

Mantra Literature: Past and Present

(with special reference to Assamese mantra literature)

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0.00 Recommendation

The topic of the proposed paper is Mantra Literature: Past and Present. 'Tantra played a special role in the religious and cultural traditions of society and civilization. It is difficult to define mantra literature. In a general sense, a 'mantra' is a set of words used in a special projection method to remember a specific energy for the achievement of various purposes in folk life. Old Kamrup was famous for its tantra-mantras. Once upon a time, the Mayang area of Morigaon was famous for mantra practice and magic. However, in the present age of science and technology, the use of mantras is becoming increasingly limited. Therefore, this paper attempts to examine the past and present status of Assamese mantra literature.

0.01 Objectives and Importance of the Study:

The main purpose of this study is to provide a brief overview of the history of Assamese mantra literature and mantras at the present time. It is tried to provide an analytical overview of how literature is being applied and discussed. Since mantra literature is a subject of historical value, a subject like mantra needs proper discussion. Only then will some unexplained aspects of

mantra literature come to light and the literary texts of mantra literature that are about to disappear will gain a preserved dimension. There is also an importance and need to study the subject in this regard.

0.02 Scope and Procedure :

The presentation of the topic examines the current situation in both the practical and literary aspects of Assamese mantra literature. The issue depends equally on both field studies and resources collected. The method of presentation of the subject is descriptive and analytical. The case study approach is observational.

0.03 Sources of Data :

The source of information on this subject depends equally on the resources collected and the datas provided by various ones. The Resources are collected from various institutions such as the Central Library of Guwahati University, the Library of Dibrugarh University, Buranji Aru Puratatta Bivag (the Museum of the Department of History and Archeology). Along with these, datas have been considered as key sources whereas the Secondary sources are collected from various magazines, books, Internet etc.

1.00 Mantra Literature: Theoretical Concepts and History

The word 'mantra' literally means a word used to worship a god or goddess. This is the meaning of the word mantra in the dictionaries Hemkosh and Sharaighat. (mantra + ghn verb) Etymologically, a mantra is a conversation that speaks, converses, thinks, receives advice, or holds in secret. Tantra literature, on the other hand, suggests that the word mantra is derived from the words 'man' and 'tra'i' In other words, the mantra is to save the mind. Simply put, a mantra is one that protects both the body and the mind. Mantras are the power of words that can remove any disease or misfortune with the proper application of meditation. In English, mantra means Charm. Charm is related to magic.

Although mantra literature cannot be defined by a specific definition, mantras and literature of that class can be defined as words projected through correct pronunciation, recitation, breathing, etc. to acquire special powers for various actions or achieving specific purposes. The definition of mantra literature gives an idea of its characteristics. The main characteristics of mantras are the emphasis on secrecy and conservatism, and the dependence on sound. Etymologically, the word 'mantra' means talking conversation, giving advice, receiving advice, conversation in secret. The history of mantras shows that mantras have been in use since ancient times. The exact date of the origin of the mantra cannot be determined. However, it will determine when the ideas and beliefs on which mantras are applied in folk society have been in use since ancient times. Various magical rituals

are known to have been practiced in pre-civilization periods.

These practices of magic (sorcery or wizardry) became widespread, especially during the development of early agricultural civilizations. As mentioned earlier, magic are known to have existed in the early stages of civilization. Early humans performed some magical rituals to increase the fertility of nature by keeping nature and women in the same place. There are many ways in which they can improve their self-confidence. The idea of this kind of magic flowed by uniting nature and women. The unification of nature and woman led to the earliest sexual practices centering on these two forces. Early magical rituals were performed to achieve perfection by maintaining the interrelationship between nature and women. For example, some communities rub **sendu** on the soil of the fields to wish nature to become menstrual.

These people believe that fertility will increase only if they are menstruating in nature like women. In this regard, Devi Prasad Chattopadhyay writes in his book 'Lokayat Darshan': "In primitive agricultural societies, man had a magical power and ability **rather than more physical labor or skill gave priority.**

(Chattopadhyay. 269)

Chattopadhyay's views show that the primitive people believed in magical powers since before the development of society and civilization. He also mentions the discovery of agricultural women and their involvement in magic. This comment is quoted from the Lokayat translated by Jatindra Kumar Bargohain. "Since agriculture is the invention of women, the belief in magic on

the occasion of agriculture is naturally women-centric and belongs to women."

