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EDITORIAL

The great revolution of social reformation initiated by the greatest reformer Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and speeded up by his much loved disciple Mahāpuruṣa Mādhavadeva in NE India, which is geographically in a non-focused position, has completed almost five and half centuries. Due to the simplicity and ignorance of its habitats and also due to the narrow connection with the mainland and other parts of the world NE India has been used as the hotbed of evil practices by evil forces since the prehistoric age. Consequently, this part of India had been regarded as the place of Asura up to the 15th century. Even the mighty king like Bāna of Sonitpura the story of whose greatness has been proclaiming by the historical monuments of modern Sonitpur district, who, according to Mahābhārata, fought boldly against Kṛṣṇa and whose daughter was married to the grandson of Kṛṣṇa was called 'Bānāsura' (Bāna, the Asura). Mythological story writers of Ancient India created stories mentioning this area as the abode of Asuras which is the case with the island country Srilanka also. Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva with the support of his ardent disciple Mahāpuruṣa Mādhavadeva had been able to remove that shameful Asura identity of the people of this area by initiating the great revolution of socio-religious reformation being influenced by the all Indian Vaiṣṇavite movement. Unfortunately, probably due to the same geographical position, the evil practices in the name of Dharma still prevails among a large number of people of this area. The shameful practice of animal sacrifice in front of gods and goddesses is running even among a section of highly educated people and in this 21st century killing of people believing to be the Daini (witch) i.e. witch-hunting has been practiced in this area.

This very fact proves that the revolution initiated by Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva is not only relevant in modern age but also the continuation of it is an urgent call for it especially in this area. This urgency was properly perceived by Lakshminath Bezbarua, the unchallenged leader of modern Assamese community. Besides writing of the two biographies 'Śaṅkaradev'(1912) and 'Sri Śaṅkaradev aru Sri Madhavdev'(1916), Bezbarua tried his best to popularize the Eka Śaraṇa Nāma Dharma in his contemporary society by blowing the devotional tunes in his 'Bahi' (flute), the journal edited by himself. 'Tattvakatha' is his most valuable contribution to Eka Śaraṇa Nāma Dharma. He declared the holy meeting of the two Mahāpuruṣas as 'Maṇikāñcana saṅyoga' (meaning- the combining of pearl and gold). The 150th birth anniversary of this great son of Assam is going to be celebrated this year. On this auspicious occasion we remember this dedicated follower of Mahāpuruṣism and a true patriot of Assam with earnest respect.

Following the literary effort of Bezbarua and others a number of noble Assamese people grouped together to preach Eka Śaraṇa Nāma Dharma of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva in its pure form and to take it to the people outside Assam and India, and established the organization 'Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Saṅgha' 82 years back from today. Among the great leaders of this vast organization, who have offered their most sincere

service to it, Sonaram Cutia is most prominent. His scholarly books, confident lectures and uncompromising stand gave a new twist to the revolution of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva for which he was offered the prestigious ‘Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Award’ in 2000 by the Govt. of Assam. To the utmost dejection of the humanist section of people he has left for his heavenly abode on 30th January/2013 at the age of 98. We, on behalf of all the devotees of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Saṅgha, pay homage to this great revolutionary and pray to God for the eternal peace of his soul.

I would like to express here my gratitude to the scholars who have obliged us by sending their valuable articles for Volume XIII of Mahāpuruṣajyoti. My sincere gratefulness is due to honourable Padadhikar, Upapadadhikar, Pradhan Sampadak and all other executive members of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Saṅgha, along with the honourable President and members of sahitya sakha samiti and sahitya gaveshana parishad, for their kind advice in editing of this Volume. I am especially thankful to Dr. Suresh Chandra Bora, Associate Professor, Department of Sanskrit, Cotton College, Dr. Indira Saikia Bora, Associate Professor, Department of Sanskrit, Pragjyotish College and Mrs. Jyotishmita Bora, Project Associate, AHSEC, Assam for their noble help in all the processes of publication of this issue. The Proprietor and workers of Ms Saraighat Printers, Guwahati and Micro Computer And Technical Institute, Abhayapuri also deserve our deep sense of gratitude for printing the journal very sincerely.

Due to some inconveniences it has not been possible to publish some of the articles sent for this issue for which I am very sorry. I request all the scholars to extend cooperation in the future publications of this Journal by sending their valuable Research articles, suggestions and critical comments on the published issues of the same.

Despite my sincere efforts there may be some omissions or commissions in the publication of this volume of the Journal for which I beg unconditional apology from all the concerns.

JAYA GURU ŚAṅKARA

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VIṢṆU AND KṚṢṆA: IN THE LIGHT OF ŚRĪMANTA ŚAṆKARADEVA'S *ANĀDI PĀTANA*

Dr. Girish Baruah

Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa are two important concepts in Vaiṣṇavism. Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva also, being a staunch supporter of Vaiṣṇavism, uses these two concepts much frequently. Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa are two principal deities introduced in Vaiṣṇavism. The word Vaiṣṇavism is coined emphasizing the concept of Viṣṇu. But later on the term Kṛṣṇa has come to the arena and has become dominant in the parlance of Vaiṣṇavism. Nay this term has even shadowed the term Viṣṇu, and he has been transformed into a subsidiary god making him one of the three principal deities the other two being Brahmā and Śiva. These three gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva have been introduced to engage them in three activities like creation, preservation and dissolution of the world respectively.

In course of time Kṛṣṇa has been transformed into the ultimate Godhead surpassing all other gods offering them only the subsidiary status. Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva recognizes all other gods, but above them he has placed Kṛṣṇa as the supreme Godhead. We may compare Kṛṣṇa with the Christian God, Who is above the Trinity like the Father, Jesus (the son) and the holy ghost (spirit).

Kṛṣṇa has taken over the position of Viṣṇu. How He has done so as to this fact an explanation is required. Kṛṣṇa has been made the supreme God infusing in Him the Brāhmīc essence. We know that the religion of Vaiṣṇavism is an offshoot of the Vedānta philosophy. In Vedānta Brahman is regarded as the ultimate reality. It may be compared with the Western concept of the Absolute. In Western Philosophy we find a difference between God and the Absolute. Hegel and Bradley are very vocal as to this difference. Hegel says that the Absolute becomes God in the field of religion. Similarly Francis Bradley, a British absolute idealist, holds that God is an element in the apparent world, while the Absolute is one of the real world. This view is very much similar to Śaṅkarācārya's view of the difference between Brahman and Īśvara. He says that while Brahman is an element of the pāramārthika world, Īśvara i.e. God is that of the vyāvahārika i.e. empirical world.

Śaṅkaradeva is interested in accepting one primary God. His monotheistic ideal does not allow him to recognize other gods independent of this primary God. Monotheism in general does not recognize other gods except the primary God. The position that other gods are there but at the same time the belief that there is a primary God is termed by Max Müller as henotheism (Vide his *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 40). From this standpoint Śaṅkaradeva's position is like this, not like pure

The *Anādi Pātana* has described the seven heavens which belong to different deities. Visnu is allotted one heaven the name of which is Viṣṇuloka. But Kṛṣṇa's abode is not within these heavens. His Vaikuṅṭha is beyond all these heavens (Vide: Verses 86,87). It also signifies that Kṛṣṇa is higher in position than Viṣṇu. But in spite of this lower position Viṣṇu is specially treated by Kṛṣṇa. He has been created with the quality of sattva, which is the best of all the qualities.

Sometimes Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa are identified. It is said in the *Anādi Pātana* that at the mercy of Viṣṇu all the three deities including Viṣṇu have regained consciousness as they became unconscious having seen Kṛṣṇa in the form of Vanamālī. (Vide: 156) Again Viṣṇu has been regarded as Kṛṣṇa's own part. (Vide: 167) But the other two deities are not regarded so. This implies also the special status of Viṣṇu.

The *Anādi Pātana* also speaks of different presiding deities of different organs of man. It is said that Vāsudeva exists in the citta (will?), while God is said to be in the heart of man (214). But in the previous verse Viṣṇu is said to be the presiding deity of the anus. Here it seems that Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu have been regarded as two separate deities, and in this verse Viṣṇu has a lower position than Vāsudeva, because while Vāsudeva is the presiding deity of citta, Viṣṇu is of the anus (Verses: 213,214). (Here it seems that Vāsudeva has a different status from Kṛṣṇa and his status is lower than the latter.) There are other examples where Viṣṇu has been imparted lower status. He has been made by Kṛṣṇa the door-keeper of Bali whose abode is the Pātāla (the nether region) called Sutala. He is keeping the door of Bali with the mace at hand. (92)

In Vaiṣṇava literature the concept of incarnation is there. It is generally said that the incarnations are of Viṣṇu. It follows logically then that Kṛṣṇa does not assume incarnations. He is above all of them. This also implies that Kṛṣṇa is different from Viṣṇu.

Viṣṇu is generally worshipped in his idol mostly by the Vaiṣṇava Brahmins. Kṛṣṇa is not worshipped as so; but his image is conceptualized in the mind. The idol of Viṣṇu consists of four hands and in these hands four things like the conch-shell (saṅkha), the wheel (cakra), the mace (gadā) and the lotus (padma) are there. Kṛṣṇa's image is of two hands. While Kṛṣṇa's bodily colour is black (śyāma), Viṣṇu is of white complexion.

The concept of Hari is also found in Vaiṣṇava parlance. Sometimes he is identified with Viṣṇu and sometimes with Kṛṣṇa. In Verse 140 of the *Anādi Pātana* Hari is identified with Viṣṇu as it is said that Hari has become manifested with the quality of the sattva. But mostly he is identified with Kṛṣṇa as in Verse 144 it is said that man's life becomes meaningless without the name of Hari. Again in Verse 162 it is said that one who is against Hari cannot pass over the sea of the world as his boat sinks on the way. Prajāpati i.e. Brahmā also regards Hari to be the ultimate preceptor, and therefore he has bowed down to Kṛṣṇa. Here Hari and Kṛṣṇa are unequivocally identified. When it is said that one should offer devotion to Hari (as in Verse 300), Hari definitely refers to Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa has been elevated to the position of Brahman by infusing in Him the essence of ultimate reality. But He is identified only with Saguna Brahman, not with Nirguna Brahman. Rāmānuja finds no difference between Nirguṇa Brahman and

Saguṇa Brahman. In Śaṅkaradeva also we find such a concept. But Śaṅkarācārya allots a subsidiary position to Saguṇa Brahman, as he says that Saguṇa Brahman is the result of Māyā. In the Gītā also we get such a position when it is said that God comes to His empiric form through his own Māyā (ātmanāyayā, Vide: Verse 4/6). So with the help of Māyā God can take any form. He utilizes Māyā as a noose for binding the souls of the world. It is also said that Māyā is responsible for creation, preservation and dissolution of the world. The above mentioned three gods are simply nominal agents for these three actions.

It is interesting to note that Māyā and Prakṛti are identified and both of them are regarded as a goddess. This goddess remains within Kṛṣṇa and when required comes out. Kṛṣṇa takes the help of Māyā for the manifestation of the world. Māyā is addressed as Mahāmāyā (the great goddess) by Kṛṣṇa. She is regarded as the beginningless goddess. Kṛṣṇa regards her as His half-body (V.45) The *Anādi Pātana* has given a very lucid description of the beauty of this goddess.

It is also interesting to note that Māyā has become pregnant when Kṛṣṇa has looked at her. It is very natural that without pregnancy a woman cannot give birth. Māyā or Prakṛti could give birth to the sons like Mahat etc. when she became pregnant at the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. But nowhere we have found that Māyā is the wife of Kṛṣṇa. She has however been regarded as His half-body (ardhakāyā).

Conclusion:

Now we may conclude that Kṛṣṇa has been elevated to the position of God by infusing in Him the content of Brahman. In essence Kṛṣṇa is Brahman. Brahman had to take the empiric form (vyāvahārika sattā) in order to create the world. Kṛṣṇa is this empiric form. This empiric form is to be taken in order to protect the honest men and destroy the wicked ones. This is to be done so that virtue can be maintained and preserved.

A personal God is required from another standpoint. Śaṅkaradeva is interested in devotion, not in knowledge. For the sake of devotion Brahman has to be personified. In Hinduism we have three paths leading to salvation and they are action (karma), devotion (bhakti) and knowledge (jñāna). Śaṅkaradeva opts for devotion allotting subsidiary status to the other two.

Jñāna i.e. transcendental knowledge is required to know or intuit Brahman, Who is formless. Śaṅkarācārya opts for this way of knowledge as he emphasizes the concept of Nirguṇa Brahman. As for Śaṅkaradeva God is a person in the being of Kṛṣṇa, so he opts for bhakti. Therefore he seems to identify Kṛṣṇa with Saguṇa Brahman.

From religious standpoint Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy is regarded as Bhaktivāda. But as he infuses the Brahman content in Kṛṣṇa so metaphysically his philosophy may be called Brahmeśvaravāda. We know that there are several Vaiṣṇava philosophers in the Indian scene. Even Caitanyadeva has a name for his religious philosophy and it is known as Acintyabhedābhedaśāstra meaning the philosophy of unthinkable identity in difference. Śaṅkaradeva does not contribute to pure theism, as his concept of God surpasses the divine domains and reaches ultimate reality in the form of Brahman. So his

theism may be regarded as absolutistic theism and the name Brahmeśvaravāda may very much be applied to it.

EPITHETS OF VIṢṆU IN THE PURĀNAS: A STUDY

Dr. Manjula Devi

Lord Viṣṇu is a Vedic deity and he has been worshipped as one of the supreme deities in the Hindu Trinity of gods. He rose to the rank of supreme god in the epic and Purāṇic period. Viṣṇu, who gradually occupies a position of paramount importance, is praised with many names and epithets in the epic and Purāṇic literature. A thousand of Viṣṇu's names and epithets are enumerated in the *Mahābhārata*¹ and the *Padmapurāṇa*.² The *Garuḍapurāṇa*³ also contains one thousand and eight names of Viṣṇu, and the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*⁴ one hundred and eight names. The *Mahābhārata* categorically states that the various names of god Viṣṇu have been mentioned by the great seers of the Vedas and Purāṇas on account of diverse acts of the god.⁵ The reason for application of so many names and epithets is best expressed in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* also which states that the god has many names and forms owing to his various virtues and deeds.⁶ The god himself has declared that some of his names refer to his attributes and some of them refer to his deeds.⁷ It is true that in most cases, it is the god's functions rather than the outward appearance that is expressed in these epithets.

The epithets are not used arbitrarily and without sense of meaning. The exact sense of the epithet is communicated by the term and they are explicative. In long eulogies of Viṣṇu in the Purāṇas, the poet gives a string of epithets representing various sides of god's character and his functions. The etymological explanations of the names and epithets of god Viṣṇu also abound in the Purāṇas, which are the *nirvacanas* of the god's names. The term *nirvacana* which occurs in the *Nirukta* of Yāska is explained by Durgācārya in his commentary as *niṣkr̥ṣya viḡr̥hya vacanam*, i.e. speaking or telling, having dragged or having taken out full meaning.⁸ Thus, the *nirvacanas*, are none other than the etymological interpretations of the god's names and epithets. These are intently used for Viṣṇu in the Purāṇas for laudatory purpose as they convey about special aspects of god's nature.

The very name Viṣṇu itself indicates that he is all-pervading. Yāska has derived the term *Viṣṇu* from the root *viś* (to enter) or *vi+as* (to pervade) - *Viṣṇurviśatervā vyaśnotervā*⁹. Thus, it is meant that Viṣṇu enters into all things, i.e. he is all-pervading in nature. That Viṣṇu is all-pervading is clearly depicted in the Purāṇic passages. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa* states that the whole world is pervaded by the energy of Viṣṇu and as such, he is rightly called Viṣṇu which is derived from the root *viś*, to enter - *yasmāt viśvamidam sarvaṁ tasya śaktyā mahātmanaḥ/ tasmāt sa procyate Viṣṇur viśerdhātoḥ praveśanāt* //.¹⁰ The *Vāyupurāṇa* also gives a similar interpretation of the term.¹¹ The term *Viṣṇu* is defined in the *Līṅgapurāṇa* as capable of pervading everywhere.¹² In the *Matsyapurāṇa*, the meaning of the term *Viṣṇu* is discussed by Mother Earth in the form of an eulogy to the Lord. She has justified the name by stating that he is appropriately called Viṣṇu as he pervades all movable and immovable objects of the three worlds. Viṣṇu is wide-spread in the three worlds and the Viṣṇu's epithet Nārāyaṇa is worth of

special attention which is in frequent use in the Purāṇic literature. Nārāyaṇa means 'he whose abiding place is water'. In the epic and Purāṇic literature, Viṣṇu is often described to live in the ocean. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* states that in the beginning, the god called Puruṣa, i.e. Viṣṇu, who came out from the mundane egg, wanted for him an abiding place. Then he created the water and his abode there, for thousand years and thereafter Viṣṇu is called Nārāyaṇa.¹⁴ Here *nara* means the water and *ayana* is the abiding place.¹⁵ Śaṅkarācārya, while commenting on the term *Nārāyaṇa* in the *Viṣṇusahasranāmastotra* observes that the word *nara* stands for the soul, and ether, air etc., produced from the soul are its effects and these effects are pervaded by the God as the cause; thereby these effects are his place or abode.¹⁶ Here Nārāyaṇa is none other than Brahman of the Advaita-vedānta, the sole cause of the world.

