

CHAPTER- II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of related literature is important to carry out a research work on a particular topic. It helps a researcher in collecting lots of information and data pertaining to the selected topic. It also helps in recognizing the research problem, and to find out the research gap through trend analysis, to avoid repetition. The following books, journals and souvenirs have been reviewed to proceed in the present study.

Bezbaroa, Laksmínath: *Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva Āru Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva*: 1914.

The author collected the data on the teachings, activities, and different happenings and co-happenings in the lives of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva from different hagiographical accounts and from the stories handed down from generation to generations relating to both of them, and compiled them in this book as easily perceptible to common people. This book contains twenty-three chapters with an additional note on the *Satras* and the system of *Dharmācārya* (the religious head), and different cults of Mahāpuruṣiāism. In these chapters, the author has given a brief history of the forefathers of Śaṅkaradeva, and also has discussed the different happenings and co-happenings in the life of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva. In addition to these, the author has mentioned the sacrifice of human beings at the time of reconstruction of the Kāmākhyā temple and the Hayagrīva Mādhava Manikūṭa by the Koc kings Naranārāyaṇa and Raghudeva respectively. During that period, there was a class of people who were named as *Bhogī*. They declared that they prepared themselves to be sacrificed in front of their goddess, and from the very day of their

declaration, they were respected by people, even they got the privilege without any restriction to satiate their desire with any woman of their choice. (P-51) In such a hard time, Śaṅkaradeva initiated his *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*, brought forth the womenfolk from their confinement to the threshold of *Maṇikūṭa*, and gave them a high status.

This book is an important source in defining the status of women in the context of societal norms of Assam.

Chatterji, Suniti Kumar: *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India*. 1955.

In this book, the author has discussed Śaṅkaradeva as a great saint, a religious teacher and a social organizer of Assam. The author comments that Śaṅkaradeva raised Assamese literature to a high level of excellence through his songs, hymns, dramas and works on Vaiṣṇava religion and practice, and mentions that Śaṅkaradeva preached the equality of men before God, and abjured the idea of special privilege for Brāhmins. He mentions that the outcome of Śaṅkaradeva's *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*, the religion of taking refuge at only one God, is a reaction against the practice of sacrificing animals, and sometimes human beings by the Brahmins and the masses as an attempt to propitiate the dreaded Mother Goddess which is based on the *Śākta Tantras*, but lacks of spirituality.

Another important point that is discussed in this book is the differences between Chaitanya's *bhakti* and Śaṅkaradeva's *bhakti*. Chaitanya's *bhakti*, or faith in God is based on love – the *madhura-bhāva*, or self-forgetting love of a married woman (*parakiyā* or another man's wife) for a lover. This *madhura-bhāva* would impel

woman in her abandon of intense attachment to make light of everything that a good wife holds dear in life, but Śaṅkaradeva's *Eka-Śaraṇa* faith concentrates on the *dāsyā* aspect of devotion to God, which conceives of man's relationship to God as that of a faithful slave to his master. "The *Eka-Śaraṇa* faith worships only Viṣṇu, either as Viṣṇu or through his incarnations as Kṛṣṇa or Rāma, acknowledging of course the figure of Śrī or Rādhā or Sītā, but never thinking of the *Śakti* aspect as inseparable and worthy of the same honour or worship as the essential *Puruṣa* aspect of the Divinity. The amoral and antisocial ideal of the figure of the *parakīyā* has always had the risk of bringing in eroticism and even moral turpitude and this was carefully avoided by Śaṅkara-deva." (P70)

Kakati, Banikanta. (ed). *Aspects of Early Assamese Literature*: (Article – Śaṅkaradeva: His Poetical Works. By Barua, B. K.) 1959.

The author has discussed different aspects of Śaṅkaradeva's poetical works, and the socio-political and religious condition of his time in a nutshell in his essay "Śaṅkaradeva: His Poetical Works". The author has remarked that Śaṅkaradeva's youthful mind was filled with overwhelming grief of losing his wife and his father within a short span of time and eventually he even contemplated renunciation of the world. After giving his daughter in marriage, he set out on a long and extensive pilgrimage (1541 A.D.) with the accompaniment of about seventeen others including his former *Guru* Mahendra Kandalī. Soon after his return, Śaṅkaradeva married again and shifted his residence from Ālipukhurī to a near-about village Bardowā. In this context, the author has mentioned, "It should be noted that Śaṅkaradeva did neither advocate a religion of extreme asceticism nor complete renunciation of family life. He

realized that men and women have to live in the world and to pursue their professions. His religion is therefore, more suited to the householders.’’ (P- 67) Again, in the context of the nature of the Śaṅkaradeva’s religion, the author has commented that the Vaiṣṇavism preached by Śaṅkaradeva was democratic in spirit, principle and organization and all people could embrace it. For the very same reasons, Mohammedans, and others including tribal people were converted to his creed. (P-76) In respect of Śaṅkaradeva’s attitude towards women, the author has discussed the description of the *Divya Kanyā* of the *Haramohana* section of the *Kīrtana*. He has commented that Śaṅkaradeva emphasized on the irresistible temptation of women as a warning to the plight of men, who are entangled in the web of women, however, this was not the attitude of Śaṅkaradeva towards women in general; elsewhere he revealed a more appreciative attitude and took into account diverse delicate qualities of female character. (Pp - 79, 80)

Neog, Dimbeswar: *Jagat-Guru Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva*. 1963.

This book contains thirteen chapters in which the author includes various articles like - *Mahāpurusism* – Its real significance, *Facts about the early life of the Founder, Śaraṇa* (initiation) – Its meaning for life, Truth about Śaṅkaradev’s Twelve Years’ Tour, *Mahāpuruṣīyā* Converts all over India, Further proofs of Śaṅkaradev’s Scholarship, *Ek-Śaraṇa-Nām-Dharma* – What it means, The essence and philosophy of Mahāpurusism, *Bhakti* – a means and end in itself, *Mahāpuruṣīyā* practice and way of life, The future of Mahāpurusism, Works of Śaṅkaradev and Mādhawdev, and an Index of More Important Words. The very names of the articles signify what have been discussed in this book. The author gives the glimpses of Śaṅkaradeva’s life,

literary and social activities, his religion and philosophy, and the relevance of his cult in larger Indian context briefly.

Neog, Maheswar: *Śaṅkaradeva and His Times*. (2nd LBS Edition. 2018)

In this book, the author has mentioned Kanaklatā Āi and her twelve apostles (*Kanakā-Bāra-Janiā*). “Kanaklatā alias Lakṣmī Āi was the first of three wives of Caturbhuja Thākura. She was a woman of much ability and great personality. She was responsible for a considerable furtherance of the faith of her grandfather-in-law. It was for the first time in the history of Assam Vaiṣṇvism that a woman acted as a religious head, and appointed other persons as Superiors. When Caturbhuja nominated Dāmodara, a minor one, as his successor, he also rendered Dāmodara and other disciples to the care of Kanaklatā. After Caturbhuja’s death his wives and the wives of Puruṣottama used to live in Koc Behār at the Bhelā-Sattra. But before long they had occasions to fear persecution from the Koc king. With the advice of Dāmodaradeva, then at the capital, they, their daughters, Dāmodara, and other relations made their way to the Āhom Kingdom. Dāmodara proceeded to the Āhom capital with a view to enlisting the king’s sanction and aid for preaching, while the womenfolk and other disciples stayed at a place, *Āi-bheṭi*, about five miles to the east of Bardowā. The *Āi* initiated many people into *bhakti* and deputed twelve apostles – six Brāhmaṇs and six non-Brāhmaṇs – to different parts of Assam.” (P-151)

Another noteworthy point discussed in this book is that, the author has mentioned the *sattras* originating from Śaṅkaradeva’s granddaughters and great-granddaughters. The author has said – “The *Satras* established by the descendants of Puruṣottama and Caturbhuja’s daughters and the latter’s sister, Govindapriyā, are

known as *nāti-sattras*, “grandsons’ establishments”, *ṭhākura-napatā-Sattras*, establishments of (Puruṣottama and Caturbhuja) Ṭhākuras’ grandsons”, or *Śrī Śaṅkara jīyārī vaṁśar sattra*, “establishments belonging to the line of Śaṅkara on the female side.”(P 151)

The author did not mention in this book about the discovery and reshaping of the *Bardowā Thāna* by Kanaklatā Āi.

