



Naamghar Association of America

NEWSLETTER

WWW.NAAMGHAR.ORG

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MESSAGE FROM THE *BOR-MEDHI*

Dear community members and well-wishers of NAAM,

Covid-19 situation seems to be getting under better control, though we still see some positive cases around. Travel seems to be less restricted with testing requirements. We have learned to live with Covid around us in a safer manner, practicing the recommended methods to reduce and prevent exposure.

In this second quarter newsletter of 2022 from NAAM, it is my pleasure to highlight a few key points:

- A) Dr. Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti, President of Society for Srimanta Sankaradeva, has organized an International webinar series on Sankaradeva. I presented a seminar in the first quarter of 2022. Its topic was "Comparison between Christianity and Eka Sarana Nama Dharma". His next speaker in April-2022 was Dr Ratul Ch. Borah who delivered a webinar with the title "Srimanta Sankaradeva and Guru Nanak". This was the 6th Lecture Program organized Dr Borkakoti, where the Delphic Council of North East India also participated with an active session of follow-up with questions and answers. Dr Borah, who is currently also the President of Jorhat Zila Sahitya Sabha, has given us his written summary of his speech, which is published in this newsletter.

- B) **We are gearing up for our mid-year NAAM fundraising event on August 28, 2022 (please see the flier below).** We have an exciting group of performing artists lined up for your pleasure with Borgeets, devotional songs and Xatriya performances. Dr Ratul Ch. Borah also accepted our invitation to enlighten the audience with a brief speech on Sankaradeva.
- C) I request all EC and WG members to pay their respective membership dues for the year 2022 and encourage your friends and family members to join us in our mission.
- D) Finally, we hope most of you are receiving our individualized communication for our fundraising drive and follow-up, which we hope to complete by the time of our August 28th event.

I am looking forward to your feedback and continued co-operation to drive the processes for our Naamghar mission.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Dr. Binoy K. Bordoloi, *Bor Medhi*

Email: binoy.bordoloi@gmail.com



UPDATE ON FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

We are gearing up for our **mid-year NAAM fundraising event on August 28, 2022.**

Please register at:

<https://naamghar.org/registration/>

NAAM is soliciting your donations via its website (<https://naamghar.org/>), NAAM Facebook page (

<https://www.facebook.com/N naamghar AssociationOfAmerica/>), and the “DONATE” button on this page to fund a community Naamghar in North America.

We encourage our well wishers who shop at Amazon, to use the link <https://smile.amazon.com/> and add "Naamghar Association of America" as the designated charity. By adding a charity at Amazon Smile does not cost you additional charges. It is free.

NAAM is looking forward to an active participation of the community (Assamese diaspora) for realizing a common dream of building a Naamghar in North America. Please use the “DONATE” button below and/or contact Dr. Binoy Bordoloi at binoy.bordoloi@gmail.com for additional information. Thank you!



Please contribute to NAAM's effort to build a naamghar in North America:



AUGUST 28, 2022 FUND RAISING EVENT FLIER

Registration link for the event: <https://naamghar.org/registration/>



NAAMGHAR ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (NAAM)
Presents
Sutradhar 2022
A fundraising cultural event by NAAM

Sunday, August 28th, 2022-1:30 PM (EDT)/ 11 PM (IST)

Register at <https://naamghar.org/registration/>



Eepsita Hazarika
Singer, Anchor, Actress



Jatin Bora
Actor & Director



Sunita Bhuyan
Violinist

Performances By

- ❖ Tarali Sarma/Eepsita Hazarika- Devotional Songs
- ❖ Sunita Bhuyan- Violin Performance
- ❖ Seuj Priya Goswami-Sattriya Dance
- ❖ Nritya Dhawani School of Performing Arts, NC- Sattriya Dance
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RECENT AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

A NAAM sponsored webinar on Sankaradeva

Dr. Ratul Chandra Borah, former Registrar, Mahapursha Srimanta Sankaradeva Vishwavidyalaya, presented a lecture titled, “Srimanta Sankaradeva and Guru Nanak,” as a part of a webinar series on “Different facets of Sankaradeva Studies,” organized by the Society for Srimanta Sankaradeva and co-sponsored by NAAM and the Delphic Council of NE India. Dr. Borah’s article on the topic appears on the next page of this this newsletter.

Webinar series on
Different facets of Sankaradeva Studies
Organized by
Society for Srimanta Sankaradeva
www.sankaradeva.com
In association with
Naamghar Association of America
www.naamghar.org
And
Delphic Council of North East India
Moderator :
Dr Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti,
President, Society for Srimanta Sankaradeva
6TH LECTURE PROGRAMME
“Srimanta Sankaradeva and Guru Nanak”

SPEAKER
Dr Ratul Chandra Borah
Former Registrar, MSSV

29th May, 2022 at 7.00 pm IST



SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA AND GURU NANAK

By Dr. Ratul Ch. Borah

Guru Nanak (1469–1539) and Guru Sankaradeva (1449–1568) are founders of Sikhism and Mahāpurushiaism respectively. They are great Indian thinkers and social reformers of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, who brought about a whole cultural and religious renaissance in medieval India. They preached universal messages for the common men guiding them towards a spiritual rejuvenation and brought about an altogether new and moral way of life for all. There are many common events and teaching in the life and works of these two great spiritual leaders. Due to the geographical isolation, lack of good communication, language etc., the contributions of these great saints of the time remained limited to a smaller geographical area. It was more so in case of Guru Sankaradeva who visited India twice, first time for long twelve years and second time for only six months, covering almost all the holy places across the *Bharatavarsha* (now India). Guru Sankaradeva received education at the age of twelve under a brahmin scholar named Mahendra Kandoli and came out as a finished scholar on all the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Upanisads*, *Epic*, *Grammar*, *Kavyas*, *Dramas*, *Logic* and all other such scriptures available in the *Tol* (residential school) of Pandit Mahendra Kandoli and studied for about seven years. Sankaradeva was a very brilliant student and proved his excellence in literature while he was in the first year of his schooling, by writing a poem “*Karatala Kamala*” without using any vowel except the first.

