

CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSION

After a careful examination of the activities of Śaṅkaradeva as recorded in the hagiographies, careful review of his literary works and analysis of the collected data and information in the above pages, it has been found that Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement had played a significant role on the economy of Assam. The impact of his *Bhakti* Movement on the economy still continues. The movement has both caused and effect relationship on the economy of Assam. The prevailing socio-economic factors of that time inspired him a lot to launch the movement. His endeavor was to make the people free from all evils faced by them. Through the movement Śaṅkaradeva launched a set of reforms to free the people from exploitation and suppression, to fight against ignorance, to fight against poverty, to make them economically self dependent, to lead them towards empowerment, to enhance their creativity, to develop them spiritually to a state of mind where they could think high for the betterment of the society by giving up bad habits. His reformatory activities affected positively the economy in a number of ways. Śaṅkaradeva expressed that everyone must engage in a job to perform his personal and social obligations. He appealed the people to take a livelihood without harming others or killing other animals and destroying the biodiversity. He prohibited his disciples in indulging in begging and arranged for them alternative source of income. He fought against the system of slavery prevailed at that time and spent his own money to free some slaves, thereby set an example which was

followed by his prominent disciples in the subsequent periods. Śaṅkaradeva opened up the process of learning to underprivileged section of the society through informal way. He also motivated his disciples towards reading and writing. Due to his consistent effort some persons turned from casual labour to enlighten leader of his order. In fact, the *EŚHND* made it compulsory among the front runner disciples to involve in reading and writing so that they could act in dramas by memorizing the dialogue or lead the prayer. He was an advocate of vocational or professional education as evident from the fact that he had sent his son along with the sons of his servant to learn accountancy. He also set the provision of vocational education in his religious order. His endeavor affected the skill of the people and thereby helped in raising their efficiency and productivity. Śaṅkaradeva engaged in economic activities and through his own earnings he feed his family and did never depend on his disciples. In his younger age when he was the *Śīromoṇi Bhūñā* he involved in cultivation, cattle rearing and associated with weaving industry. In later period also he arranged for cultivation wherever he stayed. He worked for six years as a royal officer to Cilārāi to collect tax and supervise the weavers of Tāntikuchi. Śaṅkaradeva had also positive outlook towards business and helped the merchant disciples by providing manpower and financial advice in many occasions.

Similarly, Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement helped in the expansion of agricultural sector and cottage industries of Assam. His religious activities boosted the demand for local agricultural commodities which lead to commercialization of agriculture. Some of his chief disciples were agricultural merchants and in latter period also religious leaders of his order involved in trade. In the following periods the

religious leaders provided advice for advanced technique of agriculture along with religious advice to tribal disciples. His innovation of distributing *Prasāda* among the devotees after prayer encouraged the local agricultural production. To attract the people towards his *EŚHND*, Śaṅkaradeva extensively used literature, music, dance, drama, painting, architecture etc. At the same time he designed the *Nāmghar* and *Thān* as the hub of religious cum economic activities. The cultural activities of Śaṅkaradeva enhanced the requirements of various products produced by indigenous cottage industries. In fact, the cottage industries of Assam had got ‘big push’ with the spread of Śaṅkaradeva’s *EŚHND*. He maintained a professional relationship with artisans and worked for their betterment. His recognition boosted the morale of the professions who were looked down upon that they were too integral part of the society which ultimately favorably affected their productivity. In brief, Śaṅkaradeva’s *Bhakti* Movement had positive impact on agriculture, cottage industry, business, education and human resource development. In this way he built a solid foundation on which the rural economy of Assam still operates. Thus, it could be concluded that Śaṅkaradeva was a great economist of medieval Assam. He worked like a welfare economist.

7.0: Chapter Wise Conclusion

Chapter-I provides a framework of the entire study. It has offered an introduction of the present study, its objectives, methodology, focused areas of research as well as significance and limitations of the study.