Sarma, Satyendranath: *The Neo-Vaiṣṇavite Movement and the Satra Institution of Assam*. 1966.

In the first two chapters of this book, the author has discussed the background of the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement and the contributions of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva to it. The author has dealt with the fundamental teachings of the sects and the history of the sub-sects, the expansion of the *Satra* Institution, and the nature, origin and development of the *Satra* Institution in the third, fourth and fifth chapters. These chapters provide the data and information about the socio-economic, political and religious conditions of Assam, which were in a chaotic state before the advent of Śaṅkaradeva, and provide the information about the history of sub-sects, expansion of the *Satra* institution in Assam after the immergence of Śaṅkaradeva and the inception of the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement. The author has pointed out, referring to the cases of Śaṅkaradeva’s granddaughter-in-law Kanaklatā and Harideva’s daughter Bhuvaneswarī who were recognized as religious heads of their respective sub-sects, that though some passages have decried the evil influence of women and wealth, “in practice, they seem to have shown no ill-will against woman as an individual, and have shown commendable generosity. But in spite of the right to religious ordination

granted to womenfolk, they have not been enjoying the same religious privilege as has been enjoyed by their counterparts. In some of the important *Satras* they are still denied the right of entering into the central prayer hall. Liberalism, which marked the initial stage of the history Vaiṣṇavism in Assam, was later on replaced by conservatism so far as its attitude towards womenfolk was concerned. Regarding the question of marriage and celibacy, Śaṅkaradeva nowhere extolled renunciation of the world for the sake of religion. Mādhavadeva who was a life-long celibate did not recommend celibacy for one and all, rather he advised his disciples on the eve of his death not to take him as their model and adopt celibacy.” (Pp 65, 66)

Bezbaroa, Laksmīnath: *Tattva Kathā*. (1967):

In this book, the author has discussed the *bhakti* cult of Śaṅkaradeva and shows that the essence of Śaṅkaradeva’s *bhakti* cult is taken from *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* and *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. The seeking of refuge in *Saguṇa Īśvara* (God with attributes), one of the tenets of Śaṅkaradeva’s *bhakti* cult, is taken from the *Bhakti-Yoga* of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*. The author has stated that, according to the religious belief of Śaṅkaradeva, work has to be done aiming at God, knowledge is the perception of God, and meditation is the recalling or remembering of God. Work, Knowledge and meditation would be futile if they lack of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is primarily based on belief. The basic objective of the *Bhāgavata*, the providing of Knowledge to worship *Saguṇa Īśvara* (God with attributes) through chanting of and listening to his name that give rise to the deep devotional attachment for Godhead, is the fundamental teaching of Śaṅkaradeva’s *bhakti* cult. Living beings have to be liberated from the bonding of *māyā* or *avidyā* (illusion or ignorance) to be adored by God. The Gopīs in the

Vastraharaṇa section of *Rāsalīlā* were unable to come out from this *avidyā* or *māyā*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa wanted to teach them *advaita jñāna*, the knowledge of the Supreme Being, but under the spell of *māyā* or *avidyā*, they were unable to realize the Supreme Being and were reluctant to discard their clothes that covered their worldly body. In the first part of *Rāsalīlā*, it is produced that the Gopīs had lost the opportunity of getting pleasure with the company of Kṛṣṇa for their pride. When they realized their folly, they suffered sadness for their separation from their love, Kṛṣṇa. This sadness purified them like a piece of burnt gold and made them realize the Supreme Being, Kṛṣṇa. In this way, the author has discussed how Śaṅkaradeva strived to provide the essence of *bhakti* through the Gopīs in *Rāsalīlā*.

Bezbaroa, Laksmīnath: *The Religion of Love and Devotion*: (ed) Neog, Maheswar. 1968).

In this book, the author has discussed the trends and development of Vaiṣṇavism that took place in different parts of India along with its different schools and their modes of worship of God. In the course of the discussion of Śaṅkaradeva and his *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*, the author gives a little glimpse of the forgotten ancient greatness of Assam, which was then a powerful kingdom and was often mentioned in the great epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, and in the *Purāṇas* as Prāgjyotiṣapura. He also has explained the background of the inception of Śaṅkaradeva's *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* referring to Vincent Smith that the poet Kālidāsa, who, according to Vincent Smith, flourished in the first part of the fifth century, also mentioned Kāmrūpa and Prāgjyotiṣa as names of the same kingdom. Prāgjyotiṣa was the seat of learning in astrology and astronomy in ancient India. The

shrine of Kāmākhyā in modern Guwahati in Assam, which represents *Yoni*, is associated with pre-Aryan king, Naraka, who is reputed to have been the guardian of the shrine. In the seventh century the great Chinese pilgrim Yuan-Chang during his travels over various places of India, visited Kāmrūpa also. He did not find any Buddhist to have taken root there. Some centuries after his visit, Kāmākhyā became the reputed centre of the Vajrayāna system of Buddhism, known as *Sahajīyā* cult, along with the Udayana, Śrīhatta and Puṇḍarīk. The debased practices enjoined by this system of *Tāntric* Buddhism earned for Kāmrūpa-Kāmākhyā the reputation of its being a land of magic and sorcery, or the original centre of *Tāntric* Buddhism. It was to extirpate this system of debased religion, the great Vaiṣṇava religious reformer of Assam, Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva began his preaching towards the end of the 15th century. During the next century, he and his disciple and associate, Mādhavadeva, a Kāyastha, and Dāmodaradeva, a Brāhmiṇ, succeeded in suppressing the Bauddha rites, and spreading the new Vaiṣṇava tenet far and wide.

The Author has established Śaṅkaradeva's *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* as a new and independent cult of Vaiṣṇavism based on *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and *Bhāgavadgītā*, and negated the comments of those authors, who, for their ignorance of historical facts considered Śaṅkaradeva's cult as an offshoot of the Caitanya movement in Bengal. He differentiates Śaṅkaradeva's cult from that of Caitanya's and points out that Śaṅkaradeva idealized *dāsyā-bhakti* as the main plank of his cult and insisted on self-surrender to the Supreme Being, while Caitanya gave prominence to *madhura rasa* or love relations between the lover and the beloved as the mode of worship of God. Caitanya, idolizing the female element, Rādhā, prescribed the

combined worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but Śaṅkaradeva was against the worship of minor gods and goddesses and animal sacrifices, on the other hand, Caitanya did not ban worship of numerous deities and he himself worshiped Śiva though he was a Vaiṣṇava.

Śaṅkaradeva's rejection of the caste systems and the *Vedic* rituals, such as *tapa*, *japa*, *homas*, *yajñas* and animal sacrifice, and his rejection of the Brāhmaṇical concept, the pre-requisition of the attributes, such as *deva*, *dvija* and *ṛṣi* to have the blessings of God, aroused antagonism between Śaṅkaradeva and the Brāhmaṇ. Finally Śaṅkaradeva's victory over the Brāhmaṇ, all these are discussed in this book.

