Ankiya Nat and Bhaona— An alternative media approach and its convergence with Ojapali

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ABSTRACT

Sankaradeva, the maestro behind Cultural Revolution in the 14th century and Neo Vaishnavite faith Propagation in Assam in accordance to the upliftment of spirituality and cultured livings. The cultural Communication Part of Sankaradeva is a treasure of resourceful elements and the milepost of Assamese Cultural Revolution which is well recognized with his contribution through Song, drama, dances and other literary items. The Plays written by Sankaradeva is known as Ankiya Nat and the entire drama genre is known as Bhaona. Apart from different cultural and literary contribution of Sankaradeva, the drama part is taken here to a research approach to finding out its cultural values and its elements of Communication in convergence to the Ojapali folk of Assam, India. Sankaradeva is formally recognized as the beginner of Assamese play writer and performer in the full-fledged dramatic form. But before him, a different folk performance like Ojapali, Puppetry, Dhulia, Pachati, kushan Gaan was practiced in many regions of the present day Assam. These folk forms are the important medium of storytelling during that time. Many critiques mentioned these folk forms as Quasi-dramatic performing arts. From this age of quasi-dramatic performing arts, Sankaradeva turned up to a fully fledged drama genre with extra ordinary communication method which was used for promotion of cultural and religious messages. Such an approach is an alternative media approach in the present time because it works beyond the modern mass media. The Ankiya Plays and the Bhaona grow up with special stylics of presentation and storytelling however it has a good reflection of the Ojapali in terms of the storytelling method. Such resemblance is studied herewith to get a convergence model of the age-old drama genre Bhaona and the Ojapali.

Keywords— Ojapali, Ankiya play, Quasi dramatic, Puppetry, Dhulia, Bhaona

1. INTRODUCTION

Tradition implies a bridge and breeze of evolutionary processes. Lots of folk elements constitute this evolutionary process in where spontaneously the system is coiled up with some much enshrined embody like nature, god and godliness, beliefs, myth, gesture, posture, musical sense etc which represent the socio-cultural environment of a mass respectively or irrespective of the geographical positioning. Some traditions are age-old but some are not. The drama tradition of Assam is not so old but it was enriched with lots of socio-cultural elements in the earlier days. These earlier days are brought forth with the folk drama tradition. These folk dramas are Ojapali, Puppetry, Pochoti, Kushan Gaan, dhulia etc. The tradition of puppetry is so old in the context of Assam and India too, it is far older than the Ojapali folk. This quasi-dramatic performing art is strongly bonded with the folklore of Assam. But Sankaradeva, the 14th-century maestro from Assam brought to light a massive and composite form of drama genre that is Bhaona with the initiation of his very own Ankiya play (Ankiya Nat). This commoner’s friendly Vaishnavite art form encompasses with the following:

- Sanskrit literary derivatives.
- The local folk culture of Assam
- Commonality and convergence through the language of Brajwali towards greater Indian absorption
- Innovators with the promotion of the knowledge on contemporary art forms, musical forms, and Pan Indian drama tradition.

2. ANKIYA PLAYS, BHAONA, AND THE OJAPALI

The drama form of Sankaradeva which is recognized as Bhaona and the play he wrote are Ankiya Play (Ankiya Nat) is a broad spectrum area of research regarding its Communication traits, historical and comparatives study etc. Out of the above-mentioned orientation, it is hereby taken the only means of its convergence from Ojapali folks of Assam, India. It is due to the resemblance and literature proximity with the art form of Bhaona genre as well as the play by Sankaradeva i.e Ankiya Nat.

Sankaradeva gets a lot of mesmerizing elements of communication through Ojapali. So in this regard, the statement made by Birinchi Kumar Baruah in his book ‘History of Assamese literature’ is worth mentioning. He stated that the Pre-Vaishnavite
Ojapali dance recital might have given to Sankaradeva the basic idea for the production of Ankiya plays. It may, therefore, be reasonably presumed that the recital of Kavyas, Ojapali choral singing and spectacular shows of other parts of India, might have jointly contributed to the rise of the fully developed drama in Assamese.

In parallel to the resemblance to local folk form, Sankaradeva tries to yield a unique form of drama with the knowledge management of classical drama and contemporary dramatic component. The Ankiya plays written by Sankaradeva are Patni Prasad, Kali Daman, Keli Gopal, Parijat Haran, Rukmini Haran, Ram Bijay.

Before the writing of the above mentioned six dramas, the most innovative visual art; Chihhnayatra drama was staged by Sankaradeva, but it is not included with the six plays ascribed to him. Because it is not a fully fledged drama, moreover it is a visual art and portrayal based communication. Some sources like Charit Pathi imply the evidence of two more other drama namely Janma and Kangsha Badh written earlier to the Patni Prasad as well.

This research paper is intertwined with those circumstances of the following objectives like to have a view on the contemporary trend of folk dance and drama influential to Sankaradeva Works. Secondly, the convergence to the Ojapali folk culture of Assam is taken to see the derivatives on the drama of Sankaradeva.

This paper is prepared with the explanatory method. It is observed and discussed with a feed of many previous kinds of literature on the specified area. Study on the resemblance and converging trend of Ankiya drama with Ojapali is observed primarily and also with a Secondary source of information. In the primary proceeding, we applied visual analysis and feedback study and discussion with many audiences and expert of the field of Vaishnavite literature and culture.

