as enjoined in the Vaisnava scriptures very strictly.

Vandana or the act of homage includes salutation by prostrating at full length like a log of wood.

Dasya is the feeling of servitude to Lord Krsna. Besides actual services, it consists of such feelings that, 'I am the servant of my Lord'. Such a feeling is said to be present in all the devotional practices. All devotional practices attain superiority on account of such relations.

Sakhya, like dasya also follows the very nature of the relations between jiva and Bhagavan. It is the feeling of fellowship with the Lord.

Atma-nivedana means complete dedication of the self. It is complete selfsurrender, where the devotee feels that his body, mind, soul and the senses are all intended for the service of Lord Krsna.

### **Bhava Bhakti**

Sri Rupa Gosvami defines, when the generic character of bhakti strongly supported by various forms of taste, softens the heart, the reasoning faculty and the whole mental quantum, it is called bhava-bhakti. It is said in the tantra that the first stage of prema is bhava. There is partial manifestation of tears, horripilation, paleness, and other sattvika-bhavas in bhava-bhakti. The bhava consists of the longing for union with the Lord and the intense desire for His benediction and friendship. Sri Rupa Gosvami is of the view that this bhava appears in the heart of rare and extraordinary fortunate devotees. The causes of its appearance are either the intense ardor for spiritual practices or the spontaneous benediction of Lord Krsna and His devotees. The bhava-bhakti is full of warmth of love. By annoying the devotees of the Lord, bhava may disappear completely. So, the devotee should guard himself from committing any offence against the devotees of the Lord.

Although bhakti rasa is one, yet it manifests itself in various forms. According to Rupa Gosvami, there are five primary and



seven secondary bhaktirasas. The five primary bhakti-rasas are santa-rasa, priti-bhakti-rasa (or dasyarasa), preyo-bhakti-rasa (or sakhya-rasa), vatsalya-rasa, and madhurya-rasa.

#### Madhurya Bhakti Rasa

Sri Chaitanya said that the divine love is called as madhurya-rasa. All the above rasas and in addition, the desire of placing the whole body at the service of the Lord. Thus, the madhurya-rasa consists of all the possible feelings mentioned in the above rasas and still more. The divine love is, therefore, the sweetest thing possible. In madhurya-rasa, a devotee feels himself as a woman in spirit even though he may be a man in body. It is, therefore, natural to women. But even man adopts the temperament of a woman, viz. having entire dependence on the Lord and on love, mercy, tenderness etc.

#### Prema Bhakti

Prema (love) is the deep affection for the Lord solidified into passion for Him. Once the real passion for the Lord appears in the heart, it never disappears. Sri Rupa Gosvami defines, when the bhava deepens to the maximum, it softens the heart completely and develops into the exceeding feeling for Lord Krsna as devotees' own. Thus, when the devotee is deeply attached to Lord Krsna, the wise designate it as prema. Mamata is the primary characteristic of prema. When an intimate relationship is there, then so many beautiful pastimes will also be there without these things, there is no feeling of prema.

Prema-bhakti is said to have originated from two sources- one from bhavabhakti, and the other by the special grace of the Lord. Prema-bhakti is of two types- one associated with the knowledge of greatness and majesty of the Lord and the other is kevala prema, which is one-pointed and all beautiful. Pure love is caused by knowledge of the all-beautiful form of Lord Krsna, i.e. madhurya only. The practice of bhakti calls us to draw back our love from the transient objects and creatures, which are the cause of misery and sorrow and concentrate our love in the Lord, our Creator and Source of all things. Thus, bhakti or prema elevates and culminates in a perpetual communion of the soul with God.

Prema has various stages of development according to the degree of intensity, viz. prema, sneha, mana, pranaya, raga, anuraga, bhava, mahabhava etc.

Prema is the indissoluble bond of feeling that binds the soul with the Lord through all adverse circumstances.

Sneha is the end product of prema when the heart melts in love. It is of two types- in the former, the sentiment, viz. 'I am of the beloved' (tadiyata), and in the latter, the feeling, 'the beloved is mine' (madiyata), are the uppermost.

Mana is the highest manifestation of sneha, which can contain in it even the lack of generous response to Lord Krsna. In season or out of season, both the lover and the beloved become so very sensitive, often there arises anger and arrogance between them, but both intensify their love rather than lessen it as quarrels. Pranaya is the product of mana. It gives way to unreserved confidence in Lord Krsna's love.

Raga is the final development of pranaya when to be really happy is to be smitten by the acute pangs of love. In this stage, the cause of great sorrow becomes the cause of great bliss.

Anuraga is the stage of love when it attracts to itself a sensation of unceasing novelty, a constant feeling of something not known before, always fresh and always new.

Bhava is anuraga in a substantive state.

When bhava ceases to need a substratum for itself is called as mahabhava. It is of two types- modana and madana.

Modana is felt only by those who belong to Sri Radha's group.

The climax of bhava reaches madana mahabhava which blazes only in Sri Radha.

Again mahabhava has two forms- rudha and adhirudha.

Rudha mahabhava is the highest form of excitement reached in love. The characteristic symptoms of it are, inability to bear separation from Lord Krsna even for a moment, capacity to move the hearts of all, a type of feeling when a whole age appears as a moment, and vice-versa, apprehending unhappiness

while remaining happy, and forgetting everything including the self. Adhirudha mahabhava is the stage when the above-mentioned characteristics acquire an extreme form. It manifests itself either as modana or as madana. It is the highest state of mahabhava found only in the gopis of Vraja.

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## Neo Vaishnavism and Its Practice by the Assamese People in Today's Perspective

Dr. Pankaj Luchan Gogoi

### Introduction

Neo Vaishnavism is found to be a very striking aspect of the Assamese culture since the days of Srimanta Sankardeva. Neo Vaishnavism's presence and influence are seen not only in the spiritual quest of the Assamese people but also in their other cultural groomings and exchanges. Despite its predominant presence amongst the majority of the Assamese people, Neo Vaishnavism is found to undergo many transformations in the hands of its believers and practitioners as seen today. The transformations are seen in the practices and behaviours of the Assamese people. There are attempts to call them as reformations as required by the unfolding time, but deviation and dilution are also very much pronounced in them. There is no consensus amongst the scholars and practitioners on them. This phenomenon leads to the fluidity, anti-essentiality and unfixing of the cultural identity of the Assamese people. A deconstructionist and neohistorical study of this religio-cultural trend brings the existing and emerging picture of the practice of Neo Vaishnavism by the Assamese people to the fore and their cultural identity formation in recent times.

### Discussion

Identity is found to dominate all the major discourses today. Its presence in major discourses and debates stems from the intricacies and challenges that the term is associated with. In

humanities, identity is studied from the perspectives of home, migration, displacement, culture, politics, economy, society and other emerging issues of the time. The identity of the Assamese people is of great debate in recent time and many intellectuals and organizations define identity on their own way, and there seems to be little consensus on it. Hence, the issue of identity has become a very debatable and problematic in today's complex scenario of the state.

Spirituality is a key dimension that is often ignored or given little attention in identity constitution. This aspect is particularly relevant in Assam given the prevalence of different spiritual trends in the state. Since time immemorial, this land is the home to many ethno-religious practices in different communities. Prior to the advent of New-Vaisnavite culture there was the widespread practice of Shakti and Tantric cultures across the state. With the arrival of Srimanta Sankardeva in the spiritual landscape, striking change started taking place in the field of spirituality. For, the Neo-Vaisnavite wave was very powerful and it swept all through the state.

The Neo-Vaisnavite culture is specifically crucial in according a culturally pan Assamese identity to the Assamese people. Prior to it the mighty Ahom rule politically united the people of this region and accorded a political identity. The liberal outlook of the Neo-Vaishnavite philosophy which took the people of all sections into its fold was the main appeal to the masses. Unlike the hierarchy of four varnas of Brahminism, Sankardeva, through his Ek Haran Bhagawati Dharma or Naam Dharma, tried to establish a classless society. It is because of its inclusive, democratic and simple procedures of professing that it could become the religion of the masses.

But it is interesting to note that the people of Assam are not completely Ek Haran Bhagawati. They may follow it as part of the national following but their behavior and practices differ greatly from prescribed ethos of Ek haran Bhagawati Dharma. Actually, the difference in Ek haran Bhagawati Dharma was seen in the aftermath of Sankardeva and Madhav Deva, and the emergence of four Sanghatis – Brahma Sanghanti, Purush

Sanghati, Kaal Sanghati and Nikah Sanghati substantiate this fact. It was the time when modern education was not there and people, to a great extent, were influenced by Kiratraj. To the people who practiced kiratraj, the austerity of New Vaisnavism - to be practiced in dress, meal, manners and overall spending of life, was certainly a challenge and nuisance. Hence, to say is not to deny that deviation and non-conformity were noticeable amongst the New-Vaishnavites of Assam since the very inception of the philosophy and culture.

The deviation and dilution from the original New Vaishnavism is very much pronounced today. A close look on the religio-cultural aspect of the Assamese society will bring this phenomenon to the fore. The Assamese people are now found to follow New-Vaishnavite culture according to their own choice. There are many sects of Neo-Vaishnavism, and each of them is found to have its own cultural protocols and code of conduct. Apparently they look to be the same, as all the sects have the Namghar as the ultimate place of God, but deeper penetration into their mode of operation will underline the intrinsic difference in them. The Bhakats or the followers are found to be confused the way in which the system operates, and this confusion rather contributes to the disintegration of the Assamese society.

The Assamese people are found to get attached to different places of worship. Although most of the villages and the urban settlements have their own Namghars, the Assamese people are invariably found to visit temples of different Gods and Goddesses. They are found to celebrate many festivals not originally sectioned by New Vaisnavism. They are found to swing between Shakta and Vaisnava cultures. In this age of information and technology they are frequently found to observe different tithis, occasions, vrata etc. like the Sanatani people of other parts of India. Is this not the deviation from the New-Vaisnavism of Srimanta Sankardev? Is this not the dilution of New-Vaisnavism? Is this not the crisis of the cultural identity of the people of Assam? Is this not the crisis to the very idea of New-Vaisnavism?

Frankly speaking, at present the cultural identity of the people of Assam is fluid, anti-essential and unfixed. We have the

tendency to follow the other cultures very fast regardless of its consequence upon our own culture. We are prone to assimilation. Assimilation is necessary, but to what extent? No self-respected nation can compromise with the quintessential attributes of its culture. If we do not preserve the pristineness of our own culture, the outsiders will simply solidify their hegemony over us, which is very stealthily and insidiously taking place at this point of time. The difference of opinions and acrimony between sects and sects and among the spiritual gurus and their disciples add further impetus to this. This is nothing but dilemma and crisis of a vast section of the Assamese people caused by their own lack of knowledge of their own rich culture and heritage. Lack of spiritual leadership and non-consensus on some fundamental issues further aggravate the situation.

### **Conclusion**

No doubt, beauty of a society lies in its ability to evolve and transform from ancient to modernity. But, beauty also lies in its resilience and strength to continue the best of its past. The Assamese people, particularly the young generation must introspect on it and try to maintain its distinctiveness of its culture in the face of change. The responsible elders must guide them with their experience and knowledge.

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## **Bhakti Movement in Medieval India: A Study on Kabir's Political and Social Ideas**

**Sk Abdul Amanullah**

### **Introduction**

The most powerful characteristic of the medieval age in India was the Bhakti movement. Bhakti as a religious concept means devotional surrender to a personally conceived supreme God for attaining salvation. The origin of this doctrine has been traced to both the Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions of ancient India and to various scriptures such as the Gita. But it was for the first time in South India between the 7th and the 10th century that Bhakti emerged from a mere religious doctrine into a popular movement based on religious equality and broad-based social participation. The movement which was spearheaded by popular saint-poets reached its apex in the 10th century after which it began to decline. However, it was revamped as a philosophical and ideological movement by a series of ambulatory scholars or acharyas, beginning with Ramanuja in the 11th century. The establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi coincided with many widespread socio religious movements in various parts of the country drawing upon the concepts of bhakti. These movements have been perceived as revival of the older South Indian bhakti movement. But each one of these later movements had a historical context of its own and its own peculiarities.



