

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Concept of *Bhakti*:

In a very simple language *Bhakti* is a state of conscious mind which generally comes from inner feeling. The English term for *Bhakti* is devotion. According to *Oxford American Desk Dictionary* devotion means enthusiastic loyalty or great love. The term *Bhakti* or devotion can be explained from different viewpoints. Generally *Bhakti* means a state of mind of prayer to God. It is the state of utmost but selfless love and affection to God. It is absolutely divine and supreme. So *Bhakti* is a sacred phenomenon of mind.

Bhakti is one kind of little but deep feeling of mind which cannot be expressed in words or language. It is a continuous and endless process. This process is nothing but a communication between human mind and spirit of God. *Bhakti* makes a link between God and the devotee. Through *Bhakti* the devotee pray to God for salvation.

The word *Bhakti* is derived from the word '*Bhaj*' which is found employed in the Vedic texts in its various forms in the sense of 'to distribute, allot, or apportion', 'to furnish, supply, or bestow, 'to share with', 'to partake of, or enjoy', 'to set about', 'to resort to', but never in the sense of 'to love or adore'. The word *Bhakti* in Vedic literature meant distribution, partition, separation or a share, and in the *Nirukta*, as in *R̥gveda-prāṭisakhyā*, it gives the sense of succession, order or series, or an attribute¹

¹ Neog, M. (1982). *The Bhakti Ratnakar of Sankaradeva and History of the Concept of Bhakti*. P.6

The love when rendered to God is called *Bhakti*. *Bhakti* is not destructive; it teaches that no one of the faculties, we have, has been gone in vain, that through them is the natural way to come to liberation. *Bhakti* does not kill out our tendencies, it does not go against nature, but only gives it a higher and more powerful directions. When the same kind of love that has been given to sense objects is given to God, it is called *Bhakti*.² The great advantage of *Bhakti* is that it is the easiest way for Śāṅkaradeva and the most natural way to reach the great devine end in view.³ The absolute self surrender to God and a feeling of joy and happiness in serving or worshiping Him, are the two main characteristics of *Bhakti*.⁴ *Bhakti* is single-minded devotion to the Supreme being.⁵

Devotion was the basic element of all the sects like the Vaiṣṇavism, Śāktism and Śāivism etc. The word devotion denotes all the systems of Viṣṇu worship, Durgā worship, Kālī worship and Ganeśa worship etc. The system of worshiping a particular deity is called devotion. Gradually the system of worship took a shape of a popular cult which was founded in the doctrine of *Bhakti* from Vedic age.

Viṣṇu is represented as one of the great gods even in some sections of the *Ṛg-Veda*, but he was not regarded as the greatest god in early Vedic times.⁶

The terms *Bhāgavat*, *Bhakti* and *Bhakata* are intrinsically related with one another, and the term *Bhāgavat* originally denoted primitive tribal group which owned

² Vidyatmananda, Swami.(1985). *What Religion Is In The Words Of Swami Vivekananda*. P. 245-246

³ *Ibid*. P247

⁴ Sarma, S. (2016). *the neo vaishnavite movement and the satra institution of assam* .P.49

⁵ Pathak, D. (2012). *Beautiful Mind of Srimanta Sankardeva*.P. 9

⁶ Sircar, D.C. (1993). *Cultural Heritage of India*,Vol-IV. P. 108

all tribal wealth, *Bhakti* meant a share thereof, and Bhakta an individual who had received such a share.⁷ Suvira Jaiswal, in his book, says that though the word *Bhakti* in the sense of devotion does not occur in early Vedic literature, yet the sentiment of the same is often expressed in Ṛgvedic hymns, especially those addressed to Varuṇa which are full of impassioned devotion and intimate fondness very much akin to the spirit of *bhakti*.⁸

The elements of devotion were collected from *Ṛgveda*. Pray to God, chanting of God's name, glorification of gods were different kinds of prayers which ultimately expressed the sense of devotion.

In reference to the term '*Bhaj*' from which the word *Bhakti* is derived, Dr. Phanibushan Das, in his book *Nava Vaiṣṇava Dharmar Itibrittva*, mentions three phases of devotion, they are: the personal relation between God and human being, types of prayer and participation of human being in *līlā* of God.⁹

1.2 Definitions of *Bhakti*:

Different definitions and explanations are there regarding *Bhakti*. According to *Nārādīya Bhakti Sūtra*: *Sā tasmin parāma premrūpā*- (v-2) that (i.e. *bhakti*), verily is of the nature of supreme Love of God. According to this aphorism (*Sūtra*) *Bhakti* is a state of realization of God with a blissful and divine experience. This aphorism clearly differentiates *Bhakti* from desire, kinship, hatred and fear. *Bhakti* is constant flow of mind towards the lord which is brimming with love with selfless desire.

⁷ Jaiswal, S. (1967). *The Origine and Development of Vaishnavism*. P.116

⁸ Jaiswal, S. (1967). *The Origine and Development of Vaishnavism*. P.117

⁹ Das, P. (2016). *Nava-Vaisnava Dharmar Itibrittva*. P.11

nāradastu padarpitākhilasārata taddhīśmarāṇe paRāmabhyā kulateti(swa)(V-19)

Nārada is of the opinion that the essential characteristics of *Bhakti* are the consecration of all activities, by complete self surrender to him, and extreme anguish if He were to be forgotten. According to *Nārada*, the prime characteristic of *Bhakti* is complete self-surrender. All the activities of Human life done with this attitude are called devotional. The ritual functions as well as the chanting the sacred names of God will be purely devotional if the attitude of self surrender is there. Another characteristic of devotion is anguish. Extreme anguish brings a feeling of great delight to the minds of *bhaktas* and they reach the stage of realization of God.

padarpitākhilasara san kamakrodhavimanadiko tasminneva karaṇīyam-(v-65)

Dedicating all activities to Him, desire, anger, pride etc. should be directed only towards Him or employed only in the exercise of *Bhakti* towards Him. According to this aphorism giving up all natural characteristics like desire, anger and pride etc one can dedicate himself on Him and serve Him, which is the actual exercise of *bhakti* towards God.

