

## PRACTICE OF SANKARI CULTURE: A STUDY IN TEA GARDEN COMMUNITY IN ASSAM

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### ABSTRACT

Sankari culture means the cultural contribution of Sankaradeva which is considered as the greatest contribution of him for Assamese society. The unique form of drama tradition which is called Bhawna, Sankari dance form, Borgeet new musical form, new social institution Namghar, Sattra and a well knit uniform society, all are considered as Sankari Culture. The tea garden community in Assam is also an important tribal community of Assam. The indigenous Assamese peoples come from other states to Assam, like Bengal, Odisha, south India for the purpose of doing labour in the tea gardens. They are settling for many years, so, how these peoples become a part of Assamese Society through the process of assimilation by adopting Sankari culture, this is the important aspect of this study. Practice of Sankari Culture influence on socio economic life of tea garden community in Assam.

**Keywords:** Sankari Culture, Tea Garden Community.

### INTRODUCTION

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sanaradeva, the God incarnate, is our Guru. Srimanta Sankaradeva is a great saint of Assam and the advent of Srimanta Sankaradeva in saka A.D. 1449 is regarded as the most significant event in the socio-religious and cultural history of Assam. He is the pioneer of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam and was not only propagator of a new faith but also the great socio-religious reformer and a man of art and culture and contributed huge contributions to the socio-religious and the cultural life of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Assam.

Srimanta Sankaradeva contributed rich cultural heritage for Assamese society and his cultural contribution is known as Sankari Culture which has unique form and characteristics.

Assam is a state in northeastern India known for its wildlife, archaeological sites and tea plantation. Assam occupies 78,438 sq. km. land. Assam is known for Assam tea and the Assam economy is more or less depends on tea industry. Tea tribe of Assam is estimated 5.5-6.0 million

population which is 20% of Assam's total population. The tea tribe peoples are one important indigenous community of Assam, comes from different parts of the country, like Odissa, Bengal in different periods of time. The regions with significant tea population is Cachar, Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Sonitpur, Nagaon, North Lakhmpur, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivsagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia district and all most all the districts of Assam. They are one of the most backward and exploited community in Assam due to decades of continuous exploitation by tea garden managements and neglects in part of government. Though newer generation are comparatively educated and now have intellectuals and professional in various fields but their percentage is low in comparison to the size of community. Practice of Sankari Culture in tea garden areas change the life style of garden areas peoples. 'Culture, no doubt, is the manifestation of the collective and creative efforts and intelligence of any distinct group of people. Yet the contribution it receives from time to time from outstanding genius and great national figures add new vitality and dimension to the cultural life of any community. Assam was fortunate to have such a giant figure in Sankaradeva to bring about unprecedented upsurge in cultural and social life. The great architect of Assamese socio cultural renaissance, Sri Sankaradeva set in motion a new process of consolidation and expansions of Assamese Culture embracing within its fold the distinctness and contradiction of diverse section of people inhabiting Assam at that time.' Sankari Culture include new form of art and literature, new form of social institution viz. Namghar and Satras, new form of well knit society, new form of music, dance and drama tradition, new form of faith which is surrounded by unity, brotherhood, which challenged against untouchability, casteism etc.

Practice of Sankari Culture among tea garden community of Assam is very significant. The tea garden community is considered as backward community but after spreading and popularity of Sankari institution (Sattra, Sankar Sangha), in tea garden areas, tea tribe also influenced by Sankari Culture and becomes various changes in their social life. Sankari institutions involved in the propagation of Sankari culture among the tea tribe in Assam in general and in the Jorhat and Golaghat districts in particular.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To investigate the role of Sankari Institution (Sattra/Srimanta Sankaradeva Sangha etc.) involved in the propagation of Sankari Culture among the Tea Tribes in Assam in general in the Jorhat and Golaghat districts in particular.
2. To compare the social customs ,rituals etc. among the Tea Tribes before and after adoption of Sankari Culture ,
3. To investigate the changes in educational levels, economic condition, social life in the Tea garden community as a result of practising Sankari Culture .

