

CHAPTER-IV

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Influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in Eastern India

In this chapter we are going to accommodate the discussion on the influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in Eastern India particularly in Bengal, Orissa, Assam and Manipur.

In Bangal Mādhavendrapuri and his disciples created an atmosphere for the growth of Neo-Vaiṣṇavism based on devotion (Bhakti). Ísvarapuri, the Mantra-guru of Śrī Caitanya was also a disciple of Mādhavendrapuri. However, before Śrī Caitanya was converted into Vaiṣṇavism there was a small group of Vaiṣṇavas who used to performed Kīrtan secretly in the house of Śrīvāsa or Advaitācārya or in the house of Candra Śekhara. This Kīrtan group of people in Navadwip was exclusively private and secret because of the fear of Kāzi and for the hostile attitude of Pāṣandis. So it was not safe to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa loudly in Navadwip. But when Śrī Caitanya became a devotional Vaiṣṇava, he advised his small group of followers in Navadwip to perform Kīrtan fearlessly. Gradually Śrī Caitanya made the Kīrtan very popular among the common people in Navadwip. Thereafter, Śrī Caitanya started Nagar Samkīrtan. The melodious Samkīrtan attracted the common masses. He made the Samkīrtan as a medium of his propagation

of Vaiṣṇavism. It is the Kīrtan which made Caitanyaism very popular among the masses of eastern India. As the Kīrtan has a spiritual side, it has social side also. Śrī Caitanya's Samkīrtan party was open for all, the poor and the rich, the high and the low, Brāhmins and Śudras, the scholars and the down-troddens of the society. Śrī Caitanya declared that all are equal before God.

On the day of Vyāsa-Pujā, in the month of June, 1509, some Vaiṣṇava leaders like Nityānanda, Advaita Acāryā, Śrīvāsa and others declared Viśvambara (Śrī Caitanya) as the leader of the Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīp and thus the famous Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism or Caitanya Sampradāya was formed¹. Previously, Advaita Acārya was the leader of the small group of Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīp. However, when Śrī Caitanya became the leader of the Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīp, he promised to Advaita that as a leader of Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīp he would remove human sufferings and rescue the downtroddens of the society.

To the devotees of Navadvīp, Śrī Caitanya was regarded as the Avatāra (incarnation) of Kṛṣṇa of Kurukṣetra to save the miseries of mankind from the hand of Pāṣandis and from the fear of Yavana exploits. Gradually, Śrī Caitanya became very popular in Nadiyā, through his Samkīrtan. At present, the whole of Bengal and Orissa is thrilled with the

melodious music of Samkīrtan which was made very popular by Śrī Caitanya.

It merits mention here that the first two devotees of Śrī Caitanya were Yavana Haridās and the other was Nityānanda. Yavana Haridās, a converted Vaiṣṇava was a Muslim and Nityānanda was an Avadhuta or a Sannyāsi. Today, in the 20th century many Christians also accepted Vaiṣṇavism. Here it can be said that, it was a courageous step in those medieval days².

One day the Kazi of Navadvīp hearing the sound of Samkīrtan become furious. He ordered to stop Samkīrtan. But in protest against the order of the Kazi, Śrī Caitanya firmly started Nagar Samkīrtan. In that Nagar Samkīrtan almost the whole of Navadvīp participated. The leaders of the Samkīrtan were Advaita, Haridās, Caitanya, Nityānanda, Śrīvās and Candra Śekhara. They were all in the front of the Samkīrtan. As a result, the Kāzi was defeated by the followers of Śrī Caitanya. With the defeat of Kāzi, the Navadvīp-līlā of Śrī Caitanya practically came to an end.

During the next Ratha-yātra, Advaita declared that Śrī Caitanya was the embodiment of all the incarnations of Viṣṇu. But Śrī Caitanya became annoyed with Advaita and decided to go to Nīlācal leaving Navadvīp in future (for the rest of his life).

