

## CHAPTER-VI

### IMPACT OF ŚAṆKARADEVA'S *BHAKTI* MOVEMENT ON THE RURAL ECONOMY OF NAGAON AND MORIGAON DISTRICTS OF ASSAM

#### 6.0: Introduction

Śaṅkaradeva was inspired a lot by the prevailing socio-economic factors to launch the *Bhakti* Movement. Similarly, his reformatory activities affected the economy in different ways. Although Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement was a part of the Great Indian *Bhakti* Movement, it has certain peculiarities like emphasis on economic activity, discarding of begging etc. To spread his religious propaganda *EŚHND*, Śaṅkaradeva extensively used literature, music, dance, drama, painting, architecture etc. At the same time he established religious institutions—*Nāmghar* and *Thān*. The followers of Śaṅkaradeva latter on established the institution *Satra* by slightly modifying the version of *Thān*. All these activities affected the economic development of Assam that time as well as at present. Śaṅkaradeva designed the *Thān* as a hub of economic activities. Within the premise of the *Thān* the devotees engaged themselves in economic activities besides the cultural and religious activities. The disciples were not required to give up their professions. They could carry on with their vocations freely. In fact, devotees of various professions complemented each other. For instance, one devotee Raghupati, a launderer, earned his income within the

premise by washing the cloths of other devotees besides performing religious duties.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, a weaver couple earned about 800 cowries (or ten *anās*) per day by their profession.<sup>2</sup> Regarding the role of *Satra* in economic development of Assam, Rajkhowa remarks “The Satras have been contributing to the economic well-being of the disciples, the followers, their families and the people of the neighbourhood, through promotion of agriculture, horticulture, handicrafts, handlooms, provision stores, infrastructure development, attraction of tourists and devotees and so forth.”<sup>3</sup> In the following periods also the devotees of a *Satra* had to earn money for their sustenance as well as for the management of the institution. They engaged themselves in activities like cultivation, business and cottage industries. “In this way the Sattra institutions become a training ground of some of the most important secular professions such as cultivation, weaving, dairy farming, carpentry, art and crafts, wood carving, bamboo and cane work, mask making, book illustration, painting and other fine arts.”<sup>4</sup>

### **6.1: Impact of Śaṅkaradeva’s *Bhakti* Movement on the Agricultural Economy of Assam.**

During the time of Śaṅkaradeva agriculture was the general occupation of the people. Śaṅkaradeva’s *Bhakti* Movement impacted the agricultural economy of Assam. In the hagiographies it is found that Śaṅkaradeva was involved in cultivation and encouraged others to do so. He regarded cultivation as a noble occupation. Once

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<sup>1</sup> Borkakoti, 2015, p.95

<sup>2</sup> Thakur cited by Gogoi, 2002, p.79

<sup>3</sup> Rajkhowa, 2012, p.91

<sup>4</sup> Khataniar, P. K. (1998). *Secularism and Neo-Vaisnavism of Śaṅkaradeva*. p.6

he gave rupees twenty-five to a meat hawker and advised to go for cultivation. He said to the hawker, “Dear child, it is not right and proper to eke out a living by killing animals however strained one may be. Earn your livelihood by some peaceful means. Give up this bad profession. Here I give you twenty five rupees, take it, go home and purchase a pair of bullocks and other accessories and then take to ploughing.”<sup>5</sup> During the time of Śaṅkaradeva, with the rise of Āhom kingdom the land ownership system gradually changed from community ownership of land to the feudal or semi-feudal system. Śaṅkaradeva tried to hold the system. He fought against feudal elements all along his life.<sup>6</sup> He voluntarily gave up the power of land lordship or *Śīromoṇi Bhūñā*. He distributed his one hundred and twenty bullocks among the farmers before leaving for first pilgrimage.<sup>7</sup> Gogoi also comments “The feudal system with its strong demarcation between different groups, gave rise to peasants’ protest in course of time. The Neo-Vaishnavite movement led by Sri Śaṅkaradeva and a host of his disciples in the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries propagating equality of all sections of people, at least in the spiritual plane, also had a share in the growth of such protests.”<sup>8</sup> The Neo-Vaishnavite movement had also deep impact on the food habit of the people. The devotees started to prefer vegetarian diets over meat.<sup>9</sup> As a result of this changing food habit the production of vegetables got boosted. Again the number of *Satra* institution started to get manifold after Śaṅkaradeva. The kings used to provide royal patronage to some of the *Satras* in the form of allotting huge areas of revenue free agricultural

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<sup>5</sup> Murthy, H.V. S. (1973). *The Lasting Values of Sankaradeva's Teachings*. p.3

<sup>6</sup> Borkakoti, 2015, p.95

<sup>7</sup> Bhuṣaṇa Dvīja, cited in PKGC, p.58

<sup>8</sup> Gogoi, 2002: p.170

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.134

lands, known as *devottara*. Those lands were used for growing crops (paddy, mustard, pulse etc.), vegetables, fruits, bamboos, tree plantation etc. The devotees and their family members cultivated in those lands on a contract of contributing annually a fixed quantity of the total produce to the *Satra*.<sup>10</sup> However, Śaṅkaradeva did not accept any royal patronage for propagating his religion. But in the following period few greedy *Sattrādhikār* started working against the ideology of Śaṅkaradeva. They behaved like feudal lords. They did nothing by themselves, only exploited the cultivator *bhakats*. Those *Sattrādhikār*s accumulated huge amount of personal properties. Based on this fact the critics of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement opined that Śaṅkaradeva had encouraged feudalism. But their claim is against reality.

### 6.1.1: Śaṅkaradeva's Involvement in Cultivation

To feed his family, Śaṅkaradeva made the necessary arrangement where ever he stayed to cultivate the required food-crops in his own field. He never depended on his disciples. Śaṅkaradeva had thirty pairs of bullocks, one hundred twenty cows and manual worker of one hundred households when he was *Śīromoṇi Bhūñā*.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, he had seven pairs of bullock when he stayed at Patbausi.<sup>12</sup> Śaṅkaradeva cultivated paddy, both *Āhu* and *Sāli*<sup>13</sup>; mustard near the lake Yaṅgādhāri at Bharāridubi<sup>14</sup>. He engaged labours for cultivation and Mādhavadeva sometime supervised the agricultural work. Once, Śaṅkaradeva faced the problem of labour shortage to harvest

<sup>10</sup> Rajkhowa, J. P. (2005). *Śaṅkaradeva- His Contribution to the Economy of His Times*. in B. Kalita and H. D. Mazumdar (ed.). *Śrīmananta Śaṅkaradeva Bhārata Bariṣe*. p.66

<sup>11</sup> GCK, p.178

<sup>12</sup> KGC, p.94

<sup>13</sup> GCK, p.208

<sup>14</sup> KGC, p.58

mustard. Then Mādhavadeva intelligently find out the way to solve the problem with the help of people coming to catch fish in the lake (*bīla*). The people were feeling cold and hungry when they came out from water after long hour's involvement in fishing, then Mādhavadeva arranged fire for them. After that he provided food items like pulse, banana, betel-nut etc. to them. The thrilled people wanted to offer fish to Mādhavadeva. But he politely asked them to help by plugging one handful of mustard leaf. The people at once pull out the entire mustard leaves with great enthusiasm. Again, Mādhavadeva corrected the lazy nature of a bullock of Śaṅkaradeva. He wrapped salt with banana leaf and put it on the plough in front of the bullock. Similarly, by knowing the information that Śaṅkaradeva's family had to stay in fast as rice could not be prepared due to insistent rain, Mādhavadeva had innovated the technique of storing boiled paddy (*ukhowā dhān*) above the fireplace in the kitchen. Also Mādhavadeva started the tradition of building store room for fire wood.<sup>15</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva introduced the system of cultivating all the requirements within the campus of one household to make it self-sufficient. Due to his influence the devotees cultivated banana, coconut, mango, betel-vine, areca-nut, vegetables in their houses.<sup>16</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva, in his younger days once helped his teacher to protect the paddy from wild elephant singlehandedly.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> PKGC, pp.162-164

<sup>16</sup> KGC, p.377

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

### 6.1.2: Improved Method of Cultivation

During the time of Śaṅkaradeva, the people of different tribes were practicing the primitive method of cultivation. The *jhum* cultivation was the main source of production where hoe was the chief instrument. They mainly cultivated low yielding *Āhu* rice due to lack of the knowledge about transplanted rice cultivation. But the Bhuyans had a developed agricultural tradition as they migrated to Assam from outside. They were associated with transplanted rice cultivation which was high yielding. So they were able to lead an affluent life than the tribal people which often invited clash. For instance, the Bhuyans had to leave Bordowa due to clash with the Kacharies over agricultural land. Similarly, Śaṅkaradeva left Gangmow because the Dafalas attacked frequently to loot the agricultural crops and killed the cattle. Śaṅkaradeva along with his fellow Bhuyans had to move from one place to another due to political disorder. But wherever Śaṅkaradeva decided to stay, his first priority was whether the place suitable for agriculture or not. Under his leadership the Bhuyans were able to cultivate sufficient produce and their high production attracted the tribal people. “In latter periods when Neo-Vaishnavite religion of Śaṅkaradeva was spread among the tribal people, the religious leaders taught them about improved method of cultivation along with religious advice.”<sup>18</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva's expertise in cultivation could be seen from his advice to Dāmodardeva to reduce his area of cultivation one-third each year so that productivity could be increased. It was an example of intensive cultivation. Instead of cultivating unmanageable larger area if a farmer confined himself in a relatively smaller plot

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<sup>18</sup> Barman, S. (1983). *Śrīmanṭa Śaṅkaradeva: Kṛti Āru Kṛtitva*. p.150

which he could be ploughed and cared properly, the output became manifold. Dāmodardeva tilled his cultivated land with spade only. So he could not properly till 12 *bighās* of land which resulted production of only 5 *mona* per *bighā*. But after Śaṅkaradeva's advice, Dāmodardeva given-up 4 *bighās* in the next year and cultivated 8 *bighās*. He could produce 7 to 8 *mona* per *bighā*. In the following year Dāmodardeva again given-up 4 *bighās* and cultivated only 4 *bighās* by following the advice of Śaṅkaradeva. This time he could produce as many as 15 *mona* per *bighā* because he could concentrate properly in relatively smaller plot of land.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Śaṅkaradeva's advice resulted both saving of time and energy to Dāmodardeva with increased output. "He even guided the farmers to keep a part of land as fallow so that it could get rejuvenated. In fact the productivity of such lands increased."<sup>20</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva encouraged his devotees to produce the products used in *Prasāda* at their home. Following the same path it was later on required that the people belonging to a particular *Nāmghar* had to cultivate in their own village the items used in the *Prasād*. "This led to the introduction and development of various agricultural methods."<sup>21</sup>

### 6.1.3: Demand for Indigenous Agricultural Commodities

Śaṅkaradeva had introduced the system of distributing *Prasāda* after *Nāma-Kīrtana* among the devotees. Also after staging of the dramas *Prasāda* was distributed among the audience. In *Prasāda* Śaṅkaradeva included only locally

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<sup>19</sup> PKGC, p.353

<sup>20</sup> Borkakoti, 2017, p.3

<sup>21</sup> Rahman, M.S. (2015). *Role of Satra & Namghar In The Evolution of Genesis of Assamese Identity*. in International Journal of Social Sciences and Management. Vol-2, issue-2.

available agricultural commodities like pulses (gram, green gram), rice, ginger, sugarcane and other available seasonal fruits like banana, mango, coconut etc. The *Nāma-Kīrttana* was performed daily by Śaṅkaradeva during morning time along with other devotees. Similarly, at that time itself in some particular auspicious occasions the devotees invited Śaṅkaradeva and other devotees to their home to perform *Nāma-Kīrttana*. *Prasāda* was offered thereafter. Thus with the spread of religious and dramatic activities the demand for the products included in the *Prasāda* also increased. To meet the increased demand Śaṅkaradeva encouraged every disciple to cultivate the required products themselves. Following his advice the disciples worked hard for increasing the production of crops and fruits. A healthy competition was grown among the followers who could produce better quality products. They used to bring items like rice, fruits, vegetables, pulses, mustard oil and seeds, ginger, turmeric, black pepper, banana etc. produced by themselves to the place of Śaṅkaradeva. This worked like horticulture exhibition which had positive impact on the production of agricultural commodities. The tradition of offering the best product or the first product cultivated by one in his home to the village *Nāmghar* or to the *bhakats* is still prevailed in various parts of Assam.