4. Comparison between Sankari and nonsankari group of people on the basis of their Education, Economy and Social Condition:

**Significance of the study:**

Srimanta Sankaradeva the father of Assamese Nation was an extra ordinary personality who have ,influence in all the areas of Assamese Society .He was the great vaisnavite saint of all the time ,is the glory of Assam. The culture, literature as well as the religious scenario of the entire northeast become enlighten with his glorious golden touch. Sankaradeva was a person who created a new era in Assamese society. According to him, all are equal in front of God, there is nodiscremination in the name caste, tribe etc. Through Eka-Sarana-Hari-Nam dharma ,he contributed the social recognition of man irrespective of caste, creed, status. Sankaradeva's teachings is that he advocated the moral qualities, such as truthfulness, kindness, hospitality, purity of heart, temperance, non-violence etc. Sankari culture united people and bonding by a common bond of unity. For spreading new vaishnava faith, Sankaradeva established Sattras and Namghar, where people get together and practiced his contribution like kirtan, drama, song etc. Present days Sankari Culture is gradually become popular among the tea tribe people of Assam after established Satra and Namghar in tea garden areas and also creating primary committees of Sankar Sangha. They are willing to take this new faith and it considered as the important element for social change.

This study is significant because it will focus how practise Sankari culture change the social life of tea tribe peoples, how Sankaradeva's teachings changed the custom, tradition and characteristics of one important community of Assam. This study will also reflect the role of Sankari institution for spreading Sankari Culture among tea tribe of Assam in a positive direction. After adopting Sankari Culture there are various changes occurred in the socio-economic and educational status of the tea garden people. By united all, Sankaradeva established the idea of ethnic integration and become a great figure of Assam and established a new Assamese society, this is very important and it will reflect in this study.

**METHODOLOGY**

This paper is based on primary data. The essentials datas are collected from 140 respondents (Sankari culture practised 80, others 60) of tea garden community. The area of study is Sangsuwa and Socklating tea estate of Jorhat district of Assam. Respondents are selected by using sampling method. Sankari culture practised respondents selected by using sampling method from primary sakhas of pachim jorhat anchalik sakha of Srimanta Sankaradeva Sangha under Jorhat zila sakha. The name of primary sakhas:

Under Socklating tea estate

1. Sankar madhav
2. Rampur
3. Bishnupur
4. Krishnapur
5. Narayanpur

Sangsuwa:

1. 285 no Arunudoi
2. Prahladjyoti
3. Sridam

To collect primary data ,interview schedule and observation is used as technique of data collection .

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Sankari Culture means the cultural contributions of Sankaradeva which is considered as the greatest contribution of him for Assamese society. The unique form of drama tradition which is called Ankia Nat, Sankari dance form, new social institution Namghar, Sattra and a well knit uniform society, all are considered as Sankari Culture. The tribal cultures of North East India enriched the Sankari Culture. The contribution of the tribes of Assam is undisputed in case of Sankari dance too. The tribal ingredient in Bargeet, yet another important resource of Sankari culture and he was the first playwright in all modern India languages used tribal ingredients in his Ankia plays too. All the tribes in this region accepted the Sankari culture as their own, since this culture incorporated cultural ingredients from all the tribes. The Sankari culture thus became the first ever common culture in Assam.

