

Teaching of Sankardeva - Its Relevance in Modern Assamese Society

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Abstract-

Assam is unquestionably a beautiful state of India that upholds the real picture of 'Unity in Diversity'. No one can deny the immense role played by Sankardeva's neo-Vaishnava movement in expediting the process of formation of a larger Assamese society in the right direction. In order to sow the seeds of unity and solidarity among the masses from different ethnic groups, they have to be brought to the same religious-social and cultural stage as said by Sankardeva. Simply by analysing the essence of Sankardeva's philosophy, we may understand the relevance of his teaching in modern Assamese society for its overall growth and development. The creative work of the great Srimanta Sankardeva has contributed to the social, cultural and spiritual development of Assamese society and has given impetus and scope to the national life of Assam. His thoughts and teachings have enriched the Assamese society from different angles. Therefore, it has been attempted by the writer to explore the religious and humanistic perspective in his teaching. The findings of this paper have been summarised that there is a pressing need to revive the teaching of Sankardeva in the modern Assamese society considering the rising religious intolerance and degradation of human values.

Keyword- *Vaishnavism, Religious, teaching,*

Introduction -

Our national life has been led by a rich and complex history of change. Despite its rich geographical environment and rich philosophy of life, we as a nation have not been able to survive. This must be attributed to our indifference to tradition and neglect of history. If we as a nation are to take the lead, we must be able to thoroughly analyze the content of intellectual history and be interested in correct decisions. We have to learn to adapt to the ever-changing pace of our religious ideology, the important elements of the linkage with a subtle perspective. The Vaishnava Gurus and later the nation-loving Assamese people have all been talking about how we should lead our lives and our linkage. People, societies, cultures, civilizations are moving forward in all corners of the globe. The material produced by the dynamic process of life is considered as the material of the history of the nation. We have to turn the pages of history to find out our origins. It is the primary responsibility of the future representatives of the nation to use the resources of our cultural heritage and knowledge in a way that prepares them for the challenges of time. If we ignore the past and try to solve our present problems, the complexity of the conflict situation has the potential to make us more reluctant in the future.

Therefore, we must learn from our past, utilize the learned ideas in present and make our future safe and bright. There is a saying that ' Assam is a land of Sankar- Ajan' that represents the great unity between Hindu And Muslim people. Therefore, Sankardeva is well-known as a social reformer. Vaishnavism is one of the oldest religions in Indian social history.

Srimanta Sankardeva, a great man, made a great contribution to the propagation of Vaishnavism in Assam. Srimanta Sankardeva, a neo-Vaishnava reformer, introduced a new interpretation of the ancient Indian spiritual tradition and propagated a universal religion to the masses. The Bhagavad Gita and the Bhagavad Purana (commentary on the Gita, according to many) of the Upanishads of Amritsar were based on the original scriptures of Sankardeva. The history of the Indian devotional movement is very old. This is the first time in the history of Assam that a devotional religion has been established in Assam in the eastern part of the country. This great man is closely associated with the Vaishnava devotional movement that has absorbed the whole of India. Assam is now a diverse country with many ethnic groups, languages and dialects.

Srimanta Sankardeva is one of the great personalities in the history of Assam. He is a revolutionary soul for which he is still alive as a pole star. The Vaishnava movement launched by him is identified as “Eka Sarana Harinama Dharma” or devotion to one ultimate God—that is Lord Krishna. Sankardeva laid great emphasis on human values to strengthen the spirit of unity among the people of Assam. His humanistic belief was based on faith, belief and spiritualism. Sankardeva teaches the primacy of harmony. (Pathak, G)

Objective of the paper-

The objective of writing this paper is to explore the relevance of religious and humanistic perspectives in his teaching.