Betel leaves (*pāna*) and areca-nuts (*tāmola* or *guwā*) were also used for religious purposes. Śaṅkaradeva himself was fond of betel-nut from his student life as mentioned earlier, and encouraged the devotees to cultivate betel-vine and areca-nut in their houses. The Āhom rulers accepted this model and stressed on maintaining a garden of areca-nut and betel-vine in every household later on. It is worth mentioning here that areca-nut was not produced in Āhom kingdom before the time of



Śaṅkaradeva as evident from the fact that Mādhavadeva had brought areca-nut from Baṇḍukā by boat and sold those in the market of Gaḍgāon.<sup>22</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva's religious activities also increased the demand for rice and hence promoted its cultivation. The devotees were offered to eat the *Komal cāul* (glutinous rice) with curd and molasses by household owner after *Nāma-Kīrttana*. This tradition still continues in different parts of Assam. Similarly, the item *lāḍu* or *pakāmithai* made of rice powder, milk and molasses were also offered in *Prasāda*. Even in some places “before starting the performance of drama all the audiences are entertained with Dahi-chira or Chowd-dahi and betel-nut—this custom of serving tiffins to the audience is not normally noticed elsewhere in India.”<sup>23</sup>

#### 6.1.4: Flood Control

Śaṅkaradeva hereditarily got the technique of constructing dams to prevent flood. His forefather Caṇḍībara constructed a dam with the help of local people on *Māguri Jāna* to prevent flood in Koch Kingdom.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Śaṅkaradeva also constructed a dam on the rivulet *Ṭembuvanī* to protect the agricultural crops (paddy). The flood water of the rivulet washed away the crop every year which caused great loss to thousands of farmers of many villages. The villagers tried to control the rivulet many times but failed. Then they approached Śaṅkaradeva. He organized the villagers, gave them necessary guidance to collect all the required materials like timber, bamboo, rope etc. He instructed them how to fix those materials so that the current of

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<sup>22</sup> KGC, p.50

<sup>23</sup> Banerjee, D. (2005). *Bhaona—A Unique Feature of the Sankari Culture*. in B. Kalita and H. D. Mazumdar (ed.). *Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Bhārata Bariṣe*. p.79

<sup>24</sup> KGC, p.9

the water could be controlled. Thus, under the personal supervision of Śaṅkaradeva, the dam was constructed and thereby thousands of *bighās* of paddy land was saved.<sup>25</sup>

### 6.1.5: Commercialization of Agricultural Commodities

There were sufficient examples in the hagiographies about Śaṅkaradeva's involvement in cultivation of cash crops like mustard, banana etc. Śaṅkaradeva brought sugar to Assam for the first time. In later period, when people got accustomed with using sugar, its manufacture started in Assam. There is reference in the KGC that when Śaṅkaradeva returned from the first pilgrimage he brought some amount of sugar from other parts of India and gave it to his family members to have taste of it. But his uncle Jayanta, without knowing the use, ate the sugar with burnt fish and experienced a bitter taste. Then Śaṅkaradeva advised him to eat with curd.<sup>26</sup> “The work contains certain other references to the use and manufacture of sugar in the Kamrup region in the subsequent period.”<sup>27</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement helped in the expansion the market for agricultural commodities particularly rice. Once, Mādhavadeva had purchased *Śāli* rice from a nearby villager when Śaṅkaradeva had developed stomach disorder after consuming some damp *Āhu* rice.<sup>28</sup> After that, *Śāli* rice gradually getting preference in religious activities. Its market expanded latter on due to increased demand. Similarly, with the spread of *EŚHND*, the demand for other agricultural commodities increased and their market also expanded. Many of the disciples of Śaṅkaradeva were

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<sup>25</sup> Rajkhowa, 2005, p.61

<sup>26</sup> KGC, p.26

<sup>27</sup> Gogoi, 2002, p.80

<sup>28</sup> KGC, p.59

agricultural merchants. In latter period the *Satras* became the hub of agricultural marketing centers.<sup>29</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement increased the demand of mustard oil for lightening lamp (both for religious and cultural activities). Earthen lamps (*cāki*) were lighted with mustard oil and cotton thread (*śalitā*) in front of sacred books before starting *nāma-kīrtana*. With the spread of number of devotees of Śaṅkaradeva the religious activities expands as well as the demand for mustard oil. The dramas (*Ankīya Nāṭs*) composed by Śaṅkaradeva were staged in the nights. To lighten the stage or other place lights (*Ariyā*) fueled with mustard oil were used. It consumes sufficient amount of mustard oil. For instance, to lighten the place where his first play *Cihna Yātra* was staged, nine people were engaged.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Śaṅkaradeva and his prominent disciples were engaged in literary works. They mainly sit at night to write as during daytime they were engaged with *Nāma-Kīrtana*, religious discourse and organizing people for *EŚHND*. For writing they required mustard oil to light the earthen lamp. All these activities increased demand for mustard oil and oil pressing became a profession. A section of the people earned their livelihood by extracting oil from mustard and selling it. "The Katha Guru Charit speaks of such a professional oilman of Kamrup who in his latter life became a Vaishnava."<sup>31</sup> In subsequent periods, the practice of lighting *bor cāki* made of brass metal which contains one hundred and eight numbers of small *cāki* develops in the *Thān*, *Satra* and in some prominent

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<sup>29</sup> Guha, A. (1993). *Vaiṣṇavabādhara Parā Māyāmarīā Bidrohalai*. p.31

<sup>30</sup> PKGC, p.42

<sup>31</sup> Gogoi, 2002, p.146

*Nāmghars*. A significant amount of mustard oil burns in lighting such *cāki*. When the people visit these institutions, they usually offer mustard oil.

Śaṅkaradeva's Neo-Vaishnavite Movement has also impacted the horticulture of Assam. In the religious practices of *EŚHND* flowers were used. Similarly, he drew attention of the people towards flower by depicting beautifully about different varieties of flowers in his compositions *Gajendra Upākyāna* and *Haramohaṇa*. "The leaders of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement taught the people the art of keeping beautiful flower gardens where flowers like jai, juti, malati, champa and others were grown."<sup>32</sup> Later on the Āhom rulers systematically developed the practice of gardening.

Similarly, Śaṅkaradeva had deep knowledge about the value of medicinal plants. He planted such trees in different places where he stayed. He taught the people about the importance in preserving such trees. He praised the trees like—

*hey āma jāma bela bakula  
nāhi upakāri tuhāri tula*

[The fruit trees of *āma*, *jāma*, *bela* and *bakula*. There is no other thing as useful as you.<sup>33</sup>]

*bakula banduli                      kadamba baka tulsi  
tohāsava para upakāri*<sup>34</sup>

[The fruit and flower trees: All you are very useful to others]

At Gangmou, a relative of Śaṅkaradeva, named Harirāma was inflicted with leprosy. He had faced great difficulty to find a place to live and to get food as nobody dared to go near a patient of leprosy in those days. When he sought Śaṅkaradeva's help, the later constructed a house at a place away from habitation but with easy availability of water. Śaṅkaradeva then advised him to plant one hundred Tulasī plants

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.75

<sup>33</sup> Gogoi, T. (2011). *Relevance of Sri Sri Sankardeva in the context of Globalization*.

<sup>34</sup> *Keli Gopāla*

around the new house and spent his time praying to God. He did accordingly and in due course of time he recovered from his disease. After that people started calling him as Tulasīrāma.<sup>35</sup> Gradually, the people started to plant Tulasī in front of their house.

Śaṅkaradeva brought the seeds of *kadama* from Vrindavan. He planted that *kadama* and also *silikhā* at Bardowa. The next generations of that *śilikhā* tree still exists at the premise of the Bardowa *kīrttana ghara*.<sup>36</sup> “At Belaguri, Śaṅkaradeva planted many Bela trees.”<sup>37</sup> Similarly, cultivation of *Sācī* plant was also encouraged. “He even directed the villagers to plant special kinds of trees and herbs so that the required colours and inks could be produced locally.”<sup>38</sup>

#### 6.1.6: Animal Husbandry and Pisciculture

In the religious practices of Śaṅkaradeva’s *EŚHND* milk and other dairy products were used comprehensively. To meet the demand people took the cattle and goat rearing seriously. Different tribes were reluctant to milk products, but when they embraced *EŚHND* they also gradually started having dairy products and started rearing the cattle. “By extensively using curd, milk, butter, pure ghee, cream and other milk products at most of the religious gatherings and also otherwise, Śaṅkaradeva had promoted dairy industry. Every family was engaged in the rearing of cattle, i.e, cows, buffaloes, goats and so forth. Honey was also extensively used and thereby, Bee-keeping as cottage industry was encouraged.”<sup>39</sup> Śaṅkaradeva had expressed that dairy industry could be a profitable one and could lift a person out of poverty. He explained

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<sup>35</sup> Borkakoti, 1995, p.23

<sup>36</sup> PKGC, p.75

<sup>37</sup> Borkakoti, op.cit. p.24

<sup>38</sup> Pathak, D. (2012). *Beautiful Mind of Srimanta Sankaradeva*. p.90

<sup>39</sup> Rajkhowa, 2012, p.220

it to the disciples by citing the examples of Sujan and Gokula. Sujan always kept the place neat and clean by removing cow-dung and cow-urine where the cows were kept. He cultivated himself the fodder grass and feed the cows well, protected them from the bite of mosquitoes and other insects. He milked the cows carefully and got double amount of milk. After selling the milk he was able to earn profit by recovering all the invested money. But Gokula did not care the cows well and so got less amount of milk. In this way he had to suffer losses by losing all the invested money.<sup>40</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva tries to protect the livestock. Sacrificing the domestic animal in the name of religion had adverse impact in those days on agriculture as well as dairy industry. He was against the animal sacrifice. Even he prohibited his disciples to enter in a place where animal sacrifice took place. Through his writing he tried to create awareness among the people about the bad impact of animal sacrifice particularly livestock.

*ghara poṣā paśu yito kare balidāna  
parama ajñānī sito rākṣasa samāna<sup>41</sup>*

[One who sacrifices the domestic animal: Is the most fool person, like a demon.]