Assam is the land where people belonging to various tribes, castes, sub-castes are living for ages. There are different tribes in the plains as well as in the hills areas. Srimanta Sankaradeva tried to unite all the peoples by a common bond in society. This is the important aspect of Sankaradeva's ideal. The tea garden tribes in Assam also an important tribal community of Assam. The tea garden workers of Assam are the conglomeration of descendants of both tribal and backward caste Hindus who were brought by the British colonial planters as indentured labourers from different parts. They immigrated into Assam in several phases from mid nineteenth century to mid twentieth century from the tribal heart land of central eastern India. Tea tribe is considered as educationally backward community. Regarding schooling in tea gardens areas a report was published by a European DPI in 1917-18 that as many as 2 lakhs children of school going age were there lie in the tea gardens of Assam but not even 2% were turned into primary education. During the period of 1946-50, there were only four college students from tea gardens. The tea

planters never encouraged education to garden labourers as it would prevent them from physical labour or may protest against exploitation. Even after Independence ,the amount spend for tea garden education in the first five-year plan was just 0.26 million [2.6 lakhs], i.e. not even ten paisa per tea garden labourer. In tea gardens ,three languages were primarily spoken by the labours.viz.Santhali, Kurukh, Mundari. They practices three popular religion of India, there are Hinduism, Christianity and Sarnaism. They celebrate many festivals during different seasons. Major festivals celebrated by the community are Durga Puja, Diwali, Tusu Puja, Holi, Karam Puja, Sohrai and Christmas. Music is an important component of the community. Through the folk music and dance, they try to convey their perspective on social issues and define their daily life styles and their history. 'Jhumur dance' is a famous folk dance of tea tribe people.

**General informations on respondents:****1. Age wise distribution:**

Below 50	91
Above 50	49

**2. Sex wise distribution:**

Male	82
Female	58

**3. Educational qualification:**

Literate	102
Illiterate	38

**4. Religion:**

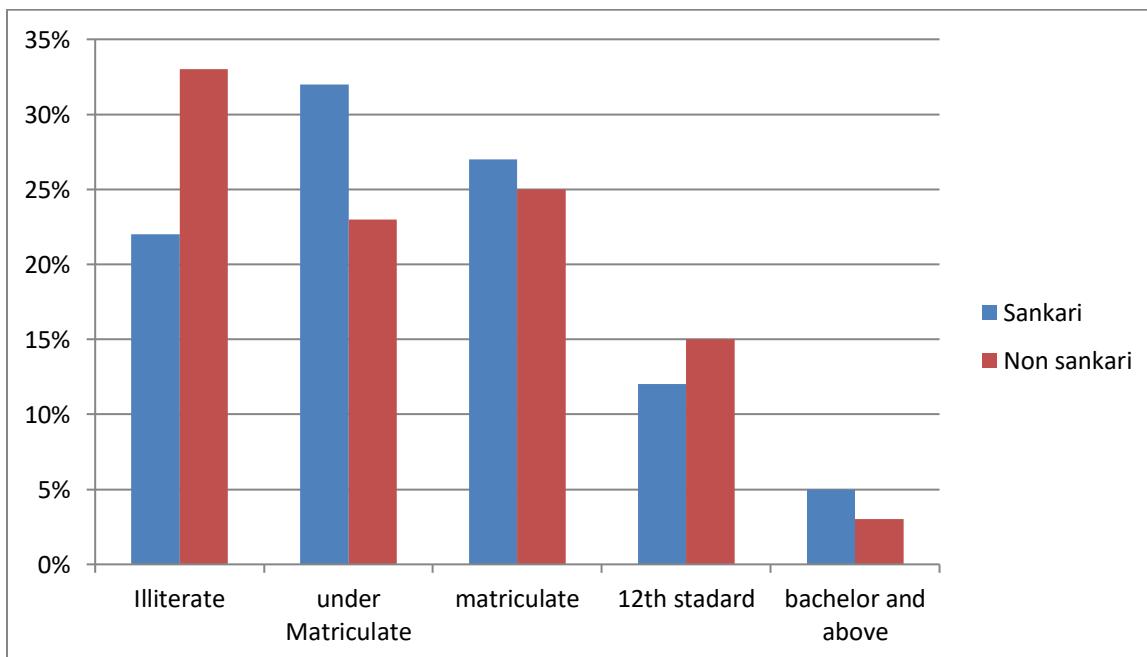
Hindu	136
Muslim	4

After collected data from the respondents, there are various differences seen among Sankari culture practised and other tea tribe people in terms of their social condition, education, economy, life style and habits etc.

