

The Satriya Dance : It's origin, development and types

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Abstract:

The Indian dance tradition dates back to the vedic period. Satriya dance is also a part of classical dances in India. Sankardeva and Madhabdeva are the originators of this dance. This dance was created for the propagation of neo-vaishnavism. Satriya dance is one of the most popular classical dances in India. Satriya dance is practiced daily in the Satra. This spiritual dance is one of the most important aspects of the body. Satriya dance is a living tradition that has been prevalent in Satra since the 15th Century. Here will discuss the evolutionary types of Satriya dance and also discuss about the Mati-Akhora and Satriya parts.

Keynotes : Satra, Satriya, Dance, Style, Mati-Akhora, Units.

Objectives:

The paper highlights the Satriya dance form of Assam and aims to look into the role of Assamese culture in this process. How did Satriya dance originate and develop? What are the elements in Satriya dance? It is important to show the importance of this dance from which has been going since the 15th century. The main purpose of the paper is to study the different elements of Satriya dance. The Satriya dance style will be specially studied by this paper. Mainly will be highlight in 'Mati-Akhora and four parts of Satriya dance.

Scope of the study:

Satriya dance is a famous dance form of India. It originates from theatrical performances. The different types of dance are attractive and have many qualities. Discussing this will reveal the features and qualities of the dance style. This is the main scope of this paper.

Methodology:

The proposed paper involves a critical use of both primary and secondary source. Some techniques such as oral interview and questionnaires are used for this study. Secondary sources are reflected more books, journal, souvenir, research paper, thesis etc.

Introduction:

The Neo-vaishnavite movement which initiated by Srimanta Sankardeva in the 15th century. It was during this time that he initiated the Satra Institution in Assam. Satra is the main centre of Neo-vaishnava religion. The vaidic Puranas refer to the Satra, although it was only the discussion level programme. But it was Sankardeva who established the first institution Satra in Assam. He was born in Bardowa and held his first Satra there. The alert was first known as Than, after this was followed by a naming 'Satra'.

Satra always celebrated festivals like naam-prasongo, kirton etc. Sometime Satras are playing drama, which is called Ankiya naat or bhauna. Actually Bhauna is the mother of Satriya dance. Mainly Satriya dance playing beginning from the bhaunas. The Ankiya Naat or Bhauna,

the traditional vaishnava theatre Chihnayatra was the first drama of Sankardeva. Bhauna is a combination of satriya, natya and sangeet. Maximum dance form of satriya derived from Ankiya Naat of Sankardeva. Other side Madhabdeva was the chief displease of Sankardeva. Madhamdeva also introduced Jhumura. Which is also short plays. Madhabdeva used some special dance at Jhumura. From these Jhumuras some dance part also derived. So first introducer of Satriya dance is Sankardeva along with Madhabdeva. In 2000 Satriya dance recognized as a classical dance form of India Sangeet Natak Academy, Govt. of India.

Satra and Satriya Dance:

The word of Satra derived from Sanskrit word 'Sattrā'. In vaidic period the term of 'Sattrā' was used in the sense of sacrifice. After that the term of 'Satra' is used first Bhagavata Purana in the sense of discussion or seminar and some sacrifice. According to Bhagavata Purana, Satra is called where noble and religious people gather to discuss about the topic of some Hindus religious matter. But in the 15th century in Assam Sankardeva was the founder of Satra's. Then Satra is not only a seminar or discuss. It is the completely structure of institute of prayer hall with some systematic elements. At the beginning time, Satra has not a specific form like present style. Sankardeva built devagriha. According to the Carit puthi, after the death of Sankardeva, the new religion made divisions, which called four Sanghati. There are four Sanghati satras is namely –

- i) Brahma Sanghati
- ii) Purusa Sanghati
- iii) Nika Sanghati
- iv) Kaal Sanghati

The vaishnavite satras was mainly the place of confluence of diverse communities in Assam. It was the institute of common people also. Mainly satra was the centre of the vaisnava saint. Namghar, Monikut or Bhajghar, Karapat or Batcara, Boha or Hati, are the main part of the satra institution.

Satriya dance is becoming from the Satra Institution which is created by the Sankardeva. It is one among the eight principle classical India dances like Bharatnatyam from Tamilnadu, Kathak from Uttar Pradesh, Kathakali from Kerala, Kuchipudi from Andhra Pradesh, Odissi from Odisha, Manipuri from Manipur, Mahinityam from Kerala. Satriya dance classification that traces its roots to ancient drama and music text of India, particularly the Natya Satra and also based on the Abhinaya Darpan, Sangeet Ratnakara, Srihastamuktavali, Kalika Purana, Yoga Satra etc. Besides these sastric elements Sankardeva explored and added lots of indigenous traditional elements in Satriya. It has been observed that some sastric elements have direct visibility or presence in Satriya, whereas some have similarity with the structural pattern of the sastric elements of various satras.”¹

Since 15th century the satriya dance have been continuously at satras. This dance is basically devotional. The core of satriya dance has usually been mythological stories. This was an artistic way of presenting mythological teachings to the people in an accessible, immediate and enjoyable manner. Traditionally satriya dance was performed only by male monks in

monasteries as a part of their daily rituals or to mark special festivals. But today, in addition to this practice, satriya dance is also performed on stage by men and women who are not members of the satras.²

Satriya dance is mainly accompanied by Ankiya Naat. Where is most part of Song, Borgeet is the another important part which is represent the Ragas of Satriya music. Khol, Taals, Mridanga, Doba is the main instruments for satriya dance. But it is purely traditional.