Chapter-II reviews the related literature of the study. Literatures on Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement and its economic aspects were reviewed at three levels— local, national and international.

Chapter-III, after discussing the life and activities of Śaṅkaradeva as well as the socio-economic background of his *Bhakti* Movement, concludes that Śaṅkaradeva was successful in building a solid foundation of Neo-Vaishnava Movement in Assam despite facing lots of adversities in propagating the *EŚHND*. He worked hard to overcome all the challenges to relieve the fellow people from exploitation in the name of religion. He taught the people that the costly and elaborate rituals were not necessary to satisfy the God. He made his *EŚHND* simple and free from any costly rites. His *Bhakti* Movement had certain unique characteristics like emphasis on stern monotheism, abolishment of idol worship, rejection of expensive rituals, stress on *nāma* and *kīrttana* etc.

Chapter-IV concluded that Śaṅkaradeva's economic philosophy was to establish an egalitarian society. His aim was to establish a society which is free from all kinds of ills, where everybody got the opportunity to empower him or herself. He urged the people to strengthen their economic condition. For this he wanted everyone should involve in a peaceful livelihood. But he cautioned the people not to take earning of money as prime motive as only running after money leads to undesirable consequences. According to Śaṅkaradeva the best way of utilizing one's hard earned money is by sharing consumption with others and by donating. Śaṅkaradeva undertook massive reformative activities for the well being of his fellow people. By advising to divide one's income into five equal parts he assigned the duties to be performed by a

person to increase the welfare in the society at the same time while fulfilling his needs and performing the family's responsibility. He was also concerned with the preservation of bio-diversity in the earth. From his views on various economic aspects it can be concluded that Śaṅkaradeva was much closer to a modern welfare economist.

Chapter-V discusses about the impact of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the human resource development of Assam. It is found that Śaṅkaradeva had a very positive outlook towards human resource and recognized the unlimited productive potentiality of human being. Not only that, he had also advised others to respect his fellow people by believing him as a part of God. Śaṅkaradeva gave utmost emphasis on all aspects of human development. He taught the disciples about hygiene, introduced *Prasāda* with a balanced diet and occasionally advised them in health matters. He encouraged the disciples to involve in knowledge earning activities; took the initiative for educating women and lower caste people. At the same time, Śaṅkaradeva helped them to raise their income level. He tried to impart some specific skills among his disciples and was a promoter for vocational education. Śaṅkaradeva endeavored for holistic development of human beings i.e., making them economically productive as well as morally strong. He tried to nurture the creativity in the minds of the people. Again, he introduced values like truthfulness, sincerity, non-violence, fraternity, equality, love, sacrifice, service to society etc. to the disciples with the help of religious activities of *EŚHND*, lecture cum discussions, writings, performing art etc. In short it could be concluded that Śaṅkaradeva was a pioneer in the field of human development.

Chapter-VI concludes that Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement has the cause and effect relationship in the economic development of Assam. The movement impacted the rural economy of Assam through agriculture, cottage industry and cultural activities. His movement boosted the demand for local agricultural commodities like pulses (gram, green gram), rice, ginger, sugarcane and other available seasonal fruits like banana, mango, coconut etc., mustard oil and seeds, betel leaves, areca-nuts, dairy products and honey. At the same time the movement positively affected the agricultural production. Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement gave a big push to the cottage industry of Assam. The religious, literary and cultural activities raised the demand for various goods produced by cottage industries. The beneficiary industries were bamboo and cane, wood and craft, bell metal, textile, dyeing, mask making, pottery, *Sāci-pāt* and *Mahī* making, fireworks etc. He ensured a sustained domestic demand for the products of cottage industry by linking his religious and cultural activities to it. Śaṅkaradeva extensively utilized the medium of literature, music, dance, drama, painting to propagate his *EŚHND* and these activities had impacted the economy. Some people also got the opportunity to earn their livelihood from the cultural legacy of Śaṅkaradeva. Professions like *pāthaka*, *nāma-lagovā*, *medhi*, *bharālī* etc. were emerged. Again, by analyzing the primary data, the chapter concludes that the performances of Śaṅkarī villages are better than Non-Śaṅkarī villages in respect of agriculture, cottage industry and human development.

