International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

The Contribution of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva to Greater Assamese Society and Culture

Dr. Utpal Saikia

Assistant Professor Department of Assamese Kalabari College, Biswanath (Assam)

Abstract:
The revolutionary efforts of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva have benefitted not only contemporary social life but also contemporary Assam and will remain a subject in the future. Sankardeva is a transient incarnate man. In the worldly sense, only a person who is born at a particular moment in an era and who establishes himself with religious awakening and divine professions that establish culture and destroy evil can become an incarnate man. The Mahapurusha was able to inspire the Assamese nation with devotion, religion, related literary arts and cultural consciousness and gave the desired new life. This research paper attempts to highlight the Sankardeva tradition about the Assamese Society and Culture.

Keywords: Society, Culture, literature, Assamese, Sankardeva

INTRODUCTION:

Through the search for the chief deity among many gods, the awakening of social consciousness towards the realization of the eternal truth among many truths, the dispelling of the horrors of religious rituals; the bold assertion that the pure heart is the main playground of spiritual realization instead of basic rituals; These are the fourfold gifts of the Mahapurushas to the development of Assamese spiritual life. The expansion and development of these four gifts is first seen in the writings of Sankardeva and his followers. They are animated by a new spiritual and social stir. While the Neo-Vaishnavite movement paved the way for the culture of medieval Indian folk life, literature promoting Vishnu devotion emerged throughout India. Like Tulsidas, Kabirdas and Surdas in North India, Sankardeva and Madhabdeva in Assam focused on literary practice with the aim of spreading Vaishnavism.

Scope of the Study:

There is a greater scope of Sankardeva ideal studies in Assamese society and culture. This research paper basically studies the Sankari ideal of his works and literary activity reflected in Assamese society. I hope that it will be useful in future studies on various aspects of Assamese Society and Culture.

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.

Discussion:

Srimanta Sankardeva was a social reformer, religious preacher, playwright, actor, musician, poet and devotee at the same time. He wrote poems, plays, songs, etc. in the language of the people, using Sanskrit Vaishnava texts, with the aim of introducing the worship of one god instead of many gods and replacing various religious doctrines with the simple pure Bhagawati religion. He soon was able to create a revival in religion and literature.

In 1371 Shaka, 1449 AD, Mahapurusha Sankardeva was born in Nagaon district at Bardowa. After the death of his mother at an early age, he was brought up by his grand-mother Khersuti and enrolled in the 'Tol' of Mahendra Kandali. From his childhood, Sankardeva showed many extraordinary scholarships.

He completed his education and married Suryavati. However, twelve years after the death of his first wife, he visited various pilgrimage sites in India and came into contact with various saints and these pilgrimages had a profound influence on the spiritual life of Sankardeva. Madhaba's grandson Aniruddha Kayastha wrote in his translation of the 5th Skandha of the Bhagavad Gita:

After returning from the pilgrimage, he began to practise, introduce and spread the devotional religion with the help of his brother Banaggyagiri, Ramrai (Jagananda) and his childhood friend Ramram Guru by establishing the Naamghar Manikut. Jagdish Mishra donated the 'Bhagavad Gita' with commentary at Bardowa, which facilitated the practice of religion and the writing of scriptures. Initially, the spread of devotion was hindered by the reactionary and radical people of the society. Perhaps this is why 'Chihnayatra' fascinates people of all walks of life by acting and is a new religion attracts to.

In the second decade of the 16th century AD, Sankardeva crossed the Brahmaputra under the invasion of the Kacharis and settled with the Bhuyans at Gangmou and later at Dhuahaat Beloguri on the northern bank of the Ahom kingdom. It was here that he met Madhabdeva, which marked the beginning of a revolution in religion and literature in Assam. This union of Sankara and Madhaba is called the 'Monikanchan Sanjyog'. Just as one cannot think of the personality of Madhaba without Sankardeva, one cannot think of the complete picture of Sankardeva without Madhaba. Many people, including Narayan Tagore, became followers of Sankardeva. Like Madhabdeva, they were all-round gurus and all-round devotees. Sankari religion gained popularity and spread in Kamarupa due to their efficiency. Sankardeva's religion is based on the essence of Sankhya, Vedanta and the Bhagavad Purana. He believed that the essence of religion is the name of God. The more honest thoughts and honest ways purify a person, the easier it is to realize God.

Sankardeva was a versatile genius. The true assessment of Sankardeva's talent is never complete if he is considered only as a preacher. He worked hard to spread the light of knowledge in a sick and broken society.There is no comparison to the contribution of Sankardeva to the social life of Assam. He tried to eradicate various inhuman and irrational practices in the name of religion.

The society of Sankardeva's dreams was an ideal society. That society had equality and humanity, democratic values. He wanted to heal the Assamese society by reforming the food, dress, behaviour, mentality, etc. of the Assamese people.

