# CHAPTER-I

## EMERGENCE OF THE STUDY

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### Introduction

Education is as old as mankind and is the concern of all living beings. By education Gandhiji meant an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man- body, mind and spirit. In every society ancient or modern, simple or complex, primitive or advanced, one finds provision for education. No society has ever existed without some method providing education to meet the basic needs, without education no society could last more than a generation. Aristotle declared that "Educated men are as much superior to uneducated as the living are to the dead."

In common parlance the word education does not merely mean the acquisition of knowledge or experience but it means the development of habits, attitudes and skills which help a man to lead a full and worthwhile life. Education means the modification of human behaviour and is an act of training. It is the whole environment that educates, namely physical environment made up of both individuals and groups.[1]

Man is being educated for ages before he himself took any part in the process of education in the sense in which we use that term. He was purely an educand and the role of an educator was left to some cosmic power as may be called. Education leads the individual from darkness into light. It is thus a process, not an end, and the changes effected through the process of education have value and significance not only to the individual but also to the society. Education is the life long process, proper use of knowledge gained remains a mere abstraction and does not integrate with the personality of an individual, the real purpose of education may be said to have been defeated. Education may broadly be classified as informal and formal so far the agencies of education are concerned.

There is different meaning between informal and formal education, when we consider the informal education or primitive societies and informal out of school

contacts in modern societies on the one hand and the relatively formal education in modern schools where young people are held to mastery of content that otherwise would not be transmitted. The essential feature of informal out of school education is actual participation in the social, economic, recreational and other institutional life of the times. In informal education no formal rules, methods and discipline are maintained. It is incidental and spontaneous to eliminate all formalities. It has no fixed time-table or curriculum. It helps in acquisition of knowledge, development of skills, formation of attitude and realization of values even in the absence of its organized system.

The formal education on the other hand is a system which we receive in the educational institution systematically and in an organized way. It has a well-defined and systematic curriculum and in every step of education formal rules, methods and strict discipline are maintained.

The process of formal education is conceived largely as preparation for adult living. The items of informal education that formal education transmits are often abstract and their uses are sometimes unreal to the child. In formal education therefore the learner has to be induced to learn that is being offered him in the school and that constitutes one of the major problems of formal education. The artist teacher is one who makes life in formal school as much like real life as possible under modern conditions and motivate formal education as effectively as possible.[2]

The ideal of education for citizenship is a very old one. An educated citizenary are a greater defense to a democratic country than a vast standing army, Plato in his Monumental work „Republic" developed the theory of education aiming at producing effective citizens. We have here a statement which might be put as indicating the objective of education for citizenship. This aim of education was accepted in early times and it was thought that education should produce economic welfare and certain habituation to civic life. An individual as a citizen has certain duties in the state and as an essential concomitant thereof he can claim certain rights from it. Education for citizenship is directed towards educating and training the individual to discharge his duties and make him conscious of his rights. In practice education for citizenship results only in training to work out the political machinery of

democracy such as election responsible, executive to carry on public business, legislation to discussion and debate.

In the broad sense citizenship is regarded as comprising not only man duties to the state but also his whole social life with his family and his neighbours, his work, his pleasures, his recreation, his health, his philosophy of life and his ethical values. It has also been recognized that a man is primarily an individual soul with a personal destiny, a need for primacy and solitude. It is this public or political and private or personal that together constitutes the background for citizenship. Training for citizenship in a democratic country is the real aim of education. The attainment of the qualities and accomplishments envisaged in the concept depends upon the innate abilities and capacities of the children, home influences and training.

