

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction :

Human being is the greatest creation among the all creation. Human life has two prime side-one is Biological and the other is Social. Biological aspect mainly directed and transferred by food and rebirth. On the other hand social aspect directed and transferred by education. In ancient society human being was directed by instinct as animal. That's why their primary necessities were food, cloth and house. Orally elders gave youngers the necessary education for their day-to-day life for their livelihood. The boys and girls' gathered necessary knowledge from their direct experience i.e. – fishing, farming, making house, preparing roads by cutting forests. These type of education were irrelevant and insufficient for their livelihood as the society was developing and growing. To accept the new concept for necessary knowledge-skill, literature, science and new invention the changes were occurred in concept, methods, objectives, subject matter etc. Thus the institution were come into force. The present system of education are considered fully narrow and syllabus based. Because this type of education are imparted within four walls of an institution by definite time bound, definite syllabus and definite examination system and discipline. On the contrary, education in its broader sense is a life long process. It begins at birth and continues throughout life, till death. Every platform of life – the playground, the library, excursion, marriage ceremony,

social organizations and fairs, the offices and the pray places educate the individual. All the events and experiences, knowledge and wisdom an individual acquires during infancy, childhood, adolescence, youth, manhood through formal, informal and non-formal is education.

The world is revolutionized by the explosion of knowledge. It is caused by education which in turn has challenged the traditional customs and values. Constant change is there in the society in respect to ideals, norms, values and the attitudes of the people which make the society more complex and integrated day by day. Education in all respect have been recognized as the important factor which facilitates these changes in the society. Society expects education at all levels to play a positive role to develop it as well as the individual by facilitating progressive and dynamic changes with respect to ideals, norms and values. One of the fundamental ideas underlying the educational process is the transmission of the cultural heritage, accumulated knowledge and values to the growing generation. So as to enable it to carry forward to build gates and paths of the future.¹

Education is viewed as an organized effort, imparting skills, moulding attitudes and behaviour of the individual, dictating and controlling activities which make the blue print for living in the society. Education has crucial role in the process of socio-economic developments. It reflects and transmits the emerging cultural patterns of the society. The dual functions of conservation and modification of culture are identified with education. The conserving and transmitting function of education is widely

¹ Joshi, M Seneha and Pushpandhan, K. (2000) *New Vision for learning at Higher Education*. Vol. 38. No. 12.

recongised. In its technical sense, education is the process by which the society, through schools, colleges, universities and other institution deliberately transmits its cultural heritage, accumulated knowledge, values and skills from one generation to another.² The modification and innovation functions of education holds that the educational institution should take active part in directing social change and share in the construction of a new social order. Education is taken as an important means for the development of the society in emerging process of world transformation. The intellectual and experts in the field of education are in view that the way to progress is to spread education to produce educated and skilled citizen and train an educated and competent intelligientia.

The dual function of education was also mentioned by Theodore Bramled. On the one hand, it is a process of stabilizing of transmitting, of guaranteeing continuity to the culture. On the other hand, it is a process of correcting, improving and altering the acquired characteristics of the past generation. Being an accepted matter education has the potential power for social reconstruction. It is a social agency to which the important function of modernizing a society through social change is being assigned.³

Śaṅkaradeva knew that the development of Society depend upon the education of the people and their active participation in matters affecting them most. Śaṅkaradevas' main concern was to mould the character and the life of the people. He achieved all these by drawing the attention of the multitudes to religious as well as ethical literature. He translated the *Bhāgavata* and other Sanskrit texts into the Assamese language so

2 Kneller, George. (1964). *Introduction to Philosophy of Education*.

3 Bramled, Theodore. (1965). *Education as power*. p. 21.

that the common man might read and understand them. He introduced one act plays, music and dance based on religious themes to educate the ignorant of the society.

Thus, education is the cause of changes in both individual and social aspect and accelerates the society's progress. Education is a means to bring the changes in individual habits, thoughts, attitudes and values. Education plays an important role in as much as it can serve as an agency to direct or channelize the changes to some definite goals.