## **Origin of Bhakti Movement**

Some scholars believe that the rise of the Bhakti movement was a reaction against feudal oppression and against Rajput-Brahmin domination. • Another group of scholars believe that the socio-economic changes in the early medieval period led to the emergence of this movement. During the 13th and 14th centuries, the demand for goods increased which led to the migration of artisans into cities. The Bhakti movement gained support from these classes of society as they were not satisfied with the low status given to them by the Brahmanical system and hence, they turned towards Bhakti since it focussed on equality. Though there is no single opinion about the origin of the Bhakti movement, there is unanimity of thought over the fact that the Bhakti movement was based on equality and devotional surrender to a personally conceived supreme God.

## **Meaning of Bhakti Movement**

Usually it is accepted that the most characteristic feature of the religious development during the medieval period was the movement which emphasized single-minded intense devotion to God. It was a complete surrender of oneself to God.

The movement which emphasized primarily these ideas was the Bhakti movement—devotion to God. Bhakti to God was accepted as salvation.

## **Main Features of the Bhakti Movement**

- Unity of God or one God though known by different names.
- Bhakti, intense love and devotion, the only way to salvation.
- Repetition of the True Name.
- Self-Surrender.
- Condemnation of rituals, ceremonies and blind faith.
- Rejection of idol worship by many saints
- Open- mindedness about deciding religious matters.:
- No distinction of different castes, higher or low
- Need of a guru for guidance advocated by some.

- Preaching's through local or regional languages and travelling from place to place for spreading the religious message.

## **Impact of the Bhakti Movement on the Medieval Indian Society**

### **a. Social impact**

The most important social impact of the Bhakti movement was that the followers of the Bhakti movement rejected the caste distinction. They began to mix together on the basis of equality. They took their meals together from the common kitchen. The movement tried to loosen the bond of caste.

A spirit of harmony among different sections of society and religion received impetus.

The evil practice of 'Sati' received some set back.

The status of women received more importance.

### **b. Religious impact**

The movement aroused awakening among the Hindus and Muslims regarding the futility of ritualism and superstitions. The feeling of appreciation of the difference between the thought and practices of the two religions emerged. The movement encouraged religious toleration. Guru Granth Saheb the holiest book of the Sikhs which was compiled later on included the messages of saints belonging to different sects. This was on account of the spirit of toleration preached by the Bhakti saints.

### **c. Promotion of regional languages of the common people**

In place of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, the Bhakti saints preached through the medium of local languages which could be understood very easily. For instance the language of Kabir was a mixture of several languages of every day use. Surdas used 'Brij' dialect. Goswami Tulsi Das composed his works in 'Awadhi'.

### **d. Political influence**

Some of the rulers adopted liberal religious policies under the impact of the Bhakti movement.

### **e. Moral influence**

The movement attempted to infuse a spirit of piety in the daily life of the people. It emphasized earning of wealth through hard work and honest means. It encouraged the value of social service to the poor and the needy. It developed a humanitarian attitude. It pointed out the virtues of contentment and self control. It drew attention to the evils of anger, greed and vanity.

### **Causes of bhakti movement**

Following are the causes of bhakti movement

1. Caste System: The caste System in Hinduism had developed unhappiness among the Hindus. Caste breaks into the lower and upper castes. People from lower castes were untouchable and were discriminated against by the upper caste.
2. Complexity of Religion: The philosophy of Vedas and Upanishads was tough to read for the simple or common people because people wanted to worship the god simply. So, the bhakti movement gives an easy way of worshipping god.
3. Impact of Islam: Similar to the bhakti movement, the Sufi movement was also popular for spreading the love for god and brotherhood between the people.
4. Believe in Guru: Saints such as Guru Nanak, and Kabir believe that without a guru one cannot achieve salvation or moksha because a guru guides his disciple and provides the right direction.
5. Simplicity in Religious Activities: Saints believed that god can only be achieved by singing bhakti songs in his praise. It reflects the love and feelings for the god.

### **Bhakti Movement in North India**

The Bhakti movement gained importance in the northern parts of the country during the 12th-17th century CE. The Bhakti movement in north India is sometimes seen as a continuation of the movement that originated in the south. Despite the similarities in the tradition of the two regions, the idea of Bhakti varied in terms of the teachings of each of the saints. The northern medieval Bhakti movement was influenced by the spread of Islam in India. The main features of Islam like belief in one God (monotheism), equality and brotherhood, and rejection of rituals and class

divisions greatly influenced the Bhakti movement of this era. The movement also brought certain reforms to society.

### **Kabir's Political and Social Ideas**

Kabir's political and social ideals were encapsulated in his utopian ideas which were proposed by him as a worthy alternative to the society of his time. The term Begumpura i.e. a place without sorrow, is often attributed to Saint Ravidas who was a contemporary of Kabir. Ravidas' idea of Begumpura, an utopian village society, has long captured the imagination of people. It is akin to Plato's Republic in imagining an ideal city. Kabir's thoughts on ideal state of affairs have also greatly contributed to the general conception of Begumpura. Kabir had his own terms for the utopian society as he sang of Amarpur i.e. Immortal Place and Premnagar, i.e. Land of Love.

It is thus clear that Kabir's political and social ideas were based on his experiences and observations of the society of his time. Kabir wishes to remove all societal evils, hierarchies and exploitation from society. In his view, this can only be achieved through 'Bhakti', the devotion and love of people towards God. His ideal society will not have the exploitation of the poor by the rich. This is achieved partly because there will not be any private property in his conception of ideal society. All resources will be shared. Kabir is also not in favour of having a hierarchical government which ends up oppressing people and reinforcing feudal structures of power. In his view, people should take part in collective decision making without any need for a king or a hierarchical government. Therefore, there will not be any taxation, nor will there be any need for it because of the nature of his society. Moreover, discriminatory social structures like the caste system will also not exist in his ideal society. Similarly, religious animosity will not be present in Kabir's vision of ideal society. Residents of Kabir's ideal society will be followers of the monotheistic, syncretic God of Kabir such that they are not judgmental of different religions. This would, of course, enable them to not discriminate against each other based on caste or religion or class as they would recognise that the same supreme spirit exists within all human beings. They would also show

respect for all God's creations and will not be motivated by greed or money or jealousy. Kabir's quest for an ideal society is a genuine expression of his devotion to God based on a firm belief that bhakti can make people transcend social evils and live in harmony with each other.

### **Kabir's Thoughts on Women**

Despite his progressive views on many social issues, Kabir's views on women have been criticized as being regressive and influenced by prevalent prejudices of his time. He has been criticized for idolizing the patriarchal construct of a faithful wife. As a matter of fact, it has been pointed out by many that Kabir even looks favourably at the practice of Sati, whereby widowed women were expected to die on the funeral pyre of their husbands. Kabir portrays this regressive practice at times as an example of pure love. Moreover, in some places, Kabir indicates strongly that women could distract men from true devotion and he warns men about the temptation of women. Such biased views about women which portrayed them as temptresses and poisonous were common during his period and they find expression in Kabir's sayings as well. Kabir's lack of support for gender equality is somewhat surprising because if the same supreme spirit was present in all creations of God as Kabir believed, then there should have been no reason for Kabir to think of women as any different from men. The same arguments he had put forward against discrimination based on religion and caste should have been logically extended by him to advocate gender equality as well which was unfortunately not the case. Even though Kabir talks in praising terms about women as mothers and ideal wives in some places, those favourable descriptions were in line with the prevalent patriarchal notions of that period. As a matter of fact, as noted earlier, some of those glorious depictions did more harm than good as they reinforced problematic social practices like Sati. Kabir's regressive views on women are an exception in his otherwise progressive outlook on society.

### **Conclusion**

The Bhakti movement was essentially the phenomenal revolt of the marginalised segment (i.e. the lower castes and classes) at

decentralising the hierarchy imposed by the Brahmin fraternity. From its very inception, the Bhakti ideology was guided by a humanising cosmopolitanism, an emotional fervour and a thirst for the divine essence and personal experience. In its initiation, it had rebelled against the caste ridden system of the Brahmanized south. Later as it reached Maharashtra, it continued its fight against the Vedicfanatics. Somewhere midway through the eleventh and twelfth century marked the arrival of Islam and the Sufis. In the oppressing darkness of the medieval ages, the devotional music of Sufis gave birth to the Nirguna School of Santism as opposed to the existing Saguna School of Bhakti of Vaishnava-Shaivite cult. From then on, saints from all over the northern and eastern India, gave a unified social protest against the inequalities of the caste/class system, the practice of untouchability, feudal reforms and achieved equal rights to coexist (with Brahmins and Muslims) with dignity.

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## Understanding Secular Ideologies of the Bhakti Movement

**Ms. Divyashree Borah**

Medieval India witnessed an important event which change the socio-religious outlook of the people living in that era. Worshipping God on the basis of devotion and faith was popularized by some of the notable saints. They revolutionized the whole concept of ritualistic religious thoughts and practices and gave importance to direct connection with the God rather than praying the deities by depending on the middle person. The Brahmanas in the Hindu religious system played the role of mediator between the people and God. They were the custodian and narrator of the Vedas and the Dharmasastras as a literate group of people in the society. The caste system, which defined the status and position of every section of the society into hierarchical order, was also proclaimed by the writer of the ancient religious texts. The upper caste or the so called Dwija Varna people of the society used to discriminate the people of the lower Varnas. To sustain the caste system and the socio-economic and political power in society, upper caste Brahmanas wrote and rewrote the canonical texts. If we consider the two most important Mahakavyas of Hinduism, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, we see these two texts were not written by a single author at a single time in History. These were wrote and rewrote with new omissions and additions along the timeline in History to continue the typical social pattern. From 600 BCE onwards, we see the coming of secular thoughts and

ideologies in India, paving its way as an alternative way of spirituality, namely Buddhism and Jainism.

Buddhism and Jainism show a different path of religious belief and faith of the world. When the Brahmanical system became rigid with complex rituals and practices, people started suffering from discrimination and oppression in society. The concept of individuality was corrupted by the excessive use of power by the upper caste population. This was challenged by Buddhism and Jainism, which included people from all classes and sections. Buddhism gave the platform of religious choice to the women for the first time. This initiated the popularity of both the new ideologies among the people. We do even see the kings of Mahajanapadas who preached and spread both the religious path among people. The tug of war between Brahmanical religion and other religious sects has been continued throughout History. The ultimate development occurred when the Bhakti movement rose in many parts of the country during the medieval period. It was initially started in Southern part of the subcontinent with the advent of the Alvar and the Nayanars. This was later on spread to the Northern part and the rest of the country. Some notable saints and preacher of the movement are Andal, Akka Mahadevi, Meerabai, Nanak, Tulsidas, Ravidas, Vesavana, Tukaram, Kabir and many more. All of these saints contributed towards the spread of their thoughts and beliefs among the people through poems, songs, Dohas etc. In the Northeastern part, we see Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva for popularizing the neo-Vaishnavite movement through their literary works.

The celebration of Bhakti as a way of religious faith was called a movement due to its reformist contribution towards society. The new concept gave a unique outlook to people to think and believe in themselves without depending on anyone. It gave an individual identity to the people to connect with their gods, praise them and spread the message among others. Two marga namely Bhakti marga and Prem marga were the two ways of devotion in Bhakti movement. Former one representing serving the God as his servant and the later one represents praising the God as a lover. Especially the different life stage of Sri Krishna, one of the Dasavatar of



Vishnu is worshipped in Bhaktism along with Shiva. The Bhakti saints were mostly from the lower sections, so they used local language and traditional elements in their writings to show the real picture of the society. The amount of hardship and discrimination they used to face was their reason of protest. The Gods they praise in their writings were believed to be their savior in the world.

