

# Educational Philosophy of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva and its Relevance in the Globalisation Era

**Dr. Bidyananda Borkakoty**

Associate Professor  
Department of Education  
Gargaon College  
Simaluguri, Sivasagar, Assam.

**Abstract-** Educational philosophy drives human society from barbarism to civilization, bubbling with the words of truth, beauty and goodness. Sometimes the human species deviates from such ultimate values. To restore the dispersed situation in this mysterious world, each great man appears in different forms and paths, depending on the place, time and personality. In the middle of the fifteenth century, a bright star appeared in the social sky of Assam, whose light illuminated the entire society. That star is Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva. There is a special educational philosophy behind the philosophy of the Nava Vaishnava religion through the efforts of the active thought, experience and action of Sankardeva. The paper attempts to shed light on the educational philosophy of Sankardeva, who was immersed in the Nava Vaishnava religion and its relevance in the present day. His philosophy was also partially influenced by idealism, naturalism, pragmatism and realism.

**Key words:** Educational philosophy, Namghar and Satras, Vaishnavism.

## Introduction

Educational philosophy drives human society from barbarism to civilization, bubbling with the words of truth, beauty and goodness. Sometimes the human species deviates from such ultimate values. To restore the dispersed situation in this mysterious world, each great man appears in different forms and paths, depending on the place, time and personality. In the middle of the fifteenth century, a bright star appeared in the social sky of Assam, whose light illuminated the entire society. That star is Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva. He was born in 1449 at Bardowa Alipukhuri in Nagaon District of Assam. With the appearance of the Mahapurusha, the night of darkness and confusion engulfed in the fog of darkness fled and burst. A golden morning of light and hope appeared. Assam during the time he was born was not socio-economic-politically stable. Everyone was drowned in the darkness of ignorance and superstition. Bamachari's activities were increased.

He appeared at such a juncture that he not only preached religion, but behind his preaching there was a strong tendency to reform society and this social reform also embodies his philosophy of education. This great man was an extraordinarily talent from his childhood. First of all, he showed his infinite talent through the stoti he wrote after finishing the consonants. In a very short time he was able to master the four Vedas, fourteen shastras and Eighteen Puranas.

Vaishnavism is a very ancient religion. Vaishnavism originated from the wise sages and teachers of transcendental knowledge and the worship of Vishnu increased in importance. The founder of the Neo-Vaishnavism in Assam is Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva. In his time the vices, superstitions that were in the values of the religions of the society, led to the destructive tendency in the society

The religion introduced by Mahapurush Sankardeva who took Lord Vishnu as unique, is called Vaishnava religion. His literature helped to accelerate the spread of Vaishnavism in the Assamese society. Like the Renaissance era in England, the Vaishnava era created by the literature of the Mahapurusha in Assam can be called a volcanic era of change. It was in this era that the Assamese opened their eyes and found themselves in the midst of world. His contributions to the Assamese literature developed strong national consciousness, patriotism, religion, society, peace, mental improvement and immense inspiring.

Mahapurusha Sankardeva's contribution to the Assamese Vaishnava community is in his contribution to the Assamese language and literature. He is the greatest poet, writer and playwright in the history of Assamese literature. Sankardeva was a great contributor to the Assamese Vaishnava community in all aspects of Assamese literature. His literature can be divided into poetry, devotional works, translations, plays, songs and nam prasangs. Important among are Poetry-Harish Chandra Upakhyan, Rukmini Haran Kavya, Balichalan, Amritmanthan, Gajendra Upakhyan and Kurukshetra; Devotional: Bhakti pradeep, Bhakti Ratnakar, Nimi Nava Siddha Sambad, Anadi Patan; Translation-Gita, Bhagavad- I, II, X, XI, XII chapters and Uttarakhanda Ramayana; Drama-Patni prasad, Kaliya Daman, Kali Gopal, Rukmini Haran, Parijat Haran, Ram Vijay; Songs: Bargeet and Bhatima.

