

# Western influence on Jyotiprasad Agarwalas Karengor Ligiri

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## **Abstract:**

*Karongor Ligiri* is the second play written by Jyotiprasad Agarwala. In 1926 Agarwala started working on this play before he left to pursue higher education in Edinburgh University in London. After returning from London, he completed the play. It went into press in 1937. *Karengor Ligiri* is the most distinguished play by Jyotiprasad Agarwala. Most critics and readers consider *Karengor Ligiri* as one of the outstanding masterpieces in Assamese dramatic literature. It portrays the conflict between an individual free will and the conventionalized will of a static society. It also draws out the manifestation of socially accepted worms hidden behind human consciousness. During his stay in Europe, Jyotiprasad got the opportunity to witness a number of dramatic changes in the western world. Dramatists like Shakespear, Yeats, Henrik Ibsen, Bernard Shaw and Galsworthy have overwhelming influence on Rupkonwar. It is very evident that *Karengor Ligiri* is an outcome of this influence and the dramatic form of experiences acquired from these great dramatists.

*Key words: Assamese Drama, Western Influence, Dramatic Techniques.*

## **Introduction:**

*Karengor Ligiri* is a tragedy of an eternally revolutionary mind in conflict with society. It is considered to be the best among the dramatic work of Jyotiprasad Agarwala. The play is successful in depicting social life of the Ahom period and power bestowed upon the royal families. It also depicts social evolution, class assertion and the need for freedom and empowerment of women. This play proves the versatile genius of Jyotiprasad through creativity, dynamism and modernity. Needless to say he adopted the technique, stage directions, styles from western dramatists like Ibsen, Shaw and Shakespear. But in methods of characterization and meaningful delineation Jyotiprasad is strikingly original. He infused a value based novelty by combining western and Indian style of drama.

*Karengor Ligiri* storyline is set in medieval time and based on the contemporary society. Although it is romantic both in theme and execution, its relation to real life is pronounced. In this context, noted drama critic P. K. Barua points out that *Karenger Ligiri* appears to be a beautiful blending of Shakespearean sense of tragedy, Henry Ibsen's revolutionary ardour and Lakhsminath Bejbarua's romanticized idea as seen in Joymoti Kuwori. The technique of the play

appears to be modeled on Bernard Shaw and Galsworthy while Shavian touches both in style and ideas expressed care unmistakable.

### **Influence of Shakespear on *Karengor Ligiri* :**

World's most renowned dramatist William Shakespear's in Assamese dramatic literature extends from the middle of the 19th century until the early part of 20th century. He was the main generative force behind most of the modern assamese dramas. Jyotiprasad's *Karengor Ligiri* was not exception. The hero of *Karengor Ligiri* Sundar Kunwar has been delineated in the line of the Shakespearean model. It is highly individualized character with a fatal flaw like any great Shakespearean hero. He becomes tragic victim of his own obstinancy. This destiny is the result of his eternal revolutionary mind that is ever in conflict with the society. Sundar Kunwar is projected in this play as a romantic revolutionary who wants to purge the society of all evils. Sundar develops a weakness towards a palace maid Sewali but at the same time he is conscious of his royal status too. He is a learned man and an idealist with somewhat misogynist nature and bears a lot of affinity towards one of the prominent Shakespearean hero Hamlet. Similar to Hamlet, Sundar Kunwar is prejudiced against the women. In the first scene of the play itself, he proclaims in front of his friend that pure love cannot dwell in the heart of women. The way Afelia's death impacts Hamlet, Sewali also frees the self conceited prince through her death. Sundar wails in Sewali's funeral, "You made me realize Sewali through your life and through your death what true love is".

### **Influence of Henrik Ibsen in *Karengor Ligiri*:**

Western great dramatist Henrik Ibsen's influence is far reaching on *Karengor Ligiri*. His revolutionary ardour is one of the focal point of the play. In fact Jyotiprasad's social revolutionary spirits seems to be stemmed from this influence of the father of realism Henrik Ibsen. In *Karengor Ligiri*, Jyotiprasad examined the realities that lay behind the facade of strict morals of family life and society. Sundar Kunwar as the idealist prince wants to move along the road of revolutionary progress. This psychology transcending marriage and class consciousness gives up all in order to proceed along the way of progress. Totally unconcerned of popular reaction, Sundar hands over his lawfully married wife Kanchanmati to her lover and decides to marry the palace maid. This does not materialize as Sewali does not live for it but such a decision itself signifies how the revolutionary will is working in the prince.

