



Cover Page



LIFE AND WORKS OF JYOTIPRASAD AGARWALA: A STUDY

Iliasur Rahman Siddique

Research Scholar

Department of Arabic, Gauhati University

Assam, India

Abstract

Jyotiprasad Agarwala was a music composer, poet, dramatist, and filmmaker, social and political activist. His determination and his commitment to art and music, and to the cause of India's freedom and its people, earned him the epithet 'Rupkonwar', by which he is popularly known today. Despite his demise at the relatively early age of 48 on January 17, 1951, he was a major figure who gave both shape and direction to the development of a distinct Assamese culture and identity. It is in recognition of his efforts and in celebration of his life, that 17th January is observed as **Silpi Divas** (a day for the celebration of art and artists) throughout the state of Assam.

Keywords: Jyotiprasad, Jyoti's Life, Jyoti's Work, Assamese Literature.

Introduction

The family tree of Jyotiprasad Agarwalla was an old banyan tree, very huge in size with a number of big branches. The surname 'Agarwalla' is derived from a Rajasthani word 'Agarwal' which means 'pioneer of enterprise'. His forefathers were also known as 'Kedia'. Jyotiprasad's great grandfather, Navarangaram Agarwalla was the eldest son of Hemraj Agarwalla. Jyoti's father's name was Pramananda Agarwala. His father was the son of Haribilash Agarwala and grandson of Navarangaram Agarwalla.

Jyotiprasad was never a teacher of any formal educational institution. But in the boarder sense, he was a universal teacher. He cultivated this habit from his boyhood and had a strong desire to do well to others. He was always kind enough to help the helpless sick. He acquired these noble and benevolent qualities from his predecessors. His father Paramananda Agarwalla was the worthy person who sowed the seeds of humanity in him.

Birth and life of Jyotiprasad

It was the 17th June of 1903, on this auspicious day in a very fine moment, as the family astrologer predicted, Kironmoyee, wife of the proprietor of Tamolbari tea estate gave birth to a pretty baby boy as her first child. But the birth of the child became the cause of worry to the whole family. It was because the child was born much earlier the scheduled time given by the family doctor. His forefather, Nabrangram Agarwala, had come to Assam in 1811 from the Marwar region in Rajasthan. After completing his studies in various schools in Assam and Calcutta, he matriculated in 1921. He went to Edinburgh in 1926 to study economics, but returned in 1930 before completing his course. On his way back, he spent seven months at the UFA studio in Germany learning film-making.

He continued his activities for Indian independence that had disrupted his studies earlier and in 1932 he was imprisoned for fifteen months. He established the Chitraban Studio at the Bholaguri Tea Estate and began filming the movie Joymoti around the end of 1933. This was the first film from Assam. The film, released in 1935, was based on a play by Laxminath Bezbarua about the heroic Ahom princess Sati Joymoti imprisoned and tortured by a repressive Ahom swargadeo. In 1936 he married Devajani Bhuyan. In 1941 he participated in the freedom movement, and in 1942, he went underground to escape British repression. The freedom struggle against the British control of India was growing in strength. Following the Partition of Bengal in 1905, the spirit of swadeshi was gaining ground and soon precipitated in the form of anti-Partition agitations and the call for Swaraj (self-rule). From his early childhood, Jyotiprasad was exposed to nationalist ideas and his outlook was deeply influenced by them.

The Agarwala family was deeply involved in the freedom struggle, and during Mahatma Gandhi's first visit to Assam in 1921, Gandhi stayed at the Agarwala family home in Tezpur. Called 'Poki', it was the first concrete ('pucca' in Hindi and therefore 'Poki' in Assamese) house in Tezpur and became an important meeting place for nationalists such as Madan Mohan Malavya and Motilal Nehru. For Jyotiprasad, cinema was not on the horizon just yet and he returned to Assam and began to assist his uncle Chandrakumar Agarwala, who was publishing a local newspaper, Axomiya. In 1926, Agarwala travelled to Scotland after he was accepted by the University of Edinburgh to study Economics.

