CONCLUSION

(a) Religion as a source of peace and conflict.

(b) The chief disciples.

(c) The Uncommon activities.

(d) A glance over their works again.

(e) As writers and fighters.

(f) Their system of Religion and Education.

(g) Reformation.

(h) Their system of Teaching in the Modern concept of Education.

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CONCLUSION

Our age has ceased to understand the concept of religion or rather it is misunderstood and confused, but still religion in its deeper meaning is important for complete and useful education.

Every age is 'new' and 'modern' and any age is an age of tension, danger and opportunity. A feeling of insecurity to some extent, sometimes more and sometimes less, is always there in every age. It is always religion that alone has given us the right direction towards destiny of peace. Of course examples are not rare to tell that the idea of religion and religious beliefs create conflicts, separation and sometimes destruction, yet religion also is the ultimate way of peace, union and perfection. History of any country is often a series of religious conflicts causing social
chaos, but in the real sense it is not religion that creates problems, but sentiment, ignorance, and selfishness in the name of religion. Behind any politics, any philosophy and any culture, custom and education there is the golden thread of religion. Any culture, any custom, any family or any society is "in the or in a" religious atmosphere. On the other hand religious tolerance has become the best safeguard now a days. God is for all and any religion is a symbolic connection between society and the individual. It is a kind of mental hygiene. So undoubtedly religious education is of vital importance in the field of education for each and every people. And with the same purpose Srimanta Sankardeva with his associates Madhabdeva, Damodardeva and Harideva launched their Vaisnavite movement to mark an important role in religious, mental, spiritual and moral aspects of the people of Assam. Before them Assam was glanced with different casteism and religionism and disintegration. They all were born in East (Eastern part of Assam i.e. Ujani) and worked...
their best and breathed last in West (Western part i.e. Namani namely Kamrup and Behar). The wave of Krisna Monsoon thundered in the East (Bardowa) and carried the mass of Madhaba cloud with the help of Hari-Damodar winds to Patbausi and Behar in the West resulting thereby showers in bhakti rain (teaching on devotion) to fill up the beels and ponds (uncultured people) with Nama flood (initiation with the name of Hari) of mukti silt (salvation).

For teachings and activities Mahapurush Sankardeva and his associates, the greatest spirituals, national and social leaders of Assam may not be very well known outside the state although in Assam they are still worshipped in every home of respective sects as the Gurus and makers of modern Assamese life and society. It was Sankardeva and his associates who brought unity amongst the different castes into one by introduction of Namghars and Satra institutions. Their 'Namadharma' is a unique form of democratic system of religious education.

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To their religion, no man was considered by reason of his birth and social position but by equality within the fold of Vaisnavism.

They always preached what they thought and did what they taught. Besides a host of high caste devotees, they also initiated into their order other persons from all sections of the people including tribes of hills and plains even the Muslims. Amongst the notable disciples of Sankardeva Govinda Atai was a Garo,

Balai Atai was a Mikir,
Ram Atai was a Kachari,
Narottam Atai was a Naga,
Narayan Atai was a Miri,
Sri Ram Atai was a Kaibarta,
Damodar Atai was a Bhutia,
Chandsai Atai was a Muslim.

As practical pioneers of integration, Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Damodardeva and Harideva were the gurus, of all, a high and a low, before whom all were equal as the creation of the same
God. They picked up disciples from each and every caste, and built a vast nation of integrity in the name of devotional community and as sons of the soil they initiated disciples under the fold of one or the other guru and thus acted for and contributed to the religion.

