CHAPTER-VI

MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER-VI

MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Objective wise major findings of the study

The objective wise major findings of the study are—

1. So far the philosophy of Sankardeva is concerned the study reveals the following

(a) Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva was a monotheist and he preached a religion of Supreme surrender to the one and therefore, his creed is known as –*Eka -Sarana - Nama - Dharma*‖. In *"Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharma*‖ there is only one God Vasudeva Krishna, and there is none else other than the one. Sankardeva is of the view that if Krishna is worshipped all other Gods are worshipped, as he says all the branches, leaves and foliage of tree are nourished by pouring water only at the root of the tree.

(b) Salient features of Sankardeva's philosophy are

i. *Brahma* is the supreme truth.

ii *Brahma* and *Ishwara* (God) are the same.

iii *Brahma* or *Ishwara* is there in every entity.

iv. *Ishwara* and His creation are not different.

v. *Jiva* (creature) is a component of *Ishwara*. The former constitutes the body of the latter.

vi. The creation is temporary but not unreal.

vii. *Maya* (illusion) is an act of God and its influence can be avoided by His grace.

viii. One becomes God as one realizes the identity of God and His creation.

ix. Atman is immutable and immortal. It was neither born in the past nor in the present. Birth and death are the characteristic feature of the body and out of the body a fresh body emerges. Though associated with the body, Atman is yet distinct from the body as fire from fuel it burns.

(c) Srimanta Sankardeva's religion is the most liberal, tolerant, simplest and easiest way of attaining God and it is economically most viable.

(d) Sankardeva mentions nine (9) ways or modes of practising devotion. They are (i) *Sravana* (ii) *Kirtana* (iii) *Smarana* (iv) *Padasevana* (v) *Arccana* (vi) *Yandana* (vii) *Dasya* (viii) *Sakhya* (ix) *Atmanivedana*. He puts much emphasis on *Sravana* and *Kirtana* as Sadhanas of Bhakti.

(e) The four fundamental elements of Neo-Vaishnavism are (i) *Guru* (spiritual guide) (ii) *Deva* (deity) (iii) *Nama* (names of the adorable God) (iv) *Bhakta* (devotees) of the different attitudes of Bhakti.

(f) Srimanta Sankardeva regards Bhakti as superior to mukti. Bhakti is also described as being itself the emancipation (mukti). Bhakti consists in the firm and over whelming affection for God with a full sense of His greatness, through this alone can there be emancipation.

(g) Sankardeva advised his followers not to hate anybody however lowly placed he might be without enquiring into caste or creed, a vaisnava according to him, should treat equally a *Brahman* or a *Candala*.

(h) Truth and non-violence are treated by Sankardeva at social as well as individual level. Truth is the essence of all actions whether it may be individual, social or economic.

(i) The social evil of the untouchability against which Mahatma Gandhi has to wage a crusade in the twentieth century, India was struck at the root by Sankardeva in the fifteenth century Assam.

(j) Srimanta Sankardeva's philosophy had elements of both *Parinamavada* and *Vivartavada*. He considered *Jiva* as changed form of Ishwara. This is an element of *Parinamavada*. At the same time Sankardeva pointed out the

illusion of Snake in rope while referring to the creation. This is an element of *Vivartavada*. Thus he blended *Parinamavada* and *Vivartavada* in his *Vivartanavada* which is unique in Sankardeva's philosophy.

(k) The more prominent difference of Sankardeva's philosophy with that of Ramanuja lies in the fact that Ramanuja abided by the philosophy of *Parinamavada* predominently whereas Sankardva's philosophy is *Vivartanavada* which has elements of both *Parinamavada* and *Vivartavada.*

(l) The religious philosophy of preached by Sankardeva had its genesis in *Veda.* His ideology of *Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharma* was actually rooted in the Veda.

(m) Srimanta Sankardeva's ideology was in the tune with the philosophy of *Srimadbhagavatgita* and *Bhagavata.*

(n) The written philosophy of Sankardeva is known as *Kirtana ghosha* which has found a special place in every household of Assamese people.

(o) Love, devotion and surrender of the self to Lord Krishna that give man peace is the basic theme, centre point of work of Srimanta Sankardeva.

(p) Sankardvea considered *Jiva* as incapable of surmounting God's *Maya*. It can be possible only by the grace of God. So Sankardeva advised devotees to worship God in order to get His blessings.