The Gita and the Bhagavad Gita occupy an important place in the whole of India, and the Kirtan Ghosha, which the Mahapurusha contributed to Assamese literature, has occupied a similar place in Assam. Apart from religious sentiments, the literary qualities of a top-literary book in terms of literature are remarkable. There is a combination of nine tastes in the Kirtana. Kirtana is a victory pillar that ushered in a new era in literature like the Assamese religious world. It has grown in popularity for nearly five hundred years. The Kirtan Ghosha is the first and foremost religious text of Assamese literature and apart from external contexts; it has courageously preached a universal religion. Sankardeva was the first Assamese play writer not only in Assam but the first in contemporary India and the world. Sankardeva Ankara' Sutradhar ' to the Assamese literature is not the Sutradhara of Sanskrit drama but it's a creation of acting skills and intelligence about him. This is the Mahapurusha's contribution to the Assamese society is He started the first literary creations Assamese drama known as Cihna Yatra, an opera of one act. This is one of the earliest dramas in the annals of world-drama. This is another wonderful creation of horizon-expanding talent of Mahapurusha Sankardeva. He was the first to present the first example of Assamese prose in the mouth of the sutradhar of Ankia Bhaona Sankardeva led an unprecedented movement to reshape Assamese society. His chief disciple multi-talented Madhavdev and other disciples also actively cooperated in this regard.

### **Namghar and Satras:**

Namghar and Satras acts as the main medium for success of his Vaishnava movement. Namghar and satras were particularly responsive as the main centers of discussion of his works. His works Namghar and Satras are played a major role of discussion. They start bhaonas in the namghars and provide opportunities to bring out the talents of the rural community. Namghar and Satras were established from one end of the state to the other. There is a new structure in the Assamese society due to namghar. The Satras have also preserved the Shankari literature, culture, Ankia Bhaona, Bargeet, Nam Prasanga songs and the practice of Khol, Dhol Seo etc. Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva strongly opposed to the policy of caste discrimination. So, he expressed it through his books and embraced everyone equally. He adopted a socialist, democratic policy by giving discipleship to people of different castes and so he was able to bring unity in the Assamese society. Another major contribution of Sankardeva to the Assamese Vaishnava community was that he adopted Brajavali and simple Assamese language as the medium of communication for easy study and understanding of various religious texts. He gave everything to the Assamese society ,Assamese satriya dance ,khol ,tal ,bhaona,nam kirtan,bargeet ,namghar bhajanghar ,society ,Hati, religion ,judgment policy ,policy, moral movement non-violence. There are many scientific, philosophical, psychological, idealistic, materialistic and socialist views inherent in his contributions to the Assamese Vaishnava society. There is no second appearance in the history of the world, let alone in India, of a great man who has contributed so much to the establishment of religion, language, literature, culture, drama, dance and socialism. It would be a great mistake to think that the contributions of Srimanta Sankardeva were only for the Assamese Vaishnava community. In 1558, at the age of 120, the Guru passed away, handing over the responsibility of the Vaishnava community to Mahapurusha Madhavadev.

### **Objectives**

This paper has been prepared with the following objectives -

- a. To analyze the general philosophy as well as the educational philosophy underlying the works of Sankardeva.
- b. To objectively evaluate the relevance of Sankardeva's educational philosophy in various aspects of education in the present-day context.

### **Methodology:**

The study entitled 'Objective Assessment of the Educational Philosophy of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva and its Relevance in the Contemporary Age has adopted analytical methods as well as observational and descriptive methods as necessary.

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of the paper will be confined to the adjectives of the works of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva. The paper is an attempt to analyze the philosophy of education, meaning of education, goals of teachers, curriculum, teaching methods, role of teachers, discipline etc. on the basis of the philosophy of Sankardeva.

### **Sources of Data Collection:**

In addition to the 'Kirtan 'and' Dashama' Granth of Sankardeva, Dr. Maheshwar Neog's 'Sankardeva and His Times: Early History of Vaishnavite Faith and Movement in Assam' was studied in preparing the paper. Dr. Saitrandranath Sharma's 'The New Vaishnavite Movement and The Satra Institute of Assam And Dr Sanjib Kumar Borkakoty's book 'Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva' is the primary source and information obtained from journals, research books, internet is taken as secondary sources.

