

## A comparative study of Kirtan Ghosha and Gopi-Uddhava dialogue of Sur-Sagar

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### Abstract:

The eminent personality, Mahapurush Srimanta Shankardev (1449-1568) was the preacher of 'Ek Sharan Naam Dharma' and the father of Assamese literature, culture and society. Earlier *Tantra-Mantra* had immense influence in the Country till the advent of Srimanta Shankardev for which *shakti puja*, *shiva puja* etc. were widely prevalent in that time. Opposing to all the *shakti puja*'s, sacrifices of the lives, the *tantra mantras*, Srimanta Shankardev founded monotheism, which basic *mantra* is 'Shelter- in- One-Religion' (here 'religion' refers to the religion of *Krishna*). The neo-vaishnavite religion promoted by Shankardev preached pure devotion to *Krishna*. His 'bhakti' infused works can be divided into poetic, devotional texts, translational texts, one act play, songs and *naam kirtan*. *Kirtan Ghosha* comes under his poetic works, *Naam Kirtan*.

Surdas (1478 AD- 1583 AD approx) was a blind Hindu devotional poet known for his lyrics written in praise of *Krishna* in *Braja language*. Surdas, the leading poet of *Ashtachap*, was an ardent devotee of *Shri Krishna* and even after being blind, he, in his works has been very successful in lucidly describing *Krishna's* beauty. Surdas has described the Krishna character on the basis of the tenth book (*skandha*) of *Srimad Bhagavat*.

The goal of this symposium is to conduct a comparative study of the *Gopi- Uddhav* dialogue of *Kirtan Ghosha* and *Sur Sagar* and bring Mahapurush Srimanta Shankardev out of the limitation of Assamese society and get his works and establish in the international level.

**Key Word:** *Gopi- Uddhav* dialogue, Shankardev, Surdas

### Introduction:

The eminent personality, Mahapurush Srimanta Shankardev (1449-1568) was the preacher of 'Ek Sharan Naam Dharma' and the father of Assamese literature, culture and society. Earlier *Tantra-Mantra* had immense influence in the Country till the advent of Srimanta Shankardev for which *shakti puja*, *shiva puja* etc. were widely prevalent in that time. Opposing to all the *shakti puja*'s, sacrifices of the lives, the *tantra mantras*, Srimanta Shankardev founded monotheism, which basic *mantra* is 'Shelter- in- One-Religion' (here 'religion' refers to the religion of *Krishna*). The neo-vaishnavite religion promoted by Shankardev preached pure devotion to *Krishna*. His 'bhakti' infused works can be divided into poetic, devotional texts, translational texts, one act play, songs and *naam kirtan*. *Kirtan Ghosha* comes under his poetic works, *Naam Kirtan*.

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### 2. Importance of study:

Both Shankardev and Surdas are pivoted in their own areas of literature. Shankardev was the promoter of religion, a social reformer, poet, dramatist, actor, musician and a supreme devotee of *Krishna*. Their aim was to promote a peaceful society by opposing the evils in the society. Surdas was also an avid devotee of *Krishna* who has been beautifully described every form of *Krishna*. Surdas is called the Emperor of *Vatsalya* (*described Krishna as a lovable child*) due to his successful delineation of *Krishna's Baal Leela* (mischievous childhood plays and activities).

Shankardev and Surdas are similar in their true devotion of *Krishna* even though they are *Vaishnava* poets of two different provinces. Both have created many compositions related to *Shri Krishna* and even if thematic similarity is found in their works yet differences in statement, style and depiction etc. are seen.

### 3. Study Title:

The study is titled as – *A comparative study of Kirtan Ghosha and Gopi-Uddhava dialogue of Sur-Sagar*.

### 4. Objective of the study:

Shankardev and Surdas are great writers and *Vaishnav* poets of two provinces of India. Both were ardent devotees of *Krishna*. The contribution of Surdas, Kabirdas, Tulsidas etc. and their works are discussed while criticizing the *Bhakti* movement and the *Bhakti* era of India. At the same time, Srimanta Shankardev and Madhavdev also started a religious movement in North-East India with a new and progressive idea, contrary to the prevailing religious and social customs and ethics.

But even today, Shankardev and Madhavdev did not find the pedestal they should have been on. The goal of this symposium is to conduct a comparative study of the *Gopi-Uddhav* dialogue of *Kirtan Ghosha* and *Sur Sagar* and bring Mahapurush Srimanta Shankardev out of the limitation of Assamese society and get his works and establish in the international level.

### 5. Limitation of the Subject:

Both the works of Shankardeva and Surdas are wide and varied and it is not possible to cover and analyse them all in a research paper. Hence, a comparative study of the *Gopi Uddhav* dialogues of *Kirtan Ghosha* and *Sur Sagar* is summarized in this research paper.

### 6. Study Methodology and Practical Measures:

The methodology of the study is analytical. The paper MLA (MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION) is presented on the basis of research methodology. Studies related to Sankardev and Surdas, history texts, dictionary, internet etc. have been used.

