

CHAPTER-II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The materials for the study of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement and its impact on the economy could be broadly classified into two parts— *Carit Puthi* (hagiographies) and modern work on Śaṅkaradeva and his *Bhakti* Movement.

2.0: *Carit Puthi*

Mādhavadeva had introduced the *Carit Tolā Prathā*, i.e, a system of narrating the story of the *Guru*. When Mādhavadeva became the chief of the *EŚHND*, he used to narrate the life and activities of Śaṅkaradeva after a *Prasaṅga* (singing and listening the glory of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Rāma) in front of the disciples. Gradually, it became a compulsory daily religious duty among the disciples. The tradition continued and latter along with Śaṅkaradeva, his apostles' life and works also narrated. Accordingly few devotees compiled *Carits* based on their lives. The most famous one is the *Kathā-Guru-Carit* compiled by Cakrapāṇi Vairāgī. He travelled extensively from *Satras* to *Satras* across the region to collect information regarding Śaṅkaradeva and his apostles and compiled the *Carit*. The hagiographies are of great importance because they provide vital information regarding the socio-economic structure of the region during the time of Śaṅkaradeva and the background of his *Bhakti* Movement. The hagiographies on Śaṅkaradeva could be classified mainly into two categories, namely the early group and the latter group—

1. The writers who were nearest to Śaṅkaradeva's lifetime included in the early group. The *Carit* written by Rāmacaraṇa Thākura, Daityāri Thākura, Bhuṣaṇa Dvīja, Rāmananda Dvīja and Vaikuṇṭha Dvīja contains the comparatively authentic information. They were free from recording miraculous events.
2. The latter group includes the unnamed *Carits*— *Kathā-Guru-Carit*, *Bardowa-Carit*, *Śaṅkaradeva-Caritra*, *Guru-Varṇanā* by Aniruddha Dasa, *Saru-Svarga-Khaṇḍa* and *Bar-Svarga-Khaṇḍa* by Sārvabhauma Bhattāchāryya. Since there was a big time gap between Śaṅkaradeva's life time and composition of these *Carits*, a tendency of infusing supernatural and miraculous elements into the life of the *Gurus* is seen. But, still these *Carits* provide some vital information.

The *Kathā Guru Carit* provides a picture of the economic condition of the people and the society as a whole at that time. Various crafts and industries particularly, weaving, rearing of *eri* and *mugā* cocoons, bamboo and cane works, net-making, wood carving, gold mining and pottery were flourishing. Despite that people had to face frequent famines when food became difficult to obtain even by begging or paying money.

The *Guru Carit* gave the information of Śaṅkaradeva's involvement in agriculture, his priority in hygiene, his involvement in weaving industry etc. It also gives a few information regarding economic conditions of the medieval period of the then Assam like mode of transportation for trade, commodities comprising trade, types of taxes charged, classification of businessmen and so on.

The *Guru-Carit-Kathā* provides crucial information on several aspects—social, religious, ethnographic, economic, fiscal, political, administrative, military, artistic,

etc. ranging from the 15th century to the 17th. It gives a detailed picture of economic condition of that time; supplies data in economic matters ranging from professions of the people, currency, business, agricultural produce, crafts to famine and slavery.

2.1: Modern Works on Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement and its Economic Aspects

Although a number of studies have been conducted on Śaṅkaradeva and his contributions in different fields but limited study are done so far regarding his economic aspects.

Bezbaroa was the pioneer of Śaṅkaradeva studies, who established Śaṅkaradeva on the academic field both inside and outside the state. His works *Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva* (1911) and *Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śaṅkaradeva Āru Śrī Mādhavadeva* (biography) (1914) can be considered as a pioneer in reviving the interest in Śaṅkaradeva's works. The books presented a fair picture of his life and preaching of the doctrine of *Eka Śaraṇa* amidst stiff oppositions.

Kakati (1923) in his book *Sankar Dev* provided vital information pertaining to the life and works of Śaṅkaradeva. Role and multidimensional activities of a *Nāmghar* have been discussed. He commented 'the Namghars are something like village parliaments. Their affairs are conducted on a purely democratic principle, every household in the village having an equal voice in the management of affairs'.