Sreenivasa Murthy, H. V.: *Vaiṣṇavism of Saṅkaradeva and Rāmanuja*. 1973

This book is a comparative study of Vaiṣṇavism of Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja. The author has discussed the origin and the background of the Vaiṣṇavite movement in all-Indian context as well in the context of Assam, and has compared and contrasted the teachings of Rāmānuja and Śaṅkaradeva. He comments that at some points both of them are same and at others they differ each other. The author has discussed the attitude of Śaṅkaradeva towards women, and quoting T. Raja Gopālacariar, he comments "In the system of Śaṅkaradeva we find only monks (*kevalīyā*) but no nuns. Śaṅkaradeva warned his followers not to entangle themselves in the web of women." The author again forwards his opinion, "If Śaṅkaradeva did not accord the same status to women as that of men, it was not because he bore any ill-will towards them, but because he was afraid that the sex aspect of women may intoxicate man, thereby close his better senses. Elsewhere he speaks of women more appreciatively."

Sarma, Tirthanath: *Bhaktivāda*. 1977:

The author opines in the preface of this book that in India, devotionism or the path of devotion chiefly implies the devotion of Viṣṇu. In reality, there is no separable relation of a devotee with an imaginary Deity or God, but it is that state of mind of worshippers based on the frequency of the intense desire to be melted with respective Lords to be worshipped.

The author discussed the definition, nature, growth, pattern, classification and trends of *bhakti* and its expositions in different scriptures. He also discussed the definition of *bhakti* expounded by Śrī Śāṇḍilya, and pointed out that, Nārada muni was not completely satisfied with Śrī Śāṇḍilya's *bhakti Sūtra*, and therefore, he expounded another *Sūtra* on *Bhakti*. The nine modes of *bhakti* of the *Bhāgavata* and the path of *mokṣa*, or *mukti* are also discussed in this book.

This book helps the researcher in the discussion of the *bhakti* cult of Śaṅkaradeva.

Jaiswal, S.: *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*: 1981.

In the fourth chapter of this book, the author discussed the origin and the historical development of the doctrine of Vaiṣṇavism with citations from different source books. The author analyzed how the Vaiṣṇavism was evolved through the shifting from the ritualistic cults to devotionism, and how the doctrine of *bhakti* evolved and became a vital force of the cult of Viṣṇu. The author also discussed the doctrine of the incarnation, the fundamental vaiṣṇavite doctrine, and the cause and purpose of different incarnations of the Godhead.

Sarma, Satyendranath: *Rāmāyaṇar Itibṛtta*. 1984.

The author discussed the *Uttarākāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* of Śaṅkaradeva and mentioned that Śaṅkaradeva narrated the deep-rooted grief, sufferings, humiliation and pang of Sītā more explicitly than Vālmīki. The Sītā of Vālmīki accepted all the decisions of Rāma and appeared in the tests of her chastity without any protest, but the Sītā in *Uttarākāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* of Śaṅkaradeva did not remain tight lips, she expressed her resentments and grief coming out from the conventional decorum of woman. Vālmīki concluded all the sufferings of Sītā in three *ślokas* while Śaṅkaradeva elaborated the episode to the contentment of the heart of Sītā.

Barman, Sibanth: *Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Kṛti Āru Kṛtittva*. 1986.

In this book, the author has discussed Śaṅkaradeva's outlook towards women and has forwarded his opinion that the status of women in the tradition of Assamese Vaiṣṇavism was in a dominated state. The Assamese Vaiṣṇavas had no high regards to the women folk in general. Though they were frequently mentioned with the names of the other lower castes of the society in different contexts, it did not mean for elevation of their status, rather, it indicated their detachment towards them, the story of Rādhikā Śānti seemed as an indirect attempt of lowering the status of the upper class people specially the Brāhmins. In support of his opinion, the author mentions different works of different writers of Śaṅkaradeva's time. However, at the same time, the author comments that these are the reflection of the all-Indian Vaiṣṇavism. On the other hand, he has acknowledged Śaṅkaradeva's attitude towards women and refers to *Rukmiṇīharaṇa* and *Pārijāta-haraṇa*, the two fundamental works of Śaṅkaradeva, in which Śaṅkaradeva elevates the status of womenfolk rather than showing abhorrence to them. The author has expressed his belief if the Assamese Vaiṣṇavas had

detachment to or abhorrence for the women in general, Kanaklatā and Bhuvaneśvarī could not have got the opportunity to become the head of *Satra* nor would Śaṅkaradeva initiate Candarī, Banbarā and the wives of Cilārāi. Moreover, the author comments that Śaṅkaradeva was not a misogynist nor did he encourage celibacy though he wrote *putra paribāra sabahu asāra* (son, wife all are futile). He married two times and lived a householder's life with five children, he even advised his disciple-in-chief Mādhavadeva, a life-long celibate, to get married. Śaṅkaradeva's religion did not believe celibacy nor put any injunction on marriage. Most of the disciples of Śaṅkaradeva were married men except Mādhavadeva.

Mahanta, Keshada: *Mahāpuruṣīyā Sāhitya: Keitāmāna Diś*. 1987.

The author has discussed the role of women in the society of *Mahāpuruṣīyā* in the article “*Kathā-Gurucaritar Barṇanāt – Mahāpuruṣīyā Samājat Nārīr Bhūmikā*” of this book based on the description of *Kathā-Gurucarita*. She opines that the interest of Assamese women for education is reflected in the character of Khersūtī, in the same way, Candarī Āi, the housemaid of Śaṅkaradeva's family, shows her knowledge in religious matters by showing the breach in *Vṛndavani vastra*, and by explaining the inner essence of the *Gītā* to some Brāhmin puṇḍita. The author has discussed the acceptance of Vaiṣṇava religion by Mādhava Kandalī and Bhūṣana Dvija, following the advice of their respective wife, and the dedication and the humanitarian service of the wife of Ṭhākur Ātā to the *bhaktas*, which provide spiritual knowledge to her husband. The love and service of the wife of Gopāl Ātā to the *bhaktas*, which was highly praised by Mādhavadeva, and the intense attraction of the *Burhī* of Dawkī village to the *bhaktas* are also discussed in this article.

This discussion helps the researcher in proceeding in the research work on the selected topic.

Sarma, Satyendra Nath: *Asamīyā Sāhityar Samikṣātmaka Itibṛtta*: Fourth Edition, 1989.

In this book, the author divides the Assamese Literature into different ages, of which *Śaṅkarī Yuga*, the age of Śaṅkaradeva, is a major one. The author has discussed the whole literature of this age in an article in which he defines the background and the importance of the Vaiṣṇavite literature. This article provides ample information and many data to a research scholar. In respect of the growth and development of the Neo-vaiṣṇavite movement in all Indian contexts, the author has forwarded a worth-mentioning opinion. Like the influence of the re-study of the ancient Greek and Latin classical literature and art, and the preaching of the Protestant religion of Martin Luther those are related to the history of the renaissance of Europe, the cultural regeneration centering the Vaiṣṇava religion and the Vaiṣṇavite movement is also taking place in India.

The author has discussed the origin and the history of development of the Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇavism. According to the author, Viṣṇu is a Vedic deity and He is a manifestation of *Sūrya*, the Sun. This Viṣṇu is the Vāsudeva of the *Sātvatas*, the Nārāyaṇa of the *Pāñcarātras*, and becomes the Supreme Deity assimilating with the Gopāl Kṛṣṇa of the *Ābhira*s. Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa and the Vaiṣṇava cult are mentioned in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini in the fifth century, in different scriptures of different ages, and in different archaeological inscriptions of the Ancient Age. The Vaiṣṇava cult is specially narrated in the *Mahābhārata*, in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, and in the

Nārāyaṇī Ākhyāna of the *Nārāyaṇīparva*. The names of the deities Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu are found in many archaeological inscriptions of the fourth century. On the origin of the Vaiṣṇavism, the author opines that, “from seventh to tenth century A D, the *Ālvārs*, the *bhakti* poets of Tamilnadu, popularized the Vaiṣṇavite religion, and there from, the Vaiṣṇavite movement got started. These *Ālvārs* composed thousands of *bhakti* poems in the Tamil language, and they regarded the collection of these poems as the *Veda*.