Another notable epithet of Viṣṇu is Hari, who is both cause and effect and also the cause of cause, the effect of effect. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin interprets the term *hari* as the remover, who destroys the belief that things can exist in themselves apart from him, the all-pervading substratum - *svātiriktāvidyāpadatatkāryajātaṃ svāvaśeṣatayā haratīti hariḥ*.¹⁷ The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* states that Viṣṇu is called Hari, i.e. the remover, a name given to Viṣṇu by Svāyambhuva Manu for saving the three worlds from affliction - *lokatrayasya mahatīmaharadyadārtiṃ svāyambhuvēna manunā harirityanūktāḥ*!¹⁸ The *Matsyapurāṇa* holds that Viṣṇu is called Hari because he controls Brahmā, Indra, Yama, Rudra, Varuṇa and other gods and then again attracts them to him.¹⁹ Thus, he is the refuge of all but he depends upon none.

Viṣṇu is widely called Vāsudeva. According to the grammatical point of view, Vāsudeva is a patronymic derivative implying son of Vasudeva. But the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* explains that Viṣṇu is called Vāsudeva, because he causes all things to dwell in him and he abides in all. Thus, he is called Vāsudeva, the term being derived from the root *vas*, to dwell.²⁰ Śrīdharaśvāmin in his commentary on the relevant verse of the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (1.2.12) clearly states - *vāsanād vasanācca vāsuḥ dyotanād devaḥ vāsuścāsau devaśceti vāsudevaḥ*! The *Mahābhārata* also similarly states - *vasanāt sarvabhūtānām vasutvād devayonitāḥ / vāsudevastato vedyo...*²¹, i.e. As all beings dwell in him, he is the support of the world and from his being of divine origin, he is known as Vāsudeva.

Viṣṇu is called Bhagavat and etymologically the term denotes one who possesses or has realized *bhaga*. The *Agnipurāṇa* and the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*²² state that *bhaga* denotes the six divine faculties collectively, viz. all-pervadingness, strength, fame, prosperity, knowledge and indifference to worldly objects. The term *bhagavat* solely refers to Viṣṇu and to no one else - *aiśvaryasya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ/ jñānavairāgyayoścaiva śaṅṅām bhaga itīṅganā // vasanti Viṣṇurbhūtāni sa ca dhātustridhātmakāḥ evaṃ harau hi bhagavān śabdo' nyatropacārataḥ //*²³ He is known as Bhagavat who knows about the creation and dissolution of the world, about the final destiny of beings, and knows what is *Vidyā*, i.e. right knowledge and *Avidyā*, i.e. spiritual ignorance.²⁴ The letter *bha* in the term *bhagavat* stands as an abbreviated form of *sambhatṛ* or *bharṛ* as Viṣṇu is the supporter of the whole universe. The letter *ga* indicates the leader, impeller or creator and the letter *va* is that elemental spirit in which all beings exist and which exists in all beings.²⁵

Viṣṇu is called Govinda because Viṣṇu regains the lost Vedas (*go*) at the end of each *yuga*.²⁶ R.G. Bhandarkar opines that Govinda is a later form of Govid, an epithet used for Indra in the *Ṛgveda*, which means the finder of the cows.²⁷ The etymological explanation of the term *govinda* as found in the *Ādiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* is as follows--Viṣṇu is called Govinda because he found the earth (*go*) in the midst of water which he agitated in the form of a boar.²⁸ In the *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* also Vāsudeva himself states-'I am called Govinda by the gods because I found, the earth which was lost and lodged in a den'.²⁹

Some epithets of Viṣṇu have their source in the Upaniṣads and their interpretations are on the pattern of the Upaniṣadic statements about Brahman. Viṣṇu is known as Puruṣottama because Viṣṇu is beyond Prakṛti, i.e. the original source of the material world and far superior to Puruṣa, i.e. Individual Soul - *prakṛteḥ sa paro yasmāt puruṣādapi cottamaḥ / tasmād vede purāṇe ca loke'smin puruṣottamaḥ* //³⁰ Another epithet of Viṣṇu is Acyuta as Viṣṇu never declines from his proper position.³¹ The *Skandapurāṇa* explains that he is called Acyuta as he never declines from his proper nature (*svabhāvādapracayavate*) meaning he does not yield to passions.³² Viṣṇu is also known as Ananta³³ which literally means the endless or infinite one. He is eternal and cannot be bound by any limitation. Viṣṇu remains when everything vanishes and that is why he is limitless. The *Mahābhārata* clearly states that owing to his eternity he is called Ananta - *śāśvatatvādantaśca*/³⁴ Viṣṇu's epithet Akṣara signifies that he is imperishable. Viṣṇu does not perish even in crores of Kalpas.³⁵ His epithet Akṣaya also bears the same meaning as he never wanes or perishes.³⁶ So also, another epithet of Viṣṇu is Śeṣa. Viṣṇu alone remains and all else are destroyed in course of time - *yāteṣu śeṣo bhavasi tasmāccheṣo'si kīrtitaḥ* //³⁷

Some epithets of Viṣṇu refer to his warrior characteristics. He is known as Janārdana³⁸ as he causes fear in wicked beings - *dasyutrāsājjanārdanaḥ*/³⁹ He is ever alert for vanquishing the inimical demons. Viṣṇu killed the demon Keśi and thereby he is called Keśava⁴⁰ and Keśiniśūdana.⁴¹ Another epithet of Viṣṇu is Madhusūdana⁴² as he killed the demon Madhu. His epithets Madhudviṣ⁴³ and Madhuhā⁴⁴ also convey the same meaning. He killed the demon Mura and thereby he is called Muraripu⁴⁵ or Murāri.⁴⁶

Thus, the various names and epithets of Viṣṇu which are well-adapted to the context throw light upon various aspects of the god's nature. The epithets are necessitated for the fact that they bring some specific forms of the Lord to the devotees which help them realize their god easily.⁴⁷ The Purāṇic seers by ever reciting and repeatating the stanzas, replete with epithets of the god served the purpose of strengthening the god's divine power, valour, fighting spirit, generosity etc. Thus, the use of epithets of the god was a most wide-spread and effective means of expressing praise and it still remains a deliberate device to express their devotion to the Supreme deity in every religious cult.

The votaries of Viṣṇu ardently sing the names of god in a group which is known as *nāmasaṅkīrtana*, i.e. the recital of the divine names. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* mentions the utterance of the divine names, i.e. *kīrtana* as one of the nine forms of bhakti.⁴⁸ The *Viṣṇupurāṇa* asserts that the repetition of the god's names with devotion is the best

purifier of all sins, as the fire is the purifier of all metals.⁴⁹ The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* unequivocally affirms that *nāmasaṅkīrtana* not only purifies them who utter the divine names but also one who listens him uttering it.⁵⁰ Thus, these names and epithets have, definitely, that psychological appeal which makes his votaries filled with unbounded pleasure with their hearts melt with *bhakti* for the Supreme god.

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Advaita Vedānta - the Philosophy of Oneness: Its Modern Perspective

Dr. Hiran Sarmah

Man is the highest creation of God (*puruṣovavasukṛtam*).¹ According to the *BhāgavataPurāṇa* human life is the best of all lives (*aho! nrjanmakhilajanmasobhanam*)². Man is creative, rational and conscientious and is thus not only different from other animals but is supreme too. Through material and spiritual excellences man can dictate the progress of the society.

It is a common experience that we all are aware of our body, mind and intellect but not the self. Vedānta helps us to discover the true nature of the real self. For acquiring the knowledge of Vedānta one need not have to retire to the jungle. It is not a retirement plan) but a technique of active and potent living. Having attained the knowledge of Vedānta people can work in their respective fields of activity. It has been stated in the *Īsopaniṣad* that people should desire to live a long life doing work with renunciation.³

The human life is full of sufferings, while ignorance of the self is the cause of pain and suffering, through the knowledge of the same one can get rid of them and leads one to enjoy peace and blessedness. The aim of Vedānta is to free man from his ignorance through pure knowledge of eternities.

Śaṅkara's Advaita is regarded as the pinnacle of Indian Philosophical thought. It is based on the four great aphorisms of the Upaniṣads. These are (i) *Prajñām Brahma*⁴ – 'consciousness is Brahman' (ii) *Aham Brahmasmi*⁵ – 'I am Brahman' (iii) *Tattvam asi*⁶ – 'thou art that' and (iv) *Ayamātmā Brahma*⁷ – 'Ātman is Brahman'. All these statements point to the non-duality of the individual soul and the supreme soul. Śaṅkara inherited a rich tradition in philosophy as built up by the Upaniṣadic seers and thinkers.

Brahman is the central theme of all the Upaniṣads and is also referred to as *paramātmān* (supreme soul). *Brahman* is amply defined in the *TaittirīyaUpaniṣad* as "*Satyam jñānāmanantam brahma*"⁸, which implies existence, consciousness and infinity. Thus *Brahman* is the infinite existence and conscious principle. The *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*⁹ describes *Brahman* as "unseen, unthinkable, nameless, colourless, that which has no eyes, no feet, and no hands, ever-present, all pervasive, very subtle and inexhaustible. The wise sees *Brahman* as present in all creatures and as the inner most essence." Again "*Brahman* is in front, in back, in south, in north, upwards, downwards, this great vast universe too is *Brahman* himself - all are with him"¹⁰. *Brahman* is effulgent, subtler than the subtle, in Him reside all these regions and their residents-such is the immutable *Brahman* - He is motive force in all, he is intellect and mind, He is *satya* and immortal"¹¹. This is the true significance of the statement, All this is verily *Brahman* "*sarvamkhalvidam brahma*"¹².

Ādi Śaṅkara, the exponent of *Advaita* philosophy pronounces "*Brahma satya, jagannmithyā*"¹³ meaning there is only one supreme reality called *Brahman*, the supreme

being and the world has no reality of its own. *Brahman* is infinite and omnipresent and therefore nothing can be added to it; further there cannot be a place where he is not. In the Bhāṣya of the first sūtra Śāṅkara states that the proof of the reality of *Brahman* is that it is the ground of the self of everyone " *sarvasyātmatvaccabrahmāstitvaprasiddhiḥ*"

The word *Brahman* is derived from the root ' *brh*', which means to manifest, to burst forth, to expand. Śāṅkara says " *brhattambṛnhattvatbrnhanatvaccatadrūpam brahmasaṅgītam*"¹⁴. Śāṅkara defines satyam as that which never changes its intrinsic nature which is ascertained to be its own " *yadrūpenayanniscitam tad rūpamnavyabharati tad satyam*."¹⁵

According to Advaita *Vedānta*, *Brahman* or the absolute is *Advaita* or non-dual i.e. devoid of any difference - internal or external and any form of quality¹⁶; the *jīva* is in complete identity with the absolute; and the world being a misrepresentation of *Brahman*, has no ultimate reality.¹⁷ It is devoid of all powers and qualities and is free from all kinds of differences — *vijatiya, sajatiya and svagata*¹⁸. He is the cause of the creation, maintenance and destruction of the world. " *janmasthitibhangamyatahsarvajñatsarvasaktehakaranatbhavati, tat brahma*"¹⁹.

In words of Ādi Śāṅkara, the world that we see around us is said to have relative reality only, and it is *Brahman* alone at the base of the world which has the absolute reality. Hence the true reality of the world is *Brahman* and the reality that we see around us is false. *Brahman*, according to Śāṅkara, is the cause from which proceeds the origin or sustenance and dissolution of this world. There is nothing other than *Brahman*. The phenomenal world (*jagat*), the individual self (*jīva*) and the creator (*Īśvara*) are merely superimposed on *Brahman*.

Śāṅkarācārya defines the fundamental tenet of *Advaita Vedānta* as — " *Brahma satyam, jaganmithyājīvobrahmaivanāparah*" meaning *Brahman* alone is real, the world is unreal and the soul is not different from *Brahman*. This statement, though presents the core teaching of *Vedānta*, has evoked much criticism. People in general are unable to accept the world in which they live and the things they directly perceive and experience throughout their lives as mere appearances or unreal. Question naturally arises if *Brahman* alone is real, what about the world of objects in which we live, move and we possess? Śāṅkara has clearly forwarded his points to come to the logical conclusion by saying that *Brahman* alone is real; the world is unreal.

Śāṅkara has all along maintained that *Brahman* alone is the real and the world is merely an appearance. Generally the question would arise as to how the two are related. Here Śāṅkara advocates the theory of superimposition (*adhyāsa*) to explain this relationship.²⁰ The entire world of objects subsists in *Brahman* and *Brahman* is the ground of the world. The world, therefore, has no reality of its own.

Śāṅkara does not believe in real change; He advocates *vivartanavāda* to explain the relationship between *Brahman* and the world. Śāṅkara²¹ maintains that the world has no transcendental reality (*pāramārthikasatta*), it is true only from the practical point (*vyavahārikasatta*) of view; it exists as long as the self does not realize *Brahman*. The world and the empirical *jīvas* are mere appearances due to *Māyā*, an indefinable power

of *Brahman*. Whatever exists is one, the ultimate reality called *Brahman* but *Brahman* appears as the universe of names and forms because of *Māyā* the veiling and projecting power inherent in it.

Regarding the world Śaṅkara tells that the *Brahman* creates the world with the magical power *Māyā*²², which is indistinguishable from him, just as the burning of fire is from the fire itself. It is an eternal power of God, by which he transforms the potential into the actual world; its presence is inferred from its effects.

Māyā is the finitising process belonging to *Brahman* with the two characteristics of *āvaraṇa* or hiding the truth and *vikṣepa* or misrepresenting facts²³. The concealing and projecting powers of *Māyā* function simultaneously. *Brahman*, in association with *Māyā*, may be called the projector or manifester of the universe. But this projection is only an appearance; it is not real. When one sees the dual universe and searches its cause, one finds it in *Brahman* associated with *Māyā*. According to non-dualists the universe is falsely superimposed on *Brahman* through *Māyā*; and the superimposition cannot affect the real nature of *Brahman*²⁴.

Māyā is treated as *anirvacanīya*,²⁵ i.e. indescribable in *Advaita* philosophy. *Māyā* is neither real as the *Brahman* nor unreal as the flower of the sky²⁶. *Māyā* is empirically real, since it produces the world of appearance but is transcendentally unreal, as it ceases to exist for those having *Brahma-jñāna*.

Śaṅkara clearly explains the nature of *Māyā* with an example. In darkness, we can mistake a rope for a snake and experience fear and trepidation of seeing the snake. If we throw light on the same we see the rope as it is and realize that the snake never actually appeared or disappeared. Similarly, out of the ignorance of the divinity in us we perceive the universe in place of *Brahman*; but in the light of self-knowledge, assures Vedānta, the universe will disappear and *Brahman* will distinctly reveal itself²⁷. Our body and mind, says Vedānta, are appearances on the *Ātman*, which is the true spiritual self and the source of eternal bliss. We generally look for fulfilment of the earthly desires in the outside world and this is because of the attachment to our body and mind. Whenever knowledge arises in us we realize that the world can bring us neither peace nor its fulfilment. With the attainment of Self-knowledge (*Brahmajñāna*), one realizes the self to be devoid of all these characteristics and to be identical with *Brahman*. This leads to the conclusion that the empirical self is false and it is merely an appearance of *Brahman*. In day to day life, a person identifies himself with his individual consciousness or ego. *Advaita* says that the true identity of one is not the individual consciousness but the absolute *Brahman* which lies at its root.

According to *Advaita*, all creations in the universe are just one existence; however appearing as many. The notion of the oneness of existence has many practical implications. When one considers himself as a spirit, he does naturally look upon others as the same spirit irrespective of the physical or mental differences. Practice of the truth of oneness thus helps in reducing the selfishness in individuals.

Considering all beings as manifestations of the spirit promotes in us the concept of equanimity and detachment. The universal love advocated by Vedānta is based on the

truth of oneness of existence. "Verily, not for the sake of the husband is the husband loved, but he is loved for the sake of the self [which, in its true nature, is one with the Supreme Self]. Verily, not for the sake of the wife is the wife loved, but she is loved for the sake of the self. Verily, not for the sake of the All is the All loved, but it is loved for the sake of the self. Verily, it is the Self that should be realized should be heard of, reflected on, and mediated upon."²⁸ After exhorting us to cultivate faith in ourselves, Swami Vivekananda exhorted that love for self means love for all — love for animals, love for everything; for we are all.

Eagerness to be happy and to live in peace is our nature. However, it cannot be created and all that is needed to be happy is to be alive. Material success cannot make people happy and yet, we search for happiness and for that we constantly grope for sources in the outside world.

It is observed that sometimes people do some benevolent things but the intentions of all good actions may not always be selfless. As for instance, we may donate to a charity to earn a good position or gain publicity in the society. Sometimes we may give alms to a beggar simply to get rid of him and stop him from annoying us. We often help somebody hoping for a favour from him later. Therefore, we must carefully examine the attitude with which we give. Being good is far more important than doing good. To be happy we need to share our happiness, prosperity and wealth with others expecting nothing in return.

Nobility leads to Divinity- this is the teaching of the scriptures. To feel the divinity our love should be beyond relationship i.e. we should extend our love to all. Unfortunately our love does not reach everybody and this alienates divinity from us. The love, we usually are accustomed to, is all about 'expectations'. It usually happens that whenever our expectations are not reciprocated as expected we start hating that very person whom we loved moments ago and we miserably fail to feel the divinity. A wise person showers unconditional love not only on human beings but also on all other living beings. We should acquire the capacity to feel happy in others' happiness and help people to understand that happiness is the goal of life.

