

Mahapursha Srimanta Sankardeva's Legacy in Education: Bridging Tradition and Modernity

Uttam Talukdar, Research Scholar,
Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University.

Dr. Indrani Kalita, Assistant Professor,
Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University.

Abstract

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva was a great spiritual leader of Assam. He propagated Neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam. Sankardeva and his disciples in Assam aimed to eliminate illiteracy by providing education to the masses. They established Satras, Namgharas, translated literature, composed drama, and poems, and emphasized adult and vocational education to achieve their goals.

Sankardeva significantly contributed to literature and language through his literary works, translations and propagation of the Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharama, imparting education to the masses and introducing scientific curriculum and teaching methods, which still influence the present education system.

Sankardeva also contributed to aims of education (Moral aim, Spiritual aim, Vocational aim, aim of universal brotherhood, peace and inclusive society, aim of all round development), adult education, methods of teaching (play way method, learning by doing method, group discussion method, storytelling method), curriculum etc.

This paper aims to study the contribution of Srimanta Sankardeva towards the field of education and its relevance in present time through systematics review of the existing literature.

Keywords- *Education, aims of education, methods of teaching, curriculum, education through literary work, Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharma, Satra, Namghara.*

Introduction

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva (1449–1568), a towering spiritual reformer, cultural icon, and social visionary of Assam, holds an enduring legacy that transcends religious, cultural, and educational spheres. As the founder of the Ekasarana Dharma and the architect of the neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam, his contributions to literature, music, dance, drama, art, and social reform have shaped Assamese society for centuries. Among these contributions, his educational philosophy and practice—although less explored in scholarly discourse—remain profoundly relevant in the contemporary quest to bridge tradition with modernity in the field of education.

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva initiated the Neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam which was a part of Bhakti movement. Dr. Bimal Mazumdar (2014) stated that Sankardeva was an extraordinarily gifted man, widely travelled, sound in traditional Sanskrit learning, poet, playwright and musician par excellence. Dr. Mazumdar also mentioned in his book about Sankardeva as - “He gave to Assam a new discipline of faith and helped Assam to break away with a past with its complicated esoteric doctrines and its unmeaning practices and gave to the people something simple and straightforward, divested of all questionable associations or implications. He was the greatest builder of Assam by bringing in a purer spiritual life, though circumstances prevented his influence from being spread into other parts of India, as a religious leader he is unquestionably one of the greatest India has produced, and he deserved to be mentioned with Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Basavanna, Ramananda, Kabir, Caitanya, Mira Bai, Guru Nanak, Tulsidasa. He was truly the medium through whom the spiritual light of medieval India as a whole shone upon the life of Assam.”

Srimanta Sankardeva was born in 1449 AD in the village of Alipukhuri near Bardowa in Nagaon district (present) of Assam. His father, Siromoni Kusumbar Bhuyan was the chief of Bara-Bhuyan clan. His mother Satyasandha died after his birth. After death of his father, Sankardeva was brought up by his grandmother Khersuti Ai. At the age of 12 years he started his formal education under the guidance of Mahendra Kandali. During his schooling Sankardeva composed a poem only using consonants and without using any vowel.

Sankardeva propagated *Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharma*, the religious faith that belief on one supreme god (Vishnu-Krishna) and to surrender to that supreme god. For propagation of the *Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharma*, Sankardeva composed many literary

works like poems, prose, drama, songs etc. He also established community prayer hall known as Naama Ghar and Monetary known as Satra.

In his book “Descriptive bibliography of Sankardeva studies” Dr. Bimal Mazumdar (2014) rightly stated that – Sankardeva was a versatile saint- a religious preceptor, social reformer, philosopher, poet, dramatist, artist actor, singer, lyricist, musician, yogic expert, ace swimmer, a master weaver, expert artisan and what not. He contributed to humanity through propagation of universal love and peace, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity all these for the benefit of mankind. Nripendra Nath Sarma (1996) stated in his PhD thesis that Sankardeva was the Dean and Faculty of Art and literature, social science and culture. He was a poet, a dramatist, a prose writer, a translator, an artist, a player, a preacher, a teacher, a reformer and even a strong rebel.

In 1568, Srimanta Sankardeva, breathed his last at the age of 120 years.

Sankardeva’s educational legacy is rooted in a holistic vision that emphasized character-building, moral instruction, community engagement, and experiential learning through arts and culture. His use of *Namgharas* (prayer and community halls) and *Satras* (monastic institutions) as centers of both religious instruction and social learning exemplifies an indigenous model of education that integrated spirituality with practical life skills and cultural enrichment. His writings in Assamese and Brajavalī, his plays (*Ankiya Naat*), songs (*Borgeet*), and dance-dramas (such as *Sattriya*) became tools for informal yet effective pedagogy, nurturing critical thinking, ethical awareness, and communal harmony.