Sarmadaloī, Harinath: *Śaṅkaradevar Sāhitya Pratibhā*: First part, third Edition 1990.

In this book, the author has discussed the poetical works and the plays of Śaṅkaradeva along with the general characteristics of his literary works. In respect of the worship of Viṣṇu in Assam, the author comments that a small stream of the tradition of worshipping Viṣṇu has been in vogue from many years before the immergence of Śaṅkaradeva. In the last part of the fifteenth century, this stream becomes larger and stronger at the effort and influence of Śaṅkaradeva. Śaṅkaradeva collects the nectar of *bhakti* from the honeycomb of all-Indian Vaiṣṇavite literature and introduces in his literary works to establish the supremacy of Viṣṇu. He shows the nine modes of *bhakti* that living beings should follow to offer their *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa. The *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is the honeycomb of the nectar of *bhakti* for Śaṅkaradeva. The author comments that though the stream of spirituality has been flowing with its vicissitudes through almost all the literary works of the Vaiṣṇavite age, but it appears more distinct and stronger in the literary works of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva.

In the discussion of the play *Patnīprasāda*, the author mentions that Śaṅkaradeva takes the story of this play from the 23rd chapter of the 10th *skandha* of

the *Bhāgavata*. He composes the play with a slight difference from the story of the original one, for example, the name of the sacrificial ritual that the Brāhmins performed in the main story is *Aṅgīrasa*, but Śaṅkaradeva does not mention any name. On the other hand, the name of a Brāhmaṇa, Candrabhāratī, and his dialogues incorporated in the play are the addition of his imaginary creation to the main story. In respect of the antagonistic stands of the Brāhmanas towards *bhakti*, the author quotes the comment of the noted scholar Maheswar Neog – “the offering of the *prasāda* (food taken after offering to a deity) of the wives of the Brāhmaṇa *paṇḍita* - śrīdhar Bhattācārya, Kabirāj Miśra, Bāmanācārya, Ratnākara Kandalī, the antagonists of *bhakti* of Dhuāhāt, seemed as a raillery to them. Perhaps, the *Gurujanā*, (Śaṅkaradeva), composed this play during the time when the conflict between Śaṅkaradeva and Brāhmanas was at its climax.”

Bhakti is the main theme of *Kāliyamana*, another play of Śaṅkaradeva, and it is manifested through the self-surrendering of Kālināga, and through the prayers of his wives. The wives of the Kālināga has satisfied Kṛṣṇa through their *bhakti* and made their husband realize his folly and surrender himself unto Kṛṣṇa, thus, they save the life of Kālināga through their *bhakti*.

On the love of the Gopīs in the play *Keli-gopāla*, the author comments, “the love of the Gopīs for Kṛṣṇa is the spiritual love in the sense of the absolute meaning of the term. Some critics regard the love between the Gopīs and Kṛṣṇa as the relation between living beings and the Supreme Being.

In both the plays *Rukmiṇīharaṇa* and *Pārijāta-haraṇa*, Rukmiṇī is produced as a devotee and a consort of Kṛṣṇa who surrenders herself at the feet of Kṛṣṇa with love

and devotion like a servant. Here in this book, the author opines in respect of the character of Rukmiṇī that, “though all the tastes that the rhetoricians spoken of have been revealed in the character of Rukmiṇī, but the dominating taste that illumined the character of Rukmiṇī in this play is *bhakti*.” The flow of love of Rukmiṇī for Kṛṣṇa, which is expedited by the strong torrent of her *bhakti*, has been flowed to, and assimilated in the deep Ocean of Kṛṣṇa. In the same way, the author mentions that the contrast between the character of Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā is evident in the play *Parijātaharaṇa*. Satyabhāmā is proud of having the *Parijāta* flower and she remains contented with worldly thing, she could not overcome her longing for worldly things while Rukmiṇī reaches at the highest pick of her pride. Rukmiṇī’s devotional love for Kṛṣṇa is the flag of her pride, which is fluttering in high plain of spirituality. Her character is illumined with the depth of the ideality of Indian women.

The analyses and the comments, made in this book, help the researcher in the discussion of the women characters of Śaṅkaradeva’s literary works.

Sarma, Satyendra Nath: *Asamīyā Nāṭya Sāhitya*: Seventh edition, 1996.

The author has discussed all the six plays of Śaṅkaradeva in the second chapter of this book, captioned as *Mahāpuruṣ Dujanār Nāṭ*. In the discussion of the play *Patnīprasāda*, the author has explained how Śaṅkaradeva established the supremacy of *bhakti* through the *bhakti* of the wives of the Brāhmanas for Srī Kṛṣṇa and through the contradiction of the arrogant Brāhmanas. The Brāhmanas were the believer of sacrificial rituals and the hater of *bhakti*, on the other hand, their wives were enthusiastic devotees of Kṛṣṇa.

In respect of the character of Kālināga of the play *Kāliyadamana*, the author says that Kālināga is the symbol of pride and cruelty, and these instincts, raising thousands of hoods, cause restlessness and great calamities to Kālināga, and stand as barriers in the path of his devotion to Kṛṣṇa. One cannot find an atmosphere conducive to *bhakti* and feel peace and tranquility of mind, until one becomes free from cruelty. Those who immerse in worldly affairs are full of pride and cruelty, and their other instincts are controlled by their pride and cruelty. The wives of Kālināga are the symbols of the other instincts that are controlled by the pride and cruelty of Kālināga.

The sentiment of devotional love of the Gopīs for Kṛṣṇa and its different stages and layers are narrated in the play *Keli-gopāla*. The author comments that through the introduction of the story of the *Śaṅkha-cūḍa- Vadha*, Śaṅkaradeva showed that in the practice of *Niṣkāma premabhakti* (matterless and devotional love), sometimes the erotic sentiment appears and stands as a barrier in the path of pursuing devotional love.

Śaṅkaradeva portrayed the dramatic characters in the play *Pārijāta-haraṇa* based on their mutual antagonism or contrast and parallelism or homogeneity like a modern playwright. He portrayed the characters - Satyabhāmā, Śacī and Rukmiṇī putting the hostility between Satyabhāmā and Rukmiṇī, and the homogeneity between Śacī and Satyabhāmā side by side. In respect of the *bhakti* of both Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā, the author comments, “Perhaps, Śaṅkaradeva portrayed Rukmiṇī as a symbol of *Nirguṇa bhakti* and Satyabhāmā as a symbol of *Saguṇa bhakti*.”

The character of Rukmiṇī is portrayed in another play *Rukmiṇī-haraṇa*. In this play, Śaṅkaradeva uses his creative genius in the story of *Rukmiṇī-haraṇa*, but though he let his imagination roam freely over the story, he does not unbridle it, and for that

reason, the story neither lose its classical fervour nor does it degrade from spirituality to worldly state. Rukmiṇī never forgets that Srī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Being, the Supreme Godhead, and the sole Saviour of enthusiastic devotees. The playwright, Śaṅkaradeva, portrays the character of Rukmiṇī as more attractive than all the other characters of this play through the narration of her activities, her curiosity, anxiety, grief, dialogues and her dwindling mental stature for the uncertainty of having Kṛṣṇa as her husband. He does not insist on the character of Kṛṣṇa as much as he has insisted on the character of Rukmiṇī in this play.