Therefore, it can be assumed that tantric rituals are mostly centered on nature and women. Furthermore, the early agricultural society can be considered as the beginning of tantric thought or magical beliefs. Later, in the Vedic period, Tantra-mantra became more widespread. However, the concept of tantra-mantra gained widespread popularity in the Vedic period.

The above discussion gives some idea of how the concept of magic was instilled in people from the earliest times and how this concept later contributed to its development into tantra. However, it is not possible to get any accurate information about the exact date of origin of the mantra and the place of origin of the mantra. Although it is not possible to date the origin of magic in Egypt around 3000 BC, it is not possible to determine the exact date of its origin. Since ancient times, people have believed that the main cause of various misfortunes, diseases, etc. is the dissatisfaction or anger of the gods and goddesses. Therefore, mantras were uttered to appease that particular god or power. The concept of mantras developed further in the Vedic period. Mantras were also used in the epic period. There are many accounts of the shooting of various enchanted arrows and the use of Brahmastras on the battlefield.

Old Assam was famous as a land of magic. The travel notes of the travelers who visited Assam at various times tell us about the high practice of tantra-mantra prevalent in ancient Kamrup or Assam. There are many books on the subject, such as the "Purani Kamrupar Dharmar Dhara" by

Banikant Kakati and "The Cultural History of Assam" by Birinchi Kumar Barua. Kakati says in his book:

"The kingdom of Kamrup has been famous for its magic spells since the time of history. This fame is not confined to ordinary foreigners, it is also mentioned in all-India literature and history."

(Kakati. p. 204)

To prove the truth of this statement, Kakati presents evidence from the character of the Advaita Shankaracharya of South India, the characters of the two Sikh Gurus of West India and the Mughal history of Central India. He mentions the story of Abhinava gupta giving in to the argument with Shankaracharya and infecting him with gout. There are many other sources of information and descriptions on the subject. For example, Shankaracharya, who came to Assam in the ninth century AD, or the Mughal Bad Shah, who invaded Assam, were harassed with the power of mantras. Birinchi Kumar Baroua commented on the development of Assamese mantra literature:

"The mantras are mainly a combination of the Atharva Veda, Buddhist and Hindu tantra scriptures and tribal beliefs."

(Barua. 140)

Like other parts of India, there are many mantras in the society of Assam. These are formed mainly on Buddhist and Hindu arguments. It was formed by a combination of scriptures, Atharva Veda and tribal beliefs. The scope of mantra literature is very wide. Therefore, the mantras are also available in Sanskrit, Assamese and various tribal languages. It is believed that mantras have been in use since before the fully

developed form of the Assamese language and literature or since the oral era. Old Kamrup was famous for its tantra-mantras. There are several oral legends and references found in various scriptures as evidence of the strong practical position of mantras in Assamese society. The Assamese mantra literature has gained a distinct identity from the mantras of other languages due to its distinctive characteristics.

There are two main aspects of Assamese mantra literature: the practical aspect and the literary aspect. There is a vast field of application of Assamese mantra literature. Mantras are used to achieve both good and bad purposes. In addition to housekeeping, cucumber protection, increasing wealth, love, etc., good mantras are used in various fields such as weaving, fishing, catching thieves, mental treatment of muddleheaded one, beauty treatments, exorcism, enchantment, hypnosis, etc. Similarly, evil spells (mantras for evil works) such as increasing enemies, increasing diseases, increasing quarrels, etc. are also used. It is noteworthy that most of the Su-mantras are used in medicine. These mantras are believed to have meaning only if they are projected with the right tone and pronunciation, with the help of physical accompaniments such as Jara phuka. In Assamese **mantra** literature, Sanskrit-scented words, spoken and indigenous words, as well as some meaningless ones like kang thang, hring phat, kling etc. are meaningless. The predominance of sound is noticeable. Therefore, it is important to understand the importance of mantra literature in the history of Assamese literature.

They carry the literary characteristics of the time. Although the creation of meaningful literature is not the real purpose of the mantra, the mantras are developed spontaneously. Several literary features have been preserved in some mantras. Such aspects include the use of rhyme and rhetoric, the expression of various humors, The connection of fiction, the variety of content, etc. are noteworthy.

