

Reflection of Assamese culture in Ajan Fakir's Jikir

Abul Hussain
Research Scholar
Department of Folklore Research
Gauhati University

Abstract:

Ajan Fakir was one of the noted forerunners of Assamese art, literature and culture. He is known for his Jikir songs. Usually, the Jikirs are a mean to worship and praise in the name of Allah. In simple words, the Jikir stands for the praising Allah especially for the sake of salvation. Apart from the religious touch, the Jikir represents the Assamese culture to its best. The objective of this paper is to pursue a methodical study of the Jikir. Analytical method has been used in this paper. Both primary and secondary sources have been used in the study. Primary sources have been taken from the book *Asomia Jikir and Jari* by Sayed Abdul Malik and secondary sources have been collected from various articles, books, journals and research papers.

Key words: Jikir, presentation, Assamese culture.

Introduction:

Jikir is an integral resource of Assamese folk culture. Ajan Fakir was one of the noted forerunners of Assamese art, literature and culture. In the 17th century, when the harmony and peace of Assamese life was disturbed by religion and political conflicts, Jikir songs were utilized as the medium to create harmony among the people irrespective of caste and religion. Although, the Jikir songs that were written for the welfare of the people were primarily Islamic and full of spirituality. They carried the traces of Assamese life, feelings, culture, arts, etiquette, rituals, and tune etc. Therefore, the Jikir songs can be regarded as fine example of the signatory of Assamese culture.

Objective and significance of the study:

The Jikirs, that were created keeping the aim of social welfare, have made a harmonious environment in Assam irrespective of religious and castes differences. These songs are very close to the heart of the Assamese community. Generally the Jikirs showed the path of submerging to Allah or *Khuda* (God) and stir the message of spirituality to the people. It expresses how human being can have salvation from the attachment to the materialistic world and in the course of it, the attitude of the Assamese has been echoed. In order to study the divergent devotional creation in a decorous level, study of the Jikirs turns imperative in the present time. The quantity of researches that have been done on the Jikirs yet cannot be considered enough. Keeping in view such inadequacy, the objective of this paper is to pursue a methodical study of the Jikir.

Methodology:

Analytical method has been used in this paper to discuss the various aspects of Jikir through which Assamese culture is reflected.

Sources of the study:

Both primary and secondary sources have been used in the study. Primary sources have been taken from the book *Asomia Jikir and Jari* by Sayed Abdul Malik and secondary sources have been collected from various articles, books, journals and research papers.

Ajan Fakir and Jikir:

Ajan Fakir was a poet and philosopher who followed Islamism and he was one of those saints who practised Sufism. He came from Bagdad to Assam where he plants the seed of unity in Assamese among the masses. There is lack of obvious and clear factual data regarding the life story of Ajan Fakir whose arrival was caused by immigration. Whatsoever, according to some scholars, Ajan Fakir was born in 1610 at Bagdad in Iraq and in 1610 by some other. The name of his father was Sayed Aush Jahan and no information can be found regarding his mother. Sayed Aush Jahan had two sons- one is Ajan Fakir and Nabi Pir or Nabik Uddin was another. Earlier, Ajan Fakir was named as Sayed Moin-uddin Shah and later on, he earned popularity as Shah Miran, Shah Milan, Ajan Fakir and Ajan Pir. It was known from the genealogy that his father Aush Jahan was the 42th generation from the lineage of Hazarat Mahhamad.

The Jikirs are the very unique creation by Ajan Fakir and the number of the songs is 160. The term Jikir has been derived from the Arabic word '*jikor*' which means to worship and praise in the name of Allah. In simple words, the Jikir stands for the praising Allah especially for the sake of salvation. Like other religions, it is believed in Islam too that salvation can be attained through the name of Allah. In fact, Jikir songs can be regarded as Islamic prayer. The main sources of the Jikirs are Quran, Dadish etc. According to Maheswar Neog "*baro kuri* (a quantity of 240) Borgeet, *tero kuri* (a quantity of 260) *Fokorar dore Jikiru Asomia bhashar amulyao hompo.*" (Like two hundred and twenty Borgeets and two hundred and sixty proverbs, Jukirs are also a precious resource.) (Neog, Maheswar Neog: *Asomia Sahityar Ruprekha*, p,29)

Assamese culture that reflected in Jikir:

Assamese culture is a harmonious culture. Culture includes the rituals, gestures, arts, festivals, belief, religion that associated to a particular class of people. In other words, a culture refers to the life style of the community. Assamese culture does not mean the art and culture of one particular tribe or caste. Rather, apart from the indigenous people, it is a mingling culture of various communities who had immigrated to Assam such as Arya, Kirat, Nishad, Dravidian etc. It is to be noted that the Muslim entered into Assam through immigration and in the course of time, assimilation of the Assamese culture with the culture of the Muslim took place. It is at the time of assimilation, Ajan Fakir had imparted Jikir to Assamese culture with flavour of his own Muslim culture. In the course of it, Assamese expression, tune, art, morality, spirituality and any other aspects managed to reflect in the Jikir.

The way that Sankerdeva provided a soul to the Assamese community in 15th century, similarly Ajan Fakir also tighten the rope of harmony in the 17th century. Indifference attitude of Sankerdeva to castes got reflected in the Jikir. Description about contemporary Ahom kingdom was also to be found in two particular Jikirs. One of these is:

"Dohso dukuri

nobison hiziri

Aru pache bosor jai

Ajan shahabe

ei Jikiri korile

Quran bitabot pai."

