

## Environmental Awareness Reflected in Sankaradeva's Literature

Parishmita Das

Research Scholar, Dibrugarh University, Assam

Email ID: parishmitadas347@gmail.com

### Abstract

*Environmental awareness deals with awareness of the natural environment, its exploitation, and the importance of its protection. An environmentalist tries to promote awareness among the people to protect the environment and work against the exploitation of nature by human activities. According to Sankaradeva awareness of the environment has importance for the survival of human beings. It is needed to a basic positive attitude towards nature and against the pollution of the environment. He reveals that human being has responsibilities even towards the non-human environment also, and suggest an integral view on awareness along with different aspects of the environment that preservation of biodiversity. In his literacy works, he tries to draw the attention of human beings towards the environment. This study attempt o find out how environmental awareness is reflected in the literature of Sankaradeva.*

**Keywords:** Environment, Awareness, Literatures, etc.

### Introduction

The environment is defined as "the surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal or plant lives or operates"-Oxford Dictionary. So an environmentalist tries to produce awareness among the people to protect nature or to work against the damages caused by anthropogenic activities to nature. Srimanta Sankardeva (1449-1568), was a 15th-16th century saint, scholar, poet, social-cultural and religious reformer and perhaps the ideal figure in the history of Assam. By his literary works, he could draw the attention of people towards the environment. His literature consists of mainly six plays (Ankiya Nat), prayer books (kirtan, Gunamala), songs, six narrative

episodes ( Harichandra Uoakhyan, Rukminiharana Kavya, Ajamilopakhyana, Amrita-Manthana Kavya, Balichalana, Kurukshetra Kavya), four theological and cosmological works ( Bhakti-Pradip, Nimi- Navasiddha-Samvada, Anandi-Parana, Bhakti Ratanakara), etc. In his writings, he views that the human being has to cultivate their holistic attitude towards nature. He sees all the animals as equal to men. He believed that maintaining equality between human beings and all the living beings of nature is necessary. This study tries to find out how Sankaradeva previewed the holistic attitude towards nature, which reveals that man has moral responsibilities even towards non- human nature and gives an integrated view of environmental awareness for survival.

### **Objective**

The main objective of the paper is to analyze the environmental awareness and different aspects of the environment mentioned by Sankaradeva's in his literature.

### **Methodology**

Data: The data source is secondary and collected from books, journals, and related articles.

Method: The paper is purely analytical and descriptive.

### **Discussion**

With the advent of global consumerism with the development of science and technology, the awareness of environmental issues has occupied great importance and assumed a new dimension which is a matter of wide concern. It needs to be creating environmental awareness or consciousness and inculcation of the spirit of responsibility and accountability in our relationship with nature.

Human beings should approach nature with love, affection, respect, and gratitude to others. Sankaradeva tried to inspire the people to lead a less selfish life and live for others. Most of the cases of Sankaradeva's views on **environmental awareness** mentioned in the Bhagavata, Chapter-10, 928 as...

*etu brindabone achai yata tarugana*

*dekha dekha kene moha sadhur laksan.*

*koroi par upkar kinu kripamoy*

*pararese arthe jiboi etu brikhyacay..*

*Jibai para upakar kori arthe prane..*

He states that all the trees and the creepers always live for others. They always do welfare for others and their lives are devoted to the good of others. They always tolerate the sunlight rain, storm, etc. and give shadow to others; the life of the human being is successful who live for others without selfishness.

In episodes of *Gajendra Upakhyan* and *Haramohan* of Kirtan, Sankaradeva depicts the pictures of the environment. He mentioned numerous names of trees, birds, flowers, insects, animals, etc. Trees are like *aam, jam, kahjuri, jara-jamir, beel, narikal, taal, tambul, pakari, agaru, chandan, saral, sonaru* in *Gajendra upakhyan*; and *shirisa, debadaru* in *Haramohan* are mentioned. Flowers are constitutes like *parijat, champak, mandar, ashok, padam, kumud, indu, utpal, kadamba, raghu, nageswar, malati, madhai, jai, juti*, in *Gajendra upakhyan* ; *seuti, labanga, gulal, karabi, bak, kanchan, sewali, newali, palash, parali, bakul, banduli, kanauri, babari, singhachampa, debana, rajchampa, kunda, ketaki, tagar, gutimali, rebate* in *Haramohan* episodes.

In the **preservation of biodiversity**, Sankaradeva states that human beings alone cannot survive on earth. The interrelationship and dependency among plants and animals must be protected for the survival of human beings. He believed that everything in the universe is the creation of Nature and all are equally important. In a Borgeet he says...

*Yata jiva jangam                      keet patangam*  
*Aaga naga jaga tere kaaya.*

*Savakaha mari                      purata uhi udar*

*Nahi karatu bhuta daya..*

All living beings including insects, creatures, and unmovable things on the earth are the parts of God. Fill the stomach by killing everything so you don't have any love for the living beings.