The world of today has witnessed evils like loss of character, hatred, greed for property, torture, adoption of unfair practices, untruth, ungratefulness, indifference towards the societal causes and welfare and above all the strong urge of individual to assert supremacy through adoption of even illegal means; people strive for worldly possessions, wealth, success, power and recognition so that they can feel better about themselves. But even when they attain all those things they do not get relief from misery. Our attitude to the world is self-centred. We are more interested in what happens to us rather than the welfare of the community. This attitude causes stress and tension, all these have pushed the basic philosophy *yatrajīvatatrasīva'* to the back seat.

The problem of moral degradation is a universal phenomenon at present. The present state of affairs is primarily due to non-adhering the principle of love and respect for the creatures and the creator of the universe. Men throughout the world today are laying for peace and prosperity. Every person wants to live in joy, happiness and peace.

It is a general tendency of man to want to live longer, be healthier, look younger and accumulates wealth but every individual in the world today feels absence of security and this has led to phenomenal increase of the discontentment and misery in the society. The catastrophe arises not out of the nature nor out of the animals; has it arisen out of the attitude of the man itself. Everyone in the society wants to get rid of this undesirable state of affairs. The material success may come to life but that is not sufficient to attain peace. The life of a human being is full of struggle or sufferings in the wilderness of *samsāra*. A man often fails to realize the truth of life. In order to get rid of the sufferings one has to remove the blind faith of *Māyā* and find way back to the self. Vedānta shows the way to free man from his ignorance and give him knowledge of *Ātman*-the essential truth of *Brahman* or self; it helps to transcend from the material and transient to the enduring and eternal. Men can get rid of the sufferings if they are able to unite themselves through mutual love, passion, sympathy etc. and through realization of oneself in others and others in oneself. When one sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself, he does not shrink away from anything. In words of Śaṅkara, all objects-living as well as non-living are the creation of *Māyā* only. Without *Māyā* the world cannot exist and so while performing our duties in this worldly life we have to realize the oneness of all within the circle of *Māyā*. In fact, Advaita teaches the tenet of oneness in all.

The teaching of *Advaita* Vedānta philosophy is to search for the root of oneself, which is Brahman. Because of lack of its true appreciation we consider ourselves as other than Brahman. It is this Brahman that we need to realize and the realization of the same helps us to see the relative identities of who we really are and this is the great truth shown by *Advaita* Vedānta. Those who have realization of Brahman, rise above the desire for wealth and worldly gain, Absolute is itself the world, and the Self is all in One, Knowing this truth, they want nothing from anyone or anywhere, and live in the bliss of Brahman, which is their *Ātman*. However, *Advaita* does not tell us to drop our duties in the world, or stop acting. The Vedānta does service of other people because of this realization. Rather, we should become free to hold those identities loosely, while increasingly being able to act in the loving service of others, independent of our relative identities. When one is able to realize the oneness in all, there will be enduring peace and prosperity among the people worldwide.

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Concept of Morality - A Study

Dr. Indira Saikia Bora

The word 'Morality' is derived from the word 'Moral' which means pertaining character and behaviour from the point of view of right or wrong. Human being has many kinds of excellence. It has its natural resource and is the source for many qualities. It compels the mind to think over more and more whenever some problems are created. The problems may be self made or created due to circumstances but many of these get the way to solution through human intellect. Morality is also the creation of human beings themselves. It is created through different environments. It cannot come by nature because it changes and changing elements do not spring originally. Morality is a sort of bondage for a person and the society.

Man is primarily moved by two interests: individual and social. The former pertains to his close self and the later determines his relations with other members of the society while he is engaged in his dealings with them from day to day. For promoting these two interests, he passes through many phases. One of these phases constitutes 'Morality'. It has an intimate correlation with his daily life. From these daily dealings one can read the habits, conduct and character of a person. 'Morality' is known as 'Ethics', a science which analyses the human behaviour. 'Ethics is the science of goodness or badness, rightness or wrongness of human conduct'.ⁱ Good behaviour is praised as moral and bad behaviour is condemned as immoral.

But the question arises as to how one can determine the moral and immoral aspect of a conduct. In other words, what are the sources of morality?

Some laws or rules suitable for a particular time, particular place and particular social circumstances are made from time to time for the development of the individual and the society. For all such moral laws, ancient Indian thinkers have mentioned various sources. According to Yajñavalkyaⁱⁱ, the sources of Dharma are:

- i. Śruti i.e. Vedas
- ii. Smṛti i.e. Law books
- iii. Sadācār i.e. conduct of the Good propel Purāṇas, Nyāya and Mimāṃsā are also the sources of Dharma according to him.

Veda is the principal source of Dharma i.e. morality. Gautamaⁱⁱⁱ says that Veda is the origin of Dharma. Traditions and practices of the persons knowing Veda are also the source of Dharma. Apastamba has the view that the social customs and conventions approved by learned persons who know dharma are also the source of Dharma but Vedas are the main sources.^{iv} According to Mimāṃsakas also Veda is the source of Dharma.^v

Manu also considers all the Vedas as the main source of Dharma (Morality) and further adds to tradition, practice, conduct and self-satisfaction of those persons who

know Vedas.^{vi} The term ‘Smṛti’ used in the compound ‘Smṛtiśīla’ literature was yet to come into existence. ‘Smṛti’ and ‘Śīla’ stands here for the customs and conventions. For a long time, these rules existed only in the memory of the custodians of tradition and so by ‘Lakṣaṇa’ they began to be called as ‘Smṛti’.

The next source of morality (dharma) is Smṛti. Vasistha^{vii} states that instructions of Smṛti are Dharma. In their absence, the practices of authorities are Dharma. Jaimini also recognises Smṛti as the secondary source of law on the hypothesis that it is based on the Śruti. Jaimini observes, ‘The Smṛtis having been compiled by sages who were the repositories of the revelation, there arises an inference that they were founded on the Śruti and should, therefore, be regarded as authoritative.’^{viii}

Next comes ‘Sadācāra’ i.e. conduct of good people which has been declared as a source of Dharma. These were customary laws accepted by the society and were divided into three classes.

1. Special practices prevalent in different castes.
2. Family traditions.
3. Yugadharmā.

According to Kānt^{ix}, ability, power, money, respect, health, satisfaction and prosperity all belongs to one’s luck. All these factors are not unwanted or looked down upon but these can be good only when the base of these is good will. It is the will that differentiates good from bad. If it is good, it is moral otherwise immoral.

It is very clear that the conduct of good based on goodwill is the most important source of Morality as it stands even in the absence of Śruti and Smṛti.^x

According to ancient Indian thinkers the Vedas give full knowledge of hidden things which cannot be understood otherwise, and so they affected religion and ethics very strongly.

Smṛtis have given very elaborate description of morals. These are full of the positive and negative injunctions prescribed for the people. Reason also was considered important in the domain of sacred law. Whenever there were conflicting views of different Smṛtis or there was conflict between Śruti and Smṛti, the theory of Yugadharmā^{xi} was resorted to and if the conflict could not be explained even in that way, the sages contemplated that preference should be given to reason. Nārada says, ‘In a case of conflict between Dharmāśāstra that which is consonant with reason should be adopted as the proper course.’^{xii} Again Yājñavalkya says- “In a case of conflict between Smṛtis, reason prevails according to usage.”^{xiii}

Morality according to Vedic literature

The oldest literature of Hindus is Vedic literature in which R̥gveda is the oldest Veda. We do not find the word 'Nīti' used independently in Vedic literature. It is in compound form such as R̥junīti.^{xiv}

According to the commentator Skanda, it means a system of behaviour which leads a man to the right path.^{xv} Mudgala and Sayana consider it a system of behaviour which lacks bad-will (crookedness).^{xvi} Dayananda Saraswati has explained it as a conduct which is right, simple, and pure.^{xvii}

In R̥gveda, we often find the word 'Deva'. It is derived from the root 'div' which means 'to do' or 'to shine'. It contains ethical importance. Every Sūkta has its own 'Devatā'. All the Deities contain some ethical elements but Varuṇa is specially the 'Deva' of morality. Varuṇa is lauded as upholder of physical and moral order. He is great lord of the laws of nature. By his ordinances, the Moon shines at night and the Sun during the day. He is also a regulator of the water. He is all knowing and witnesses man's truth and falsehood. He is described as the ordainer of duties for persons and he who does not obey his rules and Morality is fastened by Him with fetters of three types.^{xviii}

The above mentioned verses enable us to have some knowledge of Varuṇa's power of importance through which he commands every phase of life full of morals. In one verse (R.V. 125.12) it is mentioned that Varuṇa leads to good path. This good path indicates the path of Morality.

The second God of Morality is 'Mitra'. He guides people towards truth and honesty.^{xix} There are many other Gods as Agni, Soma, Savitra, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Pṛthīvi, Ūṣās, Aśvin, Vāyu, Puruṣa, Prajāpati and Yama who are described as leading the people towards morality. The two concepts of R̥ta and Satya (truth) are the forces behind the morality explained by the Vedas.

R̥ta is the fervour which kindles to its height Eternal Law and Truth^{xx}. The word 'R̥ta' has been derived from the root 'ṛ' which means 'to go to change'. R̥ta has been described in the Vedas as pervading all the worlds and the directions.^{xxi} It is free from geographical and temporal changes. It is the supreme law controlling all the forces of nature. All the Gods, the Sun, the Moon follow the path of R̥ta.

R̥ta was above the Gods. It should be noted that in Hinduism, it is the principles and not the Gods which were held high, eternal, supreme and perfect. The law of R̥ta, the law of Dharma, the law of Karma- these are the laws which are held supreme and above the Gods. Even the God^{xxii} is the first field of R̥ta meant for universe, it leads to other two fields in which the second is for morality and third is for yajñas.^{xxiii}

'Satya'(truth) is again indirectly R̥ta as it is created by R̥ta itself in the moral sphere. R̥ta is having two aspects, the actual and the ideal, ideal is laid up for people to follow.^{xxiv} The morality of Vedic period is based on the concept of R̥ta.

After R̥gveda the Vedic literature includes Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, Sāmaveda, Aranyakas and Upaniṣadas. Religion and Ethics had become taught during this period. Taittirīya Upaniṣad mentions some duties for a person in which it says that a man should take the path of truth and Dharma.^{xxv}

Concept of Morality in Smṛti Literature

Smṛtis, a section of Dharmaśāstra literature, are the codes of Hindus which deal with morality. Of all the Smṛtis, Manu Smṛti is the one which has fully explained morality.

According to Manu, Veda is the main source of Dharma^{xxvi} and Smṛtis prescribe rules of conduct which come under Dharma, thus man who follows Dharma suggested by the Veda and the Smṛtis get real happiness in this world and in another world also.^{xxvii} Manu directs human beings to follow the morals created for them by the sages. According to him, Morality or Dharma has an important place in human life. Manu has discussed in Chapter XII the good and bad conduct of people which is the cause of the various conditions of life of man. Yajñavalkya also agrees with the views of Manu regarding the theory of Dharma and Karma.^{xxviii}

Manu has classified the morals in three categories mainly “Sāmānya-dharma”, Varṇāśrama-dharma and Āpaddharma.^{xxix} He also dealt with many other qualitative charms like-‘Nityadharmas’ (usual-Dharmas), Naimittika (unusual), ‘Kula’ (Family’s), Strī (lady’s), puruṣa (man’s), Vyavahāras (everyday dealing), Deśa (country’s), Kāla (times), Rāja (king’s), Putra (son’s) ‘Pati’ (Husband’s), Patnī (wife’s), Guru (teacher’s), Śiṣya (student’s) etc. Each one of these Dharmas prescribes a particular role that an individual has to play at a particular course of his life for his own development and the development of the society. Though Manu has regarded Dharma as the group of moral codes derived from the ‘Śruti’ and ‘Smṛti’, he also pointed out that Dharma is ‘that’ which is followed by the learned people and accepted whole heartedly by the good people who are always immune to the feeling of hatred and disaffection towards others. According to him he always can be described as the knower of Dharma, who interprets the utterances of the sages and the directives of Dharma by modes of reasoning which is not contrary to the Veda Śāstra. Thus, Manu has given equal importance to reasoning also in the determination of Dharma.

Manu believes in ‘Trivarga’ or three goals of human life viz., Dharma, Artha and Kāma. The last and ultimate goal of human life is Mokṣa which is to be attained through Dharma, Artha, Kāma. Artha and Kāma should not transgress one another.^{xxx} Thus Kāma in itself is not bad but it leads to disastrous result when it transgresses Dharma. The physical beauty of Pārvaṭī is not deemed enough to make her love for Śiva fruitful.^{xxxi} She had to go through hardest penance to achieve it. The lusty love of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā was punished by Durvāsā’s Śāpa and the lusty love of Urvashī suffered when she was turned into a creeper.^{xxxii}

Manu has prescribed ten duties which are included under Sāmānya Dharma and are to be followed by everyone.^{xxxiii}

Yajñavalkya also has explained Dharma of different Varṇas and Āśramas and the Mitākṣara commentary of Yajñavalkya Smṛti says that Yajñavalkya deals with 'Varṇa-dharma' (duties concerning four classes of man), 'Āśramadharmā' (duties concerning four stages of human life), Guṇadharmā (duties of human beings with reference to characteristic tendencies which are innate in them), 'Special duties' (concerned with special occasions) and Sādhāraṇadharmā (duties common to all men and women as human beings). He has also pointed out that the high dharma of man is self realization for the salvation of soul.^{xxxiv}

Besides, the ten Dharmas or morals, Manu has mentioned many other morals such as:

- i. Refraining from giving the false evidence.^{xxxv}
- ii. Refraining from injury to living beings.^{xxxvi}
- iii. Respect for guests.^{xxxvii}

Manu has dealt with the duties of various sections of women. Woman is described as a girl (daughter), a wife, a mother, a widow and a prostitute. For all these Manu has recommended different moral codes.

Moral codes suggested for women by Smṛtis show the position of women in society of their times. In Hindu Dharma, a woman has been given very high place. She is considered man's better half and the social life is not regarded complete without a woman. Manu says that Gods reside there where women are worshipped.^{xxxviii}

In spite of the hard rules of the Smṛtis, there remained the existence of various practices which were not accordance with the laws of Smṛtis. But, still there is no doubt that the hold of the Smṛtis become more and more tightened with the advance of time and we find it in practice also as the 'Satīprathā' and 'widow-remarriage' was not favoured by the jurists, Parivrājakā of Mālavikāgnimitram also remains celibate after being a widow, neither she become a satī nor is she remarried.^{xxxix}

'Yugadharmā' has an important existence in determining the concept of Morality. Time and place also have great significance. Hindu thinkers recognize that the behaviour of a man depends on the conditions, demands and exigencies of the time and place. Human beings are always confronted with the complexities of problems created by time and place. To solve those problems they should be prepared for the radical changes in Dharma, Smṛtikāras themselves have accepted this Yugadharmā.^{xl}

Concept of Morality in Epics:

Ethics is the very essence of religion and the study of this subject in the Rāmāyaṇa is of special interest, for a moral ideal is at the very root of the composition of

this Kāvya. Along with Rāma who 'typifies the spirit of good'. Several other characters of the Rāmāyaṇa are cherished by the Hindus as the embodiments of distinct moral virtues.

Vālmīki refers to various moral excellences in the Rāmāyaṇa. He observes at one place that service to the elders, restraint of the sense, compassion and tolerance alone constituted the (real) ornamentation of a person.^{xii} Rāma regarded obedience to elders and carrying out their orders as his supreme dharma. Honesty in all public dealings was another quality on which Vālmīki has laid great emphasis.

Mahābhārata was the period of fights. The famous was of Kurukṣetra, its proof. When Arjuna refuses to fight, Lord Kṛṣṇa persuades him to follow the path of Svadharma. It is full of ethics. The second chapter of Gītā is containing these contents and these are based on Karmayoga. We get three stages of moral evolution of a human being.^{xiii} These are containing 'Tomogūṇa', 'Rajogūṇa' and 'Satvagūṇa' respectively. Karmayoga teaches us that the acts done by us should be without self interest. Any action should be for the duty only and not for the sake of its fruit.^{xiii} The Gītā ethical teaching lies in the few lines when Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to fight.^{xiv}

According to Gītā, the Karma should be without Kāma otherwise it leads to rebirth^{xv}. In the political morality, the duty of the king was to protect dharma while promoting Artha and cultivating Karma. We find its illustrations in Rāmāyaṇa where the king was convinced by his wife's purity but could not keep his wife with him. Here the balance of ruler's power is shown.

Mahābhārata advises a person to attain Dharma, Artha and Kāma, otherwise he remains unhappy. Life is the source of all troubles and Mokṣa is the greatest puruṣārtha. It is very difficult to get it.^{xvi} This problem is solved by Āśramadharmā and Varṇadharmā.^{xvii}

Varṇadharmā has been also explained in Mahābhārata from the point of view of ethics. Following morals are prescribed for all varṇas^{xviii}- R̥jutā (*Varacity*), Savabhūtaḍāyā (*For all creatures*), Ahimsā (*Refraining from injury to living being*), Apramada (*Moral watchfulness*), Śrādhakarma (*Funeral rites*), Atithisevā (*Service of Guest*), Satya (*Truth*), Śānti (*Peace*), Patnīvrata (*Faithfulness to wife*), Santoṣa (*Satisfaction*), Sucitā (*Purity*), Adveṣa (*Refraining from jealousy*), Ātma-jñāna (*Self-knowledge*), Jijñasā (*Curiosity (urge)*).