The father of Sankaradeva was a local ruler and landlord and the kingdom was known as *Bhuyan Rajya* (Bhuyan’s state). However, Sankaradeva was not interested in all these worldly possessions, and he was inclined to religious matters. He devoted himself to creative works like writing of scriptures and on cultural affairs like staging drama to educate the illiterate people on the stories described in the *Bhāgawata Purana* and other religious scriptures. He started his literary works while he was a student, and

this was continued up to the age of 119 years. Guru Nanak’s father was the *Patwari* of the village, Talwandi, employed by the local ruler and landlord. *Patwari* was an important incumbent of the administration of the day and was in a respectable position in society (Sohan Singh Seetal, 1968). At birth astrologers predicted very high and unique personage of both Guru Sankaradeva and Guru Nanakdeva. The name of astrologer of Sankaradeva was Sandhara Doloī and that of Nanak was Hardyāl. Guru Nanak was put into his studies at the age of seven years under Pandit Gopal and received education for two years during which he attained good scholarship in both Hindi and Persian. Not only this, but Nanak also made efforts even to grow well-versed in old religions literature, as is proved by his poem ‘*Sidh-Gost*’ After Pandit Gopal, Pandit Brij Nath, a scholar of Sanskrit; taught Guru Nanak for some time (Ibid). Guru Nanak also learnt writing and knowledge of Persian from Quasi Kutay-ud-Din and thus Guru Nanak completed his formal schooling. Guru Nanak was more interested in listening to the *Saint* or *Fakir* whoever he could meet and many a time he spent in sitting still at meditating and thinking, even at that age. Guru Sankaradeva also practised Yoga and attained expertise in Yoga, Nanakdeva was leaning towards renunciation and austerity.

Both Guru Nanak and Guru Sankaradeva were householders and had spent married life and both of them had children. However, Guru Nanak abandoned household life for some years and went out for preaching religion among the people. Guru Sankaradeva, after the death of his first wife leaving behind a daughter, he married for the second time at the request of the members of his family. Guru Sankaradeva never abandoned his family although he stayed away from home for some years and stayed at Kochbehar with his eldest son Ramananda along with his devotees.

Both Guru Sankaradeva and Guru Nanaka preached Bhakti Cult. They were against all the Vedic or Brahmanical religious rituals like idol worship and other Vedic austerities. Both of them were monotheistic and preached Bhakti cult among all sections of the people of the Society irrespective of caste, creed, religion etc.

Religions Preached by Guru Sankaradeva and Guru Nanak:

The religion established by Guru Srimanta Sankaradeva is known as *Eka Śaraṇya Hari Nāma Dhārma* (in short, *Nāma Dharma*) which is also known as *Mahāpurushia Dhārma* (*Mahāpurushiaism*). The religion founded by Guru Nānaka is known as *Sikhism*. “In fact, *Sikhism* has often been called the *Nām Marga* or the way of Nām.” (Daljeet Singh, 1998). Both the religions are monotheistic in nature and *Nirguna Brahma* is the ultimate object of realization. In *Mahāpurushiaism*, *Nirguna Brahma* is realized through *Saguna Brahma*. However, in *Sikhism* incarnation of God is not accepted. According to the *Guru Granth Sahib*, (religious scripture of the Sikhs on which Sikhism is based), God does not incarnate, He does not come into the human form and is not born. In the *Mul Mantra* of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, God has been mentioned as one who never takes birth or form. The Sikh Gurus have repeatedly emphasized, as also stated in the very opening verse of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, that God is one, *Ek Onkar* and no second entity. The same God is *Śaguna* and *Nirguna*, *Nirankar* and self-absorbed. ‘But it would be highly inappropriate to confuse the Gurus’ concept of *Śaguna* and *Nirguna* (i.e., Translucent cum Immanent God) with the Advaitic connotation of these terms as also of *Ishvara*. The Gurus never accepted the Advaitic concepts of *Śaguna* and *Nirguna*.’ (Daljeet Singh, 1998).

However, in *Mahāpurushiaism*, the basis of which are the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, accepts the incarnation of God in different forms, the most important among them is Kr̥ṣṇa who is both *Śaguna Brahma* and *Nirguna Brahma* at the same time. In fact, *Krishna* is the perfect incarnation of God, manifesting as *Śaguna Brahma* whose name attributes are innumerable. Through the *Kirttana* (chanting) and *Shravana* (listening) of the. Nām

(name) as well as attributes of *Śaguna Brahma* (*Krishna*), one (the devotee) attains the *Nirguna Brahma* (*Krishna*). In fact, the *Nāma Dharma* of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva is based on the four principles i.e., Guru (Srimanta Sankaradeva), *Deva* (*Krishna*), *Nām* (attributes of *Krishna*) and *Bhakata* (Devotee of *Krishna*). The four principles lead to realization of the *Nirguna Brahma* (*Krishna*) in the *Satsanga* or the company of pious people or devotees of *Krishna*. However, hearing and chanting of *Nām* is the main principle of *Sadhana* for attainment of *Nirguna Brahma* through devotion to one and only one God i.e., *Krishna*. So, *Nām* and attributes of *Krishna* and *Krishna* (*Hari*) are synonymous.

In *Mahapurushiaism*, the modes of worship are *Shravana* (listening which is meditative) and *Kirttana* (chanting with devotion) of the name and attributes of *Krishna* in the *Satsanga* or in the company of the devotees of *Krishna*. Therefore, *Nām* is central to the *Nāma Dharma*.