Similarly, in the first day of meeting, Śaṅkaradeva argued with Mādhavadeva (he wanted to sacrifice a pair of goat to please goddess Durgā for well-being of his mother) that one who goes to heaven by killing animal then who else would go to hell.

*haṁsa chāga, kāṭi yite rudhire karddama kare  
si yena swarge yāya, narakata no kona pare<sup>42</sup>*

[One who kills duck and goat, plays with their bloods: If he goes to heaven then who else would go to hell?]

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<sup>40</sup> PKGC, p.622

<sup>41</sup> *Bhāg.*, 6<sup>th</sup> Canto, vs.58

<sup>42</sup> KGC, p.52

During Śaṅkaradeva's time the agricultural economy of the region witnessed gradual transformation from tribal to non-tribal method of cultivation. In the later method the livestock play important role. By saving the livestock from killing in the name of religion Śaṅkaradeva also contributed to a large extent the agricultural economy.

Śaṅkaradeva advised his disciple to keep livestock separated from living house on the ground of hygiene.

The Śaṅkarī institutions like *Nāmghar*, *Thān* and *Satras* help in fishing. All these institutions have a pond or more for cultivating fish.

#### **6.1.7: Impacts of Present Religious Activities**

With the spread of *EŚHND*, the institution *Nāmghar* became popular among the people. They established *Nāmghars* in their villages. With the influence of the Vaishnava people, the Non-Vaishnava people also started establishing *Nāmghars* and began performing *nāma-kīrtana*, although they did not give up worshipping other Gods through age old rituals. Another institution *Satra* also spread rapidly after the death of Śaṅkaradeva. With the spread of these institutions the demand for commodities included in the *Prasāda* also expanded. With demonstration effect in the temples of Assam also, the same kind of *Prasāda* was being offered and distributed among the visitors.

Though *Prasāda* is distributed after religious congregation at present also but its composition changes. New goods are added to it. The fruits like apple, grapes, *mousumbi*, cherry, plum, pear, pomegranate, guava, date, cashews etc. are also offered

as *Prasāda* which are not actually produced in Assam. This leads to outflow of crores of rupees from the state which has negatively impacted the economy of Assam. Besides the newly added commodities are costly, which are out of reach to the common people. It causes a vertical division among the disciples between rich and poor which is against Śaṅkaradeva's ideology of egalitarian society. In case of locally available goods also instead of working hard to produce the commodities to be offered to God, the people prefer to buy them from the market.

## **6.2: Impact of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the Cottage Industry of Assam**

Due to Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement the cottage industry of Assam got an incentive to expand. He was directly responsible for the stimulation of different indigenous industries of that time. To propagate his *EŚHND*, Śaṅkaradeva extensively utilized dance, drama, music, painting, literature etc. The increasing activities of the performing arts raised the demand for musical instruments, dresses, artificial weapons, musk, dyeing and other accessories. Similarly, the religious activities made it necessary to utilize various goods produced by cottage industries. The cultural and religious activities gave a big push to the cottage industries by boosting the demand for their products. In this way Śaṅkaradeva ensured a solid foundation for the rural economy of Assam. By linking his religious and cultural activities to the cottage industries he ensured a sustained domestic demand for them. Similarly, he put effort to develop skills required for cottage industries among the fellow people. Regarding Śaṅkaradeva's role in the development of cottage industry Rajkhowa remarked "He



was a great patron of cottage industry, particularly handloom weaving & designing, brass and bell metal, musical instruments, cane and bamboo items, pottery and other handicrafts.”<sup>43</sup>

### 6.2.1: *Bhakti* Movement Boosted the Cottage Industry

Before Śaṅkaradeva, the cottage industries were remained under-developed as the demand for their products limited only to a certain level of local consumption. Lack of demand forced those industries to remain with low- technology and low production level. But the religious activities of Śaṅkaradeva boosted the demand for various products of different cottage industries. “The institution of Thān (Sattrā), Aṅkiyā Nāṭa and Nāmghar that Śaṅkaradeva started, which was vigorously pursued by his great disciples, Mādhavadeva, Dāmodardeva and others gave great fillip to the cane and bamboo industry, costume designing and making, jewellery making, architecture etc.”<sup>44</sup>

For propagating *EŚHND*, Śaṅkaradeva had composed dramas and staged those dramas at different places. For the *bhāona* or enactment of dramas, requirement for different items of cottage industries were aroused. Thus, different items like musical instruments, dresses, masks (*mukhā*), artificial weapons, earthen lamps (*cāki*) and lighting threads (*śalitā*) etc. were used. Later on, with frequent enactment of dramas the order for cottage industries also expanded.

Śaṅkaradeva strictly prohibited idol worship. Instead of putting an idol of God, he introduced the system of keeping a manuscript (first *Gopi-Uddhava-Saṁvāda* and

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<sup>43</sup> Rajkhowa, 2012, p.191

<sup>44</sup> Rajkhowa, 2005, p.64

latter *Guṇamālā*) on the altar (*guru āsana*). The tradition continued but with some additions. The devotees used to decorate the *manikuṭa* with a *gosāi kāpora* (piece of cloth with designs of flowers). The names of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa or some verses from the *Bhāgavata* or *Kīrttana* are woven along with different designs of flower into this *gosāi kāpoar*. This cloth is also used to wrap the holy manuscripts.

### 6.2.2: Industries Affected by *Bhakti* Movement

The industries which were mostly benefited from Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement were bamboo and cane, wood and craft, bell metal, textile, dyeing, mask making, pottery etc.

**Bamboo and Cane:** Śaṅkaradeva's *EŚHND* increased the demand for various bamboo and cane products. Utensils and other items like *pāci*, *kāuli*, *dalā*, *palā*, *kulā*, *dunari*, *kharāhī*, *cālani*, *jāpi*, *kaṭh*, *bicani*, *dhāri*, *pāṭi* etc. were extensively used in the religious activities which boosted their demand. Musical instruments made of bamboo were also used in *Nāma-Kīrttana* or in singing *Bargīta*. Again, in the dramas artificial weapons like *godā*, sword, bow and arrow, spear, shields etc. were used in large extent.

**Wood and Craft:** The religious and cultural activities of Śaṅkaradeva and his followers boosted the demand for the products of wood and craft industry. Products like *guru āsana*, *mayūra āsana*, *garuḍa āsana*, *manikuṭa*, *śimhāsana*, *khātolā*, *thagā*, *perā*, *temā*, *japā*, *safurā*, *tāmuli pīrā*, *bar pīrā* etc. were widely used. Different mythic animals were also prepared from wood and used in the dramas. *Śarai* (made of cane and timber), *khundanā*, *gachā*, *ural*, *ural māri* etc. were of great demand with the

spread of Śaṅkaradeva's religious faith. Again, another musical instrument *dabā* (made of wood and cow leather) used in all the *Satras* and *Nāmghars*.

**Brass and Bell Metal:** This industry was greatly affected by the religious activities of Śaṅkaradeva as it boosted the demand for various items. Śaṅkaradeva had promoted the bell metal industry by using different products of it. He introduced different kinds of *tāla* or cymbals in prayer. Later on, those are universally used in *Nāma-Kīrtana* at *Satra*, at *Nāmghars*, in public ceremonies or even in private households by his followers, which created large demand. Various kinds of *tāla*, made of bell metal, namely, *bhora tāla* or *bara tāla*, *pāti tāla*, *gāyana gowā tāla*, *khuti tāla*, *mañjirā* or *mandirā* were used. Similarly, *kānh* was also used in all Śaṅkarī institutions.

Similarly, special kinds of brass and bell metal articles made by professional craftsmen were extensively used for religious as well as domestic purposes by the *bhakats*. Such type of articles were “ban kanhi (dish with a stand), ban bati (bowl with a stand), borakanhi, dagdagi lota (water jug made of brass), sarai (bota) usually with a stand and with or without cover on top (dome shape), tamar kalah (a kind of big water jug made of copper), thal or plate, ghati (a kind of water jug made of bell metal) etc.”<sup>45</sup>

**Textile:** Śaṅkaradeva had a special interest on textile industry. He had supervised the *Tātīs* when he lived both at Bordowa and Patbausi. After the first pilgrimage although he had given up the responsibility of *Śīromoṇi Bhūñā*, but he retained the responsibility of supervising one hundred weaver families. He did so because he wanted to make some experiments in the weaving industry. “This means that he was aware of the commercial significance of the garment industry for the local economy

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<sup>45</sup> Rajkhowa, 2012, p.218

and hence he offered his personal attention to it. He designed some dresses which latter accepted by the Āhoms as royal dress.”<sup>46</sup> He designed the costumes for different characters in his dramas by taking ingredients from different ethnic tribes like Tiwā, Jaintiā, Sonovāla etc. Out of all the designs the most beautiful one was that of the *Sūtradhāra*. Similarly, under his guidance the weavers of Tāntikuchi made the *Vṛndāvanī-Vastra*. He designed the model, trained up the weavers and also personally supervised the work. After that they became so skillful that in the later period they could weave the replica of the original work even after the death of Śaṅkaradeva. The skill continued to the future generations. Such kind of duplicate *Vṛndāvanī-Vastra* woven by next generation weavers are still preserved in different museums across world along with some pieces of the original one. “This type of silken-weaving artwork was produced up to around 1715 in Assam and its neighborhood and exported to places like Tibet.”<sup>47</sup> Śaṅkaradeva’s *Bhakti* Movement also boosted the sericulture. The silk cloth used in a big way. Most of the dresses of the actors of *Ankīyā Nāṭs* were made of silk. Few were wearing cotton dresses. The entire dress of the *Sūtradhāra* was made of silk. Similarly, the use of *gāmocā* (a kind of towel) continued since the times of Śaṅkaradeva.<sup>48</sup> The followers of Śaṅkaradeva had also patronized sericulture. “The KGC refers to women sericulturists and states how Mādhavadeva taught a village woman the improved technique of rearing cocoons.”<sup>49</sup>

**Dyeing and Painting:** Śaṅkaradeva had used locally available natural colours widely for the purpose of painting and writing. Different colours like *heṅgula*, *hāitāla*, *nīla*,

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<sup>46</sup> Borkakoti, 2015, p.97

<sup>47</sup> Schoeser, M. (2007). *Silk*. p.50

<sup>48</sup> Rajkhowa, 2005, p.68

<sup>49</sup> Borah, 1993, p.208

*agara*, and *geruā māṭi* were prepared and used. Those colours were used in the make-up of the actors, to paint the settings of the dramas, to prepare masks and to colour wooden animals and artificial weapons.

**Mask Making:** In the *Ankīyā Nāṭs* different kinds of masks (*Mukhā*) were used. Similarly, effigies (*cho*) were also used in drama. Goswami elaborated the art of mask making as “To make a mask, at first a framework is made using thin bamboo sticks over which a layer of strips of cloth are wrapped. Then a paste made by mixing sticky soil and cow dung is applied over it. Then the whole structure is wrapped with strips of cloth and the process is repeated. Then colour of different hues is applied. After drying, teeth and hair are added to the mask to impart a dramatic and often fearsome look.”<sup>50</sup>

**Pottery:** Earthen lamps (*cāki*) were of great demand with the spread of religious and literary activities. Other utensils made by potters like *caru*, *malāi* etc. were also used for religious purposes. *Khol* was the most significant contribution of the pottery industry to *Bhakti* Movement of Assam. In latter period *Negerā* or *Nāgārā* is extensively used in *nāma-kīrtana* particularly in lower Assam.