Morality is Dharma itself. This has relation to many other social and psychological aspects of a human being. Śruti (Veda), Smṛti and Sadācāra are its main sources. It has been classified by the literature of various times. Different duties prescribed by Vedas or Smṛtis are considered morals for an individual or a particular society. These change according to the time, place and circumstances.

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TEACHINGS OF ŚAṄKARADEVA: AN ANALYSIS UNDER MODERN LEGAL CONTEXT

Dr. Binima Buzarbaruah

Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, the versatile personality of the 15th century A.D., has immense contribution in setting up a society full of harmony and peace by way of his bhakti movement. He had an endeavour to instruct people about morality and ethics through the medium of literature, music, art and drama and thus lead a well refined life. He played a great role to abolish the evil practices prevailed among the people of that time and also to maintain justice and equality in the entire Assamese society.

In the modern time, the Constitution of India is regarded as the supreme law of the land. The main aim of the constitution of India is to establish a society based on justice and equality. In the preamble of the Constitution itself, it has been revealed in unequivocal terms. It secures to all its citizens justice, liberty and equality so that it can establish an egalitarian state.

In the present day India, through the rule of law justice is maintained in the society. As a result of it the ruler cannot become despotic. The rulers have to act in accordance with the law of the land. They exercise their power as instructed by law and they do not have any opportunity to go against it. In the writings of Śaṅkaradeva also it is found that the king who is the head of the state should be an ideal one. All those who assist the king will perform their duties properly only when the king is good. '*Rājā bhāla bhāile bhāla have dāsa*'.¹ A person can be considered as a king in the real sense only when he takes proper care of his subjects as his own sons. '*Sise mahā sādhu putravate pāle prajā*'.² So, the king or the rulers are expected to exercise their power for the welfare of the state and its people and not to leave the lawful path.

Justice can be maintained only when punishment is inflicted according to the gravity of the crime. If the crime is of lesser degree then the punishment should not be of higher degree and vice versa. If two different crimes seem to be similar, even then the minutest difference found in the commission of these two, needs difference in punishment also. It means that the amount of punishment should be appropriate. In modern time though robbery and dacoity seem to be similar outwardly, there remains a bit difference between them. Robbery is dacoity only when it is committed by five or more persons. The punishments for these two crimes have been appropriately stated in the Indian Penal Code in two different sections.³ Śaṅkaradeva, the great reformer, is also of the opinion that the king should punish the wrongdoer according to the seriousness of the crime. For different crimes, the punishment should be different. Punishment for a crime which is heinous in nature should differ from punishment of a crime of lower degree. Śaṅkaradeva has given him the title *dharmarājā* who inflicts proper punishment. '*Kare samucita śāsti sise dharmarājā*'.⁴

Violation of law is a crime. So, one should not violate the law prevalent in a state. But sometimes for some special reasons, if law is violated then it is not considered as a crime. Indian Penal Code has provided for the general defences which may be pleaded by the accused to claim immunity from punishment prescribed for the offence of which he is charged. All these defences have been collected together in Chapter IV of the Penal Code entitled General Exceptions in thirty one sections, namely from Section 76 to Section 106. Śaṅkaradeva is always of the opinion that one should not leave the path directed to be followed. But in certain situations he can leave his actual path for his own safety taking another way though not lawful. But one is not allowed to leave his path of righteousness without any reason and if he does so, he has to suffer from immense punishment.

binā āpadata jito nija dharma chārai/ yamadūte dhari tāka asipatre pārai//⁵

In present time, all people irrespective of caste, race and sex are regarded as equal before the eyes of law. The right to equality⁶ which is the fundamental right of the Indian constitution states that human beings are equal before the law and all should be protected equally by the law. No special privilege is granted in favour of any individual or group. All people without any discrimination are equally subjected to the jurisdiction of ordinary court of law. Moreover, equal treatment of all persons situated in similar circumstances is provided.

The elimination of the feeling of difference and realisation of unity in diversity is an important feature in Śaṅkaradeva's writings. It is Śaṅkaradeva's Neo-Vaiṣṇavism which has established equality among all living creatures. Śaṅkaradeva rejected caste and class superiority and proclaimed that all *Vaiṣṇavas* are equal irrespective of their caste, class and beliefs.

smaroka mātra Hari dine rāti // nabāche bhakati jāti ajāti //⁷

Śaṅkaradeva's endeavour to bring the heterogeneous races into one fold of religion is praiseworthy. He established equality among the Hindus, Muslims, Brahmins, non Brahmins, Sūdras, Tribals and some other sects. He proclaimed that the *kirātas*, the *Kachāris* and *Khāsis*, the *Gāros*, the *Miris*, the *Yamas*, the *Mlecchas*, the *Candālas* and other become pure in the company of the devotees of Kṛṣṇa.

*Kirāta kachārī khāci gāro miri yavana kaṅka gowāla /
asama maluka dhobā ye turuka kubāca mleccha candāla //⁸*

The maintenance of a wife and children by a person is a matter of personal obligation. In modern time to maintain one's wife and children is the subject of Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956. In all patriarchal societies, it has been considered that the husband is to maintain his wife as soon as the performance of the marriage ceremony. In the days of Smṛtis also, the lawgivers were quite conscious regarding the maintenance of a chaste wife. It was stated that a wife is to be maintained by doing hundreds of misdeeds also. So, a wife was not supposed to be deprived of her maintenance because of the weak financial condition of her husband.⁹ Section 18 of the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 deals with maintenance of a wife.

Section 18 (i) lays down that a Hindu wife whether married before or after the commencement of the Act is entitled to be maintained by her husband, during her lifetime.

Regarding the maintenance of one's children also there are certain specific provisions. The children are unable to maintain themselves. So, for their physical and mental upliftments they are to be maintained. In early days, by any means a father had to maintain his children. In the name of poverty, he could not neglect this responsibility. In modern time, the rules regarding the maintenance of children have been laid down in Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956. According to this¹⁰ a Hindu is bound during his or her life time to maintain his or her children. To maintain one's wife and children has been taken with great concern by Śaṅkaradeva also. He is of the opinion that it is the duty of a person to maintain his wife and children. But, if a person does not care for those members and feeds his own stomach, is to be blamed. So that, people cannot neglect such a responsibility, for that reason he has shown terrible consequences of it.

*nija bhāryā putraka bañciyā jito nare/ kare anna vyañjana bhojana ekeśvare//
pare andhatā miśrita bhuñjawai jātanā/ yamadute karai śāsti harawai cetanā//¹¹*

Trees and animals are the part of our environment. Presence of greenery around makes the hearts receptive, mild and humane. Trees are valuable gifts of nature to man and other living beings. It is also necessary to protect the animals for the protection of environment. Any violent activity towards them is to be avoided. Indian constitution contains different specific provisions relating to environmental protection. Article 51(g) specifically deals with the fundamental duty with regard to environment. It states that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment. Moreover, some statutes were also enacted in India. For the protection of wild animals, birds and plants, the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972 was passed. In 1980, the Forest Conservation Act was enacted by the Parliament with a view to checking further deforestation. In this way, modern law has taken some steps for protection of animals and trees. Śaṅkaradeva also in many places of his writings has stated about the usefulness of trees. The appreciatory notes towards the trees reveal their importance and thus make people aware to keep those as part of their lives and thereby not to harm them. The trees protect all from the heat of the sun. He says that the trees have the qualities of a saint. They are for the benefit of others.

*Ādityara caṇḍa raśmi tāpa karai āti/ Tāte br̥kṣagaṇe yena dhari āchai chāti//
.....dekhā dekhā kena mahā sādihura lakṣaṇa//
Karai para upakāra kino kṛpāmaya/ Pararese arthe jīvai ito br̥kṣacaya//¹²*

Animal killing is also condemned by Śaṅkaradeva. One who kills animals for enjoyment and eats merrily along with other family members is a great sinner. Moreover, those who kill innocent animals for own enjoyment by arrows or javelin, who kill the birds by throwing a net or by digging a hole who catch animals cannot get rid of the hands of Yama. They have also to face similar consequences as they have done to the animals.

*raṅge paśu māri yito parama niskhale/ nija putra bhāryyā same bhuñje
kautuhale//
mahā raurawata parai nāhike nistāra/ sehi paśu āñcuriā māñsa khāi gāra//
jitojane phurai yaṭhī kāndhe paśu māri/ prāṇa nirodhata parai siṭo ahamkārī//
lobha diyā mārāi yito pakṣi phānda pāti/ śūlapuṭa narakata kare tāka śāsti//
prāṇika nirodhe yito khāndi pote gāta/ pare siṭo avaśye nirodhe narakata//¹³*

One should remain content with his own earnings. It is not proper to have covetousness. Such covetousness leads men to do some evil actions like theft. Theft according to Indian Penal Code is an offence against property. The definition of theft as found in Indian Penal Code is that whoever intending to take dishonestly any movable property out of the possession of any person without that person's consent, moves that property in order to such taking, is said to commit theft.¹⁴ So, in the action of theft there remains a dishonest intention. Section 379 declares the penalties for theft. It states that whoever commits theft shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years or with fine or with both. Śaṅkaradeva also warned people from doing activities like theft. He states that one who involves in the crime of theft he has to go to hell and also has to suffer immense punishment.

*curi kare bale bā biprara harai dhana / sandarśa narake gaiyā parai siṭojana / /
yamara kiṅkare tāka dhariyā bināśe. ciṅḍai gāva māñsa tāra tapata sāṅḍāse.¹⁵*

In this way, Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva brought renaissance at the time when Assam was politically unstable and the society was completely demoralised. There was a chaotic condition in the sphere of religion also. In such a period he made a great effort to reform the society through his teachings. It is found that the teachings of Śaṅkaradeva were so significant that in the modern age also, for the maintenance of peace in the society, similar principles are adopted by today's legislators. So, from this it can be well remarked that the principles taught by Śaṅkaradeva for establishing peace and harmony in the society hundreds of years ago have their relevance even today.

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DISCERNMENT OF ANCIENT INDIA'S CLASSICAL AND FOLK DRAMA: RESEMBLANCE AND DIFFERENCE WITH ASSAMESE DRAMA.

Dr. Arcchana Puzari

From the very earliest age, classical drama was very popular in India. Proofs had been found that, many dramatic essence and methods of treatment were in Vedic Era. Western critics, namely Picel, Lujarch, and Dr. Beridel Keith etc. are very serious about it. Picel told that Puppet-Show was the origin of ancient India's dramatic art. In contrary of that, Lujarch wanted to tell that Shadow-play was the beginning of the same.

On the other hand, Dr. Keith told that 'recitation of epic' was the main source of drama. But, the German scholar Maxmular's theory is being accepted as very authentic. His decision was that the dialogues used in 'dialogue hymns' in Ṛk Veda, and the holy chorous of Vedic religious festival preceded the ancient India's drama. Levy and Dr. Harlet also supported Maxmular, that choral performance of Vedic hymns was the origin of Indian drama. From this point of view, we might come to conclusion that religious faith and idealism were closely related with the conception of drama.' It has been observed that, it is not the tradition of Indian dramas only, but the tradition of western also. Prof. A. Nicoll narrated that "the drama of the Greeks had begun with the extension of religious observance and in similar manner the medieval theatre developed, without conscious effort, out of the religious services of its time. Distinctively it was a creation of the church. For men and women of the middle ages, apart from the round of their daily affairs the church was virtually everything."¹

The drama is the best art of literature. In ancient India, drama was called visual art (driśya-kābya), where story was explained by one character. In Sanskrit literature, the word 'rūpaka' was used for the word 'drama'. There are ten different kinds of Rūpaka. They are nātaka, prakaraṇa, dima, ihāmṛga, vithi, samavakāra, prahasana, vyāyoga, bhāṇa, and aṅka or utsrṣṭikāṅka. But in all respects, the Assamese Aṅka differs from the Sanskrit Aṅka.

In Sanskrit drama, there are five to ten aṅkas in one drama. In this case, it is required a series of preliminaries (pūrva-raṅga), which must be performed before the main drama begins. The real prologue in the Sanskrit drama begins with a Nāndi Śloka (BENEDICTION), praising Lord Śiva. The opening verse recited in praise of a deity a Brāhmaṇa or a king. After 'Nāndi', laudation (prarocanā) begins; and then the introducing part, called Āmukha (introduction) or prologue starts where Sūtradhāra (the stage manager) with the help of attendant or an actress (Naṭī) and the Jester Viduṣaka) try to hints the story of the play or who are coming onto the stage. Accordingly, there are five stages of Sanskrit dramaturgy-

(1) Beginning (Ārambha), (2) the struggle, (3) the possibility (Pratyāśā), (4) the certainty of success, (5) the attainment of the desired result (the Phalāgama) respectively. Again, there are five elements to connect the internal steps of drama, which are called juncture (Sandhi). They are - opening (Mukha), the progression (Pratimukha), the development (Garbha), the drop (Vimarsa), and the conclusion (Nirvahana).

Creation of Rasa (Sentiment) is the main intension of Sanskrit drama. But the Nāṭyaśāstra specified the different Rasa for different types of Rūpaka and its subdivisions. But, the Sanskrit dramatist had given more importance in the lyrical elements than the dramatic quality of the drama. As a result, the audience, sometimes, could not enjoy its taste or sentiment of Sanskrit drama.

Really, Sanskrit dramas were written only for the elite class of the society. In technique, Sūtradhāra disappears altogether after the invocation, but Jester plays the integral part, in these dramas. It is observed that, there are some prohibitions also regarding portrayal of certain incidents on the stage. According to Nāṭya Śāstra of Bharatamuni, Sanskrit dramatist could not show the incidents like battle, killing, marriage amorous dalliance, putting on garments and eating on the stage.

In ancient India, traditional folk drama was also in use parallel to the Sanskrit drama. From the 10th, 11th century, Sanskrit drama has been facing decline for so many causes. Mohammedan rulers also totally neglected and dominated the Sanskrit drama. In the mean time, Bhakti movement was in full swing in whole India and it inspired folk dramatists. At that period, local languages also gradually developed throughout India which gave birth to a new drama. And then, Sanskrit plays had started to lose their rigid rules. In respect of this point, we may note J. C. Mathur's observation "so widespread and continuous has been the process of exchanges between traditional classical and traditional folk drama in India that pure features of one on the other are hard to come by."²

Traditional folk plays of India are most popular and their characteristics are also of different colours. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, Assam to Maharashtra, traditional plays have been spreading all over India by their unity between diversity. They consist with different types of rituals, cultural activities and various religious feelings and above all, may tie up our mind with their inner similarities or internal cohesions.

It is difficult to ascertain that the traditional folk-plays of other parts of India have influenced Assamese dramas, mainly Śaṅkaradeva's Aṅkiyā dramas. As like Oja-Pali, Deodhani-Nach, Dhuliya-Bhaona, Putala-Nach, Kusan-Gan of Goalpara, there are many different folk institutions in India. They are 'yatra' and 'gambhira' of Bengal; Ramlila Rashlila, Nootanki of North India; 'Bhagat' of Agra, Mathura and Brindaban; 'Bhawai' of Gujrat; 'Duddar' or 'Mudalpai' of Mahisur; 'Das Kathia' of Orissa (like Oja-pali of Assam); 'Tomasa', 'Lalita', 'Gundhal' of Maharashtra; 'Jakhyagan' of Tamilnadu, Karnataka; 'Kuttu' of Kerala; 'Beethi Bhāgavatam' and 'Beethinatakam' of Andhrapradesh etc. It is notable that the traditional dramas have local characteristics.

But there are so many similarities which indicate the cultural unity of India. Among all the folk-plays there are some similarities.

- 1) They are based on songs and dances.
- 2) The sūtradhāra or stage manager leads the story.
- 3) No raised platform, stage curtain formality is necessary,
- 4) There is one 'Bohuwa' or 'Jester'-like character, which tries to give us an extra taste.

On the other hand, extension of religious teaching within village spectator is also one of the main aims of the folk institutions.

There was no rigid rule in folk plays in comparison with the classical Sanskrit plays and the language of common people, where there are local similes and metaphors were used in the folk plays.

If we notice to the North-East India, we found that the popular dramatic institutions of west Bengal as well as Orissa, where we get Krisnalila, the stories related to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Like Oja-pali of Assam, there are another two different institutions as 'Suwanga Yatra' and 'Palagan' in Orissa. Another folk institution called 'Danda' of Orissa is also more similar with the Dhulia circus of Assam. 'Gambhira' is one of the most popular dance drama of West Bengal, where Lord Śiva has been worshipped. Stories of Rādhikā, Gopi-Kṛṣṇa are shown in Raslila of North India. Prayer songs of these institutions show that from fifteenth or sixteenth centuries they begun another dance-based institution called Ramlila. The folk-dance-drama, where the Sūtradhāra is the main character and its story is based on Rāmacarita Mānasa of Tulsīdāsa. In the southern part of India, Marathi Kings patronised the traditional play like 'Tāmāsā' and 'Lalitā' where the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa had been shown. Besides, 'Jaksyagan', 'Sannatta' and 'Dudatta' are also popular for their stories (Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata). In the 'Bhawai' of Gujrat, the Bhajan of Mīrābāi has performed. Sūtradhāra plays main part and recites story in 'Jaksyagan' and 'Kuttu' of Kerala.