There are similarities in many aspects between *Sikhism* and *Mahapurushiaism*. In both the religions, it is the scripture which is placed on the altar (*Thapana* or *Guru Asana*). In *Sikhism* the *Gurudwara* is the place of community worship where *Guru Granth Sahib* is placed for worship as the living Guru. The 10th *Guru of Sikhism*, *Guru Gobind Singh* died in 1708 AD. But before his death, he passed on the Guruship to *Guru Granth Sahib*. (Surinder Singh Kohli, 1996). *Guru Granth Sahib* is regarded as the “Living jurisprudence” (accepted by the Supreme court of India) and accepted as the living Guru of the Sikhs in the form of “Guru’s word”, (*Shabad Guru*). In the *Nāma Dharma of Srimanta Sankaradeva*, it is the *Namghar* where community worships, prayers are performed in addition to various cultural and social activities. In the *Namghar* or *Gurugriha the Bhāgavata* (the main scripture of *Mahāpurushiaism*) is placed on the *Guru Asana* or *Thapana* (altar) inside the *Manikut* (*sanctum sanctorum*) of *Namghar*. An abridged version of the *Bhāgavata* called, *Gunamala* (composed by *Guru Sankaradeva*) is placed instead of the complete book of *Bhāgavata* in the *Guru Asana* or *Thapana*. The *Mahāpurushias* consider the *Guru Asana* as the symbol of living God and *Guru* (*Srimanta Sankaradeva*). God (*Krishna*) and *Guru*

are synonymous. Here Srimanta Sankaradeva is regarded as the sole Guru who is Supreme *Guru* (*Parma Guru*) and there is none other than Him and second Guru (*Naam-Ghosa*, verse No. 375, Mahāpurusha Madhavadeva), No other image or idol is worshipped by the Mahāpurushias. No gods other than One Supreme Absolute God is worshipped in Mahāpurushiaism.

In Sikhism, *Nām Simran* is the main mode of worship which is synonymous to *Nām-Kirtana* in Mahāpurushiaism. Like Mahāpurushiaism, there is no caste or ascetic austerity in Sikhism. It believes in one God, *Ek Onkar*. Singing in His praise is the best way of devotion. The glory of *Nām* has been explained and exemplified throughout the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Similarly, in all the writings of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva as well as of Madhavadeva, *Nām* occupies the central position.

Maheswar Neog (1994) a renowned Sankarite scholar has compared Guru Sankaradeva and Guru Nanak and their religions as follows: ‘Nanak formulated the message of ‘There is no Hindu, there is no Musalman, and stuck to a strict monotheistic doctrine. Sankaradeva too made no compromise over his monotheism and interdicted the worship of any other deity than Vishnu-Krishna; but, unlike Nanak, he admitted avatars or incarnations and while his personal deity was in the final analysis (*paramartha vicara*) the formless *Brahman*, his protest against idol worship was also not absolute. To both the saints God was a God of Grace; but while Sankaradeva’s theory of grace was bound up with a belief in avatars, to Nanak an anthropomorphic concept of God was repugnant.

‘He is not born.

Nor does He die to be born again.

By His grace shalt thou worship Him.’
(Japji)...

Loving-adoration of the Lord is to be cultivated in the company of His great lovers (Nanak’s *sadh sangat*, Sankaradeva *sadhu-sanga*). Both the saints put an extreme emphasis on the office of the religious teacher, without whose guidance one can attain neither to the true path nor to the Truth. Sankaradeva considered *dharma as Gurumukhi*, absolutely guru ship-based, while Nanak made the institution of the

guru the pivot of his religious system (Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs’). And this gave a peculiar shape to the later history of Sikhism as to the later history of Assam Vaishnavism.”

The key features of *Eka Śaranjya Nām Dharma* propagated by Guru Sankaradeva are as follows:

- 1) Worshipping of only one God who is Lord *Krishna*.
- 2) Mode of worship is *Sravana* and *Kirtana* and entire
 - a. ritualistic sections of the Vedas are rejected by Sankaradeva as it does not conform to the doctrine of *Bhakti*.
- 3) Sankaradeva gave stress on the *Gita* and the
 - a. Bhagavata, however, the latter occupied the first place.
- 4) There is no casteism, untouchability etc. in his order.
- 5) Acquisition of *Bhakti* in the company of *Satsanga* (pious company).

Namghar and Gurudwar:

The religious centre of Sankaradeva is known as Namghar. Every (Hindu) village in Brahmaputra Valley of Assam has at least one Namghar which is the centre of religious, cultural and social activities of the village people. The door of Namghar is opened to all the people irrespective of caste, gender etc. Namghar is not only a religious centre but other cultural activities like staging of *Bhaona* (drama, originally *Ankia Nat* by Sankaradeva) and other *Sankari dance, drama etc.* The different social problems of the people of the village are also dismissed and solved. This is a very democratic organisation which is rare in other parts of India. Sankaradeva had established *Kirtanghār* and *Then*. Subsequently a new kind of religious cultural institutions were established by his disciples i.e., Damodardeva and Madhabdeva, called *Sattras*. There are many *Sattras* in Assam. However, all the *Sattras* are not related to Sankaradeva. *Gurudwara* are the centre of Sikh religion all over the world. Here the *Gurugranth* is kept in the alter which is worshipped by the Sikhs.

Place of Nām in Sikhism and Mahāpurushiaism:

In Sikhism, the principle of Nām (*Shabad*) includes meditation, contemplation and reflection and the principle of *Shabad* (Hymns) includes praising and glorifying God earnestly with focused and attentive mind. Nām is God's name and *Simran* means remembering. There can be many names of God and He is to be remembered constantly through word, thought and deed. Although the word, *Waheguru*, is the most appropriate word according to *Gurubani*, the purpose behind this is to select a word comfortable to mind for perpetual remembrance of God, "Nām-Simran is at the center of Guru Nanak's teachings. The whole message of *Guru Nanak* as contained in the *Guru Granth Sahib* revolves around Nām. The first chapter in the holy *Granth* is devoted to differentiation between the meanings of Nām *Simran* and *Bhakti*. *Simran* is beginning, *Bhakti* is the end. *Simran* is the seed, *Bhakti* is the fruit. (Kulwant Singh, 2002). This seed, when sown in the soil of mind, comes sprout in the form of the live God, to fructify. "In *Kaliyug*, vice predominates, and as a result the human mind has lost much of its lustre. Since Nām is the only detergent that can cleanse the mind, it alone has the capability to change the *Yug*. It functions at all levels, from micro to macro. There are two ways to live a human life-by treading the path of *Bhakti* (devotion to God) and by following the path of *Maya* (worldly attachments). The path of *Bhakti* leads to rewarding life, peace, happiness, bliss and union with God. The path of *Maya* ends in pain and suffering. (Sri Gurbax Singh, 1999). "Thus Nām-Simran is an inseparable part of Sikh's life. In fact, Sikhi is synonymous with Nām-Simran" (Kulwant Singh, 2002). *Simran* is a meditative prayer within. God's name is respected lovingly in short phrases. "Wahe Guru Wahe Guru, Wahe Guru Ji / Sat Naam, Sat Nām, Sat Nām Ji" is prelude to Nām-Simran, the recitation of God's name. In *Simran*, God is revered. God's name is God's praise. God's name is a portal, a vessel, its repetition an act of humility.

The recitation of the *Guru Granth Sahib* is an essential part of daily prayer in a Gurudwara. *Guru Granth Sahib* is a compilation of the messages of the *Sikh Gurus*. It accommodates even *Hindu Gurus* who are basically preachers of *Bhakti* culture. There are messages from *Sufi* poets and the messages of *Kabir* the great preacher of *Bhakti* philosophy in medieval India. There is a total of 31 *Rāgas* in the *Guru Granth*

Sahib. (Surinderū Singh Kohli, 1996). It needs training for recitation of this holy scripture, for which persons are trained at a very young age.

The *Guru Granth Sahib* highlights the glory of Nām and its utility in human life. The dictum "*Sarab rog ka aukhad Nām*" heralds a great truth. It is a great truth, which when fully grasped has the power to overcome all physical and mental illness. It can be induced to harness the earthly resources for the benefit of mankind. *Guru Granth Sahib* rejects all ritualism, formalism and symbolism. All the *Braministic* intermediaries and cadres of priesthood exploiting the masses in the name of religion, have been castigated as self-serving and hypocritical. *Guru Granth Sahib* advocates the equality of all human beings, irrespective of birth and gender. The woman is, in no way, inferior to man. The *Guru Granth Sahib* presents a balanced combination of action (*Karma*), devotion (*Bhakti*) and knowledge (*Gyan*). It is essentially a religion of devotion where the body has to work for the well-being of the family and society, the mind has to remain in tune with the Lord. Service is, thus, the motto of an adherent of *Guru Granth Sahib*. The best service towards the *Guru* and the Lord is the remembrance of the Nām. (Harikant Singh, 2003).

Spiritual Meaning of Nām:

"According to *Gurubani* "*Ek Onkar*" denotes both *Sagun* (manifested) and *Nirgun* (unmanifested) stages of '*Akal Purakh*' *Waheguru*. In its pure form it is a musical sound-word, arising out of '*Soon*' (soundless state). It is pure knowledge giving rise to the energy and worldly order. The 'Word' is pervasive everywhere and is creator, protector and destroyer of all physical forms of life and lifeless. 'He' has countless attributes, but all are 'His' manifested qualities' The real one is beyond comprehension, languages and words. One can get tuned to the 'Word' in the heart through the mind with 'His' grace through the words of a true '*Guru*' and can actually listen and see its manifestation. For that he has to surrender to the *Guru* with full faith, carry out his commands in toto and recite '*Guru mantra*' repeatedly all the time. '*Guru mantra*' is one of the manifested names of '*Ek Onkar*' which has the capacity to link the disciple (Sikh) with 'Word'." (Dilbagh Singh, 2004).

“According to Guru Nanaka everything in the universe is created by the power of Divine Name (*Nām*) and without the Divine Name there is no way (*The Japji*). He explains that all the visible forms are held by the Divine Name, everything takes its rise from the Divine Name and is again absorbed in it. The Divine Name is synonymous with the Divine Word or *Shabad*.” (R.M. Chopra, 2000).

Guru Nanaka said, “Hearkening to the *Nāme* bestows Truth, divine wisdom, contentment, to bath in the joy of the *Nāme* is to bathe in the holy places.” (*The Japji, Pauri, 10*)

It is held by Guru Nanaka that God is *Antām* (nameless), yet He is possessed of infinite names. “Numberless, Thy Names and numbers Thy places” (*The Japji, pauri, 19*). “In fact, Guru Nanaka took many attributive names of God for one Absolute Reality from Hindu thinker as well as Muhammadan names: *Vishṇū*, *Brahmā*, *Govindā*, *Gopāl*, *Hari*, *Keshava*, *Kṛīṣṇa*, *Nārayana*, *Parameswara*, *Rām*, etc. from Hindu pantheons and Muhammadan names like *Allah*, *Haq*, *Rahim*, *Khaliq*, *Khuda*, *Rahim*, *Rabb*, etc. from Muslim Holy books. All these names stand for the same God. To these names more names have been added by the Sikh Gurus such as, *Piars*, *Pritam*, *Mittal*, *Sajjan*, *Sargtri*, *Waheguru*, etc.” (R.M. Chopra, 2000).

‘Contemplate though only the *Nam*.’ This expression is found in *Guru Granth Sahib, Rag, Suhi Mahala I*. The meaning of the technical terms “*Japu*” and *Nām*, expressed in the *Guru Granth Sahib* is as follows:

“*Japu* mans prayer, meditation, *Nam* means the Spirit within, figuratively the, *Nām* also means *Amrita* or nectar of immortality.”

According to Sankaradeva there is no difference between *Nām* and God *Kṛīṣṇa*. He has written that “*Jeī naam sei Hari jana nistha kari*” meaning “know certainly that name attribute and Hari are synonymous.” In his *Kirttan Ghosa* Śaṅkaradeva has written about *Nām* as follows:

“*Karia kalit Kirttan ati:*
Pawe Vaikunthak coutris jati”
“*Sito candālak garistha mani:*
Yar jibhāgre thake Haribani.”

