

Chapter-V

JYOTIPRASAD AGARWALA AND CULTURAL NATIONALISM IN ASSAM

“When used for murder, the hammer is no doubt a weapon, when used for building a house, it is a constructive tool. Nationalism considered as a vindicator of a particular culture is morally neutral, considered as a movement against national oppression, it has a positive moral content, considered as a vehicle of aggression, it is morally indefensible.”¹

Nationalism is as much a phenomenon of the modern world as of the ancient. As an ideology and movement, nationalism exercised a strong influence in the American Revolution (1776A.D.) and French Revolution (1789A.D.), yet it did not become the subject of historical enquiry until the middle of the nineteenth century, nor of social scientific analysis until the early twentieth century. It was only since the 1960's, after the wave of anti- colonial and ethnic nationalisms, that the subject has begun to be thoroughly investigated by scholars from several disciplines.² The forms that nationalism takes have been multicolored as religious, conservative, liberal, communist, political, pan, cultural etc.

“Like all social phenomena, nationalism is a historical category. It emerged at a certain stage of evolution of the life of community when certain socio- historical conditions, both objective and subjective, matured.”³ According to Smith: “*The issue of the modernity or antiquity of nations has become central to the study of nationalism over the last few decades. It is true that there was a renewed interest in theory construction and in general perspective's in the later 1970s and early 1980s*”.⁴ It is a strong connection force by which all kinds of people live together peacefully and can identify themselves as a part of a single whole.

Nationalism means unity of diverse societies into one nation. It is a particular sentiment that binds together all the people, brings them under one common umbrella,

¹ Sarma, Devabrata., op. cit., P13

² Smith, Anthony D., 1998, *Nationalism and Modernism*, Routledge, New fetter Lane, London, p.3

³ Kishore, 1987, op. cit. p.III

⁴ Smith, op. cit. p.IV

no matter what their religion, caste, language or history is. But, nationalism acquires significance only when it holds the whole world's expanse and stand for humanity.⁵

The term nationalism is used to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such attentions with nationalist arguments. The definition by limiting it to a political doctrine, it avoids the danger of being too vague and draws attention to the modernity of nationalism.⁶

Nationalism as a river of water- like movements starting out as a trickle in its cultural heartlands and gaining in power and extent of involvement as it gathers pace. Benedict Anderson viewed that he did not suggest nationalism historically 'supersedes' religion. But he proposed that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which as well as against which it came into being.⁷

Nationalism, the subject whose force in shaping and reshaping the modern world is so obviou and which yet remains obdurately alien and incomprehensible to those who are not possesses by it.⁸

The most powerful and dominant force in modern times is that of nationalism. Nationalism, which emerged in 19th Century, became a more powerful factor in the 20th century and came to be taken for granted almost everywhere like water and air. Infact, the very basis of modern state is nationalism. Whatever may be its demerits. Nationalism still enjoys greater support and acceptance all over the world than any religion. People are ready to shed their blood and undergo any amount of sufferings for the cause of nationalism.

Nationalism implies a group feeling directed towards a set of values, which are considered unique and valuable. In other words nationalism is a feeling of oneness arising from historical, political, religious, linguistic, racial, psychological and other

⁵ Subramaniam, Ka. Naa., 1998, *A Movement for Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, p.IV

⁶ Ibid, 84

⁷ Anderson, Benedict., 1983, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, P12

⁸ Gellner, Ernest., 1983, *Nations and Nationalism*, basil Black well Publisher, Oxford, i

factors in the nation. Therefore, nationalism is a spiritual and psychological feeling of unity having its root in the common past.⁹

In the 1950s and 1960s, nationalism was still regarded as a feature of the victorious anti colonial struggles in Asia and Africa. By the 1970s, nationalism had become a matter of ethnic politics. Not many years ago nationalism was generally considered one of Europe's most magnificent gifts to the rest of the world. Whether of the 'good' variety or the 'bad' nationalism was entirely a product of the political history of Europe. Everyone agreed that it was a European import, the debates in the 1960s and 1970s in the historiographies of Africa or India or Indonesia were about what had become of the idea and who was responsible for it.¹⁰

As a way of avoiding the pejoratively applied term 'nationalism' replaced the older word 'patriotism' i.e. love of one's homeland or country is used. In eighteenth century Europe it bore the notion of an emotional attachment to a city, a landscape a dynastic state or a ruler. From nineteenth century onwards, the meaning of patriotism shifted to allegiance to the nation and the nation-state, and came to be synonymous with nationalism and national consciousness, though in fact it was more and more rarely used as such. Unlike nationalism, patriotism has virtually never had the effect of an aggressive political force. For this reason, the historian Hans Kohn, who together with Carlton Hayes can be regarded as the doyen of the modern study of nationalism, has justifiably called it a 'purely vegetative group feeling'. In the argument of Hobsbawm, the twin founding fathers of the academic study of nationalism after World War I are Carleton B. Hayes and Hans Kohn.¹¹

The term 'nationalism', whose earliest mention can be found in a work of 1774 by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, did not begin to enter into general linguistic usage until the mid- nineteenth century. But today arguments still rage over what nationalism really is. Even the academic world, which has been studying

⁹ Adivesh, T.V., 2008, *Rising spirit of Nationalism in Karnataka*, Vishwa Prakashana, Rajapur, Bangalore, P.1

¹⁰ Chatterjee, Partha., 1992, *The Nation and its Fragments colonial and post colonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, Pp3-4

¹¹ Hobsbawm, E. J., 1990, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780 Programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge University Press, p.3

nationalism for decades, has failed to agree on a generally acceptable definition. The same is true of the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationality'.¹²

Nationalism is understood as a political force which has been more important in shaping the history of Europe and the world over the last two centuries than the ideas of freedom and parliamentary democracy. It has assumed in historical and political reality since the late eighteenth century. In particular the focus will be on the changing political and social functions nationalism has assumed over the years. The roots of modern nationalism are to be found in late eighteenth- century Western Europe and North America. From there it subsequently spread to the whole of Europe and eventually to all parts of the world. In the twentieth century, nationalism has had unparalleled successes, its importance growing by leaps and bounds in Europe directly before and after the First World War and then particularly after the Second World War in Asia and Africa. It can be associated with forces striving for political, social, economic and cultural emancipation.¹³

Nationalism purely a modern concept is a principle or an ideology of a nationality which has been developed historically. Its connotation implies multi dimensions. It manifests as a patriotic feeling as well as principles or efforts or policy of national independence.

It also expresses a degree of socio- economic and political consciousness. Carlton Hayes, the father of scholarly American study of nationalism defines it as 'a modern emotional fusion of two very old phenomena- nationality and patriotism as well as the paramount devotion of human beings to linguistic and cultural nationality. The limitation in defining nationalism, originates from the concept of nationalism itself and its formation.'¹⁴

Nationalism as a 'political doctrine' or a system of political ideas and as a 'social movement' is conditioned by the material development as well as the degree of social consciousness. The material condition on which the social consciousness of the

¹² Alter, Peter., 1989, Nationalism, British Library Cataloguing Publication , Great Britain, p.2

¹³ Alter Peter, op. cit. p.3

¹⁴ Saha, Subhas Chandra., *1942 struggle: A study of Grass- root Nationalism in the Districts of Darrang and Nowgong of Assam 1942-45*, NEHU, 1984, P.5

masses in general and the peasantry in particular emerged and developed in India was instrumental to produce social unrest.¹⁵

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, large multinational states which had emerged during the course of history, such as the Ottoman or Habsburg Empires, were split apart in the name of nationalism and were succeeded by a large number of small separate states. In the last century and a half, new states such as Greece, Italy the German Reich, Ireland and Poland were among the driving forces behind the colonial expansion of the European powers as they created overseas empires in Asia, Africa and other parts of the globe. And yet at the same time, nationalism could just as often engender hopes for a free and just social order, indeed for many it equated with liberation from political, economic and social discrimination.

It can mean emancipation, and it can mean oppression, nationalism, it seems, is a repository of dangers as well as opportunities. It has so many different forms and national variations in space and time that it is often argued whether they can all be accommodated under the one roof. This still leaves the issue of whether the various nationalisms the world has witnessed since the late eighteenth century nevertheless possess common formal and substantial structures and whether they can be traced back to comparable historical geneses. Modern German encyclopaedia defines nationalism as an exaggerated and intolerant form of thought in relation to a nation.

These common structural components, or features, of nationalism include: consciousness of the uniqueness or peculiarity of a group of people, particularly with respect to their ethnic, linguistic or religious homogeneity, emphasizing of shared socio- cultural attitudes and historical memories, a sense of common mission, disrespect for and animosity towards other peoples. Since the 1950s' has consequently defined nationalism as 'a state of mind which gives 'national' messages, memories and images a preferred status in social communication and a greater weight in the making of decisions.'