Sarma (1955), in his study *Neo-Vaisnavite Movement and the Satra Institutions of Assam* commented that the *Satra* institution was a significant contribution of Śaṅkaradeva to the Assamese society. Besides spreading Vaishnavite religious

activities, the institution had patronized religious literature, popularized the art of classical music and dance, patronized dramatic performance introduced by Śaṅkaradeva, encourage handicrafts and introduced the manuscript painting.

The study done by Neog (1955) *Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Assam: Śaṅkaradeva and His Times* give the details of economic background of Śaṅkaradeva Movement. It vividly mentioned the economic condition of the people, different vocations of the people, agriculture, slavery, weaving, commodities traded, taxes and customs duties, currency, famines and hardships.

Barua (1960) in his book *Śaṅkaradeva: Vaishnava Saint of Assam* comments that the contemporary social life, economic condition and other relevant aspects has much to influence the creative attributes of the saint-scholar.

Acharyya (1966) in the book *The History of Medieval Assam* commented that Śaṅkaradeva preached the doctrine of equality. The subject matter of his literature is a combination of religious philosophy and human psychology.

Das (1979) in the book *Śaṅkarī Sāhityara Bhūmikā* discussed in detailed about the literary works of Śaṅkaradeva. The sources of Śaṅkaradeva's writings, the chronology of his compositions, the beauty of Śaṅkaradeva's compositions, the language used by him were analyzed. In the study, the paintings and dramas of Śaṅkaradeva got special importance.

Gohain (1981) in the book *Kīrttana Puthira Rasa Bicāra* discusses the relation of the *Kīrttana* composed by Śaṅkaradeva with the people of Assam. He comments that the language of *Kīrttana* is very much similar to modern Assamese language. By analyzing feudal social system, *Satra* and *Nāmghar*, tribal society, composition of

Assamese society etc. he concludes that Śaṅkaradeva's ideals and achievements could still be light bearer to Assamese people despite Śaṅkaradeva's relevance in modern times is less than that of Marx, Freud and Einstein.

Barman (1983) in his book *Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva: Kṛti Āru Kṛitva* referred to the prevailing socio-economic condition responsible for the growth of *Bhakti* Movement in India in general and Assam in particular. He also analyzed how Śaṅkaradeva popularized a simple way of devotion to God by avoiding expensive rituals like sacrifice, pilgrimage, elaborate worships etc.

Mahanta (1985) in the work *A Study of Mystical Thoughts of Sri Sri Śaṅkaradeva and Sri Sri Mādhavadeva* opined that Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva's lives and deeds clearly prove that they are significant ethical thinkers and social reformers. On the basis of their own practical experience, they are studying the problem of evil from two standpoints: positive and negative. From the negative standpoint, they try to resist the influence of evils. From the positive standpoint, they formulate rules and regulations and show the path for leading a virtuous life. Hence, it may be stated that while dealing with the problem of evil, they do not show the attitude of the escapists.

Behal (1985) in the work *The Vaishnava Monasteries in Assam in Relation to folk Religion* comments that the study of Vaishnavism in Assam is important in the historical and social sphere as its initiation brought considerable change amongst the Assamese people both on social and cultural level.

Roychoudhury (1985) in his study *Comparative Study of the Thoughts of Śaṅkaradeva and Tulsidasa* observed that during the time of Śaṅkaradeva there was a

big gap between the affluent and the poor. Economically the royalty and its officials were prosperous. But the ordinary subjects like peasants, labourers etc. were unable to free themselves from poverty in spite of hard work. Forced by poverty many people committed crimes, told lies, used deception in business and so on. Śaṅkaradeva made attempts to bridge the growing gap.