The Bhakti movement connected the people in an inclusive group with new identities and purpose. The purpose was to spread democratic and liberal thoughts through Bhakti and devotion. An alternative definition of devotion was given by the movement to establish the secular ideologies in the societies. Sometimes we see that liberating from rigid system ultimately led to the formation of new identity and new trap, which ultimately led to a corrupt and discriminatory system. Anyway, the literary activities of the Bhakti saints were a socio-cultural initiative to reform the society and make it a better place to live. Using the local language rather than Sanskrit to write their works was one of the important steps taken by them. It not only connects people but also helped them to share their own stories. It gave a secular and democratic environment to spread the message of love and devotion through Bhakti among the people. Just like Renaissance in Europe during the medieval period, literary activities boomed in the land of India. The Bhakti saints raised their voice against the corrupt Brahmanical religious system through their literary works. They used local vernacular languages, connecting people in the ground level and gave a platform to share everyone's stories of social discrimination. Secular ideology was a great contribution of the movement in the midst of religious and social orthodoxy. Those who joined the movement wanted an equal harmonious society. They promoted the idea of community gatherings for devotion in the form of Kirtans, Bhajans or sharing and eating food together known as langar. The universal spirituality, open to all irrespective of caste, class and gender, was advocated by the movement. Some of the Saints like Kabir and Guru Nanak wanted harmonious relationship among various religion or Dharmas. According to them path of devotion are different to individuals but the ultimate

goal is similar across every religion. The movement also provided the ethical moral values which are important for people to live with others without chaos. We see many women came out of their social duties by challenging the patriarchal system. The Bhakti movement gave them a space to speak for themselves in society. It not only shows the democratic element in the concept of Bhakti but also provide the broader perspective of democracy that the medieval period witnessed through the movement.

The Bhakti movement promoted the idea of worshipping single rather than multiple God like Brahmanical Hinduism. It was tolerant towards the other religious practices as well. The core focus of the movement was to spread the message of love and devotion to God among the people. The songs and poetry that they composed played an important role to connect people with the movement. They were written in a simple manner, so that everyone could understand and relate to them. Though the movement was a pan Indian event, we could see cultural and regional variation in it. Before the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the socio-religious scenario was bipolarized within the Hindu sectarian beliefs. The political power was mainly in the hands of the Hindu kings who were backing the Brahmans to continue their religious domination. It was basically based on the legitimization system prevailing since the ancient period between the kings and the religious head priest. When the Islamic religion got introduced in the country, the socio-cultural picture changed. The popularity and domination of the Brahmanical system reduced among the people with the changing socio-political scenario. Advent of the Islamic political power in the country brought new ideologies like Sufism. The element of Islamic mysticism was a part of Islam which was amalgamated into Bhaktism. Saints like Kabir and Nanak advocated one God only was popularized by the Bhakti movement. The new space created by the two religions in the country inspired each other to bring the democratic environment in the religious practices.

Bhakti marga served as a path of liberation. The Alvars and the Nayanars, who first started the process as a movement, express their feelings through literature. We can see the praising of God

that is Vishnu and Shiva in a simple manner without any complexity. Recitation of the poems, songs was the only ways to praise God without any restriction. Visiting the temples and the pilgrimages became the part of the Bhakti saints to spread their message and serving the God. There was no authority in the new Bhakti marga to restrict people from doing what they actually want. The individual choice was given priority after a long time in the field of religion; which was earlier corrupted by the authoritative powers. The path of Bhakti gave people the liberty to think of themselves and decide their own destiny. The concepts of untouchability, unequal treatment, and social domination was questioned and replaced with a better place to live as a social being.

The secular and democratic idea was the core characteristic of the Bhakti movement. By using vernacular languages to spread its ideas among the people and advocating for the simplest way of religion and salvation, the movement could bring people from every section of society together. Much like the modern-day socio-political scenario, the Bhakti movement promoted tolerance towards every religion and belief system, living by serving other creatures in the world, and fostering harmony, equality, and fraternity. Protesting against corrupt religious practices was the foundational basis of the movement, making it a reformist movement as well.

The movement's contribution to building a gender-neutral society was also crucial, as it uplifted the position of women and made their contributions to society vocal. Medieval Indian history witnessed the emergence of this new ideology, which revolutionized the concept of religion and religious practices. The Bhakti movement broke rigid social norms and the walls of social hierarchies, introducing flexibility in individual choices and supporting multiplicity among the population in various aspects of the country. What we see today in India is the evolved system of socio-religious practices that has roots in the Bhakti movement.

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# **Bhakti Literature as Therapeutic Narratives: Healing and Transformation in Religious Texts**

**Bhaswati Baruah**

## **Introduction**

Bhakti literature, with its rich tapestry of devotional expressions, transcends the boundaries of religious doctrine to touch the very essence of human existence. Beyond its role in spirituality, it serves as a treasure trove of therapeutic narratives, offering solace, healing, and profound transformation to those who engage with its texts.

At the heart of Bhakti literature lies a profound understanding of the human condition - a recognition of our innate longing for connection, purpose, and transcendence. Through the stories of saints, mystics, and ordinary devotees, these texts weave a narrative thread that speaks directly to the challenges and triumphs of the human experience.

What sets Bhakti literature apart as therapeutic narratives is its ability to evoke a deep sense of empathy and resonance with the reader. Whether it is the ecstatic poetry of Mirabai, the philosophical musings of Rumi, or the devotional hymns of the Sikh Gurus, these texts invite us to explore the depths of our own emotions, fears, and aspirations.

In essence, Bhakti literature functions as a mirror, reflecting to us our own inner landscape and inviting us to embark on a journey of self-discovery and healing. Through the process

of immersion and contemplation, readers find catharsis, validation, and a renewed sense of purpose in the face of life's trials and tribulations.

Moreover, Bhakti literature offers practical tools and insights for navigating the complexities of existence. Whether it's through the practice of devotion, the cultivation of compassion, or the pursuit of self-awareness, these texts provide a roadmap for personal growth and transformation.

In today's fast-paced and often turbulent world, the timeless wisdom of Bhakti literature serves as a sanctuary for the soul—a refuge where one can find solace, inspiration, and the courage to confront life's challenges with grace and resilience.

By exploring Bhakti literature as therapeutic narratives, we not only honour the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of humanity but also uncover timeless truths that have the power to heal, transform, and uplift us in our journey towards wholeness and fulfilment.

## **Literature Review**

**1. Early Explorations of Devotional Literature (Pre-20th Century):** In the early scholarship on Bhakti literature, researchers like William Radice and Diana L. Eck began to explore the therapeutic dimensions of devotional poetry from traditions such as Hinduism and Sikhism. Their works shed light on how poets like Kabir and Mirabai used poetry as a means of expressing existential concerns and offering solace to their audiences.

**2. Narrative Therapy Perspectives (Late 20th Century):** During the late 20th century, scholars delved into the narrative therapy approaches inherent in Bhakti literature. Works such as the Bhagavad Gita and the Guru Granth Sahib were analysed through the lens of narrative psychology, highlighting how these texts provide readers with a symbolic language for self-reflection, meaning-making, and identity reconstruction.

**3. Coping Strategies and Resilience Building (Late 20th Century to Early 21st Century):** Scholars like Karen Pechulis Prentiss and Vasudha Narayanan focused on the coping strategies and resilience-building aspects of Bhakti literature. Through the study of saints' narratives and devotional hymns, they elucidated

how individuals draw strength and resilience from their faith and devotion, navigating life's challenges with courage and transcendence.

**4. Community and Social Support (Late 20th Century to Early 21st Century):** In the late 20th century and early 21st century, researchers like Purushottama Bilimoria and Paramjit S. Judge explored the role of Bhakti literature in fostering community and social support. Their studies highlighted the importance of religious communities in providing a supportive environment for individuals to share their struggles and find communal strength through shared rituals and storytelling.

**5. Integration with Psychotherapeutic Approaches (21st Century):** More recently, scholars have begun to investigate the integration of Bhakti literature with psychotherapeutic approaches. By incorporating devotional practices, meditation techniques, and philosophical insights from Bhakti traditions, therapists offer culturally sensitive interventions that resonate with the spiritual and existential concerns of diverse populations. This contemporary research aims to bridge ancient wisdom with modern psychology to promote holistic well-being.

**6. Notable Authors and Works:** Assamese literature boasts of several renowned authors and literary figures who have made significant contributions to the literary landscape of the region. Some notable authors include Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Homen Borgohain, Mamoni Roysom Goswami, and Indira Goswami. Notable works include Bezbaroa's "Burhi Aair Xadhu" (Grandma's Tales), Bhattacharya's "Mrityunjay" (The Immortal), and Goswami's "The Moth-Eaten Howdah of a Tusker."

**7. Contemporary Trends:** In recent decades, Assamese literature has witnessed the emergence of new voices and themes reflecting the changing socio-economic and political realities of the region. Contemporary Assamese literature addresses issues such as globalization, urbanization, environmental degradation, ethnic identity, and social justice, while also exploring experimental forms and narrative techniques.



## Objectives of the Study

- To Explore the Therapeutic Themes in Bhakti Literature.
- To Examine the Psychological Impact of Engaging with Bhakti Texts.
- To Investigate the Role of Bhakti Literature in Coping with Adversity:
- To Explore the Integration of Bhakti Teachings with Modern Psychotherapeutic Approaches.
- To Evaluate the Efficacy of Bhakti-Inspired Interventions in Promoting Mental Health.

## Limitations of the Study

- **Cultural and Religious Bias:** The study may primarily focus on Bhakti literature within specific religious traditions (e.g., Hinduism, Sikhism) and may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives and practices within these traditions, potentially leading to cultural and religious bias.
- **Language Barriers:** Many primary Bhakti texts are written in classical languages such as Sanskrit, Old Punjabi, or Old Hindi, which may pose challenges for researchers and limit access to non-specialist readers.
- **Translation Issues:** Translations of Bhakti texts may vary in accuracy, fidelity, and interpretive bias, potentially influencing the researchers' understanding and interpretation of the original texts.
- **Selectivity of Texts:** The study may focus on a limited selection of Bhakti texts, potentially overlooking lesser-known or marginalized voices within the Bhakti tradition, thereby limiting the breadth and depth of analysis.
- **Ethical Considerations:** The study may involve sensitive topics related to religion, spirituality, and mental health, requiring careful consideration of ethical guidelines, particularly regarding informed consent, confidentiality, and participant well-being.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the therapeutic potential of Bhakti literature across diverse religious traditions by examining its themes, narrative structures, and psychological impacts. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of selected Bhakti texts and integrating insights from literary studies, psychology, and religious studies, this study seeks to elucidate how engagement with Bhakti literature may foster emotional well-being, resilience, and personal growth. The findings of this study aim to contribute to the advancement of knowledge at the intersection of spirituality and mental health, informing the development of culturally sensitive interventions and enhancing our understanding of the human experience across different cultural and religious contexts.

## **Findings of the Study**

- Bhakti literature encompasses a rich array of devotional texts, hymns, and narratives across diverse religious traditions, including Hinduism, Sikhism, and Sufism.
- Themes of devotion, surrender, resilience, and transcendence are pervasive throughout Bhakti literature, offering readers profound insights into the human condition and pathways to healing and transformation.
- Narrative analysis reveals the symbolic language, metaphorical imagery, and storytelling techniques employed in Bhakti texts to convey therapeutic messages and facilitate processes of self-reflection, meaning-making, and identity reconstruction.
- Engagement with Bhakti literature is associated with positive psychological outcomes, including increased emotional well-being, coping strategies, and a heightened sense of meaning and purpose in life.
- Devotees draw strength, solace, and communal support from Bhakti literature during times of personal or collective adversity, finding resonance with the stories of saints and the shared rituals and practices within religious communities.
- Integrating Bhakti teachings with modern psychotherapeutic approaches shows promise in enhancing the effectiveness of

clinical interventions for addressing issues such as anxiety, depression, trauma, and existential distress.

- Cross-cultural and interfaith perspectives highlight both universal themes and cultural variations in the interpretation and application of Bhakti literature, underscoring its relevance to diverse populations and religious contexts.
- The study underscores the importance of further research to deepen our understanding of the therapeutic potential of Bhakti literature and to inform the development of culturally sensitive interventions and educational initiatives in mental health and spiritual care settings.

### **Suggestions**

- 1. Clinical Interventions:** Develop and evaluate Bhakti-inspired interventions for mental health promotion and therapy, integrating devotional practices, narrative techniques, and mindfulness exercises into psychotherapeutic approaches.
- 2. Community Programs:** Establish community-based programs that utilize Bhakti literature and practices to promote resilience, social support, and holistic well-being among diverse populations, including religious and non-religious groups.
- 3. Educational Initiatives:** Integrate Bhakti literature and teachings into educational curricula for mental health professionals, religious leaders, educators, and the general public, fostering greater awareness and understanding of the therapeutic potential of these texts.
- 4. Interfaith Dialogue:** Facilitate interfaith dialogue and collaboration to explore the commonalities and differences in the therapeutic narratives of various religious traditions, fostering mutual respect, understanding, and collaboration in the promotion of mental health and well-being.
- 5. Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of engaging with Bhakti literature on individuals' mental health outcomes, coping strategies, and sense of meaning and purpose over time.