They were the class I individuals with all social awareness of a big Vaisnavite Assamese society consisting of -

Brahman Kayastha Koch Ganak Garia
Ahom Kachari Miri Kaibarta Baria,
Hari Suri Dom Dhoba Kalita Telia
Garo Baro Naga Sata Saral Sutia,
Mukhi Musi Yugi Bhot Khamti Khasia
Nepali Bangali Kuli Metar Maria.¹

They were born more than five centuries ago at a time when political and social condition of Assam was far from satisfactory. The whole

¹ Avatar (Vol.I), Oct. 1992
Ed.by S. Chaliha, Tarun Cont'd.. 237/-
Nagar, Gauhati
of Assam, more correctly Kamrupa did embrace in its fold almost the whole of North East India including Bangladesh and North Bengal, present day Assam and parts of Bhutan, Meghalaya, Arunachal, Nagaland and Tripura. Though vast a kingdom under the fold of one name there was always political disintegration, rise and fall of dynasties such as the Kochas, the Kacharies, the Chutiyas, the Ahomas, the Bhutiyas and the like. In the mean time the society had already been deeply rooted by feelings of Casteism like Brahmins and non-Brahmins, high castes and low castes. Some were touchables while other few were untouchables. From his childhood Sankardeva noticed all these social evils and mixed with all sections of children. Since then he developed an idea of reformation. His morning showed the day and the child Sankara grew up to be the great Sankardeva. He was perhaps the first Sudra to get the title 'deva' which was at that time meant for the Brahmins only. And at all the time he was supplemented with the Cont'd.. 238/-
contributions of his associates.

History of every nation is proud of its preachers, reformers and scholars, artists and Poets, great writers and saints. But no history of any country has ever been proud of one man who is a poet, a dramatist, an artist, a singer, an actor, a preacher, a reformer, a dancer, a musician, an ideal house holder and a great saint at the same time. Sankardeva united the Assamese society and brought forth a glorious renaissance in the fields of literature and culture, art and music and dance and drama, religion and custom and his associates also did in this respect to a great extent. Since their time only Assam started indentifying herself with a language and culture as contributed by them. They were born and they died one after another but their work on language and literature covered from about the later part of the 15th century to the early part of the 16th century, a period popularly and widely known as the Golden age of Assamese Literature. It was their writings which had to stand as a defender

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during the British rule to say and prove that Assamese is an independent language with its rich origin and resources and not and never and in no way is a part of Bengali.

Sankardeva wrote 'Karatala Kamala Kamala dala Nayana', a short but meaningful poem only when he had just learnt the alphabet in the tol. His first remarkable verse book "Harichandra Upakhya" was also written during his primary school stage. He summed up the great Bhagavata Purana within a few days, a task comparable to killing an elephant and putting it into a jar.

He had to compose and sing "Madhu Danaba darana deva barang" - a lucious totoy immediately and on the spot in the royal court of king Naranarayana while asked to ascend to his seat.

The first Bargit "Monameri Rama, caranahi lago" was very suddenly composed and sung at Badarikashrama when his mind was completely occupied with

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divine pleasure. He gallantly fought against the Brahmins with his great work 'Patni Prashad' and gained immediate success. As a holy present to Narayan Thakur after a sraddha ceremony he had to compose 'Bhakti Pradip' in haste.

Of course he started the 'Kirtana' quite at the early part of his religious life at Bardowa and continued the work till his later living in the Koch Kingdom. He did its work slowly and in break and scattered chapters, which were finally collected and arranged by Ramcharan Thakur at the direction of his maternal uncle Madhabdev. Very appropriately he undertook the work of Dasama which is one of the four Vaisnava Vedas during the last part of his life at Patbaushi and at a proper age for the purpose. His 'Patni Prashad' was only a literary fight against the Sakta Brahmins who always reported against him before the Ahom king. "Rama Bijay" is his last work in 1490 at the request of Chilaraya, brother of king Naranarayana of Cooch Behar and with it he ends his last drop of ink with the last word of his literary life. Thus most of
his associates also had to work under a circumstance or in the modern educational term 'situation'. They always wrote with a purpose and under a situation and very strangely any writing of theirs becomes a great text for all who can read.