Theodor Schieder holds nationalism to be a specific integrative ideology and according to him it always makes reference to a 'nation' in one sense or another, and not merely to a social or religious type of group. This broad conception will be adopted

¹⁵ Saha., op. cit., P.269

here, nationalism, such as it has appeared since the American and French Revolutions, will be understood as both an ideology and a political movement which holds the nation and the sovereign nation-state to be crucial in dwelling values and which manages to mobilize the political will of a people or a large section of a population. Nationalism is hence taken to be a largely dynamic principle capable of engendering hopes, emotions and action. It is a vehicle for activating human beings and creating political solidarity amongst them for the purposes of achieving a common goal. ¹⁶

About the origin and spread of nationalism Benedict Anderson demonstrated with much subtlety and originality that nations were not the determinate products of given sociological conditions such as language or race or religion, they had been, in Europe and everywhere else in the world, imagined into existence. He also described some of the major institutional forms through which this imagined community came to acquire concrete shape, especially the institutions of what he so ingeniously called 'print capitalism'. He then argued that historical experience of nationalism in western Europe, in the Americas, and in Russia had supplied for all subsequent nationalisms a set of modular forms which nationalist elites in Asia and Africa had chosen the one's they liked. But Partha Chatterjee questioned if nationalism in the rest of the World have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? Partha Chatterjee argued that the very form of imagining nations is such that even as one talks about a particular historically formed nation, one is left free to implicate in one's discourse others that have not been so formed or whose forms remain suppressed and perhaps even some whose forms have still not been imagined. ¹⁷

According to him anti colonial nationalism is the most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a difference with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern west. He argued that this problem is because it have all taken the claims of nationalism to be a political movement much too literally and much too seriously. ¹⁸

We know that, there are important differences in ways of defining the concept of nationalism. Some equated it with 'national sentiment', others with 'nationalist ideology

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Chatterjee, Partha., op. cit. p.XI

¹⁸ Chatterjee, Partha., 1992, op. cit. Pp.4-5

and language' and others again with 'nationalist movements'. There is also a difference between those who stress the cultural rather than the political aspects of nationalism. But the general view is that nationalism was, first of all, a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty. They must obey only their own 'inner' voice. They must be gathered together in a single historic territory and they must have legal equality and share a single public culture. Nationalism grows in an oppressed people out of an indomitable urge to assert them as an independent community united by a common bond of culture.¹⁹

The forms that nationalism takes have been multicolored as religious, conservative, liberal, communist, political, pan, cultural etc. Founding fathers of nationalism- Rousseau, Herder, Fichte, Korais and Mazzini saw the ideological movement of nationalism. Anthony D Smith like his forerunners Gellner, Nairn, Anderson and Hobsbawm explores the current orthodoxy of nationalism. He explores the varieties of modernism.²⁰

In India on the one hand, a civic, territorial, anti-colonial nationalism and on the other hand, various ethnic and pan cultural movements have exerted the most powerful influence. However, a romantic yearning for a return to an idealized ethnic and religious past which was being wrinkled by westernization and capitalism was to be found in late nineteenth century intellectuals like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Aurobindo and in movements like the Arya Samaj.²¹

A very striking feature of Indian nationalism was that it emerged under conditions of political subjection of the Indian people by the British. Nationalism in India, in modern terms did not exist prior to the establishment of British rule. But there is little disagreement that the Indian nationalism was a product of colonial modernity. Indian nationalism was firmly rooted in a correct critique of the character of colonial economy, but this critique was at the same time confined within the perspective of the capitalist character of modern economy development.

¹⁹ Smith, op. cit.27

²⁰ Smith, op. cit. 28

²¹ Ibid. p.8

The strength and mobility of Indian nationalism became more and more stronger and wider with the emergence and involvement of the 'new classes, off springs of the new economic structure and living under the same state regime.

In Indian perspective, it is said that in contrast to western experience, the concept and manifestation of nationalism emerged and developed under the colonial rule and economy.²²

Nationalism in India was, thus, articulated and developed through different stages. The strength of National Movement become more and more stranger with the involvement of new classes particularly the workers, peasants and the radical nationalist middle classes.²³

It was the colonial rule with its multifacet exploiting systems which radically transformed the socio- economic basis of the Indian society. The material condition based on inequality and exploitation thus provided the ground to the rise of social consciousness.

The common interest which formed the basic dynamics of Indian nationalism was its strive for national independence. But its nature was not out of class- interests.²⁴

The problem also involves with the elitist domination over the historiography, both ideological and methodological. Ranajit Guha has pointed out that 'the historiography of Indian Nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism-colonialist.'²⁵

The approaches to the study of Indian Nationalism reveal two facts: in the first place, the Indian nationalism has no dynamism of its own. It was just a product of 'stimulus and Response', under the colonial rule. In the second place, it reveals that whatever the achievement it could secure in the mobilization of the people are resulted gift of elite leadership. The vast majority of the Indian masses had nothing to do with it,

²² Ibid,P8

²³ Saha., op. cit., P.10

²⁴ Saha., op. cit., P.269

²⁵ Guha, Ranajit., 1982, *Introduction, Subaltern Studies, Vol-I*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, P.12

but to follow without any questions, sometimes with selfish motives to gain economically from their patron elite leaders.²⁶

India is a unique nation state as also civilization. But its uniqueness lies precisely in its cultural diversity, the coexistence and integration of different linguistic, religious and cultural strands. This is why the two concepts of a composite culture as also the diversity of cultures, devised and discerned by the finest of modern Indian intellectuals, are basic to the integrity of the Indian people and the nation- State. All attempts to deny and denigrate them are, therefore, to be seen as an effort to undermine them.

The movements for social and religious reforms were an effort to orient the people to the changing material conditions and new ideas. The basis for all the religious reform movements was the same. This indeed facilitated the cause of integration in India and the rise of Indian nationalism was a sequel to the social and religious reform movements of the first half of the 19th century. Initially, efforts were made by the religious reformers to correct the ills of our own society in the light of Western thought and knowledge. Both the social reform movement and spread of English education gave a fill-up to the Indian intelligentsia to organize them to press the demands for social welfare, political rights and economic relief.²⁷

However, there are different **debates on Indian nationalism**. The most important schools regarding the theories of nationalism are 'early nationalist', 'neo-Traditionalist', 'Cambridge school', Marxist school", and 'Subaltern school'. The 'early nationalist' as well as some of its later followers focused primarily on the nationalist ideology and a national consciousness to which all other forms of consciousness were assumed to have been subordinated. Prasenjit Duara has critiqued such formation as 'Teleological model on Enlightenment History' which gives a false sense of unity of Indian nationalism. However, the 'Cambridge School' interpreted Indian nationalism as nothing more than a battle between the two men of straws. In other words this school completely denied the role of a nationalist ideology in Indian nationalism. On the other hand the Marxist tried to explain Indian nationalism in terms of the economic developments of the colonial period.

²⁶ Saha., op. cit., P. 13

²⁷ Kishore, 1987, op.cit. p.II

They viewed that as economy transformed under the British rule; it also transformed the society from 'the rise of new social classes' to socio-cultural and political developments resulted in different forms and phases of nationalism.²⁸ They identified Indian national movement as directed by the bourgeois leadership to suit their own class interests which neglected the mass interests. Sumit Sarkar however, qualifying this view recognized the legitimacy of nationalism and does not ignore the 'internal tensions' within it. Bipan Chandra also argued in similar way that Indian national movement was a popular movement of various classes not exclusively controlled by the bourgeoisie. He demonstrated two types of contradictions in colonial India. As the anti-colonial struggle made progress, the secondary contradictions were comprised in the interest of the primary contradiction and thus the hegemony of a nationalist ideology was established.

Further, the '**Subaltern** school' stated that the organized national movement which led to the foundation of the Indian nation-states was a hollow nationalism of the elites.

This notion has undergone considerable shifts in recent years from national analysis to culture, mind and identity. The most important contribution has made by Partha Chatterjee. His assertion on Indian nationalism was that it was essentially a 'different', but derivative discourse from the west. According to him there were two domains of action in Indian nationalism. In the inner spiritual domain the Indians tried to fashion a 'modern' national culture that however was not western and in the outer national world nationalism was already sovereign in which there was little scope for the influence of western models. Indian nationalism was a rethinking and critiquing of the western modernity from the point of India's spiritual-cultural heritage, combined with a scientific approach. Benedict Anderson has categorized nationalism from a different standpoint where he related print capitalism with nationalism. He also pointed out that technology of print and the capital involved which created reading public which ultimately helped shaping a war nation. According to him the nationalism in Asia and Africa were not crystalized as a modular form of the west.²⁹

²⁸ Desai, A.R., 1948, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p.IX

²⁹ Chatterjee, Partha., 1992, *The Nation and its Fragments Colonial and Post colonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p.6

In India, he argued that it is a general notion that nationalism properly began in 1885 with the formation of the Indian National Congress. It is also known that the decade preceding this was a period of preparation when several provincial political associations were formed. Prior to that from the 1820s to the 1870s, was the period of 'social reform' when colonial enlightenment was beginning to 'modernize' the customs and institutions of a traditional society. And the political spirit was still very much that of collaboration with the colonial regime: nationalism had still not emerged. According to him this history also from sociological analysis, cannot but converge with Anderson's formulations.³⁰

He argued that 'the world is divided into two domains- the material and spiritual. The material is the domain of the 'outside', of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual on the other hand, is an 'inner' domain bearing the 'essential' marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve is the distinctness of one's spiritual culture. This formula, is a fundamental feature of anti colonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa.'³¹

There are several implications first, nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual its sovereign territory and refuses to allow the colonial power to intervene in that domain. He cleared that in India the period of social reform was actually made up of two distinct phases. In the earlier phase, Indian reformers looked to the colonial authorities to bring about by state action the reform of traditional institutions and customs. In the latter phase, although the need for change was not disputed, there was a strong resistance to allowing the colonial state to intervene in matters affecting 'national culture'. The second phase, in his argument was already the period of nationalism.³²

The colonial state in other words, is kept out of the 'inner' domain of national culture but it is not as though this so called spiritual domain is left unchanged. Infact here nationalism launched its most powerful creative and historically significant

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid. P6

project: to fashion a 'modern' national culture that is nevertheless not western. If the nation is an imagined community then this is where it is brought into being.³³

However, a number of statesmen and writers champion that the emergence of Indian nationalism in the 19th century was closely related to the spread of western education and the rapidly developing means of communication in the second half of the nineteenth century. They asserted that the urge for national freedom grew among the Indian people because modern education helped them to study and imbibe the doctrines of liberation propounded by western authors. After the penetration of the British into India, they radically changed the economic structure of the Indian society for its own purpose. With the establishment of a centralized administration, they introduced modern education and modern means of communications and other institutions which resulted in the growth of new social forces and changes in the society. These social forces with their own unique nature came into conflict with the British imperialism and provided the motive power for the rise and development of Indian nationalism. It is viewed that the growth of Indian nationalism was a by- product of British colonialism in India.