The study done by Mahanta (1987) entitled *The Role of Assam Vaisnavism in the Making of Assamese Life and Culture: A Study in an Enduring Tradition* emphasized that the Neo-Vaishnavite Movement influenced greatly the Assamese socio-cultural life. The great bulk of literary works and multiple traditions of fine arts have been also responsible in making a strong and permanent imprint on the Assamese consciousness so much so that during successive centuries another great bulk of such creations by known and unknown devotees or even by persons from outside the Vaishnavite fold, were added to the tradition. And so pervasive has been the influence of the literary and musical tradition that even the most unlettered village man and woman also can sing the most intricate and raga-based devotional songs (*bargīta*) as or recite passages from the scriptures and take part in the *bhāona*.

Nath (1991) in the work *Barpeta as a centre of Assamese Culture, a study in Tradition and Change with special reference to the Satra Institution* studied the various crafts, craftsmen and their relation with the *Satra* with reference to Barpeta *Satra*. The *Satra* encouraged the indigenous artisans in different fields such as carpentry, black smithy, gold smithy, pottery etc.

Bhakat (1991) in his study *The Assamese Vaisnavite Satras of North Bengal and Goalpara* emphasized on the origin and development of *Satra* institution in

Assam, the basic components of a *Satra*, the *Satra* institution in Goalpara and North Bengal particularly their financial and social conditions. Most of the *Satras* have preserved many valuable manuscripts and old rare articles and artifacts such as different images of Gods, traditional articles made of wood, brass and bell metal. Many of the *Satras* have faced financial hardships and in dying condition. Originally each of the *Satras* had sufficient land properties, on which the *Satra* people depended on, but later on, especially after the abolition of the zamindari system the Government had taken away the possession i.e. ownership over the land properties of the *Satras*. As a result, the *Satra bhakats* and other associates faced many problems regarding maintenance and various activities of the *Satra*.

Borah (1993) in the study *Society in Medieval Assam with special reference to Women* commented that the Neo-Vaishnavism had its impact on the status of women and also on the material life of the people. The Vaishnava reformers were advanced agriculturists and artisans. They taught people advanced mode of cultivation. At their initiative, jhuming cultivation was giving way to ploughing and as a result, women lost their main role in cultivation, as ploughing could not be done by them. This had indirectly made them subordinate to man.

Goswami (1994) in the work *The Katha-Guru-Carit: A Critical Study* discussed about the economic condition of the people with agriculture, slavery, industry, trade, ownership of land, etc. as depicted in *Kathā-Guru-Carit*.

Sarma (1996) in his study *Contributions of Srimanta Śaṅkaradeva and His Associates towards education amongst the rural Folk of Assam* stressed the role of Śaṅkaradeva and his associates in spreading education. In the field of education the

Vaishnavite educators contributed in a big way, sometimes openly and often behind the screen. He narrates the educational philosophies of Śaṅkaradeva and his associates Mādhavadeva, Harideva, Damodaradeva in a comparative and comprehensive way to show that they were moral educationists with their own ideas and concepts.

Mahanta (1997) in the study *The Satriya Dances of Assam (A Critical and Analytical Study)* critically investigated the various facets of *Sattriyā* dances in the context of performance, technique, etc. and its continuation. The performance, text and technique of *Sattriyā* dance are handed down from generation to generation in the *Satras* as a ritual.

Khataniar (1998) in his work *Secularism and Neo-Vaiṣṇavism of Śaṅkaradeva* evaluates Śaṅkaradeva's Neo-Vaishnavism on the basis of modern concept of secularism. Śaṅkaradeva through his liberal teaching of his Neo-Vaishnavism brought about a socio-cultural renaissance in Assam in the fifteenth- sixteenth century A.D. He united the different ethnic tribes and races of this region under the banner of his religion of love and devotion and thereby established a new democratic social order. This study also analyzes the financial bases of Vaishnavite institutions.

Barman (1999) in the book *An Unsung Colossus: An Introduction to the Life and Works of Śaṅkaradeva* discussed in detail the immense contribution Śaṅkaradeva made across various areas of society, art, culture, literature etc. The new revolutionary value system which Śaṅkaradeva introduced through his preaching of the philosophy of *Bhakti* has been amply described along with appreciating and critically assessing Śaṅkaradeva's strong stance against casteism and the Brahmanical perceptions about woman.