In the context of modern education, especially within a globalized world that often grapples with cultural alienation, identity crises, and a mechanized learning environment, Sankardeva’s approach offers vital insights. His model promotes learner-centered education rooted in local culture, creative expression, and moral values—elements often missing from contemporary curricula. As India envisions an educational renaissance through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, revisiting Sankardeva’s philosophy becomes timely and significant. His legacy presents a framework for an education system that is not only inclusive and democratic but also deeply connected to the socio-cultural ethos of the learners.

This paper explores Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva’s contributions to education from a historical and philosophical perspective and examines how his

ideas can inform present-day educational practices. By analyzing his life, works, and institutional innovations, the study aims to highlight how Sankardeva's legacy can help bridge the gap between traditional knowledge systems and modern pedagogical paradigms, offering a culturally responsive and morally anchored vision of education for contemporary India and beyond.

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to explore and analyze the educational philosophy and practices of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva, with the aim of understanding their relevance and applicability in the context of modern education. The study seeks to examine how his teachings—centered on moral education, spiritual growth, cultural integration, and community-based learning—can contribute to shaping a value-oriented and culturally rooted educational framework that bridges traditional wisdom with contemporary pedagogical needs.

Need and Significance of the Study

The present era of rapid globalization, technological advancement, and cultural homogenization has led to a growing disconnect between modern education and traditional values. In this context, revisiting the educational legacy of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva becomes highly significant. Sankardeva's philosophy, rooted in moral development, spiritual enlightenment, cultural expression, and community harmony, presents a time-tested model that addresses the holistic development of individuals—something that modern education often overlooks. His use of local language, indigenous art forms, and inclusive pedagogy resonates strongly with the objectives of contemporary educational reforms, such as India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes value-based education, cultural rootedness, and experiential learning. This study is needed not only to critically analyze and document Sankardeva's contributions to education but also to explore how his principles can be meaningfully integrated into modern curricula to nurture responsible, ethical, and culturally aware citizens. Furthermore, in a time of rising intolerance, social unrest, and moral degradation, the relevance of his teachings in promoting peace, compassion, and unity is more urgent than ever. By bridging tradition and modernity, this research seeks to offer insights into how Sankardeva's educational ideals can serve

as a transformative force in reimagining education for present and future generations.

According to Priti Deka (2017), there is an urgent necessity to effectively apply the educational philosophy of Srimanta Sankardeva in today's society. Such implementation could play a crucial role in nurturing moral values, spiritual awareness, character formation, and holistic personality development among the younger generation. Presently, society is witnessing a decline in moral and spiritual education, leading to increasing instances of cruelty, hatred, and inhuman behavior. This moral erosion has contributed to growing violence and insurgency, disturbing the peace and harmony of the community. Embracing the teachings of the revered saint Sankardeva could help the youth address and resolve many of these conflicts and societal issues.

Methodology

This study is based on secondary data. To study the contribution of Sankardeva's education system on modern education system, the researchers reviewed some existing related literature. These literatures were collected from books, journals, Shodhganga website, Wikipedia, YouTube etc. This study is descriptive in nature.

Review of Literature:

Dr. Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti (2015) stated that, Sankardeva and his disciples developed various means of educating peoples of their time. Through his literary works, songs, drama which contains most parts of the curriculum, they disseminate education among masses. Through the performance of his drama, songs and other literary and poetic works at satras and Naamghars, people get knowledge about various values, life lessons, vocational skills etc. which relevance still exist in present time.

Priti Deka (2017) stated on her Ph.D. thesis that, Sankardeva was a brilliant educator and philosopher. Established by Sankardeva, the Namghara and Satra institutions operate on the democratic principle of religious education. Sankardeva attempted to uphold society morally by teaching the masses moral education based on values and, in the truest sense, by fostering a work culture among the Assamese people. He did not limit himself to merely preaching Bhakti doctrines. Sankardeva projected certain social values as his ideals in the context of society after surviving a very difficult social life. Sankardeva envisioned oneness in duality and unity in diversity.

In his research study “Relation Between Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva And Assamese Society- A Brief Study” Abu Anowar Aminul Hoque (2020) stated that, Although Srimanta Sankardeva is primarily revered as a religious saint in Assamese society, his remarkable contributions to literature and culture have earned him the revered title of Mahapurusha among the people of Assam. His impact on Assamese society is vast and far-reaching. Many of the cultural and spiritual elements that define Assam's identity today can be traced back to his efforts. His legacy encompasses the promotion of religion, development of arts and literature, creation of drama and theatrical performances, efforts to eradicate untouchability, unification of diverse communities, and the establishment and enrichment of the Satra culture—all of which have played a vital role in shaping and uplifting Assamese society.