No more example is demanded to show that they were born scholars, like many other philosophers they also thought and spoke, wrote and suffered. As all other great revolutionary social reformers of the world like Buddha, Christ and Mahammad, Sankardeva and his associates also had to face troubles and obstructions for the orthodox priesthood and sakta supporters and had to come into tough debates with prejudiced pandits at the royal court. Often times they had to face harassments and so had to change their residences from place to place. At last, of course they got peace and shelter under the great kings of Cooch Kingdom where from they could convey their greatness and the religion. Like ordinary house holders

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all except Madhabdeva had to bear the burden of their wives and children, suffer the pains of tears, but none of the sort could diminish their originality in the field of religion, literature and philosophy. Sankardeva lost his first and dearest wife just after three years of his marriage. He had to take care of his little daughter Manu since after her mother died, saw his son-in-law Hari killed by the king's men, changed his residence again and again seeking for a place of safety and hid himself from the king's search which meant sure and severe punishment leading to death. Damodardeva had to suffer the loss of his young wife and newly born daughter and to take the burden of the poverty of his widow sister-in-law and fatherless nephews. Harideva lost his wife, the only son and the only sister quite unexpectedly. Madhabdeva was forced to see the brutal killing of his dearest companion Hari, the son-in-law of his guru Sankardeva by the Ahom king. Yet they did and fought and lived for the religion and did not cease devoting themselves into the work of

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literature and culture and education. Rather they felt the necessity of going out on a long pilgrimage or on organisational programme as a part of demand for widening the horizon of knowledge for contributing to Vaisnavite education and the Bhagawata recognised religion.

They returned home with the first hand knowledge of Vaisnavite theology, mode of worship and ideal management of institutions. They moved from place to place for preaching their religious ideals and for this purpose they established Namghars and satras in most of their stations. In this sense they introduced a mobile University that the present Western World can think of. As men of strong personality they were not only good looking but also genius who established in themselves many wonderful qualities rarely to be found in single individuals. Born and brought up amidst a Sakta Society they noticed the hollowness of the prevailing ritualism connected with religions and religious observances including animal sacrifices.
and expensive worships. Their lives were long and living was complete. So they had time enough to cure religious deformities with reasons and thinking and writings. They studied all the Sastras, the Vedas, the Upanisads, the Puranas, the Gita and Bhagavata for bringing out all in there in easy and comprehensive form for the mass people who could not read and enjoy them. Throughout all their thinking and writings and preaching they laid more importance in the application of morality than formality in day to day life.

In their system of religion, the devotee maintains direct communications with the supreme Lord without the need of any intermediary help. There is no rich and no poor amongst their devotees. They maintained tolerance in the matter of religion and taught people the same. The greatest contribution of Sankardeva and his associates to the Assamese society is the social recognition of man irrespective of caste and creed. Even the lower animals like dogs, donkeys and outcastes were also

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equally honoured by them as is done to man.

"Kukkura Chandala garddavaro atmam Ram
jania Sabako pari kariba pranam". 1
Prostrate before all knowing that God
is the soul of the dog, the out caste
and the donkey. 2

Thus for the first time, the lower class
people were given due recognition in the society.
What they taught, what they spoke and what they wrote
they did all for the common people with common exam-
plies. The Kirtana, a summed up simple edition of
the Bhagavata Purana is one of the best examples of

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1 Kirtan Ghosa - By Srimanta Sankardeva,
edited by M. Neog. Chapter - XXIII, P.496,
lines - 40.(Pub.1967)

2 Sankardeva and Gandhiji - By R.K. Saikia,
1987. - pp. 15 (No. 5)
Sankardeva's efforts for the common people. The popular Kirtana is regarded to be so sacred that every Assamese home has or feels to have a copy of it. Madhabdeva's Namghosa and Harideva's Bhaktirasa Tarangini are also no interior condensed philosophies of Vaisnavite thought to Kirtana and Dasama. Damodardeva was perhaps the first man to think of a prose system and style of writing for the common people including Sudras and women and accordingly he directed his ablest disciple Bhattadeva to do the job. The whole structure of Assamese Vaisnavism had to rest upon the four dependable pillars of Hariguru - Sankara - Madhaba - Damodar unit. As mass-Psychologists they invented the device of drawing attention of the people towards their religion by introducing songs like Bargits, plays like Ankiya Nats and other lyrics and writings. Both the Bargits and Ankiya Nats have unique educative values with high technique of writings, mode of expression and style of wording. They introduced all the good in and removed all the evils from the Assamese society with the Bhagawatadharma based on the

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'Harinama'. They established educational institutions like the Satras, built village courts and parliament houses like the Namghars, and accepted any one from any caste or creed as their devotee as a part of the programme of integration.