Commenting on this opinion, A. R. Desai argued that it would be incorrect to conclude that Indian nationalism was the child of this education. Infact, according to him Indian nationalism was, the outcome of the new social material conditions created in Indian and the new social forces which emerged within the Indian society as a result of the British conquest. It was the outcome of the objective conflict of interests, the interests of Britain to keep India politically and economically subjugated to her and the interests of the Indian people for a free political, economic and cultural evolution of the Indian society free by the British rule.³⁴

The commercial interests of the British made it imperative for them to have a uniform administration as well as link the important parts of India through rail, road, post, telegraph system etc.³⁵ Selig Harrison also observed that regionalism in India was old and insistent. Therefore India was never a political unity and according to him the

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Desai, op. cit. p.3

³⁵ Kishore, 1987, op. cit. p.15

only unifying factor in the country is ‘a common Hindu civilization sharing a dominant Sanskritic cultural legacy’.³⁶

However, the social scientists have been faced with the complex problem of defining Indian nationalism. According to Kohn, people don’t have the idea on nationalism because there was the absence of any single unifying factor, whether that was language, religion or of custom which can cement the social groups of India in one state of mind or ‘act of consciousness’ which may termed as nationalism.³⁷ Nehru though was an observer of ‘nation state’ he was actually aware of immense diversity of India in regional terms imposed by geographical and historical factors.

On citing examples from Tilak, Gandhiji and above all from Jawaharlal Nehru that diversity of the nation was not seen as an obstacle to be overcome, not like the communalists who said one nation, one culture. Rather one nation was to be formed on the basis of the diversity. As Nehru repeatedly said, we should glory in this diversity. I still remember as a child at our own level we used to argue that India was a great country because it was so big and diverse.³⁸ Tilak who first used the phrase- India is a nation in the making. The British used to say India is a geographical expression, not a nation. Tilak never asserted that we are a nation. He said: “True, we are not, but we are becoming a nation.”³⁹

The most important factor in the making of the Indian nation, however, was the political activity of the Indian people and their struggle against colonialism, their common enemy. The national movement was based on the assumption that, though certain elements of cohesion and even nationhood were present in India’s history and in more recent times it had entered the process of nation formation, it was not yet a structured nation. Hence, one of the basic tasks the movement undertook from its very beginning was that of promoting the process of nation-in-the- making. At the same time it was widely accepted that India could become a structured nation not only by acknowledging but also appreciating its immense cultural, linguistic, religious and geographical diversity.

³⁶ Harrison, 1968, op. cit. p.15

³⁷ Kohn, 1944, op. cit. p.10

³⁸ Chandra, op. cit. p.46

³⁹ Chandra, 1993, op. cit. p.47

In India strong nationalist feelings became pronounced in the later part of the nineteenth century when educated Indians began to realize how an alien ruler with a sense of racial and intellectual superiority was exploiting our land and people in various ways. Democracy was linked to the unity of the country. According to Nehru one reason why India must follow a peaceful or non-violent, democratic way of life and politics was because of India's being a fractured and diverse society. India could not be held together by any kind of force, coercion or violence. Nehru wrote to his daughter that "today we are trying to free India. That is a great thing. But an even greater is the cause of humanity itself. And because we feel that our struggle is a part of the great human struggle to end suffering and misery, we can rejoice that we are doing our little bit to help the progress of the world".⁴⁰

"The development of India as a nation is the result of combination of several factors and forces during the British rule. The exploitation of India by a common enemy was the most dominant factor which gave the nationalist forces in India a common identity and programme during the British period. Discussing the character of Indian nationalism in the nineteenth century, Charles Heimsath showed from government report that for the average Indians, the concept of Indian nationalism was generally beyond understanding. The only kind of nationalism that they aware were a culture-based regionalism, centering round the idea of linguistic homogeneity. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee also had preferred the use of the concept of 'language culture' in general context of India rather than that of 'racial culture'.⁴¹ However, it was the educated Indian elite class, belonging to various linguistic and regional groups, who had infused new ideas of regional consciousness among the people of respective areas before they began to think in terms of a larger Indian consciousness. Generally, the spirit of Indian nationalism is dated from the formation of 'Indian Association' in Calcutta. However, it was with the formation of the 'Indian National Congress' in 1885 that the idea of Indian nationalism reached its maturity.⁴² Despite the existence of such diversities within the Indian sub-continent, however the Indian nationalists of the freedom struggle were able to spread new ideas of unity amongst the different population groups of the country which ultimately developed into a new phenomenon known as Indian nationalism.

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Choudhury, Abhijit., *Suniti Kumar Chatterji and the Problems of Nation building in India*, The Heritage, 2014, Vol- V, Guwahati, p.10

⁴² Misra, Tilottama, 1987, *Literature and Society in Assam*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, p.145

Nihar Ranjan Ray found that in spite of ‘variations in details’ the contributions of different ethnic and cultural streams gave a distinctive character to India which he defined as “Indianness of the community of people of India”.⁴³ He had to acknowledge that India was a ‘nation- in- the- making’ and would therefore, “promote the rowing unity of Indian people through a common struggle against colonialism.”⁴⁴ However, Ambedkar has suggested that India should be defined as a multinational federation of states.⁴⁵ Some historians also hold that nationalism is not a natural inherent feeling but is an artificial, as its growth and spread are visible.⁴⁶ Charles Hemisath also viewed that early 19th century India’s nationalism was only the feelings and ideas of limited groups of people.⁴⁷

The **Assamese intelligentsia** of the nineteenth century was, therefore, in no way alone in its advocating of the cause of regional nationalism. Amalendu Guha had interact nationalism in Assam more than of a century and according to him the two track of nationalism in Assam were – the all India unity and the little nationalism based on regionalism, linguistic unity which is nowhere so prominently visible as in the case of Assam.⁴⁸ It is also viewed that ‘little nationalism’ flowed under the shadow of the anti- colonial movement during the colonial period and were not isolated movements but integral parts of the nation- making process itself.⁴⁹ In this way several other factors besides those in common with the other parts of India, contributed to the development of a strong current of regional nationalism amongst the Assamese intelligentsia in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ British administration and the material foundation laid by it resulted in the destruction of the old feudal classes and in the rise and growth of new social classes. In Assam elsewhere, of all the social classes thus emerged the middle class and it was the most prominent which helped in social regeneration. New consciousness flourished among the Assamese elites and one major demand of the situation was the identification of the Assamese as Assamese which was primarily done through the attribution of a language.

⁴³ Ray, 1973, op. cit. Pp.18-20

⁴⁴ Chandra, Bipan., op. cit. p.Pp.22-23

⁴⁵ Choudhury, Abhijit., op. cit. p.14

⁴⁶ Carlton, 1931, op. cit. p.62

⁴⁷ Heimsath, 1964,op. cit. Pp.133-134

⁴⁸ Guha, op. cit, p.45

⁴⁹ Nag, Sajal, op. cit. p.87

⁵⁰ Misra, 1987, op. cit. p.148

With the strong roots in the feudal attitude the middle class that emerged in Assam during the British rule appeared to be loyal, compromising and subservient to the ruling class. It was their belief right from the days of Haliram Dhekial Phukan to Lakshminath Bezbaruah that the country under the British rule made much progress and improvement and they wanted therefore the continuation of the British rule.⁵¹ Hemanga Biswas also argued that in spite of tremendous contribution of Lakshminath Bezbaruah to the Assamese society, he had some limitations. As he had never made any comment in his writings against the imperialist rule and never mentioned or recognized the Non-cooperation movement and some of the peasant uprisings occurred during his time.⁵²

They regarded British rule as a Divine privilege and therefore freedom of the country from the British was yet to cross their minds. All that they wanted was like the Moderates, not swaraj but *Suraj* or good government that would remove their long standing grievances and would bring in all round improvements politically, culturally and economically. They sought to achieve these not by revolutionary but constitutional means. No wonder, therefore, even in discussions and debates in the Councils, their speeches were marked by effusions of loyalty to the British government.⁵³

However, we should have to remember that they, including Anandaram Dhekial Phukan in fact were the product of an age in which the conception of Indian nationalism was yet in embryo.⁵⁴ Then the Indians very few only realized that they belonged to the same nation but men from other localities. Therefore, though they were not nationalist in the modern sense of the term, but were intensely patriotic.

Jyotiprasad Agarwala found the stage ready through the representation of the Assamese elite class who insisted in establishing the language based Assamese nationalist identity. But he had departed from the mainstream linguistic nationalism and through his new ideas of juxtaposing Assamese culture with nationalism added a new dimension to the available legacy. Devabrata Sarma in his narrative has brought to

⁵¹ Kalita, Ramesh Ch., 2011, *Situating Assamese Middle Class the Colonial period*, Bhabani Printers, Guwahati, p.23

⁵² Mazumdar, Paramananda(ed.), 2008, *Hemanga Biswas Rachanawali*, Guwahati, p.45

⁵³ Bhuyan(ed.), 1999, op. cit. p.241

⁵⁴ Sen, op. cit. Pp.411-12

light a very significant debate initiated by Birendra kumar Bhattacharjee regarding the distinctiveness of Jyotiprasad Agarwala's concept of Assamese nationalism.⁵⁵

Culture is generally understood as an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour. It can also be discuss as a vehicle of the identity of a community. It remains underlying in customs and manners, food habits, dresses etc. Even though a community marches or progresses with time, yet the glory of its past and earlier culture can be discovered from ancient time. Culture refers to a state or a phase in the gradual, evolutionary process of man's advancements in refined understanding and ways of life. Even the literary heritage of a nation is a part of its cultural heritage. In the current usage culture refers to the best of a nation's thought, imagination and action.⁵⁶ Culture is man's evolutionary advancement in understanding life in a refined manner and literature reflects people's cultural life.⁵⁷ Cultural is a vehicle of the identity of community. It remains latent in customs and manners, food habits, dresses, ornaments etc. Even though a community marches or progresses with time, yet the glory of its past and earlier culture can be discovered from the archaeological and historical relics or from ancient books.⁵⁸