He looked at every aspect of society, big and small, because a healthy society can never be expected by improving only a few aspects of society. Along with the spread of the Neo-Vaishnavism, one of the main objectives of Sankardeva was to reform the Assamese society. "Social vices, immorality, adultery in the name of religion and the superstitious practices of many minor religious communities, unhealthy way of life, ignorance about healthy living, etc. must have distressed and worried Sankardeva."[1]

They began to disbelieve. There was a deep conspiracy to disrupt and destabilize the political and social

life of the North East. Assam was also inhabited by various ethnic groups during the time of Mahapurusha Sankardeva. There were also fights over and anon between the Borbhuyans, Kochs, Kacharis, Ahoms, Garos, Khashis, Karbis, Miris, etc. The Mahapurusha faced many obstacles in his preaching and organization due to the vices, narrowness and conservatism of the society of the time and especially the strong opposition of the royal family. Yet, the Mahapurusha stood by the socially weak, Dalits and the homeless with words of hope and inspiration. He embraced people of all walks of life irrespective of caste and race with the great humanitarian ideal of 'Wherever there is life, there is Shiva'.

Noticing this generosity of the Mahapurusha and attracted to the Naamdharma he preached, people from all walks of life, Hindus, Muslims, tribals and non-tribals, came to him and took refuge in him. Therefore, even a Shudra, Antyaja and even a Chandala can become pure or holy by the glory of devotion to Hari. Among them are Govinda of Garo, Paramanand of Mising, Damodar of Bhot, Ramai of Kachari, Narottam of Naga, Chandsai of Yaban, Jaihari, Haridas of Bania, Purnananda etc.

Everyone is equal in his religion. There is no great or small, high or low of race among people. Sankardeva built a Naamghar at Bardowa and laid the first pillars of devotion and planted the seeds of Satra and Naamghar. There are many places like Dhuahaat, Belaguri, Patbausi etc. where the Mahapurushas established satras. 'Naamghar' is the national theater of Assamese. Around these newly established satras, Vaishnavism and Vaishnava literature continued to burn like a windless, unshakable candle. Sankardeva went on a second pilgrimage with his disciples. He travelled from one end of old Assam to the other and launched his first successful campaign to bind the people with a single string of simple religion. Secondly, it established one God instead of polytheism and turned the people away from religious distractions and leftist practices. Thirdly, it gives spiritual courage to the common people who have been neglected at the lower levels of society for hundreds of years by presenting a bright and sacred picture of spiritual and social life. Fourthly, drama, song and acting bring a new awakening of art and culture and make the people aware of culture by awakening a sense of beauty in their minds. Fifthly, Sankar-Madhaba built the Sahitya Mandir on the foundation of literature firmly established by previous poets like Madhava Kandali. There are many different types of literature, including poetry, drama, song, prose etc.

'Kirtan' is the best example of the poetic talent of the Mahapurusha, the greatest example of Vaishnava literature. There is no evidence that any play was written before him. One of the most innovative contributions of this guru is the Bargeet. The most popular Bargeets express regret and surrender to the feet of God. The melody and greatness of these Bargeets drew many people to the Mahapurusha. Sankardeva used his creative talent to make the Nava Vaishnava movement a success. Sankaradeva created 'Angkiya Natak', a combination of Indian dramatic literature, Sanskrit metaphorical models and indigenous elements, expressing the divine expression of Krishna through characters and dialogue and sowing the seeds of devotion in the tender minds of the audience.

The invention of the Naamghar is another prominent contribution of the Guru in the field of collective chanting of Hari Naam, performance of songs, bhaonas etc., and the performance of works in unity. The ideals of the Naamghar will play an important role in strengthening the bond of unity in all aspects of Assamese literature and culture.

The great legend (mahapurush) Sankardeva laid the foundation of the society through the sessions of Naamghar in order to create a pattern of religious management through the Neo-Vaishnava movement. Naturally, the socio-cultural integrated Assamese national life became the center of these activities. As a

result of the Neo-Vaishanava movement, innumerable temples were established in different parts of Assam.

By establishing the Naamghar as a center of religious practice, Sankardeva gave the non-literate people of that time the opportunity to impart spiritual knowledge and education through various techniques and also gave some authority over the Naamghars. Gradually, the temples became famous as centers of learning in all social, cultural, economic, and educational fields. Satola Deuri, Bilaniya, Namlagowa, Panchni, Namghariya etc. were created to manage the socio-religious activities in Naamghar. All of them have traditionally been accorded high status in a single village. The place of 'Naamghariya' is important in the rural society and cultural life of Assam. Srimanta Sankardeva's innovative contribution 'Naamghariya' is the head of the management of the 'Jatiya Naatshal' Naamghar in the rural society of Assam. Usually, Naamghar is a place of public worship for the followers of one shelter Naamdharma. Each religion has its own set of places of worship. Hinduism also has places of worship as temples. Sankardeva also established the concept of Naamghar in the process of spreading the new Vaishnava system of religion based on the influence of Vaishnavism which spread all over India.