Significance of the Study-

The relevance of Sankardeva's study as the guru of national life in Assam and Assamese is undeniable. During the period when socio-political and religious conditions prevailed in Assam from all these aspects, Sankardeva propagated Vaishnavism in Assam as a branch of the All India Devotional Movement. Although Vaishnavism, introduced by Sankardeva, was a branch of the devotional movement, it also gave a new dimension to its original creative power. Apart from devotion, the creation of a high level of classical literature and culture and the adoption of a liberal outlook has also increased the relevance of Sankardeva(Bhuyan Gogoi, S.).

The tendency in Assamese society to establish Sankardeva as a spiritual guru is not a fair consideration for the guru. Sankardeva's multi-faceted talent is a rare one and there is a need for a talented person like Sankardeva even now. Poetry, Music, Drama, Painting, Religion, Philosophy, Physical Exercises - Sankardeva's genius is evident in all aspects. The. Simplicity and morality are the main characteristics of the Sankari religion. Instead of worshipping many gods and goddesses, Sankardeva's teachings include praying to one God, treating all beings equally, uniting all people irrespective of caste, region, colour and creed. Sankardeva is also relevant for the humanitarian point of view embedded in the religious ideology of one ideology and for the universal appeal of the Sankari ideology. Sankardeva played an important role in strengthening the nation-building process in Assam. It was not easy to unite the various factions ruled by different political forces under the name of 'Assam'. Considering the multidimensional roles played by Sankardeva for the development of Assamese society, the writers of this paper felt the need to explore his spiritual and humanitarian activities and their relevance in present

Assamese society. It has become very relevant nowadays to analyze the background of the Assamese society which has given a new perspective by Sankardeva to the change of superstitious belief, prejudices, narrowness and feudal thinking prevailed at that time.

Methodology of the Study -

This is chiefly a theoretical research paper based on secondary sources of data. The pertinent data have been gathered from different books, research papers, articles published in journals, magazines, dissertations, thesis etc. For analysing the collected data, the descriptive method has been adopted by the writers.

Result and Discussion -

Based on the objective, the following description has been made to highlight the findings of the paper--

Religious perspective in the teaching of Sankardeva-

Religion or religious consciousness has two aspects. The first aspect refers to the external function or ritual of each religion. This external aspect is different according to the differences of different religions. The internal or the second aspect indicates the true doctrine, norm, or goal of religion in resolving the question of life. The essence of religion depends on this aspect. Thus, although the external aspects of religion are different in different religions, the internal aspects are the same. Religious consciousness, which originates from the human heart, forms and develops the body and mind. According to Vivekananda, true realization of religion is possible only in the human heart. Such realization also makes one feel the existence of Vishnu. The main feature of all religions is universality. The consciousness of religion is connected with the welfare of human beings, the welfare of the world.

Religion rises at a historical stage in the development of human civilization and plays a role in social organization and evolution. Gradually, as it became an integral part of contemporary human life as a social system, it became the cornerstone of the establishment of the dictatorial state system. The promoters and propagandists of the religion were all groundbreaking philosophers, thinkers and scientists. Their life was explored by the best inquisitive minds of the people. Until the beginning of a historical level rich in systematic study style, the social significance of this human organization remained and will always remain historical significance.

This was followed by the advent of the scientific method and the advent of modernity based on intellectual value. With the formation of the modern nation and state system, the socio-cultural life of the people began to be confined to the perimeter of the nation. The Industrial Revolution brought about a radical change in the relationship between capital development and production. Religion was also a social reform and a modern version with a practical set of rules and regulations emerged. In the same way, different religious versions have also gained the legitimacy of social representation over time. (<https://vikaspedia.in>). Significant variations are observed in the interpretation of religion. Therefore, it is not easy to give a unanimous definition of religion. However, there is no doubt that the service to humanity is the essence of every religion.