In Nimi-Navasidha Sambad, 67 he mentioned as ..

*Hue heo krisha prane      mile taat mahagyan*

*Samaste dkhe gobindak.*

*Akash prithivi jal      jyoti vayu rasatal*

*Nadi nada choudikh chatak..*

*Yata lata taru trine      kahaku nedekhoi vinna*

*Harirar sharir buli mane.*

Saknaradeva states that the ultimate knowledge is achieved if one can see God in everything. All the creatures on the earth are the parts of God. One cannot be separated from others.

He appealed human beings to respects trees, animals, and birds in a proper manner. (Nimi-Nacasigha Sambad, 152)

In Bhagavata, Chapter-11, 219 ...

*Samaste jagata jitu dekhoi harimaya.*

*Tare nnam satya sakhi janiba nichaya..*

Similarly, in Bhagavata, Chapter-8, 651...

*Tumi kaya karan samaste charasar.*

*Subarne kundale jane nahike ontar..*

*Tumi pakhu-pakhi surasur tarutrine.*

*Agyanata murha jane dekhe vinna vinna..*

Men should see God on every living being which is called by him the best religion. Also, he states that no difference between God and his creation. Only fools make the difference between the creation of God or nature.

In Sankaradeva's thought and culture, the perception of sorrow, pleasure, and joy of the trees, animals, and the insects are treated as the same with the human. He advised the people to refrain from the violence to animals and emphasized on the coexistence of all species.

He composed in Bhagawat, Chapter-11, 206 as....

*Kukura sirgal gard havara atmarama.*

*Jania sabako pari kariba pranama..*

God is the soul of all dog, fox, and donkey alike, we should pay respect to all of them. It is the highest ideal of his spiritualism as an essential element of sustainable development of the society.

In Bhagavata, Chapter-6, 24

*Jitu mandamati aati akuye nubuje.*

*Byarthe pakshu pakshi mari sakutumbe bhunjoi..*

*Jitu jia pakshu dhari ani bandhe.*

*Nakata namara kari jivante randhe..*

Sankaradeva opposes killing the animals and birds. He states that the person, who kills the living beings, cuts the throat of duck and goat, captures birds and give terror to animals will be punished by the angles in the hail after death. Also appealed people to avoid the unnecessarily kills animal and birds and eats their meat.

Sankaradeva prefers **livelihood without degradation of the environment**. So he discarded those livelihoods which are associated with the killing of living beings. Sankaradeva boldly opposes all bloody sacrifices that were committed in the name of religion.

He writes in Nimi-Navasidha sambad, 337

*Najane dakshina bidhi      pujaro nahike sidhi*

*Nuguni pranir himsha dush.*

*Apuni jibika arhe      pakshugana mare byarthe*

*Tate mile manar santosh..*

He mentioned that worship or rituals are futile which does not discard violence to living beings. People who live by killing living beings are ultimately suffered by losing peace of mind.

Because of **Pollution**, Sankaradeva composed a drama named Kaliadaman on the theme of water pollution. In the Kaliadaman Yatra episode-9, he describes a story of Lord Krishna to show how

to keep the lake free from pollution. By this drama, Sankaradeva tried to establish the importance of biodiversity and how to maintain the equilibrium between good and evil in environmental issues.

### **Conclusion**

It is seen that environmental awareness always requires understandings of nature and accurate co-operation with nature. Sankaradeva had a great affection for the environment and its creations. In his literary works, he tried to promote affection towards flora and fauna. He was able to create awareness of the environment and notion for the preservation of biodiversity five centuries ago when the earth was densely covered with trees and wildlife. From his perception, it is understood that he respects all the creatures on the earth equally and values with love and affection, sympathy, kindness. He advocates through his teachings the use of nature without exploiting it.

### **References**

Board of Editors, ed. Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva Vakyamrita: A compilation of the compositions of Sankaradeva. 1st ed. Nagaon: Srimanta Sankaradeva Sangha, 1998. Print.

Dange, S. S. Bhagavata Purana. 1st ed. Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1984. Print.

Goswami, D. C. Boigyanik man aru Boigyanik chinta. Print.

Hazarika, S. K., ed. Kirtan Ghosa Aaru Naam Ghosa, 2010. Print.

"Kaliadaman." Bhagavata-X. 2nd ed., n.d. 669. Print.

Mahanta, Bapchandra, ed. Bargeet. 1st ed. Print.

"Pariparsik vigyanar dristrit Srimanta Sankardeva." Bhakati Prabah. Ed. Jagat C. Kalita and Leelassen Tamuli. 1st ed. Makum, Tinsukia: Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha, 2014. 313. Print.

Praantik 16 June 2012: 6. Print.

Srimadbhagavata. Print.

Vakyamrta, S. S. Sri Krishnar Vaikuntha Prayan. 1st ed, 1825. Print.