KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OF
SRIMANTA SANKARDEVA AND HIS RESEARCH METHODS

Abstract: Vaisnav Saint of Assam Sri Manta Sankardeva (1449-1569) was not only the spiritual leader of Medieval Assam but also a Research Scholar. He searched knowledge by following methodologies like literature search, observation, experimental method, analytical method etc. He applied his research findings in his creative works of literature, culture and social reform with spiritual as well as scientific attitude which is the back bone of today’s modern Assamese society. The ‘Satra’ and ‘Namghar’ established by Sri Manta Sarkardeva are not only religious institution but also the institution of knowledge Management. The libraries of Satra institutions still reflect the quality knowledge management system of Srimanta Sankardeva.

THE MAIN POINTS

- Srimanta Sankardeva was also a research scholar and knowledge manager.
- He organized a knowledge management system which includes production, collection, Dissemination and preservation of knowledge.
- He followed the research methods like literature search, experimental method, observation method, survey method, case study method etc.
- He had clear objectives of his research with great social relevance.
- He engineered his research findings in creative activities and social reform.
- Srimanta Sankardeva’s knowledge management system is still relevant in modern society.
1. **Introduction**: 

“There is no other sacred than knowledge……. Everything starts from knowledge and everything ends in knowledge.” (‘Bhagawat Gita’). Knowledge is regarded as sacred by the Indian Society and Searching knowledge is regarded as most noble work. ‘Simple living and high thinking’ – was the ideal attitude of knowledge activist of ancient time. The knowledge society highly honours the knowledge workers. Sri Manta Sarkardeva was a knowledge activist, who started academic life under the guidance of great scholar Mahendra Kandali at Bardoa Sanskrit ‘Tol’. (Resident School). Mahendra Kandali discovered the supernatural talent of Sri Manta Sankardeva in very beginning. The title ‘Deva’ (Deity) was conferred to Sankardeva by Mahendra Kandali. Teacher Mahendra Kandali was astonished at the creativity as well as depth of knowledge of this young child, when child Sankardeva composed a poem without knowing the composite scripts according to Sanskrit alphabet. Kandali recognized him as deity and it is said that he took ‘Sarana’ (became disciple) to Srimanta Sankardeva. When a ‘Guru’ (Teacher) becomes a disciple of his own student what it reflects! What could be the depth of knowledge of such a student!

2. **Research and knowledge management system of Sankardeva**:

In the subject of library and information science knowledge management system is chapterised as production, collection, dissemination and use of knowledge. Knowledge is reposed in the form of books or any such reading material and collected and preserved in the libraries or archives. Knowledge is disseminated to the user through the process of teaching, performing arts, delivering reading writing materials etc. The knowledge users may be of different strata, occupation, age of the society. Mahapurush Sankardeva searched for such methods which could be the ways to reach knowledge for every individual of a society from scholar to a general cultivator. Before the age of Srimanta Sankardeva knowledge searching activities were confined only among the priest and Royal communities. But Sankardeva opened up the process of earning and searching knowledge for all. He established ‘Namghar’s and ‘Satra’s which become the centers of spirituality as well as art-culture-literature and education of the public. Sankardeva managed knowledge for all the people from
these institutions. Namghar and Satra were the production. Collection, dissemination centre of knowledge for all the people.

2.1 Knowledge production of Srimanta Sankardeva: Srimanta Sankardeva produced knowledge by research activity and creative activities. He did research by following the methods like literature search, analytical method, observation method, experimental method, survey method, and also the case study method.

