

“ANKIYA –NAAT’ - A Traditional Drama of Assamese Literature”

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Abstract

Ankiya naat main subject is to worship lord Krishna. The plays usually combine live instruments and singers ,dance and elaborate costumes in production. A particular presentation of an Ankiya naat is called a Bhaona .Twelve such plays,scripted by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva between them are found on record. Mohapuris sankardeva laid the foundation of assamese society by perfectly bringing the local artifacts and culture in to the spiritual path of vaishnavsim .

Key word: *ankiya naat, bhaona, krisna, brajavali, sankadeva’s, madhavdeva’s etc.*

Introduction :

‘ANKIYA -NAAT ’ means a one -act drama.Ankiya naat plays were written in an artificial assamese Maithili mixed language called Brajavali . Ankiya naat main subject is to worship lord Krishna. The plays usually combine live instruments and singers ,dance and elaborate costumes in production.The invention of the ankiya naat is usually attributed to the medieval saint and social reformer Srimanta Sankardeva. Ankiya naat were intended to be viewed by common folk in medieval assam,majority of whom were expected to be illiterate . Thus,an explanation was included at every succeeding stage of the drama.

Objective of study : The research paper aims to analyze the state of Ankiya Naat .In this present paper we try to draw the characteristic of the sub genres of Sankardava ankiya naat with the example.

Methodology : This research paper is based on analytical method. To prepare this research paper we take help from the topic related books and internet.

Definition of Ankiya Naat : A particular presentation of an Ankiya naat is called a Bhaona .Twelve such plays,scripted by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva between them are found on record.According to some *sorit puthis*(Biography) Sankardeva started as a play –wright by planning and presenting the ‘ chihna yatra’ and proceeded to compose a few more subsequently.The six plays composed by him are ‘*potni-prasad,keli-gopal,Rukmini – haron,Parejaat horon, Kaliyo domon and the raan bijoy*. The plays of Madhavdeva are- “*Arujan Bhanjon*”

Generally, ankiya naat is referred to the writer document and bhaona is performance of the play.so there is no difference between these two terms. Both the words are interchangeable. The

bhaona is often performed in the namghar in a satra or village. The actual performance of a bhaona is preceded by a series of rituals.

Characteristics of ankiya naat:

The ankiya naat are the true index of Mahapurush Sankardeva's creative genius. These plays Characteristics are as stated-

- i) Use of brajavali language
- ii) Use of versified prose
- iii) The dominant role of the sutradhara (interlocutor)
- iv) Versified prayers
- v) Dance with song

i) Use of brajavali language:

Brajavali language was created by Shankardeva. He also introduced prose in Indian theatrical art. While this language in Assamese is called Brajavali, there is a similar language in Bengali known as Brajabali. But they are not the same. It is spoken language prevalent in Mithila region during 14th & 15th century AD. The sentences quoted in verbatim below give an idea of the type of amalgamation that Maithili has had with the Assamese Brajavali language-

'Hemo kata tapa kariya devika bare briddha bayase krishnaka putra pawalo. Sehi prana putra brikshya pariya kshyanika mari yaya, gosainra barase erawalla. Toho kinimite manusa bheli, rakhasito adhika bheli, apono putraka khaite sawala. Krishnaka nakhai hamako khawa'

("After a lot of penance, and with the blessings from the god, I have got Krishna as my son at this advanced age. That son, dearer than my life, was going to die in a moment due to falling of the tree. He escaped from death only because of divine blessing. Why have you become a woman? you are worse than a titan, you want to eat your own son! eat my flesh in place of Krishna ..")

ii) Use of versified prose:

The second distinct peculiarity of ankiya naat is its versified prose. Sankardeva's plays is the first instance of such type of prose found in Assamese literature. The pure form of Assamese prose in proper shape is found only in the writings of Banikanta Nath Bhagawat Bhattacharya which became the sole medium of producing perfect prose writings. The excerpts quoted examples are below-

*'Srikrishna Rukminika bhakati basya huya bihar madana khelo lila-keli kautuka kariya
rajkumarika parama monurotha purala'*

(Being pleased with rukmini's lord krishna played various forms of love sports with the princess and fully satisfied her desire .)

iii) The dominant role of the sutradhara (interlocutor) :

The most important character of ankiya naat is sutradhara . He plays a dominant role in performance of the ankiya naat .Sankardeva introduced the sutradhara as per his own imaginative power.In addition ,depending on time and place of the story ,the sutradhara is used to ensure the un- interrupted progress of the play.Sutradhara explains to the audience the scenes of the play that will be enacted serially and without interruptions. In that process he recites the slokas in Sanskrit,sing in Brajvali.But he doesnot sing song pertaining to personal sorrows and pleasure of the characters.He gives a description of the scenes that cannot be shown on the stage,so that the audience could get clear idea of such event.He leads the entire group of artists in singing the muktimongal bhatima at the end of the play.Sutradhara quoted examples are bellow-

'aahe hamajika luko..ramayana raamkotha aaji kohobo.'

(Today I going to tell about Ramayana)

iv) Versified prayers :

Another specific characteristics is Versified prayers. In an ankiya naat one can find plenty of songs,dances and music.The staging of such a play becomes complete only in coordinated display of all these ingredients. Songs based on classical ragas are found from the beginning to the end. Body gestures of different limbs are applied by the characters to denote such things that cannot be shown on the stage.Needless to say that such songs and dances are always accompanied with instrumental music.Apart from the sutradhara the other characters also come to the stage in dancing styles only. Not only the prologue and the concluding part,but the entire course of the play also progresses through lyrical songs. The audience can easily understand the scenes even if the dialogues are given a miss.

The ankiya naat have found four kind of songs-

- i) Bhotimas (devotional)
- ii) Raags (modes) ,taals (measures)
- iii) Chapari (rhymes and metric prayers)
- iv) Songs presented during entry of the characters in to the stage,describing their physical shapes ,gestures,and movements .

The literary worth of these songs present the clear picture of the things and situations which these songs are used to depict.

v) Dance with song :

The ankiya naat intended to create an impact of devotional sentiment on the mind of the audience through dances, songs and acting which depict the deeds of the god in his various incarnations. There before, these plays give preference to devotional sentiment over actual dramatic flavor. By generating devotional sentiment (bhakti rasa) the principle aim of the ankiya naat rather than a dramatic suspense, the audience is taken to a spiritual environment. The action creation of conflicts between characters etc are of secondary importance. However, creation of certain characters is indispensable in order to present the divine deeds and make them understandable and entertaining to the audience.

Classifications of Play :

The plays composed by Mohapurus Sankardeva are known as *ankiya naat* but with the exception of *arjun bhanjon* all other plays of Madhavdeva are called *jhumuras*. The difference between ankiya naat and a jhumura can be distinguished from *arjun bhanjan* getting the status of a drama. In this play Madhavdeva has shown a complete story as in the plays of Sankardeva's composition. But other hand, in *chor dhora*, *pimpora gusua*, *bhumi letuwara* composed by Madhavdeva, a complete story is absent. Such plays based on part of a story, or a minor event, are called *jhumura's*.

Conclusion :

Mohapurus Sankardeva laid the foundation of Assamese society by perfectly bringing the local artifacts and culture into the spiritual path of Vaishnavism. The devotional and ritualistic aspects of the performance complete the life of the villagers of Assam without the need for arduous efforts. Ankiya naat were intended to be viewed by common folk in medieval Assam. The great new Vaishnavism movement in the north eastern part of India has contributed to India's classical heritage through the art of Ankiya naat.

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