### **Sankaradeva-The Philosophy of Life**

From philosophical point of view, we can say that the philosophy of Mahapurusha Sankaradeva is mainly an idealistic philosophy. This is because idealists place the greatest emphasis on understanding the spiritual aspect of human life. Idealism in the West dates back to Socrates and Plato and in the East to the Upanishads. They believe that the material world is not a complete expression of reality. They believe that the mastery of this immortal energy should be the root of life. Therefore, it can be seen that Sankaradeva is also in favour of such a philosophy. He emphasized the spiritual world of man rather than the material world. He believed that the mortal body is perishable, liquid, and destruction is inevitable, but the soul of the devotee of God is immortal.

His philosophy was also partially influenced by naturalism, because naturalist philosophers did not believe in anything artificial. Artificiality only hinders the full development of the individual's personality. Sankaradeva did not believe in artificiality. The idol of the artificial God was not biased, instead, he emphasized on drinking the nectar of Harinam and finding a place in the shadow of the Lord.

Sankaradeva is also a Pragmatic Philosopher, because Pragmatism emphasized learning by doing and direct experience for the acquisition of knowledge. Sankaradeva also tried to reform the society by introducing 'Yatra' or 'Bhaona' to correct the minds of the devotees through religion and to impart knowledge through direct experience.

Sankaradeva is also a realist because 'Realism' emphasizes only scientific truth, the rest is useless. In that sense, we can say that the rules and regulations he instructed the devotees to follow in their domestic life also have a scientific truth. Today, scientists in our country have proved that they also believe in a scientific truth.

Sankaradeva, however, was not influenced by the 'hedonistic philosophy' or the Charvaka Philosophy. So we can say that Sankaradeva's personality was the result of a combination of different philosophies.

### **Educational Philosophy of Sankaradeva**

In a broad sense, 'education' is the process of permanent correction of a person's behaviour through experience and practice. This process is a continuous process from embryonic development to the moment of death. From that perspective, education also means a lifelong process of transforming one's behavior. Because when the ignorant hear and chant the name of God to become devotees of God, there will come a time when they will realize themselves, be self-controlled and eventually they can self-correct.

You can make yourself worthy to take refuge at the feet of God, you can change this behavior qualitatively, you can go to heaven, or you will have to rot in hell. This process is long-term, it will continue to triumph with the soul even if the body is destroyed. So the real teaching is to realize, restrain and correct yourself to take refuge in the fearless feet of the omnipotent God. Education removes ignorance and gives knowledge.

### **Sankaradeva's Philosophy on Aims of Education**

The goals of education depend on the philosophy and socio-economic, political, religious needs of contemporary society. The aims of education cannot be fixed. The principles of life that Sankaradeva gave were based on the prevailing social system and religious philosophy of that time which reflects the aims of education. In other words, the aims of education should be to remove Maya or ignorance and realize the Supreme Self.

### **Sankaradeva's Philosophy on Curriculum**

The fact that Sankaradeva studied in the house of his 'Gurukula' that unlike in the Vedic era, students were taught in institutions like 'tol' and 'pathashala' in Assam and the main subjects were the Vedas, Vedangas, fourteen scriptures, eighteen Puranas etc. Sankaradeva understood the essence of all the scriptures so that he could strengthen the Vaishnava movement. The Bhagavad Gita emphasized education as the main object of the curriculum. He explained all the knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita to the devotees in detail. He emphasized that one can cross the ocean of the world by taking a name of supreme Self, drinking the nectar of the name. Idol worship had no place in his curriculum. He tried to explain to the devotees through various means that there is nothing but Hari Naam in Kali Yuga. He tried to convey the knowledge that a Chandala devout can be better than a Brahmana devout through his works. He also included the teaching of 'Health Science' in the curriculum. His curriculum is a combination of 'teacher and student-centric curriculum'. His curriculum reflected democratic principles. It was the same for people regardless of caste, religion, race, economy. He assumed that everyone could worship the Supreme Brahman if they followed the same curriculum properly. He believed that if he followed the same course properly, he would be able to worship the Supreme Brahman. He did not give any place to Tantra Mantra in the curriculum. Therefore, the Tantric Brahmin priests did not take this curriculum easily. So, he emphasized these aspects in the curriculum of education such as-

- (a) The revival of the human personality.
- (b) Development of rationality.
- (c) Transformation of culture.
- (d) Moral education, etc.