1.2 A brief note on Śaṅkaradeva :

The life of Śaṅkaradeva has been a great source of inspiration and enlightenment for innumerable learned and common persons in Assam and North-East of India. Śaṅkaradeva was born in the middle of the 15th century (1449) at Alipukhuri near Bardowa in the undivided district of Nagaon, Assam. Śaṅkaradeva lost his mother just after his birth. Śaṅkaradeva lost his father Kusumber Bhūñā in 1457. He was brought up by his grandmother Khersuti. Śaṅkaradeva was sent to school under a Sanskrit scholar, Mahendra Kandali at the age of 12 years in 1461. Śaṅkaradeva acquired much proficiency in Sanskrit and other branches of learning and completed his study in 1465. Śaṅkaradeva was a wordly person and looked after his family estate like others in the community. Śaṅkaradeva married Suryavati in the year 1471 at the age of 22 years. Manu was born in 1472 in conjugal life of Śaṅkaradeva and Suryavati. Śaṅkaradeva lost his wife Suryavati in the year 1473. Manu was given married to Hari Bhūñā in 1480. Hari Bhūñā was persecuted and executed by the Āhom ruler. All these bereavements brought a drastic change in Śaṅkaradevas' attitude to life and finally he set out on a

pilgrimage in 1481 at the age of 32. Śaṅkaradeva visited Puri, Gaya, Vrindaban, Mathura, Dwarka, Rameswaram, Prayag, Badarikashram and a few holy places of North during his pilgrimage period. In 1493 Śaṅkaradeva returned home after long twelve years sojourn, discussions on religious matters with some reknown saints of that time. The deep study of the Sanskrit scriptures profoundly influenced Śaṅkaradevas' life to the extent of enlightenment. In 1503 Śaṅkaradeva married Kalindi at the age of 54 for second time. Śaṅkaradeva established a Than (*Śaṅkari* Institution) with a *Nāmghar* at Bordowa in 1509 and held discourses on what he proclaimed as *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. The message of the new religion propagated by Śaṅkaradeva is to surrender to one supreme Godhead, to take refuge in one God only. Śaṅkaradeva was monotheistic and he was a strict non-believer in the matter of caste and of worship of idols. Śaṅkaradeva was a believer in the equality of men and above all was a humanist. Untouchability had no place in the conception of Śaṅkaradeva's society. That's why Śaṅkaradeva drew to his fold people from all castes including *Nagas*, *Bhutanes*, *Miris*, *Brāhmins* and even a few Muslims accepted his faith.

Śaṅkaradeva left Bardowa in 1516 due to *Kachārī* revolt at the age of 67 years and arrives at Rowta. In 1517 Śaṅkaradeva arrives at Gangmou. Residing more than five years at Gangmou Śaṅkaradeva shifted to Komorakata in the year 1522. In this very year some other special incident were happened in Śaṅkaradeva's life. Śaṅkaradeva's arrival at Maluwalarati, birth of his first son Ramananda, arrival at Dhuwahata and initiation of Mādhavadeva were held. Śaṅkaradeva's second son Kamal lochan was born in the year 1524 and third son Haricharana in 1526 and daughter Rukmini in 1528.

Allegation against Śaṅkaradeva by *Brāhmaṇ* priests and trial by king Chuhungmung in Āhom kingdom. Again allegation by *Brāhmaṇ* priests to king Chuklengmung in 1539. In the year 1540 some other important incidents were held in the life of Śaṅkaradeva. There was elephant safari of king Chuklengmung, arrest of Mādhavadeva and Hari Bhūñā. Execution of Hari Bhūñā, the son-in-law of Śaṅkaradeva and release of Mādhavadeva. Departure from Dhuwahata with bereaved mind at the age of 91 after residing here more than 17 years. Arrival at Kapalabari. In 1541 some other incident were happened in the life of Śaṅkaradeva like as arrives at Chunpora. Initiation of Narayan Das Thakur (Bhabananda), then arrives at Kumarkuchi and death of his beloved daughter Rukmini. Śaṅkaradeva arrives at Patbausi in the year 1542 at the age of 93, arrival of king Naranārāyaṇa at Bornagar. Śaṅkaradeva meets Naranārāyaṇa at Bornagar in 1543. In 1545 capital of Koch Kingdom shifted to Dinganagar.

In the year 1546 Chilarai (Sukladhvj) attacks Āhom kingdom and Dāmodaradeva migrates to Koch kingdom Chilarai becomes disciple of Śaṅkaradeva and Dāmodaradeva meets Śaṅkaradeva in 1548. In 1550 Dāmodaradeva becomes disciple of Śaṅkaradeva and second pilgrimage starts. Śaṅkaradeva returned from his second pilgrimage in 1551. In the year 1552 some other eventful incidents were held in the life of Śaṅkaradeva. Allegation against Śaṅkaradeva was given by *Brāhmaṇ* priests to king Naranārāyaṇa. Narayan Das Thakur and Gakul Chand were arrested. Śaṅkaradeva's arrival in Chilarai's house. Arrival of Śaṅkaradeva in the court of king Naranārāyaṇa. Mādhavadeva's visit to Banduka. Chandsai, a muslim becomes a disciple of Śaṅkaradeva. Composition of Gunamala a tiny version of *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* with only 377 verses and handed over the same to the king. *Vrindavani* cloth was weaving in

1554 and it was given as gift to Naranarayan in 1555. King Naranārāyaṇa wants to be a disciple of Śaṅkaradeva but Śaṅkaradeva denied to make him disciple. Composition of the play Ram-Vijay which was his last play. Passing away of Śaṅkaradeva. These important events were happened in the year 1568.

