

## **RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND HIS LITERARY WORKS OF SRI SRI ANIRUDDHADEVA**

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The *Neo-Vaishnavite* philosophy that propagated by Sankardeva was based on *Bhagabat Purana* and *Gita*. So, the works of Sankardeva like *Bhakti Ratnakara*, *Bhakti Pradipa*, and *Bhakti Ratnawali* of Madhabdeva, are based on those scriptures. Continuing this tradition *Bhagawata* also the supreme texture of the Kala Samhati *Satras*. Similarly Aniruddhadeva's *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* and the *Nij-Shastra* were based on the spirit of *Bhagawata Purana*.

The *Vaishnava* philosophy based on four principle or *chari vastu*. Those were *deva*, *guru*, *nama* and *bhakta or bhakat*. Like his predecessors Aniruddhadeva also believes it as the four pillars of his ideology.

### **Deva:**

In *Neo-Vaishnava* philosophy, *Vishnu* or Lord *Krishna* is the supreme deity. Aniruddhadeva describes *Vishnu* as the supreme deity to be worshipped. In *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* he says:

*Krishna byteraka ana karta nahi jana*

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*Vagabanta sastra kahe ehise byakhayana.*<sup>1</sup>

(This is explained in *Bhagabata* that there is no God except *Krishna*)

Again in *Puranjan Upakhan* he says:

*Madhavake pujile savake puja hoi*

*Prithake pujar deva ishware napave*<sup>2</sup>

(When Madhava is worshipped all other deities are worshipped. But when other deities are worshipped fruit doesn't go to anybody.)

God is omnipotent and omniscient. He creates the world, sustains it and he is also the destroyer of the world. He is Lord *Krishna* or *Vishnu*. In his *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* he says:

*Daivakita honte byokta huya samasta lokata nistariya*

*Narara swarupa devata nanda nandana*

*Tanta vine ano deva nahi jivara kushala sadhiveka*

*Hena iswara karone loilu sarana*<sup>3</sup>

(Assuming the human form of as the son of *Daivaki*, he liberated all human beings. There is no other god except him who can do well to all human beings. I surrender to this great god.)

Again in the same scripture he narrates;

*Jagatara eka natha Prabhu*

*Maha Mane andha hoya taka*

*Novhajai jito Sito ati Murha Jana.*<sup>4</sup>

(Who doesn't worship the sole almighty, he is a foolish one)

He also warns him, who indulging in sensual pleasure avoids worship of Lord *Krishna*,

*Bhastachariya yito labhiya manashi tanu*  
*Gyana vignanara mula sthana*  
*Sri Krishna najaniya indriyo sukhoto bhrame*  
*Koti kolpe nupojai jnana.*<sup>5</sup>

Aniruddhadeva offers his first salutation in his *Bhakti mangal Ghosa* to Lord *Krishna*, as Madhavdeva does in *Namghisa*,

*Jaya jaya Krishna deva bhakatare karane yito*  
*bhadla purna bekata gobinda*  
*hena paramananda Krishna vhajohu sada*  
*hridayata pada arivinda*<sup>6</sup>

(Glory to lord *Krishna* who assumed full incarnation for the sake of his devotees.  
I worship that *Krishna*, the eternal bliss keeping his holy feet in the lotus of my heart)

### ***Guru:***

Gopaldeva was and passionate follower of Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. He mentioned *Hari* or Lord *Krishna* as the chief adorable divinity. He created the doctrine of '*Guru Vada*' or influencing devotion to *guru*. In this cult *guru* is regarded as the living embodiment of God on earth. In the 5<sup>th</sup> *skanda* of *Bhagabata* he narrates that without learning from a *guru* nobody can cultivate the spirit of *bhakti*,

*Guru charana                      anugraha loiya*

*Jijane jane namaka*

*Kahe Aniruddha*

*etini lokata*

*Sama kona sijanate*<sup>7</sup>

(He is unequal in three world who learns to chant the name of God from a *guru*)

In Assam Sankaradeva and Madhavdeva were the first *gurus* or preceptors, exposing the greatness of those *gurus* he says;

*Adi karta deve nana sastra kori*

*hari hari hari hari ye*

*Nij sastra mata guputa koriya thoila*

*Sankara rupaka dharia isware*

*hari hari hari hari ye*

*Bhaktara hita cintia bekat koila*

*Sehirupe sehidharma madhavata*

*hari hari hari hari ye*

*Bekata vailo dekhiloka sarvaloka*

*Ateke aved sankara madhava*

*hari hari hari hari ye*

*bisare pramane eko sove janiyoka.*<sup>8</sup>

(The sages composed many texts but kept secret the *Nij- Sastra*. Sankardeva as an incarnation of God reveal it to all. As Madhava taught it from Sankara, there is no difference between them.)

