

A Study On Influence Of Srimanta Sankardeva in the Literary And Cultural Compositions Of Jyotiprasad Agarwala

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Abstract:

After the demise of Srimanta Sankardeva (also known as Mahapurush Sankardeva and Guru), his literary works, philosophical ideas, and intellectual discussions were predominantly confined to Satras, Namghar (prayer halls), and his followers for over four centuries. His endeavors, confined inside the realm of religion, commenced at the onset of the 20th century, and were intertwined with the principles of Bhakti and Sankardeva's extensive literary contributions, cultural proficiency, and proposed strategies, which were made available for discussion. On the other hand, Rupkonwar Jyotiprasad Agarwala was one of the pioneers of modern Assamese literature. He was a poet, playwright, lyricist, drummer, dancer, and the first Assamese film director. His compositions were unique in the history of modern Assamese literature. His compositions have been widely discussed and decisive in scientific terms and subsequent literature. In this research paper attempt to highlight the Sankari ideal aspects of literary activities in Agarwala's Compositions.

Keywords: Society, Assamese Society, Literature, literary and cultural

Introduction:

The emergence of Srimanta Sankardeva in the religious, societal, fine arts, and literary realms during the Middle Ages of Assam was a remarkable occurrence that had significant implications for Assam's religious history, socio-cultural structure, and linguistic and literary landscape.

According to Kalaguru Bishnuprasad, Srimanta Sankardeva can be seen as one of the exemplary figures symbolizing Culture alongside another individual among the numerous notable individuals who have graced this earth. One of the individuals is Lord Krishna, while the other one hails from Assam and is known as Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva. In the 20th century, Jyotiprasad Agarwala made a significant contribution to Assamese society, which is noteworthy. Jyotiprasad Agarwala was a multifaceted individual who excelled in various artistic domains, including laureate, songwriter, singer, actor, composer, film producer, worshipper of beauty, poet, director, and a person driven by patriotic sentiments. He has significantly contributed to various aspects of Assamese Culture, including songs, musical instruments, societal norms, traditional attire, and cultural rites, hence pivotal in creating and developing a new cultural landscape. Jyotiprasad Agarwala may be characterized as an individual who exhibited remarkable progressiveness during his day. His literary and cultural prowess propelled the Assamese community to unprecedented achievements. Agarwala's contributions extended beyond artistic endeavors, as he cultivated a novel cultural milieu and promoted societal awareness by highlighting injustices. Moreover, his patriotic songs played a pivotal role in liberating the populace from oppressive constraints. *Sundoror Pujari* (Worshipper of beauty) Jyotiprasad Agarwala has immensely contributed to various fields ranging from social awareness to cultural heritage, from the rich Assamese songs to modern songs, poems, dramas, literature, films, and from folk arts and Culture to Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva's contributions.

Scope of the Study:

There is a greater scope of Sankari ideal (Adarsha) studies in Agarwala's Composition. In this research paper basically studies the Sankari Ideal in his Composition, especially *Play, Songs and Collections of essays,*

are discussed, and hoped that it will help in future studies on various aspects of Assamese literature.

Method of the Study :

The researcher adopts descriptive as well as analytical method and the data collected from secondary sources like different books, journals and research paper for its research.

Objectives of the Study :

Taking into account the objectives of the research paper, the following aspects are expected to be revealed :

1. The reflection of the elements of Sankardeva in the Compositions by Jyotiprasad Agarwala.
2. The determination of the form of Assamese literature revealing the various conditions and situations of Sankari Adarsha.

Therefore, in this paper trying to be enlighten the Sankari ideal aspects in Agarwala's compositions.

Main topic Analysis:

Lakshminath Bezbaroa can be regarded as a forerunner to Jyotiprasad Agarwala in terms of the scholarly examination and discussions surrounding the two prominent Assamese figures, Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. Even though several individuals within Bezbaroa's academic circle have also researched this subject, Bezbaroa stands out as the sole person who dedicated significant time and effort to thoroughly investigate the literary and cultural achievements, as well as the social and aesthetic qualities, of Srimanta Sankardeva. Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Jyotiprasad Agarwala, and Bishnuprasad Rabha recognized that the two Mahapurush, Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, have attributes above their divine gifts. These

individuals were regarded as individuals who demonstrated concern for the welfare, tranquillity, and contentment of all, actively engaging in both the joys and sorrows, laughter, and tears experienced by others. Mahapurush Sankardeva and Madhavdeva's unwavering commitment to the Assamese society extended beyond written literature, encompassing diverse artistic mediums such as painting, sculpture, songs, dances, musical instruments, plays, and the meticulous organization of Satras and Namghar. In addition, they established a financial institution known as Dhan-Bhandar, which resembles contemporary banking systems.