1.3. Śaṅkaradeva and Philosophy :

Śaṅkaradeva the great *Vaiṣṇava* saint of Assam is remembered as a unique personality. Śaṅkaradeva was one of the foremost religious philosopher in the world. His religion *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* had laid the foundation for a new religious philosophy. Though he had not made any conscious effort to that end. He founded a distinct and new philosophy in the process of founding his religious order. There was no contradiction between his religious activities and his philosophical thoughts.⁴ Śaṅkaradeva presented lots of admirable expressions in terms of art as being familiar with the system of philosophy. “The philosophical basis of his religion, says Birinchi Kumar Barua is the culmination of the *Bhakti* movement of Northern India augmented by Ramananda and of Southern India”⁵. Śaṅkaradeva believed that God is the central reality of the soul and matter, both of them cannot have existence without Him. The soul and the matter are inseparable from Him. Śaṅkaradeva mentions about their relation in *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* as -

tumi Paramātmā jagatra isa eka /

*eko bastu nahike tohmata byatireka /*⁶

(Supreme self is the Lord of the universe and there is nothing in the world except Him.)

4 Borkakati, Sanjib Kumar (2012). *Srimanta Sankaradeva*. P-64

5 Barua, Birinchi Kumar. (1994). *Sankaradeva, Vaisanava saint of Assam*. P-87

6 *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*, v, 519

From metaphysical standpoint Śaṅkaradeva presented a non dualistic view point. This view is different from the other *Vaiṣṇava* saints of India. Maheswar Neog mentioned, “The Philosophical aspects of Śaṅkaradeva’s poetry and religion corresponds rather greatly to the Advaitic views of the great Āchārya Sankara.”⁷

Acit (matter) *cit* (soul) and *Īśvara* (God) are three kinds of substance Śaṅkaradeva accepted. Śaṅkaradeva maintained that from *Paramātmā* the subtle *Jīvas* and subtle material powers of the universe emanate. The conscious and unconscious bodies of the universe also originate from Him.

According to Śaṅkaradeva the mind determines the quality and the activity of the body and is a product of *Māyā*. Because of the ignorance created by the *Māyā* the embodied should associates itself with the activities of the body. The nominal self goes by the name *Jīva* and suffers pain miseries in this world as long as it is associated with the body, mind and the senses as like a lamp illuminates so long it is connected with the wick, oil and fire. For Śaṅkaradeva *Jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā* are not identical and co-extensive though the *Jīvātmā* originates from *Paramātmā*. *Jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā* have their own independent existence but both are interrelated.

From the philosophical standpoint Śaṅkaradeva asserted the identity between *Jīva* and the *Jagat*. From the religious point of view Śaṅkaradeva spoke the difference between *Jīva* and *Jagat*. *Jīva* is not considered as an ultimate real like *Brāhmaṇa*. *Jīva* merges itself into the *Brāhmaṇa* at the time of liberation “Śaṅkaradeva established a new religion at that time when ritualism was gaining ground with occasional

⁷ Neog, Maheswar. (2008). *Sankaradeva and His Times*. P-243

instructions of ultra-religious animism and occultism. Śaṅkaradeva logically proceeded against the theologial basis of polytheism. For him God is the absolute Reality and He is the material as well as efficient cause of the universe. All the positive and excellent attributes are present in God. Nārāyaṇa is the absolute *Brāhmaṇa* who is the only adorable object.⁸”

According to Śaṅkaradeva *Nirguna Brāhmaṇa* to be the ultimate Reality and *Jīva* to be one with *Brāhmaṇa*. He considered *Brāhmaṇa* is indeterminate, changeless and eternal. Śaṅkaradeva tried to combine the theistic idea of a determinate personal God with the monistic views, which is the central point of his creed. Śaṅkaradeva taught that sole devotion to the personal and transcendent God can lead human being to the knowledge of self the result of which is liberation.