Shyamali Hazarika (2020) opined in her PhD thesis “A study on social philosophy of Sankardeva with special focus on his eka sarana nama dharama” that, through various means like drama, songs, paintings, music, literature etc. Sankardeva tried to spread the seed of secularism. Which in turn made the Assamese society inclusive and peoples of different tribes, casts, religion showed faith on him and take in his satras for education. He also emphasised on the cleanliness and physical education. He practised yoga for physical health. In present time physical education is an important subject in education system. Again Government launces grand programme like “Swacha Bharat Abhiyan” to make the country clean.

Abul Hussain (2021) stated in his study entitled “Contribution of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva to Assamese Literature and Culture” that, Srimanta Sankardeva contributed to a great extent in the field of Assamese literature and culture. Through his cultural and literary activities, he disseminates education among common people.

Priyasri Devi et al. (2022) in their research study entitled “Satriya culture and Srimanta Sankardeva's contributions to education” stated that, Srimanta Sankardeva and his disciples played a significant role in promoting education through the establishment of Satras, which offered both formal and informal learning. While formal education was provided through tols supported by affluent Satras, informal education effectively reached the general masses, who were largely excluded from traditional learning systems. Despite widespread illiteracy and limited access to education for common people, Sankardeva's movement made a conscious effort to spread knowledge and social awareness. Over time, the Satra institutions took on the

responsibility of educating and enlightening society through their own initiatives.

According to Phuloma Daimary, Srimanta Sankardeva disseminate education through poetic works, bhakti theory, drama, songs, satriya dance. Sankardeva's poetic works are very strong instrument for aesthetic development of students. Bhakti theory of Srimanta Sankardeva has a great educational significance. It helps in the development of various democratic values like brotherhood, unity, equality, love, affection, peace etc. among the people, attainment of which are also objectives NEP 2020.

Educational Contribution of Srimanta Sankardeva

Unlike other educationist, Srimanta Sankardeva did not engaged himself only in the field of education. Through his religious and social activities, Sankardeva disseminate education to general people. Contrary to popular belief, Srimanta Sankardeva was not just a religious leader but also, in his own unique style, an educator. He assisted the populace in learning behavioural science and the scriptures. Even in its rudimentary form, social science was present in his writing. His writing occasionally analyses the state of society. His lessons were replete with suggestions for the perfect way of living. The primary focus of his instruction is ethics. People were advised not to be arrogant. He pioneered adult education on a global scale. Additionally, vocational education knowledge was imparted by Srimanta Sankardeva.

Education was a privilege, that was only available to a select few members of the upper class of society during the Sankardeva era. The general populace continued to be submerged in a gloomy abyss of ignorance and illiteracy. Within the vast sea of illiterate masses, the enlightened and socially conscious disciple constituted a tiny minority. Nevertheless, Srimanta Sankardeva continued to spread knowledge and wisdom in his own unique ways. He wrote numerous plays, songs, prayers, and philosophical essays. A significant amount of the curriculum used in the residential school back then was included in this. The writings of Srimanta Sankardeva contained a strong emphasis on the curriculum. As a result, when his plays were performed, his songs were sung, and his hymns were chanted, people were taught the same material that they had learned in residential schools and were brought up according to those standards.

Srimanta Sankardeva's contribution to various field of education can be discussed as bellow:

(a) Contribution to aims of Education: Priti Deka (2017) on her PhD thesis explained the aims of education of Sankardeva in her PhD thesis as follows: both formal and informal education were imparted by Satras during the time of Sankardeva. Sankardeva's aims of education can be explained as-

Moral Aim: Numerous passages in Sankardeva's writings promote virtue and condemn vices, respectively, as the universally recognized way of living. Truthfulness, kindness, hospitality, temperance, contentment, patience, purity of heart, restraint over passions, and indifference to worldly pleasures are examples of these moral virtues. It is acknowledged that kindness or nonviolence towards all living things is a great virtue. He emphasized on universal equality and inclusiveness of all through his literary work Kirtana Ghosa as:

Kukura Candala Garddabharo atmarama

Janiya sabako padi kariba pranama

(Even the souls of dogs, Candala, asses are verity of God, considering this idea in mind they should be saluted.)

Sankardeva emphasized on development of human values. He gave the message to help the needy people and animal by his writings:

Jagatara punya mane jana nista kari

Prani upakara alpako nuhi sari

Hena jani pranika abhaya diya dana

(All the animals should be helped and well protected considering them to be the souls of God.)

Sankardeva addresses truth and nonviolence on both a social and personal level. Any action, whether it be social, economic, or individual, must start with the truth.

Nahi nahi ana dharma jana satya kari

Satyase ache rahi mahi caracara

Satya sama dharma aru nahi purusara.

