

Indianness in Padmanath Gohainbaruah's 'Srikrishna'

Dr. Neeva Rani Phukan¹, Arnab Sarmah²

¹Associate Professor, ²Research Scholar,

¹Department of Assamese, Padmanath Gohainbaruah School of Humanities,

¹Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, Patgaon, Rani, Guwahati, Assam, India

²Department of MIL, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

The term Indianness is not easy to define as it includes various dimensions. In simple words, Indianness is the feeling of oneness or it is a feeling of unity among the Indians irrespective of caste, religion, sex or status. Though it is a newly developed perspective, but its existence can be felt from ancient times. In this research article, an attempt has been made to grasp the idea of 'Indianness' as showcased by Padmanath Gohainbaruah through his projection of numerous facets of the central character Srikrishna in his creation 'Srikrishna'. Srikrishna can be considered that momentous work of the third decade of the twentieth century, which features the character of Srikrishna as a man of action covering his birth and family lineage up to his death.

KEYWORDS: Indianness, Srikrishna, statesman, diplomat, social organizer

How to cite this paper: Dr. Neeva Rani Phukan | Arnab Sarmah "Indianness in Padmanath Gohainbaruah's 'Srikrishna'"

Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-4 | Issue-3, April 2020, pp.219-221,

www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd30339.pdf



Copyright © 2020 by author(s) and International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development Journal. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)



1.1. INTRODUCTION

Srikrishna is the towering personality in the Indian consciousness. Ancient Hindu texts such as the Mahabharata, Harivangsha and the eighteen Puranas have abundant information and data related to the stories of Srikrishna as well as his numerous exploits. Creating a broad canvass on the life of Srikrishna is a challenging task. One may stumble upon these issues while embarking upon such a work – Is the story of Srikrishna based on real facts? If it is a real story then where are its roots? If it is fiction then whose ideal personality has been projected here? Orientalists and eminent scholars have been studying and doing research on this significant personality who has also found an important place among the Hindu Pantheon. This particular research article is an attempt towards portrayal of the versatile character of Srikrishna as perceived by one of the doyens of Assamese literature, Sahityacharya Padmanath Gohainbaruah in his magnum opus 'Srikrishna'. 'Srikrishna' of Padmanath Gohainbaruah is a comprehensive study of the profound preceptor of Indian spiritualism Lord Srikrishna. In his book, Gohainbaruah has studied the versatile character of Srikrishna in three parts namely Adyaleela, Madhyaleela and Antyaleela. In the first part, Gohainbaruah makes an analytical study of the dual personality of Srikrishna – both as an earthly human being and a divine being. Madhyaleela is the matured part of Srikrishna's personality where his numerous exploits of matured age are being depicted and explained with full gusto. The last part Antyaleela deals with the more intricate aspects of the life of Srikrishna and his

colossal contribution to Indian way of life through citation and interpretation of his role during the war between the Pandavas and Kauravas at Kurukshetra. Consequences of man's action have a major role to play in this part of Gohainbaruah's work. It is worthwhile to note that Padmanath Gohainbaruah published this significant work in 1930 – during those turbulent years of India's struggle for independence from British rule. A close look at the thematic part of the contents of the book will make one realize the presence of a subterranean flow of thought for the greater welfare of mankind.

1.2. Methodology

As the main thrust area of this research article is the content part of Padmanath Gohainbaruah's work 'Srikrishna', the descriptive method has been considered suitable to serve the purpose. Similarly, attempt has been made to churn out suitable examples which well define the concept of Indianness projected through 'Srikrishna'. Secondary sources are used to collect the required data.