2.1.1 Literature search method: Sankardeva searched all the vedic literature in Sanskrit language of that time. He searched four ‘Veda’, eighteen ‘Purana’ and fourteen different ‘Sastra’ (Book) of different subjects like Grammar etc. He had a big peer group from where he collected the contemporary literature of that time. Worth mentioning is Jagadish Misra, a Sanskrit scholar from Srikshetra (Puri, Orissa) came to provide him ‘Bhagawata Sastra’ when he was at Baroda (Nagaon, Assam). He also searched the vernacular language and literature. He read all the writings of the scholar like Madhava Kandali which were highly influential literature of that time. By searching these literature he achieved knowledge of philosophy, language, poetry as well as the society based on which he hypothesized his ideas. The out-comes of literature search were nothing but the creative literatures like ‘Dashama’, ‘Kirtana’, ‘Uttarakanda Ramayana’, ‘Bhakti Pradip’, ‘Bhakti Ratnakar’, ‘Nimi Nama Sidha Sambad’, ‘Hari Chandra Upakhyan’, ‘Rukmini Haran’, and so on. The philosophy of ‘Vaishnavism’ and ‘Bhakti’, (Total surrender in front of God) also developed by him by the searching these literature. He searched both Sanskrit and Vernacular languages of that time from where he achieved poetic quality of his language. He produced different ‘Bhakti’ literature based on the findings of the research by such literature searching method. He searched the Sanskrit literature, anaylised and converted to Assamese language by his own style of writing which were understandable to all the classes of people.

2.1.2. Observation Method: Srimanta Sankardeva said that there is no worth of visiting Tirtha (Holy places) in Kaliyuga. Then why he traveled twice on foot, for long twelve years to see the ‘Tirtha’s like chathura, Brindavan, Puri-Jogannath etc! actually he did not travelled these Temple for ‘Mukti’ or ‘Punya’ (virtue) but to achieve knowledge. This was nothing but the observation method of research. Srimanta Sankardeva set out on pilgrimage for first time in 1483 and returned in
1495. According to Hem Barua – ‘The post pilgrimage stage in his life is a period of
great magic and creative fulfillment.’ He undertook another pilgrimage in 1552.
Naturally he observed various societies, places to research their culture, literature,
philosophy etc. and earned necessary skills to create the arts like ‘Bargeet’,
‘Bhaona’, ‘Nritya’ etc. He also created the Musical instruments, choreographs and
costumes based on the research findings of dances and musics of different temples
in India of that time. He wrote the first ‘Bargeet’ (great holy songs) ‘Mana Meri Ram
Charanahi Lagu’ at the ‘Badarikasram’, the temple of lower Himalayan Region. By
searching the cultural activities of different places of Northern India, he achieved the
foundation of his creative or performing arts. He observed the paintings and
sculptures of different famous Temples of the then India and got the ideas to paint
like ‘Brindawani Vastra’ which was presented to king Nara Narayan. The sculptures
of Satra and Namghars are also on the basis of the findings of observation method
of his research. Establishment of ‘Namghar’ and ‘Satra’ are also the output of his
observation method of research.

2.1.3. Experimental Method: Sankardeva did some experiments also. Actually a
scientist or scholar does experiment to clear his doubts and to make his findings
acceptable for society. Sankardeva experimentally played ‘Chihnojatra’, at Bardoa
after returning from his first time visit of North Indian temples. The experiment was
very much successful. The supernatural talent of Srimanta Sankardeva was
established by this play and the intellectual society of than Bardoa bestowed upon
him the responsibility of propagating vaisnavism. He also experimented the idea of
social equality by the instances like ‘Sati-Sadhini’. Sadhini was a fisher women, but
she had the qualities to lead the people to work for building a dam over a river. He
establishment his socialistic views by these experiments.