(Truth is the essence of all actions and it is the greatest virtue of man. There is no other dharma like truth. The whole Universe sustains because of the truth.)

Sankardeva emphasised the importance of moral purity in daily life for a

healthy society. Therefore, he counselled living a life based on truth, non-violence, self-discipline, and refraining from greed, falsehood, desire, anger, and other negative emotions.

Spiritual aim: One of the main spiritual aim of Sankardeva's education is to belief in one god i.e. Krishna. He preached *Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharama* for all people of irrespective of caste, creed, class and religion. *Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharama* emphasized on worship of only one god (Krishna) that make people more focused, more disciplined. He also emphasized to overcome the love for materialistic goods and other desires by devoting oneself to god.

Vocational aim: Sankardeva realized the importance of vocational education to improve the livelihood and economic condition of people and hence he emphasized on the development of vocational education. Through Satras, Sankardeva imparted various vocational training to his followers. Some of the important vocations that were imparted in Satras are handicraft, various works of wood, cane works, bamboo works, mask making, preparation of Sanchi-Paat and ink for writing manuscripts etc. All these vocations are still practised in many Satras of Assam.

Aim of universal brotherhood, peace and inclusive society: One of the main aims of Sankardeva's education system is universal brotherhood, peace and an inclusive society where all people can leave with each other with same dignity. He tried to achieve this aim by including people from various castes, class, religion and creed as his disciple to propagate *Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharma*.

Kirita, Kachari

Khasi, Garo, Miri

Yavana Kanka Goala

Asama Muluka

Dhoba je Turuka

Kubacha Mlechcha Chandala.

(The Bodos, the Kacharis, the Khasis, the Garos, the Misings, the Muslims, the cow rearers, the launderers, the kochs, the untouchables, the pyre lighters in the land of Assam.)

So it can be said that Srimanta Sankardeva was the first person to introduce the concept of "Bar Assam" (Undivided Assam).

He also worked for the eradication of untouchability from the society and try to established peace.

Aim of all round development : Sankardeva emphasized on all round development of people i.e. Physical development, moral development, spiritual development, mental development, social development etc. For physical development he emphasized on practice of yoga. He himself use to practice yoga for physical development. For spiritual development he composed many songs, drama, plays etc. and used to discuss spiritual and religious topics in Satras.

(b) Contribution to Literature and Language: It was Srimanta Sankardeva who put all the knowledge of the Bhagavata Purana in precise form in “Gunamala”. It is only possible for Sankardeva to put an elephant (Bhagavata Purana) in a “Bhuruka” (a small pot) (Gunamala). But it is not an easy task to write about all the literary works of Srimanta Sankardeva with in a small amount of word. Poet Jatindra Nath Duwara rhighly said about Sankardeva as -

*“Tomar jibani dev! likhe Ene saddhya kar,
Gotei Asom juri bistrita Jibani jar.”*

(Who can write thy story, O great saint?)

The founder of the Bhakti movement in Assam, Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva was also a pioneer in the fields of education, language and literature, art and culture. He contributed to the field of literature and language in many ways. He composed an extensive number of books, including translations, commentaries, and original works, to explain his philosophy and practical applications. Since these texts were always needed to govern daily tasks, they surely promoted the study of literature.

The renaissance of Assamese literature occurs during the Neo-Vaisnavite age in Assam. The teachings of the faith that Sankardeva and Madhabdeva, his favourite disciple, wished to spread, were explained and elaborated in a great deal of songs, dramas, verses, and narratives that they wrote. Sanskrit language was the only language during the period of Sankardeva for religion as well as for education. It was the great Sankardeva, who translated the religious books from Sankrit to Assamese language for the common people. Sankardeva developed a language known as Brajvali language for composing the Bargeetas.

Various writings of Srimanta Sankardeva can be categorized as (Nripendra Nath Sarma, 1996) –

1. **Drama and Ankiya Nats :** Keli Gopal, Kaliya damana, Ram Vijaya, Rukmini Haran, Parijat Harana, Patni Prashada, China Yatra, Patni prasad,

Janma Yatra, Kangsa Badha. '*Chihna Jatra*' is his first drama or Nat. It contained various portraits of heaven, music, songs, dances, dialogue and acting.