1.3. Indianness and Srikrishna

It is not easy to define Indianness and confine it to one particular theory itself. It is manifold in meaning. The term Indianness has numerous implications. Academicians, philosophers and litterateurs have interpreted the term Indianness as per requirement of their respective discipline. For the political thinkers Indianness is that physical as well

as mental condition or situation where the citizen was bound by the realization of oneness as a nation in spite of each citizen's identity as separate being belonging to specific regional background, culture and ethnic identity. From the sociological standpoint there may be homogenous groups or heterogeneous groups in the society. Common customs, traditions, beliefs and ideology bind the homogenous groups together and help the members of the group to develop. Whereas, among the heterogeneous groups the case is just the opposite. The important fact is all the heterogeneous groups reside in the same society as the homogeneous groups. A mechanism should be designed as to how to keep all the groups together in society. Tolerance, mutual give and take and certain adjustment at both personal and social level bridges gap between heterogeneous groups in the society. The Indian society is a perfect example where certain instances related to unity and harmony among numerous heterogeneous can be observed. This counts to another positive implication and this is Indianness or the feeling of oneness among different groups, communities or societies within India, who get inspiration to work hand in hand for the greater welfare and glory of the nation. Similarly, when arts and literature is considered, there are noticeable distinct features and variations related to the creative elements within this vast land mass known as India. Just as the rivers and streams make its journey and merge into the vast sea, so also the ever vibrant flow of art and literature merge into the great national spirit and exhibit all that is great, glorious and unique – which reflects the essence of a flourishing tradition getting nurtured by the spirit of Indianness.

Among all the illustrious epics as well as historical personalities of India, the personality of Srikrishna is most prominent. Without him, the spiritual identity of India is incomplete. If seen from the modern standpoint, he was a great statesman, a shrewd, diplomat and a farsighted social organizer. It is from the craft of statesmanship and social organization that the warring groups of the Yadavas made peace with one another and aspired for the greater welfare of their fellowmen. It was none else but the descendant of British Srikrishna, who was the architect of this great change among the rival Yadava princess. His welfare policy was such that even the forest dwellers dwelling on the outskirts of Dwarka coexisted peacefully with their neighbours, the Yadavas. Srikrishna was deeply attached to the Panadavas. They considered him their friend, philosopher and guide. After the laying of the monarch of Magadha Jarasandha by Bheema, favourable conditions arose for the king of Indraprastha-Yudhisthira for performing the organizing of this significant Yagna which proclaimed Yudhisthira as the undisputed emperor of Bharatvarsha. The shrewd, Farsighted statesman Srikrishna encouraged the four younger Pandavas to go out on armed campaigns before the commencement of the Rajasuya Yagna. In that remarkable campaign the third Pandava, Arjuna was assigned to subjugate the monarchs of the northern frontier. From the north, he proceeded towards the north eastern front to Pragjyotishpura or ancient Assam. Arjuna defeated the valiant king Bhagadatta of Pragjyotishpura. The second Pandava Bheema went to the eastern front and won over the monarchs there. Most of the monarchs were won over diplomatically. His last stop was Vanga or present day Bengal. The fourth Pandava Nakula went to the western front and won over the kings there. The fifth Pandava

Sahadeva went down south on his military campaign. Apart from the other ruling monarchs of the south he got into conflict with the monkey king. A fierce battle arose between the two groups. Finally it was Sahadeva who won over the monkey king. In this way, subsequently, the whole of India come under the uniform rule of the monarch of Indraprastha. At this point it is worth mentioning that the able administrator and benevolent monarch Yudhisthira looked to it that his subjects lead a peaceful life free from doubt and anxiety. This welfare attitude of the monarch brought prosperity to the kingdom and helped in the overall growth of the state under his rule. Social harmony and co-ordination among the various sections of people in society became a reality. This indicated towards a common feeling of brotherhood and friendliness bears the seed of the novel feeling and much pronounced term of modern day India – Indianness.