In the play, Rāmavijaya, Sītā is produced as *Jātismara*, (one who knew the events of one's previous birth). She was *Vedavatī*, (the daughter of king Kuśadhvaṇa who was reborn as Sītā to be the cause of the destruction of Rāvaṇa), in her previous birth, and she observed penance to get Viṣṇu as her husband. According to Vālmīki, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were not brought to attend the *Sayambara* of Sītā, but to show the bow gifted to Janaka by Maheśa. Assamese playwright, Śaṅkaradeva, adding the story of the *Svayamvara* of Sītā increased the excitement of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to go to the court of king Janaka.

In this way, the author discussed all the six plays of Śaṅkaradeva. Such discussion of the author helps the researcher in the discussion of the women characters of the plays of Śaṅkaradeva in the present research work.

Bhattacharya, Parag: *Prema Dharma Āru Vaiṣṇava Kāvya*: 1997.

The philosophy of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* religion and its theory of illicit love are discussed in this book. With reference to the philosophy and source of the poetry of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* poets, the author has discussed the concept of the worshipping

of *Saguṇa Īśvara* (God with attributes). The worshipping of *Saguṇa Īśvara*, in the hope of getting desired fruits, gets prominence simultaneously with the knowledge of the *Brahman* that is received from the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣadas*. This is illumined in a unique way through the *Gītā* and the *Purāṇas* in the later ages, and in particular, the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* brought a change to the tradition of Vaiṣṇava religion. The author has discussed the monism of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, in which the *Brahman* is the Absolute truth and all the other things are illusions in this Universe, and opines that the monism of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya is unalloyed monotheism.

Chaliha, Bhaba Prasad. (ed): *Śaṅkaradeva Studies in Culture*. 1998.

The book is a compilation of a number of articles of some distinguished scholars on the multi-faceted genius and personality of Śaṅkaradeva, the saint-poet, playwright and the founder of *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. This book gives the glimpses of Śaṅkaradeva's contribution to the life, literature, culture and religion of the people of Assam. Some contributors to this book commented in their respective article on the attitude of Śaṅkaradeva towards women.

In the article “*A New Life, Letter and a State*”, the writer Banikanta Kakati discussed the diverse aspects of Śaṅkaradeva's *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* and forwarded a comment on the attitude of Śaṅkaradeva towards women. The writer commented that Śaṅkaradeva was a householder, he married a second time after his return from the first pilgrimage and he did not countenance celibacy in his followers for the purpose of devotion to Viṣṇu.

Chaganlal Jain has compared Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva and Bhagavān Mahāvīra, and opines that both the preachers preach against caste system and advocate

that all men in the domains of religion and society are equal, and by preaching against the caste system, they raise a new hope and strength in the oppressed and downtrodden sections of the society. Both the preachers raise the status of woman in the society by accepting their equal right in practising religion and in other sphere of social life.

K. N. Prasad ‘Magadh’ comments on the character of Sītā portrayed by Śaṅkaradeva in *Uttarākāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*, ‘Rāma, although his deity, is more a royal hero; but the heroine Sītā, with her common womanly habits, is a unique and unparalleled creation of Śaṅkaradeva that is not to be found in any of the *Rāmāyaṇas* of the modern Indian language.’

Such comments of the author on woman help the researcher in determining the attitude of Śaṅkaradeva towards women.

Sarma, Satyendranath: *A Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam*. (1200 A. D. – 1800 A. D.). 2001.

The author discussed Vaiṣṇavism with reference to some *Purāṇas*, *Upapurāṇas*, Copperplate grants, and a large number of Viṣṇu images recovered from different places of Assam, and commented that Vaiṣṇavism, along with Śaivism and Śaktism was prevalent in Assam during the first five hundred years of the second millennium A. D. He also pointed out that the common and ignorant people could not derive the pleasure of direct participation in religious observances, because they could not involve themselves directly in any of the major three religious faiths without the intermediary service of the *Brāhmaṇa* priests or religious *Gurus*. Śaṅkaradeva removed this barrier in the early decades of the sixteenth century by his new creed of Vaiṣṇavism.

Neog, Maheswar: (ed). *Banikanta Racanawali*: (Assamese version) 2006.

In the first section of this book, the author discussed the religious system of ancient Assam and analyzed some societal norms, which, instead of creating a sound atmosphere for religious practice and spiritual uplift of common people, caused moral degradation, social anarchy and religious degeneration. He mentioned the evil practices - the human sacrifice, the *Kaulācāra*, the *Kumārī pūjā*, the *Vāmācārī pūjā*, the *Devadāsī nṛtya* and the emergence of the *Bhogī* class etc. that were prevalent in the name of religious practices before the emergence of Śaṅkaradeva. In Tamreśārī temple of Śadia and in Kāmākhyā temple of Kāmarūpa, the practice of human sacrifice in front of the deity was prevalent, and eventually a new class of people known as *Bhogī* emerged out, who had the every right to mitigate their desire indiscriminately without any obstacle. Voluptuary was consequential of the *Kaulācāra*, the *Kumārī pūjā*, the *Vāmācārī pūjā* and the *Devadāsī nṛtya*, Śaivism and Śāktaism were deeply rooted, but Vaiṣṇavism was almost out of practice until the emergence of Śaṅkaradeva. These discussions provide ample data and help in the discussion of the background and the context of the emergence of Śaṅkaradeva's *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. The researcher owes to the Banikanta Kakati's discussion on the socio-religious matters of Ancient Assam done in this book in differentiating the status of women between pre-Sankarite and Śaṅkaradeva's age in terms of *Bhakti*.

Deva Goswami, Keshavananda: *Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva*. 2007.

The author discussed the biography of Śaṅkaradeva, his literary works, the history of *Satra* Institutions, devotional practices and ceremonials, the faith and the tenets of Neo-Vaiṣṇavite philosophy and position of *Nāma* and *Yuga Dharma*, *Bhakta*

and *Bhakti* etc. He also discussed the background of the Vaiṣṇavite Movement, and analyzed how the *Bhakti* movement started and spread in different parts of India including Assam. In Assam, this movement got a tremendous impetus as Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement, and later on came to be known as *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* or *Mahāpuruṣīyā Dharma*.

Chakravarti, Mukul: *Guru-Carit-Kathār Rūp-Ras*. First Edition 2008.

In this book, the author has discussed almost all the matters related to the compilation of the *Guru-caritas* in detail, and put them in nutshell. In his discussion, the author includes the Introduction, the Narrators, and the time of composition of the *Guru-caritas*, the relation of the *Guru-caritas* with Barpeta *Satra*, the language and the use of common devotional maxims in the *Guru-Caritas*, *Guru-Carit-Kathār Chān Poharat Emuthi Caritra* (a couple of characters in the light and shadow of *Guru-caritas*), the reference to the *Nāma-ghoṣā* in the *Guru-caritas*, the reference to *Devī* in *Guru-caritas*, the use of the sentiment of mirth, the narrating style, the use of parables in the *Guru-caritas*, Humanity of Śaṅkaradeva in the *Guru-Carit-Kathā*, Dāmodaradeva in the light of the *Guru-caritas*, the reference to Śaṅkaradeva and Cilārāi in the *Guru-caritas*.

In the article ‘*Guru-Carit-Kathār Chān Poharat Emuthi Caritra*’ included in this book, the author has discussed those male characters which are related to Śaṅkaradeva’s religious belief, and he has mentioned only the name of the wife of Nārāyaṇ Dās Ṭhākur, Bārabāhī Āi, and comments that, “Bārabāhī Āi was the fittest wife of Nārāyaṇ Dās Ṭhākur Ātā. She was a proud mother with her four sons and five

daughters. At home, she played the role like Yaśodā, the wife of Nanda, and among the *bhaktas*, she was kind and righteous.”

