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Emergence of Sankar Sangha Movement: It's Impact in the Socio-Religious Life of the Twentieth Century Assam

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Abstract:

This paper is an attempt to understand the change of attitude and perception of a section of socially backward non Brahmin Assamese people towards the Vaishnava religion in a democratic environment and their objective to reform the religion from the orthodox brahmanical rituals. With the spread of modern education under the British rule an educated socially backward non-Brahmin class was emerged who openly challenged the prevailing caste system, untouchability and authoritarian attitude of the upper caste Hindus in religious matters in the society. They very strongly expressed their views against such religious traditions and proclaimed that they were in no way inferior to the Brahmans. The year 1930 may be considered as a watershed mark in the history of social reform in modern Assam, as this point of time, an organized effort had been taken to reform the Vaishnava religion. The birth of the Sankar Sangha was an important step in this direction. So in this paper a very critical approach have to be taken to discuss about the prospects and limitations of Sankardeva Sangha movement and its impact on the socio-religious life of twentieth century Assam.

Keywords: Sankar Sangha Movement, Mass Participation, Brahmanical Orthodoxy and Social Reforms.

1. Introduction

The early twentieth century was significant for the social history of Assam for the growth of a new awakening amongst a section of people against the existing religious traditions. The general subordination of the lower caste people assumed a particularly severe form in Assam through the powerful instrument of religious traditions that shaped social practices. But fortunately an educated non-Brahmin class was emerged with the spread of modern education under the British rule, which were more rational in the socio-religious issues and they began to protest openly against the casteism, untouchability and authoritarian attitude of the upper caste Hindus in religious matters in the society. Under such circumstances, a reform movement had been started by the new elite section of the society and challenged the prevailing caste distinction and proclaimed that they were in no way inferior to the Brahmans.¹ They very strongly expressed their views against such religious traditions. The year 1930 may be considered as a watershed mark in the history of social reform in modern Assam, as this point of time, an organized effort had been taken to reform the Vaishnava religion. The birth of the Sankar Sangha (presently it is known as Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha, hereafter I will just use Sangha) was an important step in this direction. It is thus that effort to reform the religion as well as the society in the twentieth century became more organized and adopted very comprehensive methods for social mobilization. Sankar Sangha was born to meet the twin-challenge of caste-distinction and distortion of Sankardeva's doctrine. The main thrust of this movement was to reconstruct the Assamese society on the root of Sankardeva's original doctrine in that most axial period. This reform movement was developed in response to the social changes first under the British colonial rule and speeded up its activities in the post independent period.² The new Assamese non-Brahman educated class could now read and understand the actual meaning of the *shastras* and thus became more contextual in religious matters. They began to realize that the ideology of Neo-Vaishnavite movement propagated by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, the two great medieval saints of 15th and 16th century Assam had undergone some undesirable changes in the hands of their successors. Even some *satra* did not want to accept Sankardeva as *guru*. So in order to reinstate Sankardeva in the chair of *guru* of Vaishnava religion Sankar Sangha movement played an important role. Lakshminath Bezbarooah (one of the active supporter of Sangha) was the first person who rediscovers Sankardeva and made him relevant again in the early twentieth century Assamese society. Thus, this paper is an attempt to understand the change of attitude and perception of a section of socially backward non Brahmin Assamese people towards the Vaishnava religion in a democratic environment and their objective to reform the religion from the orthodox brahmanical rituals. Moreover, this paper also discusses the prospects and limitations in the later days of this socio-religious movement.

2. Objectives of the Paper

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the circumstances for the birth of Sankardeva Sangha movement and its impact in the Assamese society. Besides it, whether this movement could be able to break away the existing caste based barrier in the socio-religious system in the twentieth century society and could it actually go above casteism among its members while performing different activities in the society is also another objective of this paper.

3. Methodology

The source materials which will be available in the form of letters, articles and literature are used as per current historical methodologies. Field work on the Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha, oral testimonials and own observations will be used as empirical data. Thus, attempt is made to make the paper rational as far as possible on the basis of both literary sources and empirical observations.