(q) Sankardeva has prescribed certain qualification necessary for real bhakta. He must possess the qualities of sympathy, beneficence, forgiveness, softness of heart and complete mastery over his passions. He seems to have laid more emphasis on the control of senses.

(r) Sankardeva propagated *Nama-Dharma* as practical method to bhakti. *Nama-Dharma* consists in chanting the name of the Supreme self with undeviating devotion, being pure in heart, thought and action.

.

2. So far the contribution of Sankardeva in the field of education is concerned the study reveals that

(a) During the time of Sankardeva education was a privilege available to only a limited few belonging to the upper section of the society. The enlightened and socially conscious disciple constitutes the microscopic minority in the vast sea of illiterate masses. But inspite of this Srimanta Sankardeva and his follower engaged themselves in the work of propagating knowledge and wisdom in their own ways. He wrote many songs, plays, prayers and philosophical writings. These contained major portion of the course materials prevalent in the then residential school. The essence of curriculum was very much present in Sankardeva's writings.

(b) Sankardeva rendered eight (8) skandhas of *Bhagavata purana* (Bhagavat-I, II, III, VI, VIII, , X, XI, XII). Among these *Bhagavata –X* is very popular which is also known as *Adi-Dasama.*

(c) Sankardeva's *Kirtana-ghosa* (the book of songs and refrains) is one of the most important books of Assam Vaisnavism, which is so popular that even today it is found in nearly in every house hold in Assam.

(d) Sankardeva wrote in three types of language such as (i) literary Assamese (ii) Colloquial Assamese and (iii) *Brajawali* Assamese. Saint Sankardeva composed *Bargits* and *Ankiya Nats* in *Brajawali* which is a fabricated language drawing elements from Maithili, local Assamese, Bengali, Uriya and Hindi. It is a mixed literary language, understandable and accessible to a major section of the Indian Society.

(e) The aims of education of Srimanta Sankardeva were

(i) Universal Brotherhood
(ii) Moral aim of education.
(iii) Spiritual aim.
(iv) Vocational aim
(v) All round development.

(f) Universal brotherhood of mankind and unity of whole human race was a profound belief of Srimanta Sankardeva. Assam was a meeting ground of

people with various tribe and races having various cultures. Inspite of that Sankardeva brought the unity of thread among heterogeneous people of North –East India by bringing them to a single fold of *Eka- Sarana- Nama- Dharma* irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

(g) Srimanta Sankardeva's concerns were not limited to human rights alone but they extended even to include animal and plant right, as is evident from some of his literary contributions.

(h) For healthy society Sankardeva stressed the need of moral purity in daily life. Hence, he advised to keep away from greed, false hood, desire, anger etc. and to live on truth, purity, non-violence, self-discipline etc.

(i) According to Sankardeva Truth elevates man to the higher regions while untruth degrades man to the path of ruin. So, Sankardeva advised to maintain truthfulness.

(j) Sankardeva had a profound belief in God and preached a common religion to the whole world i.e. *Eka-Sarana- Nama-Dharma* (devotion to a single God).

(k) In the *Satra* besides religious education and monastic practices the bhaktas assigned to a particular *Satra* are engaged to take up some vocational education including handicraft like wood curving, cane and bamboo works, *Sanchi pat* preparation, musk making required for dramatic performances , illustraton of manuscripts, painting, use of natural dye *hengul-haital*. The expertise of the vocation is imparted traditionally by the senior members of the *Satra*. Thereby *Satra* helps the bhaktas for earning their livelihood through self-employment.

(l) Sankardeva gave much importance for all round development of individuals i.e physically, mentally and spiritually. Sankardeva himself practiced *yoga*. For physical development of the body he always encouraged to practice *yoga*. He also advised his disciple for self-control by means of practising *pranayama*. Sankardeva composed a number of songs (*Borgit*) and drammas (*Ankiya Nata*) for entertainment of the people. He propagated *Nama-Dharma* (chanting the name of Supreme self) as a practical method to Bhakti.

(m) Srimanta Sankardeva introduced some important methods of teaching for the mass education. These methods are now appreciated and adopted by the modern educationists of our time. These methods include –

(i) Group discussion method.
(ii) Play way method.
(iii) Learning by doing method.