Mahapurush Stimanta Sankardeva is such a great personality who adopted a liberal attitude towards religious diversity. Sankardeva realized that the simplest way of devotion is to awaken spirituality in one's mind. Satra and Namghar were set up to unite the society in the name of Bhakti Dharma. These ceremonies became the centre of religious practice, Bargit, Ankia Nat, wrote scriptures and enlightened the uneducated society with spiritual knowledge. At present, the Assamese nation is under threat. Each ethnic group is emerging with its own group identity. In such a time, there is a need to re-propagate

and spread the principles of Gurujana. Sankardeva felt that religious unity helps in reconciling and uniting society. This is the reason why he preached 'Eksaran Naam Dharma'. Sankardeva did not write literature just to propagate the religion. He also wrote for the propagation of religion as well as for the organization of society and caste. This religion has all the principles of education Justice, morality, non-violence, abolition of untouchability, spirituality, abstinence from evil, social service. He sought to educate human beings in the spirit of God, by uplifting the body and soul through the vision of God, freeing them from the aggression of the bodily reptiles, and nurturing them with spiritual knowledge. He said that to maintain peace and harmony in society, human beings should be attracted to the enlightened path of non-violence. The intellectual community must spread this great teaching of Sankardeva in today's society. Although religion is a parody of feudal thinking, we have to accept the epoch. The anti-corruption rhetoric of anti-corruption activists has been culturally re-invented and has since been recognized as a historical fact. Sankardeva devoted himself to building a prosperous greater Assam, primarily through the propagation of his Bhagavati Vaishnavism, establishing the unity of all communities. His religious ideals were based on the establishment of national unity and national consciousness by building a broad society of people without any distinction between high and low, Brahmins and Chandals.

Humanistic Perspective in the teaching of Sankardeva-

The great Srimanta Sankardeva was the negotiator of love, peace, wisdom, devotion and spectators not only in Assam but all over the world. Sankardeva has an incredible contribution to the social, cultural and spiritual identity of Assam. About 560 years ago, Assam was in the midst of such a complex religious, political, social, economic and cultural chaos that it was very difficult for the common man to get rid of it easily. Worship of various deities, alms-giving, polytheism, sacrifice, feasting, etc. The Assamese people were scattered from almost all directions. At such a critical juncture, this holy land of Assam, in the Bardowa of Nagaon district, emerges of Sankardeva awaken the people with the sense of humanity. Sankardeva has taught human society to stay away from materialist ideology. The mirage of happiness is the pursuit of happiness and the intoxication of human life. Drug use causes chaos in society. He appealed public to stop using these harmful substances. Before the Bhakti movement under the patronage of the main religious system of the Brahmins and the Purahites, the considerable moral and cultural danger was created in the Indian Hindu society. This Vaishnava devotional movement brought a renaissance to the religious and social life of the Indian people, with the basic premise being that there is a great deal of complexity, a lot of adherence to the rules and regulations, and a lot of adherence to the rules of liberation.

Humanism means service to human beings or the welfare of human beings. Gandhiji also said that 'service to man is service to God'. The question of humanitarianism is associated with a variety of problems and crises in society. The implication of humanism lies in its ability to devote itself to creation for the betterment of human beings, regardless of race or creed, beyond all forms of narrowness and insignificance. Humanism is, in fact, a form of protest, which can start a revolution against the prevailing social order to rescue human beings from any adversity and usher in a kind of new history. The name of this kind of new revolution is apparently humanism. The humanist ideology reflected in the writings of the great Srimanta Sankardeva is also a form of protest. All of his writings show that the triumph of humanism was hidden in his ideas. He dreamed of establishing peace and harmony in society through the establishment of human values. He established religious unity among the masses as a means to eradicate caste discrimination and establish a sense of untouchability, non-exploitation and cosmopolitanism. He chose painting, music, architecture and sculpture as his means of propagating the religion. One of the major cultural manifestations of his culture was the Bargit, Satriya Dance and