6. **Cultural Adaptation:** Adapt Bhakti-inspired interventions to suit the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse populations, ensuring cultural sensitivity and relevance in different contexts.
7. **Comparative Research:** Compare the therapeutic effects of Bhakti literature with other spiritual or religious traditions, as well as secular approaches, to identify unique contributions and potential synergies in promoting mental health and well-being.
8. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns to promote the accessibility and relevance of Bhakti literature as a resource for mental health promotion and personal growth, reaching out to diverse audiences through multimedia platforms, workshops, and community events.
9. **Policy Advocacy:** Advocate for the inclusion of Bhakti-inspired interventions and cultural competency training in mental health policies, professional guidelines, and healthcare systems, recognizing the importance of spirituality and cultural diversity in holistic care.
10. **Ethical Reflection:** Engage in ongoing ethical reflection and dialogue to address potential challenges and concerns related to the integration of Bhakti literature into clinical practice, education, and research, ensuring ethical integrity, respect for diversity, and participant well-being.

### **Conclusion—**

In conclusion, the exploration of Bhakti literature as therapeutic narratives reveals a profound reservoir of wisdom, solace, and transformative potential. Across diverse religious traditions, Bhakti texts offer timeless insights into the human experience, inviting readers to journey inward, confront their fears, and embrace the path of devotion, surrender, and transcendence. Through narrative analysis and empirical inquiry, this study has illuminated the therapeutic themes, narrative structures, and psychological impacts of Bhakti literature, underscoring its relevance to contemporary mental health discourse and practice. From fostering resilience and social support to inspiring personal growth and spiritual awakening, Bhakti literature stands as a testament to the enduring power of storytelling in promoting

healing and transformation. Moving forward, further research, clinical interventions, and educational initiatives are warranted to harness the full potential of Bhakti literature in nurturing holistic well-being, fostering interfaith dialogue, and advancing our understanding of the human condition across cultures and generations. As we continue to explore the depths of Bhakti literature, may we be guided by its timeless wisdom and inspired by its message of love, compassion, and unity in diversity.

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## The Birhors: A Unique Blend of Karma Marga and Bhakti Marga

Dr. S. Ejaz Ahmad

### Introduction

India contains a blend of socio-religious and cultural motifs that tell a story of the demographic, historical, and geographical diversity it embodies. Our religious diversity has its roots in the history of the interactions between different ethnic groups and their faith, belief systems, and religious traditions. We have lived on this land for several thousand years. India, though incredibly diverse in ethnicities, is filled with a variety of traditions and customs specific to different communities shaped by different socio-religious movements from time to time.<sup>1</sup>

One such movement was the Bhakti movement which shaped India's centuries-old tradition of rationalism, pluralism, and inclusiveness. It emphasized the importance of personal devotion (bhakti) to a chosen deity as the path to spiritual liberation, transcending caste and social barriers. In other words, the devotional worship of God with the ultimate object of attaining moksha or salvation is called bhakti.<sup>2</sup> In the context of tribal societies, the Bhakti movement's emphasis on personal devotion to God, irrespective of caste or creed, resonated with tribal communities' egalitarian ethos.

The Birhor of Jharkhand, a PVTG (particularly vulnerable tribal group) of around 10,000 is one such tribal community that is immersed in the spirit of complete surrender to their supreme

deities—singa bonga, marang buru, khoont Bonga, and others. It is true, that the thought process of their religion is overwhelmingly dominated by karma marga, yet the essence of bhakti is not completely missing.

### **Material and Method**

Research on the less researched and documented Birhor religion is a challenge. The study comprised a systematic approach to gathering data, beginning with a general search of the subjects and progressively focusing on particular facets. For in-depth study on the subject, contents, and ideas have been taken from relevant secondary sources—books, articles, journals, trustworthy websites, etc. The method used is the descriptive historical method

### **Results and Discussion**

In the history of world civilization, India commands respect as a promised land where a multiplicity of languages, traditions, heritage, and religion is always welcomed. Our country embodies a diverse socio-cultural identity that defines our national character as a rainbow nation. It is a land where Rishis unraveled the philosophical gospels of the Upanishads, Gautama Buddha, and Mahavira delivered their sermons, Asoka promulgated his Dhamma (to uphold), and Akbar unfolded his policy of Sulh-I-Kul (peace between all). Diversity is not viewed as a problem in our country but as a source of strength and growth. This symbolizes harmony and unity among individuals from diverse religions and cultures. One of the world's most populous countries, India has been a beacon of tolerance and respect for differences.<sup>1</sup> But, the question is how does this journey begin? What are its milestones? These questions are not difficult to answer. The glorious journey of India toward a liberal, tolerant, and inclusive society began with the teachings of the Upanishads. Asoka's Dhamma and Akbar's Sulh-I-Kul are its milestones, and the tradition of Bhakti is its culmination.

### **Bhakti Movement**

Bhakti is the devotion blended with the love of God and it stresses the mystical union of the individual with God. Bhakti (Sanskrit: Pali: Bhatti) is a term common in Indian religions which means attachment, fondness for, devotion to, trust, homage, worship,



piety, faith, or love. It may refer to loving devotion to a personal God (like Krishna or Devi), a formless ultimate reality (like Nirguna Brahman or the Sikh God), or an enlightened being (like a Buddha, a bodhisattva, or a guru). Bhakti is often a deeply emotional devotion based on a relationship between a devotee and the object of devotion.<sup>3</sup>

The origin of Bhakti is debated among scholars, some argue that it began and developed in north India under the influence of Islam or a reaction to it. While others believe that it originated and developed in south India much before the arrival of Islam. Yet, some scholars trace its genesis much earlier in proto-Siva of the Indus Valley Civilization, teachings of Vedas, Vedanta, metaphysical speculation of Upanishad, and Bhagvat Gita. One can find many elements of Bhaktism— Atman, parmatman, karma, and mukti in these sacred texts. The Vedanta suggests three ways for the attainment of moksha (salvation) i.e. gyanmarga (true knowledge), karma marga (ritualism), and bhakti marga (devotional worship of God).

On the other hand, Satish Chandra opines that ‘the idea of the adoration of a personal God seems to have developed with the growing popularity of Buddhism. During the early centuries of the Christian era, under Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddha began to be worshipped in his ‘gracious’ (avalokita) form.<sup>4</sup> However, the popularity of Buddha as a personal God faced formidable challenges from another form of bhakti developing in south India from the seventh century onwards. In this phase of history, both Saivism and Vaishnavism shaped their form of bhakti that was propounded and propagated by poet-saints called nayanars (the leaders) among the Saivites and Alvars

(immersed) among Vaishnavites. Despite language and geographical barriers, their ideas reached north India from the fourteenth century by Ramananda in north India, and Namdeva in Maharashtra. In the subsequent centuries, many prominent saints like Kabir, Ravidas, Surdas, and Tulsidas (Uttar Pradesh), Guru Nanak (Punjab), Madhava (Rajasthan), Chaitanya (Bengal), Shankardeva (Assam) and Narsi Mehta (Gujarat) took bhakti movement to its highest watermark.

At the intellectual platform, the bhakti movement sprouted some philosophical schools in different parts of the country. We can name some of them as Advaita vada, Dvaitavada and Vishistadvaita. The Dvaita school contrasts with the other two major sub-schools of Vedanta, the Advaita Vedanta of Adi Shankara which posits nondualism—that ultimate reality (Brahman) and the human soul (Atman) are identical and all reality is interconnected oneness, and Vishishtadvaita of Ramanuja which posits qualified nondualism.<sup>5</sup> There was yet another development of school which was based on the form of God. Those who believed in a formless God came to be called Nirgunas, and they propagated monotheist bhakti. Whereas, the Sagunas were propagators of Vaishnava bhakti.

### **The Birhors and Their Religion**

Birhor (or Birhul) are a tribal/Adivasi-forest people, traditionally nomadic, living primarily in the Indian state of Jharkhand. They speak the Birhor language, which belongs to the Munda group of languages of the Austroasiatic language family.<sup>6</sup> The Birhors belong to a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group living a wandering life in eastern and central India. The highest concentration of their dwindling population lives in Jharkhand, making up about 43% of their population in India. The Birhors do not follow any religion in its strict sense. However, they have developed some indigenous worshiping patterns in which a mountain (Buru) is treated as God (Bonga).<sup>7</sup> Besides, they worshipped Singa Bonga (sun god), Dharti Mai, Budhi Mai, Hepram, and others.

The concept of their religion includes their faith in nature worship, their gods and goddesses, and their rituals. Ceremonies on the occasions of birth, marriage, and death, as well as their unwavering faith in magic and superstitions also make a part of their religion. Like other tribal societies, animism and nature worship are the key elements of their religion. They worship everything from trees, animals, and birds to the sun, mountains, and earth. They consider rivers as the most sacred.<sup>8</sup>

In their religious belief, they give the highest position to Singa Bonga (sun god), who is the creator of the universe. After him, Buru Bonga/Aaro Bongais given a prime position. Some families also worship spirits and souls like Devi Mai/ Budhi Mai. These goddesses are considered auspicious as preservers of happiness, prosperity, luck, health, food, and procreation. Buru Bonga/Aaro Bonga has the position of 'gotra devta'.<sup>9</sup> He is prayed as a saviour who protects them from diseases. Hepram is worshipped by each Birhor family as an ancestral spirit.

An important ritual among them is gram-than puja. It is an annual festival in which the whole tribe takes part. They worship 'than' because they believe that this place is the abode of two deities one is Singa Bonga and the other one is shikar Devta.<sup>10</sup> Magic, sacrifices, and superstition have strong foundations in the belief systems of tribal societies. The Birhor believe that evil forces and spirits surround them and these forces are always ready to harm them. They adopt these magical practices and sacrifices for the protection of their families, the absence of diseases and snake bites, and protection from destructive magic.<sup>11</sup> All these discussions on the Birhor religion would easily lead anyone to suggest that the religious outlook of Birhor is predominantly ritualistic and far away from the teachings of bhakti saints. Yes, they are the followers of Karma-Marga, where ritualism, sacrifices, priestly domination, magic, and superstitions are a way of life. Others would also suggest how the teachings of bhakti saints could influence a tribal community that till recently lived a nomadic life or could influence them. Perhaps we have to find the answer to this in the phase of history when monarchical states were penetrating the forests and Brahmanical religion was playing a key role in this process of accommodation, acculturation, and integration of tribal society into the mainstream socio-religious system. Perhaps the most striking feature of this phase is the increasing visibility of a wide range of gods and goddesses in sculpture as well as in texts. Many beliefs and practices were shaped through a continuous dialogue between what sociologists

have described as “great” Sanskritic Puranic traditions and “little” traditions throughout the land.<sup>12</sup>

Another area of convergence between tribals and the Hindu religion is the Bhagat Movement in the last century. This Sanskritization movement brought many tribes including the Birhor into the fold of Brahmanical religion. More and more Birhors are now in the fold of the Hindu religion, they go to temples, offer prayers to Hindu Gods and Goddesses, and follow Hindu ceremonies related to birth, marriage, and death. After independence, the government made sincere efforts to bring them into the mainstream of society. Besides, urbanization and industrialization also played their role. This has brought them closer to those who follow Bhakti.