Among the worship bags of different religions, however, some of the special features of the temple are visible to all "prathamate, naamghar jodio eta dharmapanthaar upasanaathali, tathaapi iyar ase dharmanirapekhyatao. Pabitra, paricchanna asomiya pochak pindha jikono loke namgharat prabesh karibo pare aru iyar anusthanat bhag lobo pare. Dwitiyate, namdharmar anugamisakalar majote kono jatibhittik bibhed namghare namane."[2] As a result of the Neo-Vaishnava movement, innumerable temples have been established in different parts of Assam, in villages. In parallel, naamghar are gaining importance. "Graamya naamghar parichalana samiti bore paramparaagatabhabee gathita haisil carita padak lai sei caraita pada hal naamghariya, bayan aru sutradhar. Ai carita panar adhikarisakalar arthanaitik ba samajik abasthane samajat teololor kartatbakak laghu ba guru nakare. Ene parichalana byabastha aan dharmaanusthanat thaka dekha najai."[3] In the Assamese social system, Naamghar has largely controlled the social system culturally and this huge culture is surrounded by singer, various artists, director, cloth designer. To run smoothly and finely the work of religious works and social works various posts like Reader, Satola, Deori, Bilonia, Pathok, Pachani; these titles have been created and taken. The status of these individuals in the village society is quite high. With the passage of time, the naamghar-centered social system has naturally undergone considerable changes. In addition, the role and functioning of the namghar is not without its limitations. Birinchi Kumar Barua called the shrine 'Jatiya Natshala' and 'Jatiya Charchar Jadughar' of Assamese social system. "Asomiya samajik, dhaarmik aru saanskritik jibanat naamgharar chapon chaburi abadaanar punarbrittir prayojon nai. Naamghar asomiya jatiya sanskritir jadughar."[4] Public appearances in parallel to socio-religious work, litigation etc. were raised in the majesty of the Naamghar. It is impossible to describe the contribution of Sankardeva to Assamese literature and culture. When ideals are conservative, society shrinks, when ideals are liberal and virtuous, society develops. The basis of Sankari culture was generosity and appreciation. There are many institutions that carry the banner of the great ideals with which Sankardeva planted the seedling of the Vaishnava tradition and Sankari culture in Assam.

Conclusion:

There are many literary treasures that Sankardeva left behind, not only the Vaishnava ideals but also the highest level of literature. There are many qualities that make his creations immortal and universal. There is no other incarnation in the history of the world except Srimanta Sankardeva, the great man who

contributed so much to the establishment of religion, language, literature, culture and socialism by the same man. He left behind only a lotus flower when he died. This great man was glorious with miraculous powers.

References:

1. Deka Hazarika, Karbi. Madhabdev : Sahitya, Kala aru Darshan. page- 8
2. Kalita, Pulin. Namghar Udbhabanr Aitihaxik Patabhumi. Satsari. 10th Year, 2nd Issue. September 2014. Edit. Anuradha Sarmah Pujarai. page- 25
3. ibid. page- 25
4. Baruah, Birinchi Kumar. Asamiya Bhasa Aru Sanskriti. 1992. page- 79

Bibliography:

1. Barua, Birinchi Kumar. Asomor Lok-Sanskriti, Guwahati : Bina Library, 1989. print.
2. Barua, Prahlad Kumar. Dharma Samikhya. Dibrugarh : Banalata, 2000. print.
3. Gogoi, Lila. Asomiya Lok-sahityar Ruprekha. Dibrugarh : Students Emporium, 1992. print.
4. Goswami, Prafulla Dutta. Asomiya Jana-sahitya. Guwahati : Bani Prakash Private Limited, 1994. print.
5. Gohain, Hiren. Asomiya Jatiya Jeevanat Mahapurushia Parampara. Guwahati : Alibat Publication, 2014. print.
6. Neog, Maheswar. Asomiya Dharmar Buranji: Andhaar aru Puhor. Jorhat : Assam Sahitya Sabha, 1988. print.
7. Sankardeva And His Times. Guwahati : Gauhati University Publication Department, 1965. print.
8. ed.). Gurucharit Katha. Guwahati : Gauhati University Publication Department, 1986. print.
9. Asomiya Sahityar Ruprekha. Guwahati : Chandra Prakash, 2000. print.
10. Sri Sri Sankardeva. Guwahati : Chandra Prakash. 2006, print.
11. Sarma, Nabin Chandra. Bharator Uttar-Purbanchalar Paribeshya Kala. Guwahati : Banalata, 2009. print.
12. Sarmadoloi, Narayan (ed.). Krittan-ghosha aru Nam-ghosha. Guwahati : Student Store, 2001. print.
13. Sarma, Satyendranath. Asomiya Sahityar Samikhatmak Itibrittra. Guwahati : Saumar Prakash, 2011. print.