Thus *Bhakti* is a state of mind of dedicating oneself with the love of God which is far away from worldly matter.

According to Śāṇḍilya's *Bhakti Sūtra*: *sā parāṇuraktirīśore īśvare. (v-2)*

That means devotion is extreme or supreme fondness or attachment to Godhead.

The characteristics of devotional services are described by Rūpa Goswāmī with evidences from different scriptures. He states that there are six characteristics of pure devotional services, which are as follows: ¹⁰(Prabhupād, 1989. Pg 3)

- I. Pure devotional service brings immediate relief from all kinds of material distress.
- II. Pure devotional service is the beginning of all auspiciousness.
- III. Pure devotional service automatically puts one in transcendental pleasure.
- IV. Pure devotional service is rarely achieved.
- V. Those in pure devotional service deride even the conception of liberation.
- IV. Pure devotional service is the only means to attract Kṛṣṇa.

In his translation of the Upaniṣad, Max Muller says: “*Bhakti* is never inculcated and is only mentioned in the last verse, but what is really peculiar... is the strong stress which it lays on the personality of the Lord. The Īśvar Deva in the passage quoted is perhaps the nearest approach to our own idea of a personal God”¹¹. (Neog,1982, Pg 6).

1.3 Ways of *Bhakti*:

Bhakti (devotion) to the Lord may find expression in different phases. These devotional expressions are classified into nine forms. They are: *Śravaṇa*(listening), *Kīrtana*(chanting), *Smarāṇa* (remembering), *Arcana* (praying), *Vandana*(praising),

¹⁰ Swami Prabhupada, A.C.B. (1989). *The Nectar of Devotion*. P.3

¹¹ Neog, M. (1982). *The Bhakti Ratnākara of Sankaradeva and History of the Concept of Bhakti*. P.6

Pādasevana(serving the golden feet of Lord), *Dāśya*(servility), *Sakhīva*(friendship), *Ātmanivedana*(total surrender of self to the Lord). These nine expressions are called *Navavidhā Bhakti* (i.e. nine forms of devotion).

śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇu smaraṇam pādasevanam nām I

arcanaṁ vandanaṁ dāśyaṁ sakhyamātmanivedanam ii

(Śrīmadbhāgavata V. 7/5/23)

In *Kīrtana*, Śaṅkaradeva mentions these nine ways of devotion:

śravaṇa kīrtana

smaraṇa viṣṇura

arcana pādasevana /

dāśya sakhitva

vandana viṣṇuta

kariba deha arpaṇa // (V. 340)

These nine forms are classified under three categories: (Sarma, 1995, pg 73)

prathama tritaya (the First triplet),

dvitīya tritaya (the Second triplet) and

trītiya tritaya (the Third triplet)¹²

The first *tritaya* is composed of *Śravaṇa*, *Kīrtana* and *Smaraṇa*, the sole theme of which is to love God. It is known as *Premamayī Bhakti* (i.e. devotion with love and affection). The second *tritaya* is composed of *Arcana*, *Vandana* and *Pādasevana* which are work-based and are called as *Karmamayi Bhakti*. *Arcana*-the

¹² Sarma, T. N. (1995). *Bhaktibad*. P73

praying, *Vandana*-the praising and *Pādasevana*-serving the feet of the Lord. And the works are performed for God, for which these are known as *Karmamayī Bhakti*. The rests are based on knowledge. *Dāsya*-The servility, *Sakhitva*-the friendship and *Ātmanivedana*-total surrender to the Lord- all are included in the third *tritaya*.

Among the nine forms two are considered to be best by Holy Scriptures. They are: *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrttana*. *Bhakti* generally is one kind of deep feelings of mind. It is a state of dedicating the mind to God and to realize Him. The Holy Scriptures say that for realizing God *Śravaṇa* and *Kīrttana* are the best ways.

1.4 Life sketch of Śaṅkaradeva

When a society needs reformation, a revolution is always necessary. Political, economy, religious as well as social changes bring reformation to the society. As the change is positive, the society enjoys a positive and conducive environment. At the same time development surely comes to the society. To establish reformatory social values renaissance for the society becomes necessary. Such a renaissance may be spearheaded by some profound reformers who do their best basing on pure truth and values. A renaissance brings revolutionary changes to the society where people can assimilate themselves with utmost moral and spiritual values. Such a change is absolutely adorable by all people by all times and by all places. To lead such a revolution the emergence of a social reformer is always considered as blessing to all. The advents of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, Śrīrāma, Buddha, Mahāvīra, Jesus Christ, Hajarat Mohammad, Śaṅkarācārya, Nānak, Rāmānujacārya, Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Caitanya, Tulsīdās, Śaṅkaradeva, Mādhavdeva, Harideva etc. are regarded as significant events

all over Indian sub continent. Their mission and vision were to conduct the society by reformative principles based on values.

