

CHAPTER-V

ŚAṆKARADEVA'S LITERARY DEVICES AND MASS COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

Śaṅkaradeva was the pioneer of *Bhakti* movement of the North-Eastern part of the country. Like the other saint-poets of the movement of India Śaṅkaradeva also spearheaded the same with the help of both literary and cultural productions. Śaṅkaradeva contributed a lot to the literary world of Assam. Śaṅkaradeva's literary compositions carried the messages of both social and religious reformation. Those compositions were based on *Bhakti*. Like the other leaders, Śaṅkaradeva too disseminated the messages of socio-religious uplift keeping *Bhakti* as the central theme. Śaṅkaradeva created a large corpus of literature basically based on devotional sentiment. Through those literary works the readers of the contemporary society became able to receive the *Bhakti*-based messages.

5.1 Śaṅkaradeva's Literary Works: An Overview

Social revolutions are generally accompanied with and assisted by literary works. Literature in simple language is a written output which deals with different subject matters or any particular matter that can influence the readers. Literature has a great power to impact a society. A revolutionary change becomes efflorescent by new literature. In India *Vaiṣṇava* literature boosted up the *Vaiṣṇava* faiths. Moreover *Vaiṣṇava* literature helped in dissemination and expansion of *Bhakti* cult from the time of Ālvārs till date. Indian *Bhakti* movement was basically flourished by various

literatures among which *Nālāyīra Divya Prabandham* is one of the greatest literary outputs. *Śrīmadbhāgavat* and *Bhāgavad Gītā* are such sacred literature of *Bhakti* cult.

The *Bhakti* movement or the *Bhakti* cult in Assam was enriched by the *Vaiṣṇava* literatures, which again were mostly influenced by the sweetness and softness of *Bhāgavat* and *Gītā* -the sacred most scriptures of Indian Vaishnavism. And in the 15th and 16th century the large share of literary compositions was contributed by Śaṅkaradeva. Following Śaṅkaradeva's works, other poet writers like Mādhavadeva, Rāma Sarasvatī, Ananta Kandali and Bhattadeva produced their own writings during the period. As a result the literary innovations began to reach a higher level.

At a very early age Śaṅkaradeva studied maximum number of the holy scriptures of Indian *Bhakti* literature. Moreover he used to write from a very early age. He became master in all branches of religious scriptures like the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Tantras*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Samhitās* and *Kāvya*s etc. He was basically influenced by the theological and philosophical principles of *Bhāgavata* and *Gītā*. He was also inspired by the writings of his predecessors.

At the age of twelve he went to the *ṭol* of Mahendra Kandali. Within a very few days of admission, he composed a mystical poem glorifying God except the initial one without using any vowels. It was like this:

karatala kamala kamala dala nayana

bhaba dava dahana gahana vana śayana

napara napara para śatarata gamaya

sabhaya mabhaya bhaya mama hara śatataya

kharatara vara śara hata daśa vadana
khagacara nagadhara phaṇahara śayana
jagadaghamapahara bhava bhaya taraṇa
para pada laya kara kamalaja nayana.

According to his stay at different places and territories such as Bāra Bhūñā, Āhom and Koc territory, Śaṅkaradeva's literary works can be divided into three basic periods.¹

A. Early period: In the Bāra Bhūñā territories**

This period is characterized by a youthful gaiety and exuberance, and extends roughly up to the year 1516.

i) Non-*Bhāgavata* group

1. *Hariścandra-Upākhyāna*(*Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa*)
2. *Bhakti-Pradīpa*(*Garuḍa Purāṇa*)
3. *Kīrtana-Ghosā: Ureṣā –Varṇana* section(*Brahma-Purāṇa*)

ii) Non- *Bhāgavata* material mixed with *Bhāgavata* elements, not influenced by Śrīdhara Svāmī-

4. *Rukmiṇī-Haraṇa-kāvya* (*Harivaṃśa* and *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*)

iii) Lyrics-

5. *Bargīts*

¹ Neog, M. (2018). *Saṅkaradeva and His Times Early History of Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Assam*. P. 160

iv) First group of *Bhāgavata* tales, taken from outside book X-

6. *Ajāmilopakhyāna* (Book VI)

7. *Amṛta –Mathana* (Book VII)

8. *Kīrtana-Ghosā: Ajāmilopakhyāna* (Book VI), '*Prahlāda-caritra*' (Book III, VII), *Haramohana*, *Bali-chalana*, *Gajendropākhyāna* (Book VIII), and *Dhyānavarṇana* sections

9. *Guṇamālā*, II-VI

B. Middle period: In the Āhom Kingdom

This was a period of great unrest and obstruction, self criticism and then advance.

i) Presentation of arguments to meet the enemy of the *Bhakti* cult-

3. *Kīrtana-ghosā: 'Pāṣaṇḍa-Mardana'* and '*Nāmāparādha*' sections (*Bhāgavata*, *Padma* and *Bṛhannārādīya Purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu dharmottara* and *Sūta-Saṁhitā*)

9. (Vipra) *patnī-prasādaNāṭ* (*Bhāgavata -Purāṇa*, x)

ii) Tales of Kṛṣṇa's early life from the Pūrvārdha of the *Bhāgavata -purāṇa*, x-

3. *Kīrtana-Ghosā: Śiśu-līlā*, '*Rāsa-krīdā*', *Kāmsavadha*', '*Gopī uddhavasamvāda*', '*Kujīr vāñchā-puraṇa*' and '*Akrūrar vañca puraṇa*' sections.

C. Final period: In the Koc kingdom (c. 1543-1568)

i) The second group of *Bhāgavata* tales, taken from outside

10. *Bali-chalan* (Book VIII)

11. *Anādi-pātan* (Book III, *Vāmana-purāṇa*)

ii) *Bhāgavata* tales from Book X (Uttarārdha), XI and XII-

3. *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*: ‘*Jarāsandhayuddha*’, ‘*Kālayavanavadha*’, ‘*Mucukundastuti*’, ‘*Śyāmanta Haraṇa*’, ‘*Nāradaḥ Kṛṣṇa Darśana*’, ‘*Vipraputra Anayana*’, ‘*Daivakir Putra ānayana*’, ‘*Vedastuti*’, ‘*Līlāmālā*’, ‘*Rukmiṇīr Premakalaha*’, ‘*Bhṛigu Parīkṣā*’, ‘*Śrīkṛṣṇar Vaikuṇṭha Prayāṇa*’, ‘*Caturvīṃsati-Avatār-Varṇan*’ and ‘*Tātparya*’ section.

iii) Rendering of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* taken *Skandha* by *Skandha* or in the form of independent anecdotes-

12. *Bhāgavata*, X. *Ādi*

13. *Bhāgavata*, XI (with materials from Books I and III)

14. *Bhāgavata*, XII

15. *Bhāgavata*, I

16. *Bhāgavata*, II

17. *Bhāgavata*, IX (not available)

18. *Kurukṣetra* (Book X, *Uttarārdha*)

19. *Nimi Nava Siddha Saṁvād*

8. *Guṇamālā*

(iv) The tale of Rāma-

20. *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Uttarakhaṇḍa*

v) Lyrics-

5. *Bargīt*

6. *Toṭaya*

21. *Bhaṭimā*

(vi) Doctrinal Treatise-

22. *Bhakti-Ratnākara*

vii) Dramas-

23) *Kālī-Damana*

24) *Keli-Gopāla*

25) *Rukmiṇī-Haraṇa*

26) *Pārijāta-Haraṇa*

27) *Rāma-Vijaya*

5.2 Literary Devices as Mode of Mass Communication

The religious condition of Assam in the pre-Sankarite period was too worse. Like other parts of India the Brāhmaṇas became more dominant in Assam too. They spread the Vedic and priestly rituals wherein the non-Brahmins were prevented to join in. Gradually the common people lost both their interest in and knowledge of Hinduism. And the newly-entered Brahmins got the golden chance of it and enjoyed supreme power over the common people. As a result, some significant as well as noteworthy developments took place in the society.

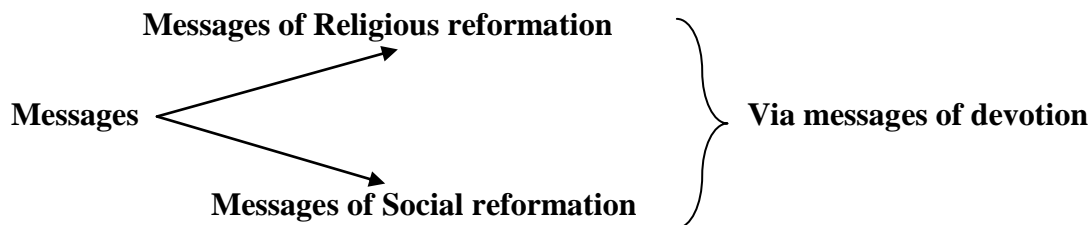
During the pre-Sankarite period, the popular cults prevailed in the land were Śaivism, Śaktism and Vaishnavism. It is amply warranted by epigraphic evidences that all the principal royal families of ancient Kāmarupa were devotees of Lord Śiva. Śaivism, worship to Śiva, was popular cult among the aboriginals and the Aryanized people from a remote period. The worshipping of Śiva was accompanied by human sacrifices and sexual amusement. Wine, women and raw flesh were basic needs of Śiva worship.² Again the Śakta cult is considered to be originated in Kāmarūpa with its chief temple at Kāmākhyā as its centre. Kāmākhyā is said to be the goddess of sex and virgin. This cult emphasized on the worship to sex and sex organs as mentioned in *Kālikā-Purāṇa* and *Yogini Tantra*. Some fundamental elements of worship of Kāmākhyā were flesh, fish, women, wine etc. According to *Kālikā-Purāṇa*, the sacrificial animals were birds, fishes, alligators, tortoises, buffaloes, bulls, he-goats, antelopes, wild boars, ichneumons, rhinoceros, iguanas, reindeer, lions, tigers etc.