4. Reasons behind the Emergence of the Movement

It is a very pertinent question that in spite of having several hundreds of satra institutions why Sankar Sangha has to be emerged as a socio-religious movement in Assam with the zeal of social reform. There must have been some vital reasons behind the birth of this movement. It must be remembered that Sangha has not only protested the authoritarian attitude of the priestly class in the religious matters but also wanted to make the people free from the exploitation and domination of this class. It is true that as long as the satras maintained the Sankardeva's liberal ideology all section of people accepted Vaishnavism as their religion, but as soon as the brahmanical elements viz. image worship, untouchability, caste discrimination etc. were penetrated in to the satras in the post Sankardeva period it had gradually become the centre of conservatism and orthodox rituals.³ Even Sree Sree Pitambardeva Goswami, the then Satradhikar of Garmur satra had vehemently criticized the satra system for grew out casteism and untouchability within it. Later he became one of the stalwart leaders of Sangha movement and adorned the Padadhikar chair in 1951.⁴ In that circumstances the door of some satras had been closed for the women and lower caste people. Since then, the satra institution had gradually lost their religious hold over the people which they enjoyed in the early period of the movement. In the early twenty century due to the impact of western civilization rationalistic ideas spread among the people and they felt the need of a reform movement to bring an end to the evil practices existing in the Assamese society.

4.1. The Indian freedom movement has provided the space for mass participation irrespective of their position in social hierarchy. On the other hand, due to the impact of modern education, a large number of people became more rational in religious matters, which had ultimately shaken the grip of satras on the people. At this critical juncture the larger issue was how to mould the heritage of the Bhakti movement in Assam to respond to the changing aspirations of a democratic framework which was gradually built up by the Gandhian ideals of mass participation in the freedom struggle against the British. More importantly in Assam along with the freedom movement a socio-religious reform movement was also carried out parallelly by the few Congress leaders (who were the member of Sankar Sangha also) inspired by Gandhian spirit to make the society free from the orthodox brahmanical rituals, which did not form a part of the original teachings of Sankardeva.⁵

4.2. Sankar Sangha movement would not have been born if the Satradhikars of some important satras including the Auniati Satra would participated in a public meeting which was organized by Haladhar Bhuyan with the prior consent of the Satradhikars of Garmur, Barduwa and Dihing Satra.⁶ Bhuyan and Ramakanta Muktiyar personally met Hem Chandra Goswami, the then Satradhikar of Auniati precincts at Nagaon to invite him to that public meeting to resolve the differences in performing the rituals in the mahapurushiya religion. The Auniati Satradhikar took one month period to give his decision to them about his participation on that meeting. Though more than one month had passed, the Satradhikar did not send any message to them. At last he informed his inability to attend that meeting. In such circumstances Bhuyan informed to the Satradhikar through a letter that they would form a Dharma Sangha by themselves and propagates the ideology of ek saran nama dharma. All these things happened in 1929.⁷ Accordingly, in the very next year (1930) Haladhar Bhuyan summoned a meeting to discuss the religious issues at Palasani village of Nagaon district. In this meeting they formed Sankar Sangha as an anti- Brahmanical institution to propagate Sankardeva's ek saran hari naam dharma among all the communities of Assam. In fact, Sankardeva Sangha tried to define a distinct religious creed against Brahmanical authority.

4.3. The main point of controversy was started on the issue of the period of impurity (asoch) to be observed by the non-Brahman castes on a death in the family. In 1930 the mother of Jogendranath Barua, the renowned judge of Golaghat died. Barua had observed dasāh asauca (10 day ritual impurity) and performed the sṛāddha on the 11th day itself by nama kirtana according to the advice of Gopika Ballabh Goswami of Golaghat. This issue had created a great uproar all over Assam. The crucial issue debated was whether the shastras permitted a sudra to observe 11th day ritual impurity. A Sabha (Meeting) was convened on this issue where eighteen renowned Pandits of Kamarupa under the chairmanship of the Principal of Cotton College, Pandit Lakshmi Narayan Chatterjee assembled at the Phulaguri Stage House, in which the Brahman pundits gave the judgment that only the brahmins have the exclusive right to observe 11th day ritual impurity and for a sudra 31st day is mandatory for the shradha ceremony.⁸ The Brahmins even published a small booklet to preach their judgment. Predictably this judgment was challenged by the leaders of Sangha by citing many slokas from different shastras to refute the claims of the Brahman pandits. Pandit Bhuvan Chandra Vyakarana Tirtha, Tarka Sastri, was also present in that debate, which cited many arguments in favour of 11th day's ritual impurity from different shastras. In that Sabha, after the arguments and counter-arguments of both the parties, the Sangha has

defeated the Brahman pandits. Thus, in that debate the futility of the Karmakandi rituals was proved and the view of Sankar Sangha had been established as the true shastric code of belief.