“*Candālo Hari Nam lawe mātra:*
Kariba ucit yajnar patra.”
“*Krsnar kathat yito rasika;*
Brahman janma tar lage kika.
Smarok matra Hari din-rati:
Nabace bhakati jati-ajati.”

“The people of thirty-four castes can attain Paradise by reciting the name of God in the Iron Age.’ ‘That untouchable is to be considered glorious who has the name of God in the tip of his tongue.’ ‘An untouchable is fit to be the priest in a sacrifice only if he often recites the name of God.’ ‘What for needs he be a *Brāhman*, who is an admirer of the glories of God. Let him recite the name of God day and night, *Bhakti* will not care for caste high or low.’ (Dimbeswar Neog, 1998)

Sikhism, like Mahāpurushiaism, prescribes *Nām Simran* in the company of *Satsang* or devotees (*Bhakta*). Literally *Satsang* means the *Sang* (Company) of *Sat* (*Nam*, *Guru* and *God*). Thus, Sikhism and Mahāpurushiaism have the basic similarity of *Guru*, *Deva* (God), *Nām*, and *Satsang* (*Bhaktas*). The entire conception of the Ultimate Being is regarded as *Nām* or the ‘Holy Name’. God is considered as *Nama-Rupa* in Mahāpurushiaism.

In all the writings of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, *Nām* occupies the Supreme place along with *Deva*. The *Nām* of Hari (Krishna) is synonymous with *Deva*.

Thus, both Mahāpurushiaism and Sikhism glorify the *Nām* in their respective religions and *Nām* finds the Supreme place of attaining devotion that is *Nirguna Brahma*.

Literary Works of the Two Gurus:

The main scripture of the Sikhism is ‘*Guru Granth Sahib*’ or ‘*Adi Granth*’ is a compilation of messages of many Gurus or religious leaders of medieval India including Jayadeva and Trilochan. There are a limited number of scriptures written by the Sikh Gurus.

Guru Sankaradeva has a vast literary works in different areas. These are as follows:

- The Kavyas: (1) *Harichandra Upakhayan*, (2) *Rukmini Haran*, (3) *Ajamil Upakliyan*, (4) *Gajendra Upakhyan*, (5) *Amrit Manthan*, (6) *Bolichalan*, (7) *Kurukhetra*.
- The Dramas: (1) *Patniprasad* (2) *Kaliodaman* (3) *Keligopal* (4) *Rukminiharan* (5) *Parijatharan* (6) *Rambijoy*.
- Translated Books: *Bhāgawata* - First, Second, Eighth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth Cantos and the Uttarakanda Ramayan.
- The songs are divided into two groups: (1) *Borgeet*, (2) *Bhatima*.
- Spiritual: based on Bhakti Philosophy: (1) *Bhakti Pradeep*, (2) *Bhakti Ratnakar* (sanskrit) (3) *Anadipatan* (4) *Nimi- Nabasidha Sambad*.

Sankaradeva was a multifaceted genius. Besides being a great religious leader, he was artist, dramatist, sculptors, musician and social reformer. Therefore Prof. V. S. Agarwala of Banaras Hindu University has rightly commented that “There are poets and composers, there are saints and religious teachers, there are musical masters, there are preceptors, but Sankaradeva was a genius in whom all these qualities were rolled into one.”

Legacy of Guruship:

Both Guru Nanak and Guru Sankaradeva were different from other Vaishnava Gurus of medieval India. They always tried to establish a human society in which all men and women had equal status and there was no caste barrier in their religions. When they wanted to leave this world, they nominated the next leader of their creed to the next most efficient and able person. They did not nominate their sons to the seat of Guruship. It was Lehna who was appointed as next Guru by Guru Nanak and his son Sri Chand was not nominated as the next Guru” Thus Bhai Lehna became the second Guru of the Sikh under the name Guru Angad. It has been written that the souls of those two (Gurus) coalesced into one and the personality of Nanak was transferred to that of Guru Angad. Similarly, Guru Sankaradeva nominated Madhabadeva as his successor and he did not nominate his eldest son Ramananda as the religious head. Guru Sankaradeva declared in presence of his son and some other devotees Madhabadeva as the leader of his creed. Sankaradeva

told his son that he has transferred of his strengths and Bhakti to Madhavasdeva.

Epilogue: In this brief write-up a comparison has been made between the two great spiritual leaders of medieval India. The religions preached by these two Gurus are still living religions. Guru Sankaradeva is alive among the Assamese people in Namghars, and Guru Nanak is alive among the Sikh people in Gurdwara. They had established a society where equality, peace and moral values are the main principles. Both the Gurus enlightened the society with spiritual lights and tried to remove inequality and injustice from the society. Both preached universal religion and inculcated universal brotherhood among the people of the world.

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স্মৃতিৰ পম খেদি - ৭০ - ৮০ ৰ দশকৰ গুৱাহাটীত সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰ প্ৰচলনৰ কিছু কথা

ললিতা দাস কলিতা

এইয়া ১৯৭৪ - ১৯৭৫ চন চনমানৰ কথা; তেতিয়া আমি মঙ্গলদৈত প্ৰাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ৰ ছাত্ৰী। ঘৰত সত্ৰীয়া সঙ্গীতৰ চৰ্চা আছিল, দেউতাই আমাৰ দুই বাই - ভনীক বৰগীত, কীৰ্তনৰ পদ আদি শিকাইছিল। সেই সময়তে চৰকাৰী জনসংযোগ বিভাগৰ দ্বাৰা আয়োজিত কিছু আনুষ্ঠানত সত্ৰীয়া, দেবদাসী আদি নৃত্য দেখি মনত ভাব হৈছিল - এনে সুন্দৰ নৃত্য শিকাৰ সুবিধা কেতিয়াবা পোৱা হ'লে। আমাৰ এই সপোনটোয়ে কিছুদিন পাচতে ফলিয়াব সেই কথাটো তেতিয়া জনা নাছিলোঁ।