However, after the disappearance of Śrī Caitanya, Nityānanda spreaded Kṛṣṇa-nāma among all the people irrespective of caste and creed. Even women were allowed in the Samkīrtan. As a result, the whole of Bengal and Orissa was overwhelmed with the ideals of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism spreaded in entire Bengal by different leaders and it took different forms. The followers of Gaura Paramyabadis accepted Goura as a separate God. They had separate Bhajana. The Goswāmīs of Vṛndāvana took the path of Śrī Caitanya. To them Kṛṣṇa is the God and to get him they accepted the path of Gopis of Braja. Caitanya is the means to the end and Kṛṣṇa is the final end. At present the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is the combination of Navadvīp school and the Vṛndāvan school. The Navadvīp school under the leadership of Nityānanda became a social revolution while the Vṛndāvan school under the leadership of the six Goswāmīs took the shape of Intellectual Movement. Nityānanda who spreaded the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal was determined to redeem the downtrodden people. The Vṛndāvan school constructed the superstructure of philosophy by composing huge literature of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism³. Nityānanda spreaded Caitanyaism in Bengal in the 16th century and Vīracandra enhanced the number of Caitanya cult while

Narottamadās brought the comprise between Navadwip school and Vṛndāvan school of Gandīya Vaiṣṇavism.

The Caitanyaism is so sweet and so peaceful that it has an admiring appeal to attract even the non-Hindus. That is why, many Muslim devotees and poets being influenced by Caitanyaism composed poems on loving God Kṛṣṇa. Some of them were Chānd Kavi, Lālan Fakir, Hussain, Ālyara Ākter, Māmud Hussain, Nāsir and Māmud. Among the Chānd Kavi and Lālan Fakir were worthy to be mentioned. It merits mention here that even among the Muslims there were some Caitanya devotees and there were some religious sects based of Caitanyaism, viz. Āuls, Fakirs, Darbash, Sai etc. Though they remained Muslim, nevertheless, they like the Vaiṣṇava Padakartās used to compose Padas on Vaiṣṇava Rasatattva, Bhakti-Tattva and padas on the love of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanyaism deeply influenced a large number of Muslims, Buddhists, Śāktas and Nātha-yogis of Bengal.⁴ Caitanyaism became so popular among the mass people because of its religious freedom, social equality and above all of its universal love of mankind.

Śrī Caitanya and Bengali Padāvali literature, Śrī Caitanya's influence on Bengali Padāvalī literature is tremendous. During the life-time of Śrī Caitanya, some of his devotees became famous by composing Vaiṣṇavapadas. When Śrī Caitanya at his 24th years went to Nīlāchal. His

devotees of Bengal became very much shocked for his separation. Some of them composed songs with the title ‘Gauracandrikā relating the eulogy of Caitanya. This type of ‘Gauracandrikā’ was to be sung before the Pālākīrtan of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’. Here some of the Padakartās of the contemporary of Śrī Caitanya are mentioned.

Murārigupta was elder than Śrī Caitanya in age. Both of them studied in the same Tol. They were closely related with each other. However, Murārigupta wrote first the ‘Caitanya-jīvanī-Kāvya’ in Sanskrit. Narahari Sarkar Thākura was also other senior devotee of Śrī Caitanya. He was said to be the first Padakartā about Gaurāṅga. The three Ghoshabrothers viz. Govinda Ghosh, Mādhava Ghosh and Vāsu Ghosh were the followers of Śrī Caitanya and were also renowned padakartās. Among them the youngest Vāsu Ghosh became more famous composing Vaiṣṇava-padas. ‘Nimāi Sannyāser-pālā’ by Vāsu Ghosh is full of Pathos. Besides, Yadunandan, Govinda Ācārya, Vāsudeva Datta and others were also remarkable Caitanyadeva’s contemporary Padakartās.

Padakartās after the disappearance of Caitanyadeva-

After the disappearance of Caitanyadeva there appeared the renowned Padakartās during the later part of the sixteenth century. They were Balarāmadās, Jñānadas, Kavi Rājśekhara and Govindadās. All of them were the master-minds of the Vaiṣṇava-pada literature. After the

disappearance of Caitanyadeva they remained perplexed for some times. When their intensity of grief was slowed down the Vaiṣṇava-community accepted Caitanyadeva as the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa of the Kali age. They considered that the human Caitanyadeva after disappearance turned into the refulgent idol of Bhāgavata. Devotees and poets being swayed (flooded) with the new emotional sentiment commenced the golden period of Vaiṣṇava Padāvali. In this regard this following.