Education plays a vital role in giving human beings proper equipment to lead a gracious and harmonious life. Education in the widest sense is the constant interaction between the individual and the environment. No good life is conceivable without education. Intellectual power of human beings gives new meaning to life. A good life is one which is lived well and which is lived by the individual along with securing their fullest development. Through education society passes on to its growing generations, its ideals, hopes, ambitions, beliefs, traditions and all that comes under cultural attainments. The social environment provides varied opportunities for the development of man‟s intellectual and spiritual powers and lifts him above the animal level. Education has the basic responsibility of enabling the individual to live well and also creating those conditions which makes it possible for all human beings to live properly and creatively.[3]

Education is in fact learning through experience. Education is a natural, harmonious and progressive development of man‟s innate power. A citizen has to play not only political role but also social, religious and other roles, when we interprete the aim of education for citizenship properly it may be possible to include this as one of the aims of education. The promoters of this education for citizenship gave up the plan of courses in civic life in the way it was introduced and they now try to stress that all subjects should be so taught in schools as to develop democratic virtues. This change in attitude led to the change in terminology and there was change from education for citizenship to education for democracy.

A man is influenced by the society or vice-versa. Every group of individuals, when organized, lays down certain ideals and objectiveness. It is the society that has established institutions to educate the member of the society. In a democratic society every individual has to discharge his duties towards the society.

The society cannot relieve itself from the responsibilities of educating the children. From the point of view of ability, perfection and capacity, society and education are inter linked and inter related. Society also casts a lot of influence on education. Society influences the education and the schools very much. It is the education which helps to establish various moral and spiritual values in the society, in the absence of which the social structure may topple down. Members of the society had great faith in the educators and the education.

The society hands over its children to the educator and the educator makes them capable of living in society. From these we see that education has a great value as a process of social change. [4]

On the road of the values of truth, beauty and goodness the feet of youth can be set only through religion. Education must have the foundation of religion in order to save us from the darkness of the world. Religion is a subjective faculty of apprehension of the infinite. Religion is the cultural pattern based on relations with the super natural or extra ordinary as concerned by particular people involved. Religious experience is something unique which enters children like as a special kind of experience. In the broader sense religion does not stress the social self-respect, dignity by self-reliance, co-operation, liberty and tolerance.

Religion and education are closely associated with each other. Both are spiritual tendencies. Both seek to participate man, not from contact with his environment, but from slavery to it. Education gives certain mouldings to the life while religion beautifies the life by cultivation of truth, full heart with the moral and spiritual values. Religion and education with this collective and mutual effort lead a person towards self-realizations and self-understanding.

Truly speaking religious education does not mean something separable but pure, honest and beneficial. Education is nothing but religion, because both the

religion and education aim at harmonizing the person to the ultimate truth. Religion is the pure form of education. [5]

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in India there was a plexus of forces which toppled completely the cultural and religious order of the whole North Eastern India and led to the growth of a new religion for restructuring the toppled cultural and religious order. It was a Bhakti movement which is based on the liberal doctrine of Bhakti as revealed in the *Bhagavata purana*. It was a progressive and democratic movement which laid emphasis on the unity of the Godhead, stood against excessive ritualism, preached a faith on constant devotion, fought against caste prejudices and stressed on the equality and universal brotherhood of man. Several saints of great endowments appeared in various provinces to carry the message of the new faith to the masses by rendering the Sanskrit purana into regional languages. Of these saints Ramananda, Kabir (1440-1470 A. D.), Vallabhacharya (1479-1531 A. D.) were most impressive and occupied the first place. In Maharastra the religion of Bhakti was preached by Namadeva (1400-1430 A. D. ) who was a tailor by caste. In Bengal arose the notable saint Chaitanya (1485-1533 A. D. ) born of a learned Brahman family. In Assam also appeared many gifted Sankardeva (1449-1569 A . D.), a Kayastha by caste who shaped the religious, social, cultural and literary life of the people of the province for ages to come.

Mahapurusa Sankardeva, a great Vaisnava saint, social organizer as well as a social reformer of medieval Assam was a visionary personality. Sankardeva was great philosopher and an educationist. He preached the *Eka- Sarana- Nama- Dharma* which is common religion to the entire masses. Sankardeva established the Namghar and Satra institutions which are run by the principle of democratic system of religious education. Sankardeva did not confine himself only to preach the Bhakti doctrines but tried to uphold the society ethically by imparting the masses with value based moral education and in the true sense by cultivating the work culture among the people of Assam. After passing a very critical social life Sankardeva projected some social values as his ideals in context of the society. Sankardeva envisaged unity in diversity and oneness in duality.[6]

**Relationship between philosophy and education**

Education and philosophy are dependent on each other. Both are necessary for the development of life and making it happy.