Neog, Maheswar: *Śaṅkaradeva Āru Mādhavadeva*. (2010):

This is a biographical account of the two Vaiṣṇava saints Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva. The author has analyzed the socio-political and economic conditions of Assam that tend to popularize the Vaiṣṇavite movement in Assam. He also has discussed the basic ideology and moral codes of conduct of the *Mahāpuruṣīyā Dharma*, (the *bhakti* cult expounded by Śaṅkaradeva and spread by Mādhavadeva), and mentions the nine modes of *bhakti*, of which Śaṅkaradeva emphasized on *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*, (chanting and listening), as the best mode of *bhakti*. Life sketches along with respective Vaiṣṇava *Sampradāya* of the followers of Śaṅkaradeva are briefly discussed in this book. The author has analyzed Śaṅkaradeva’s contributions to the reformation of societal norms and social reconstruction, and to the literature and music of his time, the golden Era of Assamese literature and music. He has also discussed the role of some female *bhaktas* in the *bhakti* cult of Śaṅkaradeva.

Goswami, Golokeswar: *Guru-Carit-Kathā – Adhyayan Āru Biśleṣaṇ*. 2011.

In the article titled “*Guru-carit-kathāt Asamar Nava Vaiṣṇava Dharma Sangathan Āru Asamīyā Nārī*” incorporated in the aforesaid book, the author has discussed those women who have played role in the spreading of Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement in Assam, and are mentioned in the hagiographical accounts of Śaṅkaradeva. In the discussion, the author, referring to *Manu Samhitā*, opines that though it (*Manu Samhitā*) contains some humiliating comments on the physique and nature of women, nevertheless, it also highlights the positive qualities of women. The

author has also pointed out that a degrading remark is mentioned in a part of the *Kīrttana*, but in the *Hariścandra Upākhyāna* section of the same *Kīrttana*, Śaṅkaradeva highly praises women.

The author, referring to the comment of Śaṅkaradeva, - “I never be the teacher of kings women and *Brāhmaṇas*”, opines that Śaṅkaradeva made such comments either being influenced by intense religious emotion or by some comments mentioned in the *Bhāgavata*. The author has referred to another comment of Śaṅkaradeva, Śaṅkaradeva would not have married to the mother of Rāmānanda if he had heard beforehand the reluctance of his chief disciple Mādhavadeva to get married, and comments that Śaṅkaradeva made such a remark out of emotion. The attitude of Śaṅkaradeva, Mādhavadeva and the other Vaiṣṇavite teachers of Assam towards women were inspiring, and perhaps, for such inspiring attitudes of the Vaiṣṇavite teachers of Assam, women like Kanaklatā, the wife of Śaṅkaradeva’s grandson Caturbhuja Ṭhākura, and Bhuvaneśvarī, the daughter of Harideva could occupy the position of religious head in later times. In addition to these women, some other women devotees, who played crucial role in preaching and spreading the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement, are mentioned in *Gurucarit-kathā*. These women are Bārabāhī Āi, the wife of Nārāyaṇa Dās Ṭhākura Ātā, the wife of Bhabānipuriā Gopāl Ātā and his daughter Padmapriyā, Āi Dhāi, the maid attendant of Koc king Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, Hariparbā Dāyāl, the wife of Keshu Hājarā, Dāyāl, the wife of Teli Kṛṣṇa Ātai, Two wives of Madhāi Ātai, Candarī, the housemaid of Śaṅkaradeva, the wife of Ananta Kandalī, the wife of Cakrapāṇi Dvija, the wife of Jinai Burhā of Dowki village, the wife of Kaṇṭhabhūṣana, Bhuvaneśvarī, the daughter of Rāmraī, the wife of Bhīma

Bāyana, the mother of Govinda Ātai, the wife of Mathurādās Burḍha Ātā, Sumālīnī Burḍhī of Hajo, Harigati, the sister of Harikhā, a messenger of the Koch King Naranārāyaṇa, the wife of Dakṣiṅkuliya Barviṣṇu Ātā, Mādhurī, the beloved wife of King Raghudevanārāyaṇa, the second wife of Śaṅkaradeva alike.

This article provides ample information to the researcher in proceeding in the research work on the selected topic.

Goswami, Upendranath: *Vaiṣṇava Bhakti Dhārā Āru Santa Kathā*: 2012.

In this book, the author has discussed the meaning, classification, and different trends and aspects of *bhakti*, the best way of attaining *mokṣa* according to the Vaiṣṇava religion. He also discussed the principles of *bhakti* expounded by Śrī Śaṅḍilya and Nārada Muni. The nine modes of *bhakti* sanctioned in vaiṣṇavism, based on which, there emerged twelve Tamil Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*-poets known as the Ālvārs, who enriched the Tamil *bhakti* literature with a number of four thousand hymns of worshipping Viṣṇu as the Supreme Deity, are discussed in this book. The author also dealt in another group known as Nāyaṇmārs who worshipped Śiva as the Supreme Deity.

The discussions on the Vaiṣṇavite *bhakti* tradition, its development in post Ālvār period, and the contributions of different cheers like Nāth Muni, Yamunācārya, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, Śrī Rāmānujācārya, Svāmī Rāmānanda, Kabīrdās, Guru Nānak, Tulsidās, Śrī Ballabhācārya, Sūradās, Mirābāī, Śaṅkaradeva and Caitanyadeva provide ample data on the status of women in the context of all Indian *bhakti* movement. These discussions help the researcher in defining the attitude of Śaṅkaradeva towards women.

Pathak, Dayananda: *Beautiful mind of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva*. 2012.

The author gives a glimpse of the life and works of Śaṅkaradeva with an introduction to the tradition of all-Indian Vaiṣṇavism, and Śaṅkaradeva's Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement, which has a swapping effect in the socio-religious, cultural and literary domains of Assam during the 15th-16th century A. D. This book helps the researcher to form the basic concept of Śaṅkaradeva's teachings, and encourages her in undertaking the research work on the selected topic.

Deva Goswami, Ranjit Kumar. *Anunād: Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Āru Asamīyā Saṅskṛti*, (edited). March -2012.

This book contains various beautiful analyses of the literary works of Śaṅkaradeva by different writers in the context of present day prospect. In one of the articles of this book, *Śaṅkaradevar Dhāraṇāt Nāri*, by Malini Goswami, the writer discussed the contributions of Khersūtī Āi and Kālindī Āi to the individual as well as religious life of Śaṅkaradeva. Both these women were mentioned in the hagiographical accounts of Śaṅkaradeva. Khersūtī Āi had to play the role of friend philosopher and guide of the orphan Śaṅkaradeva. She took immense care of Śaṅkaradeva's education and moulded him as a genius.

The writer puts forward her opinion that Śaṅkaradeva did not forget to carry out his household duty. After his marriage, he resided for five years at Ālipukhuri with Kālindī Āi. During this period, Śaṅkaradeva kept himself busy with the production of his different artistic creations, and simultaneously carried out the householder's duty as a responsible husband and a father. According to the writer, Śaṅkaradeva had a high regard towards women, hence none of his poetic compositions or his plays is lacked of

women characters, and in some of his writings like the play *Rukmiṇīharaṇa* and the poetic composition *Rukmiṇīharaṇa* women have played the dominant roles in the development of the respective plots. The women mentioned in the literary works of Śaṅkaradeva are either devotees or beloved of Kṛṣṇa. Some of the women characters of Śaṅkaradeva's writings have been taken from different puranic sources and some are his own creations; but he never discriminates them, rather imposing the womanly beauty and grandeur, he introduces them in his writings with due regards, and as a whole, he highlights the mightiest side of women.

