

REFLECTION OF SPIRITUAL IDEOLOGY IN SRIMANTA SANKARDEVA'S *BORGEET*

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ABSTRACT

Mohapurush Srimanta Sankardeva was one of the most important literary persons of Medieval Assam. He is also popular among the people of Assam as a religious preacher. Because during the time of Sankardeva the socio-religious condition of Assam was so deplorable that contemporary people of Assam was lived in a dark age. Sankardeva knew that it was only because of ignorance and illiteracy of Assamese people. During the time of Sankardeva though Ahom monarchy ruled in Assam and they adopted various measures for the development of Assamese people but lots of common people remain uneducated, unawareness and poor. Due to the ignorance and illiteracy of common people of Assam some other religious sects spread their own religion among the people. But the common people were not able to understand their complex religious system. So, Srimanta Sankardeva along with his chief disciple Madhabdeva took initiative to remove all these social and religious complexity from the Assamese society. To success in his mission Sankardeva wrote many books on religious philosophy which were great contribution to the Assamese literature and also enhance the glory of Assamese language and literature in front of the world. *Borgeet* was one of the medium of expression of Sankardeva through which he tried to express the spiritual ideology among the people of Assam. In this paper an attempt has been made how Srimanta Sankardeva tried the established a rapport with the common people of Assam through his creation of devotional song *Borgeet*.

Keywords: Sankardeva, Uneducated, Borgeet, Social and Religious Complexity

INTRODUCTION

"Mankind to-day is in one of its rare moods of shifting its outlook. The mere compulsion of tradition has lost its force. It is our business not only to recreate and re-enact a vision of the world including those elements of reverence and order without which society lapses into riot but to pursue it with unflinching rationality." There the great men come. Their messages have to be re-interpreted in our lives and re-accepted with reverence suitably adapted to the deeds and needs of a modern rational society. We should not forget the fundamental fact that whenever the dynamic harmony and organic rhythm of life had been missing, there had come the Lord or His Messenger. Whenever there has been a period of social upheaval and unsettlement in one of those incalculable moments when History stands at cross-roads or takes a major turn, a great man has risen to guide and protect us. A man like Sankardeva was like such an individual star creating a new world of ideas and ideals.

Srimanta Sankardeva, the greatest literary figure of Assam, was born in the *Ahin* (September-October) month in 1371 *Sakabda* (1449 AD) at Ali-pukhuri (Bordowa) in the present-day Nagaon district of Assam. Sankardeva was the founder of the new Bhakti cult in Assam. When he was born the religious condition of Assam was so deplorable and all sections of the society, right from the ruling to the priestly

class were influenced by religious superstitions. Various malpractices were committed in the name of religion, which vitiate the social structure. The majority of the people of Assam belonged to non-Aryan tribes having distinct manners, customs and religious beliefs. Those who professed Hinduism loosely adhered to Vaishnavism or Saivism; Saktism bordering on extreme Tantricism, was also widely prevalent. The followers of these cults were all found indulging in evil practices like animal and sometimes even human sacrifices, magical rites, spell and the like. It was based on the philosophy of palate and sensual pleasures. The economically backward classes and the specially downtrodden became the victims of such ghastly practices. Against this backdrop, Srimanta Sankardeva appeared on the scene. A multi-faceted genius, Srimanta Sankardeva was at once a spiritual leader, a social reformer, a prolific writer and a master playwright and composer.

Srimanta Sankardeva's concept was to develop the ideals 'one humanity' and he can be called a crusader in his attempt at transforming the society into an abode of truth, perpetuity and beauty (Satya, Shiva and Sundara). He propounded the cult of Bhakti for cementing the bond of unity, peace and progress amongst different communities. At the same time, he worked for development of the society and the mental upliftment amongst the various sections of the community. Sankardev strongly advocated the necessity to have faith on human values and that every individual has the equal right on such humanity based religion.