### **Sankardeva's Philosophy on Teaching Methods**

We can discuss the teaching method of Sankaradeva as follows:

Sankardeva's teaching system is particularly influenced by idealistic philosophy. He believed that the teacher should feel the needs of the devotee more than his own needs. The teacher should be the link between knowledge and the disciple and guide the disciple with the wisdom on the subject. There was also a 'questioning' system. His chief disciple 'Madhobdeva' played a pioneering role in this. As a result, institutions like Namghar, Satra etc. later became the main centers of religious as well spiritual and moral practice. He explained the meaning through the lecture method and provided the students with the real information and purpose. He also mentioned 'pilgrimage' as a method of teaching. He himself benefited from this method. 'Even in the present age of science and technology, 'educational tours', field study, as method of teaching are an essential part of schools, colleges and universities. This approach, which is included in co-curricular activities, is somewhat close to the philosophy of naturalism. The naturalists paid no attention to any textbook except the textbook Nature. The knowledge gained by observing nature is the true, enduring, integrated knowledge. There is a saying, 'He who travels to various countries learns various things', so it can be said that travel method can give real knowledge, which also has a deep psychological aspect. He also used 'imitation' as a teaching method, although he did not emphasize imitation of those who did not know the details of a subject. He used 'audio-visual aids' in his teaching methods. For example, the introduction of 'drama' or 'Bhaona' helped to accomplish this work quickly and naturally and with less effort. Therefore, his teaching method was both 'democratic' and 'psychological'.

### **Sankardeva's Philosophy on Role of the Teacher**

A review of Sankardeva's life shows that Sankardeva was indeed a great teacher. He possessed all the qualities that a real teacher requires such as truthfulness, skill, competence, a man of pure character, humor, eloquence, readiness, etc. As a guru, sweet relationship was seen between Sankaradeva and the rest of the disciples. He instructed the disciples with his wisdom on the subject. It is through Ru's efforts that he is an ideal among his disciples. His idealistic personality also influenced his disciples. His teaching method was not 'Teacher Centred', in which students or devotees had to sit and listen. Instead, he kept the disciples active by using methods like discussion, questioning etc. He opposed to 'Knowledge is for acquiring knowledge. In short, he used all the techniques that would easily make all the disciples realize themselves as 'Slave of God' so that he was considered as Jagat Guru or teacher of the world.

### **Sankardeva's Philosophy on the Role of Disciple**

A review of Sankardeva's educational philosophy shows that the role of the disciple in his education system is also significant. 'Mahapurusha Madhabdeva' gave the highest place to 'Guru'. He did not hesitate to do anything to get a place under the umbrella of Guru Sankardeva. He presented Sankardeva as the unique guru among the devotees. 'Madhabdeva' also kept himself above the clutter of the subject of always living in 'devotion' to the Guru instead of 'liberation'. In short, the relationship between Guru Sankardeva and his disciples is like God, Philosopher, friend and guide.

### **Sankardeva's Philosophy on Discipline:**

Discussing the philosophy of life of Sankardeva, it can be seen that spiritual and moral possibilities cannot be realized unless he follows discipline through certain rules and regulations. The emphasis is on internal discipline rather than repressive discipline because when internal discipline settles in the mind of the devotee i.e., self-realization, the discipline of self-purification, self-renunciation etc. of the person will develop spontaneously. He advised the disciples to follow the rules such as taking a morning bath etc. There are psychological and scientific health science truths involved in cleaning the stools, brushing teeth, not entering holy places in shoes and sandals, observing vows, etc. Such discipline keeps the body and soul pure. So this aspect of his discipline shows us an aspect of education that should always focus on developing discipline in the students naturally. Teachers should not seek to teach by force. He tries to develop inner or internal discipline rather than external discipline in the heart of devotee or disciple.