Sankardeva and Jyotiprasad Agarwala are distinguished figures hailing from distinct periods. Jyotiprasad Agarwala's profound reverence for Sankardeva is evident in his literary creations. The analysis of Jyotiprasad Agarwala's perception of Sankardeva, a prominent figure, and his subsequent portrayal of him to the world, as well as the impact of Sankardeva's ideals and personality on Jyotiprasad Agarwala, holds significant importance. According to Mahendra Nath Sarma, there is a substantial manifestation of Srimanta Sankardeva's multifaceted abilities and other attributes in the literary works and artistic growth of Jyotiprasad Agarwala. The Mahapurush's stand against the measure of time, his all-encompassing religion, plays and acts, songs and dances, and his establishment that brought in a new era in the 15th and 16th centuries all contributed to the eradication of contemporary wrongdoings and the formation of a new culture. Over the past five centuries, Assamese people underwent a significant cultural transformation, developing a polished and cultured society. This cultural shift may be attributed to the profound effect of Mahapurush Sankardeva, the initiator of this new cultural worldview. Sankardeva's impact extended beyond his era, as his ideas and teachings continued to shape subsequent generations, including notable

figures such as Jyotiprasad Agarwala, contributing significantly to their personal growth and development.”¹

According to Jyotiprasad Agarwala, “Srimanta Sankardeva has the esteemed position of being our cultural mentor. The cultural tradition established by Sankardeva is commonly referred to as the Krishna culture. According to Agarwala, the comprehensive and final growth of an artist inside a person’s life occurs in the presence of Krishna. Sankardeva’s artistic endeavours centered around cultivating human life, with Lord Krishna as his ultimate inspiration. Often, people who dedicate their lives to religious or spiritual pursuits prioritize spiritual growth over physical strength and aesthetic appearance. The integration of physical beauty and physical prowess necessary for achieving physical well-being was unparalleled and artistically complete in the ideal artist. The artist engaged in Brahmacharya and Yoga to preserve his mental well-being and attain mastery over his physical health, cognitive faculties, and emotional state.”² The new generation should consider this attribute worthy of admiration.

The influence of Srimanta Sankardeva on Assamese society, particularly in the domains of language, fine arts, sculpture, and music, greatly inspired Jyotiprasad Agarwala. Sankardeva is regarded with great esteem by Agarwala, as articulated in the article titled “Shilpir Prithivi.” The article conveyed Agarwala’s immense reverence for the Mahapurush. Agarwala expressed his belief that the Assamese language, through which Srimanta Sankardeva conveyed his unwavering dedication to elevating humanity to its highest cultural potential by showcasing the profound beauty of human existence and the boundless elegance of nature in every aspect. Agarwala further asserted that by nurturing and effectively realizing the artistic vision inherent in the Assamese language, it has the potential to attain a position of esteem on the global stage. The author also suggests that

contemporary individuals from Assam should regard the artistic legacy of Srimanta Sankardeva in fine arts, sculpture, and music and consider him their exemplar. They should strive to comprehend the inherent purpose of these art forms and, by persistent dedication, strive to attain the highest level of mastery. The potential for Assamese people to contribute significantly to the global artistic landscape lies in their ability to cultivate contemporary Assamese fine arts by drawing inspiration from old traditions and effectively showcasing their creative skills to a broader audience. Agarwala further articulated his aspiration for Assamese artists to get global recognition by acquiring worldly cultural knowledge imparted by Srimanta Sankardeva. By comparing the Ganga River descending from Bhagirath, the author expressed their desire for the Assamese artists to contribute to creating a beautiful world.”³

In most of his compositions, Agarwala carefully examined the correlation between Sankardeva’s artistic works and different aspects of the world. He experienced overwhelming satisfaction at learning the profound extent of Sankardeva’s multifaceted abilities and his innovative and progressive world view. In 1930, Agarwala’s encounter with houses in Berlin contributed to his deep reverence for Sankardeva, who had conceived and constructed Namghar with a remarkably similar architectural form over five centuries prior. About the establishment of Namghar, Agarwala asserts that he has observed the foundational elements of contemporary modernity cultivated through minimalism and aestheticism within Srimanta Sankardeva’s Namghar. Upon entering the Namghar, one could observe Cubist elements in the Thapana, while the drawings adorning the Thapana exhibited traces of Impressionist and Symbolist influences.”⁴

Many critics hold the perspective that the sculptor Epstein, renowned for his works in the 20th century, derived inspiration from the artistic

traditions of India. Jyotiprasad Agarwala experienced similar feelings when observing the illustrations gracing the pillars of the Barduwa Namghar. Jyotiprasad Agarwala possessed knowledge of Western Culture, art styles, and diverse testing equipment. Thus, he was profoundly astonished to witness Sankardeva's establishment of these cultural and artistic expressions in the remote areas of Assam about five centuries prior.