Das (2003) in his book *Sankaradev and His Gospel to Mankind* opined that Śaṅkaradeva was the founder of an all inclusive Assamese culture and society. It was because of his endeavors that a distinct Assamese religion, language, literature, art and culture as well as a new social norm was born. He brought together the different regions of Assam in a bond of love. The various tribes and religions of Assam were united under the banner of *bhāgavata dharma*.

Bordoloi (2004) in the work *Continuity and Change in the Performance of Bhāonā: A Study with Special Reference to Mātrbhāṣār Bhāonā* discussed about the continuity and change in the performance of *bhāonā*. The history and development and continuation of the *Ankīyā Bhāonās* is closely linked with the establishment of several *Satras* in different parts of Assam. It became an almost obligatory activity of the *Satrādhikār* to write and present a play as a part of his initiation rites. The Vaishnava leaders, following Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva, composed a large number of plays based on the models set by them.

Rajkhowa (2005) in his paper *Śaṅkaradeva- His Contribution to the Economy of His Times* observed that Śaṅkaradeva was a great promoter of cottage industry, of which handloom weaving occupied his unique personal attention. The cottage industry of Assam got a 'Big Push' from Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement as it boosted demand for various kinds of items of religious, theatrical as well as domestic use.

Borkakoti (2007) in his book *Pūrṇāṇna Kathā GuruCarit* made a comparative study of the *Carits* of Śaṅkaradeva. He draws vital conclusions regarding the chronology of various major events associated in the life of Śaṅkaradeva by a detailed comparative study of all the hagiographies, by cross examining historical facts and in

certain cases even by analyzing in the light of some established scientific theories. It provides important information with respect of Śaṅkaradeva's views on economic matters, his involvement in economic activities, his efforts to develop the society etc.

Zaman (2009) in his work *An Anthropological Study on Mask of Natun Chamaguri Satra of Majuli, District Jorhat, Assam* underlines the uses of mask, process of its preparation and detailed history of the uses of mask in Vaiṣṇava faith in Assam. He comments that there is no prehistoric evidence to know about the past of the glorious tradition of mask in Assam. Till recent past the craftsmen of Assam use to make masks from bamboo, clay, earthen pot, gourd shell, pith plant, sheath of areca nut leaf, wood, etc. Though wood and pith plant are used, now a days the mask makers of Assam, particularly the mask makers of *Satras* usually make masks from the bamboo split covered with cotton cloth, clay and cow dung.

Devi (2011) in her study *Asomīyā Vaiṣṇava Sāhityat Nārī* analyzes the position of women in the Vaishnavite Assamese literature as depicted by Śaṅkaradeva and his apostles. She arrived in the conclusion that the medieval Assamese Vaishnavite poets placed the woman in a respectable position. They even added some characters of woman in their compositions absent in the main sources like Inḍumati, Kaṅkāvatī, Kuji, Pārvati, Madana Mañjari, Madana Mantharā, Madhumati, Rohini, Lilāvati, Śaśīprabhā, Sumālini, Hemāsundari etc.

Choudhury (2011) in her work *The Vedanta Philosophy and The Vaishnavism of Assam* commented that non-violence or mercy towards all creatures has been recognized as an objective by Śaṅkaradeva's *EŚHND*. The conduct of right living has been extolled and vices have been depreciated. Besides non-violence or mercy, other

moral qualities like truthfulness, kindness, hospitality, temperance, tolerance, compassion, contentment, patience, purity of heart etc. are also recognized by Śaṅkaradeva. The study further stressed that to create ideal human is the prime motto of Śaṅkaradeva's preaching. His creative humanism adopts a secular ethics which stresses upon the reformation of the individual first and then society can be reformed gradually.

Medhi (2012) in her study *A Literal English Translation of the Plays of Śaṅkaradeva with a Critical Appraisal* opines that to be able to reach out to the common illiterate people, Śaṅkaradeva developed a new form of drama. With their audio-visual affect, these dramas very quickly fascinated and influenced the people. Moreover, the performance of these plays paved the way for development of other art forms and crafts, like singing, dancing and playing musical instruments, preparation of dress, costumes, make-up and other accessories, mask making etc.