Balarāmadasa's Padas of the Vātsalya sentiment are very impressive. In the morning the cow-boys like Balarāma and others started going to tend cows in the grazing ground along with Kṛṣṇa. At this the heart of mother Yaśodā was restless. She said-

Balarām, tumi mor gopāl lai yā yāicha |

Yāre ghume ciyāiyā dugdha Piyāite nāri

Tare tumi goṭhe sājāicha ||

Vasan dhariye hate phire Gopāl sāthe sāthe

daṇḍe daṇḍe daśvār khāy |

ehena dudher vāchā vanete vidāy diyā

Kemane dharive prāṇ yāy ||⁵

The poets like Jñānadās are rare in all ages in any literature. Jñānadās composed padas in both Brajabuli and Bengali. He imitated the style of Candīdās. His padas are peerless in Vaiṣṇava literature. A few instances of his Padas are cited hereunder-

rupalāgi ānkhi jhu-re guṇe man bhor |

Prati aṅga lāgi kānde prati aṅga mor ||

hiyār paraś lāgi hiyā mor kānde |

Parāṇ pīriti lāgi sthir nāhi vāndhe ||⁶

Or we may cite-

Torāmra garave garavinī hām rupasī tomāra rūpe |

Hena mane lay oduṭi caraṇ sadā layyā rākhi buke ||⁷

We may relish the following pada of Jñānadās-

Sukhera lāgiyā e ghara vāndhinu

Anale puḍiyā gela |

Amiya sāgare sinān karate

Sakali garala bhela ||⁸

It may be mentioned here that this Pada is also found in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan by chaṇḍīdāsa. However, just as Jñānadās followed the style of Chaṇḍīdās, even so Govindadās imitated the style of Vidyāpati, the famous Maithili poet. Jñānadasa's best padas are written in Bengali, while Govindadāsa's best padas are composed in Brajabuli. However, let us relish a pada of Govindadas-

Sajani, av ki Karavi upadeś |

Kanu annrāge mor tanuman mātala

Nāsune dharamabhay leś |⁹

Or we may cite-

Nandanandana candacandana

Gandhanindita aṅga |

Jaladasundara Kamvukandhara

Nindi sindhura bhanga ||¹⁰

In Orissa

There are three main centres of Caitanyaism and these centres are Navadvīp in Bengal, Puri or Śrīkṣetra in Orissa and Vṛndāvan in

Uttarpradesh. From these three centres, Caitanyaism spreaded in other states of India particularly in Assam and Manipur.

Orissa is a neighbouring Hindu states of Bengal. Caitanya lived contiuously for long 18 years for the rest of his monastic life at Nilāchala. A part from this, many of the followers of Śrī Caitanya came to Orissa along with him from Bengal and settled in Orissa. Besides, every year during the car festivals many devotees of Bengal used to come to Śrī Caitanya at Nīlāchal till the life-time of him. They used to stay for a long time at Puri in order to perform the Cāturmāsyavrata. Many Oriya devotees also came in contact with the Caitanyapanthis at Puri and were influenced by their Pure and unalloyed devotion to God. As a result, a small Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava group came into existence at Nīlāchal. During Caitanya's life-time a group of educated and distinguished personalities came in contact with Caitanya and were influenced by his emotional charms. They were his first group of devotees at Puri. They were Vāsudeva Sārbabhauma, Rāi Rāmānanda, Swaropa Dāmodara, Kāshi Mīśra and others. They were either in-charge of jagannāth temple or some of them were distinguished royal personalities. During Śrī Caitanya's long stay at Puri from 1515 to 1533 his Gauḍīya neo-vaiṣṇavism sacured royal patronism and by degrees, it became the religion of common people. It merits mentions here that king Pratāpa Rudra of Orissa had a

religious bent of mind.¹¹ He was influenced by Caitanya's devotional personality and ultimately became his devotee. Hence, Śrī Caitanya, his neo-Vaiṣṇavism and his followers secured royal patronism. However, for the sake of royal patronism the other devotees of Nīlāchal used to serve Śrī Caitanya with the Dāsyā Bhakti.' They were Kāśi-Miśra, Paramānanda Puri, Bhavānanda Roy, his sons, Sikhi Māiti, Kānai Khuntīā, Hari Bhatta, Surananda, Jagannāt Māiti, Rāmai Pāndit, Nandāi, Janārdan, Chandaneswara, Muhāsoyara, Praharāj Mahāpātra, Pramānanda Mahāpātra, Śivānanda, Odra Kṛṣṇānanda, Odra Śivānandā and so on¹². Besides, Pañca Sakhā were also influenced by Śrī Caitanya. They followed Śrī Caitanya's ideals and accepted him as their preceptor.