Śaṅkaradeva, the pioneer of dramatic movement of Assam, had been influenced by classical Sanskrit drama and folk drama institutions of India. During his twelve years pilgrimage, Śaṅkaradeva had been familiar with those folk institutions of different parts of India. As a result, he gave a new dimension in play writing, which were known as 'Ankiyā-nāṭ'. Śaṅkaradeva took the frame-works of his drama from Sanskrit drama; where we get Nāndī Śloka, Sūtradhāra with companions and 'Muktimaṅgala'-like 'Bharat Bākya' as the Sanskrit drama. Śaṅkaradeva had taken only the frame-work of Sanskrit drama. But he had written his dramas not only for elite classes but also for common people with the object of exciting religious emotion and sentiment. Sūtradhāra played a little part in Sanskrit drama. But in Ankiyā drama, Sūtradhāra plays the main role as an actor, dancer and as a singer.

Viduṣaka (the Jester) is the standing character of Sanskrit drama. No dramatist, except Bhavabhuti, could ignore this character. Instead of Viduṣaka, Śaṅkaradeva introduced 'Bedanidhi' at Rukmiṇī Haraṇa, 'Nārada' at Pārijāta Haraṇa, 'Biśvāmītra' at RāmaBijaya as jester or Bahuwa for amusement of audience. In his plays, he had broken the rigid conventions of Sanskrit drama. In Sanskrit drama, dialogue of principal character was in Sanskrit, whereas, Prakṛta was used in woman and other lower characters. Śaṅkaradeva composed all his plays in the Brajabuli- Assamese language. Brajabuli is the artificial language with mixture of Assamese, Brajabuli, Caryāpada, Hindi, Maithili and other bi-languages. Generally, Assamese vocabulary ends with consonant; but Brajabuli is pronounced with the vowel ending; and as because, the Brajabuli lyrical works are very sweet.

One of the main characteristics of Ankiyā drama is its subject matter and sentiment (Rasa) or taste. Dramatic story of Ankiyā drama is based on the story of Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Only in the drama 'RāmaBijaya', we find the story from Rāmāyaṇa. On the other hand, Śaṅkaradeva's aim was to raise religious feelings within the spectators and with effecting this, his drama excited various sentiments (Rasa), which are regarded as principal features of Sanskrit drama. "Thus Śaṅkaradeva rouses principally the terrible (Bhayaṅkara) and pathetic (Karūṇa), sentiments in his Kāliya Damana, the erotic (Śṛṅgāra), Keli-Gopāla, the marvellous (Adbhūt) in Patnī-Prasāda, the erotic and heroic (Vīra) in Rukmiṇī-Haraṇa and Rāma Vijaya and the heroic and odious (Vibhatsa) sentiments in the Pārijāta-Haraṇa."³ But, all the above, Śaṅkaradeva treated one sentiment called Bhakti, in his plays.

It is seen, that there are some minor similarities of traditional folk play with Ankiyā play. Dr. B. K. Baruah observed that, "this pre-vaisnavite Oja-pali dance recital might have given to Śaṅkaradeva the basic idea for the production of Ankiya plays. It may, therefore, be reasonably presumed that the recital of Kavya, Oja-pali choral singing and specular shows of other parts of India, might have jointly contributed to the rise of the fully developed drama in Assamese."⁴

Though Śaṅkaradeva had taken the character of Sūtradhāra from Sanskrit drama, it is more similar to the character Oja of Ojapali, Bahuwa of Putala-Nach, Duwari of Kusangan. And dress design of Sūtradhāra is also more similar with Oja of Oja-pali. Moreover, the Sūtradhāra in an Ankiyā Nāṭ, combines the functions of the producer and running commentator. "He dances with the orchestra, opens the play by reciting the Nāndī verse, introduces the characters, gives them directions, announces their exit and entrance on the stage, fills up lacunae in the action of the play by song, dance and speech and delivers brief discourses on the ethical and spiritual points of the plot."⁵

Therefore, Śaṅkaradeva has designed Ankiyā-Nāṭ uniquely, where we have got five parts within one act play. They are-

1. The Nāndī Śloka of ślokas
2. Bhatimās
3. The Sanskrit ślokas
4. The songs
5. The prose passage.

As a classical play, Añkiyā Nāṭ tied up all the parts catagorically and it continues its gravity from beginning to end. But preliminary (Pūrbaraṅga) of Sanskrit play, Śaṅkaradeva did not do the auspicious observance at Añkiyā Nāṭ. He used the word 'Dhemāli' (amusement), instead of 'Pūrbaraṅga'. In it, Dhemāli is performed auspicious observance in front of spectator, with the help of Gāyana-Bāyana (Singer and player of musical instruments). Śaṅkaradeva was inspired by folk-play for its dance-recital-qualities. So, he created those characters and their characteristics in his plays. In Añkiyā Nāṭ, dancing performance is the main posture, exit and entrance of the stage. But, folk-play shows its story, only by reciting. On the other hand, entertainment is the main tendency in the folk drama and the moral teaching lies in its second catagory. But, selection of subject matter and its applicable form in Ankiya Nat is not so easy.

At the time of performance of Añkiyā-drama- the actions are specially dressed up, painted on face, they used ornaments and various masks. Śaṅkaradeva has derived his inspiration and depicted his skill in the art, from his acumulated experience and hereditary knowledge. "Sūtradhāra wears a GHURI (Petticoat or round long garment), broad lace-button, flowing upto the ankle and his turban is as like as Mohmadan king. Gayana-Bayana also used some special turbans. In Bhawana, generally male persons appear in female roles, putting female dresses. So, costume of woman is choosen carefully. There are different dress-designs for the character of girl, daughter-in-law and queen etc. Young girl wears Lehanga (a kind of patticoat), Queen wears Riha-Mekhela (a kind of petticoat used by Assamese female)- Chadar (a kind of sheet of garment) and prestigious woman wears Kumarni (a girdle or waist band) and body-covered chadar."⁶

Rasa of Añkiyā Nāṭ differs from Sanskrit play. Although it may contains one or as many as nine RASA, as dominated by rhetoric, they are always dominated by only one Rasa, called Bhakti Rasa and its juncture. But in Añkiyā Nāṭ, Śaṅkaradeva introduced two Nandī Slokas in his plays- Rukmiṇī Haraṇa, Pārijāta Haraṇa, Keli-Gopāla and Rāma Vijaya; which are seldom in Sanskrit Rūpaka.

In this way, Śaṅkaradeva assimilated the characteristic features of ancient Indian classical plays, folk institutions of folk drama of Assam and created his Añkiyā Nāṭ, which have been inspiring and entertaining us with their educative value, from the beginning. On the other hand, the evidence shows that the Assamese drama is the earliest one, among the regular folk dramatic work in India; and Śaṅkaradeva, the great man, was the introducer of it.

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A Comperative Study between Śaṅkaradeva and Śaṅkarācāryas Philosophy

Dr. Bibha Rani Kalita

Śaṅkaradeva a creative genius of the fifteenth Century, the great patron saint, the apostle of the Neo-Vaiṣṇavism of Assam, occupies an important place in the religious and the cultural history of India. Śaṅkaradeva has made tremendous contributions to different fields like religion, literature, education, art and culture. Śaṅkaradeva was not a professional philosopher, yet the whole of his teachings establishes him as a great humanistic philosopher. As a religious preacher his Neo-Vaiṣṇavism is different from all other forms of Vaiṣṇavism. As a religious philosopher, he preaches the supremacy of one God i.e. Kṛṣṇa is an ideal concept of his religion- “*Eka śaraṇa nāma dharma*”. Śaṅkaradeva upholds the philosophy of ‘one’. He believes in the existence of one Absolute, which is the ‘*Puruṣa*’. Śaṅkaradeva’s concept of the *Puruṣa* is called by different names e.g. *Brahman*, *Paramātman*, *Vāsudeva*, *Kṛṣṇa*, *Hari*, *Nārāyaṇa* etc. In the *Kīrttana-Ghoṣa* the *Brahman* is identified with *Nārāyaṇa*-

“Prathame pranāmo brahmarūpī sanātana/

Sarva avatārara kāraṇa nārāyaṇa//¹

(At the outset, I bow down to *Nārāyaṇa*, the eternal one in the form of *Brahman*, the cause of all incarnation).

Śaṅkaradeva’s ultimate reality is the Absolute *Brahman*. *Brahman* is limitless and infinite. Nothing can be predicated or ascribed to it. None can bring *Brahman* to any limit of place, time, virtue, power and self. To Śaṅkaradeva, God is both transcendent and immanent. From the point of view of the devotee, the Absolute becomes a kind and loving God. This infinite, indescribable absolute one is viewed differently by different people.

“tomākese bolai jñānī brahma niraṅkuṣa /

sāṅkhya mate bolai tumi prakṛti puruṣa //

bhakatara mote tumi parama Īśvara /

mativede tomākese pāvai nirantara //²

(This wise will call thee unconditional Absolute. According to *Samkhya*, Thou art *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. To the devotees, Thou art the Great Lord; people of different mental capacity worship thee in diverse ways).

It is seen that Śaṅkaradevas philosophy is similar to Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. So, we may say that Śaṅkaradeva is Advaita Vedāntist. In this context at first we have discussed the salient features of Śaṅkarācāryas philosophy.

1. Ācāryya Śaṅkara is no doubt one of the greatest philosophers of the world. His philosophy, the Advaita Vedānta, has attracted the best talents of India and they have made their valuable contributions for the development of the system. According to Śaṅkara Brahman is the highest transcendental truth. It is perfect and the only truth. Brahman is indefinable being; one alone without a second.³ Brahman is the universal fact of life and is present in every man. The Upaniṣads have described Brahman both as *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa*. But according to Śaṅkara *Nirguṇa Brahman* is only true. In the *BhagavadGītā*, it is said as *guṇātīta* (devoid of *guṇas*)⁴. *Brahman* is *Saccidānanda* and *nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta svabhāva*.⁵

2. According to Śaṅkara, the *jīva* is not different from *Brahman* “*jīvo brahmaiva nāparah*”⁶. Hence, Śaṅkara advocates the doctrine of identity of *jīva* and *Brahman*. *Jīva* is the agent and the enjoyer, it acquires merit and demerit, experiences pleasure and pain. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣada* shows that *Jīva* enjoys (*pīvati*) while *Īśvara* makes him enjoy (*payayati*). The *Muṇḍaka* declares that one bird (*jīva*) eats the sweet fruit, while the other (*Īśvara*) merely looks on.⁷

3. The doctrine of *Māyā* is the chief characteristic of the Advaita system. According to Śaṅkara, *Brahman* or *Ātman* is the only reality and the world is an illusory appearance of *Brahman*. Śaṅkara propounds the doctrine of ‘*Māyā*’ as an explanation of the relation between the world appearance and *Brahman*. *Māyā* means the unbridgeable gap between the ‘infinite and the finite or between reality and appearance. It is something like a magical power which somehow produces the appearance of the material world and the empirical self on *Brahman*. *Māyā* is thus inscrutable or inexplicable in nature. We may therefore describe *Māyā* as *Brahman's* natural, inseparable spontaneous power of appearing as many appearing as the universe with its beings.

On the basis of Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy of Advaita Vedānta we may realized the philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. It is seen that Śaṅkaradeva accepts the *Brahman* of Advaita Vedānta. Like Śaṅkarācārya, he says, only *Brahman* is real, the *Jagat* is not real as *Brahman*, it is false (*mithyā*), but appears to be real⁸. False is not totally blank or void. It is like appearance of a snake in the rope. Śaṅkaradeva says- “All appearances are unreal except *Brahman*. Knowledge of snake comes out of rope due to lack of light”.⁹ According to Śaṅkaradeva

Brahman is metaphysically the ground of existence. *Brahman* is real, pure, unstained and infinite. He is the father of the universe and the life of the world. He is the first and final cause of creation. He has the character of infinity as an indeterminate quality which distinguishes Him from *Prakṛti* and the individual soul. Śaṅkaradeva states—

“*namo namo acintya śakati nārāyaṇa /*
kāraṇaro kāraṇa tumi se akāraṇa//
nāhi ādi anta madhya parichanna yāra/
purṇānanda prabhū herā karo namaskāra//
namo namo atarka mahimā devahari/
jagatake byāpiyā āpuni āchā-dhari//
tumi sarba sākṣī rākhi āchā prāṇīcaya/
*tomātese hante howai sṛṣṭi sthiti laya//*¹⁰

(Salutation to the Nārāyaṇa of immeasurable power; Thou art the course of causes, yet no cause at all. Thou have no beginning, end or interruption. Oh, blissful God, I bow down to Thee, whose magnanimity is unknowable. Spreading over the world, Thou art upholding it. Thou art watching and protecting all living beings; from Thee emanate creation, preservation and destruction). Śaṅkaradeva’s *Puruṣa* is the Advaita *Brahman* of Śaṅkarācārya’s philosophy. Like Śaṅkarācārya Śaṅkaradeva admits *Nirguṇa Brahman* to be the ultimate reality and *Jīva* to be one with *Brahman*.

Like Śaṅkarācārya, Śaṅkaradeva defines *Māyā* as a condition (*upādhi*) but which the phenomenal world of appearance is explained. *Māyā* is the adjunct of God and is responsible for this manifold universe of world appearance. Śaṅkaradeva says, *Puruṣa* is the only reality the manifold universe which is the product for *Māyā* i.e., the *Prakṛti* is not real but appears to be real. He says—

“*nitya nirañjana svaprakāśa ātmā eka /*
māyā upādhira pade dekhia aneka //
yoteka ākṛti māne māyāmaya sṛṣṭi /
henajāni kevala brahmata diyā drṣṭi//
svarupate eka mātra mrittikā ākāra/
ghaṭa poṭa bheda dekhi aneka prakāra//
ehimote aneka advaita ātma buddha/
*māyā upādhira pade dekhi bahubidha//*¹¹

Like Śaṅkarācārya, Śaṅkaradeva also says that ignorance is the root cause of multiplicity. Owing to lack of knowledge men see one God differently and cannot realize the Supreme Reality. When *Avidyā* or ignorance vanishes *Māyā* also vanishes, and then the ultimate truth can be known.

In this way from the different aspects it is seen that Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy is similar to Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. Although Śaṅkaradeva is not a systematic philosopher yet his literature and culture are enriched with his profound religious and philosophical ideas.

References:

1. *Kīrttana Ghoṣa*, Page-1
2. *Srī Śaṅkara Vākyāmṛta*– Vol-II
3. *ekam eva advitīyam*– CU, 6.2.1
4. *BhagavadGītā*, 14.25
5. *Brahmasūtraśaṅkarabhāṣya*, 1.1.2, P.55
6. *Brahmajñānavālimālā*, Śaṅkarācārya, 20
7. *Cf.*, MU, 3.1.1
8. *Kīrttana-Ghoṣa*, verse-1670
9. *Bhāgavata*– XII, verses 1777-180
10. *Srī ŚaṅkaraVākyāmṛta*. Vol-II, *Kāliadamana*, verses 649-650.
11. *Bhāgavata*– X, *Kurukṣetra*, verse-511.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ŚAṄKARADEVA TO INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Anshuman Adhyapok

A philosophical system mainly depends on the concepts of- (1) The supreme or ultimate reality, (2) World or *jagat*, (3) *jīvas*, (4) The relation between *jīvas* and the ultimate reality, (5) Salvation, and (6) The means for liberation. The creation of *Jagat* may also be added to these. It has been observed that all the propounder and expounder of every system of Indian philosophy dealt with this aforesaid system and thus they laid their marks. Now a discussion is going to be presented on Śaṅkaradeva's (1449-1568 A.D.) philosophical concepts how he contributed his thinking and ideas to Indian philosophy. In the case of other Ācāryas, they clearly followed a particular system of philosophy with a certain name and works. But, Śaṅkaradeva had never named his philosophical concept with a certain name. Śaṅkaradeva was a religious preacher too and was not a propounder of a philosophical system.

Śaṅkaradeva contributed to Assamese literature (poetry and dramas) which were his rendering and adaptations. Moreover his contribution, the *Bhakti Ratnākara* is a compendium. So we are to rely on his Assamese works mainly.¹

While rendering the Bhāgavata, Śaṅkaradeva closely followed the commentary of Śrīdhara Svāmī who adored the famous seat of the Śaṅkarācārya of the Govardhana Matha of Puri, Odisha. According to the, the propounder of Advaitavedānta, the ultimate reality is Brahman. Except Brahman, there is no reality. (*Brahma satyaṃ jagat mithyā jīvo brahmaīva nā paraḥ*). Śaṅkarācārya accepts *māyā* and due to *māyā*, the existence or appearance of *jagat* is possible.

