CONCLUSION

The medieval Assam made tremendous progress in educational sphere. The educational development witnessed in the period did not begin all on a sudden since educational system is not a matter of sudden growth rather continuous process having roots in the past. The education system of Assam in the middle ages was, by and large, a legacy of the ancient period. The Aryan system of education called as Brahm-minical system spread in Assam during the ancient period and the tradition of sanskrit culture and learning continued unabated in the Ahom age. The patronage of the Kings and the Aryanisation of Ahoms gave a filip to the classical studies.

The wide variety and wealth of the classical texts prompted widespread translations in Ahom and Assamese; and these translations multiplied by copies began to spread the culture and learning of ancient texts. The tradition of formal education imparted in the Tolas continued; and there was in reality an expansion of sanskrit Tolas under royal patronage. The Ahom rulers brought with them their own culture and educational system.
In the early years of Ahom Rule, the rulers sought to establish their own tradition and system of education and consequently there emerged in Assam a Tai system of education which found finest expression in creation of historical literature and creative literature and imparting professional training in the art of warfare and transforming traditional skill from one generation to another.

The emergence of Srimanta Sankaradeva in the cultural and religious field of Assam is the most significant event of middle Ages. It was Srimanta Sankaradeva who created not only a wide variety of religious literature for popular education, but also a new type of religious institution called 'Satras' which became the most important agency for popular education in Assam. Thus we have three distinct types of educational system in Assam in middle ages, such as the Brahminical system, the Tai system and the Satra system; and this triple system together built up the massive super-structure of medieval education in Assam. Even after the great development of education in modern time by the British, we all would have to nourish our cultural and intellectual
life with waters from the fountain heads of medieval systems of education. This is evidenced by the strong under-current of the three systems found flowing throughout the length and breadth of Assam under glittering flow of western system of education that is in vogue in the present-day Assam.

The Ahoms had to impart education in political and administrative system in order to administer the vast territory. The Deodhais and Mohan-Bailungs were in charge of education. After a thorough training in the alphabets, the pupils were made to learn the Ahom dictionary; and when the mastery over words was obtained, manuscripts were given to the pupils to study and acquire knowledge. The study of Buranji was a must for the sons of the aristocratic families; and the aim of education in history was to arouse the feeling of patriotism and heroism in the youth. Gradually the Ahoms introduced education in Astrology, mathematics, scriptures etc. The Rajkumars especially were given special training in practical arts. Ahom kings and Queens patronised education and learning by giving land-grants to scholars, physicians, astrologers and other learned persons. In this respect sargadeo Rudra Singha takes the front rank. His sons carried on the tradition of their father and gave encouragement to art and literature.
Formal education in the ancient pattern was available in the Tolas maintained by Brahmin pundits. This was a continuation of the Brahminical system of education developed in the country as a whole and Gurukulasrama was the very basis of the system. The pupil pursued their studies in the house of the preceptors. The curriculum consisted of sruti, smriti, grammar and religious scriptures and literature. The study of astrology was highly valued in those days and the Tolas of Suryabiprasan astrologers imparted this type of education. The pundits earned high respect in the society for their scholarship; and the noble among them were favoured with royal patronage and some of them were invited by kings to initiate the study of sanskrit texts in the capital by opening Tolas.

Satras became the centres of education during the socio-religious and cultural renaissance of Assam under the patronage of the great saint Sankaradeva. One can call satras 'medieval pathsalas' as well. None could become the incharge of a satra unless he had obtained proficiency in texts and was endowed with considerable intelligence, knowledge and wisdom. The satra in-charge used to teach the...
children of the priests of the satras. The devotees in the neighbouring areas also began to send their children to the satra in-charges for study. The teacher first taught them alphabets. Then they were taught how to read manuscripts. Once they had earned proficiency in the art of reading, the next course would be to teach them to read also the texts in rhythmical tone. Finally lessons in music and song were also given. The Ahom kings realised the utility of the satras and extended help for their upkeep in a liberal measure.