Concluding the discussion, it may be said that Śrī Cantanya's long stay at Nīlāchal became the major factor for the spread of Caitanyaism in Orissa. A large number of people became his disciples and ultimately the whole of Orissa was completely flooded with the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult.¹³

Śrī Caitanya visited different parts of Orissa and flooded the entire kingdom with love and devotion. Now-a-days, Kīrtan is very popular in all parts of Orissa. It is a proof of Śrī Caitanya's influence on the common people of Orissa. At present, there are many Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Maṭhas in Orissa.

Śrī Caitanya's influence on Oriya Vaiṣṇava literature-

Śrī Caitanya had great influence on the religious and literary activities of Orissa. He was accepted during his life-time by the followers of Orissa as the living Jagannāth or Buddha Jagannāth. Some of the devotees considered him as the incarnation of Jagannāth. Īśvara Dās in his book styled ‘Caitanya Bhāgavata’ narrated that Vaiṣṇavas of Orissa considered Śrī Caitanya as the incarnation of Jagannāth. Jagannāth was Buddha Jagannāth and was gradually becoming Kṛṣṇa Jagannāth. Haridās, the disciple of Rāi Rāmānanda in his book entitled “Mayur Chandrikā” described that Jagannāth is both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

However, as a result of Śrī Caitanya’s coming to Orissa, Oriyā Vaiṣṇava literature was highly influenced by the philosophical thoughts of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. A large number of poets and literatures started composing books on the basis of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. The celebrated Oriyā Vaiṣṇava poets of the 16th century were Rāi Rāmānanda, Mādhavi Dāsī, Kānai Khuntīā, Narahari Senā, Raghunātha Arakṣita, Balarām Dās and others¹⁴. Among them Kānai Khuntīā is noted for his book styled ‘Mahābhāva Prakāśa’. In this book he depicted the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Rādhā Tattva.¹⁵

The change in the outlook of the Vaiṣṇava poets and litterateurs of Orissa commenced right from the 17th century. Padāvalis on Kṛṣṇa-līlā, Vṛndāvan līlā, Gopī-bhāva etc. were written. The books like ‘Rasa

Kallola' and Gopi bhāva depicting Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Tattva were also written in the 17th century. Some variations occurred in Oriyā literature during the 18th century. The theme of the 18th century Oriyā Vaiṣṇava poems was Mathurā-lilā and Dwārakā-lilā. Some of the prominent post Caitanya Oriyā Vaiṣṇava poets were Sadānanda Kavi Sūrya Brahma, Bhakta Caran Dās, Abhimanyu Sāmanta Singhara, Kavi Sūrya Baladeva Rath, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Pātnaik, Banamāli Dās, etc.¹⁶ Besides, in the beginning of the 18th century the influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism over Oriyā Vaiṣṇava literature started with Dina Kṛṣṇa Dās's 'Rasakallola'. Some of the prominent Oriyā Vaiṣṇava writers of the 18th century were kavi Bhūpati Paṇḍit, poetess Bṛndāvati Dāsā, Lakṣman Mīśra, Dāsarathi Dās, Kṛpāsindu, Nārāyaṇa Deo, Nīlakanṭha Bhanja etc. All the aforesaid Oriyā Vaiṣṇava writers were influenced by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy.

Apart from this, some Campūkāvya were also written by the Oriyā Vaiṣṇava poets in the 19th century. These Campū-Kāvya are the best examples of the influence of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.¹⁷

Influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in Assam, Śrīhaṭṭa and Cachar.

Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva was a contemporary of Caitanyadeva (1486-1533). Śankaradeva's Vaiṣṇavism is popularly known as Mahāpuruṣīya Dharma or Eka Sarama Dharma. In Śankaradeva's Eka Sarana Dharma, there is, no place of idol worship. Therefore,

