

Shivite Lokageet – an appraisal of their origin, forms and prevalence in Assam

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Abstract:

Assam occupies a very significant position so far the cultural aspects are concerned. Preaching of Shiv dharma was practice since ancient times. In Assam, the Kachari tribes were the first to offer worship. In ancient times the people residing in kamrup worship “burabathou”, “kirati debota” and “mahadev”. In Assam the linga and idol were preached. Different tribes of Assam worship shiv in different ways. The shivagin worship lord shiva as a general idol. The qualities of shiv were preached by all, so shiva centric oral songs were sang by the society. Although the songs were sang orally it followed all the structure of literature. In Assamese society shiva was considered as a noble person. In these songs shiva was considered as a person who was more accustomed to rural life. He was economically ruined. Because of his financial constraints he was unable to follow the rules and regulations of the society and his song made the general audience laugh out loud. This song basically deals with his love for cultivation, his attraction towards opposite sex, addiction towards weeds. In these songs shiva was preached as “pogolagukhai”, “buragukhai”, “rudra”, “jotia”, “bhangra baba”, “bholanath”, “pogolaguxai”.

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While studying these songs we got to know the religious perspective of the traditional society. Due to unavailability of proper platform these songs were endangered. Through my research I have try I to highlight these songs through scientific vision. If more researchers focus on these songs then definitely it will receive a global platform. The singers of these songs will also be recognize worldwide. Only then these songs will be known and preached across the globe.

Keywords: Folk songs, Shiva dharma, Assamese society, religious study

I. INTRODUCTION

A huge section of folk culture is engrossed by folk literature. If we analyse the folk culture we find folk songs occupy a preeminent position. The folk poets are the creators of folk songs which in turn become a platform for the emotions inherited in human beings. All kinds of emotions including happiness, sadness, sorrow, grief find a place in folk songs. The songs beautifully depict the everyday life of humans. Steinberg in Cassell’s Encyclopaedia of Literature has written about these folk songs, “The folk song has been well defined as a lyric

poem with melody, originating anonymously in time past among illiterate folk and remaining in currently for a considerable time, usually centuries.” (Steinberg 225)

The folk songs of Assam may be broadly divided into two groups, based on their area of origin. Thus, there are the upper Assam folk songs and lower Assam folk songs. Again, based on specific locales, the folk songs of lower Assam can be divided into the Kamrupia and Goalporia folk songs. Ritual centric folk songs, performed during auspicious occasion form an important repertoire of folk songs from both upper and lower Assam. The agriculture centric milieu of Assam engenders festivals to redouble the fertility of the soil. Both non-religious and religious folk songs form a vital part of the agriculture centric festivals. The latter naturally contain devotions aspects and are often referred to devotional folk songs. The popular varieties of devotional folk songs of Assam are ainaam, opesori khobahor geet, durga devir naam, monokha pujar naam, sadashivar naam, saraswatir naam, jikir geet, jari geet etc. I would like to present few lines of durga devir naam in these context.

Moheswari mohamya mohekhomohini.

Jogeswari jogamaya jogotojononi ||

Aidya saktimahamaya mohikhomoidini|

Paap paap horatar akritantobarini|| (Bordoloi ,Devi 434)

Some of the non-religious ritual folk songs are bihu songs, husori songs, biyanaam, and frog marriage songs. A song sung on the occasion of the harvest festival of Bihu is quoted in this context.

Barire dhapore kojola urohi

Pate tiribir kore,

Nasoni rmukholoi saboke nuwari

Souk satemari dhore. (Goggoi 66)

The songs in form of narratives are generally known as narrative songs or ballads. These narrative songs are generally historic or at times, even imaginative. The popular examples of this genre are the naharargeet, sikonkhoriyohor geet, monikuwararuphulkuwar or geet etc.

Another genre of folk songs are related several everyday aspects or tasks occur throughout Assam. The task based folk songs or ‘karmo bisoyok geet’ are named after the associated task associated. Thus, the nisukani geet is about to make babies sleep ie, lullaby; the naugeet is sings for excitement in boat race, borohi buwa geet sings in fishing by fishing rod, khuhiyarpera geet relates to traditionally crushing of sugarcane, the gorohiyar geet is used by herdsman and the mas mora geet associated with fishing.

