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**ŚRĪMANTA ŚAṅKARADEVA SANGHA
NAGAON : ASSAM**

Bhakti and *Mukti* in the Philosophy of Sri Śaṅkaradeva

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Sanchita Bora

I

Devotion or *Bhakti* is an emotional process of realizing the Supreme. It is not easy to define devotion. In religious terminology *bhakti* specifies worship of a personal God in the spirit of love. *Bhakti* is devotee's self-surrender to God. Hindu *Sāstras* indicate four principal *mārgas* or paths leading to union with God. They are *Karma mārga* (the path of action), *Yoga mārga* (the path of psychic concentration), *Jñāna mārga* (the path of knowledge) and *Bhakti mārga* (the path of devotion and love). The inimitable *Bhagavad Gītā* harmonizes these four paths; but it says *bhakti* is *gūhyatama* (the greatest secret). According to *Veda-Vyāsa*, unwavering attachment to the worship of God is *bhakti*. *Ūândilya*'s *Bhakti Sūtra* defines *bhakti* as intense love for the Lord. Again, according to *Ūândilya*, to be immersed completely in *Paramātman* and thus to enjoy full bliss is *bhakti*. *Nārada* says in his *Bhakti Sūtra* "Bhakti is superior to *Karma*, *Jñāna* and *Yoga*. It signifies a state of profound and eternal love towards God" (Vyas 24). He also adds that devotion to the Lord purifies men on the earth. Within *Vaiṣṇōavism* *bhakti* is only used in conjunction with *Viṣṇōu* or one of his associated incarnations. "Only *bhakti* can free people from worldly attachments by ridding them all doubts" (Sankardeva 1.5.12). *Bhakti* is love towards God as expressed through the devotee's body, words and mind.¹ Compared with the beatific joy with which *bhakti* fills the mind of the devotee,