১৯৭৫ চনৰ মাজভাগমানত সংস্কৃতিৰ লগত জড়িত মঙ্গলদৈৰ কেইজনমান স্থানীয় ব্যক্তিয়ে সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্য শিকোৱা এটা অনুষ্ঠান আৰম্ভ কৰে। সেই অনুষ্ঠানটোৰ শুভাৰম্ভণী কৰিছিল প্ৰখ্যাত নৃত্যশিল্পী স্বৰ্গীয় চাৰু বৰদলৈয়ে। সেই অনুষ্ঠানতে সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰ প্ৰখ্যাত গুৰু ৰসেশ্বৰ শইকীয়া বৰবায়নক প্ৰথম লগ পাইছিলোঁ। সেয়ে আছিল মোৰ সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰ পাঠৰ আৰম্ভণী। শইকীয়াছাৰে গুৱাহাটীৰ পৰা গৈ প্ৰতি দেওবাৰে আবেলি আমাক সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰ আদি পাঠ পঢ়াইছিল। প্ৰথমে শিকিছিলোঁ মাটিআখৰা, আৰু তাৰ পাচত কৃষ্ণ নাচ। সেই সময়ত মঙ্গলদৈত এই নৃত্যৰ বিদ্যালয়ে আলোড়নৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছিল; মঙ্গলদৈ চহৰৰ উপৰিও দাঁতি কাষৰীয়া অঞ্চলৰ ছাত্ৰ ছাত্ৰীৰে এই বিদ্যালয় ভৰি পৰিছিল। আমি কণ কণ ল'ৰা ছোৱালীবোৰে প্ৰতি দেওবাৰ আবেলিলৈবাট চাই থাকোঁ - আমাৰ মনৰ ভাব “ আজি বা শইকীয়া ছাৰে কি নতুন পাঠ শিকায় ”। সপ্তাহৰ বাকী দিনকে ইটাত আজৰিসময়ত চুবুৰীৰ সৰু বিলাকে নাচৰ আখৰা কৰিছিলোঁ, আমাকৈ কিছু ডাঙৰ চেমনীয়া সকলে আমাৰ ভুল ভ্ৰান্তিবোৰ শুধৰাই দিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰিছিল। সেইদিনবোৰৰ কথা সঁৱৰি এতিয়াও বৰ ভাল লাগে।

নৃত্যশিক্ষাৰ এনে সুন্দৰ আৰম্ভণীৰ প্ৰায় এবছৰমান পাচতে আমি গুৱাহাটীলৈ আহিলোঁ। সেই সময়ত সৰু চহৰ মঙ্গলদৈৰ পৰা গুৱাহাটীলৈ আহোঁতে এটাই সপোন দেখিছিলোঁ, এইবাৰ নাম

কৰা নৃত্যানুষ্ঠান সঙ্গীত সত্ৰত সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰ শিক্ষা ল'ম বুলি। সেই সপোন দীৰ্ঘকাল পৰিণত হৈছিল, যেতিয়া দেউতাই আমাৰ দুই বাইভনীক সঙ্গীত সত্ৰত নাম ভৰ্তি কৰাই দিছিল। সেই সময়তে শইকীয়া ছাৰৰ লগত আমাৰ পৰিয়ালৰ এটা বন্ধুত্বমূলক সম্পৰ্কৰো সৃষ্টি হৈছিল, আৰু শইকীয়া ছাৰে সঙ্গীত সত্ৰৰ উপৰিও ঘৰতে আমাৰ নৃত্যৰ শিক্ষা দিছিল। সেই সময়চোৱাত আমি সঙ্গীত সত্ৰৰ ছাত্ৰ ছাত্ৰী সকলে শইকীয়া ছাৰৰ উপৰিও কমলাবাৰীসত্ৰৰ লগত জড়িত নৃত্যশিল্পী শ্ৰী ঘনকান্ত বৰা বৰবায়ন, শ্ৰী গোবিন্দ শইকীয়া বৰবায়ন, স্বৰ্গীয় শৈলেন শইকীয়া বৰবায়নৰ পৰাও নৃত্যৰ পাঠ ল'বলৈ সুযোগ পোওঁ। সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰ ব্যৱহাৰিক শিক্ষাৰ লগতে আমি ইয়াৰ তাত্ত্বিক দিশৰো বহু কথা তেতিয়াই শিকিবলৈ আৰম্ভ কৰোঁ। সেই সময়তে পৰিচয় ঘটিছিল “শ্ৰীহস্তমুক্তাৱলী”, সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্য আৰু ইয়াৰ তাল” আদি কেবাখনো তত্ত্বগ্ৰন্থৰ লগত। সঙ্গীত সত্ৰত নাচ শিকাৰ সুবাদতে প্ৰাচ্যতত্ত্ববিদ ড° মহেশ্বৰ নেওগৰ লগতো চিনাকী হৈছিলোঁ। পণ্ডিতনেওগ সঙ্গীত সত্ৰৰ লগত ওতঃপ্ৰোত বাবে জড়িত আছিল। তেখেত, শইকীয়া ছাৰ, শিল্পী পুৰুষোত্তম দাস আৰু তালবাদ্যশিল্পী কেশৱ চাংকাকতিৰ (সত্ৰীয়া তাল সমূহৰ প্ৰণালীবদ্ধ ভাবে লিপিবদ্ধ কৰাত তেখেতৰ বহু অবদান আছে) মাজত হোৱা তত্ত্বগ্ৰন্থৰ আলোচনাৰ কথাবোৰ বৰ ভালকৈ বুজি নাপালেও সেইবোৰ দূৰৰ পৰা শুনি কিবা এটা ভাল লাগিছিল। এই আলোচনাত এইগুণীসকলে প্ৰায়ে তেতিয়ালৈকে সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যই শাস্ত্ৰীয় নৃত্যৰ স্বীকৃতি নোপোৱাৰ কথাটোকৈ দুখ কৰিছিল, আৰু সেই বিষয়ে কিকৰিব পৰা যায় তাৰ আলোচনা কৰিছিল। এনে আলোচনাত কবি নিৰ্মল প্ৰভা বৰদলৈয়েও কেতিয়াবা অংশ গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল। কবি নিৰ্মল প্ৰভা বৰদলৈৰ ঘৰখন সেই সময়ত সঙ্গীত সত্ৰৰ লগত ওতঃপ্ৰোতভাবে জড়িত আছিল; তেখেতৰ ভাতৃ প্ৰদীপ বৰদলৈ সঙ্গীত সত্ৰৰ সম্পাদক আছিল। কবি নিৰ্মল প্ৰভা বৰদলৈয়ে তেখেতৰ জীয়ৰী আৰু দুই নাতিৰ