**Sāci-pāt and Mahī Making:** The widespread literary activities of Śaṅkaradeva raised the requirements of *sāci-pāt* (writing material) and *mahī* (ink). Similarly, extensive literary mission which he initiated had necessitated the increasing use of those materials. The *sāci-pāts* were made from the bark or stem of *sāci* plant by cutting it into pieces. Then the pieces were pressed under stone so long as they became flat. After that the flat pieces of *sāci* were dried in the sun for half an hour and then rubbed

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<sup>50</sup> Goswami, 2014, p.239

with stone or burnt brick to make them soft. Then those were rubbed with a paste and coloured. After drying in sun properly, those became ready for writing. Again, the *mahī* (ink) were made from the fluid of *śilikhā*, *kuciyā*, *bondā-kechu* or big ‘earth worm’ and cow urine. The colour of the ink was of a very fast colour and as deep as Chinese black. It was also water-proof and does not fade even after long exposure.<sup>51</sup> The *sāci-pāt* and *mahī* manufacturing was a laborious task. Besides it required a great deal of patience. Several people took as their profession the task of preparing *sāci-pāt* and *mahī*.

**Fireworks:** The hagiographies recorded that Śaṅkaradeva used fireworks in his plays. Indigenously extracted materials like the urine of cows, charcoal and sulfur were used for firework.<sup>52</sup> “The famous firework industry of Barpeta district grew centering the Sattras. There is the tradition since long past of exhibiting fireworks which is called *bākhār-mārā* on the day of *gandha* of *daulotsava* i.e. the first day of the *daulotsava* of the Barpeta group of Sattras.”<sup>53</sup>

### 6.2.3: Benefits to the People Associated with the Cottage Industries

Due to the increased demand from Śaṅkaradeva’s *EŚHND*, the cottage industries got incentive to expand. “The ‘Big Push’ that Śaṅkaradeva gave to the growth of cottage industry, by making various kinds of items of religious, theatrical as well as domestic use, through the staging of ‘Chihna Yatra’ – continued in the later

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<sup>51</sup> Neog, 2008, pp.301-303

<sup>52</sup> Borkakoti, 2017, p.2

<sup>53</sup> Nath, U. (1991). *Barpeta as a centre of Assamese Culture, a study in Tradition and Change with special reference to the Satra Institution.* p.503

centuries, and the industry not only survives, but flourishes presently also.”<sup>54</sup> All the musical instruments were locally produced. With the increasing demand for those instruments local artisan’s opportunity of employment and income also expanded. The religious activities of *EŚHND* raised the demand for bamboo and cane products. The income of the people associated with that profession had augmented. The KGC refers that one old couple of Dauki village regularly supplied bamboo products to one *Satra*. Before doing that they faced difficulty in selling and had to spend the entire day to sell their products as market was very limited among the nearby villages.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the *Nāmghars* and *Satras* helped the local artisans. These institutions even provided financial assistance to them. There were close relation among artisans, businessmen and *Satras*.<sup>56</sup> The increased demand for make-up requirements with the spread of dramatic activities promoted economic activities to those who prepared the different colours. The most important point is that the professional groups who previously looked down upon by the society were got equal status in Śaṅkaradeva’s *EŚHND*. It heightened their self confidence which ultimately enhanced their productivity.

Śaṅkaradeva maintained a professional relationship with different artisans. With the help of the artisans he constructed different articles. The most important one was the musical instrument *Khol* which he prepared with the help of artisan from Kapilī Mukha by providing them the design and necessary guidance. With the help of the carpenters he materialized his design of the *Guru Āsana* and *Sarāi*. The craftsmen were economically benefitted with the spread of Śaṅkaradeva’s *Bhakti* Movement. But

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<sup>54</sup> Rajkhowa, 2005, p.62

<sup>55</sup> KGC, p.259

<sup>56</sup> Guha, 1993, p.17

those craftsmen were not his disciples and most of them did not embrace *EŚHND* during Śaṅkaradeva's time. For instance, the head weaver of the *Vṛndāvanī-Vastra*, Gopāla initiated to *EŚHND* only after Śaṅkaradeva's death. Due to close relations between the artisans and the *Satras*, in latter period some craftsmen were staying permanently in the premises of the *Satra*. They were known as *Hari-bhakats* or disciple of Hari. They performed *Nāma-Kīrtana* but mainly engaged themselves in many economic activities like making *manikuta*, *simhāsana*, *khātola*, *perā*, *tāmuli pīrā*, *bar pīrā* and *pāti* etc. Some were also engaged in ivory products.

Śaṅkaradeva's literary mission was able to create interest among the people towards manuscripts. To read and memorize the verses they required a copy of the manuscripts. Thus, manuscript preparation turned into a vibrant cottage industry and provided livelihood directly to the *lekhāru* or copier. At the same time, the increasing literary activities provided livelihood indirectly to many people who were engaged in preparing and supplying *sāci-pāt*, *mahī* and other painting materials. Śaṅkaradeva himself procured those writing materials from different villages. "As Śaṅkaradeva required large supplies of *sāci-pāt*, he once asked Mādhava-dalai to bring them from Dakṣiṇakula. Ink and painting materials like *heṅgul*, *hātāl*, indigo and chalk were also to be found in Dakṣiṇakula in sufficient quantities."<sup>57</sup>

#### 6.2.4: Still Surviving Industries in Nagaon and Morigaon Districts

The cottage industries which were boosted from the spread of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement still survive, but now have to face tough competition with machine

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<sup>57</sup> Neog, 2008, p.302



made products coming outside the state. At present days also the followers of Śaṅkaradeva's *EŚHND* used the products of cottage industry in large scale. The surviving industries in the districts of Nagaon and Morigaon are bamboo and cane, handloom, wood-carving, pottery, *sāci-pāt* and *mahī* making, mask making, dyeing and painting.

Bamboo and cane products, such as, *dalā*, *pāci*, *kharāhī*, *cālanī*, *dhāri* etc. are produced in the villages of the two districts. The Ahatguri and Thekeraguri areas of the two districts now become the hub of marketing for bamboo and cane products. Ganesh Das, a businessman of Ahatguri revealed that on his shop around two hundred families of Phulaguri survive by supplying various products.

*Kath* was invented by Mādhavadeva. It was made of dried branch of banana leaves. Śaṅkaradeva liked the *Kath* very much as it very comfortable and useful for long sitting sessions. He advised the disciples to use *Kath* in the prayer cum discussion sessions. With a very short period of time the *Kath* became popular among the people. At present also the *Kath* is an integral part both for Śaṅkarī and non-Śaṅkarī religious activities. Besides in institutions like *Nāmghar*, *Thān* and *Satra*, in domestic congregations use of *Kath* is widespread. Barchila, Chaparmukh and Phulaguri were famous for *Kath* and *pāṭi* making (data revealed by Nilamoni Phukan of Morigaon Town during interview). Still the tradition continues in those areas but with a declining trend.

Textile handloom in Nagaon and Morigaon districts still benefitted from *EŚHND* as *gāmocā*, *gosāi-kāpor*, cloths made of *pāṭ* and *mugā*, *erī-cādar* are of great demand. *Gāmochā* making provides self-employment to thousands of rural women

today. It contributed their empowerment. The most interesting thing is that the money which the rural women are able to earn from selling of *Gāmoḥā* is spent on the education of their children. Jajari and Kachuwa are two famous villages for textile. Particularly, Kachuwa village made tremendous progress in the last four years in textile. The male population of the village switched to weaving from agriculture. As a Muslim dominated village, the people are non follower of *EŚHND* but produce *gāmocā*, *celeṅg*, *curiyā*, *gosāi kāpor* etc. and supply those to Upper Assam besides meeting the local needs of the two districts. Kachem Ali, who owns 30 *śāla* (handloom), does wholesale business in *gāmocā*. The wholesale price of the *gāmocā* ranges from Rs. 40 to Rs. 350. In weaving the best quality *gāmocā*, i.e., *pāt gāmocā* the weaver got Rs.110 per *gāmocā*. Ali revealed that after meeting all the expenditure he is able to save one lakh rupees per annum from his business. Similarly, Aminul Ahmed (owns 25 *śāla*) revealed that he went to Suwalkuchi to got train in weaving and came back four years ago and started his business in the villages. Jahangir Hussain (owns 20 *śāla*) and Ohid Rahman(owns 13 *śāla*) revealed that the textile industry in their villages provided employment opportunities to the youth of the village which put a check in migration to other state in search of employment.

*Sāci-pāt* and *mahī* making survives in different parts of the two districts. Chitraranjan Bora, President of Kalong Kala Kendra, a Registered Organization of Puranigudam revealed that his organization provided direct employment to twelve people through *Sāci-pāt* and *mahī* making, painting, wood carving and mask making. Every year the organization provided training to at least ten youth in the above mentioned skills. Bora, himself cultivated all the required plants at his own home to

make *Sāci-pāt* and *mahī*. The ingredients of dyeing were collected from the market. The *heñula* (cost rupees 18,000 per kg.) and *hāitāla* (cost rupees 6,000 per kg.) are coming from Rajasthan and Gujarat. The *nīla* (rupees 60 per kg.) and *kharimāṭi* are locally available. Bora revealed that depending on the size of the *Sāci-pāt*, mask and *cho* the prices are different. He usually sold a piece of *Sāci-pāt* (27 cm x 6.5 cm) with painting using Śāṅkarī technique Rs.8,000—Rs. 10,000. His main customers were the foreigners. At Delhi Hat, he sold small masks of Hanuman at Rs. 4000 and *cho* at Rs.80,000. According to him self sufficiency is possible through this cottage industry.

Pottery industry is still benefited from Śāṅkaradeva's *EŚHND*. Of total 267 Hira villages of Assam, 18.7 % belong to Morigaon district. The famous centre of pottery of the district is Dharamtul.

Last but not the least, dress making for *bhāonā* survives in the two districts. Places like Bardowa, Bhalukmari, Jamugurihat, Dhing, Puranigudam etc. in Nagaon district and Baghara, Patrabori, Gasarbori etc. in Morigaon district, dress making as a cottage industry plays an important role.

### **6.3: Impact of Śāṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the Economic Benefits of Arts, Paintings, Culture etc. vis-à-vis the Economy**

Śāṅkaradeva used the medium of literature, music, dance, drama, painting to propagate his *EŚHND*. Besides propagation he also emphasized on the amusements of the people for their well being and mental development. For that reason the dramas, music and verses composed by Śāṅkaradeva easily attracted the people. Therefore, the

cultural activities expanded and had impacted the economy. Banerjee recognized the literary erudition of Śaṅkaradeva as

His dramas such as Kaliyadaman, Patniprasad, Keligopal, Rukminiharan, Bargeets (songs), Bhattimas (psalms), his translation of the Bhagabat, his translation of Ramayana, his adoption of the Sanskrit rhymes and metres, his graceful style, his beautiful language particularly in Brajabuli, his deep erudition, his naive treatment of the subject, mark him out as one of the outstanding Vaishnava poets of the era and of the same calibre as Chandidas and Vidyapati. Even as a Sanskrit poet his excellence is almost on a par with famous classical poets. It has the usual four elements, song, dance, dialogue and musical appliances. His works show a literary style and excellence of their own and a sense of universalism and equality unreached in many literatures of the same period.<sup>58</sup>

### 6.3.1: Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement and Performing Arts

The Oxford English Dictionary defines performing arts as the 'forms of creative activity that are performed in front of an audience, such as drama, music and dance'. The main objective of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement was to increase the welfare of the society. So, he required that his ideas should reach to the common man because without mass involvement his reformative activities would not bring desired result. Therefore, to attract the common illiterate masses to his faith, Śaṅkaradeva adopted the weapon of performing art.