The Ahom Age is memorable for the high degree of excellence it attained in the field of technical and professional education. In the field of vocational education, training was imparted through work experience. In those days great emphasis was also paid on science and veterinary science. Since time immemorial the Assamese youths have learnt the art of archery, swords and spears. Before running out for war, the practice was to stage mock-fights by dividing the army into two parts; special training was also given how to manufacture gun-power and guns. The skill of the blacksmith, potters, goldsmith, silversmith etc. was
hereditary. Moreover one person used together skill in handling weapons as well as in the art of agriculture and it was mainly because of the multi-dimensional skill of the Assamese soldiers that the victory of Assam in the battle of Saraighat was won.

In middle ages, there was also some progress in female education. We hear of some queens and princesses who were erudite and assisted the kings in administration of the country. Each Assamese woman received education in weaving as soon as the maidenhood dawned on her. Then the maidens first assisted their mothers and grand-mothers in the act of weaving and gradually under their expert knowledge and guidance used to pick up the art of weaving at later years. The knowledge of weaving was the brightest ornament that adorned the Assamese women in the middle ages. The tradition still continues unabated; and the transfer of skill from one generation to another is still continuing in the same informal way in each household as it was in the medieval Assam. It may however be noted that the Princesses Fuleswari, Sarbeswari and Ambika probably opened training centres to educate the maidens in the art of weaving.
The Ahom kings also took steps for expansion of education. Sargadeo Rudra Singha was especially active to make his subjects educated. He invited pundits from outside and sent children of the soil to Kashi (Banaras) and Navadwip to study classical texts and acquire proficiency in classical learning. Perhaps his greatest contribution was to set up tols at various places for expansion of education.

The physicians of the middle ages used to recruit apprentices and taught them with a great care, the art of making tablets and various kinds of medicines. The art of treatment was taught gradually under personal guidance.

All other professional arts received royal patronage according to the need of the royal families. The educational system in the middle ages in most part of the country was informal in character and in this limited formal system, the children of well-to-do families got the opportunity to become educated at the centres of learning like the tols and satras. Considering this it may be said that the formal education in literature, science, astronomy etc. were confined to the select few belonging to the affluent
section of the society, while peoples' education was mainly informal; and an individual used to pick up a trade either on hereditary basis or on becoming an apprentice in the family of experts.

In the middle ages the manuscripts played the most vital role in education; because of them education spread; and growth of a professional class of copyists resulted in unprecedented production of manuscripts in Sanskrit, Ahom and Assamese. Besides being the chief carrier of education of formal type, the manuscripts paved the way for vast expansion of informal education in Assam in middle ages. The medieval manuscripts have been discovered in many houses spread over the length and breadth of Assam which bears testimony to the fact that although system of education in Assam was of a feudal type, the common people had access to it at least in the informal way. This bespeaks of peoples' love of learning; and self-education accounts for a large number of Sanskrit-knowing persons in Assam in the middle ages, which accounts for multiplicity of manuscript copies in Sanskrit.
The most important aspect of the educational history of the medieval Assam is the growth and development of Assamese script, language and literature. It was during the middle ages that the word 'Asamiya' came to replace the otherwise known Kamrupi script and language. Before the advent of Srimanta Sankaradeva the translation in Assamese began; and his emergence brought about the renaissance in Assamese literature. It is he who has given a definite character to the Assamese language and made it a fit vehicle for expression of all shades of thought and feeling. But without the presence of Sankaradeva and his satras, the Assamese would not have become the medium for mass education in the middle ages. The vaisnavite movement initiated by him used the tongue of the masses in that commonly understood language to the people who were too glad to receive it in the heart of their hearts, because of the mass appeal that lay in the use of mother tongue. This initiated the new era of mass education in Assam, in the coming centuries, the satras were destined to play the vital role. This mass awakening of love of learning and education in the middle ages led to the growth and development of an educational system with mother tongue as medium of instruction, and before the British annexation, the people of Assam,
generally speaking, received education mostly in the vernacular, and in a limited measure in Sanskrit which was confined to a select few. With the coming of the British the neglect of mother tongue in the field of education continued till we attained Independence, after which we have been giving attention to make mother tongue not only the medium of instruction but also the official language; and all this is due to our legacy of the language and literature we inherited from the middle ages.