(Malik, Sayed Abdul: *Asomia Jikir aru Jari*, 1958, p,28)

Jikir songs are sung like the *nam-kirton* (religious songs that sung in a particular tune). In Assamese culture, after the *nam-kirton* (the reitual), a tradition of having *mah-prasad* (oblation) is prevailed. In the similar way, *akhoi* (an Assamese traditional fast food kind of snack) was being served after the performance of Jikir is done. Such kind of narration is also available in the Jikir:

“Hindue bilale mahe porosade

Musolmane bilale rooti.”

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958, p,144)

Curd is another delicious of Assamese culture which also managed to have a place in the Jikir:

“doi mitha, dugdho mitha aru mitha nani

Sabat kori odhik mitha, mursid mukhor bani.”

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958, p,7)

Apart from these foods, *tamul pan* (areca catechu) has its own distinct place in Assamese culture and is regarded as having cult value. *Tamul-pan* is necessary in almost every ritual of Assamese culture. When someone is made to apologised, *tamul-pan* must be offered on the part the accused one. Example of such offering of *tamul-pan* for forgiveness is also to be found in the jikir:

“tamulu ethuka pan u eta

Rupai r maak e bhetile goi.”

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958, p,137)

The belief of vice and virtue, blessing etc are also there in the Assamese society. Respecting parents and teachers is considered as a virtue in Assamese culture which is also reflected in the Jikir:

“ki duwa dim jam tuk oi baruah

Ki bor di jam tuk/

Purukhe purukhe bikhoi khai jabi

Bhanguta nohobo tuk.”

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958, p,136)

Such message that no one can attain success in life disrespecting their parents and masters is also portrayed in Jikir:

“Aaiku nejanu bupaiku nejanu

Guruloi di golu pithi

Beha beparoloi jenekoi dhauti

Taru aulia bidhi”

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958)

The main source of living of the rural people is agriculture. It quite obvious that different pictures related to cultivation such as ploughing, farming of paddy, mustard, coconut, sugarcane, various vegetables etc got reflected in the Jikir songs:

“Habir pora nongotha

Hatot ekondha loi

Luke j haluai halu melile

Jubiai juries moi”

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958, p,51)

Narration of fishing in the countryside is also to be noted in the Jikir:

“ Khewoli jalere gura bare kuri

Pahor lekhe jukhe nai/

Tikonite dhoris susoni maribo

Sobake eke thait pai”

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958)

Usually the village folk use bamboo and clay to build their houses. Narration of such house is expressed in the Jikir :

“Ghoru bhagibo mardoli halibo chotit dhoribo ghune

Mobotor tekelai dhoris loi jabo jamin hoi rakhibo kune.”

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958)

The main sources of the Assamese Hindu regarding ritual or culture are Vedas and Purans. The significance of the Veda-Purana is also expressed in the Jikir:

“Chari veda gyanoke koi oi allah

Chari veda gyanoke koi

Chari veda pohilu gyanoke nebhabilu

Gyanor nai porichoi.”

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958, p,127)

The Jikirs also deal with the four elements of Neo-Vaishnavism that are *nam* (song), *deva* (god), *guru* (master) and *bhakat* (saint):

“jibor nam sarathi

Sot guruk bhetiba, atmak chiniba, sijibo dinore kam.”

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958)

Neo-Vaishnavism under Sankerdeva practised equality and preferred a casteless society. Jikir also glorified such virtue of equality that prevailed in Islam:

*“Mur monot bhed bhab nai allah
 Mur monot nai aan bhab
 Hindu ki musolman, ekei allahr phorman
 Akherot eke allahr nam.”*

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958, p,112)

Apart from literature, the Jikirs also deal with various objects and materials of Assamese culture such as *dhari-pati* (mat), *japi* (folk umbrella), banana leaf, and other items related art, *ojha-pali* and so on:

*“Bandai bondegi nokore, palir bulai oja
 Kabaloiu nuduai mur, mur hol muror buja
 Jikir phikir nai, ushah ase tani
 Komaror hatina bhal, loha kore pani.”*

(Malik, Sayed Abdul:Asomia Jikir aru Jari, 1958, p,75)

From the above discussion, it turns obvious that the Jikir has presented the various aspects Assamese culture beautifully.

Conclusion:

Ajan Fakir has been regarded as one of those figures who contributed to the formation of Assamese culture. Following the ideal of monotheism popularised by Sankerdeva and Madhabdeva, Ajan Fakir's creation turns a shining star in Assamese culture. These are full of morality, spirituality, philosophic which inspire to be a true Islam showing the right path in the way of life. In his attempt to impart the spiritual flavour, Ajan fakir had represented a mingling specimen of Assamese culture. The rituals, beliefs, gestures, food, ornaments, life, profession, agriculture, spirituality etc have been portrayed beautifully in the Jikir. These songs become a pillar for the Assamese culture. They also contributed a lot and hence enriched the Assamese literature.

Bibliography:

Main Sources:

Malik, Sayed Abdul (Ed.) : Asomia Jikir aro Jari, Gauhati University, 1st Edition, 1958,
 Re-Edition, 2003

Secondary Sources:

Neog, Maheshar : Asomia Xahityar Ruprekha, Chandra Prakash, 11th Edition, 2010.
 Sarma, Sattayendranath : Asomia Xahityar Samikhhkhatmak Etibrittya, Shoumar Prakash,
 9th Edition, 2006.
 Hussain, Ismail : Azan Pir aro Jikir Jarir Mullayan, Chandra Prakash, 2nd Edition, 2015