Under the circumstances the general masses had been searching for social and religious liberty. Śaṅkaradeva, as a much learned man, dedicated himself to crusade against the prevailing religious practices and began to preach *Bhakti* cult in a missionary spirit to rescue the people from such suffocating circumstances. He undertook two pilgrimages. Such a prolonged wandering provided him the real spirit of Vaishnavism equipped with firsthand knowledge of Vaishnavite theology and of the different prevailing sects of the faith. It helped to shape up a new genre in religious sector of Assam. For it Śaṅkaradeva started to write something that was chiefly based on the devotion to Lord Viṣṇu i.e. which was purely monotheistic. Through his

² Kakati, B. (2003). *The Mother Goddess Kamakhya*. P.20-21

writings he tried to communicate with the common masses to share the messages of *Bhakti* Cult. The entire process of communication involved can be presented in the following way:

Sender: Śaṅkaradeva



Medium: The literary works

Receivers: The Common masses

5.3 Messages of *Bhakti* through Literary Devices

Some tremendous and revolutionary changes took place through the messages which Śaṅkaradeva disseminated through his literary productions. His literary works are based on devotional sentiments. Although all of his literary works dealt with devotional sentiments, they carried various meanings of different aspects. The messages which were propagated can be divided in the following ways:

5.3.1 Messages of Religious Reformation

5.3.1.1 Reformation in devotional practices

Śaṅkaradeva was a fearless crusader against anti-social devotional activities. His primary mission was to demolish the existing religious practices in the society. Before his time the society experienced various expansive religious activities and

worshipping of living beings in the name of God. The circumstances were very much miserable and unstable which deteriorated the social status. Śaṅkaradeva thought for changes and reformations in religious sector to stop the anti social activities in the name of God. He produced lots of literary works through which he wanted to spread the messages of Bhakti to bring reformation in devotional practices.

anya devī deva nakaribā seva

nākhāibā prasādo tāra /

mūrttiko nāsāibā gṛhau napaśibā

*bhakti haibo byabhicāra //*³

(Śrīmadbhāgavata. Skandha II, verse 124)

(Bow not to other Gods and Goddesses; accept not the offerings of them. Glance not at idols and enter not the dwellings of idols in order to prevent adulteration of prevention.)

Śaṅkaradeva emphasized upon the nine ways of devotion. Among those nine forms, he considered Śravaṇa and Kīrttana and also Arcana and Bandana to be the chief and important ways of worshipping God. And by these four principal forms of devotional practices all the sinners of the whole universe can be freed from sins.

Śaṅkaradeva wrote -

hena Kṛṣṇa deva pari kara seva

sumangala kirti jār /

³ Chutia, D.(1998).Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Vākyamṛt. P. 255

pūjā ādi jata bhaktira madhyata

*Śravaṇa Kīrttana sār //*⁴

(*Śrīmadbhāgavata. Skandha II, verse 52*)

Here, *śravaṇa* and *kīrttana* are considered to be the most suitable and adorable ways of *Bhakti* than the other methods of worshipping God.

śravaṇa kīrttana arcana vandana

ādi bhakatiye jāra /

samaste lokara sadye pāpa hare

*tāna pāe nāmaskāra //*⁵

(*Śrīmadbhāgavata. Skandha II, verse 51*)

(Listening, chanting, remembering, praying and bowing to the feet of Lord Viṣṇu, slavery, friendship, praising and surrendering the body to Lord Viṣṇu. These nine numbers (varieties) of devotion to Lord Viṣṇu are the best lessons.

śravaṇa Kīrttana sāriu barṇara /

*nijapitṛ Kṛṣṇa mara sebya jagatara //*⁶

(*Śrīmadbhāgavata. Skandha II, verse 51*)

(All the people of four *barṇas* i.e. *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *baiśya* and *sudra* can attain Lord Kṛṣṇa only through *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrttana*. That means these two are the best means to meet God for all the people of the world.)

⁴ Ibid. P.248

⁵ Ibid. P.248

⁶ Ibid. P.251

Ghara poṣā paśu yīto kare balidāna /

*parama ajñānī siṭo rākṣasa samān //*⁷

(Ajāmīla-Upākhyāna, Skandha vii, verse. 58)

Here, it is said that the person who sacrifices the domestic animals in the name of God is very much unwise and is like a demon.

namāribe paśuka eribe māmsa āśā /

*devako uddeśvi paśu nakaribe himsā //*⁸

(Nimi-Nava- Siddha-Saṁvāda, Verse.

351)

Here, it is said that people should not kill the animals and should leave the greed of meat and also should not make any violence to animals for God.

nirantare paśura lovāilā tumi prāṇa /

*nāhi manda karma āra ihāra samāna //*⁹

(Śrīmadbhāgavata, Skandha I, Verse 32)

It is said that no other evil deeds are there like the killing of animals and taking their lives.

svabhāve lampāṭa viṣayata anurāga /

svarga pāibo buli raṅge kāṭai haṁsa chāga //

⁷ Ibid. P.293

⁸ Ibid. P.766

⁹ Ibid. P.215

karai nānā hiṃsā dharma nānā deva pūjāi /

*pūṇyakṣaya bhaile dunāi narakata majai //*¹⁰

(Śrīmadbhāgavata, Skandha I, Verse 34)

Here, it is said that people who are wicked and materialistic in nature, they greedily, happily sacrifice the birds and animals to go to heaven. They worship to different gods and goddesses and practice different violent rituals and as a result they submerge into hell.

5.3.1.2. Reformation in Expensive Rituals

Śaṅkaradeva belonged to that society where majority of people were economically backward. Therefore, he thought for them and developed some religious practices which were not expensive like the existing rituals and propagated those practices through his literary works.

tīrtha buli karai jalata śuddhi

pratimāta karai devatā buddhi /

vaiṣṇavata nāi isava mati

*garuto adhama kṛṣṇa vadati//*¹¹

(Kīrttan, verse 132)

(One who baths or purifies himself or herself in water considering it as a holy place, one who worships idol considering it as God, Lord Kṛṣṇa considers them inferior even to cows.)

¹⁰ Ibid. P.215

¹¹ Ibid. P.46

bhaktihīna nare yata karma kare

sakale viphalā haya /

tapa japa gaṇa yāta samarpaṇa

*bine phala nadharaya //*¹²

(Bhāgavata, Skandha II, verse 52)

(Meditation, prayer, *yajña* whatsoever a devotionless person does, never becomes successful, not does yield any fruit)

eka kṛṣṇa deva kariyoka seva

dhariyo tāhāna nāma II

kṛṣṇa dāsa huyā prasāda bhuñjiā

*haste karā tāna kāma //*¹³

(Bhāgavata, Skandha II, verse 125)

(To provide service to only one God, to chant the name of only one god, to act as servant of only one God are the best ways to attain the Lord.)

tapa japa tīrtha vrata vidhiar kiṅkara /

nāmara kīrttana iṭo vidhira īśvara //

nāhi kāla niyama nāmata eko vidhi /

*yei sei mate laile nāme karai śuddhi //*¹⁴

(Śrīmadbhagavata, Skandha VII, verse 182)

¹² Ibid. P248

¹³ Ibid. P255

¹⁴ Ibid.P. 304

(In this verse it is said that meditation, fasting etc. are the servants of fate, chanting the names of God is the Lord of fate. No restrictions of time and rules are there in singing Lords glory. And chanting the Lord's name purifies all.)

5.3.1.3. Reformation in Cooperation of all Castes and Classes:

Before the time of Śaṅkaradeva casteism was prevailed as a major issue in society. Discrimination between upper and lower class created a very big socio-religious problem. During that period only Brahmins and some other upper class peoples were allowed to cooperate in worshipping and other ritual functions. The general people were dominated by priestly community and were deprived to join in such functions. But Śaṅkaradeva revolted against this and proclaimed:

smaroka mātra hari dine rāti /
*nabāchai bhakati jāti ajāti //*¹⁵
(Kīrtana ,verse129)

(It is said here that human being should remember only Hari day and night, without any discrimination of caste or non-caste.)

cāṇḍālo hari nāma lave mātra /
*karibe ucita yajñara pātra //*¹⁶
(Kīrtana, verse 118)

The movement an outcaste takes resort to the name of Hari, he deserves to be a priest of sacrificial fame.

brāhmaṇara cāṇḍālara nibicāri kula /

¹⁵ Ibid. P 46

¹⁶ Ibid. P. 45

dātāta corata yena dṛṣṭi eka tula //
nīcata sādḥuta yāra bhaila eka jñāna /
*tāhākese paṇḍita buliya sarbajana //*¹⁷
(Kīrtana, verse 1821)

(He who makes no differences between Brahmaṇa and Cāṇḍāla, and keeps equal view on donor and thief, and he whose view has become equal on wicked and saint, only he is said to be the wise by all.)

Thus Śaṅkaradeva tried to send the messages of devotion which could bring reformation in the socio-religious life. He stood against the existing religious customs which created caste-discrimination among the general masses. Moreover worshipping of different gods and goddesses and scarifying of living creatures in the name of God created social instability. Therefore Śaṅkaradeva, used his writings as tools to stand against the prevailing religious customs, tried to disseminate the messages Bhakti for all round reformation of the society.