2.00 Recent discussions of Assamese mantra literature:

2.01 Practical status of mantra literature:

Mantra literature once occupied an important place in Assamese society and literature, both practically and literarily. Therefore, at one time old Assam or Kamrup was famous as the land of Tantra-mantra. However, with the passage of time there was a change to the firm position of tantra before the mantra. Due to the advancement of science, the change of era and several other factors, mantra literature is gradually disappearing. Assam was once a sanctuary for the practice of Tantra-mantras, but with the passage of time, many mantras have gradually disappeared from the minds of the people. Mantras were used in almost all aspects of folk life, including home protection, crop protection, good fortune, increase in wealth, beauty treatments, and cooking. In addition, magical mantras such as tiger bonds and wool mantras were also used. There are also various references to the practice of evil spells that harm others. However, their use has almost disappeared nowadays. Mantras are still known to be used as a primary treatment for minor

diseases or for other purposes, especially in rural areas.

In short, mantras have taken a widely changing position in Assamese society compared to the past. Mantras were used in various fields of folk medicine as well as to achieve the purposes of folk life, both large and small. Although this is no longer the case, some people still resort to mantras as a primary treatment for minor ailments. They are also used to treat Mukhlaga (stomach unrest), small cuts, toothache or cavity, etc. They are also used to treat stuck of fish bone in the throat when eating fish. It is not possible to discuss the large practical field of mantra in this discussion. Below are just three examples based on field studies.

When small bones of fish caught in the neck, mantras were used for treatment. This is still the case in rural areas as it was in the past. Even today, the mantra is said:

Sir sir shimolur daal
Moi masor kait jarisu
Hoi jaok bhal

(Collection: Jyoti Gogoi)

The method of applying mantras varies from place to place or from person to person. Some people apply this mantra by wrapping it around their necks with a fan. Someone gives them to eat a banana. In folk life, simple people still treat with mantras in this way. It is believed that bones are removed from throat with this mantra.

Mukhalga Bhanga Mantra :

According to folk belief, it is believed that a person has a mouth when he does not want to eat anything or when he becomes dry and thin after eating. Even today, in rural societies, people use burning

mustard seeds in a fire and beating them with poisonous sticks or cutting water and pouring water on their bodies. The mantras chanted for Mukhlaga Bhonga is quite long. This mantra is recited in a vague voice. The mantra mentions the story of Shiva and Parvati, including Ramachandra, Sri Shankara and Balobhadra. In addition, there are references to various ghosts, demons, etc., such as heroes, yakshinis, yoginis, etc. This mantra is still passed down from mouth to mouth by various people. In addition, this mantra has been published in book form. Some of the mouth-breaking mantras are mentioned below.

Shreekrishna Namah Dhanantriya Namah
Harparvati Ubach
Satyam Satyat Badmate Nama Krishna
Mahavishnu Brahma
Vishnu Maheshwara
Many rupang daitanang namami
purushottam,
om kling hong hong hong hong hong hong
hong swaha

(Source: Bara Bejali)

Mantras for eye diseases: The therapeutic mantras of Shalak Tantra, one of the forms of Ayurvedic medicine, are among the practical fields of Assamese mantra literature. There are many types of eye diseases such as Acinair Mantra, Chakshushula Mantra, Chakshukotar Mantra etc. and mantras for dental diseases, tooth insect mantras, tooth decay mantras, tongue swelling or enlargement mantras, throat mantras etc. are also mentioned in Assamese mantra literature available.

Sri Sri Narayanaya Namah Sri Sri
Kalikaya Namah
Shree Shivay Namah

Amukir sokur kuta jarisu pani hoi
por.

(Collection : Kshimai Ghoshiya)

The mantra is chanted with a clean cotton cloth or gamocha around the eyes. It is believed that repeated recitation of the mantra will cure the eyesight at some point. Applying a cotton cloth to the eyes makes it possible to remove the thorns in the eyes. In addition, if the mantra is recited in a certain tone, the patient's mind will be distracted from the eye problems and concentrated on the mantra. As a result, you can also get some peace of mind. Similarly, some witch doctor (known as BeJ in Assamese) use mantras to remove tiny insects, such as lice, from the eyes. There are many reasons why you shouldn't wear a new gomocha on your eyes on Saturday or Tuesday in cloudy weather. Whether it is actually possible to have such insects in the eye is another matter.