According to many philosophers education is the active side of philosophy. To Adams education is the dynamic side of philosophy. John Dewey has defined philosophy as theory of education in its most general phases. According to him, the relation between philosophy and education is not general but very close, because it is education that gives necessary understanding of philosophy. The aim of philosophy is not to enrich life. For this, it is necessary that some definite principles are translated into action through education. If the principles are not practised, the individual or the society cannot benefit from them. So education should give a practical shape to the aim of philosophy and help in molding the attitude of man towards life according to its aims.

Education may be considered as a means for achieving the aims of philosophy. Philosophical knowledge is obtained through education. The principles of philosophy generally are a contribution of education. According to John Dewey philosophy has originated through education. Educational process gives rise to ideas in the mind of man and consideration of the related activities to create philosophy. Philosophy has been recognized as theory of education and educational process makes theorizing possible. Needless to remark that the contribution of education to philosophy is no less important. Education and philosophy are both complementary to each other. A review of history of philosophy bears out that all prominent philosophers have discussed education as well.

Philosophers from Socrates, Plato and Rousseau to John Dewey and other modern philosophers may be cited in this context. Indian Philosophers have gone a step further in this context. Most of the Indian Philosophers of ancient period from Yagyavalkya, Vashistha vishvamitra to Dronacharya have been great teachers. For giving a practical shape to his philosophical views, Rabindra Nath Tagore established Viswa Bharati and Aurobindo Ghosh established the Pondhicheri Ashram. Mahatma Gandhi put forth his new system of education known as Basic Education. Thus it may be concluded that almost all educationists while talking on education took philosophy into consideration. The main reason for this is that after some time philosophers begin

to feel that their philosophic views can be made practical through education only and the educationists feel that for reconstruction of ideals of life the help of philosophy is necessary.[7]

**Rationale of the study**

History of every nation is proud of its preachers and scholars, artist and poets, great writers and saints. But no history of any country has ever been proud of one man who is a poet, writer, dramatist, an artist, a philosopher, a psychologist, a singer, an actor, a preacher, a reformer, a dancer, a musician, a lyricist, a designer, a democrat, an ideal house holder and a great saint at the same time.

During the period of Sankardeva, education was a privilege available to only a limited few belonging to the upper section of the society; people at large remained buried in the dark abyss of ignorance and illiteracy. The enlightened and socially conscious disciples of Srimanta Sankardeva constituted a microscopic minority in this vast sea of illiterate masses. But nevertheless Srimanta Sankardeva and his followers engage themselves in the work of propagating knowledge and wisdom in their own ways. He authored many songs, plays, prayers and philosophical writings. These contained the major portion of the course material prevalent in the then residential school. The teachers of this school taught mostly the religious scriptures like *Vedas, Purana, Srimodbhagavat, Gita,* the epics etc. The teaching was not secular in those days. The essence of curriculum was very much present in the writings of Srimanta Sankardeva. So when his plays were enacted, when his songs were sung, when his hymns were chanted, people received the very knowledge which one received in the then residential school and which made one educated by the standard of those days. But there were more in the teaching of Srimanta Sankardeva than what those residential schools used to teach. For instance the value education imparted by him remains a crucial ingredient in modern education also. The saint also taught people by embodying his teachings in himself, not merely by uttering those. He was personification of his own ideology.

Srimanta Sankardeva was not only a religious leader like many people think but also an educationist in his own inimitable way. He helped the people to acquire

knowledge of scriptures as well as behavioural science. There were even elements of social science in his writing albeit in a primitive form. Analysis of social condition is found here and there in his writing. His teaching was full of advices about an ideal life style. Ethics constitute the main component of his teaching. People were cautioned against pride. He was a global pioneer in adult education. Srimanta Sankardeva imparted the knowledge of vocational education too. He was a master craftsman and supervised the manufacturing of musical instruments as well as other accessories used by the disciples in rendering of his song under his guidance. Thus he stood as a teacher of the entire society.[8]