4.4. Soon after this debate the supporters of Sangha movement composed many books related to asauca, in the vernacular language so that the common people could easily understand. As for example the books entitled 'Dasāh Asauca Vyavasthā Puthi', 'Vivāh Vidhi', 'Srāddha Nirnay', were written by Gopika Ballabh Goswami and 'Vivāh Vidhi' (Codes of the Marriage Ceremony) and 'Srāddha Vidhi' (Codes of performing of the Srāddha) by Pandit Bhuban Chandra Bhuyan. Likewise Ramakanta Muktiyar was also written two important books entitled 'Antyesti Kriyā Vidhān' (Codes of Performing the Funeral Rites), and 'Mrityu Mangal'. Two very generous persons Radhakanta Handique and tea-planter Mahendra Nath Barua came forward to assist the Sangha movement by printing these books.⁹ This had given a new dimension to the Sangha Movement in the years to come. Thus, Sankardeva Sangha started codifying some rules and norms for the members of this institution which were later on considered as the characteristic rituals of this Vaishnavite creed.

4.5. The main object of the Sangha as described by Haladhar Bhuyan was publicizing of a monotheistic religion (Ek Saran Hari Nam Dharma), the abandonment of ritual impurity, the abolition of untouchability, the creation of equal rights for men of all castes and cementing of good will between the peoples of the hills and the plains.¹⁰ Most of the forefront founder leaders of Sankar Sangha (its original name) had the bitter experience of strong caste-discrimination at the hands of the upper caste people in the society. Haladhar Bhuyan¹¹ and Vaishnava Pandit Sonaram Chutiya¹² are the two big personalities, who had been insulted for their lower caste birth in two different occasions before they joined in the Sankar Sangha movement. In that context the freedom movement also played tremendous impact on the structure of society. Most of the leaders of this reform sect actively participated in the freedom struggle and thus they came into contact with Gandhiji's Harijan movement, that inspired them to reform the religion as a means of reforming society.¹³ Thus, prevailing situation demanded a socio-religious movement to prevent the upper caste hegemony in the society and to reassess the actual teachings and ideologies of Sankardeva in the light of modern outlook. This has facilitated in the growth of Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha which had responded actively to the social changes of the time and tried to set up such a society where caste will never be a barrier to mix up one member with the other in the society.

5. Early Challenges: Debates on the Religious Issues

Since its formation Sankar Sangha movement had to face very stiff opposition from the Brahman priestly class. The upper castes tried to prevent the mobility of this lower caste movement in order to defend their hierarchy and socio-economic status quo. Therefore, the leaders of Sangha had to take part in a number of debates held in different places of the state. Thus a serious conflict between these two groups was inevitable as Sangha had challenged the brahmanical dominance in the socio-religious matters in the society. Its leaders succeeded in establishing their arguments very convincingly (true and original ideology of Srimanta Sankaradeva) in these debates. Such debates were held on basically on the issue of the period of impurity (asoc) to be observed by non-Brahmin castes on the death of a family member. Where a sudir (lower castes) had to observe ritual impurity in thirty days by performing of sradha function (commemoration service) in the thirty-first day but a Brahman can observe ten days ritual impurity by performing sradha in eleventh day. According to the priestly class sudirs should perform their sradha function in thirty days and the Brahmans can only perform it in the eleventh day for their purification. Therefore, the Brahmans had opposed the purification of the sudirs in the eleventh day by merely reciting Hari Nama Kirtans as suggested by the leaders of Sankar Sangha. In 28th December, 1933 one such debate was held at Phulaguri near Nagaon town, where as many as eighteen Sanskrit scholars were present at the request of the priestly class in order to advocate for the thirtieth day purification for the sudirs (non-brahmin). On the other hand, Bhuban Chandra Bhuyan, a Sanskrit scholar was present on behalf of Sankar Sangha in that debate. The priestly class had failed to defend their points and left out from the debate.¹⁴ In that debate again the Karmakandi rituals had been proved futile and the view of Sankar Sangha was established as the true shastric code of belief.