The term 'culture' is of wider connection than what is usually implied by its popular, loose application to refer to only the domain of certain arts. It refers to state or a phase in refined understanding and ways of life. Infact, when we speak of the culture of a people we of every aspect of their life and activities the way they act their livelihood or their faiths and rituals or religious life, their dresses and tastes or aesthatic sense as reflected in the fine arts and their understanding and intellectual attainments as expressed through education and literature. Even the literary heritage of a nation is a part of its cultural heritage.⁵⁹ Culture is progressive by nature. Culture is man's evolutionary advancement in understanding life in a refined manner and literature reflects people's cultural life.⁶⁰

It its current usage culture refers to the best of nation's thought, immagination and action. Even though man acts or behaves according to inner instincts, they can

⁵⁵ Sarma, Devabrata, op. cit. p.45

⁵⁶ Bharali, op. cit., P.vii, 3

⁵⁷ Bharali, Arunima., op. cit., P.iv

⁵⁸ Ibid., P.vii

⁵⁹ Ibid,P.3

⁶⁰ Bharali, Arunima., 1999, Assamese Culture: As reflected in the Medieval Assamese Literature, Lawyer's Book Stall, Panbazar, P. vi

improve it through culture.⁶¹ Culture is the result of the struggle and victory of the human mind over impulses. Assamese culture has grown out of the syntheses of diverse customs and manners, modes and morals prevalent among the various communities living in this ‘land of one score and fourteen races and it has found beautiful expressions in Assamese literature.’⁶²

However, both John Breuilly and Eric Hobsbawm wished to confine the use of the term ‘nationalism’ to a purely political movement.⁶³ But such a usage is unduly restrictive. It omits other important dimensions of nationalism such as culture, identity etc. and the result is a serious underestimation of the scope and power of nationalism. The term ‘culture’ generally confined to an acquitted celebration of art and beauty that consciously disguises the political context in which cultural production takes place. But, Jyotiprasad Agarwala’s involvement with art and culture cannot be interpreted in such narrow terms.

This point had made by John Hutchinson in his pioneering and thought-provoking analysis of cultural nationalism. Hutchinson does not deny the importance of ‘a political nationalism that has as its aim autonomous state institutions. In the meantime he also argued that we cannot overlook the recurrent significance of cultural forms of nationalism. Despite its much smaller scale cultural nationalism must accord due weight to ‘a cultural nationalism that seeks a moral regeneration of the community’.⁶⁴ Tom Nairn, a Marxian thinker combined Gellner’s modernization perspective with that of Gramsci in order to provide a ‘materialist’ explanation of the dynamism of ‘romantic’ nationalism. For Susan Reynolds, the conjunction of regnum and people meant that medieval regnalism was always both political and cultural in content. This refutes the common idea that modern nationalism is simply the later politicization of purely cultural or ethnic sentiments in pre- modern periods. It also appears to refute the separation of a purely cultural from an exclusively political type of national sentiment. One of the goals of nationalism is the attainment and maintenance of cultural identity.

In modern world, however, such a separation is much more feasible. John Breuilly, as we saw, wished to confine the use of the term ‘nationalism’ to a purely

⁶¹ Ibid,P.4

⁶² Bharali., op. cit., P7

⁶³ Smith, 1998, op. cit. p.177

⁶⁴ Hutchinson, 1994, op. cit. p.41

political movement and Eric Hobsbawm also argued that nationalism's only interest for the historian lay in its political aspirations, and especially its capacity for state-making. But such a usage is unduly restrictive. It omits other important dimensions of nationalism such as culture, identity and the homeland. The result is a serious underestimation of the scope and power of nationalism, and of its ethnic roots. Political nationalism hesitates and ebbs however, cultural nationalists, as it were, pick up the torch and seek to revive a frustrated and oppressed community.

According to Hutchinson, the objectives of cultural nationalist are essentially modernist. One of the goals of nationalism is the attainment and maintenance of cultural identity which is a sense of a distinctive cultural heritage and 'personality' for a given named population. Without such a collective identity, there cannot be an authentic nationalism from a nationalist's standpoint.⁶⁵ For cultural nationalists, to secure a representative state for their community so that it might participate as an equal in the developing multicultural rationalist civilization. They regard the nation as a primitive expression of the individuality and the creative force of nature. It is a movement of moral regeneration which seeks to re-unite the different aspects of the nation. Cultural nationalism is not a regressive force. It may look back to a presumed glorious past, but it revives both traditionalism and modernism away from conflict. Here lies the importance of historians who rediscover the national past and chart its destiny, and also of the artists who celebrate the heroes of the nation and create out of the collective experience of the people.⁶⁶ Accordingly, from his analysis Hutchinson draws three conclusions about the dynamics of cultural nationalism. The first is 'the importance of historical memory in the formation of nations'. The second is 'that there are usually competing definitions of the nation' and the third is 'the centrality of cultural symbols to group creation.'

Parha Chatterjee argues that long before the political struggle for power began, the Indian society was imagining its nation in a private cultural sphere, even though the state was in the hands of the colonisers. They imagined in this point with their own domain of sovereignty and constructed an Indian modernity that was modern but not

⁶⁵ Smith., op. cit., P.90

⁶⁶ Ibid.34

Western.⁶⁷ From this time cultural construction of a space for autonomy in the early nineteenth century, that Indian nationalism started.

C.A. Bayly on the other hand, has traced the roots of Indian nationalism to its pre- colonial days, it emanated from what he described as ‘traditional patriotism’ which was a socially active sentiment of attachment to land, language and culture that developed in the subcontinent long before the process of Westernization had begun.⁶⁸

For Susan Reynolds, the conjunction of regnum and ‘people’ meant that medieval ‘regalism’ was always both political and cultural in content. This refutes the common idea that modern nationalism is simply the later politicisation of purely cultural or ethnic sentiments in pre- modern periods, and that the distinctive feature of modern nations is their sovereignty as mass political communities. It also appears to refute the separation of a purely cultural from an exclusively political type of national sentiment.⁶⁹

Cultural nationalism may look back to a presumed glorious past but it does not mean that cultural nationalism is a regressive force. It repudiates both traditionalism and modernism. Instead cultural nationalist regarded as moral innovators who seek by reviving an ethnic historicist vision of the nation to redirect traditionalists and modernists away from conflict and unite them in the task of constructing an integrated distinctive and autonomous community, capable of competing in the modern world.⁷⁰

Hutchinson supports a detailed and rich analysis of national- cultural ‘revivals and highlighted the alternations between failed political nationalism and resurgent cultural movements and the reasons why the cultural movements appealed to an intelligentsia whose mobility was blocked by professional. Hutchinson concerned to vindicate a separate realm for culture in the formation of nations and argues convincingly for a distinct politics of cultural nationalism.⁷¹

Connor has contributed greatly of the functions of language and ethnic ties and the power of myths of origin in rousing popular support for nationalism. Armstrong, Hutchinson also trace the role of myths, symbols, values and memories in generating

⁶⁷ Chatterjee, 1993, Pp. 5-7

⁶⁸ Bandyopadhyay., op. cit., P.206

⁶⁹ Smith., op. cit., P.177

⁷⁰ Smith., op, cit., P.179

⁷¹ Smith., op. cit., P. 180

ethnic and national attachments and forging cultural and social networks have added historical dimensions of nations and nationalism.⁷²

Cultural Nationalism sometimes occupies a subordinate role, at least initially, it can still be convincingly argued that for a new nation to achieve lasting popular success and maintain itself in a world of competing nations, intellectuals and professionals have an important and perhaps a crucial role to play.⁷³

Michael Mann proposed a starker 'political' theory of nationalism. He further insisted on the primacy of political and military factors. He claimed that the key lies rather in the state.⁷⁴

Anthony D Smith declared that Mann might be right in partial way that nationalism is part of the wider movement for democracy. In the same way, the nationalists emphasise the uniqueness of a vernacular culture.⁷⁵

Raymond Williams has pointed out three common definitions of culture- the ideal, the documentary and the social. The ideal definition views culture as a State or process of human perfection in terms of certain absolute or universal values. The documentary definition takes culture as the body of intellectual and imaginative work, recording in a detailed way human thought and experience. On the other hand the social definition looks at a culture as a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also institutions and ordinary behaviour.⁷⁶

Jyotiprasad Agarwala seems to accept the third definition of culture because it is the most crucial aspect of any social reality. He is of the opinion that culture remains an integral part of all aspects of the social life of all civilizations.⁷⁷ He regarded the national liberation struggle, society, revolution, literature, music all as the different expressions of the same life experience. Accordingly there have been pure cultural nationalists who have either rejected or remained silent about the state and the need to capture state

⁷² Smith., op. cit., P.224

⁷³ Ibid., P.57

⁷⁴ Ibid., P82

⁷⁵ Ibid., P.83

⁷⁶ Williams, Raymond., 1984, *The Long Revolution*, Harmondsworth, p.57

⁷⁷ Baruah, Apurba K., *Jyotiprasad Agarwalla and the Concept of Assamese Culture*, NEIHA, p.218

power. Such nationalist was Jyotiprasad Agarwala who did not interested in acquiring power but a pure cultural nationalist.