Śankaradeva's Eka Sarana Dharma appears to be religious fanatic in some extent; which perhaps has not been noticed in caitanism as Caitanya himself worshipped the Rāmeśwara Śiva Linga in South India and Jaleśwara Śiva Linga at Jaleswara in Orissa. However, Śankaradeva spreaded Vaiṣṇavism in Assam, but not Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, though he was inspired by Caitanya's emotionalism unlike Orissa, Caitanya's faith was never very much wide-spread in Assam. But Caitanyaism was not unknown in Assam. According to tradition, Caitanya remained sometimes as an ascetic in a cave near Hājo. Jayānanda wrote in his 'Caitanya Mangal' that Caitanya stayed some days at Hājo and there exists a cave called 'Caitanya Gumphā' or Caitanya's cave.¹⁸ At Hājo, there also a temple called Hayagriva Mādhava. Hari Bhārati, grandfather of Rāma Kānta was probably a follower of Caitanyaism. According to Rāmakānta, Hari-Bhārati practised names of Hari or the Solanāma of Hari. These 16 names, signify the 16 names of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.¹⁹ All the aforesaid references point out that Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism was not unknown in Assam. It merits mention here that the followers of Caitanyaism established a few Ākhras of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in different parts of Assam. Now-a-days these Akhrās are known as Kalābari Satra, Jāmolbari Satra, Kahuatali and Nārāyanpur Satra located in Kāmrup district.²⁰ There are also a few more Satras in Nowgong and Goalpara districts in Assam. However, in the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple at Hājo, Śrī Caitanya

explained the Bhāgavata to Ratneswara Pāthak and appointed him as the priest of the Hayagrīva mādharma temple of Hājo. He -introduced Samkīrtana and the study of Bhāgavata at Hayagrīva Mādharma temple. It is said that at Hājo Caitanya taught the Bhāgavata to two other disciples and they were Māgurīyā Tarkabhuṣan and Kavi Śekhara. Dāmodaradeva, the founder of the Damodara Vaiṣṇava sect of Assam had a meeting with Caitanya and was influenced by him. Bhattadeva Kaviratna, the disciple of Damodaradeva wrote a book in Assamese-

Titled ‘Sat Sampradāya Kathā’. In that book Battadeva Kaviratna wrote that Dāmodaradeva spreaded Caitanyaism in Assam-

Śrī Caitanya Kaśav bhāratīr śiṣya hai saumār (Uttar Pūrva Assam) paryanta premabhakti pravartāilā) eteke Purva deśar ācārya Caitanya prakhyāta bhaila |²¹

So from the above reference it is indicated that Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism or Caitanyaism was not unknown in Assam in the 16th century. But unlike Orissa or Manipur Caitanyaism could not make any headway in Assam because of the Śaṅkaradeva’s neo-vaiṣṇavism. That is why, S.N.Sarma is of the opinion that the influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in Assam is very limited.²²

However, from Hājo Caitanya went upto the famous Vaisṇava centre- Paraśurām Kuṇḍa of Assam and from there he went to Brahma Kuṇḍa.²³ Since Śrī Caitanya visited all the famous religious places of India, we can, therefore, accept the tradition that he also came to Assam, to visit Hayagriva temple at Hājo, Paraśurām Kunda and Brahma Kuṇḍa of Sadiyā region.

Jayānanda in his book ‘Caitanya Mangal’ wrote that Nimāi went to East Bengal to visit Śrīhaṭṭa, his father’s birth place and also to earn money by teaching Sanskrit grammar to the students of East Bengal. At his first visit to Śrīhaṭṭa, he went upto Bargangā (Burungā) where he luckily met with his grandparents Upendra Miśra and Śobhādevi who came to Burungā from Dāccā Dakṣin for some reasons.²⁴ It merits mention here that barungā was his ancestral place. From that place Upendra Miśra went to Dāccā Dakṣin to settle there.

Achyuta Charan Caudhury Tattwanidhi in his book ‘Caitanyer Assam O Purbānchal Parikrama’ wrote that at his mother’s order, after accepting asceticism, Caitanya again went to Śrīhaṭṭa to meet with his grandmother Śobhādevi at Dāccā Dakṣin.²⁵ From Dāccā Dakṣin Caitanya went to Hājo and Paraśuram Kunda at Sadiā. However, at Dāccā Dakṣina (Popularly known as Guptavṛndāvan) there is a temple with dual images of Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya. Now these images are installed at Śrīkona of

Cachar district, Assam. At Dāccā Dakṣin some of his devotees accepted his vaiṣṇavism. Prominent among them were Rāmdās, Mādhavadas, Jñānavara, Kalyānavara etc. They spread Caitanyaism in Śrīhatta, Kachhar (Cachar) and Maimanshing. Among them Jñānavara and Kalyanavara- two brothers spread Caitanyaism in Heḍamba state or modern Cachar area situated to the east of Dāccā Dakṣina, while Ramadās and Madhavadās went to the northern region known as Susanga (or Suvanga area). Even now the tribal people of this region called Hājang are all Vaiśṇavas. They introduce themselves as the disciples of Vaiṣṇava-mahājanas. Perhaps, these Vaiṣṇava mahājanas are no other than Rāmadās and Mādhavadās.²⁶ Achyutacharan Chaudhury Tattvanidhi in his article named ‘Śrīhaṭṭe Śrī Gaurāṅga’ quoted from a manuscript entitled ‘Rasatattva-vilāsa’ thus-