Comparison between Sankari and nonsankari group of people on the basis of their Education, Economy and Social Condition

**Education wise distribution of Sankari and Non Sankari Respondent:**

Education	Sankari Respondent	Non Sankari Respondent	Total
Illiterate	18 (22%)	20(33%)	38
Under Matriculate	26(32%)	14(23%)	40
Matriculate	22(27%)	15(25%)	37
12 <sup>th</sup> Standard	10(12%)	9(15%)	19
Bachelor and above	4(5%)	2 (3%)	6



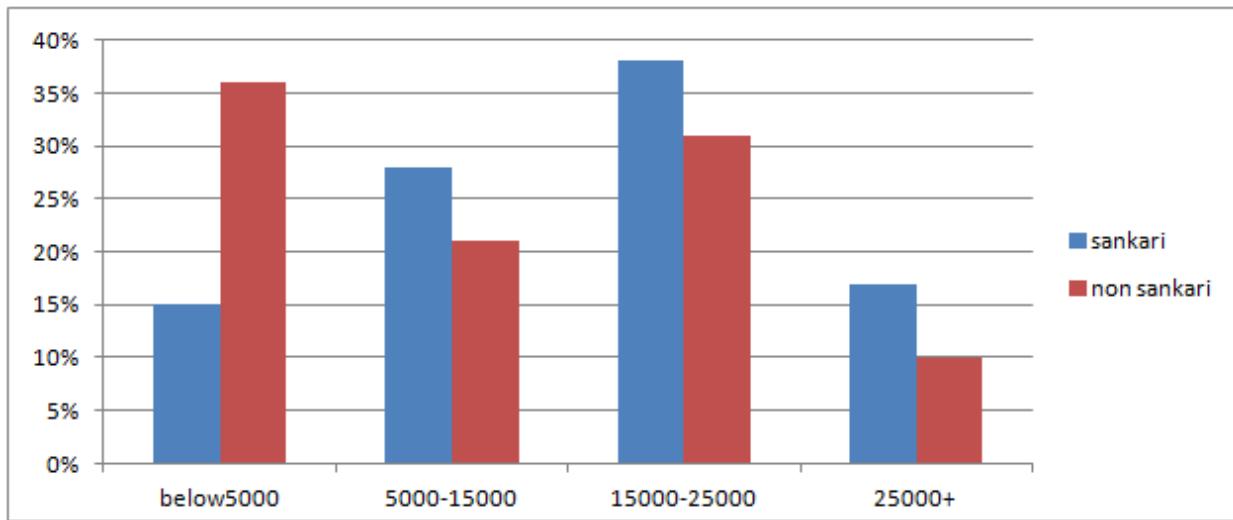
**Findings:**

The propagation of sankari culture by sankari institution increased the rate of social and formal education by organizing educational awareness meeting and discussion and though the contribution of Sankardeva, like. religious books, paintings, one act plays etc.

By reducing the rate of alcoholism, socialized people and brought educational awareness .

**Economic Status:**

	Sankari	Non Sankari
Below 5000	12(15%)	22(36%)
5000-15000	23(28%)	13(21%)
15000-25000	31(38%)	19(31%)
More than 25000	14(17%)	6(10%)
Total	80	60