He brought a new wave in the realm of Assamese culture. He had respect for old traditional Assamese cultural forms and idioms. He showed a new enthusiasm to recreate these traditional forms by experimenting them with western forms and idioms which resulted in the wonderful genre of Assamese songs which was deeply rooted in Assamese cultural tradition representing the new.⁷⁸ He was a man of revolutionary passion can be more or less seen from his efforts at the national unity and integrity made through all his dramas. He had coloured the characters of his drama in various ways so as to make his symbol of love and beauty perfect. He believed that man is basically good- natured and the worshipper of beauty. Even man is confronted with the forces of evil, he tries to remain good. It is art and culture that enable man to sit in his high and worthy pedestal. He has written: “Newness is the secret of the art of characterization. While someone creates such a character by transmuting an abstract idea, another creates it by adding flesh and blood to a particular message of the realm of thought. Thus such characters are created either in dream or in the room of intellectualism. The character Chitrlekha in his play *Sonit Kunwari* is nothing but a symbol of unfulfilled thirst for beauty pursued by all the artists of the world. He believed that the world would be able to enjoy real peace only on the day when the rein of administration would fall on Rupkonwar’s hand (Prince of Beauty).⁷⁹

He was the pioneer in aesthetic thinking and art criticism in Assam. He conceived the noteworthy notion of *Krishnatatva* and framed a special definition of ‘artist’ and ‘culture’.⁸⁰ According to him Krishna is a tradition, a great heritage that is inherited by us over the ages.⁸¹ He called Sankari ideal as Krishna culture or in short Krishna who also indicates to Culture. Sankaradeva, the icon of Assamese culture has made an effort to make this legacy of *Krishnatatva* closer to the heart of common masses. The saint gave a sense of direction to the people of the land. ‘Jyotiprasad on the other hand totally approved this idea and used it in carving a new culture for the general

⁷⁸ Pokee, letters of jyotiprasad Agarwal, File no 3

⁷⁹ Goswami, Pranati Sarmah., op. cit. p.94

⁸⁰ Dutta, Akhil ranjan(ed.), 2012, *Culture, ideology politics Jyotiprasad Agarwala as a social transformer*, DVS Publication, Guwahati, p.15

⁸¹ Gohain (ed.), *Natunar Puja*, op. cit. p.495

Assamese society in a modern context.⁸² He had reinvented Sankardeva to give culture an organic creative meaning rooted in Indian civilization through the ages.

Jyotiprasad Agarwala tried to trace a similarity between the *Kauravas* of Mahabharata which he regards as *Duskriti* as the enemies of pure culture or Krishna culture which he called as *Sanskriti*. Since the Lord was with the Pandavas. Even among the Kauravas pure hearts like Bhishma and Gandhari were there. They were for truth, but their voices have gone unheard by other Kauravas. Bhishma and Gandhari wanted Krishna, but had to remain away from the lord for their own reasons. Gandhari was for truth, but being the mother of Kauravas she had to remain with them. Lord Krishna was for the protection of the truth as much as he was a destroyer of falsehood. One of his hands was for creation, while the other one was for fighting falsehood. Jyotiprasad argued that we should have to follow this ideal of the lord.

Lord Krishna too had his anti-bodies within his family. The tug of war between culture and the forces of evil exists in a cyclic order. It possibly continues in various forms and shapes. He argued that the Krishna culture is perhaps reborn again in the guise of Mahatma Gandhi who led India to freedom and subsequently got killed by a bullet of his adversary as like Krishna was killed by a bird-catcher. Jyotiprasad Agarwala viewed that if culture fails to dominate within our hearts we are sure to be destroyed. He argued that we have lost the meaning of the word Krishna. According to him Krishna should not necessarily mean Lord Krishna. India is a multilingual and multicultural country. Every community may be religious or ethnic, has its own Krishna or cultural symbol of its own. He argued that in today's changing contexts our concept of Krishna or culture should be to work out a cultural unity in diversity. In every community culture stand for happiness, this is being symbolized by Krishna.⁸³ (*Silpir Prithibi*) In his discussion with one eminent personality of the 20th century, he argued that Abstract culture's concrete variation is Krishna and saint Garga would had given the name Krishna with this view. In many times Artist differ from culture. But he wanted to create culture by the artists. In Jyotiprasad Agarwala's view Krishna means culture, the highest form of humanity and who knows it is the cultured man or the artist.⁸⁴ Kamalesh wrote accept that this artist feelings is Jyotiprasad's philosophy of

⁸² Dutta, 2012, op. cit. Pp.15-16

⁸³ Gohain(ed.), Silpir Prithivi, op. cit. p.467

⁸⁴ Pokee, File No.2, Personal Letter to Jyotiprasad Agarwala from Kamalesh dtd. 9/12/1948

Brahma which he argued cannot be possible to found easily in best literates also. He again viewed that if the world would be called as *Sanskritikar Prithivi* (Cultureds' World) inspite of *SilpirPrithivi* (Artists' World). According to him who could able to realized the 'Krishna Culture' can called *Sanskritik* (cultured) and in that sense Jyotiprasad Agarwala can be called a cultured man.⁸⁵

Interestingly, the Agarwala with their traditional faith on Jainism, was attracted by the ideals of neo-vaishnavism and it was Navarangaram the great grandfather of Jyotiprasad Agarwala who was the first Marwari in Assam who took initiation in Sankarite vaishnavism. Jyotiprasad inherited such a lineage that was reshaped and remolded due to their cultural contact into the Assamese society. Thus, this transformation of the Agarwala family can be correlated with Jyotiprasad Agarwala's concept of Assamese nationalism. Jyotiprasad in conceptualizing Assamese nationalism adopted Krishna as an icon that could blend and unite the multiple variants (caste, class, and ethnicity) in Assamese society and culture. Here, it should be noted in this context that constructing such a framework of Assamese nationalism with Krishna at the central unifying icon, which is identified as 'krishna culture' of Jyotiprasad Agarwala by the Marxist scholar like Apurba Baruah, has put forward the question of homogeneity of Assamese vaishnavism with a classless base.⁸⁶

He viewed that a true artist cannot hate his adversaries and according to him every man is an artist, artist of humanity, good and beauty. According to him culture is nothing but worship of beauty. Man derives supreme happiness in life by the complete propagation of culture. The call for light which sounded in the dark ages of the past too signalled man's desire for culture. (*Poharaloi*) *Silpir Prithibi* (World of the Artists) is a wonderful piece of writing of Jyotiprasad Agarwala. It is infact, a testament of his philosophy of art. Presented in the form of a talk to the people of Sibsagar, it opens up almost all the windows of his mind. He said that the world is a house of the artists and a treasure-trove built up for the posterity. The burning light in an artist's heart will have to light the hearts of the people worldwide. Every artist will have to improve himself as world artist. A true artist converts everyone into an improved individual, a better citizen. What pains Jyotiprasad is that the artist within everyman is yet to blossom to the fullest extent. This quest for artistic expression in most cases bogged down because

⁸⁵Personal letter to Jyotiprasad Agarwala fro Kamalesh dted. 9/12/1948

⁸⁶ Baruah, A.K., op. cit. p.118

of hostile situations all around. It is also equally true that man is essentially an animal. It is very difficult to keep his animal instinct subdued. Man is destructive besides being creative. He is subjected to a continual warfare between his creative and animal instincts. In most cases his creative instincts are overpowered by his bestial impulses. It happens for lack of a proper social and cultural environment. In his play *Rupalim* therefore he showed that live conquers all barriers imposed by external factors and establishes its superiority over oppression and tyranny. Even it bounded a tyrant to realize his

However, according to him, to show people the right path of culture attempt has been made by Lord Krishna, Jesus Christ, Gautom Buddha, Hazarat Mohammad, Srimanta Sankardeva and others. Similar attempt in this direction has also been made by Karl Marx, Lenin, Rishi Aurobinda, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and their true followers. According to him they are the creators of culture. Every saint had to wage a relentless war against the adversaries of culture.⁸⁷

This distinction of his view can be link one of the Gramseian approach to the role of intellectuals. Gramesi viewed that all men were intellectuals but all of them did not play the role of intellectuals. In the same way Jyotiprasad Agarwala believed that all men participated in culture but all of them did not play the role of artists.⁸⁸ Culture always tries to transform and transmute hatred to love and happiness. Therefore he utters:

“...Tok bandhu rupehe chao...

He mor sakalo satru

Tomak namaskar

Prati sangharsate natun

Sakti pao...”

(Oh! my enemies, I salute you. I take you as my friend. In every conflict with you I get new energy).

Jyotiprasad refers to what Adolphe Appia, a great philosopher and theatre personality of Europe had viewed about culture. He quoted: *“Art is an attitude. This*

⁸⁷ Gohain(ed.), op. cit. p.456

⁸⁸ Baruah, A.K., op. cit. p.219

*attitude ought to be humanity's collective heritage. Instead, we have narrowed it down, made it the personal attribute of the artist alone, of the creator of the work of art...".*⁸⁹ Jyotiprasad reiterates the same spirit. He argued that if culture fails to dominate within our hearts we are sure to be destroyed. In this connection he referred to the extinction process of a large number of gigantic animals. These animals despite their size and physical power failed to survive the test of time. They lacked the art of living. According to him finally this world will be having its right kind of inhabitants. (*Silpir Prithibi*) He wants to put art in a higher pedestal. From personal level of excellence, he wants to broaden its edge. From a fixed acting theatre he wants to become an actor in the larger context of people's life. To reinforce the idea he further quotes Adolphe Appia: "*A time will come when professionals in the theatre and the plays written for them will be a thing of the past, never return...The time when we shall be artists living, artists because we willed it so.*"⁹⁰

He makes some vital observations about the importance of culture for the development of human race. Man, he says, is distinguished from the wild world. Culture stands as a dividing line between the two. Quest for beauty is the cardinal objective of culture. Every artist must have a militant mindset to combat those hostile forces coming from outside and inside. Perhaps under such compelling situations the necessity of revolution cannot be set aside. He welcomes the fire of revolution as a farmer welcomes the lightening in the sky in the expectation of a heavy downpour, necessary for his paddy field. Every revolution has two faces- one is for devastation and the other one for new creation. People without a definite sense of culture are prone to power craze, and to retain the seat of power they may create a situation, however, cannot be expected to continue for a long time.⁹¹

Above all, Jyotiprasad was a creative artist. He stated that Indian Civilization has been ups and downs since long. During the colonial rule this vast country has been virtually enervated to the level of slavery. Indian culture is transformed and transmuted time and again, depending upon social and economic contexts. According to him Aryan civilization is founded on what we mean by Krishna culture. Indian civilization is one of the oldest ones in world history. But it has been subjected to a process of rise and

⁸⁹ Gohain(ed.), op. cit. p.567

⁹⁰ Ibid, p.92

⁹¹ Pokee, Letter from Jyotiprasad Agarwala to Sukadev, 25-3-1919

fall. Indian civilization remaining so long in a state of *samadhi* has once again risen to a new consciousness. People like Gandhi, Aurobinda, Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore worked at a time when the people of the country, cutting across all segments of the society, were virtually jolted by a new socio- political resurgence.