There are five principal *khyātis* in Indian philosophy. These are *Ātmakhyāti*, *Asatkhyāti*, *Akhyāti*, *Anyathā-khyāti* and *Anirvacanīya-khyāti*. Śaṅkarācārya accepts *Anirvacanīya-khyāti*. Though, Śaṅkaradeva had not stated about *khyāti* but he accepts that Brahman does not undergo any real change like an actor on a stage appearing as a different man, the world is the product or imagination of mind. Except the Brahman, all are unreal. It is, as if the cognition of a snake has arisen in a piece of rope.²

From this, it may be said that he follows Śaṅkarācārya's *Advaitavedānta*. From the practical stand point Brahman can be regarded as the cause, the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer of the world. The *Saguṇa* Brahma or *Īśvara* is the object of worship. In Śaṅkaradeva's writings this ideal is clear: *namo nārāyaṇa jagata kāraṇa khaṇḍio saṃsāra bhaya*.³ Some other statements are also traceable.⁴ From the transcendental standpoint Śaṅkaradeva believes in the Brahman devoid of all distinction. He has stated that various distinctions are possible due to *māyā*; in a real sense there is no distinction.⁵

According to *Advaitavāda*, an individual himself is the Brahman. So, in one of the *mahāvākyas* it is stated thus: *Aham brahmāsmi*, (I am the Brahman).

Another *mahāvākya* is *tattvamasi*, (you are that, means you are that Brahman). Śaṅkaradeva follows the *ahaṁ brahmāsmi* principle⁶

Here it is to be noted that Śaṅkaradeva preached and propagated the Bhāgavata religion and therefore, the concept of God is the same as found in the Bhāgavata. He maintained that God is the supreme Lord of the Universe. He is indescribable, eternal, omniscient and omnipresent. Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa in the form of Lord Kṛṣṇa is personified as the supreme reality. This may be propagated for the common people for their religious advancement.

Śaṅkaradeva considered *Kṛṣṇavatāra* as the highest, best and the most spiritual ideal or divinity. Therefore, he appeals:

*mukhe lowā nāam hṛdaye dharā rūpa
eteke mukuti pāivā kahilo svarūpa ||*

Liberation or *mukti* is the fourth of the *Caturvargas*. Every individual attempts at *mukti* as per their own conception and path.

In Vedānta philosophy, *mukti* is of two types: *Jīvanmukti* (Liberation in life) and *Videhamukti*, (Liberation after death). Besides these two, some other categories of *mukti* are also defined in other *sāstras*; viz. *Sālokya* (being in the same plane with God), *Sāmīpya* (Nearness to God), *Sārūpya* (Likeness to God), *Saraṣṭi* (Equaling the glory of God) and *Sāyujya* (absorption in God).

Śaṅkaradeva has not stated directly to any one kind of these stated above. But it seems that Śaṅkaradeva recognizes *Jīvanmukti* and speaks of it in the **Kīrtana** thus:

*Samasta bhūtate viṣṇubudhi nohe yāwe
Kāyavākya mane abhyāsiba ehi bhāve
viṣṇumaya dekhai yiṭo samasta jagata
jīvante mukuta howai acira kālata||
sakala prāṇika dekhibe ka ātmāsama|
upāya madhyata ito ātī mukhyatama|
mora iṭo dharmara alparo nāhi hāni
jihetu sākṣāte mai kailo tattvavāṇī||*

-Kīrtana 1824/25

“He who sees viṣṇu in the entire world gets salvation, forth-with even while alive of all means by far the best into deems all creatures as one’s own self.”

His statement “*kukurasṛgālagardabharo ātmārām*”- shows that all are same and the appearance of the supreme reality. In *Jīvanmukti*, an individual attains such state, where there is no discrimination and he realizes Brahman everywhere. Caitanyadeva of Bengal, who is glorified as an avatāra of Lord Kṛṣṇa said therefore “*yekhāne tekhāne kṛṣṇa dekhi*”. Tulasidāsa also says:

“yāhā yāhā cakṣucare tāhā tāhā kṛṣṇa care.”

The means of liberation is one of the major components. There are different means for liberation advanced by different scents such as – *jñānamārga*, *karmamārga*, and *bhaktimārga*. Śaṅkaradeva followed the *bhakti* principle and therefore, he has argued for utmost devotion to the Lord Kṛṣṇa. In his *Bhakti Ratnākara* (Sanskrit), *Bhāgavata* and *Kīrtana*, the superiority of *bhakti* doctrine has been established. It may be mentioned that all saints of medieval Assam emphasized on *bhakti*.

The way of *bhakti* is easier and easily practical for all. So, he asked all to take refuge in Lord Kṛṣṇa (*eka śaraṇa*) and then *mukti* may be attained.

From the above discussion, it may be concluded that Śaṅkaradeva followed the *Advaitavāda* concept of Śaṅkarācārya, by the means of *bhakti*, how the mass people may attain the supreme self (or Brahman). Following the *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana* and thus realization of *ekesvaravāda* is the contribution of Śaṅkaradeva, in a true sense.

Notes & References:

1. kāchile nāṭaka yena bhinna rūpa dekhi/
manara kalpanā māne samasta saṁsāra//
- Anādi Pātana/ V.65-6.
2. brahma vyatireka yata dekhā michā āna/
jarīta upaji yena āche sarpa jñāna//
- Bhāgavata, 12th Book, V. 171.
3. Kīrtana, 5.641.
4. (i) namo paripūrṇa brahma ananta śakati/
janme janme taju pāve thākoka bhakati//
- Bhāgavata, 10th Book, V. 1845.
(ii) sraṣṭāro sraṣṭā tumi sarbadraṣṭā uddhāri dharilā bhūmi//
-Kīrtana, V. 1437.
5. āpuni srajlīlā carācara dehā yata/
samasta aiśvajja bhāve āchā samastata/
jīva amśe tumipraveśilā gāwe gāwe/
āwe āmitomāka bhajoho sarvabhāve//
- Kīrtana/ 1655.
6. mai paramātmā āta nāhike sandeha/
Dehatese ācho mai noho iṭo deha//
- Bhāgavata, 12th Book, V. 209.\

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Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, His Religion, sustainability and the Globalization

Budhen Kumar Saikia

Globalization is one of the most popular words in the present day world. Globalization is not only an economic terminology but a very common and generalised terminology for every essence. It is an important fact that Sriamnta Śaṅkaradeva and Sri Sri Mādhavadeva started the foundation of the Assamese race and religion, culture and literature; and the nationality in front of the World.

Scholars opine that the teachings of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva are becoming more relevant day by day. His democratic attitude, non-violent philosophy, humanity and wonderful creative literature, art and culture have enriched the knowledge system in the present day World.

According to Kirpal Singh Narang, *'Sri Śaṅkaradeva, also called Mahāpuruṣa by his disciples was a great Vaiṣṇava saint of Assam. He was a contemporary of Kabir, Guru Nānak and CaitanyaDeva and his teachings too breathe the same Bhakti spirit. The teachings of these saints are based on their respective 'Anubhav' i.e. the actual experience. They do not talk or say on the basis of the testimony and experience of others. The Mahāpuruṣa, therefore, taught what he actually saw and experienced. Like all Realized Saints He felt that God is Love; and He can be attained in this Kaliyuga or Iron Age only through Devotion (Bhakti) and Love. All his writings, such as Bhakti-ratnakara (in Sanskrit), Kirtana-ghosa, Bhakti-pradipa (written in Kamarupi language) and Bargits, and those of his devoted disciple and spiritual successor Mādhavadeva, speak of Nām Bhakti, i.e. worship of Nām as the most efficacious way for God realization'*

It is undoubtedly true that the Philosophy of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and the reasonability of His creations can demand the universal acceptability in the World. Though this great saint was born and brought up in the holy land of Assam, yet He visited different places of the country and collected different views to shape and reshape His religion and philosophy.

Eka śaraṇa nāma dharma is the central theme of His creations and religious views of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva gained the general acceptability. Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* says that of all paths, those who follow *Bhakti* would surely reach Him. Sir Edwin Arnold, who translated *Bhagavad-gītā* in beautiful English poetry, quoting Lord Kṛṣṇa in "The Song Celestial", says:-

*'Who follow gods go to their gods; who vow
 Their souls to spitris go to spitris; minds
 To evil bhuts given over sink to the bhuts;
 And whoso loveth Me cometh to Me.
 Whoso shall offer Me in Faith and Love
 A leaf, a flower, a fruit, water poured forth,
 That offering I accept, lovingly made
 With pious will. Whatever thou doest, Prince!
 Eating or sacrificing, giving gifts,
 Praying or fasting let it all be done
 For Me, as Mine. So shalt thou free thyself?
 From Karmabandha, the chain which holdeth men.'*

Nāma, deva, guru and bhakti are the four pillars of the religion of of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and bhakti is recognised as the most acceptable means for reaching the God.

Śaṅkaradeva was a great humanist and He deserves all the credibility for setting up a fully reformed Assamese society which has the strong basis of scientific temperament and cultural dignity. His ideology has the similarity with the contemporary great apostles in India and even abroad. He welcomed the people of other races and religions to accept nām dharma through śravaṇa and kīrtana to attain the path of salvation. Śaṅkaradeva along with His most favorite follower Mādhavadeva tried their level best to assemble the people with a goal of popularizing the *eka śaraṇa nāma dharma* to establish a classless Assamese society. With the help of *Nāmghar* He tried to uplift the Assamese culture through performing arts like song, dance and drama.

Śaṅkaradeva was actually a great leader of Assam for gathering the people in the purview of Kṛṣṇa culture. However, at this present era of globalization, Śaṅkarī dharma can demand as dharma of scientific basis and cultural consciousness. There are a good number of verses in the *Nāma-ghoṣā* of Mādhavadeva which are also known as the *hejāri ghōṣā*, and they say that love and devotion alone can captivate the Lord (verse 211- *Kṛṣṇakese mātra bhaje jito jone/ abyabhisārī bhakati/tini guna atikrami brahmarūpa/ pāwe siṭo mahāmāti*) and that except *Bhakti* no other means such as knowledge, austerities can lead to the emancipation of man (verse 200-*kevale bhakati puruṣaka tāre/ sahāy kako nacāve/ Jñāna karma tāwe tarite napāre/ Bhakati napāwe jāve*). Mādhavadeva, further elucidating the *Bhakti* aspect of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva's teachings, says that a devotee should bind with the rope of love the feet of Kṛṣṇa to the pillars of his heart. He should wear a strong amulet of the *Rāma Nāma* and tightly fasten it to his neck (verse 258-*hṛdaya stambhata Kṛṣṇa caraṇaka/ prema jari diā cāndā/ parama suhṛda Rāma Kṛṣṇa nāma/ kabaca galata bāndhā, Nāma-ghoṣa*). Sri Śaṅkaradeva even throws a challenge when he puts a question like this to the earnest seekers of the Lord:

Is there anyone in this Kaliyuga who has attained salvation without treading the path of *Bhakti* and without the love of Nāma?

Śrīmanta Sankadeva's great contributions have the immense role for restructuring the shape of the modern Assamese community as a whole. At this era of conflict and contradiction of value system the contributions of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva have the appropriate relevance for an ideal life.

The value conflict theorists like Waller, Fuller, Cuber and Harper hold that clashes in value system are the basic importance in the origin and development of social problems. Waller has referred to the conflict between 'Organizational' and 'humanitarian' values. The former is in favour of private property and individualism, while the latter are votaries of remedying the misfortunes of others. (Ahuja Ram 2002).

Our Society has been drastically changed in some respects under the impact of globalization. Globalization refers to the condition of complex connectivity evident in the world today, seen in terms of both compression of the world and intensification of global consciousness. It is an outcome to the world as a development of social history as a post 1990 consequence. Globalization had begun to replace terms like 'internationalization' and 'Transnationalization' as a more suitable concept for describing the ever intensifying networks of cross-border human interaction. (Hoogvelt, 1997). Globalization referred to an empirical condition of the complex connectivity evident everywhere in the world in recent times. Complex connectivity involved overcoming cultural distances through penetrating experiences provided through education, employment, consumer culture and the mass media and had been described as being more significant than technological advances and physical mobility (Tomlinson, 1999)

Giddens defined globalization as "The intensification of world-wide social relations which links distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa" (Giddens, 1990). In McLuhan's terms, globalization means, the world was reduced to a 'Global Village' (McLuhan, 1989). McGrew also defined globalization as a "Simply the intensification of global interconnectedness" and stressed the multiplicity of linkages – it implied – goods, capital, social and institutional relationship, technological developments, ideas all readily followed across territorial boundaries. But it is true that present global age is more specific and sophisticated as compared to modern age as it is an age with its own axial principles and specific cultural imaginary. Hence the diversified govt. activities of modern times must have the strong value judgments for their international impact and global acceptance for attaining inclusive development in the globe.

In the question of sustainability Śrīmanta Sankadeva's contributions have excessive real value. The Brundtland commission's brief definition (1987) as the "ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs" is surely the standard definition when judged by its widespread use and frequency of citation. Sustainable development is a broad conception which encompasses three pillars namely

human development, establishment of equity and social justice. Sustainable development seeks to include the three sets of goals that use three time-horizons namely the short term goals of the UN's MDGs of 2000AD, the two generations goals of the sustainability transition of the Board of Sustainable Development of 1995 and the long term goals of the great transition of the Global Scenario Group. Thus the term sustainable development clearly indicates the development for "now and in the future".

Great scientist Einstein told, "Science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind." Really for the scientific basis of oneness of God or the eka śaraṇa nama dharma of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva can demand the acceptability as well as the adaptability of his religion even in the present day context. It really a challenging task for us that we must regenerate our hidden energy to establish the great Assamese in the light of the multidimensional creations and contributions of our great men and at the top Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and Sri Sri Madhabadeva are standing as the greatest force. Therefore Sri Sri Madhabadeva told in Namghosa

He Kṛṣṇa, taju pāwe paśilo śaraṇa

Mai anāthara nātha tumi Nārāyaṇa (Nāmaghoṣa 406)-

Oh! Kṛṣṇa I take refuge at thy feet. Oh, Nrayana, thou art the redeemer of this helpless orphan like me.

It is very clear that at this critical situation of moral degradation and ideological conflict, our present generation has lost the patience and the ability to go forward towards the right direction of life. People have lost the justification between the right and false in most of the cases. The extreme materialism has been causing lots of damages to the social environment. Śaṅkaradeva can undoubtedly teach us the mantras of love, peace and welfare. Simplicity is one of the pleasant qualities of his verse. Other marked thoughts of His contributions are: Vaisnava modesty, self-reproach, World-weariness, dedication to love and service of God.

In the very beginning of Kīrttana, . Śaṅkaradeva wrote

Prathame pranamo brahmarūpi sanātana

Sarba avatārara kāraṇa Nārāyaṇa

Firstly I pray the brahmarupi Sanatana because it is the cause of all the forms of Narayana.

Sahityarathi Laxminath Bezbaruah wrote:

Guru lage mok sikshita sishya/

Jagatak janoni dilo/

Jagatare Guru Sri Sankar gharate/

Andhalai nedekhilo/ Hey, Guru Sankara

(I am visiting the whole world for an acceptable guru. But I have not seen that the guru of the world is there at my home. Really I am a blind. Forgive me Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva.)

It is really a tragedy for all of us if we knowingly disregard Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and His colleagues and their great contributions. It is the time of introspection for the Assamese.

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Role of woman in social change Glorious act of four women in medieval Assam (Few characters from Vaiṣṇava age)

Dr. Gitanjali Hazarika

Change is an important characteristic of a living society. Change can be made by nature or by man. This change has many dimensions- social, economical, political, religious etc. Change may be positive or negative. Here we discuss change in social matter and in positive mood.

Some social changes happen automatically. Some are done by the great people for the benefit of the society. These great people include both men and women.

History and the present status also say that men dominate women from the earlier times. Yet, woman played an important role in social changes.

In Assam, we have seen many women who have been doing some remarkable works for the betterment and uplift of the society from the earlier days. We found such women in conservative mediaeval Assam also. Besides staying within the stream, within the limit, they worked very praiseworthy. Four such women were *Chandari*, *Radhika*, *Kalindi* and *kamalpriya* of medieval Assam. We are able to know about them very well from the biography of Vaiṣṇava saints (charit puthis). Now we see how they could play their roles in social changes.

Chandari was the maid of *Śaṅkaradeva*. She had put an objection to the painting of *Vaikuntha* (heaven) done by great scholar *Śaṅkaradeva*. *Śaṅkaradeva* accepted her opinions because she was right. Besides of being a maid she had more knowledge of *śāstras*. At that time one was considered educated who had the knowledge of *śāstras* or divine books. In that sense *Chandari* was an educated woman. Once, she described the meaning of a philosophical thought to a foreign scholar, who was coming to debate with *Śaṅkaradeva*. But when the traveler met *Chandari* he realized that if a maid had so much knowledge how much *Śaṅkaradeva* would be? Then he had escaped without meeting *Śaṅkaradeva*.

chandari teaches us two things – (i) one could attain knowledge in any situation if one has keen interest on it. In short, every man can become educated by crossing all the barriers. There is no other option except education for the development of the society. (ii) She had not any inferior complexity on her profession. She knows the dignity of labour. So, she was out of all hesitation. It is a changing positive attitude. For every physical change attitude should change at first.

Radhika belonged to the fisherman's community – an oppressed class of the society. At that time the fisherman's community was treated as a lower class. The people of such community were not accepted equally with the people of high cast. But *Radhika* was proved more virtuous than the woman of high casts. With the help of the chasteness

of *Radhika*, the over flooded *tembuani* ravine was blocked and the life of man and animal were saved. She stood as a strong challenge to the woman of so called high cast.