“eta vali mahāprabhu ḍāke Rāmadās |

Dui bhāi sange cale Mādhavadas ||

Ei nām vilāivā uttar digete |

Jñānavar kalyānavar ḍākaya tvarite ||

Mor āgñā vāpu pūrava digete |

yāre tare ei nām vilāo bhālamate ||”²⁷

It is to be noted here that Mādhavendrapurī, the Ādi Sūtradhāra of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sampradāya or Caitanya Sampradāya was luminous son of Śrīhaṭṭa. He was born in a Brahmin family of Purnihāt within Lāud of Śrīhaṭṭa. He was a learned man. After the demise of his wife he went to Viṣṇupur situated in between the villages Kumārhatta and Phuliā. He established one Sanskrit Tol there. Īsvarpurī, Advaita Ācārya, Keśava Bhāvati, Śrīvās Paṇḍit, Pundarīka Vidyānidhi and others were his students. Later on, they were the leaders of Guḍīya Vaiṣṇava movement. Murāri Gupta, the writer of first biography of Caitanyadeva in Sanskrit was also a glorious son of Śrīhaṭṭa. He was the older class-mate of Caitanyadeva in the Tol of Gangādās Paṇḍit of Navadwip. Vṛndāvandās the writer of the first authentic biography of Caitanyadeva was also basically a son of Śrīhaṭṭa of course, he was born at Kumaraḥṭṭa. Vṛndāvandās was the son of Nārāyaṇi Devi, the niece of Śrīvās Ācārya. Hence, Girijāśankar Roy Chaudhury, the author of ‘Bāngla Caritgrante Śrīcaitanya’ has rightly opined that the Vaiṣṇava movement of Bengal of the 16th century actually originated from the intelligentsia of Śrīhaṭṭa.²⁸

During the Post-Caitanya era particularly in the 17th, 18th and the 19th centuries the culture and the philosophy of Caitanyaism remained uninterrupted in Śrīhaṭṭa and Cachar areas through the establishment of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temples and in the compositions of the Vaiṣṇavite

devotional scriptural and biographics and above all in the compositions of Vaiṣṇavapadas by the Padakartās. It also remained uninterrupted by means of Namakīrtan and bhajan as well. Numerous Vaiṣṇava saints and high-souled personages continued to revive the Vaiṣṇavite culture and literary activities in Śrīhaṭṭa tsavagītamālā' attributed to Govindacandradhvajanārāyaṇa, the last king of Haiḍamba dynasty in Cachar merits mention.²⁹ However, now-a-days, a good number of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Maṭhas and Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Sevāśramas are established in different parts of Śrīhaṭṭa and Cachar areas.

It merits mention here that Tarakiśor Chaudhury (Santadās Kaṭhiya Bābā), Satis Chandra Roy (Haridās Nāmānanda), Mṛṅāl Kānti Das (Paramānanda Saraswatī) of sylhet though they spent their later part of life as an ascetic enriched the continuity of Vaiṣṇavism by their cultural and literary activities.

Vaiṣṇavism is very popular among the lower classes of people of this area. In this lower classes of people, a Vaiṣṇavite religious sect is 'Jaganmohini Sampraday.' The founder of this sect was Jaganmohan Goswāmī (1528-1560). Thereafter, the Vaiṣṇava propagator of this sect was Rāmkrṣṇa Goswāmī (1576-1652), who belonged to Kaivarta community. He established one big Ākhdā at Bithangal and brought up a large Vaiṣṇava sect there at. Caitanya Mahāprabhu is their Parama-guru.

The Yugal Tular Ākhādā in the vicinity of Sylhet town is also worthy to be noted. Thākur yugal was the founder of this Ākhādā.

In Barāk Valley also there are numerous Ākhādās wherein the vaiṣṇavite tradition is faithfully followed. Among these Ākhādās, the Bāraigrām Ākhādā is famous. This Ākhādā is now known as Āśrama there in the temple the idols of Śrī Śrī Gopāljin and Śrī Śrī Rādhāvindjiu have been installed. The great Vaiṣṇava saint Śrī Śrī Rādhāraman Goswāmī was the chief sebaite of this Āśrama. At present in different places of Barak Valley, Tripura and other parts of Assam, the Āśramas of Rādhāraman Goswāmī are established wherein the Vaiṣṇavite tradition is followed by the disciples of Rādhāraman.