Jyotiprasad pointed out the three categories of Human culture and behaviour. *Satik*, *rajasik* and *tamasik*- based on *sattya*, *rajah* and *tamah*. Human behaviour is regulated by any of the three qualities. In our day-to-day life it is difficult to remain strictly within the frontier of *sattya* that is truth. Only through realization of *sattya* a state of superior culture can be achieved. Human problems are unlimited. They continued to proliferate. Such situations in their search for solutions inflame our animalish instincts, which eventually lead to hostilities, tensions, terror, selfishness and enmities between the two categories. Such situations lead to war and bloody revolutions. Great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Aurobinda have shown a system of peace protest against injustice without any hostility or bad blood. Aurobinda talks of philosophical revolution, while Mahatma Gandhi resorts to *sattyagraha*. If this *modus operandi* is resorted to by people, as they are being practiced in India, a higher civilization will certainly become a reality.⁹²

Though Jyotiprasad Agarwala is mostly observe as a cultural portrait, but his cultural engagement also had a political vision and his political vision was reflected in his culture. Because, it is regarded that Cultural Revolution is not possible without the political consciousness.⁹³ Any person, who thinks about a radical change of the society and desires a society free from exploitation and domination, he will use politics for bringing changes in the society in whatever area of creative activity such a person is engaged. It may be play, literature, art, cinema, music or any other forms of his creativity but he will definitely associates his political vision with it.⁹⁴

Thus, for Jyotiprasad Agarwala also his political activity was the other side of his humanism and creative exploits. “The vigour of the cultural movement of that period, which marked not only a new political awakening but also made a break in cultural practice, derived from its being linked with a political movement which had an

⁹² Gohain(ed.), *Natun Dinar Kristi*

⁹³ Biswas, Hemanga., op. cit. p.99

⁹⁴ Dutta, Akhil ranjan(ed.). op. cit. p.20

anti- feudal, anti- colonial and anti-fascist character whose expression was a united front strategy.”⁹⁵

He considered culture to be the pivot of his activities and culture to be the arena for political struggle and a vehicle for social transportation. Jyotiprasad Agarwala through his new ideas of juxtaposing Assamese culture with nationalism added a new dimension to the available legacy.

He brought a new wave in the realm of Assamese culture. He had respect for old traditional Assamese cultural forms and idioms and showed a new enthusiasm to recreate these traditional forms by experimenting them with western forms and idioms. He accompanied the local cultures and identities with the world culture which resulted in the wonderful genre of Assamese songs which was deeply rooted in Assamese cultural tradition and was refreshingly new. He accepted a broader perspective by accepting different traditional cultural traits like folk songs (*lok geet, biya geet*), traditional dance and ballads and poured nationalist flavour in it by composing songs and poems himself. These are the folk treasures of the Assamese society. He specifically means the rural folk. Urban people had a negative attitude towards the folk music and songs such as *borgeet, bongeeet, biyageet, ainam* and others. These songs are sung either as prayers or at the time of marriage ceremonies. *Bongeeets* are songs sung by the touring villagers or travellers. *Biyageets* are popular amongst the womenfolk during the time of marriage ceremonies. *Ainaams* are generally songs sung by the womenfolk in praise of the Al-mighty. Such songs are integral part of Assamese social life. The so called Assamese educated people preferred to get rid of that folk music considering them to be rustic and base. The heart of Jyotiprasad protested and he promised to do justice to that explores area.⁹⁶

Accordingly, his plays also revealed a clear departure from the prevailing themes and modes which was mainly inclined by the Bengali plays. He himself wrote: “I imparted to the songs of *Sonit Kunwari* the tunes of Assamese folk- songs such as *Biyanam, Ai- nam, Bihugeet* and made the actors and boys who played the female parts sing them... Those who were more familiar with the tunes used in Calcutta theatres and Hindusthani music began to pass ironic comments about them. Gradually the new

⁹⁵ Patnaik, 2012, op. cit. p.56

⁹⁶ Pokee, File No 2

Assamese tunes began to be accepted by the educated Assamese. He pointed out that Indian music has two broadbased traditions- Hindusthani music and Carnataki music. Hindusthani music has absorbed in its fold elements from Arabian, Persian and other sources. Therefore it has received a special dimension without being washed away by the non- Indian elements encompassing it from all around. Compared to that Carnataki music is firmly rooted to its soil. For Jyotiprasad, Assamese music, especially developed by Sankardeva from out of the available richness of Indian classical and folk music, constitutes a third category. Assamese music is marked by some distinct features of its own. This may be the result of an incorporation of Mongoloid elements into same. This has added some extra dimension to Assamese music. He argued that Assamese music is a tradition by itself.

One of the basic truths on which all Indian art is developed is that true art is never made to order, it comes as a result of an irresistible inner urge. Behind all works of art is a great spiritual urge. The artists who gave than poured their devotion in the shape of such exquisite works of art it was an act of self- effecting dedication.⁹⁷ Folk music of a nation is a natural expression of the mass soul of the people making the nation. In fact, any national art is or at any rate ought to be a true expression of the cultural soul of the nation. And music being the highest of the fine arts is the best and most vital expression on the nation's soul. While the higher and more elaborate musical expressions correspond to the higher and more intellectual section of the people, folk music expressions effectively and in simple direct and straight forward manner the emotional experience of the general population.

It is said that while there are appreciable differences between the various kinds of musical technique obtaining in different parts of the world there is a sort of similarity in folk music all over the world. This is but natural as the basic emotional impulses of humanity are similar all the world over. There are also other varieties of folk- songs which convey moral lessons and expound philosophical truths, teach proverbs and narrate historical events and so on.⁹⁸ According to Walker Connor: "all nationalisms, have an ethnic core, even when they present themselves in a civic guise."⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Srinivasan, R., op. cit. p.40

⁹⁸ Ibid.p.49

⁹⁹ Baruah, sanjiv., op. cit. 67

In the *Asom Sahitya Sabha* Session at Guwahati Lakshminath Bezbaruah himself gave his stamp of approval by stating that the two songs had touched his soul.¹⁰⁰ From this session of the *Asom Sahitya Sabha* the influence of the new musical and dance tradition introduced.

In the context of fast changing socio- cultural scenario the music of a developing nation cannot remain stagnant. Jyotiprasad does not appear to be in favour of any isolation between the music traditions. Indian tradition of music should not discard the desirable elements from the western music. He adopted the style of harmony of the western music. According to him by drawing from the large reservoir of world music Indian music can rich itself. But it was not taken place. Even Rabindranath Tagore, who was a singer and a composer himself, held a similar view that when our cultural treasure house is full of gems, why should our music be kept in an isolation chamber?

A section of people were happy because Jyotiprasad tried to preserve our cultural heritages. Along with Assamese tunes Jyotiprasad tried for the first time to place Assamese *Bihu*- dance and *Kamrupi* dance upon the stage through *Sonit Konwari*. The *Padum kali* dance of Chitrlekha was a fusion of Assamese *Bihu*- dance and the dance movements in *Bhaona*. From that time onwards Assamese people were interested in the art of Assamese dance.¹⁰¹ Thus it was that the experimentation and presentation of Assamese music and dance by Jyotiprasad which helped to bring about a renaissance in Assam. Jyotiprasad takes to the intellectual heritage of Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy. Perhaps that is why Jyotiprasad is different from his contemporaries. The themes of his plays were mainly on local contexts and with all its uniqueness it developed into a new Assamese variety. The dance evoked much interest in the audience. Sensible people of the time said- Assamese music and dance are back on the rail.

Despite its newness in his plays, they also built up in a traditional context. The nationalist and humanist mindset of him was the reflection of his passion for what is best in Indian tradition. His passion for the past was creative. No society, however modern, can ever survive as a distinct identity by detachment with tradition. He showed example of Assamese architecture. He stated that the *Namghars* and their architectural designs strike a close similarity with the designs of Valkishe theatres at Berlin. Thereby

¹⁰⁰ Gohain(ed.), op. cit. p.6

¹⁰¹ Pokee, File no3

Jyotiprasad tried to point out, modernity in Assamese architecture could be seen during the 15th and 16th century Assam when Sankardeva was preaching neo- Vaishnavism in this part of the country. Modern architecture is marked by modernist, cubist, futuristic and by other styles, depending upon the culture and ethos of the nations of the world. He viewed that our people should be interested in architecture with the modern trends of architectural designs, popular amongst the advanced nations of the world. He advised that while working out architectural designs of our own our people should see our cultural heritage and step should be carefully taken so that our heritage is reflected in our designs. Again he advised not to forget or ignore our typical Assamese ornaments and clothes which represent our secular mindset.¹⁰²

Jyotiprasad spoke for the promotion of culture. By new culture, however he did not mean a total departure from the best part of our cultural traditions. According to him culture should be review timely. Without his review and update culture does not proceed. (*Natunar Puja*) He said in his essay *Natunar Puja* (Worshipping the new) that change ought to be the law of life. Human civilization proceeds through a process of change, through a process of trial and error.

Patriotism, nationalism and humanism are the inherent derivatives of one's passionate and creative touch with tradition. He therefore wrote the poems like *Kumar Mohan*, *Chitralkha*, *Kanaklata*, *Lachitar ahban*. In *KarengarLigiri*, Rajmao, the grandmother of the prince is a symbol of dying royalty with all its magnificence and regalia.