Mantra literature once occupied an important place in Assamese society and literature, both practically and literarily. Therefore, at one time old Assam or Kamrup was famous as the land of Tantra-mantra. However, over time, the previous strong position of tantra changed. Due to the advancement of science, the change of era and several other factors, Mantra literature is gradually disappearing.

Mantra is uttered in secrecy and it is considered to be its specialty. However, in recent times, in some cases, this feature has not been maintained in social media. For example, channels related to tantra are now available on YouTube. This is available now in Hindi, Bengali and other languages as

well as in Assamese Channels. This channel is called Durlabh Mantra available in Assamese language and offers ways to solve various problems with Tantra-mantra. The content of the mantra videos available on this channel is as follows —

Ways to break up a marriage
Let's learn how to classify by hair
and subdue by nails
Mantra for glowing skin and so on.

Most of the mantras broadcast on the channel are vashikaran mantras. In other words, this channel offers the precepts of how to subjugate others through mantras. The video even explains the method of applying the mantra verbally and draws pictures if necessary. It is worth noting that Tantra-mantras are believed to be guru-oriented and secret. **Thus, the teaching of nudity on social media such as YouTube has undermined the secrecy of the mantra to some extent.** Furthermore, it is believed that mantras cannot be used by anyone at will. The YouTube videos have proved that idea wrong. Because, if it is available on a public forum, everyone can apply the mantras as soon as they wish. However, there is also room to judge whether the characteristics of the mantra have changed under the influence of the media. If the mantras have been made publicly available to everyone in the interest, that too will be considered as a changed position taken by the mantras in changing times. Once considered magical spells, magicians are now seen performing acts such as making people into goats or sheep and getting pain in their bodies for entertainment purposes. In other words, magicians show the audience the impossible

things they can do with mantras as subtle techniques of their hands. Magic has now become an entertaining art and there is a good chance that a favorable environment will be created for the adoption of magic as a profession in the future. This can also be considered as a possible transitional situation.

2.02 The status of mantra literature in terms of objective study

In recent times, mantra literature has been studied as a subject of the poet Vishnu. Among them are Tantra-mantrar. There have been some studies and discussions on the mantra literature of the central Mayang region in the past. Research studies have also been conducted on the practical context of mantras in the region. In addition, *Mayang Myth and Reality* is directed by Utpal Barpujari. An audio-visual documentary has also been produced. It presents the practice, practice, history and current status of mantras in the Maya region. The novels are based on the theme and background of tantra mantras in the Mayang region. These include '*Mayangor Uki*' by Aarti Das and '*Maya*' by Jayanta Madhav Bora. National and international seminars and webinars are held from time to time on the preservation of mantras in the Mayang Anchalik College. In February 2022, Mayang Anchalikl College organized such an important seminar in collaboration with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Asian Institute, Kolkata. About forty papers were presented on the use of tantra and herbs in the mythical Mayang. There are also several mantra practitioners who present the application of Tantra-mantra. In July of the same year, an international *balloon* was held

at Mayang Regional College. Its theme was - Exploring the Mayang Mystics The Tantrik Knowledge Tradition in Practice. Associate Professor Munindranath Tagore of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Dr. Sean Dowdy of the University of Chicago and others participated as resource persons. In 2014, Meenakshi Tamuli completed her PhD research from the Department of Assamese, University of Guwahati on 'Folk Literature of the Mayang : A Special Study of Mantra Literature' In his research works, he discusses 'A Brief Introduction to Mantra Literature' and 'The Practical Aspects of Mantras Prevalent in *Mayanda*'. There are many books on the practice and practice of tantra in the Mayang by Utpal Nath, Lokendra Hazarika, Kamal Chandra Nath and others.