5.1. Since then many public such debates were held at time to time in different places in the districts of Nagaon, Kamrup, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat. Once such debate took place at Balipet between the followers of Sankardeva Sangha and the Gouriya (Bengal) scholars. The Gouriya scholars tried to establish that the worship of dual form of Krishna-Radha as approved by Chaitanyadeva was the true judgment of Bhagavata. But they had failed to place logical answer against the arguments raised by the leaders of Sangha. So, it was accepted that surrender to single Krishna is the true judgment of Bhagavata. Likewise, another marathon debate for long twenty three days was held at Barpeta. In all these debates the arguments offered by the leaders of Sankardeva Sangha were recognized. The attempt made by the priestly class to check the rise of Sankar Sangha had measurably failed. All these debates rose up from one particular issue of a sradha. Gopika Ballabh Goswami had prepared a draft on consultation with Bhuban Chandra Bhuyan in the name of sarba varnar dahah asauca and it had got recommendation from the Satradhikar of Garmur Satra. Thereupon Barua performed sradha by Nama-Prasanga in ten days instead of existing rites of thirty days sanctioned for the sudirs. But it had created an immense chaos all over the state and public debates were organized where Bhuban Chandra Bhuyan and other leaders of the Sankardeva Sangha successfully defended their arguments.¹⁵ In this way, the supremacy of Nama-Prasanga was established and Sankardeva Sangha movement became popular as Nam Kirtaniya among the people for its simple rituals.

6. Nature of the Movement

Popularizing a number of simple rituals and giving importance on equality among all, the sangha could attract the lower caste people and the tribes to it. According to Dr. Dhrubajyoti Borah, this was a huge and widespread movement mainly guided by the

marginalized or subaltern people of the society and proved to be a successful one.¹⁶ On the other hand, A. Guha has remarked that this movement was a struggle for upward social mobility carried out by the oppressive caste of the society.¹⁷ So in another word it was the struggle of the oppressive class (who were so long exploited in the name of religion) against the hegemony of the upper caste.

6.1. It is important to be mentioned that the birth of Sankar Sangha movement has a close relationship with the Indian Freedom Movement. Most of the founder member associated with this movement were actively participated in the Freedom Movement and even went to jail for it. They were undoubtedly inspired with the Freedom Movement and wanted to reform the Assamese society and religion from all kinds of irreligious beliefs and practices. Therefore, A. Guha has rightly called the Sankardeva Sangha movement a by-product of Indian Freedom Movement.¹⁸ It is a true fact that during the period of Freedom Movement a consciousness has grown up among the common people throughout the country. It has definitely encouraged creating a sense of awareness among the oppressive classes of the society for social liberation. Such a tendency is still continued among the oppressive classes of the state. Sankardeva Sangha movement can be considered as a part of its continuity. Another notable aspect is that the Sankar Sangha movement and the Dalit movements of India are almost contemporary. The main objectives of both the movement was to assure equal rights, equal status and social justice for all living in the society. The success of Freedom Movement and the new idea of modern democracy have directly or indirectly highly inspired them to carry out their movement. While preparing the Indian constitution it was deeply influenced by the reform movement of Jotiba Phule, Dalit movement of B.R. Ambedkar and harijan movement of Gandhiji. Ambedkar himself was deeply attracted by the western concept of secular state. On the other hand the leader of the Sangha took the help of Hindu spiritual tradition as an approach to reform the society.¹⁹

7. Impact on the Assamese Society

The Sangha movement could make the society free from the authoritarianism of the Brahman- Kayastha Satradhikars and the priestly class in religious matters.²⁰ Sangha has not only provided a very purer and simpler form of Vaishnava rituals but also made the rituals very inexpensive and reduced the economic burden of the poor peasants. Sangha appointed some of its members to act as priests in different religious ceremonies. Thus, poor Vaishnava peasant got an opportunity to hold the offices of Sangha and they felt empowered. Now these common people were also allowed to perform various socio-religious function which was earlier exclusively reserved for the Brahmins. A. Saikia has rightly remarked on the positive role of the Sangha in bringing social mobility to the society in the following words- "By being a member of a social organization which allowed them to perform various socio-religious roles, which had been preserved for the Brahmins, the poor peasants were invested with a new authority. Power came to them through their ability to negotiate various socio-cultural practices and also village resources."²¹

7.1. Sankar Sangha movement has laid a very positive impact on the tribal society in Assam. Especially, after coming into the touch of Sankardeva Sangha how the lives of the Mishing people have been changed is clearly mentioned by Jatin Mipun in many of his published articles. He admitted earnestly that behind his individual upliftment Sankardeva Sangha played an important role. Even the Sangha and its norms and rituals helped their society to give up the habit of taking local made drink (Apong) which was the cause of the societal development on their part.²² He also expressed that soon after his father got initiation (1965) into this organization the whole environment of his house had been changed. In that year with him other ten Mishing family had given up the habits of taking wine and other intoxicated drugs.²³ After all, Sankardeva Sangha movement is able to teach a better way of life to the tribal people of Assam and makes them aware about the negative effects of the alcoholic items used by them in the name of tradition.