Though he was a visionary but he was aware that dreams alone cannot bring changes. He regarded himself as a revolutionary to destroy the forces of darkness. He devoted his entire life to cultural activities to restore Assamese society because he was of the opinion that to change the society a cultural change was needed. His nationalism has two aspects that is – loved for his own land and the other is love that crosses regional bounds and holds the entire nation.

However, the noteworthy part of him is his passion for modernity, leading to creative uplift of mankind. A man cannot always remain rooted to his past even if the past is a glorified one. Change is the law of life. Change for the better ought to be the

¹⁰² Gohain(ed), *Asomia stapatar navarup*

general spirit of every individual being and society. Jyotiprasad felt that there cannot be a conflict between culture and culture. Intercultural conflict cannot be a reality. Jyotisankha, Na- Jowan-e- Hind, Natun, Kanaklata, Asamiya Dekar Ukti, Biswa- Silpi are some of his best poems in this direction. He says-

“...Aditei yatra kari

Anadile jao

Dhangsor majedi moi

Rupantaredi rup pai

Nabatam Shristir salita jalao...”(I am the artist started my journey in the hoary past. My journey passes through destruction and devastation. But in the process I change and light the lamp for the new possibility that is going to dawn.)

In cultural change also Jyotiprasad had a scientific and rational view. He argued that in the light of New we need to leave something of our old culture and in the same way the immigrants also have to leave something old of their culture then only can cultural assimilation would possible.

Again in the poem *Natun* he writes:

“He natun! Namaskar

Yuge Yuge aha toi

Dese Dese haho toi

Bhohari bidari fail

Purani sanskar

He Natun Namaskar... ”¹⁰³

(O the new, I salute you. You come every time, every age. You smile in every land, breaking what is old and effete, I salute you)

¹⁰³ File No 3

Revolution and war lead to new phases in the history of mankind. Revolution and war often prove to be indispensable and unavoidable. But the post- revolution and opost- war situations degenerate people from a higher level of culture to a lower level. In the wake of the war people, regardless of their being a victor or a vanquished are equally exposed moral pollutions. Under such a situation it is the responsibility of a select section of people to keep the cultural treasures unscathed. They are to keep the light of human culture and civilization burning in the teeth of all oppositions. Referring to the role played by Lord Krishna in the Battle of Kurukhetra, he said that on the one hand the Lord was asking Arjuna to fight for the protection of moral scruples, while at the same time he was instructing Arjuna to protect his moral and ethical principles and also to keep his conscience unharmed.

Revolution, he agreed, implied basic changes in the socio- economic structure. If you want to change the society and polity, then first of all you should understand what you are wanting to change. According to him to change the society and polity one should have to know what he wants to be changed. He was convinced that the primary task was the building of a united India and promoting the process of the psychological integration of the Indian people. All other questions and issues had to be subordinated to this task.

He revealed profound grasp of the social and historical meaning of the revolutions, perhaps because he was keen to transform Indian society in a revolutionary manner. Believing in a non- violent path of political struggle in India, he was able to understand sympathetically and in depth the violence involved in the past revolutions. Basic to these revolutions, he said was not the blood shed in them but their achievement in liberating human beings from oppression and degradation.

A revolution to him represented basic social transformation. Violence occurred, he said, when the dominant groups and ruling classes refused to accept change in a reasonable, democratic or non- violent and peaceful means. The process which transform the power from exploiters to the common people occurred by popular revolution and the aims of Revolution is always to create a culture and therefore Revolution has relation with Culture.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Hazarika., op. cit., P.8

We find a new thing, at any rate on such a big scale- the union of ideas with the economic urge for revolutionary action. Where there is such a union, there is the real revolution and a real revolution affects the whole fabric of life and society- political, social, economic and religious.

Again, when nationalism started to turn with the feelings of conservative and blind regionalism, his nationalism was then reach the point of universal nationalism. Rabindranath Tagore wrote: “*tomate biswa mayir, tomate biswa mayaer aashal pata*”, on the otherhand Jyotiprasad Agarwala sounded- “*Mayei swadesh, mayei bidesh, mai nana desh...*” He was deeply rooted in his own cultural roots but at the same time had all the attributes of a world citizen. His famous lines urging his associates: “*who will come out to see the world along the banks of the Luit treading on the little village path?*”(Jyotiprasad Rachanawali)According to Hemanga Biswas Jyotiprasad Agarwala took the tunes of his songs not from the fields but from the *sotals*, (the homestead).¹⁰⁵ He revived the Assamese art- forms which were in a decaying stage and might have died without such efforts as he did. He made it his lifelong mission to renewed life and keeps alive the treasures of Assamese cultural tradition. His cultural view which always indicated the mass, his literature and different contributions to the Assamese society differ his uniqueness from the other nationalists.

Assamese society has its distinctive cultural settings and it is organised in its way. However, the Assamese society and culture cannot be studied in isolation as to a great extent; it is under the board spectrum of the Pan- Indian society and culture.

Sankardeva gradually became a passion for Jyotiprasad Agarwala. Sri Sankardeva was a great innovator in both literature and cultural pursuits. Today what we have as Assamese culture is the generosity of the great saint Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. Both the saints have given a sense of direction to the Assamese mind. His thrust on the totality of man with all his latent excellences naturally drew Jyotiprasad to his side. The versatility of the saint and his ways of looking at things became a source of inspiration for Jyotiprasad. He found a great culture in Sankardeva, a longdrawn tradition and a revival of a rich civilization. Like Sankardeva, he also believed that cultural regeneration was the key to social reform. According to him to get the best of an individual he must be artistically nourished and all his latent creative faculties are to

¹⁰⁵ Mazumdar(ed), 2008, op. cit. p.28

be fecundated with innovative devices. Sankardeva was successful in his mission of apprehension a lost culture, a moribund tradition from getting totally lost. He gave a new identity to his people and a vision for future. He expresses that Assamese society gets its cultural sustenance from the treasure house very meticulously built up by the saint in the 15th century A.D. The cultural treasure house of the Assamese society is designed by the saint.

He pointed out to the example of Sankardeva, who in the 15th century spiritually and culturally unified diverse elements of the then fragmented Assamese society. In his essay he wrote that in the light of the new times we have to give up some aspects of our old culture and they too must give up some aspects of our old culture and they too must give up some aspects of their culture. Sankardeva has been our source of culture. He gave a sense of direction to the people of this land. Jyotiprasad called *Sankari* ideal as Krishna culture or in short Krishna who also implies culture. Although neo-Vaishnavism was an all- India phenomenon arising out of a common socio- economic political and religious perspective every saint of the movement had his or her ways of looking at things depending on local situations.

Sankardeva was a great innovator in both literature and cultural pursuits and that he evolved fine admixtures of Indian classical music with local folk forms and evolved a few local variant *ragas* also.¹⁰⁶

Jyotiprasad was quite conscious about the fact that culture is a double edged sword. He stated that the ruling classes also use culture to serve their own machinations. Using the metaphor of Krishna and Kauravas representing culture and the oppressive ruling classes, he observed that the Kauravas need Krishna, that is culture only to fight for them, but would never listen to his counselling. Today the character of capitalism and imperialism resembles the Kauravas... and the masses would fight and destroy them to protect culture as Krishna and Arjun.¹⁰⁷

Sankardeva made Krishna as his symbol of culture and in fact even in his own life he used the cultural and artistic aspect of Krishna to enlighten the human existence. Instead of following the ascetic life he well understood the notions of Krishna and

¹⁰⁶ Bharali, op. cit., P. vi

¹⁰⁷ Dutta., op. cit., P.154

accordingly formed and guided himself by becoming an example of setting up a good family as well as involving in building a sound body.

Jyotiprasad had rightly pointed out the revolutionary and progressive aspect of Sankardeva's thoughts. Jyotiprasad also noted the same aspect in Sankardeva's architectural abilities. This architecture was somewhat different from the already established forms, which were in vogue in India. Jyotiprasad was correctly able to evaluate the characteristics of Sankardeva's architectures in various *Namghars* of Assam, as he was already familiar with the different architectural forms of the world. These forms were the consequences of Sankardeva's viewpoint that found its place in his designs.¹⁰⁸

Though, in many times people regards culture as a medium or source for enjoyment, but Jyotiprasad Agarwala adopted 'culture' as a strong weapon for the political movement of the nation. For him it is not only merely an element of a society, but its entire way of life. In the words of Hemanga Biswas leaders with Marxist attitude also in many times failed to realized the power of 'culture' and regard it as a source of enjoyment. But Jyotiprasad Agarwala showed with a unique example how songs and culture can be effective tool in intimating the communication with the general people. As per our common proverb, '*pen is mightier than sword*', but songs and lyrics are much more strong and effective than pen or writings. Because only educated people can know the language of pen, but songs and lyrics can be understand by all the sections of the society irrespective of their education and age. Which a literate person can acquire through writings, illiterate can't acquire that. They can be motivated even if the words and meanings of the songs can't be understood but they could be inspired with the lyrics and tunes. Though in many times we cannot understand the real meaning of songs but it can attract us, inspired us, cried us and can give us courage. Again it cannot be bind with any race, religion or politics. At a point where thought fails rhyme continues its onward journey in human heart. Rhyme is the language of the soul, he says. His songs can equally inspire all kinds of revolutionaries who love or aspired a revolution in the society. He showed us a way through which we can create harmony among the common people.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Dutta, A.R., op. cit., P145

¹⁰⁹ Gohain(ed), op.cit. p.88

It is such a holistic view of culture, rather than any ideology, which determined his actions throughout his life. Cultural resurgence for him was more than a renaissance in literary and artistic modes. It meant a total transformation in the manner a society thought and behaved. A society which allowed oppression of one section by another could not be called a cultured one, no matter that it was rich in artistic attributes.