1.4. Assam and Srikrishna

Ancient Assam plays a significant role in the ancient Indian scriptures. This distinct feature can be retraced farther back to the pre historic age as well. During the epic age, Assam finds mention in a glorified manner. At this juncture the kingdom of Vidarbha needs mention. Vidarbha's present name is Sadiya district of Assam. During the epic age (The Mahabharata), the capital of the Vidarbha kingdom was known as Kaundilya. It's ruler was king Bhismaka who was blessed with five valiant sons – Rukma, Rukmarath, Rukmabahu, Rukmakesh, Rukmamali and a daughter named Rukmini. As per tradition, king Bhismaka arranged for Swayamvara to marry off his daughter to a worthy person. Both Srikrishna and Rukmini fell in love with one another. On the way of the Swayamvara, Srikrishna abducted his lady love and married her at Dwaraka after some rigid resistance and direct conflict with Rukmini's eldest brother Rukma. The saga of Srikrishna and Rukmini has found mention in the thenth skandha of 'Srimadbhagawat'. This particular marriage alliance between Rukmini and Srikrishna brought two geographical parts-east and west part together. As an outcome of this relationship mutual socio-cultural as well as political and diplomatic understanding touched new limits when Srikrishna's grandson Aniruddha was abducted and brought to Sonitpur by Chitrlekha the creative artist and daughter of Kumbhanda who was the minister of king Bana of Sonitpur. It was his daughter Usha who fell in love with Aniruddha, grandson of Srikrishna and son of Pradyumna. This beautiful saga of love and conflict has been depicted in Harivangsha. Here Hara (Lord Shiva) comes to the aid of his devotee Banasur and fight against Hari (Srikrishna). Fearing destruction of the world, Lord Brahma sent Narada as the mediator between Hari and Hara with an appeal to end their conflict and save the world from destruction. Finally peace was restored and amidst fanfare and jubilation Srikrishna left for Dwaraka along with his grandson and grand daughter-in-law. Again there is mention of king Bhagadatta of Pragjyotish who fought valiantly against the pandavas during the battle of Kurukshetra. Even the flourishing tradition of mythology and legends connect north-east, specially Assam to the greater Indian society. The mythological as well as legendary figure Naraka of Pragjyotishpura or Kamrupa and his close proximity with Lord Vishnu and his human incarnate Srikrishna explains that the north eastern part of India or ancient Bharatavarsha was not totally isolated from her neighbours.

1.5. Padmanath Gohainbaruah and His Exemplary work 'Srikrishna'

At different juncture of time since the middle ages, with the rise of Vaisnavism and Neo-Vaisnavite movement in Assam, various saints, scholars and men of letters have been analyzing and contemplating on the towering character of Srikrishna. Some laudable efforts have been made to interpret the towering personality of Srikrishna. It has been seen that most of such endeavor concentrated on a fragment of the unique character of Srikrishna. Very few have aspired to explore the vastness of Srikrishna's character. If the social history of Assam in the middle ages is considered, we see only one exceptional dynamic personality Srimanta Sankardeva, founder of the Neo-Vaisnavite movement, saint, philosopher, social reformer and creative genius who took sixteenth century by storm. He did his utmost to project the multidimensional character of Srikrishna. But the practical Srikrishna of mundane life remained obscure due to religious fervor and glaze of the supernatural feats of the divine Lord Srikrishna. The advent of the modern age in Assamese literature during the last few decades of the nineteenth century brought in new thoughts and ideas to the rejuvenated minds of the Assamese youth by boon of western education and major break from rigid conventional thoughts and behalf, Padmanath Gohainbaruah falls in the line of this new ideology. His monumental work 'Srikrishna' reflects his modernistic outlook towards a much-discussed epic character as well as the greatest personality captivating the Indian mind since thousands of years.

It has been observed that most of the writings and critical analysis on the character of Srikrishna tend to project his divine or spiritual personality. The divine Srikrishna is a master at exhibiting supernatural feats. Many authors term these feats as Srikrishna's *Maya* (illusion) or *Leela* (supernatural deeds). This creates a number of barriers while trying to evaluate great statesman, diplomat and social reformer, the welfare minded human being Srikrishna. Based on this yardstick one of the noted literature of Jonaki era Padmanath Gohainbaruah has made a momentous effort at penning down a comprehensive work on the complete life of this formidable character of Indian consciousness Srikrishna, the eighth son of Vasudeva of Brishni lineage and Dwaivaki, daughter of Devaka and granddaughter of Ahuka.