'Ek Sarana Nam Dharma' preached by Srimanta Sankardeva is based on scientific analysis. The worship of Lord Krishna through 'Nam Prasanga' leads to the quest for truth and balance between the soul and the body. Hardly has there been a religious 'Guru' who effectively enjoined a pure honest work culture, social discipline, humanized love and thus cherished religious values accepted by all. The lessons of humanism can be drawn in his literature, drama, music, dance, art and culture. Sankardeva along with his disciple composed many Borgeet through which they expressed spiritual ideology for upliftment of the society.

DEFINITION OF BORGEET

Different scholars of Assam give different opinion and explanation regarding Borgeet that composed by Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhabdeva. According to Dr. Bani Kanta Kakaty, "Borgeets are based on high morality and spiritual thinking. That is why, all those songs are called as Borgeet." The notable linguistic Kaliram Medhi says that Borgeets are the 'song celestial' or great songs. Debandranath Bezboruah, a notable scholar of Assamese language and literature also opined that the Borgeets are the holy songs of Assamese language. Moheswar Neog said, "Borgeet is completely freed from earthly love and affection, it is only song of spiritual dimension. Moreover, the Borgeet should be written by Mahapurusha." From the above mentioned different definition it is found that like the other songs of India, the Borgeets are also the prayer songs.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Srimanta Sankardeva was not only a social reformer but also a religious preacher. He tried to bring some changes in the contemporary Assamese society. Sankardeva believed in one God concept that is in the mode of omission. Sankardeva preached the equality of men before God, and abjured the idea of special privileges for Brahmans. Sankardeva strictly followed the philosophical doctrine of Gita and the Bhagawat Purana as its scriptures. Sankardeva's religion was certainly a purer and

a more spiritual form of religion than what the Sakta cults with their cruelty of bloodshed and the Semi Hinduised animistic religion of Mongoloid masses could offer. While Sankardeva travelled in different holy places then he wrote many mythical songs which dedicated to the God Lord Krishna. Through these mythical songs Sankardeva tried to establish a bridge between the human beings and the God. At the very beginning all the mythical songs of Sankardeva was called as Geet but later it came to known as "Borgeet". In this paper an attempt has been made by the research scholars how the spiritual ideology of Srimanta Sankardeva reflected in Borgeet.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to find out how Borgeet represent the spiritual ideology of Srimanta Sankardeva. Borgeets of Sankardeva are recognized as devotional song which created a bridge between the human being and the God. Moreover, through Borgeet Srimanta Sankardeva attract the common people and gave the way of salvation of soul.

METHODOLOGY

DATA

The present study is based on secondary sources of data. The data were collected from different books, journals, newspapers, published and unpublished article, website etc.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Sankardeva not only as a saint, law-giver, poet, prophet, philosopher, religious reformer, spiritual dreamer, God-intoxicated man of noble vision, but a master mind with an active idealism, with a spirit of service and synthesis. Sankardeva was not in favour of idol worship or 'murti-puja'. His 'Ek-Sarana-Nama-Dharma' was an attempt to revive the pristine aspect of Gita's philosophy of complete self surrender in love. God to Sankardeva was above duality, above Purusha and Prakriti. There was none but one was his creed. He was the one and immutable and the universal in the shape of Krishna. To know Him, to realize Him, you have only to adapt 'Nama', 'Deva', 'Guru' and 'Bhakta'. His sadhana was not of Radha but of Uddhaba.

Sankardeva was a deep religious man as well as a great literature. Sankardeva composed Borgeet used to begin prayer services in monasteries associated with the Ekasarana Dharma. The first Borgeet 'mana meri Rama caranahi lāgu' was composed by Srimanta Sankardeva during his first pilgrimage at Badrikashram in 1488 AD. The language he used for all the Borgeet is Brajavali, an artificial Maithili-Assamese mix. Brajavali, with its preponderance of vowels and alternative expressions, as considered ideal for lyrical compositions, and Sankardeva used it for Borgeets and Ankiya Naats. Sankardeva composed about two hundred and forty Borgeets, but a fire destroyed them all and only about thirty four of them could be retrieved from memory.

Sankardeva understood the psychological need of his people. He gave to the masses a digestible spiritual food, and its main linguistic vehicle was Assamese vernacular. Sankardeva mainly addressed his Bhakti message to the common people and for their emancipation. His creation of literary language mixing the local vernacular with the North Indian vernaculars for his dramas and Borgeet

served the purpose of appealing to a larger section of the common masses that need not be deprived of the benefits of Bhakti as well.