Aniruddhadeva also placed his *guru* Gopaldeva in the same line of Sankardeva and Madhavadeva. He writes;

*Sankara Madhava dui      Gopala swarupe hui*  
*Jivake tariala prithivita*  
*isware namane ito      bisar nubuji sito*  
*Tara mata sastara dusit.*<sup>9</sup>

(Sankara and Madhava both took the form of Gopala and saved the world. There opinion defiles the *sastras* who do not accept the truth)

According to Aniruddhadeva, only mastery over religious texts does not make a proper *guru*. He should follow the principle of *bhakti* in his personal life. The real *guru* makes no distinction between disciples. He should ever ready to work for humanity. The relation between *guru* and *sishya* is very significant in Mayamara fraternity. The central uniting force of the devotees, who took part in Mayamora rebellion is the *guru*. The main slogan of this rebellion was “*mari jaon mari jaon goror rin suji jaon*” meaning I will kill or get myself killed but I will repay my debt to *guru*.

### **Nam-Kirtana or chanting the name of God:**

The *Vaishnava* saints preferred *Nam Kirtana* as the best way for attaining salvation. Sankardeva says in his *kirtana*,

*Kewala kirtana samsara tari*

*Bhandha sindi howe oponi har.*

*Surya prakashak karo sahai nalai*

*Apon rashmie andhar kare khoi<sup>10</sup>*

(As sun illuminates the world without taking help of others the name of *Hari* can glitter the universe).

As like Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, Aniruddhadeva says:

*Ghor kali kale eka gota dharmā*

*Krishna kirtane matra*

*Sakala srvat sestha kari sastra*

*Kirtanaka kave mantra*

*Sevat uttam yugara nayaka*

*Nahi kala desa patra<sup>11</sup>*

(Chanting the name of God is the only way to worship him in the *Kaliyuga*, it knows no difference of time, country or people)

Exposing the greatness of *nam-kirtana* Aniruddhadeva writes;

*jati kulacar niyama samyam*

*Kichuka bata nachai*

*Mahima janile matrake taray*

*Nahike ata samsay<sup>12</sup>*

(There is no caste or creed in chanting of *nam*. There is no doubt about the fact that if one realises the greatness of *nam*, he gets salvation.)

Nam can wipe out any sin. By cultivating *nirguna bhakti* and *nam* one can uplift his status.<sup>13</sup> According to him, *nam* is the redeemer of sinners. In *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* he writes,

*Patita pabana nam bine ana*

*Patita kariba kene janile pramana*<sup>14</sup>

Again he emphasized it as,

*Maha abhakate      adhama candela*

*Thake matra bidurata*

*Saya parasile      bastra ghrana paile*

*Lagaya snana yahar*

*Hari hrna nama      ekabara matra*

*Karibe ave ussara*

*Samsara bandhara      para tetikshana*

*Huibeka jana mukuta*

*Aru jagatara pujani hoibeka ati ati odbhuta*<sup>15</sup>

(Hari considers all devotees as equal and if one takes his name with devotion at once he get freedom from the bondage of the world.)

He warns those people who takes different way avoiding *nama- kirtana*. He wrote in *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* ,

*Hari bhakatika      ari jito jane*

*An purusartha kare*

*Nao ari yen      kubudhi manushye*

*jalata dubiya mare*<sup>16</sup>

(The man who discards *hari- kirtana* is like a man who leaves the boat to get himself drowned.)

### ***Bhakti* is the only way to adore God:**

In *Neo-Vaishnava* movement *hari bhakti* is the best and sole means for realization and adoring god. So, Sankardeva and other *Vaishnava* reformers taught only the way of *bhakti* to disciples. This *bhakti* is of two types. One is *Saguna bhakti*. In this type of *bhakti* the devotee takes this way for the venerators of God with a desire for something on earth. Another is *Nirguna bhakti* or selfless *bhakti*, having monotheistic principle. Sankardeva preferred the *Dasya bhakti* or saving god with a spirit of loyal servant.