The saint Sankardeva attempted to wipe out untouchability to establish equal rights of all caste communities what has today been embodied in the constitution of independent India through lifelong endeavour of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of Nation was in fact introduced by farsighted Sankardeva five hundred years ago. He raised the erstwhile socially down trodden communities to the level of higher caste by installing them as Atais (Devotee) and Mahatma (Nobleman).[9]

It is no mean credit to Sankardeva that he collected the villager at the *Namghar* not to while away their leisure in hearing idle gossips or ephemeral talks but to listen a good poetry enabling music as well as to participate philosophical and religious discussion. All these activities raised no doubt the level of our civilization and culture, widened the intellectual and imaginative horizon of the common mind and also at the same time spread literacy as effectively as is done at present by the Adult Education Scheme of the Government.

Sankardeva was a great unifier and also a great social organizer. He remoulded and consolidated the fabric of Assamese social life through setting up of *Namghar* and *Satra* which are knitting together the diverse section of Assamese society irrespective of religion, creed and culture within the single fold of *Eka Sarana Nama Dharma*.

Again Sankardeva made a remarkable contribution to the economic upliftment of the Eastern India. He was a great promoter of cottage industry of which handloom weaving occupied his attention. This can be beautifully illustrated by referring to his designing and supervision of weaving works of the *Vindavani Vastra* (preserved at present in London Museum). In *Vrindani Vastra* Sankardeva depicted

the various scenes of *Krishna –divine-lila,* all related to Vrindavana in different colour , as taught to them by the saint and master weaver.

Sankardeva also encouraged trade and commerce. He was the pioneer of Brass and Bell –metal industry by introduction of different kinds of cymbals which were universally used in Nam- kirtana by thousands of his followers. Special kinds of utensils such as *Sarai, bata, ban, kanhi, bera-kanhi* (dish made of bell metal), *dugdugi, lota* (made of brass metal) and many more made by professional craftsmen, which are still very popular. Other forms of handicrafts also got a big fillip after Sankardeva had introduced various kinds of drums like *khol, taal, mridanga, daba, kanh,* which are still used by the people in various cultural and religious festivals.

Another important contribution to the economic upliftment of the people of the Eastern India where he spent his life is *Agriculture Development*. During the period when Sankardeva was the *Bar- bhuyan* (the bhuyan chief and administrator) of the principality of Bardowa, then under the Ahom king, he came to know about the miseries of thousands of farmers of many villages whose agricultural crops were washed away every year by the Tembuvani rivulet which had its confluence into the Brahmaputra. Sankardeva organized the villagers, gave them necessary guidance to collect all the required materials and under his personal supervision, got the mouth of the rivulet falling into the big river plugged, thereby saving thousands of *bighas* of paddy land. The concept of flood protection bund for Agriculture which Sankardeva introduced in 15$^{th}$ century is still prevalent in modern Agriculture.

Another contribution made by Sankardeva is that he introduced the system of distributing *prasada* after the *Nam- Kirtana* ceremony at the places of religious congregation. The *prasada* composed of pulses, green-gram etc., available seasonal fruits, ginger, betel leaves and areca-nut, coconut, sugarcane etc. Since each family had the *Bari* (homestead) where these crops were grown, the Mahapurusha used it for social welfare. His followers then put in extra effort for increasing the production of these agricultural items; thereby Sankardeva encouraged his followers to grow horticultural crops for income generation as well as self-employment. The present government is also giving much emphasis on horticultural crops which can be taken up by the unemployed local youth for earning their livelihood.

The concept of sericulture was introduced for the first time by Sankardeva. Three kinds of silk yarns, endi, muga and pat were produced through sericulture which was used to make different types of fabrics. Today‟s Assam‟s silk, pat, endi and muga is most popular all over the world and many people engaged in these industries and they earn good amount of income. The popular Gamoca (Assamese towel) seems to have been in use since the times of Sankardeva. Gamoca- making by using different designs, provides employment to thousands of rural women today.

