

**A STUDY OF THE ELEMENTS OF MASS COMMUNICATION  
IN THE *BHAKTI* MOVEMENT  
OF ŚAṆKARADEVA**

**Thesis Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)**



**Pranami Bora**

**Department of Sankaradeva Studies**

**Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya,**

**Nagaon: Assam**

## CHAPTER-VII

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The *Bhakti* movement was first emerged in 9<sup>th</sup> century in India and lasted till 15<sup>th</sup> century. During that time in India the communication system was very poor and no print, electronic or new media was available. In spite of such dilapidated scenario of communication the leaders and the propagators successfully carried on the socio religious renaissance through preaching the aroma of *Bhakti* among the people. The leaders of the movement took the help of both literary and cultural medium to disseminate their messages among the mass people. But during that time most of people were illiterate and only a few people had their command over *Samskr̥t* as well as other vernacular languages. Therefore the proponents also adopted songs, music etc. along with some literary workouts which became very much convenient for those illiterate classes. Gradually their devotional ideologies were propagated throughout the country. The movement, as a result, successfully went into the hearts, minds, and souls of the people who had been persecuted and had gone through a turmoiled socio religious condition for a longer time.

*Bhakti* movement which newly shaped the social-religious scenario of the country and appeared like the morning star of the Indian socio-cultural and religious history. If *Bhakti* movement had not succeeded in southern part of India then it would not spread all over India. In the North Eastern part of the country the *Bhakti* movement was initiated by Śaṅkaradeva, who built the Assamese nation with his multi-

dimensional experiences and knowledge. The *Bhakti* movement which evolved in 8-9<sup>th</sup> century in the southern part of the country entered Assam during 14<sup>th</sup> century. In Assam the renaissance was boosted up first by Śaṅkaradeva and his followers and later by Mādhavadeva, his worthy successor, and other devotees and followers. During Śaṅkaradeva's time the communication system was not well-organised what we have with us today. Technological devices were not available at all during those days. Moreover, the society had less numbers of literate people and maximum numbers of illiterate people. Therefore, Śaṅkaradeva adopted, developed and used both literary and cultural devices to communicate with all the people to propagate the devotional principles. He used the literary devices for the literate masses and the cultural devices mainly for the illiterates section of the society so that they could easily grab his philosophy of *Bhakti*. At a very early age of life Śaṅkaradeva studied all the Holy Scriptures and epics of Hindu religion and acquired knowledge of those holy books and planned to distribute the same among the masses. For that worthy purpose he adopted the task of transcreation of scriptures. He composed most of the works in *Sanskṛt* but in Vrajāvalī- a very easy and convenient language with ethnic flavor. All he composed were based on *Bhakti*. The subject matters and the core meanings of all the writings carried a message of devotional sentiment. Significantly all the writings of Śaṅkaradeva propagated the message of worshipping to only one God. In spite of the lacking of a very well-tech communication system Śaṅkaradeva's devotional messages were fluently disseminated throughout the land. People were able to acquire the messages of *Bhakti* through the literary devices what Śaṅkaradeva intended to disseminate among them.

Śaṅkaradeva was a multi talented personality. He realized that only the literary devices would not be enough to communicate and disseminate the devotional messages successfully among the people as most of them were unable to read religious scriptures and his own compositions. Therefore the saint developed many cultural devices which were thought to be very convenient to propagate the devotional messages. He thought that songs, music and musical instruments, rhythmic verses along with some audio-visual media would be very much convenient and effective for the illiterate masses to acquire knowledge. So he introduced the cultural medium in his Bhakti movement to spread the religious messages among the people.

Śaṅkaradeva, in his life time, went out twice for pilgrimage. At a very early age of his life he set out for his first pilgrimage and visited various holy shrines of Northern part of India and came back with abundant experiences, knowledge and comprehensive plans. After reaching homeland Śaṅkaradeva set up the first ever religious institution *Kīrttana Ghar* or *Harigrha* from where he sprayed the fragrance of *Bhakti*. It radiated even to the remotest corners of the society in all the directions. Gradually the *Kīrttanaghar* became a social institution, religious center, educational institution and a cultural hub of all classes of people.

In the study, the researcher has found that the *Bhakti* movement in all India perspective was an effective mass communication system. In the Indian *Bhakti* movement the propagators disseminated the devotional messages among the common masses. In this regard the propagators performed the role of sender of the movement. They disseminated the messages of *Bhakti* through both the literary and cultural

medium like writings, songs, rhythmic verses, poems etc. And it was seemed that the common people received those devotional messages which helped a lot for religious, social, cultural, literary as well as spiritual uplift of the society and brought a new change to it.

In Assam the renaissance was radiated under the leadership of Śaṅkaradeva. He propagated the messages of Bhakti among the common people through both literary and cultural devices. The literary compositions, consisting of devotional messages were highly admired by literate people and they effectively entered into their heart, mind and soul. Therefore the researcher would like to say that the *Bhakti* movement which was transmitted by Śaṅkaradeva in Assam was an operative and systematic mass communication process.

The researcher has also found that the cultural devices which were innovated by Śaṅkaradeva targeting the illiterate masses had efficaciously impacted the society. Śaṅkaradeva dispersed the messages of devotional ideologies through cultural elements like music, songs, drama, rhythmic verses etc which the common people found to be very easy and opportune to learn something from them.

Śaṅkaradeva with his tremendous experiences and knowledge established the Assamese nation in a unique way before the world. During his time no electronic or print media were there. But overcoming such difficulty he started to propagate the messages of *Bhakti* through literary and cultural devices which the common people found to be very convenient and easily accessible. It is found that in spite of absence of technical devices Śaṅkaradeva's literary and cultural devices worked as strong and

forceful media to communicate with the people. So those cultural and literary devices gainfully utilized by Śaṅkaradeva are still alive in the field of Assamese culture and literature. Śaṅkaradeva as a mass communicator is unparalleled. Successful implementation of those devices are still exists today. Popularity and admiration of his literary and cultural assets are still prevailing in society even after five hundred years of his demise. His superb audio and visual and audio-visual media are still occupying an esteemed position in our society which proves that Śaṅkaradeva's mass communication system as well as the devices innovated by him were proper and very much effective.

Another important thing is that the involvement of common men in the renaissance was fully spontaneous. Śaṅkaradeva's communication system was so strong that the masses irrespective of their being literate or illiterate joined the entire socio-religious movement. They themselves came forward and acquired the messages disseminated by Śaṅkaradeva through those literary and cultural devices. Therefore in the present study, the researcher has found that the literary and cultural devices innovated and utilized by Śaṅkaradeva worked successfully among the masses of the society.