7.2. Common people now become free from the economic exploitation of the priestly class in the name of extravagant rituals. As the rituals of nama dharma are simple and economic, lots of people from backward communities have accepted this new sect. It was really a nice experience to visit Gamariguri area at Merapani where the Koch, the Keot, the Mishings, the Kacharis, the tea garden labourer and some other tribes has taken initiation in Sankar Sangha and established Namghors to perform religious functions together forgetting their caste differences.

7.3. Sangha emerged as a new social force with its ever increasing numbers in parallel to the satras. They formulated their own rules and regulations and never act anything beyond the constriction of its constitution. It could be able to resist the brahmanical hierarchical order in the society. It promised social equality to all. Therefore, it becomes more popular among the socially backward non-Brahmin Assamese people in rural areas in the early twentieth century. Lately, Sangha adopts some very admirable schemes viz. establishment of Srimanta Sankardeva University, open many Sankardeva Schools, and Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya in order to popularizing the Sankardeva's ideology among people of the world.

7.4. This reform movement initiated by Sankardeva Sangha has ushered in an era of socio-cultural renaissance in Assam and it develops a new genre of philosophy in the society. It is true that today Sangha is playing a leading role in the formation of Assamese nation and it has definitely succeeded to a large extent in its mission. The ever growing crowd in the annual conferences of Sankardeva Sangha is the finest example to believe this fact.²⁴ Most important aspect of this reform sect is that it is not based on a particular caste or particular community and all the members have the equal rights to bear the responsibility of the organization whenever required. 'Sankardeva wrote,' observed a Vice-President of the Sangha from the untouchable fisherman caste, 'that he who believes in more than one god is an untouchable. That was the opinion of Shankardeva. That was an opinion of

Lord Krishna.' Members of the Sangha eat together with the untouchables who have joined the Sangha but they refuse to eat with Brahmans observing brahmanical rituals.²⁵ They reject the concept of caste and believe in 'one' and the 'same' among their devotees by sharing a common ideology. So, this is the reasonable ground to believe that Sankardeva Sangha keeps very good relationship with all the marginalized castes and creeds treat all its devotees equally.

7.5. At the time formation of Sangha Assamese society was under the grab of blind conservatism, women were generally remained confined to their homes, while their spouses were free to enjoy life without any impediment. The skeptical attitude of lawgiver was mainly responsible for such low status of women in religion. So, as a revolutionary organization inspired with Gandhian spirit Sangha has been trying to play a very important role for the social upliftment of women in the society. It is observed that Sangha has been able to bring forward the women community by providing them opportunity to participate in the sphere of social, cultural and religious activities in the society. They oppose the codification of social laws of Smritis, which has humiliated the position of women.²⁶

8. Limitations of the Sangha Movement

However, Sangha has been suffered from some kind of limitations too. Its leaders are still dreaming of a homogenous society under the banner of Vaishnava religion. Sangha should have understood the reality that in the age neo-liberal economy it is not possible to fabricate a homogenous society on the basis of language or religion. In such a critical moment we neither think about a homogenous society nor think about a modern society with a single religion. It is very difficult to bring people of diverse faith together in a heterogeneous society like Assam. At present almost all the oppressed classes who have got limited opportunity in every sector; they continue to assert their identity as well as social and economic justice. Conventional methods to bring social change have been rightly questioned by the present generation. Paradigms of looking at society and the perspectives on social change have been changing. Therefore, new conceptual frameworks have to be formulated by the Sangha. Mere by propagating religious practices cannot satisfy the aspiration of the present generation. But we observed that Sangha has a long way to go in that direction.