Hazarika (2012) in his study *Narowā Group of Sattras and their Contribution to the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite Movement of Assam* commented that the Vaishnava movement gave all round impetus to Assamese way of life, literature, learning and education. He observed that the *Satras* developed a style of painting that moved beyond the borders of Assam, bringing in its wake not only a flow of ideas but also a circulation of painters and material goods such as those needed for painting: colours, dyes, brushes, clay pots for holding dyes and so on. Similarly, the *Satra* institution of Assam was the main centre of wood craft during the pre-colonial period.

Nath (2012) in his work *Satra Society and Culture: Pitambardeva Goswami and History of Garamur Satra* discussed about the administration and economic

management of *Satra* institutions which rapidly changed over time. He observed that *bhakats* of any monastic *Satra* are not agriculturist by profession, and do not go to the field for ploughing. About the act of ploughing, the inmates have a taboo. They consider the cow as a sacred animal, and as ploughing needs use of the animal, they do not like to use them for ploughing.

Kakoti (2013) in her work *Cultural History of the Sattras of Nagaon: A Study with Special Reference to Bardowa* highlighted the economy and *Satra* institutions. The religious activities of the *Satras* establish a trading relation with various groups in the community which stimulate economic growth in the locality. The contributions of *Satras* in respect of land utilization, agricultural development and promotion of cottage industries were also highlighted in the study. The *Satras* are generally practicing an economy for self-support and self-sustenance following the notion that ‘the more the produce the more influential the *Satras* will be’.

Mazindar (2013) in his study *Srimanta Śāṅkaradeva Sangha: A Move for Socio-Political Reform in Assam* discussed about the *Śrīmanta Śāṅkaradeva Sangha* as an economic organization. He particularly mentioned about the system of *Mustidāna* of the organization. Under the system every member household at the grass root unit (*Prāthamika Śākhā*) keeps apart a morsel of rice from a meal and preserves it. The secretary himself or a responsible member of the unit collects the preserved rice from households. The so collected rice sold at a fair price to the members whose economic condition is not sound. The process thereby raises the fund one hand and provides a kind of financial assistance to the poor members.

Das (2013) in the work *A Study on the Education System of the Monastic Satras of Assam* studied about the education system of the *Satras* of Assam. The *Satra* arranges training in *gāyana*, *bāyana* and craft in a non-formal way for its inmates. The study also discussed the management system and economic problems faced by the *Satras*.

Gohain (2014) in his book *Asamīyā Jātīya Jīvanat Mahāpuruṣīyā Paramparā* critically analyzed different aspects of *Bhakti* Movement in all India perspective. He discussed in detail the impact of the Movement on the socio-economic life of Assamese people. The Movement impacted positively the commodity production, monetization of the economy, activities of the artisans etc. It played important role in reducing caste rigidity. However, in the following period some of the leaders of the *Satras* started to work like feudal lords.

Mohanty (2014) in her work *Vaisnavism in Medieval Assam and Odisha- A Comparative Study* made a comparative study of the Vaishnavism in medieval Assam and Odisha. The Assamese Neo-Vaishnavism directly as well as indirectly contributed to the economic welfare of the people. Apart from the economic contributions made through the institutions like *Nāmghaar* and *Satra*, the Assamese Vaishnavism encouraged cottage industry in various ways. Woodcraft, pottery, cane and bamboo works etc. flourished during and after Śaṅkaradeva's time. The patronage given by the Vaishnava saints to these works encouraged cane and bamboo industry, costume designing and making, jewellery making, architecture etc. In comparison to Assam Vaishnavism, Utkaliya Vaishnavism could never make such tremendous economic influence on the land.

Borkakoti (2015) in his book *Srimanta Sankaradeva: a Multi-faceted Genius* argued that Śaṅkaradeva was one of the pioneers of socialism in the entire world. All throughout his life, Śaṅkaradeva fought against feudal elements. Śaṅkaradeva advocated a work culture among his disciples and discouraged the practice of begging. He also observed that the professional attitude of Śaṅkaradeva towards economic activities helped the sporadic growth of commercial capitalism in the region.