Śaṅkaradeva was the pioneer of *Bhakti* movement in Assam. He propagated the Neo-Vaishnavism trend for the very first time during medieval period in Assam.

1.4.1. Date of birth:

According to Rāmcarāṇa Thākura, Śaṅkaradeva was born on Friday, 5th day of the month of *Āsvina* in 1371 *śaka* on *Śuklā Daśamī Tithi*. Again according to Dr. Maheswar Neog, Śaṅkaradeva was born on Thursday of the month of *Āśvina* on full moon day of *Śravaṇā Nakṣhatra*, *Kārtik saṁkrānti* in *Śaka 1371*.

1.4.2 Place of Birth:

Śaṅkaradeva was born at Ālipukhurī near the village named Bardowā in Nagaon(present) district of Assam of the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. Śaṅkaradeva himself also provides data about his place of birth, geneology and parents in his own writing as follows:

baradovā nāme grāma śaṣye matsye anupāma

louhityara āti anukula I

sehi mahā grāmeśvara āchilanta rajādhara

kāyastha kulara padma phula II

tāne putra sūryavara mahā varā deśadhara

jñānī mānī parama viśiṣṭa I

yāra yaśa ebho jvalai jayantā mādharma dalai

dui bhāi yāhāra kaniṣṭha II

tāne putra kuloddhāra bhaumika madhyata sāra

prasiddha kusuma nāma yāra I

tāne suta śiśumati kṛṣṇa pāve kari nati

viracilā śaṅkare payāra II

*(Bhāgavata purāṇa, X.)*¹³

“The village named Bardowā, situated just near (on the bank of) the Louhitya (Brahmaputra), was rich in food and fish; the head of that village was Rājadhara, the lotus-like person of the Kāyastha community. His son Sūryavara was a famous administrator, a charitable, respectable and distinguished person; whose fame is still glittering. He had two younger brothers, Jayanta and Mādhava Dalai. His worthy son, the rescuer of the family and the great among the rulers (land lords) was famous by the name Kusuma. And his son the poor-minded (immature) Śaṅkara composed these verses by paying homage at the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa.”¹⁴

Śaṅkaradeva’s father was Śiromaṇi Kusumbara Bhūñā, the chief administrator of *Bārabhūñās* and mother was Satyasandhyā. He lost his parent very early of his childhood.

¹³ Chutia, D.(1998).*Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Vākyamṛt*. P.546

¹⁴ Goswami, K. (2007). *Mahapurusha Sankaradeva*.P.4

As one story goes, Śaṅkaradeva was born as a result of Lord Śiva's blessing. So he was named as Śaṅkara. The story was that Śaṅkaradeva's father had a cow name Kapilī. The cow used to offer her milk to Lord Śiva daily by going to Gopeswar temple in Śingāri crossing the mighty river Brahmaputra at night. One day Kusumbara astonishingly found his cow Kapilī's body wet in the morning daily. Later Kusumbara Bhūñā got to know about the whole incident. After knowing that he also went to Gopeswar Temple to offer pūjā to Lord Śiva as he did not have any child for a long period of time after his marriage. Being satisfied by him Lord Śiva blessed him that he would be a father of an excellent child. As a result Satyasandhyā gave birth to a boy baby and later he was known as Śaṅkaradeva.

1.4.3. Childhood and education:

As Śaṅkaradeva was an orphan, he was brought up by his paternal grandmother Khersūtī, till the age of twelve, Śaṅkaradeva spent most of the time by wandering here and there and playing with his friends.

Śaṅkaradeva was very brave, healthy, strong and energetic since his childhood. In his childhood he swam across the river Brahmaputra, caught snake and so on. But Śaṅkaradeva's grandmother was worried about his career and future as he had no interest in study. Each and everyone of his family was very wise. His forefathers were well-versed in every branch of study such as *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, epics etc. one day his grandmother told him to go school unless he would blemish his family and would remain dull or silly. According to the wish of his grandmother Śaṅkaradeva was admitted in the *Tol* of Mahendra Kandali on a very auspicious Thursday in the month

of *Bhādra*. After a few days of admission Śaṅkaradeva learnt the alphabets and composed a very strong poem without using vowels. The poem was all about the glorification of Lord Viṣṇu.

That poem made Mahendra Kandali very surprised and he understood Śaṅkaradeva's caliber and greatness. Within a few years of learning at the *Tol*, Śaṅkaradeva became master of *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇā*, *Yoga* etc. *Hariśchandra Upākhyāna* was his great composition during his schooling.

1.4.4. Marriage life:

After completing his study Śaṅkaradeva returned home. His grand fathers Jayanta and Mādhava decided to make arrangement for his marriage. Śaṅkaradeva married Sūryavatī, daughter of Haribar Giri in *śaka* 1392. Sūryavatī gave birth to a girl child named Manu or Haripriyā. But unfortunately Sūryavatī lost her life right after their daughter Manu came to their family in *śaka* 1396.

1.4.5. Second marriage of Śaṅkaradeva:

After his first pilgrimage when Śaṅkaradeva returned to Bardowā, he was insisted by his relatives to marry again. Accordingly he married Kālindī, daughter of Cidānanda Bhūñā, at the age of forty eight. From his second wife he had three sons. They were Rāmānanda, Haricaraṇa and Kamalalocana.

