

## Chapter-VII

### CONCLUSION

It is said that nationalism could never be based on geographical and cultural unity as it happened to be a 'politic- economic' concept like its European root.<sup>1</sup>Rajendralal Mitra in the Calcutta Congress of 1886 had said: "Nations are not made of sects but of tribes bound together in one political bond. We are all bound by the same political bond and therefore we constitute a nation."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand Jyotiprasad Agarwala placed nationalism firmly within the arena of current political and cultural thought and paved the way to more systematic and focused progress in this rapidly expanding field. He placed nationalism firmly within the arena of current political and cultural thought and paved the way to more systematic and focused progress in this rapidly expanding field. The thoughts that he promoted paved the way for a new expressive society built on the '*Concept of Beauty*'.

Jyotiprasad's personality only as a cultural giant is not write, but one have to view him as a social- political philosopher. Significantly, he himself opposed the permanency to confine the genius of Sankardeva, merely to a religious preacher. He stated, "...the root of the indifference in appreciating the greatness of Sankardeva in the proper perspective lies in our political and the cultural oppression. I would not say that we have overcome such cultural suppression even today."<sup>3</sup> Jyotiprasad Agarwala showed the dangerous outcome of forceful assimilation, which he repeatedly cautioned against more than half a century back, is today threatening the very edifice of the Assamese community. It is such vision inherent in his thoughts that makes his legacy enduring even today.

However, many scholars regard him as Gandhian, revolutionist, and communist and so on. Although he was a follower of Gandhiji's philosophy of Ahimsa, but his mind was open to other ideologies also. He was of the opinion that if his ethics would

---

<sup>1</sup> Choudhury, *op. cit.*, P.15

<sup>2</sup> Misra, Tilottoma., 1987, *Literature and Society in Assam*, Omson Publication, New Delhi, P.146

<sup>3</sup> Agarwala jyotiprasad., *Natunar Puja*, P.495

not attained through the ideal means of Ahimsa; it should have to attain through violent means. Of course he remained devoted to non-violence as the basic policy of the Indian national Movement. But his attitude towards stray acts of violence underwent a change.

As a matter of fact, every person embodies within him both the elements which may not be in equal proportions. The admirers and passionate fans may ignore the negative points but a true judgment does not ignore any of the two elements. The treatment must be a balanced one. He was often misunderstood because one great quality of his is missed both by admirers and critics that he was constantly changing and growing. His basic commitment was to human values which remained constant, on all issues his opinions underwent drastic changes and in a more radical direction.

This point is often missed because many of his critics regard any quotation as good enough to beat him with, while many of his followers regard every word he ever wrote or spoke as sanctified. As Gandhiji made his statement in 1938: “My recent writings must be held as cancelling my remote sayings and doings, but though my body is deteriorating through age, no such law of deterioration, I hope, operates against wisdom which I trust is not only not deteriorating, but even growing.”<sup>4</sup> He was a profound political leader and thinker who constantly ‘experienced with truth’ and therefore changed and developed his understanding of society and social change. His thought and activity were in constant evolution.

His idealism can be related with Rabindranath Tagore though he is more politically vocal and reflexive compared to Rabindranath Tagore. Jyotiprasad’s Krishnatatva is a significant notion of jyotiprasad where the epistemological, ontological/ metaphysical queries of human mind are amalgamated with the artistic traits and talents or finer qualities along with the political consciousness and social reflexivity to create an ideal state of human culture. In such dialectical discourse to create something eclectic, hybrid and essentially unified category, Jyotiprasad seems to be able to make a critical transcendence of the disparity between aesthetic modernism and political modernity. Perhaps herein it would be pertinent to talk in brief about this disparity between aesthetic modernism and political modernity.<sup>5</sup> According to Jyotiprasad Agarwala if Mahatma Gandhi is regarded as the symbol of peace and non-

---

<sup>4</sup> Desai, A. R., *op. cit.*, P4

<sup>5</sup> Dutta, A.R., *op. cit.*, Pp. 129-130

violence, Karl Marx, Lenin are regarded as the symbol for revolution then also Sankardeva would be the symbol of unity and integrity.