Aniruddhadeva also preferred *Nirguna bhakti* or calls it as having the power of making a man to attain liberation. In *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* he says,

*Narayana Snareneka parma subside mani*

*Aharnishe smare tusta mane*

*Nirguna bhakti jana bulia thaka tole*

*Jenibaha jata sadhu jane*

*Prani samastake jitu isuar mutike dekhe*

*Pranita dekheiya inswaraka,*

*Ehimote jito jane satake dekeye jana*

*Nirugn buliya isabaka<sup>17</sup>*



(who chants the name of Narayana all the time, finds the presence of God in all his Creations and the creations in God is known as follower of *Nirguna Bhakti*)

In *Bhakti Ratnawali*, Madhavdeva mentioned nine modes of *bhakti*. Those are like *Sravana* (listening), *Kirtana* (chanting), *Smarana* (recollection), *Archana* (worship with offering), *Vandana* (abeisance), *Padasevana* (personal services), *Dasya* (service with the attitude of a loyal servant), *Sakhittva* (friendly behavior) and *Atmanibadana* (resignation of one's self).<sup>18</sup>

Revealing the greatness of *devotion or bhakti* he says,

Muktita kari            bhakti garistha  
Eteke jana nishay  
Abhagata save        achoko bhakti  
Muktito napavay<sup>19</sup>

(Know it certain that *bhakti* is greater than *mukti* or salvation. The non-devotees cannot attain *mukti*, not to speak of *bhakti*)

Those ways were fitted with the illiterate society of Upper Assam of that period. Those nine types of *bhakti* was of three virtues, *Satta*, *Rajo*, *Tamo*. The three types of *virtues* again classified into three types, considering their grades as *Uttam Madhyam* and *Adhama*. So total number of *bhakti* became 81. Like Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, Aniruddhadeva also preferred *Uttam Sattik bhakti* to be the highest types of *bhakti*. This is selfless devotion to God and service in his name with the spirit of a servant.<sup>20</sup>

Giving an essence of *nirguna bhakti* he says,

*Narayana smaranaka        parama suhrida mani*

*Aharnishe smare tusta mane*  
*Nirguna bhakti jana bulia tahaka kole*  
*Janibaha save sadhu jane.*  
*Prani samastako jito iswara murtika dekhe*  
*Pranito dekhaya iswaraka*  
*Yehi mote jito jane dekhiya satate jana*  
*Nirguna buliya iswaraka.*<sup>21</sup>

(Who chants the name of Narayana, and thinks him as his best friend and consider all living beings as his image and feels his presence in all his creations, is a *nirguna* follower.)

The company of *nirguna bhaktas* is called *sat-sanga*. Aniruddhadeva sates *sat-sanga* superior than the blessing of God. In *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* he says,

*Ateke sat-sanga sarba upakari*  
*Nahike patro niyam*  
*Labhile matrake kitaertha hovey*  
*Pavay gati parama*<sup>22</sup>

(Therefore *sat-sanga* is useful to all. It purifies the heart of all. One who gets the company of *sat-sanga*, he is the blessed one)

### **Not committing sin against *bhakti*:**

The main four pillars of *Vaishnavaita* faith is *Nama*, *Deva*, *Guru* and *Bhakat*. In the Neo-*Vaishnava* order a devotee had to follow some codes and conducts. The violation of these conducts is taken as a sin. Aniruddhadeva mentioned the most serious

crime is insulting a co-disciples. He speaks about the greatness of devotees in *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* as,

*Isware bulanta mur gururupa*  
*Bhakate jana nichay*  
*Hena vhakataka jijane nindai*  
*Sastraka si ki gane*<sup>23</sup>

(God says; know it is certain that the devotee is like my *guru*. who casts profanity on such a devotee, how can show his regard to the religious texts.)

Most of the disciples of Aniruddhadeva came from the depressed class, who work always discriminated by the upper class. Aniruddhadeva was always conscious in this regard. He says in his *Bhakti Mangal Gosha*,

*Bhakat nindile hai nam Apnedh*  
*Bhakti nisise tar daiba nahi badh*<sup>24</sup>

(Devotion to God remain incomplete, when one reproaches a devotee)

Assault to a co-disciple is taken as *nam aparadh*. He says the fate of such persons as,

*Bhakataka nindi krishnaka dukhit*  
*Kare ito duracar*  
*upoji upoji narakata pore*  
*nistar nahike tar*<sup>25</sup>

(The devil who reproaches a *devotee* gives pain to lord *Krishna*. He will take birth again and again in the hell and never get liberated.)

### **Forbidding the worship of *vigrahas*:**

Aniruddhadeva forbids any kind of *vigraha* worship. Therefore no *vigraha* is still worship in Mayamara namghars.<sup>26</sup> The *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* of Aniruddhadeva or the *Mukti Mangal Gosha* of Nityanandadeva is placed in the *sastraghar* in stead of any image of God.