5.3.2 Messages of Social Reformation

5.3.2.1 Messages of Moral Education

5.3.2.2 Messages of Mass Education

5.3.2.3 Messages of Social Education

5.3.2.1 Moral Education:

Śaṅkaradeva wanted the masses to be morally educated. Morality of people was very much essential to reform the society which was deteriorated by various socio-religious factors such as predominance of priestly community, classism,

¹⁷ Ibid P.178

sacrificing of living creatures in the name of God etc. To make the morally degraded society strong and well-built, Śaṅkaradeva thought of providing moral education to the masses with a mission to reform such weaken circumstances. He wrote many scriptures to provide the people the messages of moral education. The masses could receive the messages of good human behavior, behavior towards animals or other living beings, messages of non-violence etc.

jagatara puṇyamāne jānā niṣṭha kari

prāṇī upakārara alpako nuhi sari /

hena jāni prāṇika abhaya diyā dāna

*bolā hari hari pāibā vaikuṇṭhata thāna II*¹⁸

(Hariścandra Upākhyāna, verse 495)

(Know it definitely about good in the world, and service to creature is service to God. Knowing this, ensure fearless environment to creatures, and do utter *Hari Hari* to have devine happiness.)

kukura śṛgāla gadarbharo ātmā rām /

*jāniyā sabāko pari karibā praṇāma //*¹⁹

(Kīrttana, verse 1823)

(In this verse it is said that all the animals are the parts of God and knowing it people should bow down to them.)

¹⁸ Ibid. P.834

¹⁹ Ibid. P.178

yīto caṇḍālāra jihbāra āgata /

hari guṇa nāma bīje //

tāpa tapa japa yajñya homa dāna /

*jānā prati nite sije //*²⁰

(*Daśama Skandha*, verse-1779)

(The cremator who utters Hari's name, all his activities done in the name of God, such as meditation, yajña and sacrifice to God, are considered as taking place regularly.)

5.3.2.2 Mass education:

Literacy rate of during Śaṅkaradeva's time was very low. A minimum number of people could read and write and because of that they were not able to grasp the knowledge from the holy scriptures. Śaṅkaradeva's time was very unstable both in political and religious sectors. Therefore Śaṅkaradeva wanted the common people to be educated irrespective of their castes and categories.

kāka buli hari kathā

harira kīrttana kibā

yītu save ekove najāne /

strī śūdra antyajāti

tāko śikṣā dibā māti

*dharibe sisave aho prāṇe //*²¹

(*Nimi nava siddha samvāda*, verse 333)

²⁰ Ibid. P.

²¹ Ibid. P. 764.

(Whom to say about *Hari and Hari Kīrtana* as they know nothing. Call in and teach all of them irrespective of gender and caste. They will learn by heart and soul.)

5.3.2.3. Messages for Social Education:

Śaṅkaradeva deeply thought for the society and its people. He wrote nothing for his personal benefits, nor for some one's individual purpose, but for the society consisting of all classes of people, irrespective of poor and rich, upper and lower. Through his writings he raised the voice of socialization, social control, social protest etc.

kirāta kachārī *khācī gāro miri*

yavana kaṇka govāla /

asama maluka *dhoba ye turuka*

kubaca mleccha caṇḍāla //

āno pāpī nara *kṛṣṇa sevakara*

saṁgata pavitra haya /

bhakati labhiyā *saṁsāra tariyā*

vaikuṇṭha sukhe calaya //²²

(Śrīmadbhāgavata, Skandha II, verse.53,54)

(Kirāta, Kachārī, Khāsi, Gāro, Miri, Yavana, Kaṇka, Govāla, Turuka, Kubāsa, Mleccha, Outcaste and other sinful people also become holy-minded when become

²² Ibid. P. 249

companion with the devotees of lord Kṛṣṇa. And on getting blessings of God they make their way to heaven.)

devato tīrthato kari bhakatese bara /

bhakataka bhajile gucaya karma jaḍa //

(Śrīmadbhāgavata, Skandha XI, verse.

181)

(Devotees are superior to gods and pilgrimage, one who serves devotees can release himself from work-fever.)

viṣṇu maya dekhai yitu samaste jagata /

jīvante mukuta hovai acira kālata //

sakala prāṇika dekhibeka ātmasama /

upāya madhyata iṭo āti mūkhyatama // (Kīrtana)

Here it is said that a person who perceives the presence of Lord Viṣṇu all around, he attains salvation in his life within a short span of time. Therefore, do think that all the living beings are equal and it is the best of all the means of attaining salvation.

Thus Śaṅkaradeva in all of his writings have reflected the messages of *Bhakti* targeting the common masses. The sweetness and softness of his writings compelled the common people to be engrossed in the sentiment of devotion. He drew the sweetness of his literature mainly from *Bhāgavatpurāṇa* and placed it in the land of Assam through Vaiṣṇavism.

5.4 Messages of *Bhakti* in the Devotional Scriptures of Śaṅkaradeva:

Bhakti movement, in general parlance, was boosted up by literary works of many sages all over India. Śaṅkaradeva's literary works also did the same in Assam. Behind all the literary writings there was a noble objective which can be said as the objective of dissemination of *Bhakti*. Śaṅkaradeva used all of the literary works as medium of communication through which the messages of *Bhakti* were sent to readers.

A brief discussion of how Śaṅkaradeva used his literary compositions as a medium of transmission of bhakti messages is given bellow:

5.4.1 *Hariścandra Upākhyāna*:

According to *Kathā Guru Carita*, *Hariścandra Upākhyāna* was the first work of Śaṅkaradeva when he was a disciple in the *ṭol* of Mahendra Kandali. The content of the book was taken from 8th chapter of *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.

mārkaṇḍeya purāṇara kathāte pradhāna /

payāre racibo hariścandra upākhyāna // (Verse.2)²³

The writer tries to establish the power of Viṣṇu through the story of the book. He mentions the four pillars of *Bhakti*, i.e *Nāma*, *Deva*, *Guru* and *Bhakata* in that book (Lekharu, 2006. Pg.21).

viṣṇu vaiṣṇavaka kathā duyo samatula /

śravaṇa kīrttana kare pāpaka nirmūla // (Verse-2)²⁴

²³ Ibid. P.181

²⁴ Ibid. P. 2

(The writer says that tales of Viṣṇu and *Vaiṣṇava* (devotees of Lord Viṣṇu) are equal.
Chanting of and listening to Lord Viṣṇu remove all sins.)

The author emphasizes upon the power of worship and devotion at the beginning and at the end of the book respectively:

Mādhavaka ārādhile yena lāge hauka //

(verse 2).

*dharmara prabhāve hariścandra puri bhai gailā svargara
samāna//*

(verse 510)

Śaṅkaradeva has emphasized on *Dharma* along with its parameters like charity, sacrifice, forgiveness, tolerance, favour and loyalty. Śaṅkaradeva has established the philosophy of superiority of Vaishnavite faith through the book.

According to the story, King Hariścandra lost his Kingdom and his royal dignity. He had to lose his family. Such situation came when Viśvāmitra, the great ṛṣi, cursed king Hariścandra and took away his kingdom and everything he had. King Hariścandra had unflinching dedication to lord Viṣṇu and ignored Lord Gaṇeśa.

Being ignored by king Hariścandra, Lord Gaṇeśa searched an opportunity to take revenge. One day it happened in reality what Lord Gaṇeśa wanted. Viśvāmitra, when he was in deep meditation, was disturbed by King Hariścandra. So he cursed him in anger. As a result the king lost everything he had. But at last lord Viṣṇu relieved Hariścandra from all his troubles.

In the story of *Hariścandra Upākhyāna*, it seems that the worshipping of Lord Gaṇeśa was ignored by Śaṅkaradeva in the story. The chief objective of the book was to establish the principle of *ek deva ek seva* and the writer did it by dismissing importance of worshipping of Lord Gaṇeśa.

namu namo nārāyaṇa bighini khandana prabhu

bhakata janaka karā dayā /

haripada prasādata siddhi hauka abhimata

nāśa yāok saṁsārara māyā / (verse 67)²⁵

Here, Śaṅkaradeva considers *Nārāyaṇa* i.e Lord Viṣṇu as the almighty in human life. He holds that Lord Viṣṇu alone can bring an end to all the troubles of human life and thereby bestow salvation.

Thus Śaṅkaradeva through the story tries to sing the glory of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Hariścandra lost everything. He lost his royalty. But he had deep devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa who saved him from such a life of sufferings.

5.4.2. Ajāmila Upākkhyān:

It is a poetic work of Śaṅkaradeva. The subject-matter of *Ajāmila Upākkhyāna* is taken from the 26th chapter of 5th *skandha* and 1st to 3rd chapter of 6th *skandha* of *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. *Bhakti* is the central theme of the story. In this story Śaṅkaradeva

²⁵ Ibid. P. 802

tries to depict how chanting of God's name can redeem the people from the all kinds of sins.

Ajāmila, who belonged to a Brāhmaṇ family, was a heretic. His only interest was in physical happiness, worldly life and sexual relationship. He was the father of ten sons. Name of the youngest son was *Nārāyaṇa*. It was about the last moment of his life. Yamarāj, the king of Hell, sent his *dūtas* (representative) to Ajāmila to take away his soul to the hell. Ajāmila became frightened and started to call his youngest son *Nārāyaṇa*. *Nārāyaṇa* is another name of Lord Viṣṇu. As he started to call *Nārāyaṇa*, some Viṣṇu *dūtas* appeared there immediately. A quarrel started between the two parties i.e. the *Yamadūtas* and the Viṣṇu *dūtas*. Both the parties fought to win over Ajāmila's soul to take away the same to hell or heaven. At last the Viṣṇu *dūtas* succeeded to take the soul to heaven. All the sins of Ajāmila were washed away all of a sudden because he uttered the single word '*Nārāyaṇa*', a name of Lord Viṣṇu.

