

Ankia-Nat: A Traditional Theatre

(An Analytical Study on its Presentation, Acting and Musical Perspective)

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Abstract

The Theatre of India tracks back to the ancient Vedic period. In the Rigveda, there were some references to acting. Bharat Muni's Natyashastra was strong evidence of the powerful legacy of Performing arts. In Assam, some evidences of theatrical performances are found in the villages as the different folk performances like Ojapali, Kushan Gaan, etc. In the 16th century, a great pioneer of Assamese culture and literature, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva, was born, and he renovated and established the Assamese theatre properly. Sankaradeva, with the influence of various folk forms of Assam, i.e., Ojapali, Putala Nach, and Sanskrit theatre, created a new performing art form 'Ankia Nat'. He, with his keen observation of the local performing arts and Sanskrit theatre, created a highly stylized, vibrant dramatic form. In Ankia Nat, Sankaradeva merged dance, music, drama, poetry, stylized dress and makeup, a kind of Natyadharmi (theatrical) acting, and its total presentation style in a unique way. In Ankia Nat, the Natyashastric influence also occurred in acting or presentation style. This paper an attempt to underline the acting and musical perspective of Ankiya Nat with its analysis. Descriptive and Analytical methods are used to writer this paper.

Keywords: Ankia Naat, Sankaradeva, Natyashastra, Music, Natyadharmi

Introduction:

Performing Arts in Assam (had) have a long history. Many a folk drama forms are prevailed in this region from before 1st century B.C. The influence of Odramagadhi can be seen in many a folk form like Putola Naach, Kamrupi Dhulia, Ojhapali, Khulia Bhaona, etc. In the 2nd century A.D, Agnigarh, ruled by Banraja, was the central place of dance and music. It has been proven that in Agnigarh, princess Usha and her friends were dancing with vibrant musical together. In the Yoginitantra, there were found elements of dance, especially devadasi nritya. In the inscriptions of Hiuen Tsang, lots of elements have been found of dance-drama traditions in the 7th century A.D. in Bhaskarbarma's kingdom, which was called Pragjyotishpur or Kamrup. His praise about dance and music of this region also found in Doobi Copper inscription. Scholar, researcher Maheswar Neog of Assam stated as, "while the Chinese traveler came in

Pragjyotishpur, the king arranged a party of dance and music for the guest of honour. This party continued for one month every day."(Neog, 2011, P:03). Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva gives a new identity by establishing the Ankia Naat not only in Assam or Pragjyotishpur but the entire Odramagadhi region by its grandeur, unique performance style, and blending different art forms like dance, music, acting, spectacle, mask altogether in an aesthetic way. So, after a long history of music and dance and various folk forms prevalent in Assam, Mahapurusha Sankaradeva first made a tradition of theatre in this entire Kamrup region by incorporating various elements from Natyasastra, Sanskrit theatre, his experience in pilgrimage, mingling with various folk forms, and local languages of Assam and his abundant talent. Sankaradeva's unique traditional performing art form *Ankia Nat* is called the *Ankia* because the stories unfold in one act. Though Sankaradeva had not called the *nats* as *Ankia*, the later Charit Puthi writers had called it as Ankia Nat. Sankaradeva had written six *Ankia Nats*. Madhavdeva also wrote some Ankia Nats, though his plays are called Jhumura.

Analysis:

Chihna Yatra:

Chihna yatra was the first dramatical endeavour by Sankaradeva where he showed the *Sapta Boikuntha* through paintings or chitrapat. Apart from chitra in Chihna yatra, Sankaradeva mixed Gayan Bayan, dance movement, music, etc., with it and gave a unique taste to village folk. It was an innovative pantomime, but highly enchanting and inspiring for people. He made khol, taal, taught the folk with special attention, and himself performed as Lord Vishnu in various Boikunthas. He acted, narrated, played instruments in these types of performing art. No written script of Chihna yatra had been found. The lighting equipment was the bhota, aaria, etc. Mask was also used in Chihna yatra. He had to train people in acting, singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments. In short, he had to find people and train them: gayon bayan, train people to make khol, taal, etc. Sankaradeva himself acted as God Bishnu and he participated in the performance in multiple ways like dancer, Sutradhar, instrument player or Bayon, etc. (Sharmah, 1962, p-8). After the first performance, Sankaradeva had stopped such kind of performance entirely because the pats (painted scenes) did not last for long time and problems occurred due to lack of painting artists. But the success of Chihna yatra heralded a beginning of a great dramatist in the life of the saint. He then moved to Ankia Nat and written six Ankia Nats. The six plays are Patni Prasada, Kalia Damana, Keli Gopala, Rukmini Harana, Parijat Harana, and Ram Vijaya. Sankaradeva wrote the first drama Patni prasada in 1526 A.D. when he resided in Dhunyasat Satra in Belguri. (Goswami, 2010, P.42).