At Śālgangā also there is one noteworthy temple known as Śrī Rādhā Ballabh Rāi Kālācānd Āśram. It was established by the illustrious Vaiṣṇava saint named Brajaraman Goswāmī on 19th January, 1960. At presently the Sebaite of this Āśrama is the successor of Brajaraman Goswāmī. There is also another Āśrama established by Brajaraman Goswāmī at Tārāpur, Silchar. This Āśrama is known as Śrī Śrī Vaikunthadhām Āśram. At present, the Sebaite of the earlier mentioned Āśrama was Śrī Balesh Ranjan Goswāmī the son of Brajaraman Goswāmī. The Tulāpatti, Aklādā of Silchar also is a famous Ākhādās known as Śrī Śyāsundar Ākhādā.

In this context, Śrī Śrī Bhuvaneśwar Sādhu Thākur Mandir of Tārāpur, Silchar is worthy to be mentioned. It is a famous Vaiṣṇava temple of the Biṣṇupriyā Manipuri Society. The Bhuvaneśwar Sādhu Thākur Mandir at Bihāḍā the birth place of Sādhu Thākur is the biggest temple. There are also other temples of the Sādhu Thākur in different places of Cachar Karimganj and Hailakandi districts. In these temples the religious Vaiṣṇava tradition is followed by the devoted Biṣṇupriyā Manipuris family. Bhuvaneśwar Sādhuṭhākur was a devoted Vaiṣṇava following the ideals of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism. He spent the major part of his life in Vṛndāvana and Navadwip. It is said that being inspired Caitanyadev in dream he constructed a temple named Govindābari Mandir at Navadwip collecting donation from the religious minded people of different parts of the country and installed one idol of Mahāprabhu with white marble stone in that temple.

Bhuvaneśwar Sādhu Thākur had thorough knowledge in Vaiṣṇava literature and hence he had the credit of composing two famous research works on Vaiṣṇava Bhakti Śāstra. One is ‘Śrī Śrī Harinām Mangal’ and other one ‘Śrī Śrī Govindārcanacuḍāmani’. Both these works are highly appreciated by the Vaiṣṇava savants belonging to different periods. In fact, both these works evince the profound erudition of Bhuvaneśwar Sādhu Thākur in the field of Vaiṣṇava Bhakti Śāstra³⁰.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is tremendous in Manipur on account of the patronage of the powerful kings of Manipur. The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult spreaded in Manipur due to Caitanyaism. King Charāirongbā was the first king of Manipur who was formally initiated into Vaiṣṇavism by a pious Brahmin named Rāi Vanamāli. Charāirongbā patronized devotional Kīrtan. Garibniwāz, the son of Charāirongbā was also a famous Vaiṣṇava king of Manipur. He tried to introduce the Rāmānandi sect of Vaiṣṇavism but could not successful. Later on Garibniwāz was influenced by Bengali Padāvali Kīrtans. It is to be mentioned here that the daughter of King Garibniwāz was the first Manipuri woman who visited Vṛṇḍāvan.³¹

However, king Jayacandra alias Bhāgyacandra and his subjects were initiated into Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism by Santadās Bābāji, a famous Vaiṣṇava saint of Narasingha Tillā Ākhaḍā of Sylhet. He approached Manipur alongwith a group of his followers crossing the hills of Jirighāt and within a short time he influenced the entire Manipur by his melodious Kīrtans basing the legend of Brajalilā of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. He married one Manipuri Sevādāsī and established a centre of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in Imphal.³² A large number of Manipuris including the king Jayacandra were initiated into Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism by him. Moreover, it is a historical fact that during the reign of Jayacandra Vaiṣṇavism became the state religion of Manipur.³³ King Jayacandra's personality was so

impressive that he was designated as ‘Rājarṣi’ by his people. Thus we may call the king Jayacandra as the morning star of the neo-Vaiṣṇavism (Caitanyaism) in Manipur which shows its dawn with king Gambhir Singh and reaches its zenith in the reign of king Candra kirti.³⁴ Dr. M.Kirti Singh, therefore, observes, “Vaiṣṇavism spreaded rapidly all over Manipur under the patronism of such powerful monarchs as Garibniwāz, Jayasinha, Gambhir Singha and Chandrakirti.”³⁵