He had an idealistic vision of Assamese society and was certain that one day Assam would become the cultural leader of India. : “since the inception of the British era Bengalis and Marwaris had given the lead in India’s cultural life. According to him when the movement of 1942 had died out in other states of India, its fire lit by the death- squads of Assamese boys and girls continued to burn in the villages and wilderness of Assam for a long time... Who can say that tomorrow the talent and achievements of the Assamese will not light up the world?” He quoted the view of Chandrakumar Agarwala that the people of Assam are weak in every respect, but once they raise from their slumber they can work out miracles. They are virtually sandwiched within the folds of their destiny. Once they wake up they will explore with a bang. It is now time for them to wake up and get back to action and reshape their destiny before it is too late. (*Asamiya Sthapatyar Nabarup*)

Being a cultural nationalist he frequently driven into state politics to defend the cultural autonomy of the nation. A numbers of his speeches that he had delivered are testimonies to his political and ideological penetration into the socio cultural issues of Assam. The central theme of his vision was how to create a humane culture and to defeat the evil- the *duskriti*. According to him the problem which has not resolved till now is how to bring conformity between material culture and human culture. His goal was to help humanity to keep the cultural resources of human civilization protected from the aggression of the material resources created by human being themselves to free their needs. In his speech ‘*xilpir prithibi*’ (The world of artist) he also vision a thread of integrity between the devotee of beauty and the ideology of new progressive cultural politics. His different contributions gave a new enthusiasm and pace to Assamese culture. According to him, to change a society a cultural change was needed. He opposed to anything conservative. He clearly opined against cultural conservatism.

‘He declared that part of our culture which we do not find as the vibrant agency of the future should be abandoned.’¹¹⁰

He realized the value of communicating through culture and the ability of songs to convey messages than speeches or slogans. It was with his song “*Luitor parore ami deka lora, mariboloi bhoi nai.....*” on the lips of the satyagrahis which became a theme song of the freedom fighters. He was aware that workers and farmers formed the backbone of society and it was in the around of Tezpur that he carried out his nationalist propagating activities.

He presented the best of his vision with a great sense of critique of the emerging Indian condition and also capitalism and imperialism. He asserted that independent India’s position has no fundamental difference from that of the colonial situation in dealing with the revolutionaries and according to him it will be a great blunder in today’s Indian history to believe that one can suppress and eliminate an ideological movement through violent and suppressive policies. According to him inspite of getting independence from the British, our country is not free from imperialism. As a result, many tribes and communities including Assamese people have facing the underdevelopment problem. He suggested that with the joint effort of all the communities and tribes it is possible for the communities to fight against imperialism which will ultimately lead the development of various tribes and communities. He advocated for mutual respect and penetration of the values of different nationalities to bring a new human culture and thereby peace to the region. He promoted for convergence of the ‘local’ with the ‘global’ and emphasized on the primacy of both.

His humanist approach made him vision beyond Assam. In his poem *Axomiya dekar ukti* he asserts that the Assamese youth is the representative of Assam and also India. He is the representative of all tribal communities of Assam- *Khasia, Jayantia, Chinpho, Lalung- chutia; Losai- Mikir-Garo; Naga-Angami- Hero*. He visualized a pan-Indian, humanly integrated culture in which each tribe, community and region will maintain their own individual ethos, culture and identity. His love for the land often merged with his love for India. His patriotism did not mean Assam without India and vice versa. In a poem like *Kanaklata* he says-

¹¹⁰ Asomiyar Satpattarnavarup, P.519

“Kapale dharitri

Bharator gol mortoponi bhagi

Uthe naba bharatar nabin shakti

Jagi...”(The new India is awakening from its sleep. The new youths are coming up. They now stand awakened.)

Again in the poem *Poharar Gan* he writes:

“Aji jagrata Bharat,

Poharar gane gane,

Jage janatar

Mahapran...” (India is awakened today. There is music of light. The soul of India is awakened.)

Indian civilization, according to Jyotiprasad Agarwala is like a mighty river fed and nourished by the regional and state- level cultures and sub-cultures. Whatever is best in the larger Indian civilization invariably gets reflected in the regional and state-level cultures, which present diversity in unity and vice versa. According to him Assamese culture is a mere echo of the larger Indian culture. In the past Assamese culture was essentially a demonic one since the land was ruled by demons or *asuras*. But the culture promoted by the *Asuras* was never inferior to that of the *Aryans*. He cited some examples like fine arts of the ancient Pragjyotishpur. It was superior in every respect, comparable to the fine arts of ancient India. Music, dance, singing as different forms of fine arts was cultivated in Pragjyotishpur. After coming into direct contact with the *Aryan* culture and civilization the regional culture of *Pragjyotishpur* received a new orientation and vitality. The process of Aryanisation or Sanskritization started at this stage of Assam’s history. He also explains how Assamese culture is being shaped by the different subcultures of different ethnic groups. He refers to *Kamrupi* culture and also about the influence of the Ahoms in giving a new orientation to the Assamese culture.

Assam is the home of many communities, castes and sub castes with languages of their own. Each community and ethnic group has its contribution in the formation of

Assamese culture. In such a situation our culture cannot exist in isolation from the subcultures that exist all around us. Every subculture must make a compromise at some level and unitedly make a bigger cultural identity. This is inevitable for the survival of Assamese society and its multicoloured culture. The composition of the Assamese society is an admixture of different communities. Every community has its own language and lifestyle. Even without dispelling their own they are by and large Assamese. He viewed that to maintain that integrated status a group of people should come forward with a committed mind, determined to unite every community with a bond of common culture for the mutual gain of the constituent communities. The future of Assamese society will depend on that cultural cohesion.

In his prose “*Natunar Puja*”, he argued that our effort should be for creation of a common Indian culture by combining all the regional or individual culture. Moreover, in and around Assam, there are various community and tribes with their own language and rich cultural heritage. It is not ethical to force them to accept the greater common culture by neglecting their own culture and language. It is also against the principle of unity and culture as desired by Sankardeva. Though Sankardeva tried to bring all tribes and communities to a common culture, but he gave more stress in maintaining their own language and culture. He tried to bring all under one umbrella without losing their own identity. So, Jyotiprasad also argued to follow the same principles. He considered himself to be the symbol of the composite nature of Assamese society. He compared himself to one of the hundred streams that flow through hills and vales to merge with the Brahmaputra. But he was aware that assimilation could not be brought about by force. It had to be gradually instilled into the various segments so that they become mentally attuned to each other. He preached a policy- “*milibo lage, milabo lage*”(give and take) rather than coercion to achieve the goal of cultural assimilation. He believed that intrusion of outside elements would widen and strengthen the range of Assamese society.

He had a clear vision about the formation of the Assamese nationality. He clearly spelt out a number of occasions that the Assamese community is an outcome of a synthesis of the streams of migrants from the rest of India and various indigenous tribal groups.¹¹¹ The Assamese community must take lessons from this historical reality

¹¹¹ *Silpir Prithivi*, P.490

while building the emerging Assamese society.¹¹² According to him unless this happened there was danger for us.¹¹³ He said that ‘today no nation or a sub- nation or a tribal can have a culture totally exclusive from others. A process of synthesis is the only way forward for these groups. Only a policy of synthesis which also ensures diversity can save us from conflicts among ourselves.’¹¹⁴

Similar view is maintained in his another essay entitled *Asamiya Sanskriti*. In the essay Jyotiprasad tried to analyse the spirit and contents of Assamese culture in the larger context of Indian culture. For him Assamese culture is the eastern version of the Indian culture. Today what we have as Assamese culture is essentially a reflection of the medieval Indian culture, handed down to us through Srimanta Sankardeva and the neo- Vaishnavite fraternity.

In his prose *Natunar Puja*, he argued that to form integration in the region our efforts should be for the creation of a common Indian culture by combining all the regional or individual cultures. Even Sankardeva though tried to bring all the tribes and communities under a common culture, but at the meantime he gave more emphasized in maintaining their own language and culture. Gandhi also viewed that as like ‘Americanness’, Indianness was never based on imposition of one dominant culture absorbing the others. Rather it presented a synthesis of different cultures assuring each of a legitimate place.¹¹⁵ He viewed that our pillar must be the culture and the past heritage of Assam. He tried to integrate all under one umbrella without hampering anyones own identity. Arguing in the same line Jyotiprasad Agarwala viewed that culture develops with the assimilation of the masses and therefore the highest culture should have to comprise much masses in its breaths. Because he believed that ‘universalism’ is the indispensable necessity of effective nationalism.¹¹⁶ He wrote:

“Aaji Ganar Sarai Patilo

Pranar sarai Patilo.

Biswa thapanat

¹¹² *Natunar Puja*, P.497

¹¹³ *Natun Dinar Kristi* Pp. 491-492

¹¹⁴ *Poharoloi*, P.484

¹¹⁵ *The Heritage*, op. cit. p.7

¹¹⁶ *Asomiya Sthapatar Navarup*, P. 519

Mor pujaloi matilo

*Biswa janatak.*¹¹⁷

The central theme of his vision was how to create a humane culture and to defeat the evil- the *duskriti*. According to him the problem which has not resolved till now is how to bring conformity between material culture and human culture. In his first film "*Jaymati*" through choosing an inspiring episode of Ahom history, Jyotiprasad Agarwala displayed his nationalistic fervour and love for the land of his birth. John Hutchinson revealed that the dynamics of cultural nationalism has a separate entity and it mostly focused on the moral regeneration of the community. Gerard Delanty and Patrick O' Mahony in their book *Nationalism and Social theory* discussed culture as an integrative structure. Jyotiprasad Agarwala's nationalistic ideas had partly similarities with Bipan Chandra's concept of homogenous nationality. Since, Jyotiprasad Agarwala had tried to mobilize all the different sections or classes of the Assamese society into one national banner. Again his ideologies had partly similarities with Partha Chaterjee's concept of nationalism. As Partha Chaterjee had articulated, Jyotiprasad Agarwala tried to link the 'inner spiritual domain of culture' with the 'outer domain' of the Assamese people. His efforts to link up the 'inner domain' of nationalism with its 'outer domain' as Partha Chatterjee has articulated, further proves the distinctiveness of Assamese nationalism.

¹¹⁷ File No. 3 Geetangsa, 525/26 (3)