II. METHODOLOGY

My research work is based on information collected during my field work and the documented sources available in various libraries. For carrying out the field work, I have visited the districts of Darrang and Sonitpur, interacted with a wide cross section of people, across different age groups. It allowed me to collect a variety of lokgeet and related information. Subsequently, books accessed at libraries helped me evaluate authenticity of the folk songs collected in the field trips.

III. RESULT

The survey of the lokgeet/folk songs collected, accessed, and analysed, revealed four salient points in relation to the main objective of this paper the appraisal of Shivite Lokageet, with relation to their origin, forms and prevalence in Assam

1. The Shivite religious songs were communicated orally.
2. They varied from region to region.
3. The language and theme of these songs are very simple.

The documented information gleaned from books accessed, reveal these songs are basically sung during special occasions while performing associated rituals. Their Shiv centric bias does not take away from their significance in the culture of Assam and are hallmarked by their message of hope. Although, these folk songs were born in the hands of lay man the vocabulary used in these songs are easily understood by all. Even while these song portray a deep sense of devotion towards Lord Shiva, they are also suffused with humour, romance, and sadness. While performing these songs the singers project an individualistic take on the various emotions inherent in these songs. Thus the singers also depict folk performing art through their moves; accompanied by the rhythmic clapping of hands to underscore musical notes. Folk musical instruments like nagara, khutital, dogor, and dambaru are commonly used in percussion.

IV. DISCUSSION

Our discussion is based on Sadashivar naam, the name by which Shiv centric folk songs are known in Assam. Their origin can be traced to the age old Saiba Dharma and linked to the traditional worship of Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati, by the 'kirat' in ancient Kamrup. As mentioned in Yogini tantra 'kirataza' is actually a result of the combination of Aryan and non-Aryan traditions or religious practices. The great king Naranarayan while rebelling against the Ahoms, followed the teachings preached by Lord Shiva by following the kirataza principles. Historians like Gait have recounted the traditional Siva worship of the people of Assam. "This tribal mode of worship was recognized and legalized by the king by the issue of an edict which set aside the north bank of the Brahmaputra river for the practice of the aboriginal forms of worship" (Gait 58)

The historical and religious books, accessed during my research, bear testimony to the very prominence accorded to Lord Shiva. In Vedas, Shiva is called Rudra Pashupati. Shiva is actually a combination of truth, beauty, calm and patience, possessing the attributes of a yogi. He is equally affectionate towards his home and the outdoors; the latter, in fact gives him the

sobriquet 'batordevota'. Shiva is simultaneously seen as a selfless person and considered as the lord of love.

In the socio cultural milieu of Assam, Lord Shiva occupies a very prominent position. Right from the ancient times Lord Shiva has been central figure in the consciousness of the people of Assam, which is borne out by the many songs in his name. The analysis of the songs during our research, not only supports Shiva's social centrality but bears witness to the very prominent place he held in the mind and heart of peoples. One of the reasons for choosing Darrang and Sonitpur districts of Assam for our field study, was their famed cultural richness of folk songs related to Lord Shiva. The acclaimed cultural richness was clearly borne out by our interactions during the field study. These songs with their specific nomenclature of 'shodashivar nam, shivar malsi geet, jagar puja geet, is a strong indicator of their exalted position in the society, particularly in these districts.

Among them, the 'shoda shivar nam, stands out as the most popular genre. They are markedly non Aryan origin, orally handed down, and sung by folk poets of every generation. The 'shoda shivar nam' narrate Shiva's inclination to drink and drunkenness, and his lack of attachment to domesticity of a married life. His famed consort Parvati also figures prominently in these songs. This repertoire of songs were mainly sung by the people during the auspicious occasions like Shiv Puja and Shiv Ratri. It would be pertinent to quote the words of a song from Sailandra Saikia, who spoke of its ancient lineage.