### **Kindness to all living being:**

All the *Neo-Vaishnava* preachers teaches to be kind to all living beings. Aniruddhadeva condemns animal sacrifice. He says,

*yajna kari pasu kati rudhirya karia pankā*  
*siyo yebe yaibeka svargaka*  
*ito jagatete tebe kon jan ache an*  
*yaibe ito ghor naraka*<sup>27</sup>

### **Satsang or company of holy person:**

Aniruddhadeva laid emphasize on the company of pious or wise man. He says clearly about the qualities of a holy man as,

*Tumi hena maha mahantar padaraja jito sire dhari*  
*Samasta petaka tekhana nasta kari*  
*Parama iswara devatata nirmal bakti haibe jata*  
*Mur mane yito adbhuta kisu nahay*<sup>28</sup>

Again he describes its merit as,

*Eteke satsang sarva upakari*

*Nahike patra niyam*

*Labhile matrake kitartha hovey*

*Pavai gati param*<sup>29</sup>

(*satsang* purifies the heart of all. He is a blessed one who gets *satsang*)

### **Literaturary contributions of Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva:**

The *Vaisnavite* Movement gave a tremendous impetus to the development of Assamese literature in various directions. The personality and the genius of Srimanta Sankardeva became a shadow to the next *Vaishnavite* poets. Sankardeva himself was a source of infinite inspiration, and delight to contemporary writers. Aniruddhadeva was one of the accomplished followers of Sankardeva and an outstanding figure in the field of literature. As a social and religious reformer he was more revolutionary than other writers. Like other *Vaisnavite* poets he also composed several poetic songs, translations etc.

After shifting to Naharati *satra* Aniruddha started composing all his religious scriptures. Aniruddhadeva translated the 5<sup>th</sup> *skanda* of *Bhagabata*. It contains 950 *padas*. The transcription of this part is a sign of his mastery over his Sanskrit language and *Vedic* lore.

His *Puranjan Upakhyan* is based on 25<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> chapters of 4<sup>th</sup> *skanda* of *Bhagabata*. The saint also composed 182 number of devotional song in the line of *Bargeet* of Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. He prescribed Ragas to each of them. Those songs are published in the book “Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva *git*.”

In the line of Madhavdeva's *Namghosa* he composed the *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* with 805 verses. The Mayamara disciples considers it with same merit of Sankardeva's *Kirtana* and *Namghosha* of Madhavdeva. It is kept in the *Satraghar* of Mayamora *satra* and *Namghar*.

His another work *Nij-sastra* is written in prose and verse. The scripture is not open to common devotees. Only the *Bhajanial* devotees are allowed to attend in the recitation and explanation of the scripture. Its performance is done at night.

We can divide them in three parts

- 1) Translation
- 2) Devotional writings and collections
- 3) Devotional songs

Though the situation made him to move place to place, his pen never stopped. Aniruddhadeva started his religious mission from *Vishnu* Balikunchi in 1601 A.D. But his literary life started and ended at Naharati *than*, where he shifted after *Dafala* raids.

## **Translation:**

The translation of the entire text is not a light job. Sometimes translator makes changes in the text without destroying or subverting the central idea of the original. Aniruddhadeva had translated the Canto V of the *Bhagavata*. Originally, there were twenty six chapters. Aniruddhadeva translated them into twenty four chapters. With the

principle of remaining faithful to the subject matter of the original *Bhagavata* he has translated *Priyabrata Rajar Proti Brahmar Upadesh*, *Priyabratar Paryatan*, *Rsabhaar Akhyan*, *Bharatar Akhyan*, *Sapta Dvipor Katha*, *Narakar Barnana* etc.

The story of the king *Puranjan* is a part of the fourth book of the *Bhagavata*. *Aniruddhadeva* found the story extremely useful and informative for far reaching religious effects and more impressive for spread of *bhakti* movement. In this story the conflict between good and evil has been described. How the honest effort is obstructed by the ill motive and how both reside within the mind of a person is the projection of the story.

### **Devotional writings and collections:**

Collection of devotional songs of *Aniruddhadeva* is the *Bhakti Mangal Ghosa*. *Bhakti Mangal Ghosa* is a monumental work of devotion, where the theory of *bhakti* has been described. Following the example of original *Bhagavata* the *Bhakti Mangal Gosha* opens with ‘*Om Namo Bhagavata Basudevaya*’. It is composed after the pattern of *Namghosa* of *Madhavdeva*. Here he describes the process to delivering oneself from *maya*, the path of devotion, grace of *guru*, nobility, supremacy of *bhakti* and the necessity of *guru* in one’s religious life. *Aniruddhadeva* also invokes his *guru* *Gopaldeva*. He urges everyone for self realization. However there is no other religion than chanting the name of *Hari*. Devotion alone helps one to cross the ocean of the world of *maya* or illusion. This is the only path of salvation. The devotional recitation of the name of *Hari* is regarded as the supreme religion.