Sankardeva advocated the question and answer techniques and group discussion method of mass education. Generally the common people, who were illiterate, came to the *Namghar* or *Satra* and took part in the discussion on various topics. Questions are put by the people for clarification of their ideas and the learned person discussed the matter in general and removed the difficulties from the mind of the people. This type of discussion drew the attention of the common people who enjoyed the peaceful environment of living.

Sankardeva introduced the play-way method of teaching which is followed by the modern educationists today. The introduction of plays i.e. *Ankiya Nat*, *Bhaona*, Putala Nac, *Satriya* dance made the teaching, learning and situation easier.

The learning by doing method was introduced by Sankardeva in the 15th century through drumbeating (*Khol*) with different mudras and gestures.

(n) Co-curricular and Vocational education was first introduced by Sankardeva--

i. Sankardeva was the fountainhead of the *Ankiya Nat*, a form of one - act play. In fact, his *Cihna-Yatra* staged by him is regarded as one of the first open – air theatrical performances in the world.

ii. Sankardeva composed 240 nos of Bargits or devotional songs out of which 34 nos are available now. He introduced many classical ragas in his song's and set the standard of the mode of singing in accompaniment to different musical instruments like *Khol*, *Taal*, *Mridanga* etc.

iii. Sankardeva introduced the vocational education i.e. art, craft, drawing and painting which is most important in modern educational system. He laid the foundation of practical teaching and work experience introduced in our modern education.

iv. Srimanta Sankardeva was a founder of visual art. He depicted ‒Seven Vaikunthas‖ (the celestial of Lord Vishnu) in scrolls, which were used as back drops there.

v. Srimanta Sankardeva introduced the technique of recitation in the learning process through the recitation of the Sloka of the *Vedas* and the *Puranas* which the illiterate common people could easily memorise the slokas.

vi. Sankardeva 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 the weaving work of the famous *Vrindavani Vastra*.

vii. It is very much clear from the educational contribution made by Srimanta Sankardeva that the curriculum of teaching included the subjects like mother language (*Brajawali*, Sanskrit) , ancient lores and scriptures (the *Vedas*, the Upanisadas, the *Puranas*, the Samhitas), the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Vyakarana, philosophy, *yoga*, moral education, vocational education including handy craft, drawing and painting, music, dramatization, Tantra, craft as spinning, weaving, painting, dancing and cottage industry. Sankardeva stressed much importance in learning mother language. He used three types of languages i.e. Assamese, *Brajawali* and Sanskrit. The *Brajawali* is easily understandable and accessible by the common people who are not well conversant to Sanskrit, the language of the upper educated ruling class. Sankardeva also included the *Puranas*, Tantras and Samhita as subjects of teaching in order to provide the knowledge of moral education to his disciples. Sankardeva also advocated for the practices of *yoga* as he realized that both healthy body and strong mind are necessary for one’s life. *yoga* controls one’s desires and aspirations.

3. So far the Satra and Namghar as educational institutions are concerned the study reveals that

(a) The *Satras* established by Srimanta Sankardeva provided both formal and informal education to the mass people. It imparted formal education through establishment of various *tols* maintained by some affluent *Satras*. The informal education that was imparted by the *Satras* was very much effective in the case of the masses. Here the village people came to the *Namghar* in the *Satra* and listened to the recitation and exposition of various scripture like *Bhagavata-purana* and *Kirtana ghosha*. They were also involved in various religious discussion and community prayer services and thereby they got very knowledge of the scriptures.

(b) Satriya dance that Sankardeva first conceived and developed was later preserved for centuries by the *Satras* which is now among the classical dance forms of India.

(c) Sankardeva was the greatest unifier of the Nation. He brought unity among heterogeneous people by establishment of *Namghar* and *Satra* institution which is a unique form of democratic system of religious education. The *Namghar* even today becomes village parliament, village court, village school and village church.

(d) Adult education which is important in modern times was introduced by Sankardeva in 15th century through establishment of social organization i.e *Namghar* and *Satra*. Thus he intended to develop the sense of belongingness, harmony and fellow feeling in the society.

.(e) As central authority, the *Satras* also diffuse spiritual education, regulate and control religious life as well as administer moral discipline on the laity through the agency of the *Namghars*. The *Satras* very much encourage literacy and learning the laity.