She shows us that, using own virtues one can go to the top position by crossing all the barriers. *Radhika* saved many with her courageous step. She had no fear to go to try for a tough job. She was full of confident. Astonishingly she made an impossible like job as possible. She would be always remembered for her virtue, courage & confidence. *Radhika's* example taught a section of people that their judgment on the low class may wrong. Her example inspired the next generation to break the wrong concepts & superstitions.

Kalindi was the second wife of *Śaṅkaradeva*. She played a great role over the life of *Śaṅkaradeva*. She had a good decision making quality. Before his death *Śaṅkaradeva* himself directed his disciples to discuss all the matters with his wife & to accept her opinion. Such way, *Śaṅkaradeva* recognized the quality of *Kalindi* & gave her honor. *Mādhavadeva* and the other *Vaiṣṇava* saints were also influenced by her. They always wanted her consent & decision even after the death of *Śaṅkaradeva*.

All Human being are born free. But society thinks woman as subordinate to man, especially in religious matter. *Kalindi* was self conscious on her rights. She worshiped her own god besides her husband's views go against it. It shows her independency over her thoughts. Women get courage from her example to exercise their own faith and belief.

At that time, the system of burning wife on the funeral pyre of the husband was prevailing. But, *Kalindi* allowed her daughter- in -law for remarriage after the death of her son. In this sense, she had the courage to stand against the unhealthy social norms. She was exception in such a male dominating society. Such type of personality, courage, decision making capacity & humanity paved the ways to social up gradation.

Kamalpriya, daughter of *Vaiṣṇava* saint *Ramrai* was expert in fine arts. She married to *Chilarai*-the great general of *Kosh* Kingdom. She earned great respect from *Chilarai* for her own quality. She was a good singer & musician. When *Chilarai* heard a devotional song (Borgeet) in her voice he was influenced by its theme and emotions & *Chilarai* wanted to meet *Śaṅkaradeva*. The help of Koch kingdom is still remembered with great thankfulness' by the Assamese *Vaiṣṇavas*.

These women were examples of knowledge, high mind, chasteness, courage and skill. We could learn more from the life and works of these women.

These virtues are very important for every human being for the up gradation of the society. In the society, the position of women is not satisfactory till date. Equal status to the women is still a far cry. A healthy society can never be formed without the equal status of the two wings- man and woman. To earn the equal status, woman should be more educated, physically and mentally healthy, self conscious etc. like the above-mentioned four women of medieval Assam.

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ŚAṆKARADEVA'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS UPLIFT¹ OF WOMEN

Bina Gupta

At the time when the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite Movement (NVM) of Śaṅkaradeva first got off the ground, religion determined society and Assam was least perfect in matters of religion. A perverted religious system exploited woman as an accessory of worship². At the same time, along with the 'inferior' castes (*sūdras*), she was brutally suppressed. All avenues of spiritual progress were closed for her. In fact, it is very interesting to note in this connection that at one point of time, "there were many debates in the Hindu tradition over whether women, low castes, and outcastes could attain liberation in this life or whether they had to await another birth or more"³.

But Kṛṣṇa, in the *Bhāgavata*⁴, had made a significant remark which was now to act as the contagion of a great social revolution: "O Uddhava, if the (so called) 'women and sūdras' (*strī-sūdras*) express their desire to learn the Supreme Truth, speak even to them this knowledge⁵." Acting upon this order of the Lord, Śaṅkaradeva introduced the popular religion of devotion (*loka-bhakti-pantha*)⁶ in Assam to ensure that the *strī-*

¹ *Uplift* An effort or a movement to improve social, moral, intellectual or spiritual standards. This essay concentrates more on the spiritual dimension.

² For the state of affairs, see, for instance, *Mother Goddess Kāmākhya*. Banikanta Kakati, Lawyer's Book Stall, 1967.
"The companionship of a woman is the prime requisite of Vāmācāri devotee. They were, if not available for love, procured by money or force", pp. 47

³ Katherine K. Young, *Fate Hangs on a Particle: The Hermeneutics of Bhagavadgītā 9:32-3* Journal of Hindu Studies, Volume Two - Issue Two, Oxford Centre For Hindu Studies, 2009

⁴ And also in the *Bhagavadgītā* 9/32, Kṛṣṇa pronounces, "Those who are of very low caste like the *candālas* and also those like the women, the *vaiśyas*, the *sūdras*, etc., if they surrender themselves at My feet, they also attain the supreme state of bliss". These lines seem to be of revolutionary significance. It is equally significant that Mādhavadeva, the foremost disciple and apostolic successor of Śaṅkaradeva takes these up for rendering in his famous *Nāma-ghoṣā* (vv. 610).

⁵ "স্ত্রী শূদ্রো কৰৈ য়েৰে আমাত ভকতি / তাহাতো কহিবা ইটো জ্ঞান মহামতি", *Kṛṣṇa-Uddhava Samvada*, Canto XI, *Srimad-Bhāgavata*, Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Sangha

⁶ Vaiṣṇaṇātha Bhaṭṭācārya in his prose rendering of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* thus addresses his listeners: -
"O persons in the assembly, the great saint Sri-Śaṅkara, endowed with great qualities, hath formerly rendered the *Bhāgavata* into verse and introduced the popular religion of devotion (*loka-bhakti-pantha*), by getting which the low castes also could get rid of the cycle of

sūdras were not allowed to starve spiritually. The reformers of the NVM sacrificed their literary ambitions and concentrated on rendering the sacred texts into the vernacular. And the reason behind their doing so is best expressed in the words of Ananta Kandali, another stalwart of the NVM, “In Sanskrit, one knows how to write well. Still, for the benefit of the ‘women and *sūdras*’, one will compose verses (in Assamese) so that they come to know of the *parama-tattva* (Supreme Truth)⁷”. If this is not sympathy for women, then what is?

Śaṅkaradeva visualized a society in which both man and woman, on an equal footing, would seek sole-refuge in and chant the Name of God:

“...forsaking all other gods, the *man or woman* who takes Śaraṇa (Sole-Refuge) in Kṛṣṇa, *he or she*, from then on, will receive the infinite grace of Kṛṣṇa Himself.”

[Śaṅkaradeva, *Srīmad-Bhāgavata*, Canto II]

Śaṅkaradeva opened the gates of devotion for the women who had hitherto been kept outside the pale of religion by the protagonists of orthodoxy.

নলাগে ভক্তি দেৱ দ্বিজ ঋষি হইবে। নলাগে সম্ভূত শাস্ত্ৰ বিস্তৰ জানিবে।

যক্ষ বক্ষ স্ত্ৰী শূদ্ৰ যত ব্ৰজবাসী। পক্ষী মৃগো বিষ্ণু ভৈল কৃষ্ণক উপাসি।।

(Look how) By worshipping Kṛṣṇa, the *yakṣas*, the demons, women and *sūdras*, all the dwellers of Vraja and even the birds and animals became Viṣṇu.

[Śaṅkaradeva, *Kīrttana, Prahlāda Carita*]

[All] Those who have ears, minds and mouths have equal rights in Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*⁸

[Śaṅkaradeva, *Nimi Nava-Siddha Saṁvāda*]

As a writer, Śaṅkaradeva always upheld the liberty, dignity and equality of women in his own inimitable style. The principal women characters in his writings have all been endowed with a strong personality. They are bold and assertive. And expressive too. In the following outburst of **Rukmiṇī**, for instance: -

rebirths”. *Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Assam: Śaṅkaradeva and His Times*, Maheswar Neog, Motilal Banarsidass, 1980, pp. 368. Bracketed along with the ‘low castes’ in this quote are surely the women.

⁷ শ্লোক সংস্কৃতে আমি / লিখিবাক ভাল জানি

তথাপি কৰিবো পদবন্ধ ।

স্ত্ৰী শূদ্ৰ আদি যত / জানোক পৰম-তত্ত্ব

শ্ৰৱণত মিলয় আনন্দ ।।

Canto X, Middle, vv. 3096, *Srīmad-Bhāgavata*, Srīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Sangha, pp. 1228

⁸ Cited in *Assam Vaiṣṇavism and Śaṅkaradeva Sangha*, Sonaram Chutiya
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“This Śiśupāla [Rukminī says] comes to marry me: my life has taken a better turn indeed; with what cheek has he come to marry me? As a fox would feed on the lioness, as a baby would snatch at the moon, as the frog in the corner would long for nectar, so would Śiśupāla desire me. As the crow would feed on the offerings made at a yajña, as the degraded Brāhmana would covet great gifts, as the Brāhmana-slayer would aspire for heaven, so would Śiśupāla desire me. He talks of being husband to Rukmiṇī. But who would shut her eyes setting aside Mādhava, the Lord of the three worlds, and choose Śiśupāla? Who would ignore the lion and ask for the pig? Who would ignore milk and drink the water in which fish has been washed?⁹”

Or, in the following words of **Satyabhāmā**:-

“My dear husband [Kṛṣṇa], you promised to get a *pārijāta* tree for me. So fetch it right away and don’t dawdle. I will not set foot into my home unless I see a *pārijāta* tree before it. I swear it!¹⁰”

These are hardly the words of meek and docile women who would let themselves be bound by the dictates of fate but rather those of assertive and self-confident individuals who know exactly what they want. In fact, it seems the delineation of the female characters has been done in such a manner that they mark a departure from the traditional model.

No other character perhaps illustrates this aspect better than that of Sīta in Śaṅkaradeva’s *Rāmāyaṇa* who, in her anger, turns her back to an intimidated Rāma and laying aside all shyness, speaks her mind with eyes and face scarlet with rage and indignation, “By a ruse he had abandoned me in the forest. He wanted to kill the two boys in my womb...” Indeed, her words are so piercing that “if paddy had been put into Rāma’s mouth, it would have turned into puffed rice (i.e. he was burning with shame)”. This kind of an approach is unusual in *Rāmāyaṇa* literature. Dr WL Smith finds that Sīta here has much more to say. “What is exceptional here is Sīta’s reaction. Śaṅkaradeva’s great sympathy for Sīta’s plight leads him to portray her not as a passive victim as in Vālmiki, but a person of “flesh and blood”, justifiably enraged at the way she has been treated. The point Śaṅkaradeva is trying to make is one of compassion - compassion for Rāma’s dilemma, but much more for Sīta’s sufferings. Śaṅkaradeva’s sympathies are with her”¹¹.

Similarly, in his maiden book *Hariścandra Upākhyāna*, Srīmanta Śaṅkaradeva had recognized the strength of a woman by comparing her with blazing fire:-

⁹ *History of Assamese literature*, Birinchi Kumar Barua, Sahitya Akademi, 1964

¹⁰ *Shankaradeva’s Parijata Harana Nata*, William L. Smith in *Kṛṣṇa. A Source Book*, ed. Edwin Francis Bryant, Oxford University Press, 2007

¹¹ *The Wrath of Sīta : Śaṅkaradeva’s Uttarākānda*, William L. Smith, Mahāpuruṣa Jyoti, Journal of the Srīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Sangha, Vol. VI, 2004

Strīka durbala kare konano niṣkhale
Jvalanta bahnika bāndhe bastrara āñchale¹²

On the external front too, the NVM was a potent force for the improvement of conditions for women. It produced women leaders, scholars and poets who contributed to the culture and civilization of Assam. Śaṅkaradeva led the way by actively practicing what he preached. Contrary to myth, he himself seems to have offered *śaraṇa* (initiation) to women, even in the initial stage of his Movement. Actually, the leaders of the NVM showed considerable generosity not only by initiating women to the devotional cult, but also by acknowledging them as religious heads. From a comparative angle, it may be mentioned that until recent times, women were generally excluded from episcopal and clerical positions within the Christian churches¹³.

Kanakalatā Āi¹⁴, the grand daughter-in-law of Śaṅkaradeva, sailed all the way from Koch-Bihar up to the Ahom kingdom and reclaimed Bardowa and restored the place to its pristine glory. The Āi initiated many people into *bhakti* and deputed twelve disciples - six Brahmins and six non-Brahmins - to carry on the work of the Order in different parts of Assam¹⁵. She was a woman of much ability and great personality and was responsible for a “considerable furtherance” of the faith of her grandfather-in-law. It was also for the first time in the history of Assam Vaiṣṇavism that a woman acted as a religious head and appointed other persons as Superiors¹⁶. Similarly, **Bhūvanesvarī Āi** succeeded to the pontifical seat of her father Harideva¹⁷.

The dignity of women attained its height in Assam when Gopāladeva addressed his clerics thus: “Take the wives of the *bhakats* as equals of your mothers and the *bhakats* as your own body¹⁸.”

The women of the NVM were not found wanting in moments of crisis also. Nārāyaṇadāsa’s wife, **Bārabāsi**, a woman of great piety, threw open her granaries for the *bhakats* at a time of great scarcity¹⁹. Similarly, **Mathurādāsa’s wife** showed heroic virtue by keeping the ‘*aksaya banti*’ burning at the Kirttana Ghar at Barpeta, even after it had been gutted in a devastating fire, and conducting the prayer services herself with other women devotees²⁰. For this, she received high praise from Mādhavadeva. Even

¹² Cited in *Srimanta Sankaradeva as a Feminist*, Dr Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti in *Tejaswini*, Souvenir of Srīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Sangha, 2008

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Church_history retrieved December 20, 2012

¹⁴ *Āi* An honorific epithet (of address) for women in the Śaṅkaradevite circle, meaning *mother*.

¹⁵ Neog, *op cit*, pp. 151. There is still a place today known as Ai-bheti, about five miles to the east of Bardowa, where the Ai along with the other women folk had put up camp on arriving at the Ahom kingdom.

¹⁶ Neog, *op cit*, pp. 150-151

¹⁷ Neog, *op cit*, pp. 132

¹⁸ Neog, *op cit*, pp. 327

¹⁹ *Mahimamayi*, A Collection of Life Histories and Virtues of Women, Srīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Sangha (Marangi Anchalik), 2002, pp. 98

²⁰ “An oil lamp [*aksaya banti*, symbolic of the light of faith and reminiscent of the sacrificial sessions of the sages of Naimisaranya], lighted by Madhava in front of the *Guru-asana*, when

Candarī Āi, the maid-servant at Sankara’s household, was so advanced spiritually that she could send a group of *pandits* packing by reciting to them the substance of the *Gītā*²¹, while washing her clothes on the river-bank²².

One episode connected with Candarī Āi, from the *caritas*, is worth mentioning here which, besides highlighting the amazing degree of spiritual enlightenment among the women of this period, also brings out clearly how Śaṅkaradeva himself encouraged women to actively participate in matters spiritual. The following is a summary of that episode.

After the painting of the Vaikuṅṭha [for the *Cihna Yātrā*] was completed, Śaṅkaradeva drew and painted the *parisadas* on the canvas. He painted the seven Lords of the seven Vaikuṅṭhas. He also painted the divine *sarovaras* (streams) at different places.

yaita yibā lāge samastaka tuli dilā /
ekatila māno Vaikuṅṭhara nalarilā //
kalpataru yehena dibāka najānanta /
abāka svarupe duyojana rahilanta //

He (Śaṅkaradeva) painted all the visuals [of Vaikuṅṭha] that were necessary;

the *rangiyal ghar* was inaugurated, was ever to be kept burning and never to be allowed to extinguish. When the hall was destroyed by fire, Mathuradasa’s wife lighted a new lamp from the embers and thus maintained the continuity of the *aksaya banti*. This possibly is the origin of this particular usage in the Sattras”. Neog, *op cit*, pp. 320

²¹ The Āi appears to have recited the following verse from Mādhavadeva’s *Nāma-ghoṣā* (vv. 620) or perhaps the Sanskrit source of it:-

ভগৱন্ত-ভক্তি-যুক্ত / পুৰুষৰ আশ্ব-বোধ
মাধৱৰ প্ৰসাদে মিলয় |
কৃষ্ণৰ কৃপাত জানা / গুচয় সংসাৰ ভয়
এহিমানে গীতাৰ নিৰ্ণয় ||
[ভগৱন্তুক্তিযুক্তস্য তত্প্ৰসাদাশ্ববোধতঃ ||
সুখং বন্ধৱিমুক্তিঃ স্যাৎগীতাসংগ্ৰহঃ ||]

Gurucaritara Rasala Katha Aru Aisakala, Premakanta Mahanta, Bharati Book Stall, Golaghat, 1997, pp. 27

²² In the classical milieu fostered by the leaders of the NVM, “Even women were found solving knotty problems of scriptures (p. 116)”. One scholar named Kavichandra, who had come to Naranārāyaṇa’s capital with his pupils in search of a rival disputant, found, to his utter surprise, all their enquiries to the passers-by ably replied to in Sanskrit. Kavichandra then made a significant remark to his followers, “Look! This seems to be a country of scholars” (p. 193). The Vaiṣṇavism epoch, besides being an era of ‘vernacularization’, was also an era of classical learning in Assam. See *The Kathā Guru Carita : A Document of Immense Historical Value*, Banikanta Kakati and Birinchi Kumar Barua in Foreword to the *Kathā Guru Carita* (UC Lekharu ed.) Gauhati, Feb., 1952

The depiction did not leave out even a single detail of Vaikuṅṭha
 [But] As if not knowing where to place the *kalpataru* (the wish-yielding tree),
 The two of them [Śaṅkaradeva and the *samnyasi*] remained, seemingly puzzled.