Bora (2016) in his study *Contribution of Western Scholars to Śaṅkaradeva Studies* analyzed the contribution of western scholars. He inferred from the discussion that some western scholars are highly attracted by the scholarly works of Śaṅkaradeva which prove undoubtedly that Śaṅkaradeva is still relevant to the present world and the multidimensional contributions of Śaṅkaradeva in the far distant fifteenth –sixteenth century are great heritage in the history of human civilization.

Gupta (2017) in her paper “*Ram-Krishana-Hurry*”—*Śaṅkaradeva’s Neo Vaisnavite Movement in the Eye’s of the Westerners* also discusses about the studies done by western scholars, travelers as well as administrators.

2.2: Śaṅkaradeva’s Study at National Level

Many renowned scholars from outside Assam studied various contributions of Śaṅkaradeva.

Prasad (1973) made a comparative study on the writings of Śaṅkaradeva and Surdāsa for his D. Litt. Degree thesis entitled *Surdāsa Aur Śaṅkaradeva Ke Kṛṣṇa Bhakti Ka Tulanatmaka Adhyayana*.

Murthy (1961) in his study *Vaisnavism of Śaṅkaradeva and Ramanuja: A Comparative Study* commented that *Bhakti* movement had a little over a hundred years of recorded achievement when Śaṅkaradeva started an independent movement of his own.

Raghavan (1965) in his book *The Great Integrators* has drawn the attention at national level to the Assamese poet Śaṅkaradeva by including three of his fine lyrics, two *bargīts* and a *kīrttana-ghoṣā*, and he has taken care to mention him as “a predecessor of Caitanyadeva of Bengal”.

Barma & Jha (1975) edited the drama *Pārijāta-haraṇa* composed by Śaṅkaradeva in Devanagari script with notes both in Maithali and in Hindi. They opined that the tradition of drama in Assamese literature is generally traced back to the early decades of the sixteenth century when Śaṅkaradeva introduced a type of devotional plays in Assamese where the Vaishnavite ideal of devotion and self-surrender to *Viṣṇu* is inculcated. This variety of plays, popularly known as *Aṅkīyā Nāṭa* is the first of its kind in the regional languages of India.

Chatterji (1978) in the paper *The Eka-Sarana Dharma of Śaṅkaradeva: The Great Expression of Assamese Spiritual Outlook* gave a detailed account of *EŚHND* and considered that Śaṅkaradeva was the greatest builder of Assam by bringing in a pure spiritual life, and although circumstances prevented his influences from being spread into other parts of India as religious leader. He is one of the greatest India has produced, and he deserved to be mentioned with Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Basavanna, Ramananda, Kabir, Caitnya, Mira Bai, Gura Nanak and Tulsidas.

Bandopadyay (1984) in her study *Purbabhāratira Vaiṣṇava Āndolana O Sāhitya* presented with evidence that Śaṅkaradeva had emerged much before than Caitanyadeva of Bengal and the meeting of the duo was only a myth. To preach Vaishnavism, Śaṅkaradeva utilized literature and performing arts widely which enriched the medieval Assamese literature. But no such literary contribution is seen in case of Caitanyadeva.

Prasad (1990) in his paper *Śaṅkaradeva: A Trend- Setter in Assam* remarked that though Śaṅkaradeva was neither socio-political philosopher nor an economist, yet his views on those aspects had also been recorded casually in his works. Those views had special significance because being a onetime administrator and head of his family whom he had always to maintain with his earnings.

Dasgupta (1990) in the paper *Saṅkaradeva: The Founder of Assamese Vaiṣṇavism* regretted that if any great religious leader and poet, has received much less attention than he deserves he is Śaṅkaradeva. He accepted that Śaṅkaradeva was one of the finest writers of devotional verse in Indian literature.

Grewal (2011) in the article *Guru Nanak and Srimanta Sankar Dev: A Comparative Study* made a comparative study between Guru Nanak and Śaṅkaradeva. Both of them preached the same thing, held discussions and were impressed by each other and hence came very close. This happened during Nanak's visit to Assam.