Irrespective of social class, ethnic origin, and religious affiliation, individuals wholeheartedly embraced the Neo-Vaishnavism religion started by Srimanta Sankardeva. Women could also assume the role of devotees within this new faith. The Guru facilitated an amalgamation of individuals from diverse backgrounds, encompassing individuals residing in both the plains and the hills, across several castes ranging from low to high, and those from different socio-economic statuses. This collective assemblage was unified as a single entity, as the Guru extended an inclusive embrace to all, which promoted a sense of inclusivity and accessibility.

“Brahmanar Sandalor nibisari kul

Data suror jar Drishti samatal

Nichot sadhut bar bhoilo ekokgyan

Takese Pandit buli xi xi sorobogyan” (Bhagavat 1100 verse, p. 256)

(The one who stays away from asking about an individual's caste shows a liberal perspective, viewing all individuals as equals. Therefore, he is the omniscient Pandit.)

The cultural Guru faced significant challenges while establishing an entirely new societal framework. However, the Guru guided all individuals with a compassionate and inclusive approach throughout their journey. Therefore, Jyotiprasad Agarwala observed that Srimanta Sankardeva played a crucial role in establishing a cultural connection between the hills' inhabitants

and the plains, thus forming a novel Assamese way of life. According to him, “Sankardeva knew how to eliminate the pervasive discrimination present throughout humanity, which could potentially cause devastating damage to the global community. Hence, he strived to promote a transformative and revolutionary change.”⁵

Jyotiprasad’s songs also express the beliefs, significant contributions, Borgeet, and Namghar of the Mahapurush. For example,

“Kune patibo khujise xunor desh

Xunor deshor

Mahapurushor

Sankar-Madhavar

Xunmoliya sanskritiye puhor diye

Ei prithivit

Xunor jibonor.” (Jyotiprasad Rachanavali, Geet-120, p. 471)

(Whoever wants to build a golden country, Mahapurush Sankar and Madhava’s beautiful land shows a glowing culture on the world and people’s lives.)

“Koto je xuwad phol

Tur Namgharor Bhortalor

Rojon joint xunpuwotir

Xunor dinor xunpatir gaon.” (ibid p. 471)

(The Bhortaal in your Namghar makes such a beautiful sound, making the mornings in your beautiful village a joy.)

Jyotiprasad Agarwala provided a comprehensive analysis of Borgeet as well. The author’s work, titled “Bortoman Asomiya Sangeet : Kamrupi Sangeetor Dhara,” explores the correlation between Kamrupi songs and Hindustani songs as expressed by the diverse raag and taal employed in

Borgeet. During that period, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala collaborated with Grahan Chandra Goswami, the Satradhikar of Nikamul Satra, and Bishnuprasad Rabha, a renowned folk performer, as his research collaborators. During his relatively brief lifespan of 48 years, Jyotiprasad Agarwala could not bring his numerous research endeavours, cultural discussions, and studies to a definitive conclusion. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning how Bishnuprasad Rabha, who succeeded him and was also an admirer, diligently continued the job and conducted a comprehensive examination of Srimanta Sankardeva's skills, significance to society, and cultural contributions.

Conclusion:

The development of the revolutionary consciousness of several social responsibilities in several compositions indicates Jyotiprasad's scientific thinking. This is because the development of human thought is possible only through historical processes. Such an approach is brilliant, reflected in Jyotiprasad's compositions of modern thinking. It is imperative to draw insights from the transformative sociological and cultural movements pioneered by the revered figures Gurus Mahapurush Sankardeva and Madhavdeva and their strategic approach to building a contemporary society with a progressive mindset and comprehensive inclusivity in the twenty-first century. Concurrently, it is imperative to comprehensively examine Jyotiprasad Agarwala and Bishnuprasad Rabha, including their real-world discussions, and then integrate the two entities.

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1. Sarma, Satyendranath (ed.).*Jyotiprasad Rachanavali*. p.1
2. *ibid*- 342
3. *ibid*- 358
4. *ibid*-350

5. *ibid*

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