. The great works of Sankardeva and other literary masters of his times were written in ink made from the juice of big earth- worm. Thus ink manufacturing in Assam got a boost from Sankardeva‟s writings. Similarly cultivation of *Sanci* plant (Agaru tree) and making paper from it, by using the bark/stem of the plant, was also greatly encouraged.

Sankardeva was not only expert in handling the pen but also in singing, dancing and enacting what he composed. His Dramas known as *Ankiya Nats* and *Bhaona* (theatrical performance) achieved great popularity among the people and performed till today. It is to be mentioned that, apart from providing moral lessons and knowledge in spiritualism through the medium of acting dance and simple interpretation of the action by the Sutradhara, Bhaona was a source of entertainment for the people. It can be assumed that, even in those days, the stage- acting of these plays provided livelihood to the professional players. Presently, the players are employed as actors and they earn a good amount of income during all the festive occasions. There are strong reasons to believe that the continuation of this stage action at different places later led to the emergence of *Yatra –Party or mobile theatre*. Although the organizers of mobile theatre has its origin in Bhaona Culture itself. Thousands of people are now getting regular employment through these theatre companies, both directly and indirectly. Thus Sankardeva, through his unique visionary, creation of the *Bhaona* , started the process of spiritual, cultural and socio-economic upliftment of the people in an integrated and cohesive manner.

Sankardeva never desired to keep the people away from the pursuit of their normal sources of livelihood, nor did he disturb their economic activities. That is one of the reasons why he made his *Eka- Sarana- Hari-Nama –Dharma* extremely simple, without any rigidity whatsoever. His religion is much more relevant now than ever

before, for in these days of global competition everyone has to be absolutely time conscious, hardworking and dynamic in thought, words and action. The simplicity of Sankardeva‟s cult certainly suits the people of the current century and beyond. This could be clearly understood from the following verse from the Nam- Ghosha:

***"Hari nama Kirttanata nahi desa kala patra /***
***Niyama samyama eko vidhi /***
***Harita sarana laiya kevala Harita nama /***
***Kirttana karate have siddhi // (V-29)***

[Meaning: To sing Hari‟s nama no time, place, or person prescribed; restraint and rule is also not necessary. Taking refuge in Hari and only by singing Hari‟s name one can fulfill mission of life forever.][10]

From the above analysis, it is clear that Sankardeva immensely contributed to the economic upliftment, self- sufficiency and for sustenance of the people. Thus Sankardeva contributed in many ways, both directly and indirectly, to the economic-upliftment and self- sufficiency of the people.

In the field of Indian and Assamese culture Sankardeva‟s philosophies has an implication. It was who had written the first plays in Assamese. The *Cihna –Yatra* staged by Sankardeva was regarded as one of the first open air theatrical performance in the world. According to professor Early Richmond of Michiagon state University USA, Sankardeva was the inventor of the open theatre in whole of the world. His *Kirtana Ghosha* is acclaimed as one the three great and the most popular religious Book in India; the other two are *Guru Ganthasaheb* and *Ramcarita Monosha*. After all Sankardeva was a versatile genius and raised Assamese and Indian language culture to a high level of excellence.

The researcher thinks that there is urgent need for proper implementation of the educational philosophy of Sankardeva in the present society to uplift the moral, spiritual, value based thought, character building and personality development of the upcoming generation of the people. In the present day society there is decline of moral and spiritual education among the people and their minds are full of cruelty, hatred and inhumane attitude. Hence there is violence and insurgency problem among different section of the people replacing peace and harmony from the society. If the

teachings of great saint Sankardeva are followed by the present young generation then many a conflict/insurgency problem can be resolved.

The great Guru *Sankardeva* has taught and showed us the noted way to live. Through his writings Sankardeva advocates the moral qualities such as truthfulness, kindness, hospitality, purity of heart, temperance, non –violence etc. and at the present scenario, it is pathetic to add that these qualities are gradually vanished from the mankind as well as from the society. The valuable teaching of Sankardeva now seems to be limited within his writings or literary piece. If we are continuing our activities without showing proper responsibility towards our society, religion culture etc. then one day will come when we will find ourselves in a silent position in the pages of history, not in the root of the universe.