In *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*, Śaṅkaradeva states –

prathame praṇāmo brahmarūpī sanātana/

*sarva avatāra kārana nārāyaṇa /*⁹

(At first the devotee bows to Nārāyaṇa, the eternal one is the form of *Brāhmaṇa* and the cause of all incarnation.)

Śaṅkaradeva believed that God is all purity all knowledge all delight and everlasting though he does not have beginning nor any end. In Śaṅkaradeva’s religion God as Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa-Rama has represented eternal *Brāhmaṇa* and demands

8 Kalita, Jagat Chandra. (2014). *Mahapurusaṅyoti*. volume XIV. (ed.). P-69

9 *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*. v.1

the worship and devotion of human being. Due to *Māyā Jīva* is created by the God. The *Jīva* should worship God with love and external rites. When a devotee absorbs himself in *Brāhmaṇa*, he automatically gets release from the bondage of *Māyā* and the rebirth cycle. Śaṅkaradeva expounded the religion of supreme surrender to one, Vasudeva Kṛṣṇa, popularly known as Hari and therefore his creed is known as “*Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*”. Śaṅkaradeva advocated the philosophy of oneness in all. In Śaṅkaradeva’s religion the worship of other gods and goddesses except Viṣṇu is strictly prohibited.

According to Śaṅkaradeva Kṛṣṇa as the highest best and the most ideal divinity. For him one can attain liberation in his life time and it is *Jīvan Mukti*. Devotion is the superior way to attain mukti. *Bhaktimārga* is the one and only way to realize God.

The *Paramātmā* which is beyond all attributes and *Īśvara* the supreme God, who is the above of all virtues are the same. Because of this branches of *Jñānamārga* and *Bhaktimārga* had always remained wide apart in Hinduism. Śaṅkaradeva brought these two paths together and thus did a great service to *Sanātana* Hinduism. Like the monists Śaṅkaradeva preached loyalty to a single supreme entity. Śaṅkaradeva strictly adhered to his personal God, Lord Kṛṣṇa. In Śaṅkaradeva’s *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* there is no place of any entity other than Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śaṅkaradeva was a truer monists than the theorists of monism.

Śaṅkaradeva considered *Īśvara* as non-different from Brahma. According to Śaṅkaradeva *Īśvara* was above *Māyā*. He said that *Īśvara* was the supreme entity as described in the *Vedānta*. Śaṅkaradeva’s theory practicable because he equated *Brahma* with *Īśvara*. To get God’s blessings Śaṅkaradeva advised the devotees to worship him

so that God's *Māyā* could be surmounted. Śaṅkaradeva believed the human body as a holy tool for worshipping God. The positive attitude of Śaṅkaradeva helped him in his reformist social movement. Śaṅkaradeva worked for the upliftment of the world.

‘The establishment of monotheism in place of the prevailing polytheism and animism was the guiding motto of Śaṅkaradeva. Describing the nature of God Śaṅkaradeva writes Nārāyaṇa is the supreme soul and is the one and only Lord of the universe. Nothing exists without Him. He is the cause (*Kāraṇa*) as well as the effect (*Kārya*) of the creation. Just as ornaments made of gold do not differ in substance from gold itself, similarly, there is no distinction between God as the ultimate cause and God as the effect. He is all pervasive and transcendental and in Him the world exists, and yet He is beyond the world’.¹⁰

Bhāgavata Purāṇa and *Bhāgavad Gītā* are the base of Śaṅkaradeva's faith. Śaṅkaradeva defied asceticism. He believed in the teachings of the *Gītā* that one can lead a social life without being attached to the world. *Bhaktimārga* was propagated by Śaṅkaradeva instead of *Jñānamarg*. Śaṅkaradeva was in firm believe that the *Bhaktimārga* to be far efficacious than the *Jñānamarga* for the mass people. From philosophical point, Śaṅkaradeva traces the reality of the world to a single point that is *Brāhmaṇa*. From religious side Śaṅkaradeva gives us a determinate God. For *Bhakti* faith, the *Īśvara* and the *Jīvas* are to be differentiated. But according to the *Advaitavāda* of Śaṅkaradeva both are identical.

Śaṅkaradeva sincerely believes that all is *Brāhmaṇa*. The world of multiplicity is born out of *Brāhmaṇa* and dissipates into it at desolution. Śaṅkaradeva holds that the

¹⁰ Malakar. R.(1977). *Teachings of Śrī Śaṅkaradev*. (ed.) P-79

Absolute Reality (*Brāhmaṇ*) is non-dual consciousness, pervading the world of multiplicity created by *Māyā*. It is shown that Śaṅkaradeva regards the determinate God as real and essentially identical with *Brāhmaṇa*. In Śaṅkaradeva's faith the worshipful deity is Lord Kṛṣṇa who is God incarnate as declared by the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*. Śaṅkaradeva propagated his *Bhakti* faith *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* in the North-Eastern part of India. Śaṅkaradeva based his religious faith on the fundamental principles of the *Vedānta*.