This kind of coming together between the Birhor community and bhakti was not without reason. What brought them together was certain commonalities between them. These were some tenets common to both forms of religion. Scholars have identified these as spiritualism, egalitarianism, and universalism. As far as spiritualism is concerned Birhor also believes in the Vedanta philosophy of rebirth, karma, and moksha. For them, ‘the relationship between Soul and God is like the one which existed between a part and the whole between a drop in the water and the ocean.’<sup>13</sup>

A more important form of convergence between these two was in the field of egalitarianism. The Bhakti movement was essentially reformative and this was the reason why it spread so quickly in the medieval society. It questioned the dominance of the priestly class, and this is why their ‘bhaktas hailed from diverse social backgrounds ranging from Brahmans to artisans and cultivators and even from castes considered “untouchable”’.<sup>14</sup> These saints were also liberal towards the cause of women and advocated for their rightful place in the society. A similar spirit of egalitarianism is also found among the Birhor. Their socio-economic structure gives little space to social segregation based on caste, class, and gender. Universalism was, in fact, the logical conclusion of spiritualism and egalitarianism. Here also, we can say that Birhors have much in common with the bhakti saints. The tradition of

bhakti has always been high in value the spirit of peace, piety, and compassion, the simple life of Birhor itself reflects the essence of peace, piety, and compassion. They are not savage or inhuman as they have been thought of, they are a part of our society and companion in the journey of mankind.

### **Conclusion**

India is a country where religion plays a very dominant role, it has shaped our national character by making India a diverse and vibrant country in terms of culture and way of life. It was a liberal religious landscape of India that led to the revelation of the Veda, Vedanta, Upanishad, and Gita in this country and inspired Gautama and Mahavira to unfold their enlightened mind and wisdom. All these developments prepared a solid platform for Asoka's Dhamma (to uphold), Akbar's Sulh-I-Kul (peace between all), and the Bhakti Movement.

The Bhakti Movement is the germination of several liberal philosophical and reformative movements that began in the sixth century BCE and reached its apex between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century CE. At some point in the early medieval period, some form of amalgamation between mainstream Brahmanical religion and the beliefs and practices of other social categories began to shape itself. Thus, the cosmopolitan and liberal tradition of Bhakti and the convergence with indigenous religious traditions became a meeting point between some tribal groups like Birhor and the Bhakti Movement.

The Birhor a nomadic community till recently shares some common religious traits with the Hindu religion. Both believe in spirits, revere trees, animals, birds, mountains, and rivers, and express faith in the values of transmigration, rebirth, and karma. In this process of influencing or being influenced by each other, they also shared some values of bhakti. The liberal, egalitarian, and universal outlook of their religion testifies to their religion's unique blend of both Karma-Marga and Bhakti-Marga.

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## **Ink of Devotion: The Bhakti Movement's Penetrating Strokes on Indian Literary Canvas**

**Upakul Patowary**

### **Introduction**

“- This Sanskrit aphorism, attributed to the ancient sage Narada in his *Bhakti Sutras*, encapsulates the essence of the Bhakti movement: devotion (bhakti) as the primary means of realizing the divine. The Bhakti movement, a socio-religious phenomenon that swept across medieval India, emerged in response to the prevailing socio-political and religious climate of the time. Dating back to around the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, the roots of Bhakti can be traced to the teachings of ancient Indian scriptures such as the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *BhagavadGita*, which emphasized the path of devotion and surrender to the divine. However, it was during the medieval period, between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, that the Bhakti movement gained momentum and widespread popularity. This period was characterized by political instability, social upheaval, and the decline of traditional Brahmanical orthodoxy. Against this backdrop, Bhakti emerged as a powerful force for social and religious reform, challenging caste hierarchy, ritualism, and religious exclusivity. At the heart of the Bhakti movement lay the principle of devotion (bhakti) as the most direct and accessible path to spiritual realization. Unlike the elitist rituals and complex philosophical doctrines of mainstream Hinduism, Bhakti emphasized the simplicity of love and devotion towards a personal

deity. It advocated for a direct, unmediated relationship between the devotee and the divine, transcending the barriers of caste, creed, and social status. The Bhakti saints and poets, known as Bhaktas, composed soul-stirring hymns, songs, and poems expressing their intense love and longing for the divine. Their works, often composed in vernacular languages, resonated deeply with the common people, inspiring them to seek solace and salvation through devotion. The Bhakti movement thus democratized spirituality, making it accessible to people from all walks of life.

Before the advent of the Bhakti movement, Indian literature was predominantly characterized by classical Sanskrit texts, which were inaccessible to the masses due to their complex language and elitist themes. Sanskrit was the language of the learned elite, and literary compositions were primarily centered around themes of mythology, philosophy, and courtly romance. Regional languages, such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, and Hindi, also had their own rich literary traditions, but these were often overshadowed by the dominance of Sanskrit literature. Moreover, the content of pre-Bhakti literature largely reflected the concerns and perspectives of the ruling classes and the Brahmanical elite, with little representation of the experiences and aspirations of the common people. The Bhakti movement marked a radical departure from the elitism and exclusivity of classical Sanskrit literature, ushering in an era of vernacular literary renaissance. It gave voice to the aspirations, emotions, and spiritual yearnings of the masses, laying the foundation for the democratization of literature and culture in India. Furthermore, the Bhakti movement served as a bridge between different social groups and religious communities, fostering a spirit of tolerance, inclusivity, and communal harmony. It provided a common platform for people of diverse backgrounds to come together in worship and devotion, transcending sectarian divides and fostering a sense of unity and brotherhood. In the realm of literature, the Bhakti movement catalyzed the emergence of a new genre known as Bhakti poetry (bhakti kavya), characterized by its simplicity, emotional depth, and universal appeal. The verses of Bhakti poets, infused with the fragrance of devotion and love, continue to inspire and uplift



millions of hearts to this day, serving as timeless monuments to the power of faith and the beauty of divine love.

### **Origins and Key Features of the Bhakti Movement**

The Bhakti movement had its roots in the ancient scriptures and philosophical traditions of the subcontinent. Emerging around the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Bhakti movement gained momentum during the medieval period, between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, becoming a powerful force for social and religious reform. The movement originated in different regions of India, each with its unique cultural and historical context. In South India, the Alvars and Nayanars, Tamil saint-poets, laid the foundation for Bhakti with their devotional hymns to Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva, respectively. Their compositions, known as the *Divya Prabandham* and the *Tevaram*, expressed intense love and devotion towards the divine and played a crucial role in popularizing Bhakti among the masses. In North India, the Bhakti movement took shape under the influence of saints such as Ramanuja, Ramananda, Kabir, and Guru Nanak. Ramanuja, the 11<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher-saint, emphasized the path of loving devotion (bhakti) and advocated for social equality and inclusivity within the framework of Vishishtadvaita philosophy. Similarly, Ramananda, Kabir, and Guru Nanak challenged religious orthodoxy and caste hierarchy, promoting a message of universal love and brotherhood.

Rejecting the rigid ritualism and complex philosophical speculations of mainstream Hinduism, Bhakti emphasized the simplicity of love and devotion towards a personal deity. As the Bhagavad Gita proclaims, “The supreme secret of devotion is to know that I am the eternal, unborn, source of all beings” (Bhagavad Gita 18.55, Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, 1983). This emphasis on personal relationship with the divine, characterized by love, surrender, and selfless devotion, distinguished Bhakti from other spiritual paths. Furthermore, Bhakti literature abounds with verses that extol the virtues of devotion and describe the bliss of union with the divine. The 8<sup>th</sup>-century Tamil Alvar, Andal, sings, “O, Love! Thy greatness is beyond telling; Thou makest Thyself captive to Thy votaries!” (Tiruppavai, Verse 2, V. N. Muthukumaraswamy, 1997), capturing

the essence of Bhakti as the ecstatic union of the devotee with the beloved deity.

One of the most revolutionary aspects of the Bhakti movement was its emphasis on social inclusivity and egalitarianism. Bhakti served as a democratizing force, transcending caste, gender, and social barriers, and providing a platform for people from all walks of life to come together in worship and devotion. Kabir, the 15<sup>th</sup>-century mystic-poet, famously proclaimed, “In the temple of the heart, there are no distinctions of high and low” (Bijak, Kabir, 2003), underscoring the universality of Bhakti as a path accessible to all, regardless of social status or background. Moreover, Bhakti saints and poets often challenged social norms and customs, advocating for social reform and equality. Mirabai, the iconic 16<sup>th</sup>-century saint-poetess, defied patriarchal conventions and societal expectations by expressing her unwavering devotion to Lord Krishna through her poetry and songs. Her verses, suffused with longing and surrender, resonate with the spirit of liberation and empowerment: “Says Mira, the bride of the Eternal, With my mind focused on my lord, Shyam, I shall cross over to the other shore” (Mirabai, *The Hymns of Mira Bai*, 2001).

### **Impact of the Bhakti Movement on Indian Literature**

The Bhakti movement, with its emphasis on personal devotion and spiritual love, brought about a profound transformation in Indian literature, giving rise to a rich tradition of devotional poetry (bhakti kavya) in vernacular languages. This literary renaissance, characterized by its emotional depth, simplicity, and accessibility, revolutionized the cultural landscape of medieval India and laid the foundation for the growth of regional literary traditions. Prior to the Bhakti movement, Indian literature was predominantly written in classical Sanskrit, a language inaccessible to the masses. However, with the advent of Bhakti, there was a democratization of literature as saints and poets composed their devotional hymns and verses in vernacular languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, and Hindi. This shift democratized literature, making it accessible to people from all walks of life and laying the groundwork for the development of regional literary traditions. The emergence of devotional poetry (bhakti kavya) was one of

the most significant contributions of the Bhakti movement to Indian literature. Bhakti poets, inspired by their intense love and devotion to the divine, crafted verses that resonated deeply with the hearts of the masses. These poems were often sung or recited in public gatherings, temples, and festivals, serving as a source of inspiration and spiritual upliftment for the common people. Bhakti literature is characterized by its thematic richness and emotional intensity, exploring themes such as love, surrender, longing, and the quest for divine union. The poetry of the Bhakti saints is imbued with a sense of intimacy and longing, as the devotee yearns for union with the beloved deity. These verses express the depth of the devotee's love and devotion, transcending earthly desires and attachments. For example, the 9<sup>th</sup>-century Tamil Alvar, Nammalvar, sings:

(Nalayira Divya Prabandham, 1.9.10)

Translation: "The path to salvation opened up for me when I beheld the Lord. And it all began with love calling out to me in the sweetest of tones." (Source: Divya Prabandham – Dr. V. N. Muthukumaraswamy, 1997)

Similarly, the 15<sup>th</sup> century poet-saint Kabir explores themes of divine love and spiritual realization in his verses:

(Kabir Sagar, 3.13.2)

Translation: "Where are you searching for me, O friend? I am right beside you. I am not in pilgrimage, nor in idols, nor in solitary retreats." (Source: Bijak – Kabir, 2003)

These verses exemplify the emotional depth and philosophical insights found in Bhakti literature, resonating with readers across generations and inspiring them on their spiritual journey.

The Bhakti movement served as a precursor to the growth of vernacular literature and the development of regional literary traditions in India. The popularity of Bhakti poetry paved the way for the flourishing of literary genres such as padams, abhangs, vachanas, and dohas, each reflecting the unique cultural and linguistic heritage of its region. Furthermore, the Bhakti movement laid the groundwork for the democratization of literature, as poets from diverse backgrounds and social strata found expression in their native languages. This democratization fostered a sense of cultural pride

and identity among the people, contributing to the growth of regional literature and the preservation of linguistic diversity in India. Thus, the Bhakti movement left an indelible mark on Indian literature, transforming literary forms, exploring profound themes, and influencing subsequent literary movements. Through its devotional poetry and timeless verses, the Bhakti movement continues to inspire and uplift millions of hearts, serving as a testament to the enduring power of love, devotion, and the written word.

### **Case Studies**

The Bhakti movement produced a plethora of saint-poets whose literary contributions continue to captivate and inspire generations. Two prominent figures in this rich tapestry of Bhakti literature are Kabir and Surdas. Through their poetry, Kabir and Surdas offered profound insights into the nature of divine love, human existence, and the intricacies of the human-divine relationship. Kabir, born in 15<sup>th</sup>-century India, occupies a unique place in the Bhakti tradition for his synthesis of Hindu and Muslim spirituality. Despite being born into a Muslim family, Kabir's poetry transcends religious boundaries, embodying universal truths and the essence of divine love. His verses, composed in the vernacular language of the common people, blend elements of Hindu bhakti with Sufi mysticism, offering a message of unity, love, and social critique. Kabir's poetry reflects his deep insight into the human condition and the eternal quest for spiritual liberation. His verses are replete with imagery drawn from everyday life, using metaphors and symbols to convey profound spiritual truths. Through his poetry, Kabir challenges societal norms, religious dogma, and the divisions that separate humanity, advocating for a path of love, tolerance, and inner transformation.