In our day to day life we always face the moments full with complexities and some culture influenced by the westernized culture. Under such circumstances, unfortunately, the new generation seems to have forgotten their way and the very purpose of life. Human values are eroded day by day due to materialistic modern life style where is something missing, which is really very essential to rejuvenate life. And this is definitely due to the lake of devotion on each other. Actually the belief of non –existence of God may be a cause of decreasing devotion, faith, kindness etc. amongst us. In such a situation can we say in the tune of Sankardeva

***Prakriti purusa duiro niyanta madhava/***
***Samastare atma Hari Parama bandhava.//***

[Meaning: Madhava is the guide of both *prakriti* (matter) and *purusa* (mind). Hari is the most faithfull friend of all.]

We can gather Knowledge by reading books, articles and journals etc. on different matters. But sometimes we fail to apply our bookish knowledge to the real situation due to lack of exercise in using it. In the same tune we may say that all of us have the knowledge of spirituality in our mind. But we are failed to use it. As a result of it we have to face the miserable destructive situation.

In such circumstance, it is high time that the moral values, teaching of Sankardeva have to be inculcated in the youths by some way or the other, for meeting

out this serious crisis. The inclusion of topics related to value education in the curriculum from the lower level may be an important step in this regard.

It has been observed that our young generations have very little knowledge about life and teachings of Sankardeva. They perhaps do not have proper knowledge what the great saints, Mahapurusa Sankardeva try to give to the nation. Sankardeva professes that the inherent goodness in man must find its expression in social behaviour. According to Sankardeva, the root cause of moral evil is ignorance. Sankardeva established social institution like *Satras* and *Namghars* with various purposes like spreading of his faith including ethico-social ideals, imparting knowledge through different media, solving knotty social problems with motive of establishing the three great values, viz., freedom, equality and fraternity. We must remember that Satras and Namghars are not a place of recreation or leisure time entertainment arena. There is no denying the fact that our new generation youths visit Namghar, offer prayers and perform rituals on many occasions. It is really a matter of pride for the nation. But there also comes the question whether they are really spiritually motivated to go to such places or they have visited as others do. Whatever may be the reason, but it is a good sign for the society they have visited there and take the chair amongst the Bhakatas.

***Vaisnavara sanga sito loiba prathamata***
***Amara caritra sunibeka bhakatata.***

Sankardeva rightly taught us the ways to develop right values in human being and in the same way the knowledge of facts to make us wise. Sankardeva taught us as well as showed us the right path to make our thinking"s right, just, true and beautiful. It is the right time, to bring a change in the problematic scenario among the youth; spiritual injection has to be pushed to the youth to bring them to right path. He is the real Guru to the society who can really remove the superstitious belief, doubts etc. from the mind of the people through his writings and scientific analysis of rules and rituals. Mahapurusa Madhavadeva (chief disciple of Sankardeva) proudly declared him as *Guru* in *Namghosa* as well as the Real friend who showed us the direction, right knowledge and right path to lead a happy and peaceful life.[11]

To preserve and maintain the dignity and glory of our culture and tradition and to make ourselves devoted to service of others in particular and to the service of

God in general, it is the high time to realize and understand thoroughly the contributions and teachings of the Saint. Sankardeva is always amongst us. Now it is our duty to go through the manuscripts, which will definitely give us the right way to lead a peaceful and justified life.

The recent ongoing violence among different section of the people particularly in between the Hindu and Muslim in Kokrajhar District in Assam India in July/2012 proves that there is much relevance of teaching of Sankardeva in present day situation as Sankardeva tried to demolish the barrier of caste system from the society five hundred years ago. In Sankardeva‟s religion all are equal irrespective of caste, creed and religion. He took disciple from all communities including Mahmadan people.

In the present day world there is constant conflict between human and wild animal. The poacher is least bothered to kill the wild animal and destroys forest trees for his self-interest forgetting about the humanity and causing disturbance to ecological balance of the nature.