Satriya Dance:

Satriya dance is mainly derived from 'Ankia Naat' and Jhumura. These were written by Sankardeva and Madhabdeva. The first lesson of satriya dance is Mati Akhora. Mati Akhora is grammar of the satriya dance. This is followed by the main lesson of satriya dance. Satriya dance repertoire includes three types 'Nritta', 'Nritya' and 'Natya'. Nritta means pure dance, Nritya means expressive dance style and Natya means dramatic play.

- i) **Mati-Akhora** : Mati-Akhora means physical exercise done on the ground. 'Mati' means ground, 'Akhora' means practice. The Mati-Akhora are the basic exercise patterns of satriya dance. With the use of these exercise patterns various dance poses are created and combining all those poses in different patterns, different dance numbers have been composed. ...It has been observed that there is no unanimity about to numbers of the Mati-Akhoras, in other words, the different satras advocate different numbers of Mati-Akhoras. Kamalabari group of Satras have been following and practicing 64 numbers of Mati-Akhoras. On the other hand, satras like Auniati, Bordowa (Narowa and Salaguri), Benganati etc. also follow some Mati-Akhoras.

The 'Mati-Akhora's are two categorized – first is pure exercises and second is basic dance form only. Pure exercises are based on some acrobatic poses and basic dances are the important part of satriya dance. Mati-Akhora basically categorized eight of the units. These are like – Ora, Chota, Jalak, Jap, Muruka, Khar, Pak and Lon. These units are categorized on the basis of different characters and application patterns. Total 64 Mati-Akhora are applied for primary stage of satriya dance. These names of the Mati-Akhora are – 1. Khasaka, 2. Ora, 3. Orat baha-utha, 4. Harbhanga, 5. Pani-sisha, 6. Sitika ora, 7. Saman ora, 8. Utha chota, 9. Baha chota, 10. Ora chota, 11. Samukhaloi chata, 12. Kati chota, 13. Etiya chota, 14. Gerowa sowa, 15. Orat jap, 16. Bagh jap, 17. Beng jap, 18. Samukhaloi jap, 19. Kachobandha, 20. Hatpakowa, 21. Moropa, 22. Muruka, 23. Baha muruka, 24. Thiyo muruka, 25. Hat soluwa, 26. Citika, 27. Ketela, 28. Jalak, 29. Sigha jalak, 30. Tewai, 31. Kakilakhosa, 32. Khahaki, 33. Jatoni, 34. Athuwa, 35. Kati khar, 36. Cit khar, 37. Luti khar, 38. Oluta khar, 39. Chatrawali, 40. Morai pani khowa, 41. Kachai pani khowa, 42. Udha lon, 43. Thiyo lon, 44. Athu lon, 45. Tamal muchara, 46. Buku chuwa, 47. Purush pak, 48. Prakriti pak, 49. Akal pak, 50. Uro pak, 51. Pithi pak, 52. Thita pak, 53. Cereki pak, 54. Shari pak, 55. Geri pak, 56. Thengmela tukura pak, 57. Udha cereki pak, 58. Teltupi pak, 59. Zor kamitona, 60. Kamitona, 61. Tukura pak, 62. Kati pak, 63. Uddha cereki pak, 64. Thengmela tukura pak.

Other hand it has also some difference importance in the satriya field. Mati-Akhora not only dance it is also a physical exercise for the Bhakats. The two difference categorized Mati-Akhora leads two difference side. Physical exercise base and dance base.

A. Dance base Mati-Akhora	Total numbers of style
1 Ora – Purush ora, Prakriti ora, Lahi ora, Full ora	4
2 Chota – Ora chota, Boha chota, Utha chota, Kati chota, Soman chota	5
3 Paak – Purush paak, Prakriti paak, Shari paak, Akol paak, Tukura paak, Thita paak, Geri paak, Ur paak, Ur paak tukura, Kati paak, Utha chereki paak, Utha paak, Etia bhori paak, Chereki paak, Thengmela tukura paak, Pithi paak	16
4 Chitika – Dutiya chitika, Etia chitika, Kati chitika	3
5 Ketela – Chirol ketela, Etia ketela	2
6 Jolok – Etia jolok, Tintiya jolok, Shingha jolok	3
7 Jaap – Orat jaap, Sanmukholoi jaap, Bagh jaap, Beng jaap	4
8 Chalana – Hat-vori chalana, Hayre chalana-1, Kunohit chalona-2	3
9 Muruka – Sanmukholoi muruka, Kaati kuruka, Utha muruka, Uttullan muruka	4
10 Moropa – Sanmukholoi moropa, Kaxoloi moropa, Tol moropa	3
11 Tewai – Sanmukholoi tewai, Tol tewai	2
12 Haat Pokuwa –	1
13 Haat Soluwa – Anchit haat soluwa, Kunchit haat soluwa	2
14 Jatoli	1
15 Khottoki	1
16 Athuwa – Eksthiti athuwa, Chalan athuwa	2
17 Orat Boha Utha	1
18 Pani Sicha – Charimatra pani sicha, Tinimatra pani sicha	2
19 Satrawali	1
20 Padachalana – Charimatra padachalana, Athmatra padachalana	2
21 Gaurashan	1
22 Singhashan	1