1. Characteristics of AnkiaNat:

Sutradhara is the central character of Ankia Nat. He first entered and sings a Nandi Sloka for the prayer or benediction of Lord Krishna or the king. After that, with his unique dance movement mingled with the music and instrument, Sutradhara narrates the entire story and introduces the main characters. Whereas in Sanskrit theatres, Sutradhara exits the stage after the preliminary Purbaranga, in Ankia Nat, the

Sutradhara remains on the stage for the entire play. After the Prastabana, he sits in the Dohar or Gayan Bayan team and indicates different guidance to the entire team. He narrates the story, introduces all the characters when they enter, explains the main psychology and intentions of the patra (characters), incidents going to take place, recites many slokas, and explains the incidents which are not shown on the performing space. In that way, he makes a bridge or communication between the characters and the audience. Sutradhara is the heart of Ankia Nat. He is also the stage manager and director. Apart from Sanskrit theatre, the Sutradhara in Ankia Nat sings songs and comments on the behavior of the characters. Thus, Sankaradeva's unique creation, the Sutradhara character, is very different in its characteristics and functions from the Sutradhara of Sanskrit theatre and other folk forms.

2. *Brajavali Language:*

Brajavali is the language of Ankia Nat. It was a language of Mithila region during 14th and 15th century AD. Brajavali language was created by mixing the Maithali, Awahati, and local Assamese language in written mode and expressions. However, influence of Awadhi, Bhojpuri, and Brajabhasa are noticed in the Brajavali used by Sankaradeva in his writings. Similarly, many grammatical elements of Ankiya Nat are found in Maithili, Awadhi, and Bhojpuri languages with slight variations in forms. For example, the words like kabahu, yakery, kaise, yaise, hoi are found in Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Awadhi. This is because Sankaradeva went on pilgrimage twice and visited many places and experienced it. The sentences given below are examples of Maithili, Assamese, Bhojpuri mixed Brajavali language:

“Aahe Patra Mantri Gyatixobo. Hamaro duhita Rukmini ko Bibaho ko Jugya Bhela. Konya ko xadrixha bora kuna thane thika. Xabahi bimarikha kaye bulaha. Hamu janu eka Doibakinandana bine kanyako samana boro nahi: jobo xobohti bhallo dexoho, tobo swahaste Krishnaka kanyadana koruhu”

(O ministers and relatives, my daughter Rukmini has become marriageable. Where does the groom equal to her live? Discuss and tell me. I know that there is no groom equal to Rukmini other than Sri Krishna. If everyone likes (support) it, then I will give my daughter to Krishna.)
(Sankaradeva, *Rukmini Harana*).

The reason behind Sankaradeva's Ankia Naat's immense popularity in entire Assam, Kamrup, and the Odramagadhi region is because of the Brajavali language, which is a mixed form of Sanskrit, Maithili, Hindustani, Assamese, etc. (Mahanta, 2017, P.100).

3. *Songs, Slokas and Payers-*

In an Ankia play, plenty of songs are found juxtaposed with dance and gestures. Songs are based on classical ragas. Mahapurusha Sankaradeva penned one hundred nineteen songs in his six plays where twenty-nine ragas have been used. The ragas are—Asuari, Dhanashree, Sri Gouri, Natmallar, Suhai, Boxonta, Kedar, Ahir, Bhupali, Mahur-Dhanashree, Turbasanta, Sindhura, Kanara, Kou, Kalyan, Beluwar, Srigandhar, Bhatiali, Purabi, Nahur, Gandhar, Karunya, Kedar, Saranga, Nat, Shyam, Sripayar, and Tur. (Devagoswami, 2011, p.31). Different body gestures were used incorporating the songs. Like the Bhatimas, different

recitations were accompanied by instruments like khol, taal, flute, etc., with dance and movements in practice. All the characters come to the stage by dancing only. It is a common feature of Ankia Naat that from beginning to end, an abundance of lyrical songs are found, and the entire play progresses with the rhythm of these songs. The emotion, agony, and inner journey of the characters are also portrayed through the use of these songs in a significant way.

In an Ankia Nat, four kinds of songs are found:

i) **Devotional – Bhotimas**

The four kinds of bhotima are:

- a) **Raj Bhotima** – The bhotimas are stuti to the Kings.
- b) **Deva Bhotima** – Deva Bhotimas are praising to the Devata.
- c) **Nat Bhotima** – The bhotimas which are used in the stories of the Ankia Nat.

Nat bhotima are of three kinds:

1. **PraromvikBhotima** – After the Nandi sloka, the praromvikbhotima is sung. In the praromvikbhotima, Sri Krishna's praising was sung in a narrative style.
2. **Major Bhotima (Middle Bhotima)** – In the Major bhotimas, the story or incident of the play is unfolded.
3. **MuktimangalBhotima** – MuktimangalBhotimas are sung at the end of Ankia Nat before all the people present there, including the actors and the audience.

Mahapurusha Madhavdeva introduced another Bhatima called Guru Bhotima. This bhotima is addressed to the great saint Mahapurusha Sankaradeva.