Again it has been observed that the sacrifice of animal for worshiping different God/Goddess is still now prevalent in our society. Now it is time to recall the ideology of Sankardeva who was a great humanist. His humanity was not limited to human being but also extends to all living creatures. The greatest humanistic principle professed by Sankardeva is equal status to all creatures. In his *Kirtan Ghosha* he has written as follows-

***Kukkura srigala gardabhoro atmarama/***
***Jania savako pari kariba pranama//***

[Meaning: “Even the soul of dogs, foxes and asses are varity God and with this idea in mind they should be saluted.”]

Sankardeva‟s great outlook towards all, both man and beast can be glimpsed without going to elaboration from a single verse from *Kirtana-Ghosha*

***Sabako maniba Vishnubudhi kari//***

[Meaning: “Respect all the beings as Vishnu”]

This ideology of Sankardeva can be implicated properly to stop the brutal killing of the animals as well as destroying of forest trees by human beings and thereby maintaining ecological balance of the nature.

Therefore it is necessary to bring to light the educational philosophy of Sankardeva. Without the systematic study it is not possible to enumerate his educational contribution. Hence the proposed study is important.

India is passing through a period of reconstruction and regeneration. Today is a period of new things, fresh thinking and quick action. The most remarkable thing of independent India appears to be her efforts towards a peaceful democratic order. If we however look back to Assam‟s past heritage, we will see that this is not wholly a new thing. The seed of democracy especially in the field of religion, society and culture in Assam was first sown by Sankardeva five hundred years ago; Sankardeva had washed the mind of the people with liberalising breath of neo-vaishnavism and given to individual the life of a new dignity and meaning.

Assam at the time of Sankardeva was passing through a period of great moral and spiritual crises when the dark forces of ignorance and irreligion ruled over this region with blinding fury. As there was none to show the people the correct path, there descended an era of confusion and chaos and all the be setting sins of arrogance, jealousy, hatred, lust and vanity made man forget the abiding values and ideas of life. Blind religious intolerance and dogmatism gave rise to relaxation of social cohesion and there were sure signs of an impending social catastrophe. In that critical juncture of the life of the Assamese people, Sri Sankardeva, acknowledged as the full incarnation of God, appeared in the scene and restored Dharma to its proper glory and established a new social order in Assam by removing superstitions, corruption, ignorance, untouchability, inequalities between man and man and other social evils. Not merely this, he gave the regenerated Assamese people literature, drama, poetry, songs, dance and music, which have attained the status of a district school and entwined the community with unity and oneness. Therefore the present study is an attempt to find out the educational contribution of Sankardeva and titled as A STUDY OF SANKARDEVA AS AN EDUCATIONIST.

**Research questions**

As no hypothesis is proposed to be tested the study is addressed to seek answers of the following questions.

1. What is Sankardeva‟s philosophy of life?
2. What is the educational contribution of Sankardeva?
3. What is the role of Namghar and Satra as the institutions of education?

**Title of the study**

To find out answers of the above research questions the researcher has designed the present study entitled **A Study of Sankardeva as an Educationist.**

**Objectives of the study**

Keeping the view of the above, the present study formulated the following objectives.

1. To study the philosophy of Sankardeva.
2. To study the contribution of Sankardeva in the field of education in respect to
   a) Aims of education.
   b) Method of teaching.
   c) Curriculum.
3. To study the Namghar and Satra as educational institutions.

**Operational definition of the terms used**

**Education:**

Education means formal and informal education only.

**Namghar:**

It is a large open hall with gabled roof having apsidal facade. The Namghar serves the purpose of a common prayer hall as well as a hall for holding religious meetings and discussion. It is a common feature of Assamese village.

**Satra:**

A Vaisnava monastery or residential establishment of Assam. The word Satra is derived from the Sanskrit word *Sattra*. In Sanskrit literature the word has been used in two senses, firstly in the sense of an alms house and secondly in the sense of a sacrifice lasting from a few days to a year or more. The latter sense is responsible for lending the nomenclature to the vaisnavite institution of Assam.

## Delimitation of the Study

The present study is confined to the contribution of Sankardeva in the philosophical and educational aspects only covering his literary contribution to the masses, his religious education and vocational education, his educational philosophy and Namghar and Satra as the socio-cultural centers of education.