1.4 Śaṅkaradeva and Education :

It is an undoubted reality that at every age, in every place every aim of education was and is to make an individual fit for living a good accepted life. At different time at different parts of the world some great men felt changing necessities of life and living. These great personalities tried to train the people in that direction and the contemporary supporters called it to be education. Śaṅkaradeva like as Jesus Christ, Hazarat Mohammad, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Gandhi, Tagore was some of such great men with a vision of education of their own. Like many others Śaṅkaradeva had his own view of life that was not other than education. In this sense Śaṅkaradeva was among the great educators of the world.

Primarily the great *Vaiṣṇavite* leader Śaṅkaradeva was not a philosopher like Aristotle and educationist like Rousseau. Śaṅkaradeva was never a Gandhi nor a Mudaliar either. Śaṅkaradeva was a religious preacher for propagating a way of devotion to the Supreme Almighty. Śaṅkaradeva did never tell a word of course, on the term "Educatoin" as one mean it today. But Śaṅkaradeva had a high sense of education

and a good knowledge of philosophy. Though his tongue and pen were silent to speak on education, his life and work can tell a lot on it. However in the field of education at that time, this *Vaiṣṇavite* educator had covered a big area of contribution, sometimes openly and often behind the scene. Though religious preacher and social reformer Śaṅkaradeva's basic aim was to educate illiterate masses in moral education.

Śaṅkaradeva, as a good psychologist could understand the mind of the common people and easily attracted the general people toward his ideals and philosophy of education. Śaṅkaradeva's religion was the religion for all, his language was the language of the common people and his education was the education of the uneducated and the scholars. In a simple word Śaṅkaradeva was the symbol of democracy-man from masses and man for the masses. Śaṅkaradeva accepted the minds of the common people and accordingly used his language, his interest and his abilities in his works and teachings-so that the common people could learn and read. Śaṅkaradeva wrote to amuse all the educated and uneducated and his art was also connected with the interest of the masses. As a democratic leader and social reformer Śaṅkaradeva was a poet, a dramatist, a translator, a prose writer, an artist, a preacher, a player, a reformer and a teacher .

Equality was of top priority when Śaṅkaradeva thought of his disciples. To Śaṅkaradeva there is no rich, no poor, all are human, created by same God. No *Brāhmaṇa* was born with the *Vedas* in his head nor a *Kṣatriya* with swords in hand. To Śaṅkaradeva none was more touchable than another. The principles of abolition of untouchability took its root five hundred years ago through the teachings of this

Vaiṣṇavite leader and only recently in the twentieth century M. K. Gandhi, the father of the Indian Nation could think of it.

From 14th to 16th century was a period of outburst in the field of religion and culture in Assam. It was a time when a religious revival was an urgent need. A new type of ideals on the liberal doctrine of *Bhakti* began to grow in different parts of India.

*“dharma saṁsthapanārthāya
sambhabāmi yuge yuge”¹¹*

I will take birth always at a time when it becomes necessary to re-establish ‘*dharma*’ or justice in the world.

A democratic movement was felt against untouchability and caste prejudices in every corner of India. The *Gītā* re-echoed in the form of Guru Nanak in the Punjab, Chaitanya in Bengal and Śaṅkaradeva in Assam. *Kāyasṭha* by caste and man by birth Śaṅkaradeva dreamt of a new shape in the religious, social, cultural and literary life of the people of Assam.

In the 15th/16th century Assam, the *Śākta* cult strongly occupied a place among the masses of the Hindu society. Śaṅkaradeva’s father and fore-fathers were *Śāktas*, his friend and foes *Śāktas* and even the Āhom kings were perfectly *Śākta* devotees at that time. Śaṅkaradeva met people who were *Śāktas*, he argued with people who defended *Śāktism*. Śaṅkaradeva had to be a pupil of the great scholar Mahendra Kandali who was also a worshipper of *Śakti* (*Devī*). There was no atmosphere in this region to sow the seed of *Vaiṣṇavism* safely and certainly.