2. **The Kirtana-Ghosa** : The unique translation and sum total of the Bhagavata, the Gita, the Padma Purana and the Brahmapurana. His Kirtan-ghosa is commonly referred to as a "Kalpataru" or beehive, where anyone can get sweet and delectable food. Children's stories, academic literature and language, and others' songs and recitations are all available in it. As a representation of the holy text, there ought to be a copy of Kirtan-ghosa in every Assamese Hindu home.
3. **The Dasama** : One of the four Vaisnava Vedas written on the activities of child Sri Krishna.
4. Translation of the various chapter of the Bhagavata: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 8th, 10th, 11th and 12th Chapters.
5. **Stories** : Harichandra Upakhyana, Amritamanthana, Ajamil Upakhyana and Balichalana.
6. **Bhakti based books** : Bhakti Pradipa, Anadi Patana, Bhakti Ratnakara, Gunamala, Niminaba Sidha Sangbada and Uttarakenda Ramayana.
7. **Bargeet**: Bargeets are another type of Sankardeva's incomparable literary work. These songs of devotion were and remain intended for use in prayer. Singing Bargeet used to be considered a necessary component of literacy. These songs are more lyrical than other prayer songs, more beautiful than other poems, more educational than other classic texts, more visually appealing than music, and finally more timeless than written works of literature. These Bargeets were originally composed by Sankardeva and were written in a combination of Brajavali and Maithili. According to Dr. Banikanta Kakati these are the "noble numbers" on the activities of Lord Krishna.

It is said that out of his 240 Bargeets, not more than 41 are presently available. Maximum of them were destroyed in accidental fire.

8. **Bhatimas** : Bhatimas are those songs based on god which are sung during

Ankiya Nat. Types of Bhatimas are: Deva bhatima – panegyrics to God. Naat bhatima – for use in dramas. Raja bhatima – panegyrics to king Nara Narayana.

9. **Totayas**

10. **Chatihās.**

(c) Contribution to Adult Education : During the period of Sankardeva, maximum people were illiterate. Sankardeva clearly understood that to practice Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharama by the general people it is important to literate them. For these purposes Satras and Namgharas play an important role to educate the adult people of Assam. Sankardeva composed many songs, plays, prose, books and translated many literatures from Sanskrit language in Assamese and Borojāvali language for the general people. It helps in increasing adult literacy.

(d) Contribution to Methods of teaching : To impart education among people Sankardeva used various methods of teaching like: play way method, learning by doing method, group discussion method, storytelling method etc.

Play way method : Sankardeva composed many drama i.e. ankiya naat through which he used to give spiritual, moral, and social knowledge to the people which is actually play way method of teaching. He used to wear mask for various religious characters, draw various portraits to make the method of teaching effective.

Learning by doing method : Through Satras, Sankardeva used to give various vocational trainings to people. This helps the people to learn things by doing themselves.

Group discussion method : In Satras and Namgharas, Sankardeva used to sit with people and discuss various spiritual and social topics. General people put questions and Sankardeva and his disciples used to answer those and discuss on those questions.

Storytelling Method : Sankardev used story telling method to explain the knowledge of various religious books so that the common people can understand easily.

(e) Contribution to Curriculum: In her PhD thesis, Priti Deka mentioned about curriculum of the education system of Sankardeva as - the subjects included in the

curriculum of teaching were—Mother tongue (Brajavali, Sanskrit), ancient lores and scriptures (the Vedas, the Upanisadas, the Puranas, the Samhitas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Vyakarana, Nyaya Sastra, Kavyas, Philosophy, Psychology, Yoga, Moral education and Vocational education including handy craft, drawing and painting, music, dramatization, dancing and cottage industry.

(f) Contribution of Satra and Namgharas to Education : Sankardeva established many Satras and Namgharas which had a great role on imparting both formal and informal education to the masses of his period as well as to the present society. Through the establishment of several tols, which were tended by a few wealthy Satras, it provided formal education. For the majority of people, the Satras' informal education was incredibly successful. The villagers came to the Namghara during the Satra to hear the exposition and recitation of several scriptures, including Kirtana Ghosha and the Bhagavata-Purana. They gained a great deal of knowledge about the scriptures as a result of their participation in numerous religious debates and communal prayer services. Here the 'bhakat' (pupil monks) reside under the supervision of the Satradhikar, who is in charge of their material well-being as well as their spiritual development. The trainee monk receives instruction in liturgy, doctrinal practices, discipline, and monastic life during the probationary term. Additional education is provided to the monks by Bhagavati and Pathak. Monks are also hired to create original works in Assamese or Sanskrit, as well as to translate texts from Sanskrit into the language. It is a custom among the monks to copy and illustrate manuscripts and to gather 'Caritputhis', which are biographies of Satra leaders and vaishnava saints, to depict the ideal of the vaishnavite individual's life.

Satras also provided vocational education like cultivation, wood curving, cane and bamboo work, paper and ink preparation, musical instrument preparation, painting, weaving, preparation of mask and many more.