#### **Drama:**

Śaṅkaradeva was able to attract the people to his *EŚHND* through dramatic performances. Similarly, he could easily propagate his religious philosophy that 'Lord Kṛṣṇa is the supreme' with the help of drama. It is already mentioned that he got the first batch of disciple just after the completion of the performance of his first drama, *Cihna-yātrā*. Thus, Śaṅkaradeva innovated that drama could be used as a medium of

<sup>58</sup> Banerjee, S. (1951). *Mahapurush Śaṅkaradeva: The Man and the Master*. p.188

religious preaching. “In this respect he was a pioneer all over the world. Nobody had used drama as a mode of campaign before him. It was he, who introduced the use of drop scene.”<sup>59</sup> Śaṅkaradeva used scenery (*citra-paṭa*) to represent the subject-matter of the play in his drama about 100 years earlier than in Europe.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, “About a century before Shakespeare, Śaṅkaradeva used the characters of clowns or jokers quite often in his Bhaona and they are known as Bahuas.”<sup>61</sup> Ojah also comments “Srimanta Sankardev was the first author in India to write a drama in local language.”<sup>62</sup> To develop his dramas Śaṅkaradeva heavily depended on local elements of folk entertainments like *putulā nāc*, *dhūliyā yātra*, *ojāpāli* and various dances of different ethnic tribes. Although Śaṅkaradeva followed the tradition of Sanskrit drama yet he made some innovations in his dramas. For instance, Śaṅkaradeva utilized the role of *Sūtradhāra* in a different way than the Sanskrit drama. The tasks of the *Sūtradhāra* in *Aṅkīyā Nāṭs* are multipurpose. The *Sūtradhāra* in Śaṅkaradeva’s plays remains on the stage from the beginning to end in contrast of Sanskrit drama where the *Sūtradhāra* disappears after introducing the subject matter of the play to the audience. He also introduced the *shānta-rasa* in his plays. Śaṅkaradeva used extensively the scenes like eating, wedding, war, killing etc. which were prohibited in Sanskrit drama. Similarly, another remarkable experiment made by him was the introduction of ‘child actors’ in his play *Patnī-prasāda*.

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<sup>59</sup> Borkakoti, 1995, p.12

<sup>60</sup> Medhi, 1997, p.xxxiii

<sup>61</sup> Banerjee, 2005, p.76

<sup>62</sup> Ojah, R. (2005). *Sankardeva—A Short Profile*. in B. Kalita and H. D. Mazumdar (ed.). Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Bhārata Bariṣe. p.45

Under the personal initiative of Śaṅkaradeva, Assamese drama had a formal birth. Śaṅkaradeva had composed as many as ten plays. They were— (1) *Cihna-yātrā* (2) *Patnī-prasāda* (3) *Kālia-damana* (4) *Keli-gopāla* (5) *Rukminī-haraṇa* (6) *Pārijāta-haraṇa* (7) *Janma-yātrā* (8) *Gopī-Uddhava-sambāda* (9) *Kaṇsa-badha* and (10) *Rāma-vijaya*. But at present only six plays namely *Patnī-prasāda*, *Kālia-damana*, *Keli-gopāla*, *Rukminī-haraṇa*, *Pārijāta-haraṇa* and *Rāma-vijaya* are available. *Gopī-Uddhava-sambāda* was damaged in fire. *Janma-yātrā* and *Kaṇsa-badha* were lost in later period.<sup>63</sup> The plays of Śaṅkaradeva are popularly known as *Aṅkīyā Nāṭa* or one act play and their staging is known as *Bhāonā*. “They were called Aṅkīyā Nāṭa (play using drawings) because of extensive use of Aṅkan (drawing).”<sup>64</sup> However, instead of *Aṅkīyā*, Śaṅkaradeva used *Yātra*, *Nāṭaka* or *Nṛtya* to denote plays.<sup>65</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva created a favourable environment for dramas in Assam. His followers including Mādhavadeva composed a number of dramas known as *Jhumurā* (Although there are nine dramas in his name but so far, five dramas of Madhavadeva had been accepted as his original without any controversy). In fact, it became a compulsory custom to compose at least one drama before one adorned the post as *sattrādhikār*. The dramas both composed by Śaṅkaradeva and his followers were enacted frequently. As a result the demand for different accessories used in the dramas was increased. Some people got the livelihood by supplying those articles. The heritage of Śaṅkarī drama gave rise in modern time to ‘*Yātra Party*’ as well as professional mobile theatre.

<sup>63</sup> PKGC, p.171

<sup>64</sup> Borkakoti, 2015, p.63

<sup>65</sup> Bharali, S. (2013). *Aṅkīyā-nāṭ and the Indigenous Art-forms*. in S. C. Bora and Biswajit Kalita (ed.), *Śaṅkaradeva Studies- Selected Articles from Mahapurusa Jyoti*. p.157

### Music:

Śaṅkaradeva like other leaders of *Bhakti* Movement used music effectively to propagate his *EŚHND*. Through music he was not only able to infuse the doctrine of *Bhakti* in the minds of common people but also able to attract few renowned persons to his faith. After listening a *Bargīta* '*pāmara mana, rāma caraṇe citta dehu*' sung by his wife Kamalapriya, Cilārāi became disciple of Śaṅkaradeva.<sup>66</sup> Again, Bhavānanda Sāud or Ṭhākura Ātā was so impressed after listening the *Bargīta* '*mana meri rāma caraṇehi lāgu*' sung by some *bhakats* while collecting firewood on the bank of river Brahmaputra that he at once inquired about the composer of the song, collected the address of Śaṅkaradeva and went to meet him.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the Koch king Naranārāyaṇa had calm down after hearing the song in the mouth of Śaṅkaradeva. The music composed by Śaṅkaradeva were classified into— *Bargīta*, *Bhaṭimā*, *Kīrttana-ghoṣā* and *Aṅkaar-gīta*. Śaṅkaradeva had composed altogether two hundred and forty *Bargītas*, but only thirty four is available at present. A *bhaṭimā* is a song of eulogy of the God or a person of high rank. Śaṅkaradeva composed three types of *bhaṭimās*-- *nāṭa-bhaṭimā* (songs in drama), *deva-bhaṭimā* (in praise of God), *rāja-bhaṭimā* (in praise of king). Sankardeva composed twenty-two *bhaṭimās*.<sup>68</sup> He composed two *rāja-bhaṭimās*, namely, *jaya jaya malla nṛpati rasajāna* and *hāsi sabhāsada karu vahu thira* in praise of king Naranārāyaṇa's deep knowledge as well as his physical beauty and strength. Based on this fact, some critics accused Śaṅkaradeva of advocating the

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<sup>66</sup> KGC, p.85

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p.69

<sup>68</sup> Das, K. (2013). *The Bargīts and Bhaṭimās of Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva*. in S. C. Bora and Biswajit Kalita (ed.), *Śaṅkaradeva Studies- Selected Articles from Mahapurusa Jyoti*, pp.132-133

feudal monarchy. However, this charge is against the truth. It is already mentioned how Śaṅkaradeva fought against feudal elements throughout his life. He voluntarily gave up land lordship and distributed some properties including cows among needy people before went to pilgrimage. Similarly, he tried to develop democratic elements among the disciples. If Śaṅkaradeva wanted to be an agent of feudal monarch, he could have praised the Ahom kings instead of fleeing from their territory.

The *Aṅkar-gīta* or *Aṅkīyā gīta* are the songs used in the dramas of Śaṅkaradeva. Śaṅkaradeva have composed 128 songs in his six dramas.<sup>69</sup> The *Kīrttana-ghoṣās* are sung as prayer by the devotees. “The Kīrttana-ghoṣā is a collection of 26 poems having 2261 couplets.”<sup>70</sup> To make the music lively and more attractive, Śaṅkaradeva used different instruments including *khol* and cymbals. With the spread and popularity of Śaṅkaradeva’s music the income of the people associated with making of instruments expanded. At the same time, the people used to sing the songs composed by Śaṅkaradeva while they were working. It increased their concentration in work and they did not feel the pain of hard labour. It increased their productivity which ultimately impacted the economy positively.

Besides, the singing of *Kīrttana-ghoṣās* had its impact on the health of the devotees and their productivities. In the congregation the *ghoṣā* is begin with a very slow manner and then gradually the rhythm increases and ends at a very high note. Proportionately the clap of the people also changes. This causes tremendous blood circulation on the bodies of the participants besides mental relaxation.

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<sup>69</sup> Gayan, 2014, p.87

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p.87



### Dance:

Śaṅkaradeva introduced a new form of dance composed by him in his first play *Cihna-yātrā*. In other dramas also dances were used in extensive but a systematic way. Following his step Mādhavadeva and other disciples also composed some gestures of dance. All those dance forms were preserved in the *Satras* for centuries with some additions. Accordingly those dances are called Sattrīyā dance. But some latter additions violate Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy and runs counter to ideology of the *Eka Śaraṇa*.<sup>71</sup> Śaṅkaradeva not only composed the dances for his plays but also trained up the dancers (*naṭuā*).<sup>72</sup> He used mainly three dominant types of dances in the dramas—*Sūtradhārar Nāca*, *Kṛṣṇa Nāca*, *Gopi Nāca*. Besides those some more dances like *Dhemālir nāca*, *Cālī-nāca*, *Rāsa-nṛtya*, *Yudhara nāca*, *Bhāwarīyār nāca* were also seen in *Ankīyā Nāṭs*.<sup>73</sup> While creating his own school of dance, Śaṅkaradeva heavily depended upon the indigenous dance forms. By borrowing some postures from the indigenous sources like *Ojāpālī*, *Putalā-nāca* and folk dances of different ethnic tribes, Śaṅkaradeva developed his form of dance. While doing so he also followed the grammar of Indian classical dance.<sup>74</sup> When Śaṅkaradeva's dance form became popular and the followers began to practice the dance the demand for dresses and ornaments boosted. It affected the local economy.

<sup>71</sup> Borkakoti, S. K. (2016). *Genesis Of The Classical Dance Form Created By Srimanta Śaṅkaradeva*.