1.4.6. Meeting with Mādhavdeva:

Mādhavdeva was Śaṅkaradeva's prominent disciple who carried forward Śaṅkaradeva's legacy of Neo-Vaishnavism cult. There was a great story behind how

Mādhavdeva met Śaṅkaradeva and became his disciple. Mādhavdeva was son of Govindagiri alias Mahodara alias Dighalīpurīyā and Manoramā or Manu. Mādhavdeva's father had two wives Anucitā and Manoramā. From Anucitā Govindagiri had a son named Dāmodara who lived in Baṇḍukā. After death of his first wife, Gabindagiri migrated to Assam from Baṇḍukā. Here in Assam he married Manoramā. When Mādhavdeva became young, his father took him to Baṇḍukā. At that time Govindagiri's second wife Manoramā stayed with his daughter and son-in-law named Gayāpāṇi, who was later known as Rāmdās. In Baṇḍukā Mādhavdeva studied under *adhyāpaka* Rājendra. Mādhava became well-versed in śāstras. After a few years he got information about his mother's illness and decided to return to Assam to see his mother. Mādhavdeva was a scholar of Śākta cult. So, while returning to Assam from Baṇḍukā he wished to offer a pair of white goats to goddess Durgā for his mother's quick recovery from illness. In the meantime his brother-in-law Rāmadāsa moves to Dhuāhātā Belaguri where Śaṅkaradeva was staying. Rāmadāsa was a great follower of Śaṅkaradeva. As Mādhavdeva reached Dhuāhātā he asked Rāmdās to buy pair of white goats to offer to the goddess Durgā. Durgāpūjā was about to start, but Rāmadāsa did not buy goats for the pūjā. Mādhavdeva became angry and argued with him on the matter. Rāmadāsa told Mādhavdeva to go to his guru Śaṅkaradeva and argue with him. Mādhavdeva decided to meet Śaṅkaradeva and went to Belaguri along with his brother-in-law. There an introduction took place between Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavdeva and verbal duel started between them concerning the fact of worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa or other God and Goddesses. The debate took place for a long time (three praharas). Mādhavdeva quoted different verses of śāstras in favor his argument.

veda ājñā laṅghilāta mahāpāpa haya I

avaśeṣe mari ghora narake paraya II

vedara vihita karma lāge karibāka I

nakarile śāstre durācāra bole tāka II

etekate āmi devīpūjā karo jāni I

īśvarara ājñā iṭo āche vedavāñī II¹⁵

Śaṅkaradeva also put forwarded his own arguments. Śaṅkaradeva cited a very significant verse from *Bhāgavata purāṇa*:

yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena

trpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopaśākhā

prāṇopahārāc – ca yathendriyāṇām

tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā (iv.39.24)

“as the branches, leaves and foliage of a tree are nourished by the pouring of water only at the root of the tree, as the limbs of the body are nourished by putting food only in the stomach so all god and goddesses are propitiated only by the worship of Achyuta.”¹⁶

Śaṅkaradeva also explained some verses from *Bhāgavata purāṇa*-

kahibanta dharma dharibeka śuddhamati /

¹⁵ Thakur, R. (2016). *Guru-Charit*. P.477

¹⁶ Neog, M. (2018). *Sankaradeva and His Times Early History of Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Assam*. P.110

harikathā śravaṇata kari dṛḍhabhakti //

kṛṣṇata huibeka prema dṛḍhabhakti yata /

deha vyatireke ātmā jānibā sākṣyāta //

*gurusevātese pāi bhakati mukuti /*¹⁷(Thakur,2016.p 440)

After hearing that verse Mādhavdeva accepted the defeat and fell down at the feet of Śaṅkaradeva. Mādhavdeva accepted him as his guru.

śaṅkarara prauḍhi vāṇī śuni mādhavara I

gucila saṁśayā yata āchila manara II

kṛtānjali kori āsanara uṭhilanta I

*guru māni saṅkarata śaraṇa lailanta II*¹⁸

That historic meeting of Śaṅkaradeva and Māhabadeva was known as *Manikāncana Saṁyoga*. That meeting took place in 1522A.D. Thereafter Mādhavadeva devoted himself and his whole life to the service of his guru Śaṅkaradeva.

1.4.7. Social life:

The advent of Śaṅkaradeva in 1449 A.D. is considered as one of the most significant incident of North-East India in all aspects of social, cultural, religious and literature etc. He was the pioneer of Assam and Assamese culture who did his best for the upliftment of the entire society. He was not only a leading social reformer but also

¹⁷ Thakur, R. (2016). *Guru-Charit*.P.440

¹⁸ Ibid. P.440

a great nation builder of Assam. This glittering personality was undoubtedly the chief exponent of rich Assamese culture and literature, whose incomparable contributions are still giving a unique identity to the Assamese culture and literature before the world.

During the time of Śaṅkaradeva Assam was divided into small kingdoms. Among them the worthy mentions were the Kachārī, the Cutīyā, the Āhom and the Koc. Assam had been considered to be a meeting ground of various ethnic races till the time of beyond the historical records. Both the plains and hills were the habitat of different groups of people. Moreover the Marān, Maṭak, the Kārbi, the Jayantīyā, the Lālūng, the Rājbaṁśī also had their separate territories. Consequently the people did not have a more powerful as well as a strong king or ruler. Each of the particular tribes had their own form of worship. The Cutīyās worshiped Goddess Kālī. The Kachārīs worshiped by sacrificing buffaloes, pigeons, ducks, cocks and he-goats etc.