With the spread of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism through royal patronage in Manipur, another interesting thing occurred like the widespread popularity of the Gītagovinda in entire Manipur. E. Nīlakānta Singh opines, ‘... he (Jayasinha alias Bhāgyacandra) dedicated three things to Lord Govindaji, his kingdom, that is Manipur, his daughter, who remained wedded to her Lord Kṛṣṇa throughout her life, a Manipuri Mirābāi, and Gitagovinda of Jayadeva.’³⁶

In this connection, it may be mentioned here that the Daśāvātāra-stotra of Jayadeva’s Gītagovinda is sung in every village temple before Lord Jagannātha. During the Rathayātrā ceremony of Jagannātha all Manipuris old and young together sing song with the accompaniment of music and dance. Besides, Vaiṣṇavas of Manipur give emphasis to know three things, such as, Śrīmadbhāgavatam, Caitanyacaritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadās

Kavirāj Goswāmī and Lord Śrī Caitanya to have proper appraisal of the Gītagovinda.³⁷

It is worthy to be mentioned here that the Śrīmadbhāgavatapurāṇa, Viṣṇupurāṇa and the Gītagovinda were translated into Manipuri language during the reigns of Gambhir Singh and Candrapkirti.³⁸ Besides, the Caitanyacaritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī and the Bengali Padāvalis and lyrics were also translated into Manipuri language by Manipuri Vaiṣṇavas. Their compositions are very popular among the Manipuris. Here, it deserves to be mentioned here that lyrical compositions of Candīdās, Vidyāpati, Govinda Dās, Jñāna Das, Kṛṣṇa Dās and Narottam are also very popular among the Vaiṣṇavas of Manipur.

It is to be noted here that during the reign of Gambhir Singh, Ṭhākur Bhakti Siddhānta is said to have composed a Sanskrit work on music and dance entitled ‘Śrīkṛṣṇa-rasa-samgīta-samgraha’.³⁹ There is also another Sanskrit work on Manipuri dance called ‘Govinda-samgīta-līlā-Vilāsa’ which is attributed to king Jayasinha.⁴⁰ In the similar manner, it has been observed that many books were attributed to the name of king ‘Jayasinha. King. Jayasinha is said to be the father of ‘Rāsa-līlā’, the India famous Manipuri dance. He introduced the Mahārāsa as a form of worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa with the accompaniment of music and dance.

The 'Kunjarāsa' and the Vasantarāsa are also attributed to king Jaysinha, while the other forms of Rāsa viz. Nityarāsa or everyday rāsa, Divā-rāsa or day-time rāsa, Nartana-rāsa or rāsa performed on appointed days only and Aṣṭa-gopi and Aṣṭa-Śyām rāsa evolved during the reign of king Candrakirti.

However, in this context, we are going to quote one pada (stanza) of Rāsa dance of the Rāsalīlāpālā said to be composed by king Jayasinha alias Bhāgyacandra as follows-

mṛdaṅga muraja vāje tā tā thai tā thaiyā vāje |

tā thaiyā thaiyā mṛdaṅga madhura vāje |

savanga yantro meli vāje karatāli āre ||

rāsamaṅḍali mājhe gopāṅganāgan padacāle bhaṅgi kari āre |

kiva sei bhuru ye kari cālana mādhurī |

kiva sei aṅga bhaṅgi gamana mahimā |

kiva sei netragati vijurī upamā ||

tā thaiyā thaiyā mṛdaṅga madhura vāje |

savanga yantra meli vāje karatāli āre ||⁴¹

Anyway, it is the practice with the Manipuris now to conclude their Rāsalilā play by singing one pada of the Rāsalilā composed by Bhāgyacandra which runs thus-

Dīnahīna Bhāgyacandra anubine dāsi hava ami

Śrī Radha govinda chandra uday hoilo.⁴²

It fine, it may be said that vaiṣṇavism in Manipur is nothing but Caitanyaism or Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. It is rapidly spread as a state religion due to the patronage of the powerful monarch of Manipur. Hence, in their festivals, customs, manners, dance, music and kīrtan the influence of Caitanyaism is visible. Thus it is rightly observed by Dr.Aloka Lahiri that since Manipur is a suitable place of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, hence when it is gradually fading away in Bengal, its birth, but it is kept alive in Manipur by the Manipuri followers of Caitanyaism.⁴³