Bridging Sankardeva's Education system with modern education system

Srimanta Sankardeva's education system, method of teaching, educational philosophy, aims of education etc. are still relevant, beneficial and effective in modern time. The researcher tried to analyze and bridge Sankardeva's education with modern education system as discussed below:

Srimanta Sankardeva's Education System and Its Relevance in NEP 2020: Srimanta Sankardeva, the 15th-16th century saint, scholar, and cultural reformer of Assam, established an inclusive and holistic education system through his Namghara and Satra institutions. His system integrated spiritual, moral, artistic, and intellectual education, focusing on bhakti (devotion), ethical living, literature, music, drama (Ankiya Naat), and community learning. Education under Sankardeva aimed at character building, cultural development, and social harmony rather than mere literacy. This aligns deeply with NEP 2020, which emphasises holistic and multidisciplinary education, integration of art, music, and ethics into the curriculum, and nurturing values such as empathy, respect, and unity. NEP 2020's vision of rootedness in India's cultural heritage while promoting critical thinking and creativity mirrors Sankardeva's approach that combined knowledge with cultural and moral grounding. Furthermore, NEP's focus on community participation and local knowledge systems reflects the Namghara model, where learning was community-driven and contextually relevant. Thus, Sankardeva's education system remains highly relevant today as NEP 2020 aspires to develop students into responsible, ethical, and culturally aware citizens with 21st-century competencies.

Inclusive education: Priti Deka (2017) stated in her PhD thesis that, during the time of Sankardeva in Assam, most of the people were not able to take formal education. It was only accessible to some selected upper section of the society. Feeling the need and importance of education, Sankardeva developed an education system which is inclusive in nature. Through Satras, Sankardeva and his disciples disseminate education among masses of the society. Irrespective of cast, religion, creed, socio-

economic status etc. all can come to take education in Satras. This inclusiveness of his education system is also relevant in modern time.

In present time, various educational act, policies, programmes are developed/enacted to make the education more inclusive. Government enacted various act like Right to education act (RTE) 2009, Right of Persons with Disability act (RPWD) 2016, NPE 1986, Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) programme 1974 etc. to make the classrooms more inclusive and accessible for all irrespective of cast, creed, gender, religion etc. In addition to that Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Samagra Siksha Abhiyan and NEP 2020 also aims in inclusive education. In this connection, to make our classrooms more inclusive, Sankardeva's education system, systems of Satras, his philosophy may be relevant. His philosophy of inclusiveness says that –

Kukura Candala Garddabharo atmarama

Janiya sabako padi kariba pranama

(Even the souls of dogs, Candala, asses are verity of God, considering this idea in mind they should be saluted.)

Kirita, Kachari

Khasi, Garo, Miri

Yavana Kanka Goala

Asama Muluka

Dhoba je Turuka

Kubacha Mlechcha Chandala.

(The Bodos, the Kacharis, the Khasis, the Garos, the Misings, the Muslims, the cow rearers, the launderers, the kochs, the untouchables, the pyre lighters in the land of Assam.)

Aims of education : Various aims of Srimanta Sankardeva's education system are moral aims, spiritual aims, vocational aims, aim of universal brotherhood, peace and inclusive society and aim of all round development of people (Priti Deka, 2017). All these aims of education are relevant in the context of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. NEP 2020 outlines several aims of education to ensure holistic, inclusive and future-ready learning. Key aims of education mentioned in NEP 2020 are:

(a) Holistic development:

- To develop all aspect of learners intellectual, social, physical, emotional and moral values.
- To develop cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains equally.

(b) Development of critical thinking and creativity:

- To nurture analytical and problem solving skills.
- Encourage creativity, innovation and adaptability to face global challenges.

(c) Building character and ethical values :

- To inculcate constitutional values, empathy, respect for others cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit and a sense of responsibility.

(d) Preparing for productive life:

- To prepare students for gainful employment, entrepreneurship and economic participation.
- Develop vocational skills and life skills from school level onwards.

(e) Promotion of multidisciplinary education :

- Breaking rigid boundaries between disciplines for better understanding and application of knowledge.

(f) Rootedness and pride in India :

- To develop knowledge of India's tradition, culture, language and heritage while being open to global knowledge and skills.

(g) Equity and inclusion :

- Ensuring education for all irrespective of socio-economic, gender or regional barriers to promote social justice.

(h) Developing global citizens

- Making learners aware of global issues and enabling them to contribute meaningfully to society and the world.

(i) Scientific temper and evidence based thinking :

- To foster curiosity, logical reasoning and an attitude of inquiry and scientific

approach towards life.

(j) Lifelong learning :

- To make learners capable of continuous learning, self-improvement and adaptation to changes in knowledge and technology.

It is clear from the above discussion that Srimanta sankardeva's aims of education are relevant in the context of NEP 2020. So, it can be concluded that, the system of disseminate education among people may be beneficial to achieve the aims of education in present time also.