The religious situation of Assam in the pre-Śaṅkarite period was too worse. Like other parts of India the Brāhmaṇas became more dominant in Assam too. The dominant features of Brahmanism were polytheism, idolatry, religious rituals and sacrament and castism. They spread the Vedic and priestly rituals whereas the Non-*Brāhmīns* were prevented to join in. Gradually the common people lost both their interest and knowledge regarding the Hindu religion. And the newly-entered *Brāhmīns* got the golden chance of it and enjoyed supreme power over the common people. But this kind of oppression came to be protested by some social reformers of the contemporary society.

Śaṅkaradeva was a fearless crusader of meaningless castism which had been prevailing in the contemporary society. The priestly activities and obscurantism had exploited the common people through ages. The humanity steeped in ignorance, superstitions and engaged in false worship and sacrifices of living beings. Śaṅkaradeva stood against such social turmoil and raised his vision and mission against such social injustice. He advocated single worship to God i.e. lord Viṣṇu. He advocated his view against the various forms of worship. He only believed that service to God selflessly is the only form of devotion which is the only route to salvation.

From childhood Śaṅkaradeva was a lover of Viṣṇu. At a very early age he studied the religious scriptures which led his mind towards the love of lord Viṣṇu. In the year 1481 AD, at the age of 22 right after the demise of his wife Sūryavatī, he started his pilgrimage and he was accompanied by his Guru Mahendra kaṇḍali and other seventeen companions. In that journey he visited several holy places of northern India. During this long term pilgrimage of 12 years he visited shrines and temples and centers of culture like Purī, Gayā, Mathurā, Vṛndāvan, Kaśī, Sītākunḍa, Barāhikunda, Ayodhyā etc. During this period he came into contact with many religious scholars and acquired vast knowledge regarding God and religion. He returned home with firsthand knowledge of Vaishnavite theology and of the different prevailing sects of the faith which helped him to shape up a new genre of religious sect of Assam.

The prolonged sojourn and discussion on religious matters with saints outside Assam profoundly influenced Śaṅkaradeva's life and works. Right after reaching home from pilgrimage he established the *Harigrha* at Bardowā and started a new

genre in the religious aspects of Assam. At the *Harigṛha* premises discussions on religious books and scriptures were held regularly from where the new doctrine *Eka Śaraṇa Hari Nāma Dharma* was propagated. He was strictly monotheistic and absolutely believed in one God. He firmly established the monotheistic philosophy with his new doctrine *Eka Śaraṇa Hari Nāma Dharma* and raised his words against idolatry and different ways of devotion to different gods. Among the nine ways of *Bhakti* (devotion), he considered *Śravaṇa* (listening) and *Kīrtana* (chanting) as best ways.

Śaṅkaradeva was the founder of Neo-Vaishnavism in Assam who spearheaded the *Bhakti* movement in the North Eastern part of the country. This versatile genius and extra ordinary scholar was the first Assamese to exercise lots of art, culture and literature. Śaṅkaradeva was a great litterateur. He wrote more than thirty volumes of prose and verse which were purely religious and devotional based on deep morality and spirituality. At the same time he was a cultural innovator. He raised the Assamese culture to a very high level of excellence through his hymns what his followers used to call as *Bargiīt* and through the *Nāṭs*. As during Śaṅkaradeva's time when no technical or mechanical devices of communication were there, Śaṅkaradeva's literary and cultural innovations were played the most important role in disseminating the messages of *Bhakti*.

Śaṅkaradeva who was rewarded by his ardent disciple Mādhavdeva as *Sarvagunākara* was a great saint preacher of 16th century who did his best to unite the entire nation by spreading the messages of Neo-Vaishnavite religion. He provided a

common platform for all sections of people in addition to a dominant bond of religious belief. He succeeded to communicate with the common people only through his works which were purely secular and which were accepted by all irrespective of caste, religion or languages. He founded a composite society where he himself was a singer, lyricist, composer, director, dancer and a great litterateur. Because of his unlimited contributions towards the Assamese nation, regard him as one of greatest personalities of the world. This great saint breathed his last in 1568 A.D. at Barpetā.

1.5. *Bhakti* According To Śaṅkaradeva

The *Bhakti* Movement was indeed a great religious movement of India. Lord Viṣṇu was the central hero of Vaishnavism and monotheism was the prime ideology of it. In Assam Śaṅkaradeva built such a monotheistic system which was based upon the ethics of *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata*. The only way, according to him, to realise the Lord was devotion, devotion to one God who is supreme in power. He was against the multiplicity of worshipping different deities.

Gītā and *Bhāgavata* were the main source-scriptures basing on which Śaṅkaradeva established a new faith which was known as *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. During the time of Śaṅkaradeva Assam was passing through a turmoil situation in all aspects like political, social and religious as well as in all level of society. The people lived religious life which was at the lowest ebb both spiritually and morally. To rescue the masses from such a suffocating life Śaṅkaradeva brought a new genre which was based on pure humanistic ideals and scientific outlook. The new genre was free from all the existing rituals of the contemporary society. *Eka Śaraṇa* is

the absolute self surrender to God-head i.e, Lord Viṣṇu. As stated in *Śrīmadvāgavat Gītā* Śaṅkaradeva was in support of forbidding of worshipping of different Gods and Goddess. Śaṅkaradeva said himself in *Kīrttana*-

anya devī deva nakaribā sevā

nākhāibā prasāda tāra/

mūrtiko nācāibā gṛhao napaśibā

*bhakti haiba byabhicāra //*¹⁹

Bhakti according to Śaṅkaradeva is the supreme route to *mukti*, i.e, to liberate human being from the worldly bondage. Śaṅkaradeva advocated *Nirguṇa Bhakti*. Some salient features of the faith propounded by Śaṅkaradeva were:

- i) Śaṅkaradeva believed in monotheism, i.e. only one supreme God who is Kṛṣṇa or Rāma rather than different deities.
- ii) Śaṅkaradeva did not support any costly and priestly rituals in the name of God.