B. Exercise base Mati-Akhora		Total numbers of style
1	Khosoka – Dandawat kori khosoka, Kachbandh kori khosoka	2
2	Kachbandh	1
3	Kachoi pani khuwa	1
4	Lon – Athulon, Thiolon, Katilon, Uthalon	4
5	Kamitona – Atia kamitona, Jor kamitona	2
6	Tomal muchora	1
7	Teltupi	1
8	Khor – Chitkhor, Katikhor, Lutikhor	3
9	Morai pani khuwa	1
10	Bukuchowa	1
11	Pacholatota	1
12	Harbhanga	1

The practice of these Mati-Akhora promotes physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual development in addition to dance. Mati-Akhora is the first part of the satriya dance.

ii) **Main parts of the Satriya dance** : The main part of the satriya dance is the derived from drama. Ankiya bhaona is the mother of satriya dance. So the satriya dance is generally divided into four parts.

A. Drama Centric Dance Unit

B. Independent Dance Unit

C. Satra Centric Dance Unit

D. Probable Dance Unit

A. **Drama Centric Dance Unit** : This unit directly derived from ‘Ankiya Bhaona’. Every three classical element like Nittyta, Nritya and Natya are published in this part. This drama centric dance are –

1. Gayan-Bayan
2. Sutradhari Naach
3. Gosai Probeshar Naach
4. Gopi Probeshar Naach
5. Others characters probeshar Naach
6. Yudhya (Fighting) Naach
7. Raamdani, Geet, Mela Naach
8. Bahar Naach

9. Jhumura Naach
10. Rashar Naach etc.

B. Independent Dance Unit : Along with Sankardeva, Madhabdeva also added some dances. Most of his plays are dance drama. Apart from drama dances, Madhabdeva also created some independent dances, which are most popular in the satriya dance. These are –

1. Chali naach
2. Nadubhangi naach
3. Borprobeshor naach etc.

C. Satra Centric Dance Unit : After the death of Madhabdeva, Badalapadma Ata collected and practiced the all dance in Kamalabari Satra. Traditional this dance have been practicing in various satra since period. So this unit is very important for satriya dance. These are like –

1. Rojaghoriya Chali Naach
2. Maanchok Naach
3. Lobonu Churi Naach
4. Kalir Shiror Naach
5. Kangshor Rongosalar Naach
6. Raamor Dhanu Vongor Naach
7. Bhortaal Naach
8. Apchara Naach
9. Dasawatar Naach
10. Bhongir Naach etc.

D. Satriya Probable Dance Unit : Actually this dance unit is not recognized by Satriya Kendra or Sangeet Natak Academy, but here also probability to recognized this dance element. This probable dances are also carry classical symbol. Although very rare, these dances are very popular in the satras. These are like –

1. Ghoshar Naach
2. Borgeetor Naach
3. Naator Geetor Naach
4. Dhemalir Naach
5. Ojhapalir Naach
6. Ekaharjyar Naach etc.⁴

Satriya dance is used as a device for offering devotion to God. Satra have developed a school of classical dance in Assam, is the early moment this dance was performed only by

bhokots in monasteries as a part of their daily rituals or mark special festivals but now Satriya dance is also performed on stage by men and women in variety field of members. In this moment Satriya dance is opened for all religion cast and others communities people. The need of the hour for the Satriya dance world comprising teachers, practitioners, scholars and connoisseurs, is to explore the dynamics of the tradition in proper academic perspective, to evolve well-framed curriculum adhering to the nuances of the tradition and find out ways and means to found a centrally administered institution which will create a right atmosphere for a uniform discipline and guidance to all dance-learners of the tradition. The sallabi and curriculum should be prepared so as to cater to the needs of those who remain at the fringe of the tradition, such as musical accompaniment, costume designing, instrument and mask making so that the vocational aspects associated with the tradition receive a sense of impetus.⁵

Conclusion:

In the discussion of Satriya dance above, it has been seen that this dance has made a significant contribution, physical, mental, spiritual, intellectual in all fields of human origin. Although Satriya dance has received national recognition, many of the elements I have mentioned above have not been studied yet. The scope of Satriya dance will be further expanded by studying the many elements that are traditionally perform in the satras. Only the types of Mati-Akhora and types of four style of the Satriya dances are discussed above. Its applications are not discussed. The discussion focuses on the origins and development of Satriya dance and its types. Satras are the main centre of Satriya dance. Therefore, every festivals of the satra is the lifeblood of Assamese society and culture. In the future, if the socio-economic aspect of the satra is protected, the satriya dance will also become more lively.

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