It was at this time that the old lady Candarī spoke. She had been spreading out the grain in the compound for drying. Taking the ‘*mārjjani*’ (broom, brush) in her hand, she, seeing that Dekāgīrī (Śaṅkaradeva) had not yet drawn the *kalpataru*, went near the stage and said, “Dekāgīrī, *this* is where the *kalpataru* must be given (painted)”. Śaṅkaradeva smiled and said,

āsiyā ethāka Āi bara kaili kāma /
 tai hena upakāra āra kaita pāma //

“O mother, by coming here [and pointing out the position of the *kalpataru*], you have done a great service [to me]. Oh! Where does one obtain such a help as you!” He, acting on the old lady’s advice, painted the *kalpataru* at that very spot [singled out by her]. Seeing this RāmaRāma and the others were struck with wonder, “Wherefrom did this *buḍhi* (old lady) get this knowledge! She must be a denizen of Vaikuntha, living here in disguise!”

[*Guru Carita*, Rāmacaraṇa Thākura, pp. 297]

The NVM was successful in diffusing a high degree of enlightenment among the masses. Vedānta was practically ‘vernacularised’. Works such as the *Nāma-ghoṣā* in which hard philosophical truths melt into exquisite poetry like ‘snow-capped mountains converting themselves to glaciers or ice-rivers at the advent of springtime’, played a leading role in this process of internalization.

And in the *caritas* (biographies of the Saints) of the NVM, we come across numerous episodes which reveal the extent of spiritual progress made by the women of that period. Once, it is recounted, a courtier of the king had just returned from the capital. He had brought many rich presents for his wife. Now the wife²³, being a follower of Śaṅkaradeva’s cult, naturally asked, “You have brought so many things for me. But what about the Guru and the *bhakats*? What have you brought for them?” The husband replied, “Nothing. You distribute a few things to them”. The wife said, “If I give, the merit will be mine. You won’t acquire any merit”. The husband shot back, “But you belong to whom?” meaning that as she was his wife, her merits would automatically accrue to him. “Nobody belongs to anybody”, replied the wife, “this *jīva*, a part of God, is simply resting (in this body) as a traveler in the shade of a tree²⁴”.

²³ The woman in question appears to be Hariprabhā, wife of one Keho Hazara, a royal official. Mahanta, *op cit*, pp. 103

²⁴ This utterance is reminiscent of the ŚvetaŚvetara Upaniṣada, “Two birds, who are companions and friends, nestle on the very same tree” (4.6-7), *Upaniṣadas*, Patrick Olivelle, Oxford University Press, 1998

It seems that the work *Janma-Rahasya* was composed specifically on request from the women of the royal household. According to Daityāri Thākura, one of the earliest biographers of Śaṅkaradeva:-

Śaṅkaradeva along with [his son] Rāmānanda Thākura again went to Behar, Cilaray Devan's place. There Śaṅkaradeva was always narrating the *caritra* (tale) of Kṛṣṇa. One day, Cilaray Devan said to Him,

“O Great One! Please translate into verses the *Janma-Rahasya* for me; all the queens (*mahādai*), want to read it with great respect in mind”.

Śaṅkaradeva said, “I will go to Barpetā and compose the verses of the *Janma-Rahasya* there”.

The Devan said, “[By all means] Please go to Barpetā and start the work of translation there soon”. Hearing this Śaṅkaradeva went to Barpetā. Along with him was Rāmānanda, his eldest son (*barbetā*). Going there, Śaṅkara said to Mādhava, “Mādhava, you do the translation of the *Janma-Rahasya*”²⁵.

In the field of culture, **Padmapriyā Āi** wrote some fine devotional lyrics. **Kamalāpriyā**, the daughter of Rāmarāya (cousin of Śaṅkaradeva) and wife of Prince Cilarai, was an expert player on the ‘*sārengdār*’ (a stringed instrument) and an excellent singer. It is said that hearing her sing a *bargīta*, Cilarai was so carried away by the great quality of the song that he lost no time in seeking initiation from Śaṅkaradeva and he remained a devoted follower and supporter of Śaṅkaradeva to the last.

Padmapriyā was the daughter of Gopāladeva of Bhavanipur. She composed songs in praise of Kṛṣṇa and of her Guru Śaṅkaradeva. She is the only Assamese woman poet of the medieval period known today.

²⁵ goilā punu Rāmānanda Thākura Śaṅkara //
 behāraka Cilārāya devānara thāi /
 Kṛṣṇara caritra kahi thākanta sadāy //
 ekadinā Cilārāy devāne bolaya /
 Janma-Rahasyara pada kari mahāśaya //
 diyoka āmāka mahādai samastaya /
 atīśaya śraddhā mane paḍhibe khojaya //
 bolanta Śaṅkaradeve barpetā yāibo /
 Janma-Rahasyara pada tahite karibo //
 devāne bolaya barpetā lāgi yāyo /
 bilamba nakari pada tahite kariyo //
 hena śuni Śaṅkara goilanta barpetā /
 lagate āchaya Rāmānanda barbetā //
 tathā yāi Mādhavaka bulilā Śaṅkara /
 kariyo Mādhava pada Janma-Rahasyara //
 Daityāri Thākura, *Śaṅkaradeva-Mādhavadeva Carita*, Hari Narayan Dutta Barua (ed), pp. 187

Don't forget the feet of the Guru, O mind!
 Deliverance lies at the two feet of the Guru.
 That is a boat to pass over the world ocean.
 No one can cross it in other ways.
 Son, husband and wealth are all in vain;
 Shine like water-reflection.
 Just existed and just exhausted,
 All become ashes - Time swallows all.
 The mind is firmly tied to worldly affairs.
 Infatuation is like a strong string.
 Holding the feet of Kṛṣṇa,
 Padmapriyā states this desire²⁶.

Perhaps the immensity of the contribution of the Śāṅkaradeva Movement towards the uplift of women especially on the spiritual front would be more fully realized if we also take into account that “the time when Śrīmanta Śāṅkaradeva started his reform activities was a very adverse period in the history of Assam” and that “He was faced with opposition at every step²⁷”. It will be interesting also to compare the condition of women in Assam, during the heydays of the Śāṅkaradeva Movement, with that of other societies of the medieval world.

²⁶ From *Guru Pada Nubhulibi Mon Toi*, 17th century. Tr: by Kesavananda Deva Goswami, *Medieval Assamese Literature : An Anthology, Volume 2*, K Ayyappa Paniker (ed), Sahitya Akademi, pp. 698-697

²⁷ “We can judge the contribution of Śrīmanta Śāṅkaradeva [...] only if we proceed with such a comparative assessment”, Borkakoti, *op cit*

JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN THE *MAHĀBHĀRATA*: A STUDY

Pranab Jyoti Kalita

It is the common nature of human being to live together and this common nature of human being, in days of yore, resulted to the formation of a state, a social organization of people, covering a specific region, usually used to be governed by a king. When each and every man of the society was truthful, then, there did not exist any sort of jealousy or repugnance among the people and hence, no any judicial procedure also existed there in. But, in course of time, with the rising of these evil factors in the society, there appeared disorder. The strong subjugated the weak and thus, righteous people suffered and unrighteousness prevailed. For the freedom from such conditions, the necessity of a king, possessing all kinds of power was felt and he had to inflict punishment upon the evil-doers for the preservation of *dharma*, i.e. mode of conduct or way of life. Thus, gradually, there arose a political system in the society and up to the time of the *Mahābhārata*, this system developed to a great extent.

The *Mahābhārata* is the store house of all branches of knowledge leading to the four principal objects of human life, viz. *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*. The epic² announces itself that regarding these objects, whatever is embodied in it may be found elsewhere, but what is not found in the epic is impossible to find anywhere else. Of these four objects, *dharma* is regarded as the root of the state for the existence of which is essential the enforcement of law³ either established by tradition or prescribed by scriptures. In society, it is well established by the king by means of controlling the evils and showing compassion towards the good once⁴. The *Mahābhārata*, representing an ancient social tradition of India, instructs the king to punish those who are wicked and do not follow the path of good conduct; by doing so, he gets good results and after death goes to the heaven.⁵ From the dialogue between king Dyumatsena and prince Satyavān, one may learn why punishment should be inflicted upon the culprits⁶. The social order is properly maintained when *daṇḍa* is properly utilized by the king as because common people are kept on the right path only by the fear of *daṇḍa*⁷. All the consideration of life as to what to do and what not come to an end only when the culprits are not punished. So, for the destruction of the evils and establishment of good, in the society, originated *daṇḍa*. In the *Mahābhārata*, the origin of *daṇḍa* is attributed to Brahmā or Śiva for the

eradication of lawlessness⁸. The epic⁹ also presents a symbolic physical form of *daṇḍa* having black-coloured body and red-coloured eyes and the same form is also referred to by Manu.¹⁰

But, the *daṇḍa* is to be inflicted upon the offenders on the basis of *dharma*, i.e. law or ordinance. As per the instructions of the epic, the king had to act according to the injunctions of law which was originated from four different sources, viz., *śruti*, *smṛti*, *sadācāra* and *paris*.

Śruti i.e. the Vedas are apparently considered as the source of law. The citation of the Vedas as the authentic source of *dharma* by Krishna¹¹, in order to prove the legality of the *niyoga vidhi*, is referred to in the epic. From the expressions like “ ‘*vaidikam. -ityeṣā vaidikī sthitih. ’*, ‘*ityeṣā śrūyate śrutih. ’*”¹², the point becomes more clear. The epic also states that *dharma* is originated from the Vedas, ‘*veda prasutadharmā*’¹³. On many controversial matters, it presents the opinions of the experts of the Vedas, ‘*iti veda vido viduh.*’¹⁴

In the *Mahābhārata*, the Dharmaśāstras are also regarded as the source of law and the rules, laid down in these Dharmasastras are based on customs, traditions and conventions and were accepted by the society.

Sadācāra which simply means the good conduct of good ones and which is difficult to be defined critically is also the source of law.

And another source of law is necessitated when the views or instructions presented by the above mentioned sources opposed to each other and this fourth source of law is the council of learned persons, technically known as *pariṣad*. A *pariṣad* is called for special occasions. In the *Mahābhārata*¹⁵, we come across such a doubtful matter where sage Vyāsa along with Drupada, Dhrṣṭadyumna, Yudhiṣṭhira and Kuntī discussed together whether Draupadī may be married with five Pāṇḍavas or not. Finally, sage Vyāsa¹⁶ answered it positively.

Thus, the law has its origin in four different sources. The *Mahābhārata* holds that it is the highest duty of a king to impart justice by means of punishing evil-doers and he may do so acting according to the injunctions of law. With the commitment of this, prosperity falls not only upon the king,¹⁷ but also upon the society¹⁸ and the negligence of his duty causes his destruction and such a king was regarded as impurifying *dharma* (*dharmadūṣaṇa*) and this act is considered as ‘*dasyudharma*’ because he does not protect the people by sparing *daṇḍa*.¹⁹ The above mentioned two epithets have been used by Draupadī for king Virāṭa who was not punishing Kīchaka for beating her in the court.

The thinkers of the epic *Mahābhārata* have furnished some principles which were to be followed by the king or other Officers-in-charge of judicial administration while judging a matter of dispute.

First of all, there should not be any sort of tardiness in imparting justice to the parties; otherwise, many evils may be faced.²⁰

The judge must be impartial while imparting justice to the parties. Although, to behave affectionately to the subjects is the sacred duty of a king, yet at the time of judgment, he is not allowed to take into considerations such sentiments and had to punish who violet the rules of law even if they are his parents, brothers, wives and priests.²¹ King Janaka²² of Mithilā and Sagara²³ of Ayodhyā may be cited as instances who punished their guilty sons. Further the epic instructs the king to punish the servants, friends and even the *guru* if they refuse to follow the rules of law.²⁴

The epic also provides some exemptions from punishment in some special conditions. Here, it is stated that if the offender is a boy of 12 years old or younger than that, then, he should not be regarded as a culprit, as by the age, an individual is unable to decide what to do or what not, for the immaturity of knowledge to understand *dharmā*. But, according to sage Aṇimāṇḍavya, the relaxation should be given up to age 14²⁵. Besides this, physical conditions are also considered for such sort of exemptions from punishment. Thus, little boys,²⁶ fools, blinds, deaf persons should not be punished even if they commit some misdeed.

For a proper decision, conditions like gravity of the offence, motive of the offender and his status in the society must be taken into consideration. For the same offence, different punishments are provided for different people belonging to different varṇas. Moreover, light punishment for serious offence and serious punishment for light offence is forbidden by the epic. Overall, the punishment should be of proper type.

But here the question arises whether the king had to judge all the cases himself or he was assisted by some other in this matter as because it seems to be very difficult for him to solve the disputes of all the subjects alone. From the scanty references observed in the *Mahābhārata*, it may be inferred that during its compositional period, there existed a well established judicial system.

As observed in the *Mahābhārata*, in the act of imparting justice, the king was assisted by many Officers-in charge of the judicial administration. He was helped by many persons, viz. the priest, the sabhyas and ministers. The epic prescribes qualifications and the code of conduct to be followed by them.

It was the *purohita* who played significant role in this respect for his being the chief advisor of the king. He held the power even to release a culprit if the culprit requests him to do so and promises before him not to commit offence again.²⁷

The judicial officer whose position was subordinate to king is referred to in the epic by the name *Prād. a-Vivāka*²⁸ and he may be equated with the chief justice of present time. But what should be his qualification is not mentioned in the epic.

Besides these, there were many judges to administer justice in different courts established by the state. Referring to the quality of such sort of judges, the epic states

that the persons to be appointed as judge must be *bahuśrutāḥ*,²⁹ i.e. a well read one. Yudhiṣṭhira was advised by Dhṛtarāṣṭra to appoint such person as judge who are reliable and have purity of ideas.³⁰ Sometime, the judge are designated by the term *puruṣa*³¹ whose duty is to impart justice to the persons.

But, it is the fact that the king was the highest court of appeal and his decision was the final decision. He had the control over all other judges. To impart pure justice to the people, he should employ spies after the judges so that they can not impart justice to the people by accepting bribe from the parties.³² The judges, if are found to be indulged into unfair means such as accepting bribe, having illegal relations with wives of other persons, inflict improper punishment, impart false justice, utter harsh words should be punished with death penalty.³³

For the assistance of the king of the judges, there existed some sabhyas³⁴ who helped and advised them on legal matters. In the *Sabhāparva*,³⁵ we come across such sabhyas when the epic narrates Draupadī's case of assault by Duhśāsana in the court of the Kauravas. The sabhyas were to state forward their views on legal matters without any hesitation. By remaining silent, they become sinner and are punished by Varuṇa.³⁶

In the *Udyogaparva*,³⁷ it is stated that punishment should be inflicted upon the offenders only when the offences have been proved after careful examination and this statement clearly indicates the prevalence of a judicial procedure.

It is very common that at first the plaintiff puts complains. The *Mahābhārata* does not refer to this practice in writing and some illustration show that the plaintiffs, going to the king's court complain orally as is evident from the story of Śankha Likhita.³⁸

The next turn was obviously of the defendant. Though the epic is not evident in this matter, yet, it is quite normal.

Next, for the process of judgment, there required a *sākṣin*, i.e. a witness. That the practice of presenting witnesses from both of the parties may be learnt from the statement of king Virāṭa who, on being reproached by Draupadī for his failure in punishing Kīchaka stated thus, "How can I impart justice in this case without knowing it fully as it did not occur in my presence."³⁹

Though the epic is silent about the number of *sākṣin*, yet, it defines *sākṣin* as one who personally has seen the occurrence of the case (*samaṣka darśināt*) or has heard of it (*śravaṇāt*) or has his ideas of it (*dhāraṇāt*).⁴⁰ The *sākṣin* must not bear any relation with both of the parties and should be very impartial. The witness had to take oath before a jar of water or the fire to speak the truth, failing of which he was supposed to be punished by Varuṇa.

Here it is worthy of notice that the *Mahābhārata*⁴¹ does not permit some persons like smugglers, gamblers, physicians, foes, friends and professional singers to tender their evidence in the court. The epic does not refer to a professional pleader.

From the foregoing discussion, it may be inferred that the king, being a judge and protector of law had to find out the fact of a disputed matter and thereafter, to punish the culprits. Hence, the epic instructs the king to punish even his parents, gurus, purohitas and tāpasas if they break the law.⁴² At all costs, the society must be preserved and the law should be maintained.

The epic chiefly refers to two kinds of punishments, viz. corporal and non-corporal. A fourfold division of punishment is also alluded to in the epic, viz. *dhigdaṇḍa* i.e. gentle admonition, *vāgdaṇḍa* i.e. severe reproof; *ādānadaṇḍa*, i.e., imposition of fire and the *vadhadaṇḍa* i.e. the death sentence.

*Śārīrapīḍā*⁴³ i.e., physical torture was provided for all the offenders except the Brāhmaṇas. Expulsion from the state⁴⁴ was the highest punishment for the Brāhmaṇa-culprits. Death penalty is the most serious type of punishment which ends the life of the persons on whom it is inflicted.

Finally, it may be concluded with the fact that the king had to protect the state, the subjects of his kingdom and for the preservation of *dharma*, he had to do anything else. He was not to live for himself but for his subjects. For the discipline of the kingdom and maintenance of law, he had to uproot *adharma* and establish *dharma* in the society.

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