The successful portrayal of the self conflict in a character can first time be seen in Assamese drama in Jyotiprasad's drama *Karengo Ligiri*. In the manner of Ibsen, the playwright has made his move through complicated dramatic situations. Like Ibsen, Jyotiprasad Agarwala

has also created a number of female characters. He has drawn the character of Kanchanmati as a representative of rationalism. The firm rational mind of Kanchanmati has been able to analyze complicated problems of a feudal society. Kanchanmati is not the sort of rebel as Sundar Kunwar is. She realizes that the society has not granted individual right to protest against the injustice. But she knows that the right step towards the social revolution will be to become consciousness of one's social status. In the matter delineating a women character capable of thread base analysis, Ibsen's character Nora in his play "A Doll's House" has a great influence.

Henric Ibsen was at the forefront of realistic social drama. This is true for *Karengor Ligiri* where the conflict in a revolutionary mind and how that mind fights against the social customs can be seen in Sundar Kunwar and his mother, the Queen. The queen is determined to marry her son to a girl from aristocracy. The prince abhors this idea but also unable to oppose. Prince Sundar is thus an embodiment of the creative and revolutionary mind. He marries Kanchanmati to please his mother who symbolizes social conservatism. On the other hand, Kanchanmati has implicit faith in the social authority and ready to accept that one should determine the real relationship between the individual and the society from the realistic point of view. The other major character Sewali comes through as a natural expression of womanhood. By means of her dedication and self sacrifice she has heightened the glory of the women about who Sundar had poor opinion.

#### **Influence of Barnard Shaw in *Karengor Ligiri* :**

Another western dramatist who has greatly influenced Jyotiprasad Agarwala is George Bernard Shaw. The special feature of Shaw's dramatic technique which is his elaborate stage direction and settings can be seen in *Karengor Ligiri*. This is one of the reasons that made *Karengor Ligiri* such a unique and successful play. Jyotiprasad seemed to prefer the naturalistic style often seen in Bernard Shaw's plays. This technique is skillfully employed in order to create a medieval setting palace – the bed chamber of the Prince Sundar. In the centre of the room is a large gold – plated bedstead supported on sculptured lion head. These mirrors stand fastened to the rear wall. Over the bed hangs a large golden canopy. On the left side of the room three lamps burn, one of which hangs from the ceiling. On right at a little remove from bed stands a big stool. The stout legs of the stool are spotted with gold and silver and a thick blanket spreads over it. A heap of books lies on the blanket. On the left of the bed and within reach from it is a pedestalled platter which is as tall as the bed, and which holds another heap of books.

Bernard Shaw's play *Candida* portrays the triangular love story which bears lot of similarity to Jyotiprasad's *Karengor Ligiri*. Jyotiprasad's strong flair for social reformation found its way through his plays. In *Karengor Ligiri* he presents a completely imaginary story with a historical background. He was also equally conscious about the stage technique of the drama. Along the line of Ibsen and Shaw, he was the first and foremost dramatist in the history of Assamese drama who has created characters in consistence with the situations and who has made characters life like and realistic.

Dr. Pona Mahanta aptly points out "Even though imaginary, *Karengor Ligiri* is very realistic in nature in terms of style, characterization, technique and ideologies. The dialogues, usage of pros, predominance of the strong female character, elaborate stage direction etc. draws parallel with the place of Ibsen and Shaw.

Another noteworthy influence of Bernard Shaw in *Karengor Ligiri* is its dialogue. In one scene Sundar and Kanchanmati debates over hypocrisy of social marriages which has no foundation in love. This rather long dialogue is undoubtedly reminiscent of Shaw. The technique and style of the play too appears to be largely modeled on Shaw and Galsworthy.

### **Conclusion:**

From the above discussion it is very evident that Jyotiprasad Agarwala was hugely influenced by the great minds of western dramatic revolution. But the play right never followed the path set by others. He may borrow the ideal of technical skill from the western masters, but he never borrowed the thematic structure. The magical touch of Joytiprasad gave the play *Karengor Ligiri* a different look and meaningful synthesis. With the aid of the wide knowledge of western literary world Jyotiprasad formed the basis of *Karengor Ligiri* and this had brought a radical change in assamese drama. Only for this reason, *Karengor Ligiri* will forever remain an unforgettable experience and carry forward the profound artistic philosophy of the genius dramatist Jyotiprasad Agarwala.

### *Reference:*

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2. Pona Mahanta: Natakhar Kotha