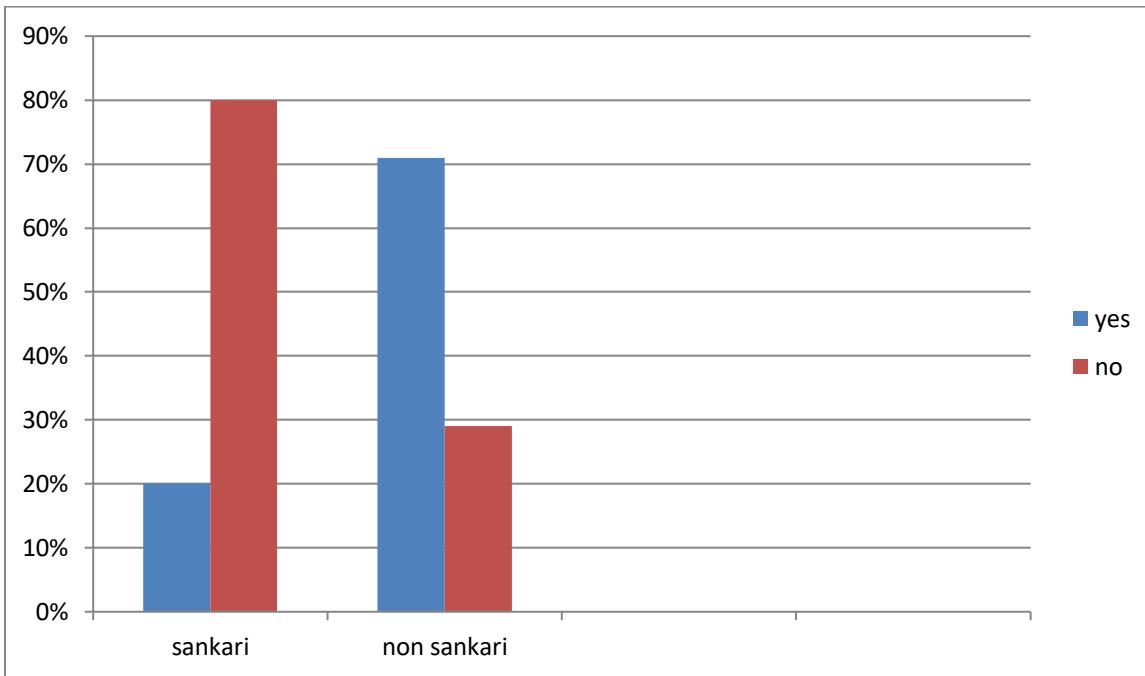
**Findings:**

In case of economic status, Sankari Culture adopted people have a better economic condition than the others. Because Sankari Culture adopted people spent less money for religious necessity .But Non Sankari people spent more money for religious ceremony and celebrated various occasions like karam puja, durga puja etc.

Rate of alcoholism among sankari culture adopted people is less than the other tea tribe people. Educational awareness among sankari culture adopted people helps to bought economic stability among them then the other tea tribe people.

**Practice of Alcoholism:**

	yes	No
Sankari	6(20%)	64(80%)
Non Sankari	43(71%)	17(29%)

**Findings:**

The propagation of Sankari Culture in tea tribe areas helps to reduce the rate of alcoholism. Because the society of Sankari Culture adopted people is fully based on some rules, regulation and discipline. The main role for propagation of Sankari Culture played by Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha in tea garden areas. Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha have their own constitution and according to them practiced of alcoholism is restricted and if some songi doing this habit then he/she should be prohibited by their prathamik sakha. As a result of this kind of compulsion reduce alcoholism among Sankari Culture adopted people.

Spread of social and formal educational awareness by Sankari institution among Sankari Culture adopted people reduce alcoholism.

## **CONCLUSION**

Practice of Sankari Culture among tea garden community in Assam is very significant. Sankari culture change the social life of tea tribe peoples, how Sankaradeva's teachings changed the custom, tradition and characteristics of one important community of Assam. The above study reflected the role of Sankari institution for spreading Sankari Culture among tea tribe of Assam in a positive direction. After adopting Sankari Culture there are various changes occurred in the socio-economic and educational status of the tea garden community.

### **Different snapshots of data collection and field study in Socklating, Sangsuwa Tea Estate:**



House Type:



### **Religious Awareness of Sankai Culture practised people:**

Namghar at Socklating T.E:



Namghar at Sangsuwa T.E:





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