

Echo of the Philosophy and Thoughts of Sankaradeva in the Jikirs of Ajan Peer

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The Muslims of Assam have been associated not only with the religion and culture of Sankaradeva by taking initiation at the Namghars and Satras, lighting lamps and offering *sarai* etc, but also many Sufi saints were deeply influenced by the religion and culture of Sankaradeva. In this case we can take the example of **Ājān Peer** of seventeenth century. He came from Baghdad in Iraq to Assam in the seventeenth century with his brother Nabi and propagated Islam in Upper Assam and Darrang. He noticed that every one in this land had been deeply attracted by the philosophy and thoughts of Sankaradeva. Therefore, when he started to compose *Jikirs* (devotional songs), he was deeply influenced by the ideology of **Sankaradeva** and **Madhavadeva**. That is why in the Jikirs of Ajan Peer, we find the names of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, and words like ‘Santa’, ‘Mahanta’, ‘Veda’, ‘Prasad’, etc. As for example: -

Kār gharar jiyāri kār gharar bowāri
bhāngi kathākshāri kowā /
Bhāngi kathākshāri kobake nowāri
hātate rasare bāti //
Sankaradevar jiyāri Madhavadevar bowāri
Rahepur nagarat ghar /
Rahepur nagarar rasak nomāi āni
diyā sakaloke bāti //

Tell the truth, who is our father and father-in-law. It cannot tell the truth; because the tray (*bāti*) of sweets (*rasa*) is on the hand. The daughter of Sankaradeva, the daughter-in-law of Madhavadeva live in Rahepur town; bring down the sweet *rasa* from Rahepur town and distribute it among all.

Mor manat ān bhāva nāi oh Āllāh
Mor manat ān bhāva nāi /
Hindu ki Musalmān eke Āllāhar farmān
ākherāt eke Āllāhar nām //

O’ Allah! There is no discriminatory feeling in my heart. Hindus and Muslims are creatures of one God; they remember only one Creator.

Chāriveda giyānoke koy oh Āllāh

**Chāriveda giyānoke koy /
Chāriveda pahrilo giyānoke nubujilo
giyānor nāi parichoy //**

The four Vedas are the source of knowledge. I have read the four Vedas but could not gather any knowledge. The knowledge has no identity.

**Othei kalam jivāi kāgaj
Dāte chābo chiyāhi bāte /
Santa Mahanta Auliyā sakale
Eketi nāmote khāte //**

The lips are the pen, the tongue is paper and the teeth create ink. The Santas, Mahantas and Auliyās pray only to the **One Name**.

Thus the impact of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva's philosophy and thoughts are vivid in the *Jikirs*, besides the style of writing of Ajan Peer, which has also been influenced by them. Thus, Sankaradeva said:-

Isha swarupe Hari saba ghate baithaha

God appears in all forms as *Isha*

On the other hand, we find in the *Jikirs* of Ajan Peer:-

**Talaloi mukoi chowā mone kori
Sabāro ghate ghate Āllāh**

See silently bowing head downward, Āllāh appears in the forms (bodies) of all.

There are more examples like this. The following two examples are sufficient to prove the extensive influence of Sankaradeva on the *Jikirs*:-

**Sankaradeva riti Madhavadeva piriti
Gopāladeva swarupar moni /
Sri Krishnare moni kanthate pindhiloi
Brahmāndot logāi gol dhvani //**

Here Sankaradeva denotes **Hajarat Mahammad**, Madhavadeva denotes **Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti**, Gopāladeva denotes **Ghiyasuddin Auliya** and *Sri Krishnar moni* denotes *Tachbiha* or bead of gems. Again, *Tachbiha* means, '*Lailaha-illallah Mahammad-ur-rasul-allah*' of Islam; ie 'there is none

but only Āllāh the creator’. Sankaradeva’s ‘Eka deva eka seva eka bine nāi kewa’ (there is one God, one worship; pray to One) denotes the same meaning with the above teaching of Islam. The meaning of this Jikir is – like Hajarat Mahammad, Sankaradeva also framed rules and customs. Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti propagated the message of Hajarat Mahammad and Madhavadeva also propagated the message of Sankaradeva with great affinity at heart. Ghiyasuddin Auliya propagated the message of Hajarat Mahammad in a more liberal way; thus Gopaladeva also distributed the doctrines of Sankaradeva in a similar manner. Like the monotheism of Islam, Sankaradeva also stressed on monotheism and thus he preached the message of harmony in the world. In the same Jikir, it is said:-

**Sankare ruye gol sondākala ejupi
Madhavadeve thāpile māti /
Hena kala ejupi lāni pāti lāgile
boi chāi ānile kāti //**

Sankaradeva transplanted *sondākala* (a kind of sweet-smelling banana) and Madhavadeva offered soil. That type of banana [now] grows in a line

For this reason, many followers of Islam have been associated with *eka-sarana nāma dharma* based on Nāmghar and Satra and show respect to it. It is sufficient to draw upon two examples relating to the Nāmghar.

One of the oldest Nāmghars of Assam is the **Dhekiākhowā Nāmghar** of Jorhat district. This Nāmghar was established by Madhavadeva, the disciple of Sankaradeva. At the time of reconstruction of this Nāmghar, one of the main pillars (*lāikhutā*) of it was donated by a follower of Islam named **Imdad Ali Bora**. Besides, the followers of Islam have been showing this respect to this Nāmghar by offering *sarāi* and donating candles and lamps. A similar example is the Nāmghar of East Jyotinagar. The plot of land for this Nāmghar was donated by a Muslim **Osman Gani** in 1980. It is believed that the name of **Chandsai** – a Muslim disciple of Sankaradeva – was closely associated with the construction of the Barpeta and the Bardowa Satras. Of course, there is much scope for research in this regard.

Such examples are found in the case of other Nāmghars and Satras too. For example, after the initiation of **Chandsai** by Sankaradeva in the veranda of the Nāmghar of Patbausi Satra (Thān), Chandsai regularly looked after the Satra, besides the regular duty of lighting it. Moreover, Chandsai

defeated many Brahmin disciples of Shila in religious debate and thus became a favourite and worthy disciple of Sankaradeva. A similar example happened at Sundaridiya Satra of Barpeta. In the veranda of the Nāmghar of this Satra, Madhavadeva initiated another follower of Islam named **Yavan Joyhari**. He was given the charge of looking after the Satra and lighting the lamps. As a result of these two examples, many followers of Islam were initiated by Garhmur Satra, Saru Garhmur Satra, Uttar Kamalabari Satra, Dihing Na-māti Satra of Jamugurihat, Madhupur Satra of West Bengal etc. and they became disciples of the religion of Sankaradeva.

For many centuries, Muslims have been enriching the school of integration by putting lamps in the various Nāmghars of Ghilāzāri Satra, Konorā Satra, Mayanbari Satra, etc. **Mahāpurusha Sankaradeva** was the pioneer of this kind of integration in the Nāmghars and Satras. As a tribute to **Sankaradeva** and his disciple **Chandsai**, the followers of Islam in Assam have formed a cultural group namely *Chandsai Bhāonā Dal*. I myself played the role of **Ramchandra** in the *Rāmviḃay Bhāonā*. As followers of Islam, we are very proud to be associated with such a cultural group.

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