

Scientific outlook of Srimanta Sankaradeva**Dr. Dulumani Deka¹**¹ Associate Professor , Department Of Assamese Bhattadev University ,Bajali ,Pathsala**Introduction**

A scientific outlook is evidence- based, rational approach to understand the world in different domains; may it be social, natural, cultural or material world. It mostly prioritizes observation, logic and verification over superstition or assumption. The key characteristics of scientific outlook are

Empirical evidence: To rely on facts and observable data rather than traditional beliefs.

Rationality and logic: Uses of sound reasoning for analysis of achievements.

Critical thinking: Questioning assertions and requiring validation.

Values: Having politeness, independence, fearlessness and attractiveness.

Srimanta Sankaradeva was prominently a religious leader and social reformer. He was a versatile genius and sought for construction of a society of spiritual, moral, religious, cultural and literal upliftment. Though Sankaradeva was a legendary religio-cultural personality of mediaeval India, we have tremendous scope to extract scientific temperaments and outlooks in His holistic creativities. These may not be like that of modern scientific approach, but there are elements of scientific outlook in His speculations, learning, teachings and creations.

Historical Background: A leader may he be religious, social, political, cultural or literal should have proper knowledge of concurrent time and social behavior. Sankaradeva was born in Assam in 1449 AD. In that period of time people of Assam experienced religious turmoil, social degradation and cultural deviations and perversions. People used to practice to pagan and witcheries in the name of religion. Their religious beliefs and traditional cultures were controlled by groupself-styled leaders and priests. History says that they were overburdened by bestowment of strict priestly rituals and customs. Masses got rid of pure religious acceptance due to absence of right path of devotion. The pure, true, eternal 'SANATAN' tradition of Indian spiritual and cultural heritage was covered by Brahmanical external ritualistic displays. Sankaradeva started His institutional education at the age of twelve years at the 'TOLA' (residential self- mastered educational institution of ancient Assam).He completed His education in six years and studied all branches of available learning systems. After completion of education Sankaradeva was supposed to hold the position of dynastical headship (Title of Honored Siromani Bhuyan). But He willingly gave away it and continued His study at home to complement His learning going through other scriptures which might not be taught in the 'TOLA'. Sankaradeva then speculated deeply to find out a pure and valued stream of spiritual and cultural stream for holistic upheaval of the society unlike other co-pupils and previous ones whose education might have ended or converted to a livelihood. Here lies the seed of scientific spirit of Sankaradeva for making a reconstructed new society of pure humanity and refined religious practices. Sankaradeva had keen observation upon the social, cultural, traditional and religious practices and beliefs of the common people. With His incomparable intellectual capacity Sankaradeva framed a disciplined plan and started a systematic approach to attain the goal. This is a scientific vision of Sankaradeva.

2.00 Religious principles of Sankaradeva:**2.1 Monotheism:**

Monotheism is the essence of Indian Vedantic philosophy. The Upanisadas (the latest school of Vedas) are known as the Vedanta. Jawaharlal Nehru says ' The Upanisadas are instinct with a spirit of inquiry, of mental adventure; of a passion for finding out the truth about things. The search for this truth is, of course, not by the objective methods of modern science, yet there is an element of scientific method in the approach.'(1) The Upanisadas take hold the concept of BRAHMA, the omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, infinite body; the creator, observer and destroyer of the unlimited universes. The BRAHMA is NIRGUNA (devoid of all properties of matter) and 'NIRAKARA' (having no shape). Sankaradeva proposed worship of 'SAGUNA' (with attributes or having mundane qualities) and 'SAKARA' (corporeal) BRAHMA in the godhead personality of Sri Krishna, son of

Basudeva and Daiboki. He attributed godhead upon Sri Krishna on the basis of evidences explored in Gita and Bhagavatapurana. Both these scriptures are decisive speakers of monotheism. Sankaradeva was a strict proclaimer of monotheism. In Bhagavata purana He advised disciples not to worship gods and goddesses other than Krishna, not to enter in premises of those, not to take offerings meant for them and not to look at the idols of them. This motto reflects rational view of Sankaradeva and keeps His religious essence free from adulteration with priestly rituals.

Path of devotion:

The official name of sankaradeva is 'EKA SARANA HARI NAMA DHARMA'. This is a system of Bhakti. Sankaradeva denounced earthly offerings and sacrifices to god. It is pure heartfelt bhakti through which one can attain salvation. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said 'Dharma is neither doctrinal obedience, or ritualistic display. It is rather self sacrificing love and rhythmpptive might.' Sankaradeva's writings give us lesions of self sacrifice, love and devotion without expectation. The way of exhibition of bhakti is to listen and recite the various names and glories of Lord Krishna. Expectation in any kind is discouraged and round the clock Krishna consciousness is anticipated in logical inquiry for righteousness.

Annihilation of caste system:

Sankaradeva strictly discouraged caste distinctions in the society. He boldly said that every person in the society has same right for religious and social purposes and observations. In mediaeval India classism was a major social illness. In Assam also people from various castes and tribes were exploited by the feudal lords and priests in respect of economic and religious fields keeping them under pressure. Sankaradeva wrote in 'BHAGAVAT PURAN' that each and every individual irrespective of caste and tribe has the same right for any religious observances.

Krishna kirtanata mora maha lava ase I

Krshnara kirtane jati ajati nabase II (2)

He mentioned castes and tribes of Assam in couples of verses who were supposed to get salvation by taking company of KRISHNA BHAKTA and exercise of Bhakti.