Tīrtha buli karoī jalata śuddhi /

Pratimāta karai devatā buddhi //

Vaiṣṇavata nāi isava mati /

*Garuto adhama kṛṣṇa Badati //*²⁰

(*Kīrttana*, verse-132)

¹⁹ Chutia, D.(1998).*Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Vākyamṛt*. P.255

²⁰ Chutia, D.(1998).*Mahāpuruṣa Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva Vākyamṛt*. P. 46

- iii) Śaṅkaradeva believed *Bhakti* (devotion) as the only route to Godhead
- iv) Among the nine forms of *Bhakti* Śaṅkaradeva stressed on *Śravaṇa* (listening with single minded attention) and *Kīrtana* (ceremonial chanting/reciting) of the names of God.
- v) Śaṅkaradeva always believed in classless and casteless society.
- vi) Śaṅkaradeva emphasized on *Satsaṅga*, i.e. company of true devotees.
- vii) Śaṅkaradeva believed that the relationship between God and the devotees should be like the master and the servant.
- viii) *Śrīmadvāgavata purāṇa* and *Gītā* were the main source of Śaṅkaradeva's religious and spiritual inspiration.
- ix) For popularizing the faith of *Bhakti* cult Śaṅkaradeva used cultural and literary outputs as medium of propagation.
- x) Śaṅkaradeva was the first to bring about a cultural renaissance along with a socio-religious movement in this North-Eastern part of the country.

1.6. Significance of the Study:

The concept of mass communication is very modern. And the system is very much intricate to society. But significantly the mass communication system was prevailing in the earlier time also, only the way was different than that of today. Dissemination of new ideas, propagation of religious faith was nothing but a mass communication system. But the significant thing was that the system was not mechanical and the devices were not technological as of today. The *Bhakti* movement

which took place in all over India was a systematic process of mass communication where all the saint-poets used nothing but some innovative devices to disseminate their socio-religious ideologies which were basically based on *Bhakti*.

In Assam the *Bhakti* Movement took place under the spiritual leadership of Śaṅkaradeva. To spearhead the vibrant movement, like other saints-poets of the country, Śaṅkaradeva too used some devices tactfully to propagate his ideologies among the common people. During the time maximum number of people of the society were illiterate and no any well-organized transportation or communication process was there what we have today with us. Therefore, the significance of the study is that in spite of such embarrassed circumstances how Śaṅkaradeva propagated his religious faith in Assam which is still alive today among us.

1.7. Statement of the problem:

To study the elements of mass communication in the *Bhakti* movement of Śaṅkaradeva is the objective of this research and to find out it the researcher has taken some definite objectives.

1.8. Objectives:

The objectives of this work are:

1. To discuss *Bhakti* Movement as an effective mass communication system in the perspective of India in general.
2. To study the devices of mass communication gainfully utilized by Śaṅkaradeva in his literary productions.

3. To study the devices of mass communication gainfully utilized by Śaṅkaradeva in his cultural productions.

1.9. Methodology:

The methodology used in this study is analytical and descriptive in nature. To collect data both the primary and secondary sources were used.

1.10. Limitations of the Study:

The researcher has confined the study within some limitations. In the present study ‘A Study of the Elements of mass communication in the *Bhakti* Movement of Śaṅkaradeva’, the researcher has discussed the system how Śaṅkaradeva made communication with the masses in propagation of his religious faith which is confined within Assam but not other places outside of Assam.

Moreover the researcher has taken into account only four basic elements of mass communication, they are-sender, receiver, messages and channel while conducting the work. Whereas in some other books of mass communication more than four elements are also found.

1.11. Definition of some Key Words:

Mass Communication: It is a process of sending and receiving any message, idea etc through some systematic medium.

***Bhakti* Movement:** It was a vibrant socio-religious movement which took place in India under the spiritual leadership of some prominent saints and sages.

Vaishnavism: The system of worshipping Lord Viṣṇu.

1.12. Chapterization:

CHAPTER I: Introduction

CHAPTER II: Review of Related Literature

CHAPTER III: Bhakti Movement in India in General and Assam in Particular

CHAPTER IV: Bhakti Movement as a System of Mass Communication

CHAPTER V: Śaṅkaradeva's Literary Devices and Mass Communication System

CHAPTER VI: Śaṅkaradeva's Cultural Devices and Mass Communication System

CHAPTER VII: Conclusion

Part II

1.13 Concept of Communication:

Communication is a process of sending and receiving information. It is the vehicle through which we develop, maintain and improve human relationships. It is a system where a force binds one to maintain a relationship with the other. The word 'Communication' is drawn from '*communis*' which means common; the idea of commonality is frequently stressed in talking about communication. Communication is a process of transmission of news and views from one source to targeted audience or audiences. It is a process of sharing perceptions, ideas or an attitude which may take place in all levels of people or institutions or organizations. Denis McQuail defines,

communication is a process which increases commonality, but also requires elements of commonality for it to occur at all.²¹

The process of communication is the vehicle of social development. It is the driving force of civilization whereof one's ideas, views, knowledge, opinions, thoughts, beliefs, skills or attitudes are shared and transmitted with another in any aspects of human activities i.e. social, political, economic as well as religious. It is a linking process between two groups or more than two groups of people which strengthen mutual expectations.