### 7. Analysis and interpretation of the topics of study:

The political situation in Assam during the Sankardev era was turbulent. The life of the general public was unsafe due to superstition, worship of evils, killings etc. Meanwhile, Islamic invasions were also taking place from the west. It was during that time, when Shankardev emerged as a saviour to the society. Sankardev's literature has not only resulted in the happiness of the people, but he has enlightened the public mind through spiritual understanding, devotional ways, music and acting only by witnessing the sorrow and pain of the people. In spite of being idealistic, in our literature, anthropomorphism can be found in every step. He was the creator of the *Brajboli* language, the originator of Assamese drama, Bargeet, and acting arts. In his compositions, he tried to inculcate devotion in the minds of people by using new words, new verses and new experiments. Shankardeva is a pioneer of the Assamese society, who uses diversity in literature, narration skills, due to the melding of clear poetic beauty and attracts the public's vision towards policy-ideals.

Surdas was the supreme disciple of Vallabhacharya, the head poet of the *Krishna-Bhakti* branch of *Saguna Dhara* of *Bhaktikal* and the chief poet of *Ashtachap* (eight seals). Before his acquaintance with Vallabhacharya, he used to write lyrics with *dasya bhava* and *vinaya bhava*, and later after his acquaintance with Vallabhacharya, he started composing lyrics of *sakhya*, *vatsalya* and *madhurya bhava*. The main theme of *Surkavya* is *Krishna-bhakti* which explicates Surdas's selfless devotion.

The inspiration of *Bhaktikavya* (religious epic) is mainly *Bhagavata* religion, in which poetry was composed by considering *Rama* and *Krishna* as the incarnation of *Vishnu*. The characteristic of *Vaishnava* devotion was reflected in the society in many forms. This devotion to love and benevolent attitude towards the living being is the basis of this devotion. Both Shankardeva and Surdas had composed many poems related to Krishna on the basis of the tenth book (*Skandha*) of *Srimad Bhagwat*. The poems related to *Krishna* composed by Surdas are in the form of '*Sursagar*' which is a lyrical free composition. Like *Shrimad Bhagwat*, it also has twelve *Skandha*.

*Kirtan Ghosha* composed by Shankardeva has 2261 verses. In it, from the beginning of the Universe to the manifestation of *Krishna* as a part of God, *Krishna* description of salvation has been beautifully described.

*Kirtan-Ghosha* has compiled 27 poems written in different volumes at different times. The *Gopi-Uddhav* dialogue under *Kirtan-Ghosha* is a summary of 24 verses.

When *Mama Kansha* summons *Krishna* to oblige to the summon and moves to *Mathura*, the *Gopis* continue to suffer in *Krishna's* absence. *Krishna* sends his message and sends *Uddhav* to *Vrindavan*. The pathetic condition of the *gopis* in *Krishna's* absence is described in the *Gopi-Uddhav* dialogue.

There are many feelings/ emotions in the minds of *gopis* in *Krishna's* absence and they begin to feel that *Krishna* has forgotten the *Gopis* by being bound in the love-loop of *Mathura* and *Kubja*.

In the words of Shankardev-

*Edila Sneh Prabhu samudaai.*  
*Mathura Naagari Sundari Pai..*  
*Aehi buli sabe lajjaaak aedi.*  
*Kandant krishnaar guna sumari.. (Goswami 2018: 290)*

(Gist: The *Gopis* were aggrieved at the fact that *Krishna* was bound in a love loop with the beautiful maidens of *Mathura* city. The *Gopi's* in *Krishna's* absence started to shed profuse tears)

In the words of Surdas-

*Kahiyou thakurani ham jaani.*  
*Ab din Chari Chalahu Gokul main Sevahu aai Bahuri Rajadhaani..*  
*Hamakoun houns bahut dekhan ki, sanga liyein Kubija Patarani.*  
*Pahunai Braj Kau Dadhi Makhan, Barou Palang Aru Tatou Pani.. (Arya and*  
*Agarwal 2007: 372)*

(Gist : The *Gopi's* resorted in utter dismay that since they are now acquainted with *Krishna's* present state. Now *Uddhav* may also take his leave and can travel back to his capital city. The *Gopis* further said that they wished to see *Krishna* with *Kubja* and the comforts of various eatables like milk, curd, butter, a comfortable bed to sleep on and warm water for bathe, that *Krishna* has been showered with.)