In another article of this book, captioned as *Śaṅkaradevar Abyartha Kabikalpanā Tejasvini Sītā* by Aradhana Patangiya Goswami, the writer discussed the character of Sītā, and showing her sympathy to Sītā, she produced her as a courageous, resolute and faithful wife of Rāma; on the other hand, she made a razor-edged criticism on the activities of Rāma. She commented, Rāma's deceitful abandonment of Sītā in a dense forest to die in her pregnancy that too done by Lakṣmaṇa instead of himself to make himself free from the slanders of his subjects, and his reliance only on the words of a spy rather than his wife, is not justifiable, but a callous act done by a coward. If Sītā had committed the crime of infidelity, why was she not punished through open trial, and instead of allowing her to defend her crime, why was she abandoned in the forest deceiving her?

Sarma, Hemanta Kumar: *Asamīyā Sāhityat Dṛṣṭipāt*. 15th Edition, Sept. 2013.

The author divided the whole Assamese literature into two parts as - The Ancient Age of the Assamese Literature, and The Modern Age of the Assamese Literature. In the first part, there is a discussion ranging from the Folk Literatures to

the Historical Literatures, and among these literature, besides others, the author has discussed the main points of the Vaiṣṇavite literature, the literary genius of Śaṅkaradeva and the Hagiographical Literature. The author pointed out that a small fountain of Vaiṣṇavism had been prevailing in Assam before the emergence of Śaṅkaradeva, but for the religious hypocrisies of Śāktaism, Tāntricism and other religious beliefs, different types of social anomalies and ill practices evolved. Common people became bias of these practices and they remained far away from practising the *Sanātana Dharma*. Fortunately, in such a degenerated state of religion, Śaṅkaradeva emerged and preached the *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. He showed the futility of different sacrificial rites and rituals and provided the knowledge of utility of his religious principle through different religious writings. Śaṅkaradeva adopted two methods to attract common people to his cult. The first one was the establishments of *Satras* and *Nāma-gharas* and the second one was his compositions of different religious books on his Neo-vaiṣṇavite religion for the voracious readers. In this book, the author discussed in detail the whole literary compositions of Śaṅkaradeva, and the tradition of accounting the hagiographies after the passing away of Śaṅkaradeva to his heavenly abode. The author commented that the hagiographies are a main branch of the Assamese Vaiṣṇavite literature. Rāmcaraṇ Ṭhākura, the nephew of Mādhavadeva composed *Śaṅkarara Carita*, (a hagiographical accounts of Śaṅkaradeva), in Assamese, some critics are of the opinion that Daitāri Ṭhākura, the son of Rāmcaraṇ Ṭhākura, too, composed another hagiography as ‘*Śaṅkaradeva Mādhavadeva Caritra*.’

The researcher took help from this book in the discussion of the fourth chapter of this thesis.

Sarma, Nabin Chandra: *Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva*. 2014.

In this book, the author discussed the meaning of *bhakti* and its history of development, the nine modes of *bhakti*, the *Bhakti* movement and its spreading in India. The author also discussed the causes of the development of *bhakti* and its general characteristics, the characteristics of the *bhakti* religion of Śaṅkaradeva and the whole literary works of Śaṅkaradeva, besides, other subject-matters relating to Neo-vaiṣṇavite *bhakti* movement.

The author commented that the chief aim of the *bhakti* movement was the uniform development of common people. The emergence of the attributeless *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣada* as the *Brahman* with attribute in the *Purāṇas* and *Upa-Purāṇas* is behind the growing awareness of the common people to their individual entities.

Adhikari, Narakanta: *Ekaviṃśa Śatikāt Śaṅkaradeva Āru Satra*. 2014.

This book is a collection of Assamese articles on *Śaṅkaradeva and Satra*. The author discussed the position of women in *Satra* institutions and opined that women had received an elevated status in *Satra* institutions from the very beginning of their establishment, and they glorified Śaṅkaradeva's religion by taking active part in different programs and religious ceremonies of the *Satra* institutions. In this respect, the author has mentioned a few women who contributed in popularizing and spreading the culture of *Satra* institutions. They were Khersūtī, the grandmother of Śaṅkaradeva, Candarī Āi, the housemaid of Śaṅkaradeva's family, Kalindī Āi, the wife of Śaṅkaradeva, Kanaklatā, the wife of Caturbhuja Ṭhākura, Rādhikā, the dam-raiser on

Tembowāni rivulet, Bhuvaneśvarī, the wife of Cilārāi and daughter of Harideva, Padmapriyā, the daughter of Gopāl Ātā, Sumati Āi, the wife of Mathurādās Burḍhā Ātā and mother of Balāi, Bhānumati, the wife of the king Naranārāyana, Candrāvalī the wife of Barviṣṇu Ātā and Barabāhi Āi, the wife of Nārāyaṇ Dās Ṭhākur Ātā. In addition to this, the author has also discussed the attitude of Śaṅkaradeva towards women and commented that the literary works of Śaṅkaradeva are the proof of his high regards to the womenfolk, though there are few defamatory remarks, these do not represent Śaṅkaradeva's outlook, but reflect the all-Indian Vaiṣṇavite outlook towards women.

Saharia, Kanak Chandra: *Asamar Vaiṣṇava Dharma Āru Sāhitya*: 2015.

In this book, the author has discussed in brief, the origin and historical development of Vaiṣṇavism, the South Indian Vaiṣṇava religion of the medieval age, the philosophy of the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas, and the pattern of *Bhakti* in Vaiṣṇava religion in the first four chapters. The author gives a glimpse of the identity of Viṣṇu and the first use of the term Vaiṣṇava in the *Mahābhārata* with citations from different scholars. He also gives the hints of the development of the Vaiṣṇavite tradition as a trend of the Hinduism from 200 to 300 B. C. in the reign of the Śaka and Kuśāna dynasties in these four chapters. In the rest chapters of this book, the author discussed the Vaiṣṇavite tradition in ancient Assam, the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite religion and its modernity, the religious philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva, Assamese Vaiṣṇavite literature and its diverse forms. In these chapters, the author briefly discusses the trends and impact of Neo-Vaiṣṇavite religion along with the literary works of Śaṅkaradeva.

Neog, Maheswar: *Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva*. 2016.

This book is a treatise on Śaṅkaradeva. The author discussed the life and works of Śaṅkaradeva in six sections including an introduction. In the introduction, the author discussed the elements of the hagiographies of Śaṅkaradeva along with a short history of his ancestors, the pre-Śaṅkarite poets, and the background of Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement in all Indian and Assam-kāmrūpīan contexts. The author discussed Śaṅkaradeva in Bārabhuñā State in the second section, Śaṅkaradeva in Ahom State in third section, Śaṅkaradeva in Koc State in the fourth section, glimpses of Śaṅkarite Literature, Culture and Philosophy in the fifth section, and the growth of Śaṅkaradeva's cult, the history of *Satra* Institutions and the future of Śaṅkaradeva's religion in the sixth section of this book.

All these chapters are helpful for the researcher to proceed in the present research work.

Śrīnivasachari, S. M.: *Vaiṣṇavism: (Its Philosophy, Theology and Religious Discipline)* 2017.

This is an outstanding work on Vaiṣṇavism, which provides a comprehensive knowledge of Vaiṣṇavism to its readers. The author put the whole gamut of Vaiṣṇavism from its origin, growth and development, its philosophy, theology and discipline in a nutshell with authoritative quotations and citations in support of his arguments wherever necessary. In this book, the author commented, "Vaiṣṇavism is not a mere cult. It is essentially a philosophy of religion." In support of his comment, he referred to *Upaniṣads*, the *Vedāntas* and the *Bhāgavata*.