Use of ‘Brajawali’ language in his writings was another experiment of Srimanta
Sankardeva. It was really wonderful that he not only created literature, art and music,
but also created a language. This experiment was also successful because it was
easily understandable to all the people of North-East and North India and because
no scholar denied this language. ‘Brajawali’ language is unique contribution of
Srimanta Sankardeva and it is nothing but an outcome of experimental method of
research.
2.1.4. **Survey Method**: Srimanta Sankardeva applied survey method of research to achieve knowledge about social needs. To organise the society he required knowledge of organizational structure of a society and needs of the individuals. For this purpose he used interview method. He surveyed the society non-formally by using interview method. He talked to all people of different strata of the society from king, scholar to general people. He found out extraordinary talents from general people by using the survey method and the responsibilities of arts, music, literature, social works etc. were bestowed on them according to their qualities and talents. He created the titles like ‘Gayan’ (Singer) ‘Bayan’ (Musician), ‘Sutradhar’ (Director), ‘Pathak’ (Reader), ‘Hatimota’ (Public relation Officer), ‘Gandhia’ (Librarian), ‘Dhanbharali’ (Treasurer), ‘Adhikari’ (Proprietoer), ‘Medhi’ (Manager), ‘Oza’ (Instructor, Teacher), ‘Kakati’ (Paper producer), ‘Lekharu’ (Copy writer) etc. These professionals served the society according to their talents. Srimanta Sankardeva also surveyed the places to establish Satras according to the productivity. He established ‘Satra’ institutions, where agricultural production was rich. He also surveyed the areas from the point condition of society, communication and lifestyle of the people. In ‘Satra’, there were four ‘Hate’ surrounding the four directions. These ‘Chari Hate’ were to secure the satra institutions – ‘Chari Phale Chareo Hati, Maha Bhaktagana’.

For communication, he searched the places, where river roads were available. He always tried to serve and teach the down-trodden people and so he researched for the villages of the oppressed group of people- to get such societies he used survey method of research.

2.1.5. **Case Study Method**: Srimanta Sankardeva’s research methods also includes the case study method. For instance, during his visit-India on foot. The stayed for long six months at Puri of Orissa. According to philosophy of Srimanta Sankardeva worshiping idol is prohibited. But in Puri temple people worship idol. Than why he was so interested to Puri? It was because, although there was the tradition of idol worshiping in Puri temple, the society of Puri was based on the philosophy of communism. The society of Puri was not divided according to the communities or upper-lower classes. All the devotes had ‘Prasad’ or food in the same floor. Even there was the tradition of taking food from the same plate ignoring caste or communities. This social system of Puri Temple impressed him and he studied the
society with utmost involvement. He studied Puri-society thoroughly and the findings were implemented in his organizing activities.

2.2. Objectives and social relevance of Srimanta Sankardeva’s research: Every research scholar has objectives and his researches also must have social relevance. Srimanta Sankardeva also had the objectives as a scholar. His main objective was to reform the society from ignorance, violence, oppression, exploitation and vandalism in the name of spiritualism. His another objective was to propagate vaisnavism and humanism following democratic philosophy. The society of that time was led by the violent administrators, the people were exploited in the name of religion. They were misled by some of the opportunistic people. They were not allowed to search knowledge, even they were forbidden to touch the books. Sankardeva’s research was thus relevant from the point of reform and uplift the society. According to Suniti Kr. Chattarji – “...He was the greatest builder of Assam by bringing in a purer spiritual life and although circumstances prevented his influence from being spread into other parts of India as a religious leader he is unquestionably one of the greatest India has produced and he deserved to the mentioned with Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya Basavappa, Ramananda, Kabir, Chaitanya, Mirabai, Guru Nanak & Tulsi Das”.

2.3. Hypotheses of Srimanta Sankardeva: Hypotheses is an important part of research. Srimanta Sankardeva’s hypotheses were – God is one, he is omnipotent, all the people are same so there is nothing of upper or lower class in the society, all the creatures are the part of God, we should worship every creature as the part of God, Humanity is above all, we should surrender in front of God, ‘Naam’, means uttering Gods’ name is only way to God who can give us freedom from all the sorrows; non-violence is the only way of peace; literature, culture, arts etc- are the ways to worship God and enjoying happiness in this materialistic world and above all we should perform our duties without expecting results, but taking as the responsibilities.

Sankardeva thesised his hypotheses in his writings, arts, cultures and real social life which is the backbone of Assamese society now. He is recognised as the ‘father of Assamese nation’, because of his contribution to the language, culture, literature, sociology, environment, nature or science which created the foundation of Assamese
nation and all his contributions were on one basis of the findings of his research activities. His research activities were not institutional or formal. But, the way he followed to un-earth knowledge was the research following the above mentioned methods.