The entire work of Ajāmila Upākkhyān deals with a word i.e *Nārāyaṇa*. *Nārāyaṇa*- is one of thousand names of Lord Viṣṇu. The significant thing is that if a person utters any of the names of Lord Viṣṇu at any moment surely he or she will be rescued by Lord Viṣṇu. Utterance may be even by mistake also.

In the work *Ajāmila Upākkhyāna*, Śaṅkaradeva emphasizes upon the chanting of God's names. By chanting the names all the sins are washed away, all the misdeeds are excused. It is the power of Lord Viṣṇu. Śaṅkaradeva, here in *Ajāmila Upākkhyāna*, states that by chanting God's name a sinner gets relief from all his sins and there is no

need to worship other gods and goddesses and no need to arrange expensive pilgrimage and expensive ritual functions.

Ajāmila was a sinner. But at the time of his last breath he was rescued by Lord Viṣṇu only because of utterance of the word *Nārāyaṇa*, his son's name, and thus he went to heaven.

Being regretted for all his sins Ajāmila took initiation on the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He began to search Kṛṣṇa and went to the bank of the river Gaṅgā.

5.4.3. *Amṛta Manthana*:

Amṛta Manthana is another poetic work of Śaṅkaradeva which is taken from the 8th *Skandha* of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. According to the story the *devatās* were defeated by the *dānavas* (demons) because of the curse of ṛṣi Durvāsā. Lord Viṣṇu suggested them to churn and draw the *Amṛta* from the ocean and told that whoever will be able to take out *Amṛta* will be immortal. Accordingly both the *gods* and the demons tried by hook or by crook to pull out *Amṛt*. But no party was able to do it by themselves separately. So they put their effort jointly expecting to remain young and immortal for the whole life. After drawing *Amṛt* out it was time to share it equally. At that time Lord Viṣṇu appeared there but in guise of a beautiful girl. Viṣṇu took the vessel of *Amṛta* from them and stealthily distributed it to the *devatās*. Because Viṣṇu did not want the demons to remain young and immortal forever as they were not peace-lovers. Their immortality will surely threat others. But the demons became angry as they were deprived of *Amṛt* and fought against the *devatās* but were defeated by them.

5.4.4. Nimi Nava Sidha Samvāda:

It is another noteworthy work of Śaṅkaradeva. The source of the book is *Śrīmadbhāgavatapurāṇa*. The story is taken from 2nd to 5th chapters of 11th *skandha*. It's a story of a king called Nimi who asked some questions about God and life etc. to nine great sages. They answered very satisfactorily and told him the way to Godhead.

They said-

sṛṣṭi sthiti pralayara yito jitu deva /

jāta pare parama isvara nāhi keva // (Verse 178)²⁶

(It means that God is the cause of creation, existence and destruction of the whole universe, there is none superior to Him)

jāgana sopana yitu nirbhara nidrāta /

samādhita sākṣī rūpe thākanta sākṣāta //

sacetana karāi deha prāṇa indriyaka /

jīvaka vuñjānta nānāvidha viṣayaka // (verse 179)²⁷

(Whom all dependants exist during awaking, dreaming and sleeping, and as witness in *samādhi*, Who always makes our body and sense organs conscious.)

paramātmā buli tāka kahe munigaṇa/

tehente parama tattva bulibā rājana// (Verse 180)

²⁶ Ibid. P.752

²⁷ Ibid. P.752

(The sages call him as supreme soul i.e. *paramātmā* and he is the supreme knowledge.

The sages told the king that he is God.)

Here it is mentioned that devotion is way to the ultimate prosperity for devotion-

garvva ahaṁkāra tyaji yiṭo jane

ācare karma bhakati /

tāte mahātuṣṭa huyā kṛṣṇe denta

vaikuṇṭha yata sampatti // (verse 54)²⁸

(It means that he/she who concentrates his or her mind on devotion to Kṛṣṇa giving up pride and ego, Lord Kṛṣṇa gets satisfied and provides all kinds of prosperity to his or her.)

Bhakti is the only way to achieve God in *Kaliyuga*-

kalita satate yiṭu nāma guṇa gāve /

eteke samaste siddhi siṭo jane pāve //(verse-392)²⁹

(It means in *Kaliyuga* one who chants the name of God, becomes enlightened.)

satya yuge dhyāna kari yajñata tretāt /

yena phala pāve nare dāpare pūjāta //

kalita kīrttana kari pāve tenagati /

brahmā ādi devo tāṅka napānta samprati // (verse-393)³⁰

²⁸ Ibid. P.741

²⁹ Ibid. P.768

³⁰ Ibid. P.768

(Chanting of God's name in *Kaliyuga* gives the same result as produced by *dhyāna* (meditation) in *Satya yuga*, by *jajña* (ritual function) in *Tretā yuga*, and by *pujā* in *Dvāpara yuga*. Even Brahma and other devatas are not able to get such results.)

They told the king about devotion. The sages explained to the king that devotion was the only way to get the Godhead and it was the only way of salvation. The Poet depicted the nine great sages as the spokespersons by whom the messages of devotion are communicated to the readers.

5.4.5 Balichalan:

It is another valuable piece of work of Śaṅkaradeva. The story was drawn from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

bhāgavata kathā iṭo amṛta sakṣāta /

vāmana purāṇa kichu miśra dilo tāta//

duyo kathā nibandhilo kari eka ṭhāi /

yena madhu miśra dugdha svāda baḍhi yāya // (verse.5)³¹

King Bali, grandson of Prahlaḍ, was a powerful demon. He always threatened the *Trailoka*-the heaven, the hell and the earth. The devatās had to leave their heaven because of the tyranny of Bali. The poet says-

dānavata bhaye ān devatā niḥśeṣa /

vastra alṁkāra eri bhailanta kuveśa //

³¹ Ibid. P.382

mehāilnta kānikanthā jena bhikṣāhārī /

palāilā svargaka chāri laiya nija narī //(verse-71)³²

To tame the demon's king and to control his power Lord Viṣṇu incarnated as Vāmana. Vāmana ended the tyranny of Bali. The poet describes the power of Vāmana-

huyoka Vāmana jaya /

khanduka āmāra bhaya // (verse-210)³³

Vāmana sent Bali to the earth, but his dictatorship increased rapidly. One day when he conducted a yajña under the guidance of Śukra ṛṣi, Lord Viṣṇu in guise of Vāmana came to Bali. At first Vāmana appreciated Bali and said that he would beg something from him and wanted nothing but three steps of land from the king.

tohmāta vimukha nabhaileka eko prāṇī /

dātā buli tohmākese jagate bakhāni // (verse. 264)

mora prayojana āve śunā rājā tumi /

māgo mai diyā moka tini pada bhūmi // (verse.265)³⁴

Bali promised to give anything Vāmana wanted-

maise īsvara mota pare nāhi āna /

sāto dvīpa prthivī dibāka pāro dāna //

praśamsā bacane moka arādhilā tumi /

kisaka māgilā mota tini pada bhūmi /// (verse 267)³⁵

³² Ibid. P.387

³³ Ibid. P.398

³⁴ Ibid. P.401

As the first and second steps of land Bali offered him the earth and the heaven. But for the third step of land Bali had nothing to offer. He lost everything. He stood in front of Vāmana and bowed down the head for the third step. He prayed Viṣṇu to rescue him from that condition. Vāmana scolded and insulted Bali. The later listened to and said politely-

trailokyara lakṣmī mora kāḍhi lailā chale /

garuḍara pāśe bāndhi thailā hāte gale // (Verse-434)

tumi yeve jānā mora satya bhaila channa /

māthā pāti deño tāte thāpiyo caraṇa // (436)³⁶

Bali surrendered. He understood the meaninglessness of worldly life and happiness. He surrenders thus-

thovā pāva śīrata sāphalo aṅgikāra /

śarīrako samarpilo pāvata tohmāra //

janme janme tohmāra dāsaro bhailo dāsa /

tayū caraṇata mora nugucoka āśa // (437)³⁷

The poet mentions-

śuniyoka jnāti moka save kripā karā moka

hari smari huyo paritrāṇa // (verse 608)³⁸

84. Ibid. P.401

85. Ibid. P.415

³⁷ Ibid. P.415

³⁸ Ibid. P.429

At the end, the poet declares supremacy of *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrttana*. The poet shows that in this world there is no place for falsehood or pride.

5.4.6 *Rukmiṇī Haraṇa*:

The original story of *Rukmiṇī Haraṇa Kāvya* is found in *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Padma Purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and *Khil Harivaṃśa*. The poet himself writes at the beginning-

harivaṃśa kathā kavi śaṅkare samprati

rukmiṇī haraṇa padabandhe nigadati // (verse. 4)

eke harivaṃśa kathā amṛta sākṣāta

āro bhāgavata kathā miśra dilo tāta //(verse. 5)³⁹

King Bhīṣmaka, wife Śaśīprabhā and prince Rukmavīra arranged Rukmiṇī's marriage ceremony with Śiśupāla, friend of Rukmavīra. But on the day before her marriage Kṛṣṇa abducted Rukmiṇī. For this Kṛṣṇa had to face a stiff fight with Rukmavīra along with Śiśupāla and their company. But the marriage function of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī ended peacefully.