It was because of their reformative movement that untouchability could not attain such criminal proportion in Assam as prevails in other parts of India even today. Mahatma Gandhi also greatly appreciated Sankardeva's contribution to Assamese society in respect of abolition of untouchability, and said that Assam was really fortunate to have a Mahatma five centuries back who gave people an idea now he could think of. And same was true to Madhabdeva, Damodardeva and Harideva also. Very soon people became interested in Vaisnavism for its all round acceptabilities and literal and cultural activities. As the religion was mainly based on music, dance, drama, recitation and discussion people found no difficulty in understanding its idealism in straightforward way. They did so much to the people and culture of Assam that their age is still known as

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the Vaisnavite Age or the Mahapurusia Age of Assam. Assam is under deep debt of gratitude to the Mahapurushas in all respects. In a word they made the people Assamese with their own mark and glory. Under the warmth of the glorious Suns the lotus of Assamese culture blossomed with thousand petals. The socio cultural architect and religious founders Sankardeva and his associates were born at a critical moment of religious crisis along with many other saints in different parts of the country. Ramananda, Kabir, Byaneshwar, Tukaram, Ramdas, Mirabai, Guru Nanak and Chaitanya in other parts of India started the bhakti movement and Sankardeva with his associates of that galaxy of saints has left a permanent mark on the life of Assamese people. Amongst the other contemporaries like Chaitanya of Bengal, Vallabha Charya of Andhra, Kabir of Benaras, Nanak of the Punjab and Tulsidas of the united province, their contributions in the field of education are the greatest.

There cannot be a stop on anything spoken of the great gurus of Assam namely the four Hari-
guru - Sankara - Madhaba - Damodara. No book can, however, have complete saying who they were, what they did, how they lived and why they still remain in the hearts of the Assamese people. A good number of pages about them is quite meagre in comparison with the vast sea of work done by the great contemporary saints in the field of religion, culture and education of Assam. Their path of devotion is easy for all. One under their fold can go on running at ease even by closing one's eyes. Their bhakti religion gives no disintegration and differentiation between man and man, man and woman and a rich and a poor. All can sit together and aspire and worship together. They said nothing different from the 'one God' theory of the Bible, "La-alaah-ellillah" (one Allah and nothing else) concept of the Holy Koran or the "One Entity and one Existence" (ekamekah merged) Philosophy of the Hindu Vedas. Hundreds of God's sons including Jesus Christ, thousands of prophets from Allah including Hazarat Mahammad and more than ten times of ten incarnates (dasawatar)

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including Krisna have visited earth so long, but none can or could change the "One God without shape" idea of religion. Hariguru-Sankara-Madhaba-Damodara, the four associates of the good and glorious past also incarnated to establish the same supreme belief in the minds of men in the best and to the deepest. But this is not enough to say what they were as they are much more than what is thought of them to be. They have so long been known to the mass people as the religious preachers for the sake of religion and social reforms. Some of them were also the pioneers of songs and music, dances and dramas. But very few are aware of the fact that they were at the same time teachers of the masses with their own principles and philosophies. They had students and institutions, curriculums and examinations, a kind of fees and obligations and also examples of the system of reward for desirable behaviour and severe punishment as opposed to it. The study claims a great need of comparison between the system of education of that time and that of the present day. Its study will throw a light on how the courses adopted by those inborn

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teachers included sociology, work education, Moral education, Education for life and reality and at the most the universal brotherhood. The need of the study does not make an end at this point alone, rather it extends to still further. It is time to feel how and why the present courses of academic curriculums fail to serve the purpose they are meant for, to what extent the present day educational policies are indebted to their findings, and how they have failed for the reason that they have left this or that part of the most valuable areas of educational objectives. As such a study on the topic like this is or has become strictly essential to make education real and practical.