7.1: Summary of Findings

The findings of the present study could be summarized as follows—

1. Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement had certain unique characteristics although it was a part of Great Indian *Bhakti* Movement. He emphasized on stern monotheism, abolished idol worship, discarded expensive rituals, stressed only on *nāma* and *kīrttana* as means of devotion. The *Bhakti* Movement of Śaṅkaradeva was not a spiritual movement alone; it was essentially a socio-economic movement. The movement did a lot for the welfare and emancipation of the socially and economically backward sections of the community.
2. Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement was based on economic elements. Through the movement he wanted to attain well being of the fellow people including improvement in their economic conditions. He did not keep religious life of a person in isolation from his economic life. Neither had he advised the people to stay away from economic activities. He believed that a person could grow spiritually only when he is able to fulfill his basic needs. It is difficult for a man remaining in starvation to justify what is good or what is bad. Since poverty is the greatest hurdle in the path of assimilation of knowledge, so Śaṅkaradeva through his movement tried to make the people economically independent by fighting against the forces of economic exploitation and trying to raise work culture among them.
3. Śaṅkaradeva made his *EŚHND* very simple and cost effective so that the people could be redeemed from unnecessary religious expenditure. Instead of involving in elaborate rituals he only prescribes for *Śravaṇa-Kīrttana*. He also introduced the

religious institution *Nāmghar*, built with freely available local materials like bamboo, cane, thatch, wood etc. so that no financial pressure had been put on the people.

4. 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 have relevance in the present economic situation. His concern in reducing income inequality, reducing poverty, inter-generation equity, taxation, raising welfare of marginal section of the society etc. still relevant.
5. Śaṅkaradeva took a number of initiatives to improve the economic condition of his disciples in particular and the society as a whole. He never preached an ascetic life and did away from economic activities. He advised people to work while chanting God’s name. Śaṅkaradeva tried to enhance work culture among his disciples. He showed by example how skillful management of time and with hard work one could become success in life. He obeyed a tight schedule regularly starting from his student life. Even after crossing the age of hundredth year, Śaṅkaradeva get up early in the morning, carry out the religious activities such as *nāma-kīrttana* with other devotees, takes part in hours long discussion session, have lunch and take a nap, sits with a group of selected members in the evening to finalize about the future strategy of *EŚHND* and then sits up to late night for literary activities. Again, his expertise in economic matters could be seen from his planning of *Thān* which he designed as self-sufficient economic unit. Similarly, Śaṅkaradeva

showed in many occasions that service too could be bought and sold in a period when service sector had very little scope to expand.

6. It is found that Śaṅkaradeva was pioneer in preservation of biodiversity. He had a great fond to nature and its creations. Through his illustrative writings he tried to promote affection among the people towards flora and fauna. Śaṅkaradeva spread the notion that 'every living being on the earth is the part of God and so one should pay respect to them'. He valued all the objects on the earth equally and advised his disciples to look them with love and affection, and sympathy and kindness and be non violent towards them. Hence, Śaṅkaradeva was an environmentalist at par excellence.
7. Economic organization of the households of villages of Assam was greatly influenced from the design of Śaṅkaradeva's *Thān* or *Satra*. Each household has a flower garden in front of the house, a *bāri* at the back to produce fruits, vegetables, *tāmol-pān*, valuable trees and bamboo, a fishery, cattle for milk and pursuing agriculture etc.
8. Śaṅkaradeva was a management expert. He adopted different techniques of management like Human Resource Management, Team Management, Feedback Management, Project Management, Conflict Management, Crisis Management etc. to put forward his movement successfully. Due to his innovative techniques of management he was able to mobilize large scale of people to his religious faith; could motivate the people for improving their way of living; could establish *EŚHND* as a major cult in Assam from zero point. He was also expert in financial management.

9. Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement positively impacted the agricultural economy. He regarded cultivation as noble occupation and encouraged the disciples to involve in it. He had the knowledge of advance agricultural technique and often guided his disciples to increase the agricultural production by giving them valuable advice and teaching them better technique of cultivation. His *Bhakti* Movement boosted the demand for local agricultural products. To meet the increased demand, his followers worked hard to raise the production of agricultural commodities. This effect continues for centuries. However, at present an opposite effect could be felt. The religious practices of Śaṅkaradeva faith still cause high demand for agricultural commodities but it boosted production outside Assam.
10. Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement helped commercialization of agricultural commodities. The Movement increased the trade of mustard oil, fine variety of rice, flower, beetle-vine, areca-nut etc. In latter period the *Satras* became the hub of agricultural marketing centers and some *Satrādhikār* directly involved in that trade. He taught his disciples the value of medicinal plants and encouraged them to plant and preserves such trees. He encouraged cultivation of *Sāci* tree and directed the villagers to plant special kinds of trees and herbs so that the required colours and inks could be produced locally as well as farmers could earn money.
11. With regard to animal husbandry it was found that in Nagaon and Morigaon districts, the involvement of households of Śaṅkarī villages was significantly higher than the households of Non-Śaṅkarī villages. However, they rear only cow and goat, not other animals. The Śaṅkarī religious tradition uses milk and milk products widely but Non-Śaṅkarī religious tradition uses them only in limited

extent. Thus, the spread of *EŚHND* has encouraged cow and goat rearing but discouraged pig, poultry, duck and pigeon rearing.

12. The present study finds that Śaṅkaradeva's contribution to the promotion of cottage industries of Assam is very significant. Śaṅkaradeva was able to break the cycle of underdevelopment—low demand—low production of cottage industry of Assam. Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement ensured sustained domestic demand for indigenous cottage industries. On the basis of that demand the cottage industries still survive in Assam. The industries which were mostly benefited from *EŚHND* were bamboo and cane, wood and craft, bell metal, handloom textile, dyeing, mask making, pottery etc. At present also the involvement of Śaṅkarī villages in cottage industry is found to be significantly better than Non-Śaṅkarī villages in Nagaon and Morigaon districts.
13. Śaṅkaradeva through his creations in the field of dance, music, painting and drama provided income and employment to the people besides providing them amusements. Many people were earning livelihood from his legacy. Professional groups like *gāyana*, *bāyana*, *sūtradhāra*, *pāthaka*, *nāmalagovā*, *khanikara* etc. had emerged. The present study finds 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. The opportunity is gradually expanding. Based on Śaṅkaradeva's performing arts some festivals emerged which contributed to the economic activities.

14. Śaṅkaradeva's innovation in the field of drama had result a favourable environment for dramas in Assam. Gradually the culture of drama became widespread and gave rise to '*Yātra Party*' and professional mobile theatre.
15. Śaṅkaradeva considered human being as asset or resource rather than liability. He recognized the unlimited productive potentiality of human being. Śaṅkaradeva propagated that human life is rare and a person got it after much sanctity and so one must try to spend it meaningfully. According to him, human beings should be both economically productive as well as embodiment of moral values like truthfulness, sincerity, non-violence, fraternity, equality, love, sacrifice, service to society etc. He introduced such values to his disciples with the help of religious activities of *EŚHND*, lecture cum discussions, writings and performing arts. Similarly, for enhancing productivity of his disciples Śaṅkaradeva tried to impart some specific skills to them, insisted and monitored his disciples to lead a pious and disciplined life style, emphasized on efficient management of time.
16. Śaṅkaradeva gave utmost emphasis on different aspects of human development. He strictly maintained hygiene, included a balanced diet in his *Prasāda* for long and healthy life. He took a number of initiatives to spread education among the common masses. For enhancing income, Śaṅkaradeva encouraged his disciples to involve in income earning activities, to take up some vocational occupation and introduced a system where expertise of the vocation is traditionally imparted by the senior expert members to juniors of the *Thān* or *Satra*. It is found that the HDI value of Śaṅkarī villages is significantly higher than that of Non-Śaṅkarī villages among the sample. The 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 literacy rate was found cent percent among the sample households in SVs but illiteracy rate was as high as 27.17% among the sample households in NSVs. The field survey also revealed that the consciousness about sanitization is comparatively lower among the people in NSVs than SVs.