Hemanga Biswas saw a similarity of Jyotiprasad's life with the tragedy of Sundar Konwar of *Karengar Ligiri*. Sundar Konwar was always against the fallacies of middle age and he was an ardent supporter of individual freedom. Because of this orientation he lived a very tragic palace life which was a feudal palace. Jyotiprasad also had that tragedy in the first part of his life.

Jyotiprasad was a devotee of beauty till the last of his life. But he was always inspired by humanism and existentialism, which itself attracted him towards Marxism. Hemanga Biswas feels Peoples' artistic transformation was the true meaning of culture to him. The co- ordination of honesty courage truthfulness and revolutionary mind with literature, culture and music in a very systematic way is very rarely seen in the cultural world of this age.

Hemanga Biswas not only appraised Jyotiprasad, but also took him to the hearts of the Bengali people writing about him in Bengali language. This was also a path breaking step for the integration of Assam and Bengal. <sup>6</sup>

On one hand Jyotiprasad was a true Gandhian and on the other he was deeply concerned with the Marxist ideology. Though he actively participated in the Indian freedom movement, the desire for cultural and social transformation made different from many of his fellow strugglers. Jyotiprasad dreamt of a society, where there is no division among people, where there is equality and fraternity and prosperity. He sincerely believed that formation of such a society is possible with the blessings of art and culture. Therefore, he was whole heartedly trying to inculcate to attribute true values to artists and their works. <sup>7</sup>

There may be a harmonious balance in the infusion of Romantic and Marxist aesthetics in Jyotiprasad's aesthetic thinking, but it also carries within itself certain contradictions. Though Jyotiprasad formulates the notion of artist, he does not go into dialectical analysis about the evolution of society, the history and the economic contexts of the society or any such other contexts related to the issue as seen in Marxist

---

<sup>6</sup> Dutta, A.R., op. cit., Pp.168-169

<sup>7</sup> Dutta., op. cit., P166

theoretical position. However, examined in a subtle way, his discourse can be seen as an attempt to transgress the binary division or dichotomy between an artist and non artist prevalent in the society be it the western counterpart or our own society. Talking about a hidden yet innate artistic subjectivity within each and every human mind he disseminates the wider gap between the two and paves the way for the possibility of a newer definition of artistic persona where anyone with an inherent trait of cultural refinement and progressive thinking, can be an artist even without any artistic ability of craftsmanship or talent. Through this attempt he has also been in a way able to transgress the dichotomy between the so called popular art or the mass culture and the elitist high art.<sup>8</sup>

Though at first he introduced himself as a fighter of Gandhiji's non-violent Movement, circumstantial forces made him feel the necessity of fighting the evil forces by violent means effectively and therefore, Jyotiprasad is found for the first time to move from his cult of non-violence to violence in the play *Labhita*. He called himself as *Chira Bidrohi* (The Eternal Rebellion). He was also closely involved with the IPTA (Indian Peoples' Theatre Association). In the Naliapul Conference of IPTA in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> July 1949 A.D. Jyotiprasad Agarwala was specially invited and he also attended the Conference.<sup>9</sup> For that tragic incident he wrote in fiery language against the Government also. Hemanga Biswas, the cultural activist opined that though he had close relations with many prominent literatures and artists, but Jyotiprasad Agarwala was rare among those who had engaged in a continuous struggle to forge a union between life and culture.<sup>10</sup> Jayanta Krishna Sarmah pointed out that Hemanga Biswas had played a significant role in bringing Jyotiprasad closer to the politically expressive and committed cultural platform i.e. IPTA. But in actual term Jyotiprasad himself transformed his thoughts and want to attain his beauty through the IPTA.<sup>11</sup> He was a man who seeks sound for the society. His entire creative only makes him a multi-dimensional genius with unusual creative faculties and a born romantic with deep human and social concern.

In the preface of his play *Labhita*, he wrote that his play seek to realistically depict the response of the Assamese people towards the 1942 movement and the wave

---

<sup>8</sup> Dutta, A.R., op. cit., 127

<sup>9</sup> Natun Asom, Weekly Paper, 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1949 A.D.