*Bhakti Mangal Ghosa* lays great stress on the help of *guru*. The service of the *guru* as the chief cause of self realization is emphasized here. Though the thought and poetic techniques are inspired by Madhavdeva, Aniruddhadeva's genius is seen in the language, mainly in the use of comparable metaphors etc. The text comprises 805 *padas* and is divided into 36 parts.

According to the *Charitputhi*, Aniruddhadeva composed another book in prose and rhyme. The book is known as *Nij-sastra*. This book is not available for common people. This is a very sacred book as far as the philosophy and rituals of Mayamara cult is concerned. This has been kept secretly and not yet seen the light of the day. It is consisted of nine parts or chapters called *Varna*.

### **Gits of Aniruddhadeva:**

Structurally Aniruddhadeva's *gits* (songs) are divided into two parts. One is *Dhurung* and other is *Pada*. These are mainly in *Payer* and *Tripadi* meters. Ragas like *Belovar*, *Mahur*, *Kedar*, *Kou*, *Kanarda*, *Vasanta*, *Kalyan* etc. are found in his songs, which are found in *Borgeets* of Sankardeva and Madhabdev. Besides he uses some other ragas like *Chalengi*, *Rang-Bhatiyali*, *Pachima Dhansiri* etc. in his songs. He uses total 36 *ragas* in the *gits*. He also gives the name of *raga* to be performed.

Considering the textual view point, these *gits* can be divided into some classes like essence of the *Vedantas*, Supremacy of *Bhakti*, Metaphysical thoughts, acts of lord *Krishna*, spiritual thoughts etc. Besides, a feel of humor is also found in some of them.

Aniruddhadeva uses old *Kamrupi* dialect of *Bajravali* form in his *gits*. He also uses Sanskrit and colloquial words in these songs. Lucid description of events and



places and particularly symphony of the songs shows his poetic talent and in-depth knowledge of music.<sup>30</sup>

Though all the songs are devotional, yet the supremacy of *Bhakti* is the most touching part of his songs. These songs are very useful and valuable contributions to the “*Satriya Sangit*” of Assam.<sup>31</sup>

Aniruddhadeva was not only a revolutionary social reformer, but also a gifted poet. From social and cultural point of view writings of Aniruddhadeva are very significant. It may be concluded by the comment of Dr. Maheswar Neog as he wrote ‘as poetic composition, songs of Aniruddhadeva are really brilliant and lively. The two great saints before him composed songs on the same themes, but still Aniruddhadeva could add novelty and a fresh vitality to his compositions. The song that he composed as Harakantha before becoming Aniruddhadeva, praying for the *darsana* of Bhabanipuriya Gopal Ata when he first entered is equally pleasing with the one by Ramananda Rai of Oresha in his second visit to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He is equally elegant in expressing the feelings of renunciation on the one hand and love, as reflected through the mankind of Brajadham considered as ideal devotion in the Narada *Bhakti sutra*, on the other’.<sup>32</sup>

#### **Notes and Reference:**

1. Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva, *Bhakti Mangal Gosha*, v. 569, henceforth abbreviated as BMG.
2. Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva, *Puranjan Upakhyan*, v. 542, henceforth abbreviated as PU.
3. BMG, v.195
4. Ibid, v. 144

5. Ibid, v. 465
6. Ibid, v. 138
7. Sri Sri Aniruddhadevar git, (ed) S. K. Gogoi, Chabua, 1982, p. 59
8. BMG, v. 38
9. Ibid, v.255
10. Kirtana, v. 13
11. Ibid, v.49
12. Ibid, v. 46
13. Ibid, vv. 24-28
14. Ibid, v. 167
15. PU, vv. 422-424
16. BMG, v. 561
17. Ibid, vv. 352-353
18. Madhavdeva, Bhakti Ratnawali, chapter III, vv. 31-33
19. BMG, v. 751
20. Ibid, vv. 341-352
21. Ibid, vv. 352-54
22. Ibid, v. 713
23. Ibid, v. 453
24. Ibid, v. 88
25. Ibid, v,448
26. B.K Gohain, Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva, Dispur, 1991, p. 31
27. BMG, v. 631
28. Ibid, v. 699
29. Ibid, v. 713
30. M. Neog, Introductory part, Sri Sri Aniruddhadevar git, Chabua, 1981,
31. A. Hazarika, 'Literary contributions of Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva', article in 'Life and Teaching of Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva' a collection of essays on Aniruddhadeva, (ed), S.L. Barua, Dibrugarh University, 2002
32. M. Neog, op. cit