<sup>72</sup> GC, p.300

<sup>73</sup> Neog, 2008, p.294

<sup>74</sup> Borkakoti, 2015, p.100

### 6.3.2: Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement and Paintings

Śaṅkaradeva also utilized visual art to spread his faith. It is already stated that in his plays there were extensive use of *Aṅkan* (drawing). "In his first drama *Cihna-yatra*, he himself painted on a large canvas, scenes of Vaikuntha to infuse into the minds of the people a sense of religious consciousness, on the one hand, and a sense of devoted service for the progress of humanity, on the other. Thus he used paintings as a popular means of communication that could be understood by the illiterate and even children."<sup>75</sup> While performing *Cihna Yātrā*, Śaṅkaradeva painted himself all the accessories used. He painted the *citra-paṭs* (scenery) of seven *Vaikuṇṭhas* (heavens) on *tulā-pāt* with *heṇul* and *hāitāl*. Similarly, in preparing masks (*mukhā*), costumes (*co*) and drop scene (*pāmari bastra*) various techniques of painting were used. The techniques had the originality as "no specimen of paintings done in Assam anterior to the time of Śaṅkaradeva is available."<sup>76</sup> In later period Śaṅkaradeva's technique of painting was used by the professional artists to paint the *guru āsana*, in decoration of *kīrtanghars* and in the make-up of actors etc. Similarly, few people were also engaged in preparing various colours like blue, red and yellow by using raw materials of *heṇula*, *hāitāla*, *śilikhā*, *nīla*, *kharimāṭi* etc.

By utilizing the technique of painting that Śaṅkaradeva started, his followers began to illustrate the books composed by him. "Śaṅkaradeva's paintings on Tulapat perhaps worked as a source of great inspiration for many of the devotees and artists in the later years to take up the work of illumination of manuscripts on the Saci folios."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Murthy, 1973

<sup>76</sup> Neog, 2008, p.303

<sup>77</sup> Mahanta, P. J. (2007). *The Śaṅkaradeva Movement: Its Cultural Horizons*. p.239

The *Citra-Bhāgavata* (dated 1539 A.D.) found in Bāli-Satra in Nowgaon district is the famous example of such kind of work. In subsequent periods besides the *Bhāgavata* other scriptures like the *Purāṇa*, *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata* etc. were also illustrated. Those manuscripts which had illustrated borders were popularly known as *latā-katā-puthi*. With the spread of *Satras* and *nāmghars* requirements for illustrated manuscripts expanded as well as the demand for painters.

The skilled and artistic penmanship of the scribes was so much on demand that one scribe usually specialized in the copying of one particular book instead of becoming a free-lancer in his profession. The skill of a painter was generally requisitioned to decorate the labors of penmanship. The scribe was sometimes a painter himself and, if not, a regular painter supplemented the work of the transcriber by sketches on spaces left vacant for that purpose.<sup>78</sup>

### 6.3.3: Śaṅkarī Tradition and Livelihood

The economy of Assam was affected by the *Bhakti* Movement of Śaṅkaradeva in a number of ways.

Śaṅkaradeva utilized the cultural activities extensively to attract the people to his faith. Through the cultural activities he incorporated deep knowledge of the scriptures into the minds of the common illiterate masses. Thus, those activities had a great educational value as they were at par with the contents which were taught in the educational institutions in those days. Moreover, the entertainment provided by the cultural activities helped the people to reduce their stresses. At that time the people had to face lots of hardships due to socio-political turmoil. In such a situation, Śaṅkaradeva's cultural activities provided the much needed impetus of life and thereby influenced their economic productivity. Some people also got the opportunity to earn

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<sup>78</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.tributetosankaradeva.org>

their livelihood from the cultural legacy of Śaṅkaradeva. Professions like *pāthaka*, *nāma-lagovā*, *medhi*, *bharālī* etc. were emerged. Even during the time of Śaṅkaradeva itself, a person named Rasāi, earned his livelihood by singing verses of *Bhāgavata* from household to household in the villages.<sup>79</sup>

A lot of people such as painters, dressmakers, hairdressers, prompters, light men, musicians and many others were directly and indirectly connected with the enactment of a play.<sup>80</sup> All of them were economically benefited with the spread of dramatic performances. “The stage acting of the *Nats* provided livelihood, employment and income to the professional players, even in those days.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, Śaṅkaradeva’s plays had a great economic implication. It provided livelihood to the people associated paper making, dress and costume making, musical instrument and mask making.

It is for Ankiya Nat and drama the people of Assam started learning the art of making Sanchipat and Tulapat. For acting, a group of people started making drums and dresses, masks etc. which enhanced their professional skills. Bhaorias now had to be literate as they had to prepare and memorize the dialogues and thus through Bhaona virtually a literacy mission started in Assam. As the drama were staged at different places, a group of copy-writers came into existence.<sup>82</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva’s unique religious practice of worshiping scripture in the altar initiated an economic resurgence. That practice was followed by each and every *Satra* and *Nāmghar* in the following periods. Even the domestic household used to follow that practice. As a result, the demand for the manuscripts kept on rising. Consequently, two new professional groups namely, *Lekhāru* and *Khanikara* were emerged. The

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<sup>79</sup> PKGC, p.134

<sup>80</sup> Pathak, 2012, p.35

<sup>81</sup> Rajkhowa, 2005, p.60

<sup>82</sup> Chaliha, cited by Banerjee, 2005, p.80

*Lekhāru* (professional copier) did copy of the manuscripts from the original one for money. With the rising popularity of Śaṅkaradeva's literary compositions, in following periods the demand for the activities of the *Lekhāru* also increased. Similarly, the professional *Khanikars* contributed sculptural and architectural creations of the *Nāmghar* and *Satra*. In latter period people used to decorate their *Nāmghars*. They engaged the *Khanikars* in designing and making of different scenes, statues, pictures etc. on the pillars, walls and ceiling of the *Nāmghar* and *Satra*. They were also employed to design and decorate the *Toraṇas* (huge arch type gates) in front of a 'Nāmghar' or a *Satra*. All those activities generated employment and income to the *Khanikar*, their assistants and the labourers.<sup>83</sup> The *Satras* used to patronize and support directly the *Khanikars*. Those institutions required different articles for dramatic performances, besides decoration of the buildings. "The bhāonā performances gave birth to a class of artisans who were specialised in making mask (*mukhā*) of various kinds, effigies (*cho*) of bears, birds, lion etc. The class of people professionally devoted to such type of works is known as *Khanikar* or *Sūtār*."<sup>84</sup>

Thus Śaṅkaradeva through his innovative creations in the field of dance, drama, music and painting not only satisfied the appetite for the senses of the people, but also provided them physical food through employment opportunities.

#### **6.3.4: Present Impact of Śaṅkarī Tradition on the Economy of Assam**

The cultural legacy of Śaṅkaradeva is so appealing that it attracts the people of Brahmaputra valley irrespective of religion. The people follow his cultural tradition

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<sup>83</sup> Rajkhowa, 2012, p.222

<sup>84</sup> Nath, 1991, p.490

even if they do not follow his *EŚHND*. *Nāmghar* is one institution which is established by villagers in their villages, does not matter whether they follow *EŚHND* or not. The villagers gather in the *Nāmghars* at regular interval, discuss among themselves and take the decision regarding the development of their villages. In some places the common property of the villages like ponds, wet lands, barren lands, grazing lands etc. were registered in the name of village *Nāmghar*. These properties are either leased out or used for co-operative cultivation and the annual proceeds are shared equally among the villagers.

Śaṅkarī dance, music and painting are able to earn greater economic importance in present times. These art forms are getting commercialization. Under private venture many schools and colleges are coming up on Śaṅkarī music, dance and painting. A significant number of persons are directly getting employment there. Now it becomes almost customary that a *Bargīt* is sung before start of any formal meeting, conferences etc. Śaṅkarī dance is also performed by commercial artists at various occasions. Śaṅkarī painting is also got commercial touch and the artists could fetch good amount from selling paintings drawn by using the techniques developed by Śaṅkaradeva. With this commercialization, some people are availing economic benefits indirectly by providing dresses, musical instruments, ornaments and other accessories.

The Śaṅkarī tradition influences the economy of Assam via festivals. Two most popular festivals—*holi* and *rāsa* are directly derived from the cultural legacy of Śaṅkaradeva. In the neo-Vaishnavite institutions these two festivals are celebrated with great enthusiasm. The *holi* festival lasts two to five days. Business activities

become manifolds. All items—from sweet to cloth, utensils to jewelers are bought and sold in the temporary markets developed around a *Thān* or a *Satra* during the festival. Although the *rāsa* festival observed throughout Assam but the way of celebration is different. In upper Assam, people mainly used to dance (*rāsa nṛtya*) whereas in lower Assam the earthen statue dominates the festival. In the latter case business activities dominates the cultural activities. Similarly, the followers of Śaṅkaradeva now used to celebrate *janmāstamī*, *Śaṅkara janmotsava* with extravaganza. Business fair like situation occurs from where local people could earn some money as additional income.

Tourism sector of Assam has greater linkage with Śaṅkarī cultural heritage. Neo-Vaishnavite institutions like *Satra*, *Thān* and *Nāmghar* become the main attraction of tourists both domestic and foreign. For example, Majuli is the tourist hub of Assam where quite a large number of foreign tourists visited annually attracted by the *Satra* institution. The local people also visited *Satra*, *Thān* and *Nāmghar* institutions regularly. On the basis of the demand created by those people the business which concentrates round the institutions survives.

In the line of Śaṅkaradeva's *Aṅkīyā Nāṭ*, his followers used to compose dramas. They compose dramas by taking stories from *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇa* etc. Such dramas are enacted along with *Aṅkīyā Nāṭ* on certain festivals and occasions like *holi*, *rāsa*, anniversary of Śaṅkaradeva, Mādhavadeva and other prominent disciples across Assam. Now these kinds of dramas are popularly known as *bhāonā* although it is not right. Enactment of the dramas at large scale requires costume and make-up items extensively. Some people are benefited from lending out these items. However, it is witnessed that due to cost effectiveness the people begin to

use artificial dresses instead of indigenous handloom products. For instance, the *Sūtradhāra*'s entire attire is made of natural silk, but due to high cost of it, some people go for artificial silk brought from outside the state. Changes are also seen in the dresses of other characters. "Use of velvet instead of natural silk and cotton for making the attires is a distortion. Actually, the whole selection of materials was made on cost consideration and local availability of raw materials. The entire system preached by Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva was such that people at large could afford to procure the inexpensive and locally available raw materials."<sup>85</sup> This replacement of dresses not only leads to outflow of money from Assam but also attacked the economic philosophy propagated by Śaṅkaradeva. Similarly, in case of make-up of actors, people are gradually giving up the indigenous technique and switch to artificial cosmetics. Traditionally the ingredients for make-up were collected from nature. "As many as twenty one ingredients were used for the makeup of the actors in the *Aṅkīyā-bhāonā*. The most important among these were vermillion, indigo, lime and yellow ochre. The minor ingredients included mollaces, soap-nut, yolk of the egg, the seed of the ou fruit, the gum of the beel (*Aegle Marmelos* Corr) fruit and tamarind seeds, the juice of earthworm, charcoal of dry ground, lamp black, sand etc."<sup>86</sup>

The substitution of indigenous costumes and make-up items with artificial ones give a blow to the economy of Assam by throwing away local enterprises.