<sup>10</sup> Mazumdar(ed), Paramananda., 2008, *Hemanga Biswas Rachanawali*, ABP, Guwahati, P78

<sup>11</sup> Dutta, A.R., op. cit., P.17

created by the Second World War. He himself declared his ideology through the play saying that the play does not seek to support any specific political ideology. It portrays of the participation of the Assamese people in the movement. According to him the central character *Lobhita* is not the portrayal of an ideal Assamese girl. The playwright has observed the strength of character of ordinary Assamese village girls as embodied by *Labhita*. It is the nascent strength of character of Assamese youth which Jyotiprasad sought to evoke in the play, while sketching a realistic picture of the mood and happenings during the war. He declared that there was no hero or heroine in the play but the entire people of Assam is hero in the play. He showed through the play how Assamese society in different aspects of life resisted the forces of an imperialistic war. *Labhita* indeed was the testimony to Jyotiprasad's nationalistic spirit and love for his motherland.

The socialistic legacy which Chandrakumar had left behind had influenced Jyotiprasad who at heart always believed in the equality of all mankind. He appreciated the futility of freedom unless the movement to achieve it was continued to rid society of all bars on individual freedom. This growing awareness in no way clashed with the Gandhian philosophy. Gandhi too had placed individual freedom above political freedom and had spoken out against social abuse and exploitation. He too had realized that attainment of independence from the British rule was but a milestone and another struggle lay ahead for the people of India.

His ideology was 'Beauty' which means **goodness** and to achieve this ideology he followed different means and positive ways. Therefore, his ideology can never bind in any narrow banner like Gandhian, Revolutionary or Communist. He called his ideology as '*xilpir sangskriti*'. Beauty for him was an entity that should light up one's life and imbibe it with meaning and direction.<sup>12</sup> He was a visionary looking forward to a future of a new dawn for the all-round development of human. Suniti Kumar who applied historical and comparative linguistics in his studies on the culture and history of the regions and people of India and the world, the context of his nationalism was basically based on culture and he also viewed on the absolute justice and equality of all.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>Personal letter of Jyotiprasad agarwala from Sukadev dtd. 25/3/1919

<sup>13</sup> Chatterji, Suniti Kumar., *op. cit.*, P45

This vision of him got expressed in his works. In other words, his works are in no way different from his vision of life and philosophy. In his all works he had a desire to represent man as beautiful, cultured and superior.

Confronted with post- independence realities, he wrote which would have been an example of his ideology-

*“Mor ganat jwale,*

*Sata yugar sata abhiman!*

*Mor gane bisare ;*

*sira duxiar sira paritran.”*(The pride of hundreds of years, Blaze in my song. My song seeks; Eternal salvation for those who have eternally been poor.)

He was essentially a humanist. Man was the center of his moral world. He was a Marxist **with his own terms of reference**. Unlike any other Marxist he created a world of his own with his own values. He wanted to defy man, attributing all the good qualities in him. Infact, he wanted to rediscover himself in the heart of every man.

However, Jyotiprasad cannot be called a Communist in the strict sense of the term. Undoubtedly he had exchanged his views with the communist party. In one of his personal letter from a communist leader Dhireswar Kalita to Jyotiprasad Agarwala, he argued that on the basis of language no people can be regard as nation. According to him Assamese nationalism cannot form due to this language issue. It is argued that in one hand nationalism created unity among people and on the other hand it gave birth to capitalism.<sup>14</sup>

Though, his attachment for the wellbeing of the people naturally drew him towards the left. In his essay entitled *Silpir Prithibi* (world of Artists) Jyotiprasad clearly expresses his displeasure over the prevailing post- independence scenario. He realized that economic facts determine man’s socio- cultural and moral behaviours. His humanism and passionate love for human beings, was the focal point of his political thinking. His sincere endeavour to humanize politics simply misfired. But such situations strengthened his passion for art, for the welfare of mankind. He was

---

<sup>14</sup>Personal letter of jyotiprasad Agarwala from Diresswar Kalita dted. 27/1/1948

determined to translate his visions into reality. He wanted the emancipation of man from the shackles of poverty, exploitation and bondage. He wanted people total uplift, full enrichment, total empowerment.

His belief, and not communist dogma, motivated Jyotiprasad to take up a socialistic stand and speak out of his humanism and his love for the common man. According to him social change was possible solely through the liberating influence of culture, and cultural resurgence was possible only through the empowerment of the masses and moulding their minds towards a desirable culture. Culture and social justice, therefore, were linked to each other. As the artist could not remain aloof from society, he must be a part of that common struggle to free society of injustice and abuse.