In the first part of his comprehensive work Gohainbaruah makes an analytical study of the dual personal of Srikrishna both as an earthy being and a divine being. He begins his discussion with a brief introduction of the illustrious lineage of Srikrishna. He has given sufficient information in support of this aspect. The first chapter of *Adyaleela Khanda* of 'Srikrishna' gives a detailed understanding of the origin of Mathura, Gikul, Braja and Brindavana. It is interesting to note that while describing the numerous characters related to the life of Srikrishna as a child and teenager, Gohainbaruah has not only accepted the data mentioned in the Puranas and other ancient texts, but also added some notes based on factual and logical studies. This distinct characteristic of his writing enables the inquisitive reader to look into the character of Srikrishna far beyond the mould of mythology, Vedic texts and the Puranas. In other words to say, some observation of Padmanath Gohainbaruah are quite realistic and acceptable as far as the socio-cultural aspects of

those geographical areas denote. All through the three parts of his work, Gohainbaruah has tried to maintain an unbiased outlook towards the numerous events affecting the life and activities of this formidable personality of India who was also the central most figure of the great epic Mahabharata. The culminating point of the Mahabharata is the Great War fought between the Pandava's army and Kaurava's army at Kurukshetra. No doubt, family feud between the Pandavas and Kauravas was the root cause of the Kurukshetra war. But in the long run it took a different turn and involved more than half of the monarchical states of that period. Gohainbaruah has not touched any other major political issue apart from the pivotal role played by Srikrishna before and during the war. He has, for practical reasons avoided those subplots and substories associated with Srikrishna and the Kuru princes, which may have supernatural elements, or those elements related to fantasy. A distinct feature prominent in his writing is that in the wide Indian perspective, readers do not see ancient Assam or Pragjyotishpura as an isolated geographical area; but readers perceive this part as an integral part of greater Bharatavarsha with Srikrishna as the connecting force. This spirit of Indianness is the guiding force of Padmanath Gohainbaruah's magnum opus 'Srikrishna'.

1.6. Conclusion

Portrayal of a formidable personality as Srikrishna is not an easy task. He is an inseparable part of Indian life and tradition. For some he is an enigmatic figure. His dual self comprising of all his human feats and divine activities arose inquisitiveness and wonder among his admirers and believers. Padmanath Gohainbaruah, a profound admirer of this undaunting personality took upon the task of portraying this great personality. The outcome of such a noble endeavor of Gohainbaruah is his notable creation 'Srikrishna'. In his book, he has not denied the divinity of this personality. But, at the same time he has made an attempt to portray and analysis the multidimensional character of Srikrishna with a realistic approach. In this book Padmanath Gohainbaruah has been able to churn out the essence of Indianness from within the character of Srikrishna and his welfare activities for the betterment of mankind at large.

1.7. Reference

- [1] Gohainbaruah, Padmanath (2008). Srikrishna, pp 515 – 870 of Gohainbaruah Rachanavali, Publication Board, Assam, Guwahati
- [2] Goyendoka, Joydayal (2010). Sankhito Mahabharata, Geeta Press, Gorakhpur
- [3] Kumar, S. (2018). Indianness. In *Cultural Studies in India*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315095196-7>
- [4] Meghani, S. A. (2009). Articulating "Indianness": Woman-centered desire and the parameters for nationalism. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07380560802314177>
- [5] Peroff, N. C. (1997). Indian identity. *Social Science Journal*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0362-3319\(97\)90007-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0362-3319(97)90007-0)
- [6] Srimonbhagawat-Mahapurana (2011). Geeta Press, Gorakhpur