Vocational Education : Apart from spiritual and moral teachings, Srimanta Sankardeva's education system was also included practical skills essential for daily life and community development. In his Satras and Namgharas, learners were engaged in various vocational activities such as mask-making, manuscript painting, weaving, crafting musical instruments, and performance arts like drama, dance, and music, which required discipline and skill. These activities empowered individuals economically and enhanced their dignity of labour, creativity, and self-reliance. His system integrated vocational skills with cultural and moral education, ensuring learners were productive, responsible, and capable of contributing to society. In present times, when vocational education is gaining importance to develop employability skills and promote self-employment, Sankardeva's approach is highly relevant. NEP 2020 also emphasises integrating vocational education from early stages to make students skilled, self-dependent, and ready for diverse livelihoods. Sankardeva's model inspires modern education to include traditional skills, local crafts, arts, and cultural practices as vocational training, thereby preserving heritage while ensuring economic empowerment. Thus, his education system remains a guiding light in strengthening vocational education with cultural relevance, ethical grounding, and skill development for sustainable living.

Method of Teaching : Srimanta Sankardeva's methods of teaching were informal yet deeply effective. Namgharas and Satras were used as centres of learning

where students learned through observation, participation, discussion, and community activities. He used storytelling, drama (Ankiya Naat), music (Borgeet), and dance (Sattriya Nritya) to impart values, religious teachings, history and philosophy, making learning enjoyable and holistic. His method emphasised understanding over rote memorisation and aimed at character building, discipline, and social harmony. Teachers (Gurus) in his system acted as role models, guiding learners with compassion and personal attention. In present times, these methods remain highly relevant as modern education increasingly recognises the importance of experiential learning, integration of arts, value education, and learner-centric pedagogy. NEP 2020 also promotes similar approaches by advocating for art-integrated, competency-based, and value-oriented education to nurture responsible, ethical, and creative citizens. Thus, Sankardeva's education system and methods inspire today's educators to blend cultural heritage with innovative pedagogies for holistic development of learners.

Holistic Development: Srimanta Sankardeva's education system was designed to ensure the holistic development of individuals by integrating spiritual, moral, intellectual, artistic, vocational and social learning. His Namgharas and Satras functioned not only as religious centres but also as educational hubs where learners were nurtured through devotional practices, ethical teachings, literature, drama, music, dance, and communal activities. This approach promoted emotional strength, moral character, creativity, cultural pride, and social responsibility. His teachings emphasised inner purity, compassion, discipline, and selfless service, ensuring that education shaped learners into good human beings and responsible members of society. In the present time, this holistic approach remains highly relevant as modern education realises the need to go beyond academic achievement to focus on emotional, social, ethical, and creative development. NEP 2020 also advocates for such holistic education by promoting integration of arts, values, ethics, and life skills with academic learning to develop well-rounded individuals. Thus, Sankardeva's education system serves as an inspiring model for today's educators to foster holistic

development rooted in cultural heritage and moral values while preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century.

Adult Education : Srimanta Sankardeva's education system was inclusive and community-oriented, extending learning opportunities to people of all ages, including adults. His Namgharas and Satras served as open learning spaces where elders and adults participated in religious discourses, moral teachings, discussions on social issues, and cultural activities like music, drama, and arts, which broadened their knowledge, skills, and perspectives. Through storytelling, group singing (Borgeet), and community dramas (Ankiya Naat), Sankardeva educated adults on ethical living, social responsibilities, and cultural heritage while enhancing their communication, leadership, and organizational skills. This approach empowered adults to lead community initiatives, resolve conflicts peacefully, and live harmoniously. In present times, adult education focuses on literacy, skill development, awareness, and empowerment to improve quality of life and societal development. Sankardeva's education system is highly relevant today as it demonstrates how adult education can be rooted in culture, moral values, and practical knowledge, making learning meaningful and applicable in daily life. His vision aligns with current adult education goals of lifelong learning, social awareness, and active citizenship, as emphasized in NEP 2020, which seeks to promote inclusive, flexible, and community-based adult education programmes for a self-reliant and empowered society.

Conclusion

In Assam, during the period of Sankardeva, education was available to only selected people. Common people were generally illiterate. Sankardeva and his disciples tried on their own way to eliminate the darkness of illiteracy from the masses. Sankardeva's aims of education included moral aim, vocational aim, spiritual aim, aim of universal brotherhood, peace and inclusive society, aim of all round development. To achieve these aims of education Sankardeva and his disciples develop many ways like established Satras and Namgharas, translated many important literatures from

Sanskrit language to Assamese language, composed drama and poems etc. He also emphasized on the enhancement of adult education and vocational education.