In 1930, Agarwala abandoned his studies at the University of Edinburgh and decided to return to Assam. En route, he spent seven months at UFA Studio in Berlin, Germany, where he met Himanshu Rai, then a young artist from Bengal, who later went on to found the famous film studio, Bombay Talkies, along with actress Devika Rani. Agarwala was now more motivated than ever to



Cover Page



become a film maker and, while in jail in 1932 – like so many other nationalists, he too had been falsely accused of treason by the British – he scripted his epoch-making Joymoti, based on a play written by noted litterateur, Laxminath Bezbaruah. It was the first-ever Assamese movie.

Agarwala was a pioneer in more ways than one. Besides the obvious– being the founder of Assam’s film industry – his movies made bold political statements and both the films he made cast women in very prominent roles. His contribution to art and culture, the emancipation of women, and their social and economic independence is still felt in Assam today.

In 1917 his first drama Sonit Kunwari was written at the age of 14 years only. In 1932 he arrested and imprisoned for 15 months along with a fine of Five hundred rupees only. He set up ‘Chitraban Studio’ at Bholaguri tea garden and it was formally inaugurated by his father Parmananda Agarwalla. His first cinema ‘Joymoti’ was released in March 10, 1935 and the first show was inaugurated by Lakshminath Bezbaruah. His second film Indramaloti was released in 1939. In January 17, 1951 Jyotiprasad breathed his last becoming a victim of dreadful cancer at the age of forty-eight.

His Works

Short Stories: Rupohi (ৰূপহী), Bogitora (বগীতৰা), Sontora (সন্তৰা), Suntir Abhimaan (সোণটিৰ অভিমান), Zuzaru (যুঁজাৰু), Sotir Suworoni (সতীৰ সোঁৱৰণী), Sondhya (সন্ধিয়া), Silakuti (শিলাকুটি), Neelasorai (নীলাচৰাই)

Novel: Amar Gaon (আমাৰ গান)

Other books: Jyotidhara (জ্যোতিধৰা), Chandrakumar Agarwala (চন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ আগৰৱালা), Background of Assamese Architecture (অসমীয়া শিল্পকলাৰ ইতিহাস)

Children literature: He wrote about thirteen children's poems, among which Kumpur Sopon is noteworthy.

Songs: Jyoti Prasad Agarwala had written around 300 songs, many of which he had set to music himself. Collectively, these songs are called Jyoti Songit.

Plays: Sonit Kunwori (শোণিতকুঁৱৰী), Karengar Ligiri (কাৰেঙৰ লিগিৰী), Rupalim (ৰূপালীম), Nimati Konya (নিমাতী কইনা), Khanikar (খনিকৰ), Lobhita (লভিতা), Perfection of me (মোৰ পূৰ্ণতা).

Incomplete Plays: Kanaklata (কনকলতা), Sundarknowar (সুন্দৰ কোঁৱৰ), Sonpakhilee (সোণপখিলী).

Film: Agarwala is lauded as the creator of Assamese cinema. In a period that saw the beginning of Indian Cinema, with ‘Joymoti’ (Released in 1935) and Indramalati (Released in 1939).

Poems: Jyoti Raamaayon – Poetry Collection and Luitor Paaror Agnisur – Poetry Collection, 1971.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like say through this brief study that Jyotiprasad was a great humanist, philosopher, a poet, musician, film producer, freedom fighter etc. He was a man of nature that’s why he always calls the people with his writings to return the nature and to become natural human. From a critical analysis of his short career, it reveals that like P.B. Shelley, the great revolutionary poet of the world, he also maintained the same philosophy of life which sang “We look before and after and pine for what are not our sweetest song are those that tell of saddest thoughts,”. He is the only person who developed the Assamese literature widely in his time.

Reference

1. Sarma, Priya Nath, ‘Jyotiprasad Agarwala: The Prince of Beauty of Assam’, 2011, p-3
2. Ibid, p-7, 15 & 51
3. Saikia, Nogen, ‘Jyotiprasad Rachanawali’, 2018, p- 3
4. Ibid, p-430 to 511
5. Goshai, Dr Hiren, ‘Jyotiprasadar Natok’, 2010, p- 81 & 381