Sankardeva and his contemporary associates were mostly religious preachers and their philosophies were on the basis of religion. They led a better life to gain the divine bliss on the form of mukti. They had nothing in the name of material gain or earthly recognition. Thus they taught

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people and took those who wanted to be in their fold as their disciples. Of course in the real sense of education they did little and taught only the moral aspects of their own. But education is not such a narrow term with such a little dimension of concept. Behind different ideals of the Vaisnavite sages there was education of the widest sense and even the education of the present time. Of course books are rare on this line and educational contributions are very rare in their writings and in the writings of others on them. The Guru charits which are the only dependable biographies of the sages also don't tell much on formal teaching that was being taken place at that time. On the other hand each biography differs with the other in matters including the system of education of that time.

But still there was education in the proper sense at that time. Srimanta Sankardeva was a leading educated person who took education under the famous Sanskrit scholar Mahendra Kandali. He
was a teacher and a preacher and at the same time an acharyya and a guru. He bore a divine power of knowledge and with that power he imparted his teaching to those who came forward. He had his own institution and method. A life long student Sankardeva studied and continued his study to teach all high and low with the same mode and in the same manner. He knew how to learn and really he learnt from great scholars like Mahendra Kandali and Ananta Kandali and also from an ordinary maid servant like Sanderi. His associate Madhabdeva was not a teacher alone but also a tutor of Ramcharan, Purusottam and Haricharan. He also gave stress on co-curricular activities like dance and music and songs and dramatisation. He did manual work himself and taught others to do it. There are examples of competitions and games and sports where Sankardeva and his contemporaries took part and thereby they wanted to complete the sense of education. Debating was taken to be the most essential part of an educated life, and accordingly they held debating sessions where they measured their depth of knowledge.

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They certified and kept examples of punishment to wrong doers. But it was severe and it often times lacked the proper spirit of punishment. Sometimes any disciple was not excused for life and sincere disciple like Krishna Kalai of Srimanta Sankardeva had to commit suicide out of grief and unbearable dissatisfaction. On the other hand disciples like Madhabdeva and Ananta Kandali were highly rewarded by being empowered to compose great works like Ratnakavali and Ramayana. And again Damodardeva, the leading organiser of institutional Satra System of education planned the scheme of mass education by introducing the prose style of writing by his ablest and dearest disciple Bhattadeva, whom he thought to be next to him - the other Damodara (apara Damodara).¹ A psychologist Damodara considered that nothing, not even a word in any writing is to be treated as wrong or unnecessary in the context. Rather he attempted to contextualise any matter through the mastery of his wide knowledge. He advised the writers and revisers not to cut or cancel any idea in writing as to be wrong or needless.

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¹ Gopal Misra Kaviratna : Ghosa Ratna, Ed. by Namarayan Goswami, 1976 pp. XII.
(comparing with condemned thieves) but to keep it reserved for consideration in a later thinking (comparing to imprisonment for further judgement) if the same can be interpreted befitting to the context. The Sun Damodara's rays reflected through the disciple Moons like Bhattadeva and Gopal Mishra to the Vaisnavite community under the moonlit starry heaven of devotion. A pacific deep and Himalayan determinant Damodar was an educationist - silent as well as sincere and liberal as well as adament. At the same time the Visnu-closed teacher Harideva was an independent thinker, disciplined writer and popular speaker on the Vaisnavite line. A door-to-door teacher of the people Hariguru preferred explaining the Bhagawata philosophies to the uneducated mass to writing and translating books for those who already knew things. He tried thereby to establish illiterate literacy amongst those who could not read or write. His scheme of adult education, mode and method of teaching and system of evaluation for entry into his fold were of his own - unique and independent. He
examined and evaluated pupils constantly and continuously before accepting them as disciples and equally he allowed to be examined and tested by willing pupils before he became their guru. This modern concept of evaluation of teachers was introduced by this great saint Hariguru more than five hundred years ago at a time when learning was informal and open and teaching was a special and honorary job of only few inborn experts. In this way there is a lot of scope to be found out for the life and living of those great educators which may certainly be called contributions on education. By going a step ahead attempts have also been made to show how they introduced the Open University mode of distance or correspondence type of education at a time when there was no postal facility and other modes of communication.