Contribution of Sankardeva to literature and language is very important. He (and his disciples) composed many important literary works such as the Kirtana-Ghosa, Bargeets (poems), Ankiya Nats (drama), Bhatima (songs), Translations of important Sanskrit books like Bhagavata Purana, Gita etc. Through literary compositions he propagates the Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharama for all people of irrespective of caste, creed, class and religion and imparted education to masses. He had also remarkable contribution towards curriculum and method of teaching which are scientific and still use in present education system.

Srimanta Sankardeva's education system can be effectively linked with the objectives of NEP 2020 and other contemporary education policies due to its emphasis on holistic, value-based, and inclusive learning. His system aimed at the all-round development of individuals by integrating moral education, spiritual growth, intellectual development, arts, music, drama, and vocational skills, which resonates with NEP 2020's focus on multidisciplinary and holistic education. Sankardeva's methods of teaching through storytelling, dramatization, music, and practical activities align with NEP 2020's objective of promoting experiential and art-integrated learning to enhance creativity, critical thinking, and conceptual understanding. His education system promoted inclusivity by bringing people of all castes and communities together in Namgharas and Satras, reflecting NEP 2020's goal of equity and accessibility in education for all. Additionally, his emphasis on skill development, self-reliance, and dignity of labour through crafts, arts, and community service parallels NEP 2020's focus on vocational education and life skills from early stages to prepare learners for meaningful livelihoods. Other policies like the National Skill Development Policy and Adult Education initiatives also align with his model, which integrated practical skills, cultural education, and social empowerment. Thus, Sankardeva's education system remains a timeless example for modern education,

demonstrating how cultural heritage, ethics, skills, and holistic development can be integrated to achieve national education objectives for building responsible, skilled, and culturally rooted citizens.

From the above discussion it can be said that Srimanta Sankardeva was not only a great vaishnavite saint, religious guru/leader, philosopher, social reformer but also a great educationist of his time (in fact all time.)

Bibliography

- Borkakoti, S. K. (2015). Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva: life, philosophy and works. Retrieved on 23rd January, 2024 from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mahapurusha-srimanta-sankardeva-life-philosophy-works-borkakoti>
- Barman, S. (2017). Srimanta Sankardev: Kriti aru krititva. (5th Ed.). Assam Publishing Company.
- Daimary, P. Educational Thoughts of Srimanta Sankardev. Great Educational Thinkers. Retrieved on 20th December, 2023 from <https://northkamrupcollege.org/notes/1628340644.pdf>
- Deka, P. (2017). A study of Sankardeva as an educationist. [PhD Thesis, Assam University]. Shodhganga. Retrieved on 20th January, 2024 from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/276371>
- Devi, P., Shyam, A. & Sonowal, B. M. (2022). Satriya culture and Srimanta Sankardeva's contributions to education. International Journal of Health Sciences, 6(S3), 8662-8669. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS3.8056>.
- Gohain, H. (1990). Axomiya jatiya jivanat mahapurusha porompara. (3rd Ed.) Lawyers Book Stall.
- Goswami, A. (2019). Contribution of Than and Satra to the value education of Assam:

- With special reference to Bardowa Than. [PhD Thesis, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva Viswavidyalaya]. Shodhganga. Retrieved on 20th January, 2024 from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/312517>
- Hazarika, S. (2020). A study on social philosophy of Sankardeva with special focus on his eka sarana nama dharma. [PhD Thesis, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University]. Shodhganga. Retrieved on 20th January, 2024 from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/524575>
- Hoque, A. A. A. (2020). Relation between mahapurusha srimanta sankardeva and assamese society- A brief study, Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 16(2), 1175-1177. Retrieved on 28th June, 2025 from <https://www.jlls.org/index.php/jlls/article/viewFile/5437/1928>
- Hussain, A. (2021). Contribution of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva to Assamese literature and culture. International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering (IJITEE), 10 (7), 65-67. DOI: 10.35940/ijitee.G8958.0510721
- Joyful Learning. (2020, December7). Sri Sri Sankardev poem by Jatindra Nath Duwarah [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=HdSp4OjXIMs>
- Mazumdar, B. (Ed.). (2014). Descriptive bibliography of Sankardeva studies. Centre for Sankadeva Studies. Gauhati University.
- Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. New Delhi: Government of India
- Sankardev. In Wikipedia. Retrieved on 23rd January, 2024 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sankardev>
- Sarma, N. N. (1996). Contribution of Srimanta Sankardeva and his associates

towards education amongst the rural folk of Assam. [PhD Thesis, Gauhati University]. Shodhganga. Retrieved on 20th January, 2024 from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/67071>

Siddique, M. A. (2013). Sankardeva and his educational philosophy – A study. [PhD Thesis, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva Viswavidyalaya]. Shodhganga. Retrieved on 23rd January, 2024 from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/289276>

The Sankardeva Movement: Its educational impact. Retrieved on 23rd January, 2024 from https://www.tributetosankardeva.org/movement_edu.htm