Ankia Nat. His thoughts were universally expressed between the Namghar and the Satriya system. He was well aware that humanism has always had and will continue to have an unforgettable relationship with religion and culture. In addition to preaching the religion, the Guru emphasized the purity of the human mind, which was the first condition of humanism. Public service and philanthropy are the only way to celebrate the victory of humanity in the world. According to him, love is the greatest asset of the human heart. In order to be the owner of this resource, human beings have to treat all animals equally. It is important to avoid upper-lower discrimination and move beyond arrogance. The whole world should be able to conquer you through love. This is how he spoke in order to propagate the humanitarian ideology. The Gurus sought to awaken a sense of cosmopolitanism, equality and humanity with simple and non-violent ideals. But now when we look at our society, we see that our society is full of various problems. The main reason for this is inhumanity, Indiscriminate and heinous acts such as murder, violence, looting, rape and terrorism are inhumane. The question that comes to mind is - why do these things happen? Today, the whole world is in the throes of unrest and chaos. In today's society, it is as if religion has regrouped, Different religions and norms are trying to destroy the harmony of the society. Peace will be established in society only through human love, rejection of untouchability, principles of non-violence, truth, forgiveness, kindness, patience etc. Social reform will take place through time-appropriate change, through rationalism and ideology. Equality and a sense of humanity can bring about unity and solidarity in society. Needless to say, Sankardeva's ideas are very relevant in today's violent world. He can be recognised as a national hero who will be the messenger of the Assamese nation's harmony for ages to come. Assamese will remain forever in the heart of Assamese for his endeavours to unite the society on humanitarian grounds.

Conclusion-

Sankardeva was not only a religious leader for us. He was also a writer, poet, lyricist, composer, playwright, singer, musician, worldly man, ascetic, philosopher, sociologist, scholar and theorist. He was an all-rounder, endowed with all kinds of qualities. The neo-Vaishnava devotional movement, which spread throughout India in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries AD, had a far-reaching effect on Assam at that time. In Assam, it was originally led by Sankardev Gurujana. He was accompanied by Madhava Deva. He was the second Guru of Assamese to convert to Gurujana. The union of these two great men was called 'Manikanchan Sanjog'. The beginning was a new horizon. Sankardeva was a radiant sun illuminated with all kinds of talents. Sankardeva, along with Madhavadeva, a devoted disciple of Tera, started a new golden chapter in Assam at that time. Whether you are talking about Sankardeva or writing about it, you can take the name of Madhava. This is because Sankardeva does not attain perfection for any reason. The two had the same heart. Instead of many gods and goddesses, one deity called 'Ekmevaditiam', the Nirgun-nirakara Brahma of Vedanta, accepted Krishna as the deity of Bhagavad-gita for practical purposes and offered one deity as per the deity preached by Sankardeva. The two of them made an impeccable contribution to the khol-tal, gayan-bayan, nat-bhaona, bargit, naam-prasanga etc. The incomparable creations of the two were revealed at that time. In order to lead the Assamese national life process by strengthening the humanistic bond with the worship of Vishnu, we have to adapt the life of our Vaishnava gurus to the ideal, religious philosophy to suit the changed situation. All thoughts of human welfare will surely take a new form in consciousness and effort. This kind of religious consciousness will surely beautify us from within and lead us towards the destination. Life is beautiful when the human heart is beautiful. It is possible to strengthen our human and social connections with the help of a beautiful life.

Many great men in different parts of India have come out in favor of devotionism to spread untouchability as a stigma of Hinduism and to propagate Hinduism in a reformed form. In this case, Kabir in Uttar Pradesh, Chaitanyadev in Bengal and Sankardeva in Assam were the gurus of this devotional movement. At that time, this movement formed under the leadership of Sankardeva in Assam was not only a movement for religious reform, it was a movement for the reform of Assamese national life. The sky was the limit for the human mind. Lack of a proper common faith or approach made it difficult to build a cohesive large society. The social and political spheres were in disarray due to the lack of harmony among the various ethnic groups and communities such as the Kochs, Kasharis, Chutias and Ahoms. It was at this juncture in the national life that Srisankardeva found the right path by conquering the Assamese society. We may conclude by saying that the ideology of Sri Sankardeva needs to be reflected among every community again and again through their activities because of the existing chaotic social order. (Kakati, S).

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