সৈতে একেলগে সঙ্গীত সত্ৰতবৰগীত শিকি গুৱাহাটীৰ বিভিন্ন অনুস্থানত বৰগীত পৰিবেশন কৰিছিল।

১৯৭৮ চনমানৰ পৰা আমি সঙ্গীত সত্ৰৰ ছাত্ৰ ছাত্ৰী সকলে গুৱাহাটীৰ লগতে অসমৰ নানা ঠাইৰ সাংস্কৃতিক অনুস্থানত সত্ৰীয়ানৃত্য আৰু বৰগীত পৰিবেশন কৰিবলৈ লওঁ। সেই সময়ত সঙ্গীত সত্ৰৰ জ্যেষ্ঠ নৃত্যশিল্পীৰ তালিকাত আছিল গীতিমা সাউদ, কৰবী ভট্টাচাৰ্য্য, দীপ্তি চাংকাকতি (বাদ্যশিল্পী কেশব চাংকাকতিৰ জীয়ৰী), জুৰি ভট্টাচাৰ্য্য (জ্ঞানপীঠ বঁটা বিজয়ী বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰভট্টাচাৰ্য্যৰ জীয়ৰী)। আমাৰ সমসাময়িক ছাত্ৰীসকল আছিল দেবলক্ষ্মী পণ্ডিত, আকাশবন্তি বৰুৱা, সঞ্চয়িতা বৰুৱা, বৰ্ণালীশৰ্মা, মোচুমী বৰদলৈ, সঙ্গীতা দাস, ভায়োলিনা বৰুৱা আদি (আজি ৪০ - ৪৫ বছৰৰ পাচত হয়তো আৰু বহুতৰে নামপাহৰিছোঁ)। তেতিয়াৰ সময়ত সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰ সাজ পোচাক আজিৰ দৰে ইমান সুন্দৰ নাছিল; আমি চেটিন কাপোৰৰ সাজপিন্ধিছিলোঁ বেছিভাগ নাচতেই; অবশ্যে কৃষ্ণ নাচ আৰু নাড়ুভঙ্গী নাচৰ সাজ বেচ বমক জমক আছিল। আমাৰ বাবে তেতিয়ানাড়ুভঙ্গী নাচৰ মুকুট আৰু সূত্ৰধাৰী নাচৰ পাগটো মাজুলীৰ পৰা অনোৱা হৈছিল। ইয়াৰ কেবাবছৰৰ পাচত শইকীয়া ছাৰেসঙ্গীত নাটক একাডেমীৰ পৰা পোৱা অনুদানেৰে কেবায়োৰো গুণাবছা পাটৰ সাজ তৈয়াৰ কৰি আমাক ছাত্ৰীসকলক নাচোতেব্যবহাৰ কৰিবলৈ দিছিল। সেইসময়তে স্বনামধন্য ভাস্কৰ যুগল দাসে টেৰাকোটো আৰু টিনেৰে অসমীয়া গহনা তৈয়াৰ কৰিআমাক নাচোতে পিন্ধিবলৈ দিছিল। এইবোৰ কথা এতিয়া মনত পৰিলে সপোন সপোন যেন লাগে।

আমি সঙ্গীত সত্ৰত শুদ্ধ নৃত্যৰ লগতে নৃত্যৰ লগত ব্যবহৃত অভিনয়ো শিকিবলৈ সুযোগ পাইছিলোঁ। আজি সেই সময়ৰ বহু কথা মনলৈ আহিছে। মনত পৰিছে, শইকীয়া ছাৰে শিকোৱা “অব সখী পেখো মদন গোপাল” গীতৰ অভিনয়ৰ কথা, যি অভিনয় দেখি দেখি দেউতাই মাক কৈছিল “আজি শইকীয়াৰ অভিনয়ত মই তেখেতক দেখা নাই, দেখিছোঁ এগৰাকী গোপীনীক”। এতিয়াও বিভিন্ন শাস্ত্ৰীয় নৃত্য শিল্পীৰ নৃত্য দেখিলে এই ক

থামাৰ মনত পৰে। আৰু এমাৰ কথা মনলৈ আহে, তাহানি সেই ৬০ৰদশকতে ৰসেশ্বৰ শইকীয়া বৰবায়নে কমলাবাৰী সত্ৰ এৰি গুৱাহাটীলৈ নহাইহেঁতেন আমি মধ্যবিত্ত ঘৰৰ ল’ৰা-ছোৱালীয়ে সত্ৰীয়ানৃত্য শিকাৰ সুবিধা কিমান পালোঁহেঁতেন।

৭০ - ৮০ ৰ দশকত সঙ্গীত সত্ৰৰ উপৰিও স্বৰ্গীয় আনন্দ মোহন ভাগৱতী, গুৰু যতীন গোস্বামী, গুৰু গৰিমা হাজৰিকা আদি বৰণ্য শিল্পী সকলৰ তত্বাবধানতো বহু ছাত্ৰ ছাত্ৰীয়ে সত্ৰীয়া নাচৰ প্ৰশিক্ষণ লৈছিল। ৮০ৰ দশকত গুৱাহাটীত প্ৰতিস্থিত চৰকাৰীৰাজ্যিক সঙ্গীত মহাবিদ্যালয়েও বহু সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যশিল্পীৰ জন্ম দিছে। সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰ প্ৰচাৰ আৰু প্ৰসাৰত এই সকলো বৰণ্য শিল্পীআৰু তেওঁলোকৰ ছাত্ৰ-ছাত্ৰীৰ বহু অবদান আছে।