17. The present study reveals that Śaṅkaradeva's contribution in spreading awareness towards education among underprivileged section of the society and women was very significant. To disseminate knowledge Śaṅkaradeva adopted audio-visual method, lecture cum discussion method, motivational and appraisal method, spot evaluation method.
18. Śaṅkaradeva was an advocate of gender equality. He provided equal status to the women. He propagated that both man and woman are indispensable to perform household and social activities. In his literary works, Śaṅkaradeva raised various issues of women empowerment. Even he expressed that women are more courageous than men.

7.2: Suggestions

The researcher put forward the following suggestions for the betterment of the economy of Assam—

1. Śaṅkaradeva's economic philosophy need to be properly discussed and spread among the people. Because some of the religious leaders of his order work against his philosophy which become a hindrance in the economic development of Assam. It is essential to remove this barrier.

2. There is a growing tendency both among Śāṅkarī and Non-Śāṅkarī people to perform religious rituals in extravaganza. This put unnecessary economic burden on the common people. To avoid the burden Śāṅkaradeva's ideology that 'the costly rituals could not satisfy the God but pure devotion could do the same' is relevant and required to popularize.
3. The Non-Śāṅkarī people grabbed some rituals of Śāṅkaradeva's *EŚHND* which cost them duplication of expenditure in the name of religion. Awareness should be created amongst them to attract them to the cost effective rituals.
4. Efforts must be made to use more locally available products in religious purpose so that the agricultural economy of Assam got an extra incentive to develop.
5. To fight against the growing income inequality Śāṅkaradeva's advice need to be popularized. For this he advised that everybody must spend one-fifth of his income to the development of society.
6. Śāṅkaradeva's work ethics *hāte karā tāṇa kāma, mukhe laibā harināma* i.e, 'keep hard working with hands while chanting the attributes of Hari' need to be properly spread among the people. Because some people feed only on others in the name of religion without working anything.
7. Śāṅkaradeva's philosophy need to be popularized among the Non-Śāṅkarī Villagers to improve the HDI.
8. The government must take initiatives to include different aspects of Śāṅkaradeva's life and work in the academic curriculum right from school level to university level irrespective of subjects.

7.3: Suggestions for Further Study

The researcher felt that the present study was not sufficient to delve deep into all the aspects of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement and its impact on the rural economy of Assam. Therefore, further studies along the following lines will be beneficial for the economy of Assam in particular and world economy in general.

- A. Śaṅkaradeva's model of growth to foster peace and progress.
- B. Studying Śaṅkaradeva's management skills to control heterogeneous ethnic conflicts across the world.
- C. Need to popularize Śaṅkaradeva's belief *every human being and every living creature are a part of the God and therefore pay respect to them* to preserve global biodiversity.
- D. Commercial viability of *mahī* making as indelible ink.
- E. To increase the export of Śaṅkarī performing arts.
- F. Commercialization of Śaṅkarī painting.
- G. Revival of Śaṅkaradeva's weaving technique of *Vṛndāvanī-Vastra*.
- H. To protect the originality of Śaṅkarī institutions i.e, *Nāmghar*, *Thān* and *Satra* with a view to keep healthy social conditions and moral values of the people of the society vis-à-vis to boost economic condition of the society.