¹¹ *Bhāgavadgītā*. 4/8

On the other hand in the 15th/16th century the political atmosphere of Assam was not peaceful. During that time Assam was politically divided into a number of states under kings and tribes. The eastern part was under Chutiyās, the Kachārīes ruled the southern side. To the west there was Kamata kingdom which came to be known as Coach-Bihar under the Koch kings. The rest of the Brahmaputra valley was ruled by Āhoms. This region was mostly under the rule of force both in religion and in politics. Śaṅkaradeva stood with a commanding force at the time of crisis. Śaṅkaradeva accepted the common language of the people as a tool for developing the culture, religion and language of Assam. For this reason Śaṅkaradeva started religious movement leading to manifold expressions in art and literature. Of course at that time the Koch rulers patronized the scholars to translate the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*. The Āhom kings also encouraged different literary activities including a new type of prose history known as *Buranji*. Śaṅkaradeva's ideals were quite strange and unacceptable to the *Śākta Brāhmaṇs* and he had to suffer a lot for this reason. Śaṅkaradeva was the man of age, an “*Avatāra*” for a specific purpose that is the establishment of the supreme ideal of *Vaiṣṇavite* philosophy- *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*, a religion on the one alone, the only name of the Almighty. To this *Eka-Śaraṇa* all ages, all castes, all stages, all time and all places were freely allowed irrespective of place, time, person and caste of a devotee Śaṅkaradeva taught the illiterate masses on a democratic type of education regarding humanity, untouchability and national feeling. Śaṅkaradeva tried to introduce Assam to India and whole of India to Assam. In all India arena there were poets and composers, there were saints and religious preachers, there were musical masters and social reformers. Śaṅkaradeva was

the genius and all these great qualities were rolled into him. Śaṅkaradeva waged a relentless crusade against social evils like casteism, untouchability and religious persecution throughout his life and taught the lesson of unity and brotherhood to the common people.

To sum up Śaṅkaradeva is not a easy task – he is the life unique living. The romantic poet Jatindra Nath Duwara dared not attempt to write the endless biography of Śaṅkaradeva –

*tomar jībani dev likhe
ene sādhdhya kār,
gotei asom juri bistrita
jībani jār* ¹²

-who can write thy story, o great saint Thou art here and there and everywhere in the soil and air of Assam. The same Śaṅkaradeva was here, the same Śaṅkaradeva was there rather he is still everywhere from Art to work, from education to culture.

tahito śaṅkara, ahito śaṅkara ¹³

-Śaṅkara is here, Śaṅkara is there

Śaṅkaradeva was among *Gāros* and *Mikirs*, among the *Nāgās* and *Bhutiyās* and among the *Āhoms* and *Brāhmiṇs* with *Harināma* as his chief “ism”. Śaṅkaradeva conquered the sky and air with the *Harināma*, the Sacred uttering of the name of the Supreme-

*ākaśat harinām batāhat harinām
harinām śiśhur mukhat* ¹⁴

12 Duwara, Jatindra Nath. (1973) -Madhyamik Asomiya Kabita Chayan. p.158.

13 Lekharu, U.C. (1987). *Kathā-Guru -Carita*, Ch.- III /37

14 Rajkhowa, Sailadhar. (1983) Madhyamik Asamiya Kabita Chayan, P.121

-In the sky there is the *Harinām*, in the air there is the *Harinām* and amongst the children there is the *Harinām*.

All the great and divine qualities were prevailed in Śaṅkaradeva. The colour and power, the work and manner, the life and lot rather all of God were inherited by the great saint –

*jākeri nāhike upāma*¹⁵

- With whom none can be compared. Śaṅkaradeva was at a time- poet, dramatist, artist, musician, religious preacher, revolutionist, social reformer and scholar with a complete long human life of 120 years. Śaṅkaradeva lived a life of purity and sacrifices, a life of success and sufferings, and a long life of pleasure and pain.

To introduce Śaṅkaradeva as an educator and a philosopher is an attempt for a detailed study on his life and activities. Unfortunately enough Śaṅkaradeva had to suffer throughout his life for truth and idealism. Like Hazarat Mohammad, Jesus Christ, Galileo and Socrates Śaṅkaradeva had to suffer from troubles and anxieties for the reason that he had an opinion which was going to be accepted by all the people at the time as the only way of living a good life. Śaṅkaradeva had to shift from one place to another seeking for safety and security not for his own life but of his ideals, pens and papers. The relevant chapters of his life and activities will show how boldly and patiently he had to struggle for life, suffer from obstacles and wait for success.