3. Knowledge collection system of Srimanta Sankardeva: Srimanta Sankardeva collected the books of Sanchipat in the libraries of the Satra’s and preserved by following scientific procedure. He made the copies of different books of Sanchipat and Tulapat by the professional copy writers who were known as ‘Lekharu’. Lekharu were the experts in hand-writing. On the other hand, the ‘Kakati’ were the paper produces. Kakati prepared the handmade papers and Lekharu copied different kinds of books. Some of the books were illustrated colourfully. Thus the libraries of ‘Satra’ institutions were big treasures of books of Sanchipat and Tulapat. The libraries of the Satra were the collecting and preserving centers of the books. Libraries of that time were also the centre of book production because multiple copies of the origin book were made by the hands of experts. Thus libraries of Srimanta Sankardeva’s Satra were the treasury of handmade books of that time and a good number of people were involved in his knowledge collection and reproduction process.

4. Knowledge dissemination system of Srimanta Sankardeva: Satra and the Namghars were the main centres of knowledge dissemination in the knowledge management system of Srimanta Sankardeva. The devotees, disciples, social leaders, artists even the politicians also visited these Satras and Namghars and they were served knowledge by the ‘Pathak’ (Reader), ‘Namgharia’ (Head of the Namghar) or ‘Satradhikara’ (Head of the Satra) or any reknowned knowledge-personal. The readers were provided books from the libraries. For the people who did not know how to read and write were given knowledge in the ‘Puthi-Patha’ (Book reading) and ‘Naam Kirtana’. Pathak analysed the knowledge of the sacred book like Bhagawata, Mahabharata, Ramayana etc. in the Naamghar. The ‘Pathak’s were the qualified persons who read the holy books with lucid tune and analysed the stories and philosophies of the ‘Sastra’s (books) attractiv ely for the listeners. These processes of knowledge dissemination system are still followed by the Satra and Namghars. Hundreds of listeners use to go to the Naamghar and Satra everyday to enjoy such ‘Path’ (Reading) and ‘Naam Kirtan’ in the hundreds of Naamghars of different parts of Assam. Some of the Satra’s like Barpeta, Auniati, Kamabari,
Madhupur, Bordoa etc. still preserving Sanchipat books in their libraries to disseminate knowledge.

6. **Users of the knowledge management system of Srimanta Sankardeva**: The whole vaishnav society of Ahom kingdom, Kamrupa and Behar (Coch Bihar) was the user of knowledge system of Srimanta Sankardeva. Apart from vaisnava devotees, the scholars and the members of Royal families also used knowledge from the Satra and Naamghar. Srimanta Sankardeva tried to educate the user with the help of performing arts and culture. ‘Bargeet’, ‘Naam Prasanga’, ‘Bhaona’, ‘Satria Nritya’, ‘Chitra’, ‘Bhaskarjya’, etc. were the tool to educate the users. These are also the instruments of mass-communication of his knowledge management system. Worth mentioning is that the user communities of Srimanta Sankardeva’s knowledge management system is still continuing after long five hundred years. The Bargeet, Bhoana, Naam-Prasanga are still popular not only among the rural masses but also among the intellectual classes. The western storms failed to uproot the knowledge system of Srimanta Sankardeva which is really a matter of hope for sustaining the high culture of Assamese nation.

6. **Conclusion**:

The teachings of Srimanta Sankardeva is becoming more relevant day by day. His democratic attitude, non-violent philosophy, humanity and wonderful creative literature, art and culture has enriched the knowledge system of present period also. Srimanta Sankardeva was not a professional researcher or teacher. But he sacrificed his life in to-to for searching knowledge and teaching people. Ultimately he was a great research scholar. The purity and sacredness of his knowledge and his high ambition to uplift the society by using quality knowledge not only enriched the society spiritually, but also developed culturally and socio-economically. His economic contribution may not be recognized by some of the scholars, but management of huge land and property of Satra and Naamghars reflects- that economic management was also a part of his knowledge management system.
References:


4. Seminar paper, “Knowledge Management of Sankardeva”, Osmania University, December, 2010 By Dr. H.C. Das.