He was a selfless nationalist sacrificing everything to the cause of India's freedom. He knew that economic facts determine man's socio- cultural and moral behaviour. This ideology he realized mostly after his disillusionment with the Congress. His humanism and passionate love for human beings was the focal point of his political thinking. Political situation strengthened his passion for art for the welfare of mankind.

He had in common deep respect for and faith in the Indian people, moral integrity, deep humanism, commitment to democracy, civil liberties and secularism healthy nationalism as also sturdy internationalism, belief in a non- violent world, and above all, commitment to the poor and the deprived. Both were renaissance persons, rooted in traditional Indian culture yet deeply influenced by modern thought. It is, therefore, once again necessary to delineate his vision of free India and reiterate the values he embodied, as also to assess his contribution to the making of our today and tomorrow and the legacy he has left to the Indian people.

Gandhiji did not accept the Marxian analysis of society and the Marxian definition of socialism, but he also did not belong to the right- wing. On the contrary, they belonged to the left camp when broadly defined. He believed that he had the capacity to move further left because of his basic revolutionary outlook and commitment to the poor. Moreover, he said, it was better to take the entire national movement leftwards than to split it along left-right lines and to rely upon the radicalism of a small select group. Their right wingness lay primarily in their conservative economic outlook and not in their softness towards imperialism. It was, therefore, he

asserted necessary to unite with them.<sup>15</sup> Along with Gandhiji, Nehru realized that a broad mass movement could not be based on a single political line or ideology. To succeed, the movement had to unite persons with differing political and ideological perspectives. There could be no democracy without socialism and socialism could not exist in the absence of democracy. Basic social change can be and should be brought about only through a broad societal consensus or the support of a very large, even overwhelming majority of the people. The process of developing such a societal consensus would perforce have to be slow for a large majority view could not be arrived at suddenly.<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, to Jyotiprasad, in a very general manner, socialism meant equality of opportunity, social justice and the ending of social and economic disparities. It also meant the eventual ending of the materialistic mentality and capitalist competitiveness. More concretely, he saw socialism as a process which would go on getting defined stage by stage as the process advanced.

He was a humanist and an idealist. He believed, for most parts of his life, in converting the exploiters so that they became the servants and trustees of the exploited. His commitment was to them and not to any doctrines. Non-exploitation and therefore struggle against exploitation was built into his basic philosophy of truth.

He foresaw the great role that social movements for local power, for preservation of the environment, for women's liberation, for the ending of discrimination on grounds of race, ethnicity, and caste are beginning to play in human liberation today. He talked about socialism in very general terms, often in terms of equality of opportunity and the ending of social and economic inequality. Socialism to him meant social justice, it meant putting an end to social and economic inequality and disparities created by capitalism, it meant gradual ending of class distinctions and class domination. He was not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent but he had discarded many ideas and learned them in a progressive means.

His commitment to democracy and civil liberties was total. He had a profound faith in democracy and democratic processes. He saw democracy as a pillar of the national movement and civil liberty as one of its basic commitments. To him,

---

<sup>15</sup> Chandra, Bipan., *op. cit.*, P96

<sup>16</sup> Desai, A.R., *op. cit.*, P.8

democracy and civil liberties were absolute values, ends in themselves and not merely means for bringing about social change and social development.

He identified self-reliant, independent economic development, defended and promoted national unity and propelled forward the process of nation-making, laid the foundations of a democratic and civil libertarian political order, strengthened the secular character of Indian state and society against heavy odds internationalism and national self-interest and popularized the broad objective of a socialism society based on equality, equality and social justice.