Both Shankaradeva and Surdas worked on the description of the *Gopi-Uddhava* episode but the difference between the two is seen even if the content is similar. *Uddhava* of Sankardeva put the message sent by *Krishna* in front of the *gopis* in the same way -

*Janilo Tumi mukhya Haridas.*  
*Pathaila pitri-patrir pasha*  
*Muniro Dustyj bandhura sneha.*  
*Jaano aani aasa Krishna-Sandesh (Goswami 2018: 290)*

(Gist : The *Gopis* expressed that they knew *Uddhava* as *Krishna's* devoted slave who was sent to deliver his message for his parents and since he was a true and devoted friend to *Krishna*, so he has also brought along the message of *Krishna* for his *Gopis*)

But *Uddhava* portrayed by Surdas was a worshiper of abstract form of *Brahma*. He goes to *Vrindavan* and does not give the message of *Krishna*, and starts discussing *Nirguna* knowledge in front of the *gopis*. Hearing all this, the *gopis* get angry and the *gopis* give *Uddhava* the comparison of bumble bee. Surdas has named the *Gopi-Uddhava* dialogue as *Bhramargeet*. *Bhramargeet* means songs spoken to the target.

*Rahu re Madhukar Madhu Matware.*  
*koun Kaj yaa Nirgun soun,chir Jeevahu Kanha hamaare..*  
*Lotat peet paraag keech main, beech na anga samhaare.*  
*Baarambaar sarak madiraa kii, aparas ratat ughare..*  
*Tum jaanat hou veisi gwarini, jaise kusum tihaare.*  
*Ghari pahar sabahini biramaavat, jete aavat kaare..*  
*Sundar badan Kamal-Dal Lochan, Jasumati Nand-Dulare.*  
*Tan mana sur arpi syamahi, kaa pai lehin udhaare..*

(Arya and Aggarwal 2007: 355)

(Gist :The *Gopis* went to the extent of comparing *Uddhava* to Bumble bee that flies from flower to flower tasting nectar and in the process they lose their sense to perform normal activities. Likewise, *Uddhava's* expressions to the *Gopis* of the abstract form are regarded as unreasonable; in spite of knowing the *Gopis* to be ardent lovers of *Krishna*, the son of *Yosodha* and *Nanda*. Surdas said : We have devoted our mind and soul solely to *Krishna* and now from whom shall we borrow another mind and soul to devotee to somebody else.)

*Radha's* mention is not seen in the *Gopi-Uddhava* dialogue composed by Shankardeva and Surdas too has not used the word '*Radha*' in the *Gopi-Uddhava* dialogue. But in some compositions, *Radha's* sorrow of separation is being indirectly expressed through the use of lyrical words (*Viraha Dasha*) -

Larikaai kii prem kahou ali kaiseen chutat.

*Kahaa kahou Brajnath Charit, antargati lutat..  
vah Chitwani vah chaal Manohar, vah Muskaani Mand-Dhuni Gavani.  
Natwar-bhesh nand-nandan kau vah vonoud, vah bana tai aawani..  
Charan kamal ko sounh karati houn, yah sandesh mohin vish laagat.  
Surdas Pal Mohin Bisarati, Mohan Murati Sovat Jagat..*

(Arya and Aggarwal 2007: 411)

(Gist : The *Gopis* expressed to *Uddhava* as how they shall leave their childhood love. Whenever *Krishna's* (*Brajanath*) romanticism comes to their mind, their hearts cry out in pain- his playful eyes, his mischievous character, his attractive smile, his melodious voice, his attire, his ways romanticizes their mind and soul till then. They said in the name of *Krishna* that the unreasonable expressions of *Uddhava* seemed to be like poison to their souls. Surdas said – the enchanting look of *Krishna* is unforgettable at any time of the hour)

#### 8. Achievements:

8.1. Both Shankaradeva and Surdas wrote the Gopi-Uddhava dialogues considering Shrimad Bhagwat as the basis.

8.2. The Gopi-Uddhava dialogue of Shankaradeva and the story of Surdas's *Bhramargeet* are virtually the same. Shankardev has never used the word '*Bhramargeet*'.

8.3. Shankardev's Gopi-Uddhava dialogue has no mention of Radha. Surdas indirectly made a reference of special *Gopi* i.e. indirect portrayal of *Radha*.

8.4. *Uddhava* portrayed by Surdas was a worshiper of abstract form of *Brahma* (*Nirakari Brahma*), but there is no such mention about *Uddhava* depicted by Shankaradeva.

8.5. Shankardev's language is ancient Assamese language 'Brajabuli'. Surdas wrote *Bhramargeet* in *Brajbhasha*, a dialect of Hindi literature.

8.6. Shankaradeva covered 25 verses in the *Gopi-Uddhava-Samvad*, while Surdas's *Bhramargeet* is widespread.

#### 9. Conclusion:

Shankardev and Surdas are *Vaishnav* poets of two different provinces of India. Both are worshiper of *Krishna*. Surdas worshiped the paired idol of *Radha-Krishna*. The way *Radha* endures all the sufferings to find *Krishna*, similarly Surdas also faces all obstacles.

There is no place for *Radha* in Shankaradeva's compositions. All *gopis* are the same in Shankardeva's vision. Here *Gopi* is the symbol of soul (*Jeevatma*) and *Vishnu* is the Supreme Soul. Therefore, God makes the desires of all beings equally fulfilled.

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