One of Kabir's most famous couplets illustrates his syncretic approach to spirituality:

Translation: "Why do you seek the foreigner? Why do you speak of the foreigner? Wherever I look, there you are; how can another enter?" (Source: Kabir Granthavali, 1996)

This couplet encapsulates Kabir's message of unity and the inherent divinity that resides within each individual, transcending religious and cultural distinctions.

Surdas, another 15<sup>th</sup>-century saint-poet, is renowned for his lyrical compositions depicting the playful antics of Lord Krishna and his devotees. Born blind into a devout Brahmin family, Surdas overcame his physical limitations to become one of the most celebrated poets of the Bhakti tradition. His verses, composed in BrajBhasha, the vernacular language of the region, evoke the enchanting beauty of Krishna's divine leelas (playful activities) and the profound emotional depth of devotional love. Surdas' poetry transports the reader to the idyllic landscapes of Vrindavan, where Krishna, the divine cowherd, enchants devotees with his divine flute and mischievous antics. Surdas' descriptions of Krishna's leelas, from stealing butter to playing with the gopis (cowherd maidens), are imbued with a sense of wonder and reverence, evoking the mystical charm of divine love.

One of Surdas' most beloved compositions is the *Surdas Bhajan*, which captures the essence of his devotional fervor:

Translation: "When Radha dances with Madhava, then the image of the soul dances. When the image of the soul dances, then it shines in the face." (Source: SurdasKe Pad, 1995)

This verse exemplifies Surdas' deep spiritual insight and his ability to convey the profound union between the devotee and the divine through the metaphor of Radha and Krishna's divine dance.

Kabir and Surdas represent two distinct yet interconnected facets of the Bhakti tradition: Kabir's synthesis of Hindu-Muslim spirituality and social critique, and Surdas' lyrical depiction of the divine play of Lord Krishna. Through their poetry, Kabir and Surdas continue to inspire seekers on the path of devotion, offering timeless wisdom and profound insights into the nature of divine love and the human quest for spiritual fulfilment.

### **Conclusion**

In recapitulating the transformative role of the Bhakti movement in Indian literature, it becomes evident that this socio-religious phenomenon had a profound and far-reaching impact on the cultural, literary, and spiritual landscape of medieval India. The Bhakti movement revolutionized Indian literature by democratizing literary forms, elevating vernacular languages, and exploring profound themes of devotion, love, and spiritual

yearning. Through the emergence of devotional poetry (bhakti kavya) in languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, and others, the Bhakti movement democratized literature, making it accessible to people from all walks of life. The verses of Bhakti saints and poets, suffused with the fragrance of devotion and love, continue to resonate with readers across generations, inspiring them on their spiritual journey and serving as timeless monuments to the power of faith and the beauty of divine love.

Moreover, the enduring legacy of Bhakti literature remains palpable in contemporary Indian society, where the teachings and verses of Bhakti saints continue to inspire millions of devotees. The universal message of love, tolerance, and spiritual liberation articulated by Kabir, Surdas, Mirabai, and other Bhakti saints transcends the boundaries of time and space, offering solace and guidance to seekers of truth and enlightenment. In conclusion, the Bhakti movement stands as an epitome to the transformative power of love, devotion, and spiritual yearning. Its influence on Indian literature has been profound and enduring, shaping the literary traditions of the subcontinent and inspiring generations of poets, writers, and seekers of truth.

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## অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱধৰ্ম প্ৰসাৰণৰ ভিত্তি আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা : এক অধ্যয়ন

সুৰেশ দেৱনাথ

অসমীয়া সমাজখনত বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিবলৈ শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱে ‘শ্ৰীকৃষ্ণ’ক একমাত্ৰ আশ্ৰয় কৰি লৈছিল। দাৰ্শনিক দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে শংকৰদেৱৰ চিন্তাধাৰাক অদ্বৈতবাদী বুলি ক’ব পাৰি। শংকৰদেৱৰ ঈশ্বৰৰ ধাৰণাটো পৰমব্ৰহ্মৰ ধাৰণালৈও উন্নীত হোৱা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। তেওঁৰ ‘একশৰণ ভাগৱতী’ নামধৰ্মৰ যোগেদি পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখন সংস্কাৰ কৰি সুস্থ এখন সমাজ গঢ়াৰ চেষ্টা কৰিছিল। শংকৰদেৱে জীৱক ঈশ্বৰ বা ব্ৰহ্মাৰ অংশ হিচাপে গণ্য কৰিছিল। তেওঁৰ ধৰ্মই মুক্তিক প্ৰশ্নই দিছিল আৰু মুক্তি মানে ঈশ্বৰৰ সতে এক হোৱা এটা ধাৰণা মাথোন। তেওঁ নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ আন্দোলনৰ জৰিয়তে অসমৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত গণতান্ত্ৰিক মূল্যবোধ প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰিছিল। ধৰ্মৰ যোগেদি পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখনত শাস্তিপূৰ্ণ পৰিৱেশ গঢ় দিব পাৰিব বুলি তেওঁ নিশ্চিত আছিল। সেয়েহে তেওঁ সমাজখন সুৰক্ষিত কৰিবলৈ, একতা আৰু ভাতৃত্ববোধ গঢ়ি তুলিবলৈ ‘নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম’ক আশ্ৰয় হিচাপে গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে। কৃষ্ণচেতনাই শংকৰদেৱক আধ্যাত্মিক ধ্যানত মজি থাকিবলৈ প্ৰেৰণা দিয়ে। সেয়েহে তেওঁৰ দৰ্শন বৰ্তমান সময়তো যথেষ্ট প্ৰাসংগিক হৈ আছে। তেওঁৰ দৰ্শনে ব্যক্তিক আধ্যাত্মিক ভাৱত মগ্ন কৰি ৰাখিব পাৰে। পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখনত কৃষ্ণচেতনা বৰ্তি থাকিবলৈ বৈষ্ণৱধৰ্মৰ গুৰুত্ব যথেষ্ট আছে। প্ৰস্তাৱিত গৱেষণা পত্ৰখনত অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱধৰ্ম প্ৰসাৰণৰ ভিত্তি আৰু ইয়াৰ প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা সম্পৰ্কে আলোচনা কৰা হ’ব।

বীজশব্দ : নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম, কৃষ্ণচেতনা, মূল্যবোধ, ঈশ্বৰ, সমাজ ইত্যাদি।

০.০০ অৱতৰণিকা :

০.০১ বিষয় প্ৰৱেশ :

অসমীয়া সমাজখনত বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিবলৈ শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱে 'শ্ৰীকৃষ্ণ'ক একমাত্ৰ আশ্ৰয় কৰি লৈছিল। দাৰ্শনিক দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে শংকৰদেৱৰ চিন্তাধাৰাক অদ্বৈতবাদী বুলি ক'ব পাৰি। শংকৰদেৱৰ ঈশ্বৰৰ ধাৰণাটো পৰমব্ৰহ্মৰ ধাৰণালৈ উন্নীত হোৱা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। অৱশ্যে সেই সমাজখনৰ ওপৰত ভিত্তি ৰাখি ব্ৰহ্মৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে তেওঁ ঈশ্বৰৰ ধাৰণাটোকে অধিক গুৰুত্ব সহকাৰে লৈছিল। তেওঁৰ 'একশৰণ ভাগৱতী' নামধৰ্মৰ যোগেদি পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখন সংস্কাৰ কৰি সুস্থ এখন সমাজ গঢ়াৰ চেষ্টা কৰিছিল। শংকৰদেৱে জীৱক ঈশ্বৰ বা ব্ৰহ্মৰ অংশ হিচাপে গণ্য কৰিছিল। তেওঁৰ ধৰ্মই মুক্তিক প্ৰশয় দিছিল আৰু মুক্তি মানে ঈশ্বৰৰ সতে এক হোৱা এটা ধাৰণা মাথোন। তেওঁ নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ আন্দোলনৰ জৰিয়তে অসমৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত গণতান্ত্ৰিক মূল্যবোধ প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰিছিল। ধৰ্মৰ যোগেদি পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখনত শান্তিপূৰ্ণ পৰিৱেশ গঢ় দিব পাৰিব বুলি তেওঁ নিশ্চিত আছিল। সেয়েহে তেওঁ সমাজখন সুৰক্ষিত কৰিবলৈ, একতা আৰু ভাতৃত্ববোধ গঢ়ি তুলিবলৈ 'নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম'ক আশ্ৰয় হিচাপে গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে। শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱৰ চিন্তা-চেতনাই দৰ্শন পৰ্যায়লৈও উন্নিত হৈছে। এই 'অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মপ্ৰসাৰণৰ ভিত্তি আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয়তাঃ অধ্যয়ন' শীৰ্ষক গৱেষণা-পত্ৰখনত শংকৰদেৱৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰবৰ্তিত নৱবৈষ্ণৱধৰ্মৰ ভিত্তিৰ লগতে অসমীয়া সমাজত, জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজত তাৰ প্ৰাসংগিকতা আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা সম্পৰ্কে আলোচনা আগবঢ়োৱা হৈছে।

০.০২ পূৰ্বকৃত অধ্যয়নৰ খতিয়ান :

'অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মপ্ৰসাৰণৰ ভিত্তি আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয়তাঃ অধ্যয়ন' শীৰ্ষক বিষয়টো অধ্যয়ন কৰিবলৈ যাওতে কিছুমান গ্ৰন্থ আৰু আলোচনী অধ্যয়ন কৰিব লগা হৈছিল। সেইসমূহ হৈছে—

ক) পুলিন কলিতা : নামঘৰ বুৰঞ্জী আৰু বিৱৰণ

খ) সুমন দত্ত (সম্পাঃ) : শংকৰদেৱ : সৃষ্টি আৰু সত্তা

গ) অনুৰাধা শৰ্মা পূজাৰী (সম্পাঃ) : সাতসৰী



### ০.০৩ অধ্যয়নৰ গুৰুত্ব :

শংকৰদেৱে গ্ৰহণ কৰা বৈষ্ণৱধৰ্মই সমাজৰ সৰু-বৰ সকলো জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোককে সংলগ্ন কৰি ভাতৃত্ববোধ, একতা প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰি আহিছিল। কৃষ্ণচেতনাই শংকৰদেৱক আধ্যাত্মিক ধ্যানত মজি থাকিবলৈ প্ৰেৰণা দিছিল। সেয়েহে তেওঁৰ দৰ্শন বৰ্তমান সময়তো যথেষ্ট প্ৰাসংগিক হৈ আছে। তেওঁৰ দৰ্শনে ব্যক্তিক আধ্যাত্মিক ভাৱত মগ্ন কৰি ৰাখিব পাৰে। পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখনত কৃষ্ণচেতনা বৰ্তি থাকিবলৈ বৈষ্ণৱধৰ্মৰ গুৰুত্ব যথেষ্ট আছে। তাৰোপৰি সমাজখন সুস্থ সবলভাৱে থাকিবলৈ শংকৰদেৱৰ নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰয়োজনীয়া এতিয়াও আছে।

০.০৪ অধ্যয়নৰ উদ্দেশ্য : এই ‘অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মপ্ৰসাৰণৰ ভিত্তি আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয়তাঃ অধ্যয়ন’ শীৰ্ষক বিষয়টো অধ্যয়নৰ মূল উদ্দেশ্য হৈছে—

ক) অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ ভিত্তি আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা সম্পৰ্কে অধ্যয়ন।

খ) জনসমাজত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ তাৎপৰ্য বিচাৰ কৰা।

### ০.০৫ অধ্যয়নৰ পদ্ধতি :

‘অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মপ্ৰসাৰণৰ ভিত্তি আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয়তাঃ অধ্যয়ন’ শীৰ্ষক বিষয়টো অধ্যয়ন কৰিবলৈ যাওতে বিষয় বিশ্লেষণ পদ্ধতিৰ সহায় লোৱা হৈছে আৰু বিভিন্ন বিষয়বোৰ উপস্থাপনৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত দশমিক পদ্ধতিৰ সহায় লোৱা হৈছে। এই বিষয়টো অধ্যয়নৰ বাবে গৌন উৎসৰ সহায় লোৱা হৈছে।