2.3: Study done on Śaṅkaradeva at International Level

Fitch, the English traveler, while visiting Koch Kingdom in 16th century observed that the people were lovable towards animal. They kill nothing. They even maintained hospitals for animals.

Hamilton in his *Account of Assam* (compiled 1807-1814) prepared a list of all the major *Satras* existed at that time and classifies them into two groups on the basis of the caste of their *adhikārs*—with the Brahmin and non- Brahmin *Sattrādhikār*. He also commented that the *Sattrādhikārs* were more powerful, several of them having from ten to fifteen thousand men devoted entirely to their service. The post *Sattrādhikār* is hereditary and appointed by the king.

Dalton (1951) discussed in detail about Barpeta *Satra* in the article *Mahāpurushyas, a sect of Vaishnavas in Āsām*. He observed that among the *Gr̥hi* (household) devotees most of them traders as well as cultivators. It is also pointed out that amongst the devotees the portion that can read and write is far greater than amongst any other class of Assamese.

Butler (1855) in his book *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam, During a Residence of Fourteen Years* observed that ‘in Nagaon boatmen of the fishing community merrily setting forth on their expeditions, the movement of their oars accompanied by the frequent chorus of ‘Ram-Krishna-Hurry’. Members belonging to the ‘lower end’ of the so called social spectrum are taking the name of ‘Hurry’ (Hari). Seen in this light, the song represents the fruition of the Saint’s teachings’.

Gait (1905) in his book *A History Of Assam* observed that the Āhom kings, except a few, showed due respect and courtesy to the Vaisnāva Gosāins. They offered patronage to set up *Satras* and made grants and endowments for their maintenance.

Richmond (1974) in the paper *The Vaisnava Drama of Assam* presented a comprehensive picture of Śaṅkaradeva's *Ankīyā Nāṭas* along with his religion and philosophy. She made some suggestions to improve the *Ankīyā Nāṭas* like to prepare theoretical manual of it for proper execution as is done in case of Kutiyattam and Kathakali.

Crill (1992) in the article *Vrindavani Vastra—Figured Silks from Assam* discussed elaborately about the history of origin of the *Vṛndāvanī-Vastra*. By adopting various approaches of scientific investigation, she came to the conclusion that amongst the fifteen numbers of pieces of *Vṛndāvanī-Vastra* preserved in different museums, the piece (AEDTA Collection, Paris) in the Art of Textile, London is the finest and earliest. The period of making of that piece has been determined to be between 1565 and 1569 A.D.

Smith (1994) in the paper *The Wrath of Sita: Sankaradeva's Uttarakanda* observed that Śaṅkaradeva represented the character of Sitā bolder than the original Sitā in Vālmīki's Rāmāyana. Śaṅkaradeva's Sitā did not remain silent as the passive victim but protested against the injustice done to her by her husband. He also highlighted the misinterpretation done to Śaṅkaradeva's ideology and works by a section of scholars and tried to answer the reason behind it.

In another work entitled *Patterns of Indian Hagiography* Smith (2003) compared the life stories and the contributions of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva with other Vaishnava saints of India.

Schoeser (2007) in her book *Silk*, commented on *Vṛndāvanī-Vastra*. She noticed that same kind of works repeated in Assam in the following centuries as well.

Shimray (2014) in the work entitled *The Vrindabani Vastra: A Celestial Delight* commented, the *Vṛndāvanī-Vastra* was woven under the supervision of Śaṅkaradeva. The technique of weaving was unique, a compound weave in which in addition to the normal warp and weft of the ground, a binding warp and pattern weft were used to make the design.

Thus, it is clear that a number of studies have been done so far both at national and international level on Śaṅkaradeva's life, ideology and work. Some scholars studied in brief about the economic background of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement and its impact on economy of Assam. But till now economic aspects of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement are not studied in detail. So, the present study *Śaṅkaradeva's Bhakti Movement and its Impact on the Rural Economy of Assam with Reference to Nagaon and Morigaon Districts* is very relevant.