15 Das, Biren. (1989) *Nāma Prasanga Pranali*. p.82

1.5 Significance of the Study :

The 15th/16th Century Assam as other parts of India was an age of darkness. The vast majority were ignorant because of illiteracy and lack of proper cultural values. Against this social backdrop the religious rituals as practiced by the *Brāhmaṇical* Institutions caused sharp divisions in the social fabric on the basis of caste and creed. The lower strata of population under such circumstances were a neglected lot; a good many of them were considered even untouchable. The *Manu-saṁhitā* approved of such marginalization. Even the *Vedas* prescribed religious rituals to be performed only by the *Brāhmiṇs*. The common masses found no way open to them for getting involved in the religious festivities in consequence where of the influence of the limited high-caste. *Brāhmiṇs* abnormally rose very high and their dominance over the poor commoners knew no bounds. The *Śākta Brāhmiṇs* even practiced ghastly human sacrifices to propitiate their favourite gods and goddesses. With sanction of the *Purāṇas* and *Manu-saṁhitās* worship of various gods and goddesses was on the rise. Indeed this practice was suffocating and exasperating the masses remained detached. This was the period of spiritual doom in entire India.

In this part of the North-East India Śaṅkaradeva felt deeply distressed to see the over whelming darkness around and wanted to show something concrete to help the masses see a light to avoid dropping. In the age of Śaṅkaradeva when there was chaos in society and ethnic struggles, communal diversity, caste prejudices, the sharp disparity between the ruler and the ruled existed. Śaṅkaradeva emerged as a savior and enunciated *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* or worship one God that is Kṛṣṇa. Śaṅkaradeva preached his religion among *Āhom*, *Chutiyā*, *Koch*, *Kachārī*, *Koivortya*,

Mleca, Garu, Khāsī, Nāgā and all other communities of Assam. Śaṅkaradeva made no distinction between one caste and another. Allowed all and Sundry to worship in *Nāmghars* under the same roof. Non-violence, equality and fraternity were the guiding principles of Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy. Śaṅkaradeva unified all sections of the society and different duties of different section of the society by preaching monotheism. Through the trumpet of *Harināma* Śaṅkaradeva was successful in sounding the voice of unity among diverse ethno-cultural communities of Assam. Śaṅkaradeva's ideal, humanism and mutual love always been useful for the society. The preaching and ideals of Śaṅkaradeva are the foundation of Assamese culture which give us an identity as a part and parcel of world culture and its importance can never be under estimated.

In the present day world recognizing the crucial role of education in the desirable formation of values and attitudes, great stress has been laid on education. Stressing the significance of this, the education Commission (1964-66) stated, "A serious defect in the school curriculum is the absence of spiritual values. In the life of the majority of Indians religion is a great motivating force and is emotionally bound up with formation of character and the inculcation of ethical values. A national system of education that is related to the life, needs and aspirations of the people cannot afford to ignore this purposeful force." It is education through which the values, morals, skills, knowledge are to be cultivated among the illiterate masses according to the needs and expectancy of the society. Therefore, it is important for all the people of the society to understand the nature of social, moral, educational values and the factors responsible for its formation and development.

Regarding the value crisis there is a hue and cry, in every corner of the society. In social and political life the society is experiencing a crisis of values in every aspects like honesty, tolerance, justice and secularism both in personal and public life, has become a matter of grave national concern. Society looks up to education as a vital means to imbibe and foster desirable values in the society. Education is responsible for the formation and distortion of social, moral, religious and educational values in the society. The prime concern of education is to enable the masses to survive from unusual distortions and disruptions. Untouchability, superstition, caste, creed, colour, language, sex disparity, social and educational condition, philosophy and education, religion is taken for the study as the issues are widely talked about and related with Śaṅkaradeva and his educational philosophy. These are largely responsible for the progressive development of the society. To understand the educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva all these issues are also included in the present study.

1.6 Statement of the Problem :

Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568) was the leader of the socio-cultural and religious renaissance of 15th/16th Century Assam. For the revival of the degenerated Assamese society Śaṅkaradeva took the initiative to spread the *Vaiṣṇavism* among the common masses. Śaṅkaradeva was practically working in almost all field like as music, dance, drama, literature, religion, art, architecture, social reconstruction, human development, knowledge management etc. For reformation of degenerated Assamese society Śaṅkaradeva spread a new form of *Vaiṣṇavism* which is known as *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. Śaṅkaradeva believed that the existence of human being on the earth is very much depended on other living creatures as well as plants. Śaṅkaradeva's

main ideology was every human being and every living creatures are a part of the God and therefore pay respect to them. Śaṅkaradeva dedicated his life for the virtual removal of the darkness which had engulfed the entire society during that time. He was a prince turned universal itinerant for the welfare of the downtrodden and for the emancipation of humanity. He was an uncompromising and relentless crusader against superstition.