8.1. Generally, Sangha has not believed in caste and class divisions and treated all its members equally. All members of Sangha meet together, converse together, eat together irrespective of caste, creed and sex within their fold. But, Sangha has been always criticized for its uncompromising rigidity in associating and inter dining with other sects. Even they do not eat or associate with their relatives if they belong to other faith. This has not only created some problems but sometimes occur conflicting situation within the family members. Therefore, a section of people today raises allegation that Sangha has created a new social division in the villages of Assam which is not encouraging as such act threatens the unity of a village.²⁷

8.2. The most important inadequacy of Sangha is that it does not recognize the separate culture of its devotees. After initiation into Sangha nobody is permitted to maintain their community culture and tradition. They will also have to surrender their community identity and instead they have to identify themselves only as mahapurushiya or Sankari. People of different communities do not like to give up their own community identity by taking membership of Sangha. Even rearing of pig, duck and chicken is also prohibited for its members. It is known that on the issue of rearing of pig on member of saran committee belongs to Mishing community had to be resigned from his post in Jonai in Demaji district.²⁸ Due to this reason the greater part of tribal people dislike this sect. It failed to abandon its intolerance and exclusiveness attitude for which many people have already left Sangha.²⁹

8.3. As a reform sect Sangha has failed to prove themselves above customs and rituals. It has given undue importance on what a Sangha devotee can do or cannot do. Therefore, many people have still doubt that after admission into Sangha he or she never freely moves in the society. Because of this reason it has not got support from all section of people. There must be some constitutional or institutional defects in Sangha for which the problem of desertion arises from time to time. As in the preceding years, many people including some top rank leaders have already left from the organization. Particularly with the desertion of Ilaram Das from Sangha, it has lost the support of a large segment of Schedule Caste people. Sankardeva Sangha has, therefore, suffered from desertion of some of its active members from time to time due to some ideological or other differences.³⁰

8.4. Sangha became conservative in course of time by formulating some uncompromisingly rigid rules and regulations. Therefore, Sangha has been always criticized outside its realm that it is open-minded and mixed up freely with only those people who are initiated into it, but the members of its devotee never participates in any religious functions held by others who do not belong to the Sangha, albeit of their near relatives. They can eat with untouchables who have joined in Sankar Sangha but they never dine with Brahmans who observes brahmanical rituals.³¹ The intolerance of Sangha towards the Brahmans and priestly-class in the name of religion is also not a good sign at all for social solidarity. In the same way the Brahmans and priestly-class should have also given up their discriminatory attitude towards other castes and creeds and other unscrupulous rituals which are not based on sastric logic or against of Sankardeva's ideology.

8.5. An allegation has always been against Sangha that since its formation most of the Padadhikars have been elected only from the upper caste. This has definitely pointed out the upper caste dominance within Sankardeva Sangha. After all, Sankardeva sangha as an organization is not against any castes and creeds but a few members are not above it. On the other hand, the leaders of the Sangha are unable to inculcate the concept of equality among the members of Sangha for which casteism still prevails among them. Mainly these two reasons dissuade the tea-garden labour community and tribal people to join in it. Though a few tea

garden people and tribal people has initiated into this sect, in spite of it Sangha also fails to check the large scale conversion of these people to Christianity.

9. Conclusion

For the social history of Assam the significance of this movement cannot be denied because it had brought in its wake a socio-religious renaissance in Assam. The success of this reformist movement could not always be measured in terms of its apparent popularity, but the strength, philanthropic, perseverance and farsightedness of its leaders. It is observed that Sangha has given utmost importance on the pomposity and public display; therefore, it could not handle the genuine and grass-root problems. The most remarkable achievement of this movement so far is that it could build confidence among the socially backward non-Brahmin communities and provided these silent people an important platform to raise their voice. It can also succeed partially to keep away these people from use of alcohol, because after initiated into Sankardeva Sangha they have given up their habits of taking wine and other intoxicated drugs. If the tribal people find scope for social mobility preserving their ethnic identity within the trajectory of Sangha, more and more people from these communities would surely join the movement. Generally most of the social movements lasted for a brief period, even many of them disintegrated before attaining their objectives,³² but Sankar Sangha movement has been continuing in its objectives since its formation with ever expanding devotees. The leader of the Sankardeva Sangha should very carefully examine the shortcomings and limitations within its organization and should try to remove these shortcomings otherwise, it will fail to show the way to transformation. It is very critical period for the Sangha movement to carry out its social reform schemes and disseminate Sankardeva's ideologies to the people of the world.

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