### **Relevance of Sankardeva's Philosophy:**

From the above discussions we can say that Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva was not only a writer, preacher, social reformer, artist and playwright, he was also a philosopher and a great educationist. Therefore, this Bhakti movement centered on the name marked the unique position of Vishnu. Nowadays, however, the religion is again rotten due to lack of understanding of Shankardeva's philosophy'. It is worth mentioning that Mahapurusha Shankardeva then invented the methods that people had to take to protect themselves from this pandemic when Corona (Covid-19) was killing millions of people as an infectious disease all over the world. These are not only

religious matters but also full of numerous advices on maintaining mental and physical health. Therefore, this proves that Sankardeva's 'Ek-Sharan Nama Dharma' is a universally accepted and reliable educational philosophy.

The meaning of education, goals of education, curricular subjects, teaching methods, discipline systems, Namghor (Worship House) and Satras of education based on the philosophy of Sankardeva are very relevant in today's society.

The Education Policy of India 2020 aims to include traditional arts, fairy tales, proverbs, prose, games, songs etc. for the education of children. The recommendations made for these indicate the relevance of the curriculum of Sankardeva's education at the present time also.

Sankardeva was an environmentalist. He realized the need to conserve trees to maintain the environment and proved this by explaining to people that "ten trees are equal to one son". The crisis brought about by environmental degradation in the present era and the steps taken by the world to preserve the environmental balance indicate that the steps taken by Sankardeva five hundred years ago are still very relevant today. Therefore, such environmental education warnings of Sankardeva are very important for every citizen of the world. His local initiatives in this regard are a very relevant example of his concern for the welfare of the world.

The Constitution of independent India emphasizes on maintaining the constitutional values of equality, freedom, honesty, justice, brotherhood etc., Such values were instilled in the hearts of the people through many mediums like performing arts etc. about five hundred years ago by Sankardeva not only in Assam but also in India; therefore, it can be said that the educational philosophy of Sankardeva five hundred years ago is still considered very relevant in the world context.

Sankardeva emphasized on learning and teaching his disciples literally and religious and spiritual lessons in a joyful atmosphere, through love and affection, through play, dance, song and instruments etc.

In the eighteenth century, Western educators such as Caldwell Cooke, Froebel's Kindergarten Method, Maria Montessori's Montessori Method, Miss Helen Parkhurst's Dalton Plan, H.W. Armstrong's Heuristic Method etc. advocated such play-based and child-centered methods of teaching children. This is because such methods help children to express and develop their innate instincts independently, enjoyably, actively, unintentionally, spontaneously, assertively and actively. Therefore, it can be firmly said that such teaching-learning process applied by Sankardeva five hundred and fifty years ago is still considered very relevant not only in Assam, but also worldwide.

It is worth mentioning that Sankardeva wrote many plays including Chihnajatra about five hundred years ago to accelerate the Nava Vaishnava movement and invented a wonderful audio-visual tool like Bhaona to make the epic stories easily understood by the common people Bhaona is spiritual, moral and religious education in a joyful environment. They have been ruling the Assamese society in present day time also.

If we look at the educational importance of the world-conquering Vrindavani cloth of Jagatguru Sankardeva, we see that it took 60 people to lift and tie this cloth, which was about 180 feet long and about 90 feet wide. Many miracles happened in the area during the time of Boyne. The events that forced people to think that the Guru was not an ordinary human being, he was the human incarnation of Lord Krishna. The weaving process continued for six months. After the news spread in neighboring villages like Patbausi Sundaridia, everyone wanted to see the unique creation for the first time. Although the Vrindavani textile is primarily a philosophical instrument, it would have accomplished both auditory and philosophical functions if there had been room for interpretation with the image in front.

According to famous educators, the ability to learn varies according to the different senses. We can learn 83 percent of what we see with our eyes and 11 percent of what we hear with our ears. Vrindavani Textiles has been able to accomplish such a task successfully. Visual Learning- As a teaching tool, Vrindavani textiles will play an effective role in creating interest in the learner or devotee's learning content, reducing the importance of oral teaching, creating motivation, complementing textbooks, using alternative forms of direct experience, teaching through play in short, as a visual tool, Vrindavani textiles can transform the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor behavior of students or disciples.

Therefore, we can say that the educational philosophy of Sankardeva is very relevant even today.

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