(f) The *Satras* play a very important role towards the upliftments and betterments of the backward classes and the bordering tribes of Assam. Sankardeva from the very beginning of his missionary career led a crusade against the caste exclusiveness, untouchability, for a recognized equality of all men irrespective

of caste or character in the eye of God and exhibited deep sympathy for the lower castes and down trodden classes. He again emphasized on the *Bhagavata* saying that even a *Candala* is purged of the impurity of his caste by firm devotion to God and sincere faith and devotion alone can uplift the soul to the eternal communion with the God.

(g) *Namghar* has lent itself as an ideal platform for social solidarity and informal education. The *Namghar* is the centre of cultural activities of the villages. Accordingly various cultural programme like musical recitals of *Gita* and *Bhagavata*, singing of *Borgits* with proper melodies, Nam kirtan, singing of the praise of the Lord, enactment of dramatic performance like *Bhaona* are held in the premises of the *Namghar*. The *Namghar* has thus contributed immensely to the socio-cultural development of the Assamese people.

(h) The important contribution of *Satra* is the empowerment of women for the sustainable development of a progressive and egalitarian Assamese society. Sankardeva pronounced his own grand-daughter-in-law, Kanaklata as a Satradhikari, the principle head of a *Satra.*

(i) The *Satra* and *Namghar* play an important role in the evolution of genesis of Assamese identity and its inclusiveness in nation building.

(j) Srimanta Sankardeva conceived the idea of community development and Panchayat Raj much before the concept was brought by the British Raj.

(k) The *Namghar* provides an effective forum for decentralized planning and decision making.

(l) The *Namghar* is more than a congregational prayer hall. It brings about bonding within the community through people praying together and participating in its various activities. It is a conference where various social issues including disputes and developmental activities affecting the community are discussed.

(m) The monks are taught music both vocal and instrumental by the *Gayan* and *Bayan*. Sankardeva himself was a master singer and an excellent instrumental player. The musical instruments, *khol,* is said to have been invented by Sankardeva.

(n) The most important contribution of *Namghar* is the upliftment of the backward class and minimization of the rigor of caste distinction. The so called untouchables and backward classes were taken freely to the religious fold.

(o) The *Namghar* further serve as Panchayat hall, where villagers gather to discuss and solve many of their day to day problems. These community centers have been found even to play political and judicial role.

(p) *Satriya* dance stands at the heart of Assamese cultural life. The staging of such performance in the *Namghar* unites all castes and classes under a common cultural tradition in an egalitarian spirit. In maintaining discipline, order and morality of the villages, the village *Namghar* i.e. village chapels have been playing a prominent role for more than five hundred years.

Conclusion

The concept of religion is misunderstood and confused in some time but still in a deeper meaning it is considered to be important for complete and useful education. It is a religious atmosphere where any culture, any custom, any family or any society can prevail. On the other hand religious tolerance has been considered to be the best safeguard now a days. God is for all and any religion is a symbolic connection between society and the individual. So undoubtedly religious education is a vital importance in the field of education for each and every people. So keeping in view the same purpose Sankardeva also began the Vaisnavite Movement to mark an important role in religious, spiritual and moral aspects of the people of Assam. Sankardeva was not only a religious preacher but also a philosopher, educationist and a guiding spirit of the Assamese society. Sankardeva united the Assamese society and brought forth a glorious renaissance in the fields of education, literature and culture, art and music, dance and drama, religion and custom and also did in this respect to a great extent and gave to the people of Assam a distinct cultural identity. Whenever the distinctive identity of the Assamese culture is in crisis under adverse social and political condition, the people of Assam get inspiration from the great ideas of Srimanta Sankardeva. Sankardeva brought the unity among the heterogeneous people

