

ABSTRACT

For quite few years I was interested to know about the impact of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the economy of Assam particularly on the rural economy. It was seen that many people make the Movement responsible for slow economic growth of Assam without making any serious study. So, a proper assessment of the Movement from economic point of view is necessary. When I joined the course work for Ph. D., I was motivated to go deep into the subject and selected the topic 'Śaṅkaradeva *Bhakti* Movement and Its Impact on the Rural Economy of Assam with Reference to Nagaon and Morigaon Districts'.

Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement is a remarkable incidence in the economic history of Assam. Through the Movement he was able to break the vicious circle of underdevelopment of the economy of the region. Before, Śaṅkaradeva launched the movement; there existed only low level of demand particularly in the Ahom Kingdom. The limited level of demand made it impossible to increase the production. Lower level of production results widespread poverty and backwardness. But Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement was able to overcome the situation. So, Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement is essentially an economic movement besides a social movement.

Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement impacted the economy of Assam in a number of ways. It affected cultivation, cottage industry, sericulture, textile, dairy farming, and horticulture. The most important contribution of the movement is human resource development. It opened up the process of learning to common masses who were deprived for ages. Through various modes of informal teaching Śaṅkaradeva

empowered his disciples. He taught his followers about hygiene and how to live neat and clean. His movement results the people to enjoy local self governance.

With the introduction of the system of distributing *Prasād* after *Nāma-Kīrttana* among the devotees Śaṅkaradeva boosted the agricultural economy besides positive impact on health. In *Prasād* Śaṅkaradeva included only locally available agricultural commodities like pulses (gram, green gram), rice, ginger, sugarcane and other available seasonal fruits like banana, mango, coconut etc. The Movement stimulated different indigenous industries of that time. In fact, the cultural and religious activities of Śaṅkaradeva gave a big push to the cottage industries by boosting the demand for their products. Some people also got the opportunity to earn their livelihood from the cultural legacy of Śaṅkaradeva. Thus, Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement positively impacted the rural economy of Assam.

The present study is divided into seven chapters keeping in view of the objectives of the study. The first chapter introduces the present study with research problem, significance of the study, conceptual framework, objectives of the study, hypothesis, different areas of the study, profile of Nagaon and Morigaon districts and the methodology. The second chapter deals with the review of literature. In the third chapter, life of Śaṅkaradeva and the contemporary economic background are discussed. Socio-economic background of the movement and its economic aspects are also dealt in the chapter. The fourth chapter tries to analyze Śaṅkaradeva's views on various economic aspects, economic practices done by him and relevance of his economic thoughts in present time. The fifth chapter discusses about the impact of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on the human resource development of Assam, his views on human resources and the present scenario of human resource development of Assam. The sixth chapter analyzes the impact of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement

on the rural economy of Assam. In the chapter, primary data collected from Nagaon and Morigaon districts were analyzed to show the impact of Śaṅkaradeva's *Bhakti* Movement on agricultural economy, cottage industry, performing artists and painters of the two districts. The concluding chapter provides a chapter wise summary of the whole research work. It also highlighted the findings of the study and put forwarded some suggestions.

In writing the thesis, the style of APA Sixth Edition was used. To fulfill the objectives both primary and secondary data were collected. The primary data were collected through personal interview method with questionnaire. To extract vital information from Śaṅkaradeva's own compositions like the *Bhāgavata*, *Kīrttana*, *Bargīta*, etc. I had depended on the book *Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Vākyāmr̥ta* edited by Board of Editors, Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Sangha, in the year 1998. Similarly, I used the English translation of different verses of the *Kīrttana* from the book *Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradevara's The Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* by P. Saikia (2005).

Date: 14-11-2019
Place: Morigaon



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