Śaṅkaradeva was a man of dream for universality and a commonwealth of humanity breaking and throwing away all the narrow caste and communal barriers. It was not his theoretical preaching but was a practical living. In India and certainly in North-East India, Śaṅkaradeva was the person to bring the kings and the beggars, the *Brāhmins* and the outcastes, wise and ignorant into one platform sitting together, thinking together, aspiring together and praying together. This is the only practical theory to demoralize caste system from the society. Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy of equality goes to the extent that the preachers and the priests, teacher and taught, man and woman, the enlightened and the fool, the tribes and non-tribes, Hindus and the people of other faiths be seated in the same level of seat not high not low. One can assume the outlook of Śaṅkaradeva regarding education from the activities and ideologies of his life.

Education is recognized as an important instrument which affects the affective and cognitive dimension of the people. Education shapes people's attitudes and values. The educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva is largely influenced by the thinking, preaching and various activities of his life. Education is a vital medium to imbibe, foster and perpetuate these qualities which helps in inculcating new thoughts and reshaping

the old ones. The present study is designed to investigate the educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. The influences of a host of socio-educational variables such as religion, caste, creed, colour, sex, untouchability, language, literary works, equality, status of women, philosophy, education, undertaken for the study were examined. These issues are supported to have considerable impact on the formation of educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. As such the study is entitled as **Śaṅkaradeva and His Educational Philosophy-A Study.**

1.7 Objectives of the Study :

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives.

1. To study the social and educational condition of 15th/16th century Assam.
2. To study Śaṅkaradeva's intention to establish harmony in the society by abolishing caste, creed, colour, language, sex disparity from the society.
3. To study the educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva.
4. To discuss Śaṅkaradeva's educational contribution to the Assamese society.

1.8 Methodology :

The common people's scientific notion compels the elite to undertake research in every field to provide appropriate direction to the existing theories and practices. Most of the leading countries of the world, make their planning on the basis of the research findings. Progress in every field is considered as the out-come of the research in that particular area. Progress of human world is directly linked with research undertaken in various fields. This highlighted the necessity and significance of sound research in men's prosperity and advancement. The success of research and findings of it largely

depend on proper methodology adopted in the study. Accurate and proper methodology may help to obtain maximum attainment of the pre decided objectives based on theoretical frame work. Methods describe the various steps to be adopted in solving a research problem, such as the manner in which the problems are formulated, the definitions of the terms, the choice of subjects for investigation, the validation of data gathering tools, the collection, analysis and interpretation of data and the process of inferences and generalization.¹⁶

All the researches in fact involve the elements of observation, description and the analysis of what happens under certain circumstances. Practically most of the studies fall under one or a combination of these three types- (i) Historical (ii) Descriptive (iii) Experimental. The present research is designed to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the status of phenomena of educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva and to draw valid conclusions from the facts discovered. The study involves analysis, comparison and interpretation. The study investigates phenomena in their natural settings. As such the present study belonged to Descriptive type of studies.

1.9 Delimitation of the Study :

The present study is aimed to find out and analyze the educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. As such the study is delimited to the educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. However, the study includes all the social, moral and educational aspects in respect of caste, creed, religion, untouchability, superstition, language , status of women, philosophy, education, literary works of Śaṅkaradeva.

¹⁶ Koul, Lokesh. (1984) *Methodology of Educational Research*. pp. 19-20

1.10 Chapterization :

The report of the present research has been divided into seven chapters :

Chapter One : Introduction

The introductory chapter presents the research theme, significance of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, limitation and methodology of the study.

Chapter Two : Review of Related Studies

The second chapter specified for the review of the related literatures in the areas of multifaceted activities of Śaṅkaradeva.

Chapter Three : Education : The Concept and Classification

The third chapter includes the discussion about the theoretical and conceptual framework of education.

Chapter Four : Śaṅkaradeva and 15th/16th Century Assam

In the fourth chapter the social and educational condition of 15th/16th century Assam was discussed.

Chapter Five : Educational Philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva

The chapter five deals with the analysis and interpretation of the research work on educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva. This chapter is divided into two part. One is as philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva and the other is educational philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva.

Chapter Six : Educational Contribution of Śaṅkaradeva.

The chapter six present the discussion about the educational contribution of Śaṅkaradeva.

Chapter Seven : Major Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion.

The concluding chapter gives a resume of research alongwith the salient findings, their social significance and educational implication and suggestions for future research.