Communication is the process of sending and receiving of information which is consist of two essential features. They are- what to send and how to send. For successful communication meaningful messages should be transformed with a convenient way of exchange i.e. the message/messages and the media or medium are considered to be essential elements for an effective communication system. Berlo says "Communication does not consist of the transmission of meaning. Meanings are transmited or transferable. Only messages are transmitted and meanings are not in the messages, they are in the messages users." In this context the communication system can be explained by the following elements of 5W's and 1H's, they are²²-

Who

What

Whom

When

Where and

How

²¹ Aggarwala, V. B. (2002). *Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication*. P.1-2

²² Ibid. P

Again according to Willbur Schramm, communication requires at least three elements:

- a) The source
- b) The message
- c) The destination

In 1948, political scientist Harrold Lasswell suggested a convenient way to describe an act of communication to answer the following questions²³-

Who?

To whom?

In which channel?

Says what ?

With what effects?

Therefore, it can be said that for an effective communication system, four basic elements are mostly needed. They are-

- Sender-the source/informer
- Receiver-the destination/targeted audience
- Message- the news/views/information
- Channel-the medium/media

²³ Ibid. P.

Considering the size and nature of source, message and the destination, communication system is classified into the following types-

1. Intra-personal communication: It is the communication system within us.
2. Inter-personal communication: It is the communication between two persons.
3. Group communication: It is the communication which occurs among three persons or more.
4. Public communication: It takes place within a structured and formal setting where one is regarded as speaker, who is the sender, and the others are considered as listeners, who are the receivers or the destination. It is face to face communication where both the senders and the receivers are equally and actively participating in the communication system.
5. Mass communication: It is the process of disseminating information or ideas to the common masses through particular media.

1.14 Meaning and definition of Mass Communication:

As the term implies, this type of communication covers a large size of procession. In this type of communication the news, views, ideas, thoughts, beliefs as well as opinions are disseminated to a large number of audiences without any historical and geographical boundary. The source transforms the information to thousands of different personalities or targeted destination to make the greatest possible impact on them through a proper system of media and the receivers at the same time receive the signal or the messages without limitations.

De fleur & Dennis: Mass communication is a process in which professional communicators use media to disseminate messages widely, rapidly and continuously to arouse intended meaning in large and diverse audiences in attempts to influence them in a variety of ways.

Orlik: Mass communication is the process of rapidly conveying identical information, assertions and attitudes to potentially large dispersed audiences via mechanisms capable of achieving task.

Dr. Joseph R Dominick: Mass communication is the process in which a complex organization with the aid of one or more machines produces and transmits public messages that are directed at large, heterogeneous and scattered audience.

So, mass communication is a complex process which comprises systematic phenomenon of rapid and at the same time wide dissemination of intended messages through technology. In this process the size of targeted audience is relatively large and widely dispersed. In this process the sender may be a person, a group of persons, an organization, an institution or a government. The receiver is, generally unknown to the sender or the source. Significantly this type of communication is more public than private because the messages transformed from the source are neither the representative of a particular individual nor targeted to a particular individual.

1.15 Elements of Mass Communication:

Mass communication system is composed with four basic elements. Shirley Biage in his book “Media/Impact: An Introduction to Mass Communication” states about these elements of mass communication as sender, channel, receiver and

feedback. A sender is the source which puts a message on a channel i.e. medium. The medium delivers the message to the 'receiver'. When the receiver responds, a 'Feedback' occurs. A 'Noise' (such as static or a drop connection) can interrupt or change the message during transmission.²⁴

According to Willbur Schramm, communication requires three elements: the source, the message, and the destination. The source is the sender; the message may be the sound wave or any other important thing which can be interpreted meaningfully by somebody. Therefore, in general the elements of mass communication are the sender, the receiver, the message and the channel.

1.16. Types of Medium:

Medium of mass communication is of four types. They are:-

1.16.1 Traditional Media

1.16.2 Print Media

1.16.3 Electronic Media

1.16.4 New Media

1.16.1. Traditional Media:

The non-electronic medium which is a part of our culture and is used for transmitting tradition from one generation to another generation is called traditional media. Tradition is handing down of belief, experiences and customs from generation to generation specially in oral form or by a process of traditional performances or

²⁴ Biagi, Shirley. (1988). *Media/Impact: An Introduction to Mass Communication*. P.iv

communication. Traditional media, i.e. the traditional means of communication expression exist before the advent of modern mass media. Traditional media is found expression in the daily social life of the people. Since ancient time, the people engage themselves in folk songs and dances, arts and crafts, rituals and festivals etc. which are part of their daily life. It is the personal form of communication and entertainment which is a way of life of a community. Traditional media is a means of communication and expression that had existed since time immemorial. It is the indigenious channel of communication having inbuilt, character of entertainment, which had been made to express the socio-ritual, moral and emotional need of folk such as folk songs, folk arts, folklore etc. Folk media is a genuine means of communication and a true carrier of culture among the people.

According to Ravindran (1999) traditional folk media is a term used to denote people performances. It describes folk dance, rural *dRāma* and musical variety of the village people. This form speaks of those performing arts which are cultural symols of the people. Traditional media refers to conventional means of mass communication practised by various communities and cultures, or embodied in local custom or lore. Traditional folk media also represent traditional way of life based on customs, belief and arts that make up a distinctive culture. Traditional media can be defined as he store house of customs, beliefs, legends, rituals and languages etc. which are very close to the people and so followed them giving much importance to it. This form of media is very popular among the masses regardless of their education, standard, social status or financial position. It, therefore, has the advantage of familiarity, personal contact, common language, audience participation, repeatability and acceptance.