In the story the message of *Bhakti* flowed from Rukmiṇī. Despite her arranged marriage with Śiśupāla she went away with Kṛṣṇa only because of her devotion towards Kṛṣṇa. She thought him as the Lord of the whole universe. Another element which enables the *Kāvya* to go near to the common masses is the sentiment (*rasa*) of

³⁹ Ibid. P.846

the story i.e. Śṛṅgāra rasa. The Śṛṅgāra rasa of the story shows not only the love between Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī but also the devotion of *Rukmiṇī* to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

śunilā kanyāra hena kathā nārāyaṇa /

ketikṣaṇe pāibo utrāvala kare mana //

hṛidayta pīḍe madanara pañca bāṇa /

rātri dine rukmiṇīra kare mātra dhyāna // (verse. 32)⁴⁰

Hāsya rasa is also found in the story which offers comical flavour to its readers along with devotional sentiment.

While thinking of attending the marriage function, Śaṅkara expresses that nothing to offer a gift to Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī, he said-

ki haibo āve kona karo karma /

gāvara vastra siyo bāgha carma //

hāte laiyā āche śūla ḍambaru /

ghara bāhire eka guṭi garu //

5.4.7. Kurukṣetra:

Kurukṣetra was the translation of four chapters of 10th *skandha* of *Bhāgavata* by Śaṅkaradeva. It was composed during the last part of his life. The writer introduces himself using some sober and polite terms like Kṛṣṇara *Kinkara*, *Mahāmūḍhamati* *Mandamati*, *Durācāra*, *Adhama* and *Adhama Mūrḍhamati* etc.

⁴⁰ Ibid. P.848

The central hero of the story is Lord Kṛṣṇa and such the supernatural power of the lord is depicted in the book.

According to the story, once Śrīkṛṣṇa along with Rukmiṇī and other *Gopīs*, Balabhadra, Bāsudeva, Daivakī went to Kurukṣetra to take a holy bath because of solar eclipse. There they enjoyed a lot of conversation with each other. At the end as it was time to return home and they expressed their feelings of sorrow.

The entire story was Kṛṣṇa centric. The writer has given a beautiful description of their journey to Kurukṣetra centering Kṛṣṇa.

āna yata yadubamśa māne nirantare/

kṛṣṇaka āvari range cale cāpakare // (verse 15)⁴¹

Before getting down the water they begged permission from Kṛṣṇa -

kṛṣṇara caraṇe save loyā anumati /

nāmiya jalata save yādava santati // (verse 30)⁴²

As they were to back to their respective homes they expressed deep grief giving farewell to Kṛṣṇa -

śuka nigadati rājā śunā gokulara prajā

yāibe yebe sabhe voila sāja /

kṛṣṇaka galata bāndhi nanda yaśodāye kāndi

āsila lotaka bhaila bāja // (verse. 460)

⁴¹ Ibid. P.906

⁴² Ibid. P.907

biyoge dahavai hiyā Kṛṣṇa mukha nirīkṣiya

kāndai mahāpreme brajabāsī /

yateka bhakata gopī kṛṣṇara śamīpa cāpi

dharai pādapadmaka ullāsi // (verse.462)⁴³

The entire story is developed centering devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the book only chanting of Lord Kṛṣṇa's name and glory is depicted. The writer expresses his deep feeling of Bhakti to Lord Kṛṣṇa in the following way-

namo namo kṛṣṇa tumi jagata bidhātā /

tumisi parama brahma prabhu paramātmā // (verse. 564)

koṭi koṭi brahmāṇḍara śṛṣṭi sthiti laya /

tomhāra māyāye aṅge karante āchaya // (verse. 565)⁴⁴

jagataka byāpi karā āpuni prakāśa /

jagatake bināśe tomhāra nāhi nāśa //(verse.487)

prakṛtita āche mātra byavahāra dharma /

tumisi svarūpa paripūrṇa parambrahma // (verse.488)⁴⁵

Thus the author in his composition depicts the superiority of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He shows the supernatural power of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Pure devotion in one's heart and mind for Lord Kṛṣṇa helps to get shelter under His feet.

⁴³ Ibid. P.930-938

⁴⁴ Ibid. P.946

⁴⁵ Ibid. P.941

5.4.8. *Uttarākāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*:

Śaṅkaradeva composed all his literary works on the basis of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. But for the local Assamese people it was difficult to easily understand the meaning of those great epics. Therefore Śaṅkaradeva thought for an Assamese rendering of those holy scriptures.

In all other compositions of Śaṅkaradeva, Lord Kṛṣṇa or Lord Rāma was depicted as the central hero. On the other hand in *Uttarākāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*, the author depicted the character of Lord Rāma as a supreme being. In this connection the author mentioned the superiority of *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrtana*.

Śaṅkaradeva led the *Bhakti* movement in the North Eastern part of this country. Svāmī Rāmānanda was the pioneer of *Bhakti* Movement who brought the wave of the movement from the southern part of India to Northern part. Svāmī Rāmānanda was a great devotee of Lord Rāma. When Śaṅkaradeva was on pilgrimage he became attracted towards the superiority of Lord Kṛṣṇa and at the same time Lord Rāma. Among his six *Ankīyā* plays in five playwrights Lord Kṛṣṇa is depicted as the central hero. The chief motive of Śaṅkaradeva's creations was to propagate the *Bhakti* cult. In order to depict Lord Rāma the central character, Śaṅkaradeva, therefore translated the *Rāmāyaṇa* from Saṁskṛt to a convenient and easy language form. Significantly he did not translate the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* which was written by Vālmīki. He trans-created some selected parts of the entire scripture, mainly the stories of Rāma and Sītā.

In the beginning of the *Uttarākāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*, the poet praises Lord Rāmā as an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu.

jaya jaya jagata janaka Śrīrāma /

pātakīyo tare yāra laile guṇa nāma //

yāka sumaraṇe tari durghora saṁsāra /

karo hena rāmara caraṇe namaskāra // (verse.1)⁴⁶

In this way the author tries to draw a picture of Rāma as supreme being of the universe in front of the readers.

Rāma was an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. In this context Śaṅkaradeva glorifies Rāma as an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, who, according to the author, existed in the earth as a human being.

In the heaven when Lord Brahmā saw Lord Rāma, he started to praise Lord Rāma-

tumi tribhūvana pati jagatare gati /

tumisi acintya guṇa ananta śakati //

5.4.9. Rendering of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa:

Śaṅkaradeva worked out an Assamese rendering of the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* when he found it indispensable for his religious order. He composed *padas* of six books or *skandhas* of the great scripture, leaving out 4th, 5th, 7th and 9th *skandhas*. Only the 1st, 2nd, 11th and 12th *skandhas* are his rendering. Book 6th is a collaboration of Śrīcandra Bhārati and Śaṅkaradeva. *Skandha* 8th is also a collaboration of Sri Chandra

⁴⁶ Ibid. P.950

Bhagavatī, also popularly known as Ananta Kandali. Śaṅkaradeva and Ananta Kandali jointly worked out the last part of the *skandha* 10th.

Like other literary works, Śaṅkaradeva's vital aim was to propagate *Bhakti* cult through the renderings of *Bhāgavata* also. The author started the chapter with *maṅgalācaraṇa* praising Lord Kṛṣṇa -

jaya jaya kṛṣṇa kṛpāmaya maheśvara /

yāra ājñā śire bahe brahmā hari hara II (verse. 1)⁴⁷

(Skandha. I)

Śaṅkaradeva always told the masses about *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrtana* –

parama īśvara kṛṣṇa deva nārāyaṇa /

tāna mahābhakti iṭo śravaṇa kīrtana // (verse. 8)⁴⁸

(Skandha- I)

mora upodeśe korā bhāgavata śāstra /

pracāroka govindara guṇa nāma matra //

yadyapi bhakati navabidha mādhavara /

śravaṇa kīrtana tāto mahā śreṣṭhatara // (verse. 38)⁴⁹

(Skandha-I)

⁴⁷ Ibid. P.213

⁴⁸ Ibid. P.213

⁴⁹ Ibid. P.215

mora nāma guṇa mātra kariyo kīrtana /

pāibi āura janamata sadā dariśana // (verse. 60)⁵⁰

(Skandha- I)

kṛṣṇa guṇa nāma dharma kariyo bekata /

śravaṇa kīrtana kari taroka jagata // (verse. 64)⁵¹

(Skandha-I)

kṛṣṇa -guṇa nāma mātra karoka kīrtana /

āur āna karmata kamana prayojana // (verse.307)⁵²

(Skandha-I)

In this way the author has emphasized much on *śravaṇa and kīrtana* because they are the easiest easy ways of worshipping God. In second *Skandha* the author says:

jaya jaya kṛṣṇa jāra smaraṇa maṅgala /

yāga yogādiro harināma mahāphala // (verse.1)⁵³

ghora kaliyuge malamati manuṣyara /

nāhi āna dharma hari kīrttanata para // (verse.2)⁵⁴

śravaṇa kīrtana kari kṛṣṇaka ārādhe /

⁵⁰ Ibid. P.216

⁵¹ Ibid. P.217

⁵² Ibid. P.235

⁵³ Ibid. P.245

⁵⁴ Ibid. P.245

mahāmokṣa sādhe eko bighini nabādhe // (verse.20)⁵⁵

śravaṇa kīrttana mātra karibe kṛṣṇara /

indriyaka jini haibe kṛtārtha si nara // (verse.43)⁵⁶

śravaṇa kīrttana arccana vandana

ādi bhakatiye yāra /

samaste lokara sadye pāpa hare

tāna pāve namaskāra // (verse.51)⁵⁷

bhaktihīna nare yata karma kare

sakale vipphala haya /

tapa japagaṇa yāta samarpaṇa

bine phala nadharaya //

hena kṛṣṇa deva pari karo seva

sumaṅgala kīrti yāra /

pūjā ādi yata bhaktira madhyata

śravaṇa kīrttana sāra //(verse.52)⁵⁸

The author started the *skandhas* glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa in the beginning and continued to glorify of *śravaṇa* and *kīrttana*:

⁵⁵ Ibid. P.246

⁵⁶ Ibid. P.247

⁵⁷ Ibid. P.248

⁵⁸ Ibid. P.248

jaya jaya jagata janaka kṛṣṇa rāma /

pātakīyo taḍāi yāra laile guṇa nāma // (verse.1)⁵⁹

(Skandha-XI)

jaya jaya kṛṣṇa prabhu abhiṣṭadāyaka /

jīvera jīvana yadu jagatanāyaka //(verse.1)⁶⁰

(Skandha -XII)

śravaṇa kīrttana karā sukhe saṁsāraka tarā

diyā mora caraṇata citta // (verse. 202)⁶¹

(skandha -XI)

bhogyā kṣaya hovai karma dharma māyāmaya /

śravaṇa kīrttana dharma parama akṣaya // (verse.222)⁶²

(Skandha -XI)

samaste bhūtate ācho mañi maheśvara /

jānibā sabāko kṛpā karai yiṭu nara //(verse.223)⁶³

bhakatara saṅga sakhi laibā prathamata /

śravaṇa kīrttana mora karibā satata //(verse.252)⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Ibid. P.625

⁶⁰ Ibid. P.691

⁶¹ Ibid. P.640

⁶² Ibid. P.642

⁶³ Ibid. P.642

⁶⁴ Ibid. P.644

12th skandha

īśvara kṛṣṇaka yīṭo cittata niścaya kari
bhaje mātṛa tāhāna caraṇe /
huyā tāte paritoṣa haranta kalira doṣa
mahāhari eteke tekhane // (verse.141)⁶⁵
mādhavara nāma guṇa kalita parama puṇya
thāke yīṭo darḍhāi prati nite /
śravaṇa kīrttana kare yadibā manata smare
tāke bā āśamse yīṭo chitte // (verse.142)⁶⁶
yateka yugara dharmma ācāra yateka dharmma
kīrttane savāro phala pāve // (verse.148)⁶⁷
kalira parama dharmma mādhavara nāma karmma
kīrttanese jāniba nṛpati /
kalira pāteka caya kīrttanese kare kṣaya
pāve nare parama mukuti //(verse. 149)⁶⁸

5.4.10. Kīrttan-Ghoṣa:

Kīrttana-Ghoṣā, is another excellent poetic work and considered as the first work Śaṅkaradeva has written precisely for the purpose of propagating his faith. It's a monumental piece of work. *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* in common parlance known as *Kīrttana*, is a superb composition of various poetic verses which have been drawn from *Bhāgavata*

⁶⁵ Ibid. P.701

⁶⁶ Ibid. P.701

⁶⁷ Ibid. P.702

⁶⁸ Ibid. P.702

Purāṇa, the most effective source of *Bhakti* movement all over India. *Kīrttana* means chanting the names of God where *Ghoṣa* means refrain.

Among the nine forms of devotion two are considered to be the best by Holy Scriptures: *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrttana*. The writer composes such a noteworthy piece which is a collection of versified stories and prayers to God going through the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, the most effective force behind the promotion of *Bhakti* movement.

The cardinal objective behind the *Kīrttana- Ghoṣā*, is the glorification of *Bhakti*(devotion) and surrender to Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa. The entire book is consisting of *Ghoṣā*(refrains) and *Padas* (the subsequent portion of the prayer sung by devotees) which glorify God. And through the glorification of God the poet tries to showcase the supremacy of God as well as devotion.

Śaṅkaradeva emphasized upon *Avatārabāda*. Lord Viṣṇu controls and dominates the sinners of the world through his various incarnations. The poet through the explanation of various incarnations of Viṣṇu disseminates devotional sentiments among the masses.

The first *pada* of the book written by Śaṅkaradeva glorifies Lord Nārāyaṇa-

prathame praṇāmo brahmarūpī sanātana /

sarva avatārara kāraṇa nārāyaṇa // (verse 1)⁶⁹

The poet first offers prayer to Lord Nārāyaṇa who is the cause of all incarnations.

⁶⁹ Ibid. P.37

Śaṅkaradeva in his *Kīrttana* mentions the twenty four incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. In each incarnation Lord Viṣṇu dominates and punishes the demons in different times. In *Kīrttana*, Śaṅkaradeva first mentions the *Matsya avatāra* (the incarnation of fish).

Once a demon called Hayagrīva stolen the four *Vedas* from the earth and hid them under the sea. Lord Viṣṇu taking Matsya incarnation entered into the sea and rescued the *Vedas*-

matsyarūpe avatāra bhailā prathamata /

uddhārīlā cāriveḍa pralaya jalata // (verse2)⁷⁰

The second incarnation, according to *Kīrttana Ghōṣā*, of Śaṅkaradeva, is Kūrma avatāra. In this incarnation Lord Viṣṇu dominates a snake-

kūrma avatāra bhailā kṣīrodadhi tīre /

lakṣa praharara pantha jurīlā śarīre //

karileka paristuti surāsura nāge /

dharīlā mandara giri prabhu pṛṣṭha bhāge // (verse 3)⁷¹

The third incarnation is Barāha. Incarnating as Barāha Viṣṇu killed Hiranyākṣa-

divya yajñavarāha svarūpa bhailā tumi /

līlāye dantara agre uddharīlā bhūmi //

⁷⁰ Ibid. P. 38

⁷¹ Ibid. P. 38

tohmāka karilā yuddha hiraṇākṣva bīri /

aprayāse daityaka mārīlā dānte ciḍi // (verse.4)⁷²

The fourth incarnation is Narasimha. Narasimha killed Hiraṇyakaśipu, the demon king who punished his son Prahlād because he was a real devotee of God-

ādi daitya hiraṇyakaśipu balīyāra /

narasimha rūpe hiyā bidārilā tāra // (verse.5)⁷³

Thus poet Śaṅkaradeva establishes the supremacy of Lord Viṣṇu as God who is the supreme power above any destructive force.

As has been already stated, there are nine kinds of devotion. And Śaṅkaradeva considers *Śravaṇa* that is the listening of God's name and *Kīrtana* that is chanting of God's name, to be the best ways to attain the almighty. Listening to or the chanting of the name of God as well as the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa are the key ways to involve people in devotion.

namāgoho sukhabhoga nalāge mukuti /

tohmāra caraṇe mātra thākoka bhakati // (verse.522)⁷⁴

It means devotion towards God is better than happiness, satisfaction and salvation.

The poet says that in *Kali Yuga*, *Kīrtana* is the best way to get blessing and salvation—

⁷² Ibid. P. 38

⁷³ Ibid. P. 38

⁷⁴ Ibid. P. 77

75. Ibid. P. 42

kariyā kīrttana kalita āti /

pāvai vaikunṭhaka chautriśa jāti //(verse 73)

kalita kīrttane hovai bhakata /

āta pare lābha nāhi lokata // (verse77)⁷⁵

neribā kīrttana duṣṭara bole /

pavitra karā hari hari role //(verse 87)⁷⁶

Poet Śaṅkaradeva in *Prahlāda-Caritra*, describes the nine kinds of devotion—

śravaṇa kīrttana smaraṇa viṣṇura

arcana pāda sevana /

dāśya sakhīva vandana viṣṇuta

kariba deha arpaṇa //

navabidha bhakti viṣṇuta ācarai

sehise pāṭha uttama / (verse.340)⁷⁷

The poet says that there are nine kinds of devotion and, these are the finest paths to worship Lord Viṣṇu and to attain him.

Kīrttana is the composition of a total of thirty chapters. *caturviṃśati-Avatara*, *Nāma-Aparādha*, *Pāṣaṇḍa-Mardana*, *Dhyāna-Varṇana*, *Ajāmil Upākhyāna*, *Prahlāda Cariat*, *Gajendra Upākhyāna*, *Haramohana*, *Balichalana*, *Śiśulīlā*, *Ras-krīḍa*, *Kaṁsa*

⁷⁶ Ibid. P. 43

⁷⁷ Ibid. P. 63

Badha, Gopī Uddhava Saṁvād, Kujir Vañchapurāṇa, Akrūrar Vañcapurāṇa, Jarāsandha Yuddha, Kālyabana Badha, Mucukunda Stuti, Dvarakā Līlā, Nāradaḥ Kṛṣṇa Darśana, Vipraputra Ānāyana, Dāmodar Viprākhyāna, Daivakīr Putra Ānāyana, Vedastuti, Līlāmālā, Śrīkṛṣṇar Vaikuṇṭha Prayāṇa, Sahasranāma Vṛittānta, Ureṣā Varṇana etc. are the most significant chapters of *Kīrttana Ghoṣa*. It is noteworthy that each and every chapter bears valuable messages with the stories of devotional sentiment. Each story depicts the triumph of truthfulness and honesty over the falsehood and sin.