Ei shiva tumar shire ganga boi

Trikhular r domboru hate

Khorpor mala gole

Chandrae puhor korithoi(Sailandra Saikia)

In 'shoda shivar nam' mention has been made about how Cananbis occupies a very important place in argo centric the life of Lord Shiva. The songs depict Shiva's greatness and grandeur when seated on his chariot (brikhob). The marriage, the ups and downs of Shiva and Parvati's conjugal life occupies a specific place in these songs. The 'shoda shivar nam' humorously narrate the chaos in his marital life. These songs simultaneously sing of the greatness of Siva's character, while lifting the veil on the negative aspects. The latter caused a lot of grief to his family and their plight is reflected through these songs. A song collected from my informant Mohini Devi brings out this ethos in a perfect manner.

Sadashiva tumar shire jonta

Jogotok bordiya apuni nogothakhoda. (Mohinidevi)

It is noteworthy, that these songs never failed to highlight the attire of Lord Shiva or visualize his simple life lead by him. Consequently, the folk singers have attempted to present lord shiva as a lay man through their songs. Lord Shiva's propensity for being easily pleased makes the folk songs a natural offering to satisfy Lord Shiva by the singers. Against the apparent difficult

and quarrelsome conjugal life of Shiv and Parvati, the songs manage to vividly portray the inherent respect and beauty of their divine association.

Shiva centric songs of Darrang are the Jagarpujar geet .Even the kings of Darrang patronized Jagarpuja geet. These songs are basically sung by ujalalis. I would like to cite one example of jagar puja in this context.

O okhudho pritivhi oxhudha khonkhar.

Oxhuror molomutrae prithivhi ekakar.

Oxhuror molomutrae prithivi ase bhori

Okhudho pritivhit nitro koru kenekori.

(saharia 25)Another genre of folk song popular in Darrang is the Malsi songs.

These songs are sung only by the Ojapalis (laymen are barred) during the Jagar Puja, and therefore, also called the Jagarpujar Geet. The name Malsi is derived from the malashree-rhythm used by the Ojapalis while rendering the songs (Saharia 25). The Malsi or Jagarpujar Geet are melodious, Shiva centric and generally performed while standing up or sitting down. It would apt to quote lines from a song sung by one of our informants.

O Shankar jagodigambar raj

Utha utha prabho nidar jagiya

Bihon ekhu joga kartik ganapati

Tumar dui putro dukho upori dukh pai

(Tankeswar Nath)

These songs clearly highlight the self-centric nature of Lord Shiva, which caused an immense amount of suffering to his wife and sons.

V. CONCLUSION

Contemporary research holds these religious traditional folk songs in high esteem. They seem to be vast repertoire of that beautifully portrays the social life, highlights the traditional customs and rituals and even touches upon the superstitions followed by the people. And, without a doubt, the devotional aspect predominates everyone one of the folks songs of the religious genre.

The Shiv centric songs are a bridge between the past and present; an indelible part of our socio-religious customs that are cherished by the present and the future generations. Unfortunately, the folk songs and singers seem to be on the decline, with not many from the present generation taking up their mantle or preserving this rich tradition. One of the possible causes is the lack of exposure, incentives and suitable platforms for folk artists that can create a livelihood for

them. The government could step forward to amend matters, provide recognition and rewards that would attract the younger generation. Creating public awareness, portraying the songs in various media, especially the widely disseminated digital cinematic would be step in the right direction to preserve this ancient, proud and worthy heritage.

Research into the various aspects of these songs, the specific usage and nuances of language would immensely help in their preservation and conservation. In addition, popularization through the World Wide Web, would not only arouse curiosity but garner fresh audiences for an ancient tradition. The accompanying musical instruments, need to be lifted out of their local nucleus in Assam, researched and disseminated on a much wider scale to benefit their continuity and the craftsmen who produce them, Also the musical instruments used while performing these songs should also be taken into account.

By preserving these songs, we will only add to rich cultural diversity of Assam and India and access a worldwide audience and following. we can uplift the cultural aspects of India. The privilege of knowing these folk songs will follow for millions all over the world. In their recognition, continuity and prestige lies an as yet unclaimed glory for these beautiful folksongs and their community.

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