of the North –East India having various cultures through his *Eka-Sarana-Nama-Dharma* which has capped his devotional excellences mounted on the Bhaktivedantism. In his religion all are equal in the eyes of God irrespective of caste, creed discrimination. His religion is based on peace, universal love, liberty; justice, equality, fraternity and secularism-all these contributing to the benefit of the general masses. Srimanta Sankardeva is considered to be the master builder of Assamese society in particular and a great Master of Indian poetry and drama. He was great creative artist, an innovator and a preacher of Neo-vaisnavite faith and ideals. In real sense he laid the foundation of a culturally vibrant Assamese society. Sankardeva was always dead against the social evil of untouchability. He tried to abolish the barrier of caste system prevailing in the society and to establish equal right of all castes and communities. What has today been embodied in the constitution of independent India through the life time achievement of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation was in fact introduced to Assam by farsighted Sankardeva five hundred years ago. He raised the erstwhile down trodden communities to the level of higher castes. He made unity among different castes through establishment of *Namghar* and *Satra* institution which is a unique form of democratic system of religious education. The far reaching contribution of Sankardeva towards democracy was breaking the seal of classical learning and making available its literature to the unlettered masses. The good and noble abstract ideas engulfed in the Sanskrit languages were unveiled through concrete form of Akhyanas, stories, kavyas, verses; Ankiya plays so that common man might apprehend them. Sankardeva is called the father of Assamese people. It was Sankardeva who has given Assamese people common language and culture besides giving predominant bond of religious belief. The great literary works left by Sankardeva has become the bed rock of Assamese literature. Srimanta Sankardeva founded his own school of classical dance and music. He was the first playwright of modern Indian language. He was the play director in the entire world to use drop scene or back ground scenario which was painted in cloth. His contribution to the blossoming of renaissance of Assamese literature running from prosody to poetic, theatrics to theology are simple immeasurable both in quality and quantity. The present society involves a lot of malpractices, contradiction, social discrimination, economic disparity, corruption, violence, poverty, murder etc. This type of present society could never be imagined by Srimanta Sankardeva and he did not want that some section of the Assamese people should involve in terrorist activities. So in order

to make a solution of this national burning problem, the teaching of Srimanta Sankardeva is considered to be the greatest significant in present day situation. The *Bargi*t, a type of devotional song was written by Sankardeva. These *Bargits* are important not only as religious songs but it has educative value also. These teaching of writings, mode of expression and style of wording are very important from educational point of view. For his teachings and activities Sankaradeva the greatest spiritual, national and social leader of Assam may not be very well known outside the state although in Assam he is still worshipped in every home of respective sects as the *Guru* and makers of Modern Assamese life and society. The contribution made by Srimanta Sankardeva in various fields was enormous and extensive and it is not possible to cover up all his creativities within a limited period of time. The investigator has tried her level best to cover her contribution in a concise manner. The investigator would like to conclude her study in the line of thinking of Professor Basudev Charan Agarwal as he said *Sankardeva was the glorious sun under whose warmth of mind Assam blossomed like a lotus of thousand petals. It is difficult to imagine how deep and widespread was the influence of Sankardeva on the cultural renaissance that burstforth in medieval Assam.* The people of Assam cannot think of the cultural identity of Assam without Sankardeva. So Sankardeva will be remembered in the hearts of each and every Assamese people as the homage paid by Madhavadeva to his *Guru* in his hymn (Bhatima)

Jai Guru Sankara Sarva Gunakara
Jakeri Nahike Upama
Tohari Charana Renu Satakuti
Bareka Karoho Pranama

[Meaning: Glory to my preceptor Sankara, the repository of all the virtues, who has not equaled anywhere. Prostrating at your feet with hundreds of crores of fragrant dust, I salute thee again and again]

Suggestion for further studies

Due to time constrain, financial problem and unavailability of information the present researcher has been unable to cover up the whole area of Sankardeva and

the study has been delimited to the educational aspects only covering philosophy of Sankardeva, his educational contribution and *Satra* and *Namghar* as educational institutions. It is therefore suggested that a number of research studies involving the review of large number of books, journals on Sankardeva written by different writers, visiting all institutions which reflects the ideology of Sankardeva, covering various aspects of Sankardeva can be made. So present investigator has suggested the following areas for further studies.

- A critical analysis may be conducted on the contribution of Sankardeva in the socio-cultural development of Assam.
- A study may be conducted on the role of Satra and Namghar in the field of education in Assam.
- A critical analysis may be undertaken on Sankardeva as a social reformer.
- A comparative study may be conducted on the thoughts of Sankardeva and other Indian philosophers and educationists.
- A study may be undertaken on the socio-cultural development of Assam during the times of Sankardeva.
- A study may be conducted on the teaching of Sankardeva and its relevance in present day world.