Traditional means following a custom or ways of behaving that have continued in a group of people or society for a long time. Folk means particular group of people. So when we say traditional media it means the traditional ways of communication among groups of people.

Traditional media generally include the presentation of different types of art form like folk theatre, street theatre, puppetry, fairs and festivals, folk dances, storytelling, folk music and songs, painting, traditional motifs designs and symbols, proverbs, sound signals, traditional youth club or dormitory, traditional games etc.

Types of traditional Media:

Traditional media is a very useful form of communication. It exists in numerous forms and practised in different parts of the country. Every community has its own traditional means of communication. Although some of the traditional media maintain its originality, many of them may not be in its original form or contents.

Different forms of traditional media are used for social communication and entertainment as shown below:

- i) Folk theatre
- ii) Street theatre
- iii) Puppetry
- iv) Fairs and festivals
- v) Folk dances
- vi) Story telling

- vii) Folk music and songs
- viii) Paintings
- ix) Traditional motifs, designs and symbols
- x) Proverbs
- xi) Sounds signals
- xii) Traditional youth club and dormitory
- xiii) Traditional games
- xiv) Mask

1.16.2 Print media:

In 1457 Johannes Gutenberg invented movable metal types. This paved the way for mass production of printed materials. Resultantly process and publication spread rapidly across Europe, then in other continents. Mass production of printed documents led to the democratization of knowledge. In other words it made knowledge and education accessible to common people. It was exactly a revolution.

At first, news was chiseled in stone. Later, it was handwritten and posted in a public area much like today's posters or read from a scroll by a town crier. As early as 131 B.C., the ancient Roman government produced daily news sheets and informed the public in this way. Through the years, print media evolved to include entertainment, educational topics and more, instead of only conveying news.²⁵

²⁵ <https://bizfluent.com/facts-6852659-introduction-print-media.html>

The printed media are different in their binding, regularity and content and timeliness, though the means and methods for productions are similar to certain extent.

News paper: News papers are periodically published which carry current information about society. Earlier, news papers were not daily publication as we see now. They were published weekly, bi weekly. This was due to the absence of adequate technology and news gathering system. Before the early 19th century, power press was invented. This led to fast printing. Invention helps us to gather news from remote places. This all facilitated the introduction of newspapers.

The first news paper was 'Publick Occurances' published by By Harris in 1760. The first news papers published in India was the Bengal Gazette by James Augustus Hicky in 1780. It also called Hicky's Gazette.

Newspaper is primary mass medium from which people receive news. The research result shows that newspapers reach more people than any other medium does. And, for every measures, newspaper industry overpowers all other media, be it in advertising revenue or in the size of audiences.

Newspapers are printed products created on a regular basis and published in multiple copies, containing mainly updated information about happening in the the society. Newspaper content is considered more credible and accurate. Capability to be used for future references makes newspapers people's favourite. Diversity of content is another feature of this medium. It can carry a rich mixture of news, features, articles, columns, cartoons, graphics, editorials etc. Selectivity and content diversity make newspaper a real mass medium.

1.16.3 Electronic media:

Mass media that use electronic or electro-mechanical energy for transmission of messages are called Electronic media. Major electronic media are radio, Television, Video and audio record, CDs and DVDs etc.

Of these, radio and television messages are transmitted via air waves or radio signals. The process of transmitting messages via radio waves or signals is called broadcasting. The literary meaning of broadcasting is to scatter seed over a broad area rather than in a particular place. Probably because of the ability to spread messages to diverse audiences through radio waves, this technique is called broadcasting.

Major Broadcasting media are:

- 1) Telephone broadcasting: Existed between 1881 and 1932, this is considered the earliest form of electronic broadcasting.
- 2) Radio broadcasting: It was started experimentally in 1906 and commercially in 1920. It is the mechanism of transmitting audio through the air as the radio as from a transmitter to an antenna and thus to receive devices. Stations can be linked in radio networks to broadcast common programming, either in syndication or simulcast or both.
- 3) Television broadcasting (telecast): It started experimentally in 1925, and commercially in 1936. This technology of airing video revolutionizes the modern communication system.

- 4) Cable media: Cable radio started in 1928 and cable television started in 1932. They were the components of cable media. In both, messages are transmitted via coaxial cable, serving principally as transmission medium for programming produced at either radio or television stations with limited production of cable dedicated programming.
- 5) Satellite television: Satellite television from 1974 and satellite radio from 1990, meant for direct to home broadcast programming (as opposed to studio network uplinks and downlinks) provides a mixture of traditional radio and television broadcast programming or both satellite dedicated programming.
- 6) Web casting or video television: Web casting or video television and audio radio streams offers a mixture of traditional radio and television station broadcast programming with internet dedicated web cast programming.

The original method of transmitting television or radio signals using radio waves is increasingly being replaced by higher quality digital broadcasting (television and radio) transmitted in digital data form.

1.16.4 New Media:

Digital technologies that take advantage of computers and the Internet have led to products and services that provide information or entertainment. Social media, blogs, video games and online news outlets are typically referred to as “new media. New media is a relative term.”²⁶

²⁶ <https://online.seu.edu/what-is-new-media/>)

The new media now a day touches every aspect of our social, political and cultural lives. Its importance has been increasing day by day and has made the world digitally.