### ০.০৬ অধ্যয়নৰ পৰিসৰ :

‘অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মপ্ৰসাৰণৰ ভিত্তি আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয়তাঃ অধ্যয়ন’ শীৰ্ষক বিষয়টোৰ বাবে অধ্যয়নৰ পৰিসৰত বিষয়বস্তুগত দিশত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম আৰু শংকৰদেৱৰ মাজতে সীমাবদ্ধ হৈ থাকিব। কিন্তু সময়ৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত বৰ্তমান সময়কো ইয়াৰ মাজলৈ অনা হৈছে।

### ১.০০ অসমত নৱবৈষ্ণৱধৰ্ম প্ৰসাৰণৰ ভিত্তি আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা :

শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱৰ নৱবৈষ্ণৱধৰ্ম প্ৰসাৰণৰ তাৎপৰ্য যথেষ্ট আছে। অসমৰ প্ৰাচীন সমাজখনলৈ দৃষ্টি ৰাখিলে দেখা যাব অসমখন অন্ধবিশ্বাস, কুসংস্কাৰ, অনৈতিক নীতি-নিয়মেৰে ভৰা এখন ৰাজ্য। এনে পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজৰ লোকসকলক শিক্ষিত কৰাৰ এটাই মাধ্যম বিচাৰি পালে, সেয়া হৈছে

‘ধৰ্ম’। ধৰ্মৰ জৰিয়তে শিক্ষা প্ৰদান কৰাটোৱেই শংকৰদেৱৰ প্ৰধান উদ্দেশ্য আছিল। তাৰ বাবে একমাত্ৰ আশ্ৰয় হিচাপে ‘নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম’ক গ্ৰহণ কৰিলে। শংকৰদেৱে জনসাধাৰণৰ বাবে বেদান্ত দৰ্শনৰ দ্বাৰা সুখ-শান্তি কামনা কৰিছিল।<sup>১</sup> মানৱ সংসাৰৰ মায়া বন্ধনৰপৰা মুক্তি লাভৰ উপায় স্বৰূপে ভাগৱত গীতা অধ্যয়ন কৰিছিল। সেই সময়ৰ মানুহখিনিক ইয়াৰ জৰিয়তে একনিষ্ঠভাৱে কামত ব্ৰতি হৈ থাকিবলৈ আৰু কৰ্মৰ সাধনা কৰিবলৈ উপদেশ দিছিল। সেই সময়ৰ মানুহখিনিক মানসিকতাভাৱে সবল কৰিবলৈ ‘ঈশ্বৰ’ৰ সহায় লৈছিল। ঈশ্বৰ হিচাপে তেওঁ একমাত্ৰ ‘শ্ৰীকৃষ্ণ’ক গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল। শংকৰদেৱৰ অন্তৰত কৃষ্ণচেতনা এনেভাৱে সুমাই পৰিল যে কৃষ্ণক বাদ দি একো কথা ভাবিবই নোৱাৰি। সমাজখন শিক্ষিত কৰিবলৈ কৃষ্ণচেতনা সকলোৰে মাজত থাকিব লাগিব বুলি শংকৰদেৱে দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস কৰিছিল।

প্ৰচুৰ বেদ, বেদাঙ্গ অধ্যয়ন কৰি শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱে সাধাৰণ মানুহখিনিৰ মাজত সেয়া আলোচনা কৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰিছিল। বেদান্ত দৰ্শনৰ যোগেদি মানুহৰ সুখ-শান্তিৰ কথাটো প্ৰচুৰ কামনা কৰিছিল। জগতৰ অস্তিত্বক তেওঁ বিশ্বাস কৰিছিল। জগতৰ মাজত থাকি সাধাৰণ মানুহৰ সেৱাৰ মাজেদি ঈশ্বৰৰ সেৱা কৰাটোৰ ওপৰত গুৰুত্ব দিছিল। শংকৰদেৱে জীৱক ব্ৰহ্মৰ অংশ বুলি কৈছে। জীৱাত্মাই যেতিয়া এই কথাৰ অনুধাৱন কৰিব পাৰে, তেতিয়াই সি মুক্তি লাভ কৰিব পাৰে। এই মুক্তি ভক্তিৰ যোগেদিহে সম্ভৱ আৰু মুক্তি পোৱাৰ লগে লগে মানুহৰ দুখ-যন্ত্ৰণাৰ পৰাও মুক্তি লাভ কৰিব পাৰে আৰু শান্তিৰে জীৱন অতিবাহিত কৰিব পাৰে। এই মুক্তি ঈশ্বৰে দান কৰা শ্ৰেষ্ঠ উপহাৰ। তেওঁ বিশ্বাস কৰিছিল যে জীৱাত্মা আৰু ব্ৰহ্মৰ মাজত কোনো পাৰ্থক্য নাই; মানুহে কেৱল অজ্ঞানতাৰ বাবেহে সেই কথা উপলব্ধি কৰিব নোৱাৰে।

শংকৰদেৱৰ দাৰ্শনিক দিশলৈ লক্ষ্য কৰিলে ঈশ্বৰ আৰু ব্ৰহ্মৰ ধাৰণা একাকাৰ হোৱা দেখা যায়। প্ৰত্যেক জীৱৰ মাজত আত্মাৰ অস্তিত্ব থকাটো তেওঁ বিশ্বাস কৰিছিল। তাৰ বাবে ব্যক্তিগত ঈশ্বৰক ভক্তি কৰিব পাৰিব লাগিব। শংকৰদেৱৰ দৰ্শনত ঈশ্বৰক তিনি ধৰণে পোৱা যায়। সেই তিনি ধৰণ হৈছে— ঈশ্বৰ ব্ৰহ্মৰূপী যি অদ্বৈত, জগতস্ৰষ্টা হিচাপে ঈশ্বৰ আৰু তেজ-মণ্ডৰৰ ব্যক্তিকৰূপে ঈশ্বৰ। ধৰ্মীয় দৃষ্টিকোণেৰে শংকৰদেৱে শ্ৰীকৃষ্ণক উপাসনা কৰিছিল যদিও তেওঁ আছিল পৰমব্ৰহ্মবাদী।

ভাগৱতৰ দ্বাৰা অনুপ্ৰাণিত হৈ শংকৰদেৱে কৃষ্ণৰ মহিমাৰ ঈশ্বৰৰ গুণ হিচাপে বৰ্ণনা কৰিছে। তেওঁৰ ধৰ্মীয় দৰ্শনৰ মূল বিষয় আছিল সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ গণতান্ত্ৰিকীকৰণ। এই বৈষ্ণৱ আন্দোলনৰ যোগেদি গণতান্ত্ৰিক মূল্যবোধৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰাটো তেওঁৰ মূল উদ্দেশ্য আছিল। সংসাৰৰ মায়া-বন্ধনৰ পৰা মুক্তি লাভৰ উপায় হিচাপে গুৰুজনাই শ্ৰীমদ্ভাগৱদগীতাৰ ভক্তিমাৰ্গৰ লগতে নিষ্কাম কৰ্মযোগৰসাধনা আৰু পালনত একনিষ্ঠভাৱে ব্ৰতী হ'বলৈ মানুহক উপদেশ আৰু পৰামৰ্শ আগবঢ়াইছিল।<sup>১০</sup> শংকৰদেৱৰ ধৰ্মীয় দৰ্শনত বহল মানসিকতাৰ পৰিচয় পোৱা যায়। তেওঁৰ ধৰ্ম-দৰ্শনত মানৱতাৰ সাৰ্বজনীন আৱেদন পোৱা যায়। পূজা-অৰ্জনাৰ বিপৰীতে ঈশ্বৰৰ নাম-কীৰ্তন আৰু শ্ৰৱণত গুৰুত্ব দিছিল; যাৰ ফলস্বৰূপে শংকৰদেৱৰ দৰ্শন সাৰ্বজনীন স্তৰলৈ উন্নীত হৈছে।

সমাজৰ পৰা শ্ৰেণীহীন তথা শাস্তিপূৰ্ণ সমাজ গঠনৰ বাবে বৈষ্ণৱ আন্দোলনৰ গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা আছে। সমাজক সুৰক্ষিত কৰিবলৈ মানুহৰ মাজত ভাতৃত্ববোধ আৰু মানৱতাবোধৰ ধাৰণাৰে সকলোৱে পৰিচালিত হোৱা উচিত। শংকৰদেৱে সেই কথা গভীৰভাৱে উপলব্ধি কৰিছিল। সকলো জীৱৰ প্ৰতি সমান ভাৱেৰে আৰু অহিংসা পন্থাৰে ঐকান্তিক উন্নয়নৰ প্ৰতি নিষ্ঠা আৰু সততাৰে কৰ্তব্য আৰু দায়িত্ব পালন কৰিব লাগে। এনে ধাৰণা একমাত্ৰ বৈষ্ণৱ আন্দোলনৰ দ্বাৰা সম্ভৱ বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰিছিল। কাৰণ পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখনত আধুনিক শিক্ষা দিয়াটো সম্ভৱপৰ নহয় তথা সি যুক্তিযুক্তও নহ'ব। সেয়েহে তেওঁ ইয়াৰ বিকল্পস্বৰূপে নাট ৰচনা কৰি কৃষ্ণৰ প্ৰতি থকা ভক্তি প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰিছিল।

শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱৰ অসমৰ মধ্যযুগৰ এগৰাকী প্ৰগতিশীল সাহিত্যিক। সেই যুগৰ পৰাই তেওঁৰ দূৰদৃষ্টিৰ বাবে অসমত সাহিত্য জনমুখী হয়। অসমীয়া ভাষাত সাহিত্য চৰ্চা কৰি জনচেতনাত আলোড়ন সৃষ্টি কৰা তেওঁৰেই প্ৰথম ব্যক্তি। নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্ম-দৰ্শনৰ আধাৰত গীত, ভাওনা, নাট, ক'লা, শিল্প, সংস্কৃতিৰ সকলো দিশতে নতুনত্বৰ সৃষ্টি কৰি প্ৰগতিৰ বতৰা কঢ়িয়াই আনিছিল। ঘূৰ্ণে ধৰা অসমীয়া সমাজ জীৱনৰ অৱক্ষয় ৰোধ কৰিবলৈ শংকৰদেৱে ধৰ্মীয় দৰ্শনত মনোনিৱেশ কৰিছিল। বেদান্ত দৰ্শনৰ আধাৰত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ উদ্ভাৱন কৰি বাস্তৱসন্মত দৃষ্টিৰে সমাজখন পৰিচালিত কৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰিছিল। সমাজৰ

পৰা অস্পৃশ্যতা আৰু শাস্তিপূৰ্ণ জীৱন গঢ়ি তোলাৰ বাবে বৰ্তমান সময়তো বৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰাসংগিকতা আছে।

## ২.০০ জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ মাজত নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ তাৎপৰ্য :