Kīrttana Ghoṣā, the monumental piece of Śaṅkaradeva, therefore can be described as a reservoir of messages of devotion. Each *pada* and *ghoṣā* sends a powerful message of devotion to Godhead, i.e. Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa:

śunā sarbajana kahe kṛṣṇara kiṅkare /

nāhi āna dharma āura kīrttanata pare //

vaikuṇṭhaka yāibā jeve saṁsāraka tari /

nirantare ḍāki ghuṣiyoka hari hari // (verse.470)⁷⁸

harita bhakati

kare sarvadāi

kariyā kīrttana karmma /

manuṣya lokata

ehimāne mātra

puruṣara śreṣṭha dharmma // (verse. 192)⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ibid. P. 73

⁷⁹ Ibid. P. 52

5.4.11. *Daśama*:

The *Daśama* is considered to be one of the monumental works of Śaṅkaradeva. It is an Assamese rendering of the first part of *Bhāgavata*. *Daśama* contains the life history of Śrīkṛṣṇa. The book narrates right from the birth to the end of the life of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

There are 90 chapters in the *Daśama skandha* of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. It is the longest and one of the most significant compositions of Śaṅkaradeva. According to the subject matters, *Daśama* has three divisions- *Ādya-Daśama*, *Madhya Daśama* and *Antya-Daśama*. From the 1st to 49th chapter it is called *Ādya-Daśama*, from 50th to 80th it is *Madhya-Daśama* and from 81st to 90th chapter it is known as *Antya-Daśama*. Śaṅkaradeva himself composed the *Ādi* and *Madhya Daśama* and Ananta Kandali composed the *Antya Daśama*.

Daśama is a very influential gift of Śaṅkaradeva to Assamese society. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme God to be worshipped in Vaishnavism. *Daśama* is mainly based on the extra terrestrial activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is one of four monumental scriptures of Assam Vaishnavism. The other three are- *Kīrttana* of Śaṅkaradeva and *Nām-ghoṣā* and *Ratnāvalī* of Mādhavdeva.

In *Ādi Daśama* the poet immensely elaborates child Kṛṣṇa as a part of God-

viṣṇu vāsa lailā āsi garbhata tohmāra /

hena dekhi bhaila bara ānanda āhmāra //(verse 69)⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Ibid. P. 436

tumise kevale sañcā save māyāmaya /
tohmātese hante have sṛṣṭi sthiti laya // (verse.81)⁸¹
brahmarūpe srajā pālā viṣṇu rūpa dhari //
rūdrarūpe niyā save jagata saṁhari //

The poet describes Kṛṣṇa as a divine character with matchless his physical appearance-

candra yena prakāśanta pūrvvara diśata /
kamalalocana cāri bhuje cāri astra //
kaṇṭhata kaustabha śobhe gāve pītavastra / (vers75)⁸²
śarīra jyoti sūtigṛha prakāśanta /
adbhuta bālaka vasūdeve dekhilanta // (verse 78)⁸³

In this context the poet advises the readers to perform *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrtana* as long as they are alive-

kṛṣṇara kiṅkare kahe śunā sarvvajane /
aribā saṁsārara hari kathār śravaṇe //
hena jāni ekacitte śunā sābadhāne /
neriba kīrtana jave prana thakai māne // (verse108)⁸⁴
kaita ketikṣyane milai durghura marana /
hari guṇa nāma kara śravaṇa kīrtana // (verse2443)⁸⁵

⁸¹ Ibid. P. 436

⁸² Ibid. P. 437

⁸³ Ibid. P. 437

⁸⁴ Ibid. P. 439

⁸⁵ Ibid. P. 622

Thus the poet says *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrtana* are the best ways to Godhead which save people from every problem and difficulty in life.

Daśama is the source of *Nāmprasaṅga*. *Nāmprasaṅga* is a system of chanting the name of God in a congregational manner. It is of two ways. Śaṅkaradeva in his religious philosophy considers *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrtana* as the best ways of devotion. Therefore, reading the book, *Daśama*, helps people to understand the theological meaning of Bhakti with ease, because it is a part of the Holy *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.

5.4.12. *Bhakti-Pradīpa*:

Bhakti-Pradīp, another poetic work of Śaṅkaradeva has been occupying a significant position in the Vaiṣṇava literature of Assam. The story of the book has been drawn from *Garuḍa Purāṇa*. The chapters of *Bhakti-Pradīp* are attractive and mind touching and flavored are with devotional messages

śunā sabhasada pāpa kariyā ucchāda /
garuḍa purāṇa kṛṣṇa-arjjuna saṁvāda //
bhakati pradīpa nāma mahanatra gati /
kṛṣṇara kiṅkare kahe śaṅkare samprati // (verse 3)⁸⁶.

The poet again mentions the impact of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* in *Bhakti-Pradīpa*:-

bhakati pradīpa nāme bhāgavata pada /
śunā ekacitta mane save sabhāsada // (verse.8)⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ibid. P. 772

⁸⁷ Ibid. P. 772

The poet starts the texts with a prayer to Lord Kṛṣṇa-

jaya jaya kṛṣṇa kṛpāmaya mahāhari /
apāra saṁsāra pāra pāve yāka smari //
hove śuddha uccāri caṇḍāla yāra nāma /
henaya kṛṣṇaka karo sahasra praṇāma //(verse1)⁸⁸

It means glorifying and remembering Kṛṣṇa who is great and compassionate, help to sail across the ocean of life. Even a *Caṇḍāla* becomes purified by chanting God's name. Thus Śaṅkaradeva offers thousands of salutes to that Lord.

Thus in the beginning, the poet, emphasized upon the *bhakti*(devotion). Taking Lord's name the poet tries to attract the attention of people and makes them ready and interested to understand the conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna—

mahāpāpacaya āche yāra hṛdayata /
bhaktira kathā tāra napaśe kāṇata //
jāni prāyaścittara kariyo save kāma /
prathame ghuṣiyo kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa mahānāma //
bhaktira caritra amṛta sama svāda /
śunā sāvadhāne kṛṣṇa arjjuna-samvāda //(verse 8& 9)⁸⁹

Such sinners get redeemed by the pronouncement of the sacred name: Kṛṣṇa : Kṛṣṇa (twice), denoting Lord Kṛṣṇa of Vaikuṇṭha. Without being purified, the sinners

⁸⁸ Ibid. P. 772

⁸⁹ Ibid. 772

fail to achieve devotion (*Bhakti*). It is, therefore crystal clear that the *Bhakti-Pradīpa* is a valuable work for devotees only.

Poet Śaṅkaradeva composed the *Bhakti-Pradīpa* from the episode *Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna Saṁvāda* (the messags of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna) of *Garuḍa Purāṇa*. Arjuna asked and Kṛṣṇa replied. Arjuna requested Kṛṣṇa to make him clear about the attainment of emancipation. Kṛṣṇa says—

mādhava bolanta sakhi sunā save veda /

mora bhakatisi karai karmabandha cheda //

nāhike prayāsa sakhi sukhe mokṣa sādhe /

hari bhakatika eko bighini nabādhe //

tarka veda vedāntaka jadypi jānoka /

koṭi koṭi janme yoga jñāna abhyāsoka //

tathāpito nāhi moka jānite śakati /

kaho satya pāve moka kevale bhakati //

napāvanta kahi mahā bhakatira guṇa /

jāni mora bhakatika dhariyo arjjuna //(verse 21,22)⁹⁰

-O dear friend Arjuna, listen the truth. Devotion to me alone can redeem a man from the earthly bondage. It can be achieved without any effort and it is free from any danger. A human being may be well-versed in the logic, *Vedas* and *vedānta*. He

⁹⁰ Ibid P.773

may attain wisdom through crores of lives. Despite all these, he has no ability to know me. But I tell you truly that he can attain me only through devotion. I can't give you a full account of the virtues of devotion. O Arjjuna, knowing this, devotion only.

mora kothā śravaṇa kīrtana bine āna /

nāhike bhakati sakhi dṛḍha karā jñāna // v.27

mora janma karma mohorese guṇa nāma /

ākese kīrtana karibeka aviśrāma //

mora kathā śravaṇata karibeka rati /

ākese buliya sakhi uttama bhakati // v.28⁹¹

There is no other kind of devotion except listening to and singing of my virtues, and you should take it firmly too. You are to sing relentlessly about my birth, deeds, my virtues and names. When you are deeply interested in my virtues and deeds, you will be offering to me the best of devotion.

The subject matter of *Bhakti-Pradīpa* is revealed from Kṛṣṇa's conversation with Arjjuna. Accordingly the subject-matters are—

- The meaninglessness of ritual functions
- The ways of salvation
- The characteristics of devotion
- About anti- Kṛṣṇaism

⁹¹ Ibid. P.774

- What *Bhāgavata* dharma is
- Characteristics of devotees
- Supremacy of the names of God
- Description of *Vaikuṇṭha*

The book *Bhakti-Pradīpa* is about the conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. Arjuna asked various questions regarding devotion and devotees, ways of salvation etc. through which Śaṅkaradeva sends the messages of devotion to the readers and common masses.

5.4.13. *Anādi Pātana*:

Anādi Pātana is also an important poetic work of Śaṅkaradeva. The subject-matter of the work is taken from the content of the 3rd *skandha* of Bhāgavata-Purāṇa and Vāmana Purāṇa.