The author discussed the different aspects *bhakti* such as *Ānandādhikāra*, *Yogatrāyādhikāra*, *Bhaktiyoga*, *Śabdākār Īśvara* (the manifestations of the Supreme Being in different names), *Navavidhā bhakti* (the nine folds of *bhakti*), *Nirguṇa* (attributeless), or Knowledge of *bhakti*, *Satsaṅga* (companion of holy people) and *Guru* (the religious teacher). In the first chapter of this book, the author discussed what the real blissful state is, and how one could attain this state of absolute happiness, what the true nature of the *Paramātmā* (the absolute Being) and how His creation, the living beings, become desirous of propitiating their thirst for attaining a blissful state. In this blissful state, living beings immersed in the absolute happiness of the Supreme Being, and they became free from the worldly matters such as well and woe, gain and loss, victory and defeat, etc.

In the second chapter, *Yogatrāyādhikāra*, the author discussed the necessity of the practice of *Yoga* to overcome the hindrances such as pride, prejudice, malice, excessive longing for worldly affairs, that deviated living beings from the path of pursuing *mokṣa*. He explained that one could proceed step by step in the path of *mokṣa*, through practising the trio – *Karma yoga*, *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga*. The author discussed the definition and trends of *bhakti* and refers to nine modes of *bhakti* along with *premamayī bhakti* (loving devotion), the *nirguṇa* (attributeless) *bhakti* of *Śaṅkaradeva*, and *jñānamayī bhakti* (knowledge of *bhakti*) of *Śaṅkarācārya*. He commented, referring to *Śaṅkarācārya*, that *bhakti* is the best way to achieve *mokṣa*, and to proceed in the path of *bhakti*, one is required to follow a religious teacher, lest it would be a hard nut for one to crack. Even if one could achieve the desired goal somewhere else, it is perhaps the fruit of one's good deeds in his or her previous birth.

This discussion on *bhakti* helps the researcher in carrying out the research work on the selected topic particularly in the chapter relating to Śaṅkaradeva's concept of *bhakti* and its impact on society.

JOURNALS:

Rosen, Steven J: *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies*, Volume 2, No. 4, Fall 1994.

In the article '*The Wrath of Sītā : Śaṅkaradeva's Uttarākāṇḍa*', by William L. Smith, the writer pointed out the innovative genius of Śaṅkaradeva and his bold approach in portraying the characters of Rāma and Sītā in an unconventional way. He commented, "Śaṅkaradeva kept the devotional gloss of the story, yet he portrayed the character of Rāma and Sītā as persons of flesh and blood, and showed his compassion for Rāma's dilemma, of course, but much more for Sītā's sufferings." In this article, the character of Sītā is revealed as dynamic and revolutionary one.

Chakrabarty, Amalendu: *Prācyā-Prajñā*, (A research journal of the Śaṅkaradeva institute of culture international), Volume 1, 1996, (edited).

In the article, "*Vivartavāda, Pariṇāmavāda and Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva's Philosophy of Religion*", by Amalendu Chakrabarty, the editor of this journal and the writer of this article discussed the two distinctive schools of thoughts – the *Vivartavāda* and the *Pariṇāmavāda* that evolved regarding the nature of the Absolute Reality (*Brahman*), the living beings (*jīva*) and the world (*jagat*). He also discussed their relation with each other with reference to different scriptures - the *Brahmasūtra* of Bādarāyana, the *Upaniṣadas*, *Śrīmadbhāgavadagītā*, the *Nyāya*, the *Vaiśeṣika*, the *Sāṃkhya*, the *Yoga* and the *Śruti*, and explained the differences between these two schools. The writer compared and contrasted Śaṅkarācārya, one of the foremost

propagators of *Vivartavāda* with Śaṅkaradeva, the follower of *Pariṇāmavāda* and the exponent of the *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*, and opined, “In various writings of Śaṅkaradeva, one can find an unequivocal support to *Pariṇāmavāda*. Nowhere he supported *Vivartavāda*, because in that case, *Bhaktivāda* would lose all its value and significance, and if the world, living being and the Supreme Lord (*Īśvara*), were no more than the product of the imaginative power of *māyā*, then the Supreme Lord with all His endless charm in which He is depicted in the works of Śaṅkaradeva, and the four foundations on which Śaṅkaradeva’s *Eka-Śaraṇa* religion rests, viz the *guru* (spiritual guide), the *deva* (individualized God), the *nāma* (Holy name), and the *bhakat* (devotee) all these would crumble down like the world of dream (*svapnohayamakhilam jagat*) as explained by the *vivartavādins*.”

Chakrabarty, Amalendu: *Prācyā-Prajñā*, (A research journal of the Śaṅkaradeva institute of culture international), volume II, 1997, (edited).

The first part of this journal deals with Śaṅkaradeva with other eight protagonists of Vaiṣṇava movement, and two papers on other religions for comparative study. The second part contains two invaluable articles relating to Śaṅkaradeva’s spiritual views and practices. After peruse of all the articles of this journal, the researcher could conceive a comprehensive idea about the *bhakti* cult of Śaṅkaradeva, which appears as instrumental in proceeding in the present research work.

Kalita, Jagat Chandra: *Mahāpuruṣajyoti*, (The journal of Śrīmanṭa Śaṅkaradeva Saṅgha), Volume XIV, 2014.

In the article “*Role of Female Characters in Śaṅkaradeva’s Plays*” by Pranati Sarma Goswami, the writer discussed the women characters of the plays of Śaṅkaradeva. She opined, “Śaṅkaradeva painted the women characters in his dramas with some attractive and excellent feminine qualities imposing on them, and he not only unveiled the anti-human deeds, but also started the women-movement for giving them their rightful status in the society.”

Pande, Rekha: (Article) *Women’s voice in Bhakti literature. Research in World Literature*, December 2012. (www.researchgate.net/publication/236680232. 09/09/2019).

The writer of this article discussed the status of women in the society in the context of all Indian *bhakti* movement, and analyzed the different layers and levels of existence that women had to negotiate. She mentioned a few women *bhakti* poets, who became morally courageous by having been perceived *bhakti* that is articulated in the *bhakti* literature to stand against patriarchal political authority, and created an alternate space for them. They became so courageous that they defied the traditional norms of Hinduism stipulated for them, and sometimes, they came out from the restraints of such norms, and at others, they changed their husbands to their way of thinking. The writer commented, “It is interesting to note that while the majority of the *bhakti* saints, especially the *Nirguṇa*, are critical of all the institutions, and revolted against idolatry, tyranny of castes and creeds, temples and rituals, the change they sought did not include women as beneficiary of their efforts. Many of the women saints were distinctly leading non-traditional, non-conformist lives and were advocating freedom of the individual from such restrictive social structures.” This happened in the context

of all Indian *bhakti* movement, but in the context of Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement of Assam, the situation was different. Śaṅkaradeva, the exponent of Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement, was a married one, and he nowhere advocated male chauvinism, rather he showed a liberal and generous outlook towards women, for which, we can find no nun or celibate woman who practised religion revolting against married life. On the contrary, we find many householders women devotees who practised religion besides performing their household duty smoothly.

It is evident from the foregoing reviews that different critics and different authors from different perspective discuss the women characters of Śaṅkaradeva's literary works and the women mentioned in the hagiographies, but the role of these women as the spokespersons of Śaṅkaradeva's *bhakti* cult remained outside the purview of their discussion. The role of women as spokespersons of Śaṅkaradeva's *bhakti* cult is an important topic of discussion to unearth the role of the women characters of Śaṅkaradeva's literary works and the role of the women mentioned in different hagiographies in the preaching and spreading of Śaṅkaradeva's *bhakti* cult. The researcher, therefore, selected the given topic for a critical study in her present work.