Some customs of *EŚHND* now become integral part of other religious cult also. Customs like offering of *Prasāda*, performing *Nāma-kīrttana* in auspicious occasions,

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<sup>85</sup> Borkakoti, S. K. (2013). *Costumes and Ornaments of Aṅkīyā-bhāonā*. in S. C. Bora and Biswajit Kalita (ed.), *Śaṅkaradeva Studies- Selected Articles from Mahapurusa Jyoti*, p.182

<sup>86</sup> Ibid: 179



reciting *Kīrttana* and *Bhāgavata* in the Shiva temples or Durgā temples are examples of such customs. Even it is observed in some places that in the same venue itself people are worshipping Goddess Durgā by sacrificing animal at daytime while at night they organized *Nāma-kīrttana*. Due to ignorance people are performing *Yajña* and *Nāma-Kīrttana* at parallel. In non-Śaṅkarī *Nāmghars*, both *pujā* and *Nāma-Kīrttana* go hand in hand. All those dual practices increase the expenditure in the name of religion which ultimately manifolds the economic burden on the people. Similarly, some unwarranted elaborate rituals also entered into *EŚHND*. Some branches of Śaṅkarī institutions are started to organize *pāl nāma* for two-three days, *Śaṅkara janmotsava* with week long program. This extravaganza in the name of religion is against the ideology of Śaṅkaradeva's financial discipline.

## **6.4: Analysis and Discussion of Results**

### **6.4.1: Sample Study**

The data collected have been tabulated using different formations as per the requirement and the demand of the nature of study and calculated percentage and averages in order to analyze them. In collecting data six villages each from Morigaon and Nagaon districts have been chosen as per the convenient of the researcher as well as to represents the geographical area of the districts. Amongst them three were Śaṅkarī village (SV) and three were Non-Śaṅkarī village (NSV) in each district. Thirty households from each selected villages were taken randomly as primary unit to collect the required data. Besides 135 other respondents (Śaṅkarī religious leaders, artisans,

painters, actors, dancers, businessmen etc.) from different villages and towns were also interviewed.

**Table 1: Sample Villages and Sample Size**

District	Morigaon		Nagaon	
		Sample Size		Sample Size
Śaṅkarī Village	Silsako	30	Batadrava	30
	Kushtoli	30	Morangial	30
	Chanaka	30	Dhing Athgaon	30
Non-Śaṅkarī Village	Aujari	30	Sariyah Toli	30
	Koraiguri	30	Mindaimara	30
	Patekibori	30	Sutar Gaon	30
Others (Śaṅkarī religious leaders, artisans, painters, actors, dancers, businessmen etc.)		63		72
Total = 495		243		252

Source: Field Study

Among the sample households the occupational, educational and income pattern are as follows—

**Table 2: Occupational, Educational and Income Pattern of Sample**

	Category	Percentage
<b>Occupation</b>	Cultivation	57.57
	Business	17.42
	Govt. Service	18.18
	Cottage Industry	1.52
	Others (driver, manual worker, construction worker, carpenter, company worker)	5.31
	Total	100
<b>Education</b>	Illiterate	13.58
	Primary level	40.16
	Matriculate	25.75
	H. S. Passed	10.61
	Graduate	8.94
	Post Graduate	0.96
	Total	100
<b>Income (per month in Rupees)</b>	Below 5000	17.43
	5000- 10000	48.48
	10000-20000	15.15
	Above 20,000	18.94
	Total	100

Source: Field Study

### 6.4.2: Data Analysis (Objective Wise)

#### 6.4.2.1: Objective-1.To Analyze the Impact of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the Agricultural Economy.

The field study revealed that all the households of Śaṅkarī villages were engaged in cultivation of paddy, vegetables, fruits etc. On the other hand 7% households of Non-Śaṅkarī villages did not involve in cultivation at all. They were landless and survive only on manual works.

The agricultural products produced by the households are—rice, jute, mustard, beetle-vine, areca-nut, coconut, banana, jackfruit, gamut, corn, peanut, pulse, sugarcane, sesame, wheat, mango, papaya, *tāla*, *jalphāi*, *kardai*, *bela*, *outeṅgā*, *nemu*, *rabāb teṅgā*, *bagarī*, litchi, turmeric, ginger, vegetables, fish and bamboo.

Among the sample households 66.18% offered commodities purchased from market as *Prasāda* at *Nāmghar* and only 25.17% offered commodities produced at home. Quite interestingly 8.65% households belonging to Non-Śaṅkarī Hindu villages do not offer *Prasāda*. Home produced items offered as *Prasāda* were *but* or gram, *magu* or green gram, other pulses, banana, cucumber, coconut, sugarcane, rice, papaya, *rabāb teṅgā*, ginger. Now the followers of Śaṅkarī religious philosophy maintain a new tradition of offering at least five fruits (*pañca phala*) in *Prasāda*. So, in the absence of local seasonal fruits, the procured fruits like apple, orange, grapes, cherry, plum, pear, guava, pomegranate, date, cashews, *bagarī* etc. from the market to offer as *Prasāda* at *Nāmghar*. Sweets, *Laddu*, *Bātācā*, and honey are also offered.

It was found that in the Śaṅkarī villages' people extensively used dairy products like milk, curd, *ghee* etc. in religious function. Both at *Nāmghars* as well as

at households after *Nāma-Kīrttana* in any function or festival, the *bhakats* are provided with *cirā* or *komal cāul* with curd and molasses.

With regard to animal husbandry it was found that the involvement of households of Śāṅkarī villages was significantly higher than the households of Non-Śāṅkarī villages. It was found that 87.87% households of Śāṅkarī villages involved in cattle rearing. However, they rear only cow and goat, not other animals (91.23% households rear only cow whereas 8.77% rear both cow and goat). 12.13% households did not involve in animal husbandry. In comparison to it 21.74% households of Non-Śāṅkarī villages did not involve in animal husbandry. Although 78.26% households of Non-Śāṅkarī villages involved in animal husbandry but they rear more animals than households of Śāṅkarī villages. They rear cow, buffalo, goat, pig, hen, duck and pigeon. Only 14.49 % households of Non-Śāṅkarī villages were involved in rearing only cow. Remaining households rear at least three types of animals. The Śāṅkarī religious tradition uses milk and milk products widely but Non-Śāṅkarī religious tradition uses them only in limited extent. Thus, the spread of *EŚHND* has encouraged cow rearing but discouraged goat, pig, hen, duck and pigeon rearing. During interview Bidyut Bikash Senapati (General Secretary, Tiwa Sahitya Sabha) of Barapujia Village revealed that the animal sacrifice particularly pig and hen drastically falls after the establishment of *Nāmghar* in the village in 1951. Some festivals like *Diṅgā Diā* festival, *Śani Pūjā* where animal sacrifice were part and parcel now replaced by *Barnāma*. But in case of death rituals particularly in *dahā* pig sacrifice is still common. Additionally *Māh- Prasāda* is also offered.

#### 6.4.2.2: Objective-2. To Study the Impact of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the Cottage Industry vis-à-vis the Rural Economy

The field survey provided that in respect of cottage industry the involvement of Śaṅkarī villages was significantly better than Non-Śaṅkarī villages. In cent percent Śaṅkarī villages there were cottage industries (one or more) like bamboo and cane, handloom, wood-carving, pottery and black smith. Among the households 45.45% involved in cottage industry of any kind or other. Out of them 38.55% involve in bamboo and cane industry, 48.19% in handloom industry, 4.81% in wood-carving, 6.04% in pottery and 2.40% involve in black smith. In comparison to SV only 66.67% Non-Śaṅkarī villages had cottage industry. Again amongst the households only 24% involved in cottage industry of any kind or other. Most of them involved in wood-carving (52.13%); followed by textile (31.48%) and bamboo and cane industry (16.39%).

The field study also revealed that the villagers used various commodities produced by cottage industries in religious purposes. Names of such items are—*dhupa, cāki, śalitā, dalā, pāci, kharāhī, cālanī, dhāri, pāṭi, kaṭh, sinhāsana, perā, thagā, gachā, śarāi, baṭā, kāhara bācana, kalah, bhor tāl, dabā, khol, kaṭārī, gāmocā, celeṅg, curiyā, gosāi kāpor* etc.

The main reason behind the higher existence of cottage industries in SVs is the requirement of cottage products within the village. The existence of at least minimum demand for religious purposes helps in thriving of the cottage industries.

**6.4.2.3: Objective-3. To Study the Impact of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the Economic Benefits of Śaṅkarī Performing Arts, Paintings etc. vis-à-vis the Economy.**

The Śaṅkarī performing arts, paintings etc. still benefit people and has bearing with the economy of Assam. The field study revealed that people's involvement in performing arts is far higher in SVs than NSVs. As evident from Table-3, members of 60.97 % households in SVs involved in performing arts as against only 36.48 % in NSVs.

**Table 3: Percentage of Households involves in Performing Arts**

	SV	NSV
<b>Yes</b>	60.97	36.48
<b>No</b>	39.03	63.52
<b>Total</b>	100	100

Source: Field Study

Again the field survey revealed that a number of people got employment opportunities in Nagaon and Morigaon districts through performing arts and paintings introduced by Śaṅkaradeva. They were either directly or indirectly benefited economically from Śaṅkarī culture. As per the survey done by Sutradhaar, (the institute for performing arts, Regd No. – RS/NG/254/J/159 of 2010-2011, Panigaon Choiali, Nagaon) in January, 2018, in Nagaon district itself there are as many as 66 institutions which are involved in training and performing of Śaṅkarī Performing Arts. The owner of Sutradhaar, Gaurab Kumar Hazarika a young boy earlier interested in modern dance. But latter seeing the greater opportunity in Satriya Dance switched to this form

of classical dance. After that he not only became economically independent but also able to travel different countries under cultural exchange programme of Govt. of India. He believes that there are vast opportunities in Śaṅkarī performing arts as it gradually got recognition at international level.

Lalit Hazarika of Kolongpar Marangiyal village of Nagaon district runs a business of costume and other accessory making for *bhāonā* for last 45 years. Now his son Nitul Hazarika also joins in the business. They also work as make-up artists. Present worth of their business is about 25 lakh rupees. They purchase cloth, make-up items and other raw materials from Gita Company of Kolkata. Annually they procure raw materials of worth rupees 3 lakhs to rupees 5 lakhs. The Hazarika family rents out the dress and other ornaments along with artificial weapons of the characters of *bhāonā*. For the full dress of Krishna they charge rupees 2500 per night. Rents for royal dresses, other deity's dress and dress of monsters along with ornaments range from rupees one thousand to two thousands. For make-up, they charge rupees 2500 to rupees 3000 per night. Their average annual income is rupees 9 lakh per annum. During the last *rāsa* festival only Lalit Hazarika was able to earn rupees 3 lakhs.

The *Fākuā* or *Holi* festival which Śaṅkaradeva started at Bordowa still continues. Lots of business activities occur during the festival. *Holi* festival is also celebrated with great enthusiasm at Patekibori and Matharbori. The local businessmen got the opportunity to earn good amount money during the festival. Another notable festival which is an offshoot of Śaṅkaradeva's *EŚHND* is the Committee *bhāonā* of Charaibahi in Morigaon district which occurs in each three years. All these festival attracts sufficient amount of outside visitors which helps tourism industry of Assam. It



was found during the field study that in the last *Holi* festival (2018) at Bordowa the Organizing Committee received Rs. 12.6 Lakhs as rent from the temporary shops and restaurants. The Committee received additional Rs. 1.6 Lakhs by providing electricity to the business entities and Rs.1 Lakh from parking place. As against the receipts the Committee had to bear expenditure on lighting (Rs. 2 Lakhs), decoration and tent (Rs.1.7 Lakhs), reception of guests (Rs. 2 Lakhs), cultural events (Rs. 1.5 Lakhs) and on *Māh- Prasāda* (Rs. 48,000). The Committee gives the task of collecting money from business entities on contract basis to local firms by calling tender. The firms charge as rent Rs.400- Rs.600 per feet of space for five days. Despite this exorbitant high rate of rent the business entities could earn good amount of profit. It proved the volume of business transactions during the festival.