śuna savadhāno mane save savāsada /

tritīya skandhara mahābhāgavata pada //

jenāmate bhailo ito anādi pātana /

śuniyoka āsai jāra mukutika mana //(verse 6,7)⁹²

The composition is all about a conversation between King Parikṣit and ṛṣi Śuka. The work is all about the origin and existence of the universe. King Parikṣit asks ṛṣi Suka about the the origin of the universe and the poet describes it in his words -

⁹² Ibid. P.267

kr̥ṣṇa pada pañkajaka dhari hṛdayata /

gurura carane mane kari śirogata //

sṛṣṭi sthiti laya mādhevāra mokṣya līla /

kr̥ṣṇara kiñkare pada śaṅkare rasilā // (verse 5)⁹³

The poet says that Lord Viṣṇu is the only creator of the whole universe-

sṛṣṭira madhyata mahā puruṣa īsvara //

kevale thākaya hari eka brahmatatva /

kimote srajanata hari ito trijagata // (verse 9)⁹⁴

The poet, thus, in his composition describes that God, Lord Viṣṇu, is the creator of the whole universe who also controls the existence of it. Through such explanation the poet tries to depict the superiority and the power of Lord Viṣṇu as the supreme being of the universe.

5.4.14. Bhakti Ratnākara:

Bhakti Ratnākara is Śaṅkaradeva's only literary production written in *Saṁskṛt* language. The subject matter of *Bhakti Ratnākara* was drawn from various sources such as- *Śrīmadvagavatapurāṇa*, *Bṛhad- Nārādīya-Purāṇa*, *Gīta*, *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Padmapurāṇa* and *Nārādīyapurāṇa*. There are 568 ślokaś in *Bhakti Ratnākara*. This treatise is based on the four rudimentary principles of devotion called as *Cārivastu* of Assam Vaishnavism- *Nāma*, *Deva*, *Guru* and *Bhakata*. *Nāma* i.e chanting the name

⁹³ Ibid. P.267

⁹⁴ Ibid. P.267

and glory of God, *deva* means deity to be worshipped, *guru* means the spiritual master and *bhakata* i.e the devotee.

The poet made 38 divisions of the *Bhakti Ratnakara*. Significantly each of them was not called as chapter by the poet himself but as *māhātmyam*. Each division of *māhātmyam* depicts theological issues. The poet named each of the *māhātmyam* according to the subject-matter of the same. The 38 numbers of *māhātmyams* as found in the work are- *Bhaktijñānapradaguroh Pūjyatham*, *Nṛdehamahātmyam*, *Satsaṅgamāhātmyam*, *Satām-lakṣaṇam*, *Paramagatipradabhajanīy-aparamadevtāsvarūpanirūpaṇam Māhātmyam*, *Śrīkṛṣṇaḡaṇakarmanāmaṇṇām-Śravaṇamāhātmyam*, *Śrīhari-Kīrttanamāhātmyam*, *Śrīhari-smarṇamāhātmyam*, *Śrīkṛṣṇārcananirṇaya*, *Bhagavadabhaktiyoganirūpaṇam*, *Uttamābhagavatī-bhaktinirūpaṇam*, *Antaraṅgābhaktinirūpaṇam*, *Nirḡuṇabhaktinirūpaṇam*, *Sapremābhaktinirūpaṇam*, *Jñānādīnām*, *Cāturvidhyam*, *Uttamabhaktalakṣaṇam*, *Madhyambhaktalakṣaṇam*, *Prākṛitabhaktalakṣyaṇam*, *Ācārabhṛaṣṭabhaktamāhātmyam*, *Bhaktiprāthanānirūpaṇam*, *Kaleh Paradharmanirūpaṇam*, *Jīvaparamātmabhedaḥ*, *Śrīharibhaktihīnaparamājñāninām Nindā*, *Bhaktadveṣiṇām Gatih*, *Bhaktānāmaṅgapraśamsā*, *Bhaktānām Janmakarmādipraśamsā*, *Bhaktivarjitānam Janmakramādinindā*, *Bṛthākathākathanadoṣaḥ*, *Abhktasaṅganindā*, *Prāyaścittagarhaṇam*, *Pravṛttimārganindanam*, *Svargādisukhasya Heyatvam*, *Bhāratabhūpraśamsā*, *Bhaktyadhikārinirūpaṇam*, *Bairāgyārtham*, *Brahmalokaparyantasya bhogasthānasyānityatvakathanam*, *Māyātaraṇopāyaḥ*, *Śrībhāgavat māhātmyam* and *Yamaniyamāh*.

5.4.15. *Guṇāmālā*:

Guṇāmālā is an epoch making book which consists of 377 divine verses and is divided into 6 parts. Śaṅkaradeva wrote the text after a tactful advice of Koc king Nara Nārāyaṇa to do something magical. The king told him to put an elephant into a small pitcher. Śaṅkaradeva understood the inner meaning of his saying. He wrote the substance of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* only in 377 verses and named it *Guṇāmālā* (the garland of qualities). It is a composition of qualities and virtues of Lord Kṛṣṇa without any explanation or description of natural or supernatural incidents. Although tiny in size, *Guṇāmālā* covers the entire *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, and has great impact on the promotion of *Bhakti* movement in India. From that point of view, *Guṇāmālā* no doubt worked as one of the most powerful driving forces of *Bhakti* movement in Assam.

The poet, at the very beginning, prays God glorifying Him-

namo nārāyaṇa : saṁsāra kāraṇa /

bhakata tāraṇa : tomāra cararaṇa// (verse.1)

tumi nirañjana:pātaka bhañjana /

dānava gañjana : gopikā rañjana //(verse 2)

vedānta gāyaka : vaṁśī bāyaka /

jagata nāyaka : mukuti dāyaka //(verse 3)

bhakatara ṛddhi : karā sarvasiddhi /

vidhātāra vidhi : dīna dayānidhi // (verse.4)⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Ibid. P.!

(I bow to Nārāyaṇa cause of creation /
 Savior of devotee, at thine feet//
 Thou Ot Nirañjana, Remover of sin /
 Destroyer of Devīl, Appeaser of cowherdess //
 Singer of vedānta, player of flute /
 Owner of creation, giver of emancipation //
 Thou art, devotee's trust, fulfiller of every want /
 Cause behind creation, merciful to downtrodden //)

Beautiful explanation of childhood life of Kṛṣṇa and his supreme activities are narrated thus:

saṅge śiśugaṇa: khele nārāyaṇa /
mṛttikā bhakṣaṇa: karilā tekhana// (verse 86)
kene māṭi khāili: ore banamālī/
nākhāloho buli: dekhāya mukha meli// (verse 88)
sakala jagata: dekhanta garbhata / (verse 89)⁹⁶

(One day little Kṛṣṇa was playing with children and ate soil. when mother Yaśodā asked Him why He had eaten soil, he opened his mouth. Yaśodā saw the whole universe inside His mouth.)

⁹⁶ Ibid. P.5

Through such amazing descriptions poet Śaṅkaradeva, wanted to establish the supremacy of Lord Kṛṣṇa and to campaign his divineness.

Śaṅkaradeva considered *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrttana* to be best ways of devotion. He mentioned—

nāmeṣe saṁsāra: karibe nistāra/

nāma bine āra: āna nāhi sāra// (verse 436)⁹⁷

5.5 Receivers:

All the works of Śaṅkaradeva were fully theological and religious. He adopted both literary and cultural devices to propagate the devotional ideas. His literary productions were rhythmic and had devotional sentiments. His mission was to spread the messages of devotion among the common people and in order to do that he composed all of his books on religious matter. Except *Bhakti Ratnākara*, which was written in *Saṁskṛt*, Śaṅkaradeva used vernacular language to compose his literary works.

Considering the outputs of the works of Śaṅkaradeva, the masses of the society during his time could be categorized as follows:

- I. Some were literate;
- II. Some of them had the comprehensive capacity to understand the theological meanings which Śaṅkaradeva wanted to make them understand;

⁹⁷ Ibid. P. 15

- III. Some could neither read the scriptures nor understand the theological meanings of the songs but only could acquire knowledge through audio-visual devices only.

During Śaṅkaradeva's time some people had formal education. Dr. Leela Gogoi in his book '*Asomor Saṁskṛti*' mentions that academic practices were prevailing during the pre-Sankarite period too. During the *Āhom* period the education was provided by the books written in *Āhom* language under the guidance of Deodhāi-Mohan-Bāilongs. The royal families were taught astrology, mathematics etc. and some other practical subjects too.

King Rudra Simha is said to have established schools at different places of his Kingdom and patronized a number of students to study at important centers of learning outside of Assam. It may be incidentally noted that a few kings of medieval Assam were adequately learned.⁹⁸ (301 borpujari). Moreover grammer, different branches of Saṁskṛt etc. were also taught in those days. That means the royal families as well as the upper class families were very much educated in different disciplines of study.

As found in '*Carit Puthis*' Śaṅkaradeva's ancestors were very much educated. They were expert in various branches of education. Śaṅkaradeva himself was highly educated person. He trans-created a huge volume of theological books in both *Saṁskṛt* and vernacular languages to disseminate devotional ideas. Those creations could not reach to all but only to those literate masses of the society. As the people were expert in different branches of learning so they could grasp the meanings of those theological

⁹⁸ Barpujari, H.K. (1994). *The Comprehensive History of Assam*. P.301

compositions which were rich in religious and spiritual messages. Therefore the targeted receivers of Śaṅkaradeva's mission were mainly the royal families of that period and the upper class of the society. Those people were receiving the formal or institutional education without any social hesitation.

Śaṅkaradeva wrote a lot through which he disseminated the devotional messages among the common masses. The subject matter of all of his writings was purely theological. In each and every literary piece, the writer provides devotional descriptions and so the readers find a devotional flavor in all of his writings. During that time no print or electronic media or technologies were there to send messages to the targeted audience in a short span of time. In spite of such inconvenient circumstances the literary productions of Śaṅkaradeva successfully worked as a medium of mass communication.