আমাৰ সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰ দৰে গাষ্টীয়পূৰ্ণ শাস্ত্ৰীয় নৃত্য পৃথিবীত খুব কমই আছে। এই নৃত্যত শুদ্ধ নৃত্যৰ সংখ্যা ষথেষ্ট বেছি, উদাহৰণ স্বৰূপে ক’ব পাৰি যে চালি নাচ, জুমুৰা নাচ, ৰজাঘৰীয়া চালি নাচ আদি প্ৰত্যেকবিধ নাচৰে বিভিন্ন প্ৰকাৰ আছে। আশাকৰোঁ আজিৰ নৃত্যশিল্পীসকলে এই সকলো নাচ শুদ্ধ ৰূপত শিকি প্ৰচাৰ কৰিব। সেই তাহানিতে লাভ কৰা সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰশিক্ষা আজিও বুকুৰ মাজত কঢ়িয়াই ফুৰিছোঁ। সেয়ে বিভিন্ন অনুস্থান আৰু YouTube ত সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্যৰ শুদ্ধ প্ৰদৰ্শন দেখিলে মন ভৰি উঠে।

গুৰু দুজনাৰ অপূৰ্ব সৃষ্টি সত্ৰীয়া নৃত্য শুদ্ধৰূপত সংৰক্ষিত হওঁক, আৰু ইয়াৰ সুৰভি পৃথিৱীৰ বিভিন্ন ঠাইলৈ বিয়পি পৰক। এইয়েকামনা।

বিঃ দ্ৰঃ - এই কথাখিনি মোৰ স্মৃতিৰ পৰা লিখিছোঁ, ইয়াত কিবা ভুল ভ্ৰান্তি হ’লে পাঠকে ক্ষমা কৰে যেন।

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Q&A

Q: What is NAAM?

A: Naamghar Association of America, Inc. (NAAM) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit spiritual and cultural organization formed to construct and manage a Naamghar for the Assamese diaspora to celebrate and perform the spiritual traditions and philosophical teachings of Srimanta Sankardeva. With strong ties with all the *Satras* of Assam, NAAM seek to provide a forum for learned spiritual leaders and traditional artistes to share their knowledge and talent with the current and future generations of the Assamese diaspora.

Q: What are the immediate goals of NAAM?

A: Some of the immediate goals of NAAM include spreading awareness on NAAM initiatives, build a digital media platform, plan for fund raising, and participate regularly in Naam-proxongo. NAAM seeks volunteers from the large Assamese diaspora across the United States to achieve these goals. Please join us (details at the bottom of this newsletter). In our planning activity, the first

priority is to identify what is needed to establish a temporary *Naamghar*. This will make the *Guru Axon*, consecrated by the Sri Sri Auniati Satra Satradhikar, more easily accessible to the public, while we work on the longer-term project of building a permanent *Naamghar*.

Q: Does NAAM collaborate with other organizations?

A: NAAM is actively seeking to collaborate with all community organizations which are willing to help achieve NAAM's mission. NAAM plans to have meaningful discussion with all organizations in our community; please contact us if you would like to be a part of this conversation (contact details at the bottom).



HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH NAAM?

JOIN THE NAAM WORKING GROUP (WG): We need your help in achieving the dream of building a Naamghar in North America. Therefore, NAAM is open to everyone who is interested in building the Naamghar.

If you are interested in getting involved actively in NAAM's mission, please join the NAAM by

sending an email to: Naaminfo@Naamghar.org. The WG meets regularly via teleconference/video conference to discuss various issues that are related to NAAM and its mission and goals.



NAAM WORKING GROUP TEAM MEMBERS

Following individuals comprise the current NAAM working group (WG) team. ***We invite all individuals who are sincerely interested in the Mission and Goals of NAAM to join the NAAM team.*** The current WG members are:

- Iswar Agarwalla, NC
- Niraj Barbara, PA
- Dr. Sanjib Bhuyan, NJ
- Pranab Bora, WI
- Lolit Bora, PA
- Subhasini Bora, NC
- Dr. Babul Borah, OH
- Utpal Borah, VA
- Dr. Binoy Bordoloi, NJ (Bor-medhi)
- Manoranjan Bordoloi, NJ
- Monidipa Bordoloi, CA
- Susanto Bordoloi, CT
- Malabika Brahma, NJ
- Debojit Choudhury, CA
- Niren Choudhury, NJ
- Dr. Bikul Das, MA
- Namita Das, VA
- Dr. Pradip Das, MO
- Shyam DevChoudhury, PA (Secretary)
- Dr. Saswati Datta, OH
- Hemanga Dutta, NJ
- Panchali Dutta, NJ
- Sawmick Dutta, CA
- Prandeep Gogoi, NJ
- Ajoy Hazarika, NY
- Kamalakshi Hazarika, NJ
- Suranjoy Hazarika, NJ
- Priyadarshini Inman, NC
- Dr. Jukti Kalita, NJ
- Lalita Kalita, IL
- Rashmi Kalita, CA
- Sangaurav Kaushik, NC
- Nilanjona Mahanta, CA
- Nabanita Mazumdar, WA
- Chayanika Mohan, NC
- Rachna Nath, AZ
- Shakhyar Neog, NJ
- Dr. Yashwant Pathak, FL
- Anu Perlmutter, VA
- Nilakshi Phukan, NC
- Gayatree Prasad, CA
- Dr. Purandar Sarmah, NJ (Treasurer)
- Vavani Sarmah, CA

Contact Us

Email: Naaminfo@Naamghar.org

Website: www.naamghar.org

Facebook: Naamghar Association of America – NAAM