3. CONVERGENCE BETWEEN ANKIYA PLAYS CUM BHAONA AND THE OJAPALI

In literature, finality varies with new exploration when time proceeds. So in many cases, some previous findings might be changeable. So dimension is changing day by day. Now we turned to the main objective point of view. We know that Ojapali is a folk form born up and spreading up with entire Indian trend of storytelling with music, dance based on Puranas, Myths and other Folk believes. Ojapali folk carries resemblance with the performing art forms of entire India like Yatra, Pachaali gaan of West Bengal, Ram Leela and Rass Leela of North India, Kushan Gaan of North Bengal etc. But these folk forms are not time specific so it is harder to clarify the influence map. But we can derive so many resemblances and convergence point of view in different folk form.

In case of Ankiya play (Nat), the dramaturgy is basically converged with local folks along with the literary convergence of Sanskrit drama as well as the principle of Natyashatra by Bharata. The Ankiya Nat, as well as the Bhona tradition, cannot be called as folk media also. Folk items may be there but it is not basically a folk culture because of its writer’s identity. It is mentioned worthy that some people and Vaishnavite writers wrote much drama for the same purpose as Bhaona after Sankaradeva. Many writers willed to provide their identity or profile and many of them have not provided. So many dramas for Bhaona performance written after Sankaradeva has not been writers’ specific. But this Bhaona forms cannot be taken under folk drama because the entire Bhaona genre proceeds with the creation of Sankaradeva. After this, many Satra and Vaishnavite institution takes part to develop and disseminate it after the death of Sankaradeva. So in many cases, some performance, musical and gesture-based variation can be found with respect to many Satras, Namghar- Vaishnavite institution and on the basis of locality. But the whole tradition of Bhaona is started with the creation of Ankiya plays. This Ankiya plays of Sankaradeva carries many inputs from Sanskrit drama; he used Brajwali language which is said to be a derived language as well as artificial language. Although the creation of Sankaradeva is unique, definitely it synthesizes many folk forms, local flavor, the tune of the land to catch up the people to have a great mass communication. In the mass communication point of view, the use of Brajwali language is to catch up Indian arena so that his communication can flow in Assam and other adjacent states and region. Such type of study on the communication traits and the entire tools of communication in Ankiya drama and Bhaona are a broad spectrum area of research. But in this specific study, it is seen that the Ojapali folk is the most proximate one to Ankiya plays and the Bhaona culture in the convergence point of view. Many researchers explore many other proximate cases. But objectifying this paper’s theme we basically go to the Ojapali section. Simply the background of Ojapali is of two types i.e. Epic based and the other is myth and folk-based which is Non-Epic. Epic based Ojapali is sub divided into Vyas Oja Pali, Rainmon, Bhaira, Durgabori, Satriya, Panchali, Daulori. The other Non-Epic Ojapali is sub divided into Sukkonnani, Bishahari gaan, Mare gaan, Padma Puran gaan, Takuria, Geetalu geet, Garu folk based Ojapali. The epic based Ojapali was formulated for the Vaishnavite worship and the other one is formulated in varied cases. As for example, Bishahari is performed in the worship of Goddess Manasa, Takuria Ojapali is performed during the worship of Takuria Devi etc. Epic and Non Epic Ojapali varies with its costumes, performance, Music, Dance, Musical Instruments. Eminent researcher Mon Mohan Ghosh stated that the performance of Ojapali proceeds with storytelling, recitation. It takes place basically in religious programmes.

One lector or the Pathak reads the story and the Dharak interpret the same. In the same way, we see in the Ankiya play the Sutradhaar provides a previous scenario of the upcoming story and sequence. He provides the basic theme of drama. So in this regard, the story telling process is proximate to the Ojapali. A troupe of Ojapali has a musician in which we see a convergence ray to our Bhaona culture. Gayan Bayan part of Ankiya plays as well as Bhaona has a close proximity to the Oja and Pali. The troupe of Ojapali in which assisting Lector and assisting pali is also there and in the same way the Bhaona performance, the Gayan Bayan i.e the Musician is a troupe to present music and directors and assisting person regarding its performance in the Ankiya drama.

In the next, we see converging trends between Ankiya play and Ojapali regarding its aims and objectives. As the Ojapali was running before the creation of Ankiya play and performance, it was basically related to religious functions. The epic based Ojapali deals with the stories Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas. In the same way, the themes of the Ankiya Plays were taken from Bhagawat Purana and Ramayana.
Sankaradeva roamed a lot in Assam as well as the Indian Territory. So he experienced a lot with his traveling. The Literature and performing art is probably synthesized with such of his interaction and visits to different territory. He probably found out so many ways of storytelling and communication procedures for which the exclusive form of drama and its performing art is brought to light. It is mentioned worthy that the Ojapali folk (Now it is also discussed as a classical form) trend is basically performed in the entire area of Greater Kamrup. It is even been strongly exist in the Darrang, Mangaldoi, Nalbari, Goalpara area. Many Satras of Assam used this communication form for their storytelling purpose and hence it is a cultural pride of Assam, after which we get the other form of dramatic approach as well as alternative media i.e. Ankiya play. In the communication point of view, this alternative media carries converging trends also to the modern mass media.

4. CONCLUSION
The drama form created and developed by Sankaradeva is quite innovative, unique and effective. It carries the following extraordinary striking points to communicate effectively i.e. 1) Prelims 2) Costume 3) Music 4) War scene 5) Overall distinctive style of enactment (Including stage system, presentational technique, another point from prelims to story) 6) Makeup 7) Dramatic Language (Dialogues, literature, - Brajawali, Assamese) 8) Story, characters and mask.

Among such diverse study area of the Ankiya Play and the Bhaona Culture, here we studied the Ankiya Play cum Bhaona and the Ojapali tradition and found a convergent relationship on the basis of the content analysis done.

6. REFERENCES