3.00 Observation and experimentation:

Sankaradeva had all qualities to reconstruct a society submerged in superstitions and pagan. It was a great challenge for Him to exhibit His leadership capacity before the illiterate, innocent and god fearing people. So He thought for some innovative ideas for attraction of the masses and chose performing arts for easy understanding of His views and opinions by the common people. He performed 'GHINHA YATRA BHAONA' a form of art-music combo exhibition, as first function of propagation of Bhakti cult. Sankaradeva took the ideas from folk cultures of Assam and reshaped it as a dramatic performance. Sankaradeva performed 'CHINHA YATRA BHAONA' in 1468 AD at the age of 19 years. Dimbeswar Neog said 'The history of the Assamese drama is very long and old indeed older surly than the drama of any Indian modern language and older even than the regular English dramas atleast a centry. The first Assamese drama is certainly Chihna Jatra (literally a play with painted Scenes) and the first theatre is the performance of it in 1468 (3).' The qualitative important features of this performance are

Sankaradeva was the pioneer to perform open stage drama in the world. In this event He preceded Shakespeare by one century.

He was the first Indian to perform drama in regional language.

Planning and arrangements were done by Himself though a small group of followers was there supposed to support Him.

'CHIHNA YATRA' was a reconstructed and redesigned form of locally prevailed folk performing arts. Sankaradeva collected relevant elements from different folk arts and incorporated in 'CHINHA YATRA' with necessary modifications to make those fit for Bhakti culture.

People from different areas gathered for temporal recreation, but they unknowingly entered into a spiritual circle. For preparation of couples of large paintings huge amount of locally available raw items were necessary. These were probably collected with the help of experienced persons irrespective of castes and tribes. The same scenario may be worth mentioning for making the musical instruments and preparation of performing site. This is an example of community participation which was Sankaradeva's presumptive hidden anticipation for propagation of Bhakti cult.

People got social recognition while their handicraft items were promoted for a devine occasion.

Sankaradeva was identified as a versatile genius by the masses and accepted Him to be a future leader of social reformation.

Sankaradeva showed examples of scientific and rational work culture and proved Himself to be an optimistic social leader. He came forward to construct a dam in the river TEMBUWANI near BARDOWA village. People accepted Sankaradeva as a divine incarnation and probably requested Him to arrange some rituals for satisfaction of god for alleviation of their sorrows. This might be the general anticipation of common people of that age. Sankaradeva threw away such superstitious thinking and took leadership to construct a dam. Even today also some religious institutions/organizations/individuals are seen to arrange rituals for prevention of flood, erosion, natural calamities etc. Sankaradeva outdated these practices five hundred years back in a society accustomed in superstitions, witchcrafts and external exhibition of religious occasions. Sankaradeva also took initiatives for digging a big pond for provision of safe drinking water by the people of Bardowa.

Purification of cultures and traditions:

People in the middle age period used to practice blind beliefs and unscientific traditional customs and rituals in the name of religious cultivation. Sankaradeva discouraged all these practices. He taught people what to follow for attainment of pure religiosity. Sankaradeva nullified priestly ritualistic displays, rather emphasized on the doctrine of self- realization and self- sacrificing love.

4.1 Field Study:

Sankaradeva went for pilgrimage twice in His life time. He left abode for the first pilgrimage at the age of 32 years and roamed all most all parts of India. The main objective of His travelling was to have a comparative field study of the concurrent Vaishnavie movement propagated by simultaneous saints in various parts of India. He also got a well acquaintance with the classical music system of India which was supposed to be quite anticipatory for Sankaradeva in adoption of Bhakti Culture in North-East India.

4.2 Ecosystem awareness:

Sankaradeva was a naturalist. He had vivid observation over nature. He urged for conservation of nature and taught people love nature. Narrations of natural beauty of rainy and autumn seasons depict His deep intimacy with nature. In the chapter 'HARAMOHAN' of 'KIRTAN GHOSHA' He has mentioned almost forty species of locally available floras. Sankaradeva taught people to realize same soul in all creatures. He boldly prohibited sacrificial offering of birds and animals before deities. He advised disciples to take care of all creatures and thus worked for preservation of ecosystem.

4.3 Health consciousness:

Sankaradeva educated people to take vegetable diet. He discouraged His disciples to kill birds and animals for eating purposes as those are also minute parts of Absolute Soul and have the right to live in this charming world. Sankaradeva had good knowledge about food stuffs and food value of vegetables. Modern medical education says that a pure vegetarian person may suffer from deficiency of protein and vit-B12. Sankaradeva advised people to take more pulses and grains which are rich in protein. He began a system of offering fruits and grains in religious occasions so that people can complement nutritional deficiencies. Milk is good source of vit-B12 and ripe fruits are rich in anti-oxidants. Sankaradeva taught importance of physical health and meditation. In present time YOGA has been recognized as an important practice for physical and mental health. The devotional practice of NAMA-PRASANGA, DRAMA and DANCES introduced by Sankaradeva are scientifically validated means of physical exercise and mental peace.

4.4 Financial motivation:

Sankaradeva house holder. He told people to be engaged in livelihood rather than passing time in religious occasions. According to Him it is better to be in Krishna consciousness in lieu of external observation of religion. He emphasized on offering agriculture products in devotional functions.

4.5 Astronomical knowledge:

Sankaradeva's works included astronomical studies such as solar system, planetary movements etc. in 'ANADIPATAN' He elaborated about time, space, matter, objects and details of origin of the universe. Though this is not like that of modern astronomical exploration it weighs some amount of scientific outlook in His observations.

5 .Conclusion:

Sankaradeva was chiefly a religious saint. He worked for holistic upheaval of the society. His cognitive capacity, work culture and leadership capacity proved Himself to be an incomparable great personality of Assam. The scientific outlook of Sankaradeva was not about laboratories or equations, but about intellectual honesty, systematic work culture and practical utility. He endeavored to build a sustainable, disciplined and well cultured society based on logic, empathy and the pursuit of peace, love and truth..

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