The Śaṅkarī institutions like *Nāmghar*, *Thān* and *Satras* directly provided employment to some people. For instance, during the field survey it was found that at Patekibari *Thān* one *Satradhikar*, two *Bhakats* and one watchman are engaged by the *Thān* authority. They are paid some honorium and incentives at regular interval. Boarding facilities and foods are provided to them. Similarly, in Bharali *Nāmghar*, it was found that there were ten permanent *Bhakats* who were offered honorium by the *Nāmghar* Management Committee in return of their service.

#### 6.4.2.4: Objective-4. To Find the Impact of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the Human Resource Development vis-à-vis the Economy.

According to UNDP, Human Development Index (HDI) is the composite criterion consisting of three indicators of development to measure the level of welfare of the people—

1. Life Expectancy Indicator (LEI)
2. Educational Attainments Indicator (EAI)
3. Standard of Living Indicator (SLI)

$$\text{HDI} = \frac{\text{LEI} + \text{EAI} + \text{SLI}}{3}$$

$$\text{Again, EAI} = \frac{\text{MYS} + \text{EYS}}{2}$$

To construct an indicator the following formula has been used—

$$\text{Achievement Level} = \frac{\text{Actual Value} - \text{Minimum Value}}{\text{Maximum Value} - \text{Minimum Value}}$$

While constructing HDI, the minimum value and maximum value for each indicator are as below in Table-4.

**Table 4: Value of Indicators of HDI**

Indicator	Minimum value	Maximum value
1. Life Expectancy Indicator (LEI)	20	85
2. Educational Attainments Indicator (EAI)		
a. Mean Years of Schooling Index (MYS)	0	15
b. Expected Years of Schooling Index (EYS)	0	18
3. Standard of Living Indicator (SLI)	\$100	\$40,000

Source: UNDP HDI Report

The field survey revealed that the HDI value of Śaṅkarī villages is significantly higher than that of Non-Śaṅkarī villages. The average HDI value of six SVs is 0.506 as against average HDI value of six NSVs is 0.333. It means that HDI value of NSVs is 34.18% less than that of SVs. In all the three indicators the performance of SVs is better than NSVs. The only exception is in respect of PCI two NSVs namely Patekibori and Sutar Gaon performing better than some SVs.

The contribution of Śaṅkaradeva towards education is evident among the sample villages. Among the followers of Śaṅkaradeva in sample households no illiterate person was found. But illiteracy rate was as high as 27.17% among the sample households in NSVs. In SVs, *Nāmghars* played important role in spreading education. In some villages the primary schools had begun operating in the *Nāmghar* itself. Latter the land of *Nāmghar* was used to construct the building of school. For instance, Chandra Kanta Pator, aged 71 years, a retired teacher of Dhorasap village of Morigaon district got his formal education in the school run in the *Nāmghar*.

The field survey also revealed that the consciousness about sanitization is comparatively lower among the people in NSVs than SVs. While it was found that all the households of SVs clean their houses regularly but the households of NSVs do the same cleanliness work only once in a week. The only exception was the Mindaimara village which was very neat and clean. Even the villagers put dustbin made of bamboo on the roadside.

**Table 5: HDI of Sample Villages**

Name of Village	LEI	EAI			SLI	HDI
		MYS	EYS	$\frac{MYS + EYS}{2}$		
Silsako	0.693	0.635	0.716	0.675	0.053	0.473
Kushtoli	0.667	0.606	0.655	0.630	0.077	0.458
Chanaka	0.650	0.612	0.683	0.647	0.066	0.454
Aujari	0.618	0.545	0.555	0.550	0.077	0.415
Koraiguri	0.433	0.480	0.517	0.499	0.027	0.319
Patekibori	0.463	0.193	0.206	0.199	0.072	0.244
Batadrava	0.787	0.866	0.889	0.827	0.097	0.570
Morangial	0.778	0.820	0.833	0.826	0.087	0.563
Dhing Athgaon	0.729	0.703	0.794	0.748	0.078	0.518
Sariyah Toli	0.636	0.606	0.692	0.649	0.055	0.446
Mindaimara	0.450	0.226	0.288	0.257	0.017	0.241
Sutar Gaon	0.496	0.373	0.461	0.417	0.093	0.335

Source: Field Study

**6.4.2.5: Objective-5. To trace out the Economic Thoughts of Śaṅkaradeva.**

Śaṅkaradeva wanted to redeem the people from unnecessary religious expenditure. He taught the people that elaborate rituals are not necessary to satisfy the god. Only by listening and chanting his name one could satisfy the god. So, he made his *EŚHND* very simple and cost effective. People were economically benefited by adopting his *EŚHND*. For instance, during the field study Chandra Kanta Pator revealed that before converting his family into Śaṅkaradeva's religion 25 years ago the cost burden in religious rituals was very high. They had to offer wine, pig and other commodities. But after grabbing *EŚHND* they only required to offer *māh-prasāda* and

beetle vine and areca-nut. Similarly, Jayanta Deka of Karhali Gaon of Nagaon district revealed that his fore-fathers accepted *EŚHND* to avoid the unbearably higher expenditure on rituals particularly on death rituals. On the other hand, Non-Śaṅkarī households grabbed some traditions of *EŚHND* which raises their religious expenditure. Besides performing worships to different deities they also involved in *Nāma-Kīrttana*. They have *Nāmghars* in their villages and offered *māh-prasāda* on regular basis.

But of late in *EŚHND* also some kind of elaborate celebrations are entering. The followers of *EŚHND* now have begun to celebrate Śaṅkara *Janmotsava* (birth anniversary of Śaṅkaradeva), *Janmāstomī* (birth festival of Lord Krishna), *Holi*, *Bhādamahīyā nām* etc. extravagantly in their villages. This is the reason behind the higher annual contribution made by households of Śaṅkarī villages to the *Nāmghar* than the households of NSVs. The field study revealed that average annual contribution required by the households of SVs to the *Nāmghar* was Rs.1540.97. In comparison to it in the NSVs the average annual contribution of the households was Rs.925.30. It was also found that among the sample households of SVs the head of the family spend on average 84.75 minutes per day in religious purposes. Contrary to it the head of the family of NSVs of the sample households spent daily 23.68 minutes on average in religious purpose. It means the households of Śaṅkarī villages are more involved in community services than the households of Non-Śaṅkarī villages.

The field study revealed that people are completely unaware of the economic contribution of Śaṅkaradeva. Only one respondent out of 495 was aware quite well

about the contribution of Śaṅkaradeva to the economy through introducing *Prasāda*, developing cottage industry and through performing arts.

## **6.5: Hypothesis Testing**

### **6.5.1: Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement positively affected the Agricultural Economy of Assam.**

From the discussion as well as analysis of data collected through field study revealed that Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement affected the agricultural economy of Assam in a number of ways. The introduction of *Prasāda* by Śaṅkaradeva boosted the demand for local agricultural commodities. His followers put extra effort to meet the increased demand. In the latter period the *Satras* involved in extensive cultivation on the lands donated to them by the royal families. The *bhakats* had to cultivate on the plot of land allotted to them and required to pay rent to the *Satra* exchequer. Similarly, Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement encouraged dairy production. Thus, the first hypothesis that Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement positively affected the agricultural economy of Assam could be accepted.

### **6.5.2: Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement favourably impacted the Cottage Industry vis-à-vis the Rural Economy of Assam.**

From the discussion of the present study it is found that Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement built a solid foundation for the development of cottage industries of Assam. The religious and cultural activities of *EŚHND* used extensively the products produced by cottage industries like bamboo and cane, pottery, wood and craft, brass and bell metal, textile, dyeing, mask making, *sāci-pāt* and *mahī* making, fireworks. The people

associated with those industries were economically benefited. The Śaṅkarī institutions like *Nāmghar* and *Satras* played important role in marketing of commodities produced by cottage industries. On the basis of the existence of at least minimum demand for religious purposes mainly in *EŚHND* some of the cottage industries still survive. Thus, the second hypothesis that Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement favourably impacted the cottage (textile) industry vis-à-vis the rural economy of Assam could be accepted.

**6.5.3: The impacts of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the Economic Benefits of Śaṅkarī Performing Arts, Paintings etc. vis-à-vis the Economy of Assam still continues.**

The cultural activities of Śaṅkaradeva's *EŚHND* like music, dance, drama, painting etc. provided employment opportunities to the people of Assam. Professional groups like *gāyan*, *bāyan*, *sūtradhār*, *khanikar*, *lekhāru* etc. emerged. During the field study it was found that a significant number of people were engaged professionally in running schools and institutions of Śaṅkarī music and dance. Commercial artists based of Śaṅkarī performing arts and paintings not only could survive but also become economically independent. Based on Śaṅkaradeva's performing arts some festivals emerged which contributed to the economic activities. Thus, the third hypothesis that the impacts of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the economic benefits of Śaṅkarī performing arts, paintings etc. vis-à-vis the economy of Assam still continues could be accepted.

#### **6.5.4: Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement does not lead to the Human Resource Development of Assam.**

Śaṅkaradeva had a positive outlook towards human resources. He put efforts to make human beings both economically productive as well as morally strong. His *Bhakti* Movement played important role in spreading education in Assam. Besides spreading literary awareness the Śaṅkarī institutions like *Nāmghar*, *Thān* and *Satras* imparted vocational education generation to generation. Through the *EŚHND* Śaṅkaradeva taught people about cleanliness, hygiene, local self administration, micro-financing, women empowerment, equality among people across caste and creeds etc. His efforts give positive results to Assam. It is evident from the field study that the HDI value of Śaṅkarī villages is much higher than the HDI value of Non-Śaṅkarī villages. Thus, the fourth hypothesis that Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement does not lead to the Human Resource Development of Assam could not be accepted.

#### **6.5.5: Śaṅkaradeva had views on various Economic Aspects and those Views are not relevant in the Light of Present Economic Situations.**

Śaṅkaradeva had expressed his views on various economic aspects like 'Money and Wealth, Livelihood, Distribution of Income, Consumption and Saving, Economic Sustainability, Welfare, Consumer Awareness, Donation, Commodity production and Profit, Division of Labour, Taxation' etc. His views still got relevance in the context of changing economic situation in the present world. Śaṅkaradeva's advice to preserve one-fifth of the wealth for future generation resembles with the concept of sustainable development which is most important issue of development now a days. His concern



to preserve biodiversity, reducing income inequality, appeal to avoid unlawful activities to earn money, advice to become discipline in consumption and saving are also relevant. Similarly, Śaṅkaradeva's views on taxation, commodity production, profit, consumer awareness etc. are very much relevant at present time. Last but not the least, his management technique is still not only relevant but also have great importance. Thus, the last hypothesis that Śaṅkaradeva's views on various economic aspects are not relevant in the light of present economic situations could not be accepted.