His patriotism, however, does not clash with his humanism and a passion for a world community, bound by love and humane concern for each other. This segment of poetic utterances include poems like *Jyotisankha*, *Lachitor Ahban*, *Kanaklata*, *Naba Biplabi Kavi jage*, *Asamar nabin Jowanar Sankalpa*, *Sabadhan* and so on. Jyotiprasad Agarwala is different in this point from his predecessors and contemporary nationalist leaders. Hiren Gohain pointed out in this connection that though Ambikagiri Raychoudhury had strong feelings of nationalism, but he could not remove his Middle Class cocoon and behaved differently during the National Movement. Likewise Lakshminath Bezbaruah also was not free from Middle Class orthodoxy. But Jyotiprasad can remove this mentality and come forth with his progressive ideas of nationalism.<sup>17</sup>

Like many of those who had fought for India's freedom, Jyotiprasad could have remained within the folds of the Congress party after independence and earned political power as well as material benefits for himself. But he was a humanist and visionary above all and the welfare of society rather than personal gains was the objective he pursued throughout his life. He was socialist in temperament though not by ideology. But ironically, within the IPTA, there were elements within the movement which had always looked at him with suspicious eyes because he belonged to an affluent, tea-garden owning family. Despite the presence of individuals such as Bishnu prasad Rabha and Hemanga Biswas within their fold, the leftists removed Jyotiprasad from the IPTA presidency. Thus, in the final days of his life, Jyotiprasad became an anathema both

---

<sup>17</sup> Gohain, Hiren., 2016, *Natun Prithivi*, P.367

to the ruling as well as the revolutionary forces. Yet, perhaps these were the finest years of the helpless idealist Jyotiprasad.<sup>18</sup>

“He could have sat, back on the 50 yard line, rich and famous. But he chose to stand up and he counted risking everything.”<sup>19</sup>

Hemanga Biswas testified that no condolence meetings were held throughout Assam to mourn his death. Even in 1952 there were no organized meetings in memory of him. However, it was only in 1953 that a section of the IPTA took the initiative to observe 17<sup>th</sup> January as *Silpi Divas* (Artist’s Day) throughout Assam. Fortunately, efforts were being made now a day to evaluate the range of Jyotiprasad’s achievements and measure his contribution to our society and culture. The fractures that have appeared in the greater Assamese society have made the people wake up to the wisdom of the path shown by Jyotiprasad, which makes him a visionary far ahead of his times.

His creations has bestowed with as if flesh and blood and therefore he could inspire the people. He tried to create a new wave among the Assamese people with his Concept of Culture and that wave might become old but can inspired every next generation and that wave called *Jyoti –Dhara* (Jyoti Wave).<sup>20</sup> His creation of *Jaymati* was also to bring closer Assamese Culture, heritage and history near to the Assamese people. Through improvement of cinema he intended to develop Assamese culture and thus wanted to educate the illiterates. He showed the example how one can being a lover of universe can also be an Indian and a good Assamese. His social consciousness, nationalism, genius to criticise life and to inspire one nation with his fiery languages, universal cultural liberal attitude and above all progressive vision are examples to be followed by the Assamese society.

When Jyotiprasad Agarwala made the first Assamese film, *Jaymati*, a talkie, in 1935A.D., The Indian talking film production was only four years old. Ardeshir Irani’s *AlamAra*, the first Indian talkie having been made in 1931A.D. in Mumbai. The story of creating *Jaymati* should form part of Indian film-making folklore. Unfortunately, its creator Jyotiprasad, the pioneering film maker of extraordinary talent in the North East of India, scarcely finds a place in the histories of Indian cinema. It is equally lamentable

---

<sup>18</sup> Dutta, A.K., *op. cit.*, P83

<sup>19</sup> Hazarika., *op. cit.*, P.24

<sup>20</sup> Hazarika, Bhupen.,, 1993, *Jyoti Kakaideo*, Surjya Hazarika Bani Mandir, Panbazar, P8

that Assamese intellectuals in their callous indifference never cared to put our own past in its proper perspective in the context of Indian cinema.<sup>21</sup>

Jyotiprasad Agarwala's cultural involvement has not only inspired the cultural activists but almost the all sections of the Assamese society. Hiren Gohain had articulated him as '*bhabikalar khanikar*' (architect of the future). It is such vision inherent in his thoughts that makes his legacy enduring even today.<sup>22</sup> Jyotiprasad Agarwala's teachings can give us the required confidence and guide us through this turbulent period which, according to him is only a transitory phase of struggle between *Sanskriti* and *Duskriti* where the ultimate triumph of the former is guaranteed. His popularity not only confined to a particular era but has transcended the limits of time.

The thoughts that he promoted paved the way for a new expressive society built on the *Concept of Beauty* within and without.

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Dutt, A.R., op. cit., P