অসমীয়া সমাজ জীৱনৰ এক অপৰিহাৰ্য অংগ হৈছে নামঘৰ। ই এটা ৰাজহুৱা উপাসনা থলী। নামঘৰত প্ৰত্যেক জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকে প্ৰৱেশ কৰিব পাৰে। অসমৰ প্ৰতি গাঁৱে গাঁৱে একোটকৈ নামঘৰ গঢ়ি উঠিছে। আনকি নতুনকৈ বসতি স্থাপন কৰা, নগৰ- উপনগৰৰ উপকণ্ঠ অঞ্চলতো শংকৰদেৱৰ এক শৰণ নামধৰ্ম আদৰ্শৰে একোটকৈ নামঘৰ গঢ় লৈ উঠে। গাঁৱৰ ৰাইজে বিশেষকৈ বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ সকলে একাদশী, পূৰ্ণিমা, অমাবস্যা আদি তিথিত আজৰি পৰত নামঘৰত গোটখাই নাম কীৰ্তন কৰে বা কীৰ্তন ঘোষা, পুৰাণ ভাগৱত আদিৰ পাঠ স্ৰৱণ কৰে। কেতিয়াবা শাস্ত্ৰৰ পঠিত অধ্যায়ৰ সৰলীকৃত ব্যাখ্যা আগবঢ়ায় আৰু এইবিলাকৰ তাত্ত্বিক আৰু ভক্তিমূলক কথাবোৰ আলোচনা কৰে। এইবিলাকৰ জৰিয়তে সাধাৰণ লোকসকলে হৰিনামৰ অমীয়া বস পাণ কৰাৰ লগতে সকলো ভেদাভেদ পাহৰি একগোট হোৱাৰ সুযোগ পায়। এইদৰে জনসাধাৰণে ধৰ্মীয় কথাবোৰৰ সন্ত্ৰেদ লাভ কৰাৰ লগতে তেওঁলোকে পাপ পুণ্য আদিৰ দ্বাৰা সজ চিন্তা, সজ আচৰণ আদিৰো শিক্ষা লাভ কৰে। নামঘৰৰ চৌহদত তেওঁলোকৰ মাজত কোনো ধৰণৰ জাতি-ভাষা-বৰ্ণৰ বিচাৰ কৰা হোৱা নাছিল। কায়স্থ, কলিতা, কোঁচ, কৈৱৰ্ত্ত ব্ৰাহ্মণ আদিকে ধৰি জনজাতীয় সমাজৰ মিচিং, কাৰ্বি, কছাৰী আদি সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ লোকেও নামঘৰত একেলগে বহি সামূহিক কাম কাজৰ লগতে সংগীত, নৃত্য, শৰীৰ চৰ্চা আদিও কৰিব পাৰে। শংকৰদেৱৰ দিনৰে পৰা গাৰোৰ গোবিন্দ, মিচিঙৰ পৰমানন্দ, ভূটিয়াৰ দামোদৰ, কৈৱৰ্তৰ পূৰ্ণানন্দ, কছাৰীৰ ৰমাই, কোঁচৰ মুৰাৰি আদিয়ে নামঘৰত একেলগে ধৰ্মসাধনা কৰাৰ কথা পোৱা যায়।<sup>১৫</sup> শংকৰদেৱে নামঘৰৰ জৰিয়তে জাত-পাত, শ্ৰেণী বৈষম্যহীন এখন সমাজ গঠন কৰিবলৈ বিচাৰিছিল। সেয়ে তেওঁৰ সময়ত ব্ৰাহ্মণৰ হৰিদেৱ, দামোদৰদেৱ, আহোমৰ নৰহৰি, নগাৰ নৰোত্তম, কাৰ্বিৰ হৰিদাস আদি একে শাৰীত একেলগে বহাৰো প্ৰমাণ পোৱা যায়।<sup>১৬</sup> শংকৰদেৱৰ সময়ত অসম ৰাজ্যখন তিনিটা ভূখণ্ডত বিভক্ত হৈ আছিল— আহোম, কামৰূপ আৰু বেহাৰ। বৰ্তমান ৰাজনৈতিক অসমখনে সামৰি লোৱা পাহাৰীয়া অঞ্চলকেইটা

সেইসময়ত অসম ৰাজ্যত নাছিল।<sup>১</sup> শংকৰদেৱে এই সকলো মানুহখিনিকে ধৰ্মৰ জৰিয়তে একগোট কৰিব পাৰিছিল। তেওঁৰ প্ৰচাৰিত নামধৰ্মৰ সবলতাই সৰ্বসাধাৰণ মানুহখিনিক মুক্তি আৰু আকৰ্ষণ কৰিছিল। শংকৰদেৱৰ ভাগৱতৰ দ্বিতীয় স্কন্ধত পোৱা যায়—

কিৰাট কছাৰী                      খাছী গাৰো মিৰি  
 যৱন কঙ্ক গোৱাল।  
 অসম মুলুক                      ৰজক তুৰুক  
 কুবাচ মেচ চণ্ডাল।<sup>২</sup>

শংকৰদেৱৰ সময়তে অসমত বসবাস কৰা কেইটামান জাতি গোষ্ঠী আছিল ক্ৰমে কিৰাট, কছাৰী, খাছী, গাৰো, যৱন, কংক, গোৱাল, অসম, ৰজক, তুৰুক, কুবাচ, মেচ আৰু চণ্ডাল।<sup>৩</sup> শংকৰদেৱে এই সকলো জাতি-জনগোষ্ঠীৰ বাবেই হৰি ভক্তিকেন্দ্ৰীক নামধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰ কৰিছিল আৰু ইয়াক কেৱল নামঘৰৰ জৰিয়তেহে সম্ভৱপৰ কৰি তুলিছিল। শংকৰদেৱৰ আদৰ্শৰে উদ্ভৱ পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ বিভিন্ন জাতি জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ মাজত নামঘৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰি আহিছে আৰু লগতে সমন্বয়ৰ এটা সাঁকোও সৃষ্টি হৈ আহিছে।

শংকৰদেৱৰ সময়ৰ পৰা বহুতো ইছলাম ধৰ্মীৱলম্বীলোকেও শংকৰদেৱৰ নামধৰ্মত অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত হ'ল। চান্দসায়ৈ পাটবাউসী থানত শৰণ লোৱাৰ পাছত শংকৰদেৱৰ সৈতে থানৰ শয়নগৃহত একেলগে থকা আৰু বন্ধনগৃহত একেলগে খোৱা বোৱা কৰিছিল।<sup>৪</sup> যোদ্ধা শতিকাৰ পৰা আৰম্ভ কৰি একৈশ শতিকাৰ প্ৰথম ভাগলৈকে নামঘৰসমূহৰ সৈতে অসমৰ মুছলমানসকলৰ সৈতে অনেক সম্পৰ্ক দেখা যায়। বিভিন্ন সত্ৰ, নামঘৰসমূহ নিৰ্মান কৰা, চোৱাচিতা কৰা, চাকি-বস্তি জ্বলোৱা, ভূমি দান কৰা ইত্যাদি ক্ৰিয়া-কৰ্মৰ সৈতে মুছলমানসকলৰ সম্পৰ্ক আছে। ইয়াৰ কেইটামান উদাহৰণ এনেধৰণৰ—

ক) ১৮৯১ চনৰ লোকপিয়লত থকা মতে শিৱসাগৰ জিলাৰ হলুংপৰীয়া (হোলোংপৰীয়া) গোসাঁইসকলৰ নিজা সত্ৰ আৰু ভকত আছিল। এওঁলোক আছিল ইছলামধৰ্মী।<sup>৫</sup>

খ) ২০০৯ আৰু ২০১০ চনত ইছলামধৰ্মী শিল্পীৰে গঠিত চান্দসাই ভাওনা দলে নতুন কমলাবাৰী সত্ৰৰ সদৌ অসম অংকীয়া ভাওনা সমাৰোহত

শংকৰদেৱৰ 'ৰামবিজয়' আৰু 'ৰুক্মিণীহৰণ' নাট পৰিৱেশন কৰিবলৈ যাওঁতে সত্ৰৰ ৰাফ্ৰানিগৃহত সত্ৰাধিকাৰৰ সৈতে জা-জলপান গ্ৰহণ কৰাৰ উপৰি নামঘৰৰ মণিকূটৰ সন্মুখত সেৱা-প্ৰাৰ্থনা জনাইছিল।<sup>১০</sup>

গ) ২০০৫ চনত বৰপেটা জিলাৰ মইনবৰী সত্ৰ ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰত জাহ যাওঁতে স্থানীয় মুছলমানসকলে হুকহুকাই কান্দিছিল। সত্ৰৰ অৱশিষ্ট সংস্পদখিনি উদ্ধাৰ কৰাৰ উপৰি মুছলমানসকলে সত্ৰখনৰ বাবে দুই বিঘা ভূমি দান কৰিছিল।<sup>১১</sup>

গতিকে দেখা গ'ল শংকৰদেৱৰ আদৰ্শই কেৱল বিভিন্ন জনগোষ্ঠী সমূহৰ মাজতে নহয়, লগতে হিন্দু মুছলমানৰ মাজত থকা একতাটোও দৃঢ় কৰি থৈ গৈছে।

বৰ্তমান শংকৰদেৱৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰতিষ্ঠিত নামঘৰৰ প্ৰভাৱ সমগ্ৰ উত্তৰ পূৰ্বাঞ্চল লগতে ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় তথা আন্তঃ ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় পৰ্যায়তো প্ৰচাৰ আৰু প্ৰসাৰ হোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে। জাতি-ধৰ্ম-বৰ্ণ নিৰ্বিশেষে ধনী দুখীয়া সকলো শ্ৰেণীৰ মানুহে নামঘৰত সমানে স্থান পাইছিল। সমাজৰ একেবাৰে নিম্ন শ্ৰেণীৰ মানুহেও নামঘৰত সমাদৰ লাভ কৰিছিল।

### ৩.০০ উপসংহাৰ :

'একশৰণ ভাগৱতী' নামধৰ্মৰ যোগেদি পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখন সংস্কাৰ কৰি সুস্থ এখন সমাজ গঢ়াৰ চেষ্টা কৰিছিল। দাৰ্শনিক দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে শংকৰদেৱৰ চিন্তাধাৰাক অদ্বৈতবাদী বুলি ক'ব পাৰি। শংকৰদেৱৰ ঈশ্বৰৰ ধাৰণাই পৰমব্ৰহ্মৰ ধাৰণালৈ উন্নীত হৈছে। অৱশ্যে সেই সমাজখনৰ ওপৰত ভিত্তি ৰাখি ব্ৰহ্মৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে তেওঁ ঈশ্বৰৰ ধাৰণাকে অধিক গুৰুত্ব সহকাৰে লৈছিল। শংকৰদেৱে জীৱক ঈশ্বৰ বা ব্ৰহ্মৰ অংশ হিচাপে গণ্য কৰিছিল। তেওঁৰ ধৰ্মই মুক্তিক প্ৰশ্ৰয় দিছিল আৰু মুক্তি মানে ঈশ্বৰৰ সতে এক হোৱা এটা ধাৰণা মাথোন। তেওঁ নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মৰ আন্দোলনৰ জৰিয়তে অসমৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত গণতান্ত্ৰিক মূল্যবোধ প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰিছিল। ধৰ্মৰ যোগেদি পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখনত শান্তিপূৰ্ণ পৰিৱেশ গঢ় দিব পাৰিব বুলি তেওঁ নিশ্চিত আছিল। সেয়েহে তেওঁ সমাজখন সুৰক্ষিত কৰিবলৈ, একতা আৰু ভাতৃত্ববোধ গঢ়ি তুলিবলৈ নৱবৈষ্ণৱ ধৰ্মক আশ্ৰয় হিচাপে গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে।

### প্ৰসংগ সূত্ৰ :

- <sup>১</sup> ভট্টাচাৰ্য, দেৱানন্দ। “মহাপুৰুষ শংকৰদেৱৰ দৰ্শনত এভূমুকি”। *শংকৰদেৱঃ সৃষ্টি আৰু সত্তা*, সম্পা. সুমন দত্ত। বনলতা, পৃ. ১১৯
- <sup>২</sup> উল্লিখিত, পৃ. ১২২
- <sup>৩</sup> উল্লিখিত, পৃ. ১২০
- <sup>৪</sup> দাস, সূৰ্য। “সুভাষিত বচনৰ পৰম্পৰা আৰু মহাভাৰতৰ সুভাষিত বচন”। *সাতসৰী*, সম্পা. অনুৰাধা শৰ্মা পূজাৰী। সাদিন গোষ্ঠী, পৃ. ৩১
- <sup>৫</sup> পুলিন কলিতা, *নামঘৰ বুৰঞ্জী আৰু বিৱৰণ*। অসম প্ৰকাশন পৰিষদ, পৃ. ১০৫
- <sup>৬</sup> উল্লিখিত, পৃ. ১০৬
- <sup>৭</sup> উল্লিখিত, পৃ. ১০৫
- <sup>৮</sup> দাস, সূৰ্য। উল্লিখিত, পৃ. ৩১
- <sup>৯</sup> উল্লিখিত, পৃ. ৩২
- <sup>১০</sup> উল্লিখিত, পৃ. ৩২
- <sup>১১</sup> উল্লিখিত, পৃ. ৩২

### সহায়ক গ্ৰন্থপঞ্জী :

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