2.03 Preservation of Assamese Mantra Literature

With the decline in the practice of tantra, many mantras are on the verge of disappearing forever. It is time to preserve and eat these properly without losing them. It is a matter of concern how these can be recovered and preserved and published overcoming the obstacles of conservatism of mantras. Such published mantra books are not readily available at present as very few books are published in print. Therefore, it is time to take appropriate steps to properly preserve the Assamese mantra literature. However, a few conscious individuals have collected resources written in Assamese script on ink or paper through their own efforts. Some significant steps have also been taken formally. These include the Mantra Rural Museum located in the

Mayang area of Morigaon. It has about half a hundred mantra books preserved in modern methods. There are also a number of mantra books in the Mahendra Bora Library of the Assamese Department of Dibrugarh University. Some of these are incomplete and some are found in complete form. Some of the mantra books found in this library are Kalika Mantra (incomplete), Dhyana Mantra (collector- Suren Mohanta), Uluka Mantra (Pramthesh Goswami), Aho Mantra (Pramthesh Goswami), Bilahi Mantra (Pramthesh Goswami), Shankh Bejali Mantra (Sun). Mahant) etc. Similarly, the Central Library and the Library of the Assamese Department of the University of Guwahati have many old mantra books in their collections. Among the unpublished mantra books collected in the library of the University of Guwahati are the Bisha Jara Mantra, Sudarshan Chakra Mantra, Chamundi Mantra and Kshetra Bandhan Mantra. There are also a large number of unpublished mantra books in the museums of the Kamrup Research Society and the Department of History and Archeology in Guwahati. Some of these mantra books are the Kobal Mantra, the Chakshu Mantra, the Pakshiraj Mantra, the Dhanbhola Mantra, the Birkheda Mantra, etc. If these books can be sufficiently translated into modern Assamese and published, then the practice of mantra literature could be preserved.

Nowadays, you can occasionally see a few published mantra books in bookstores. In addition, you can sometimes see a few mantra books in temporary small street shops. A couple of mantra books that have been published are still in the hands of mantra practitioners. If the mantras that have

not yet been published can be recovered and put into writing, the mantras will surely attain a properly preserved level. Two of them are readily available in every household nowadays

The published mantra books are called — 'Brihat Vaidyasagar and Bar Bejali. These two mantra books contain many mantras that are used by chanting some words. In recent times, it is time to take appropriate steps for the practice and preservation of mantra literature. Mantras need to be preserved for the present as well as the future without being lost as a resource of the past. There is no doubt that many of the characteristics of mantras, especially the practical aspects of mantra literature, will come to light.

Conclusion:

A brief discussion of “The Past and Present of Assamese Mantra Literature” is presented. After the discussion, several aspects of opinion literature can be concluded. These conclusions are presented below.

Decisions:

a. In recent times, the application of mantras has become limited. However, some people still resort to mantras as a primary treatment for alcoholism.

d. Privacy and conservatism are the main features of the mantra, although recently it is social like in YouTube. It is important to note that mantra learning is available in the medium. In addition, magicians today perform impossible feats that were once performed with mantras for entertainment with the help of manual crafts.

This can be considered as a changing state of mantra literature.

c. There is an important aspect of objective discussion and understanding of mantra literature in recent times. In addition to seminars, documentaries on mantra literature, scientific research has also been conducted.

d. Although the Assamese mantra literature is collected in some places, many mantras are still in oral form. In addition, many written mantras remain unpublished. It is time to take appropriate steps to preserve these.

Although the relevance of mantras from a practical and practical point of view has declined in changing times, they will always retain their literary and historical importance and relevance.

Conclusion:

"The Current Status of Assamese Mantra Literature"

It is natural that the practice of mantras is declining from a practical point of view, but it is necessary to be careful not to lose the literary text of mantras."

In the present age of science and technology, the use of mantras has naturally decreased compared to the past. Most of the practitioners who are practicing tantra-mantras are still using the mantras they have inherited. This is because many of those who have received this knowledge from generation to generation are reluctant to touch the resources left by their ancestors and therefore many of these valuable resources are known to have been drowned in the rivers. The current use of magic is unknown due to secrecy and secrecy. This is

because all the data providers know about the use of evil spells and their current status. There are many different types of tantra in the Mayang area of Morigaon, which was once famous for its tantra-mantra. There are also magical spells such as cane shaking and lamp shaking that are disappearing. In short, in this era of expansion of science and technology, mantra literature has not maintained its previous position. Nowadays, the prevalence of tantra is declining in rural areas as free treatment is provided to patients in government primary hospitals in rural areas. At a time when medical science was not advanced, there was no way for the public to know the symptoms and causes of many diseases. Therefore, 'folk-healers were their last refuge. However, it covers the history of mantras and their current status to a limited extent. Certainly there is room for extensive study of this subject.

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