Sankardeva is to be particularly valued as a poet for his devotional songs included in his 'Kirtan-gosha' and 'Borgeet'. Sankardeva tried to express his gratitude towards the Lord Krishna through his Borgeet and directly dedicated to the Lord Krishna. Sankardeva is often stricken with a sense of sin and, in some of the Borgeets, there is an agony, of repentance which alone, he thinks, can bring him the Lord's grace. The well known Borgeet, 'Nārāyana, Kāhe bhakti Kary terā' is one of such songs, "Say, Narayan, how can I offer Thee my love? My sinful heart cannot shun evil." And even in the midst of this hunting of sin, the poet has faith in the Lord's infinite compassion: "Thy Name is my hope, and Thy grace can redeem me." And in the Borgeets, he is a true vedantist, believing in the presence of the Lord in his creation: 'Thou art in all things like the wide sky in all pitchers.'

The oldest trend of music that overwhelms the people's mind and soul over the ages, that transports the listeners to the utmost spiritual depth, that enchants them with its divine tone is Borgeet. Borgeets are acknowledged to be that special trend of song and music pioneered by Sankardeva. It is said that the sublime thought and exquisite expression of Borgeet touch everyone's heart and soul, and awaken the latent spirit of Bhakti in him or in her in Sankardeva's first Borgeet 'Mān Meri Rām Saranahi Lāgu'. Borgeet has its own unique spiritual divine melody, fertile self-revealing diction and very magnanimous sublime thought and theme. Bani Kanta Kakati, Kalicharan Medhi etc. scholars have termed Borgeet as 'Songs Celestial', 'Noble Numbers' because of its spiritual depth and sublimity. It is important that Sankardeva and Madhabdeva never used the term Borgeet for their songs; they called them 'Geet' only. However, in the later period, their disciples and followers used the term Borgeet (i.e. grand song) because of the song's sublimity and grandeur in different aspects. The Borgeets are flawlessly complete in their music, diction and those all go hand in hand complimenting one another in a very balanced manner. Borgeets are based on sublime, moral and spiritual thought. This sublimity is achieved in every way ranging from tone to the arrangement of the words. For example:

Pāwe Pari Hari Karoho Kātorī
Prāna Rākhohi Mora
Bixaya Bixadhara Bixa Jarajara
Tibana Narahe Mora"

(Sankardeva, Borgeet-17)

This line of Borgeet expresses the acknowledgement to the Lords that the life is full of sorrow and sin. We are not able to escape from the pain of life. Praying to the Lord is the only way to relief from the pain.

Srimanta Sankardeva through his Borgeets showed the people that Sri Krishna, as depicted in the Bhagawat-purana was the greatest among all the gods, and that all other gods, including Brahma and Maheswara, were subservient to Him. Sankardeva's philosophy of life is not confined to any religious community and hence in his preaching appeal to all sections. The Borgeets of Sankardeva are as like prayer songs. Sankardeva opined that there is only one beauty that infatuates

him that of the Lord, there is only one thirst that troubles him, that of Harinama; and there is only one hunger, that of meeting him.

CONCLUSION

It is seen that Sankaradeva as a rebel against orthodox practices, as a religious revivalist, as a social reformer, as a democratic leader, as a poet, as a philosopher, as a dramatist, as a monotheist, as a musician, as a composer and as a spiritual preceptor of a protestant type. Through Borgeet Sankaradeva tried to establish a rapport of eternal love of God towards his disciple. Sankaradeva's Borgeet brought a dramatic change in socio-cultural life of common people of Assam. Such a versatile man of outstanding abilities did not cut himself adrift from the main Indian current but re-established the same in its pristine glory through the process of congregational prayer known as "Hari-prasanga". He was a Martin Luther, a John Calvin or a Ram Mohan Roy or Dayananda Saraswati combined. He added to that a literary excellence and superb imagery. Such was the Great Man who was, so to say, the maker of modern Assam.

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