- i) Songs based on ragas and talas
- ii) Rhymes which are descriptive in nature and prayer songs (Chapayas)
- iii) Songs presented during the entry and exit of the characters describing their mental condition and nature

There are many different types of Dhruva songs including Praveshiki, Naiskramiki, Antara, Prasadiki, and Akshepiki. (Goswami, 1984, p.555; Mahanta, 2013, p.270). Character's entry songs are known as Prabexiki; for example, in *Parijat Harana*, "aawe Jagat guru koi uparbexo" is a Prabexikigeet.

The song which is sung when the character exits from the stage is called Niskramiki. In *Parijat Harana*, "sololi Narada Hori gungai" is the Niskramiki song.

The song when a character narrates his emotion, sorrow, pathos with a song is called Axepiki. In *Ram Vijaya*, "bilopoti Maithili Mai" is such an example.

Praxadiki is the enjoyment song of the characters. *Rukmini Harana*'s "Jagajiboutsukesololi" is an example of Praxadiki.

All characters come to the stage in dance movement accompanied by these songs and musical instruments. The characters' emotion, agony, pathos, narration all are signaled by these songs of Ankia Naat. So, songs and slokas are a very integral part of Ankia Naat.

4. Use of Prose:

One other feature of Ankia Naat is the versified prose. Its use in Sankaradeva's plays is the first instance of this kind in the entire North-East region. However, it is not the Assamese language in its purest form. Sankaradeva had used many North Indian languages and elements in his written dialogues. This form of prose dialogue is different from the spoken one, which is normally used by the common folk. This is the reason it should be denoted as rhetoric or versified forms.

“Ohi parkare bhakataka kripalu Srikrishna Rukminika bhakati basya huwa bibidha bihar madana khela lila-keli koutuka kariya Rajakumarika parama manorath purala, Se Nripatinandinika mahamahotsava milala; Jagataka Parama Guru Narayana, tanikara parasane parama soubhyagini bhela. Navataruni Padmini sata saharsa dasi pawala, Indra ko jata sampatti nija mandire milala, Srikrishna Charana pankaja paramanande paricharya kaye sarbatha rahala”

(In this way, who is kind to his devotees, being subdued to Rukmini gratified her wishes by playing various delightful amorous dalliances. His wish was fulfilled by getting the princess. The princess became very happy. She became absolutely blessed to get His touch who is Narayana – the supreme Guru of the world. The graceful young woman got hundreds of thousands of maid servants. She found all the wealth of Indra at her home. She lived very happily serving the lotus feet of Sri Krishna.) ([Sankaradeva, Rukmini Harana](#)).

5. Bhaktibad

Spreading devotional ideal is the main motive of Ankia Naat, which we call Bhakti. Apart from entertainment, Sankaradeva's main motive through Ankia Naat is to spread the baani of Bhakti or Eksarana Naam Dharma. Sankaradeva idealizes the Vaishnava dharma where Krishna or Rama is the main character. So, Sankaradeva, with his utmost intelligence and aesthetic brilliance, portrays Krishna or Rama as the main character in his every Naat. The devotional ideal is another main feature of Sankaradeva's Ankia Naat, which is Bhakti. In the Bhakti tradition, Sankaradeva believed that there is only one God, who is Lord Sri Krishna, and when we pray to him with Shravana-Keertana in utmost devotion, we meet him.

6. Presentation of Ankia Naat-

The plays of Sankaradeva performed in Naamghars or in Rabha soripandels made temporarily. In Naamghars, in front of the Manikut, the performances occur. The audience watches the play from all directions, and performance takes place in the middle portion of the Namghar or Rabha. There was no set design or settings in Ankia Naat. The audience imagines the atmosphere and different locality of the story from the narration of the Sutradhara and the unique Abinaya by the actors. An Agnigarh is made from where the characters make entrance into the performing space. The actors are called Bhaorias. In the day of performance, all the bhaorias do not eat anything because bhaona is believed to be a spiritual performance. Outside the acting space, there is a special room called cho-ghar where actors wear makeup and costumes. In old days, the acting space was sufficiently lit up with earthen chaki, lighted with mustard oil and cotton wick. Accompanying such lights, there were bigger flames which were called Aariyas. Nowadays, modern lighting equipment is used in performances. Before the

acting starts, the Gayan-Bayon enter the performance space and play the instruments in a unique blend. This blending is called xorudhemali and bordhemali. This piece is also called Purbaranga. But the Purbaranga in Sanskrit theatre has lots of differences from Purbaranga of Ankia Naat. After the Purbaranga, women hold a white cloth which is called Aarkapur. From behind that Aarkapur, the characters unfold their entries one by one according to the play. First enters the Sutradhara, the heart of Ankia Naat. After entry, he sings the Nandi Sloko (preliminary prayer) from the Sanskrit treatise for the praise for the Supreme God. This entry is often called Patra Pravesh. The Sutradhara starts dancing, sings the Bhatima, and then follows the outline of the play and introduces the patras to the audience. After that, the Sutradhara goes to the Gayan-Bayan area and indicates to begin the play. *Ram Vijaya*, one of Sankaradeva's famous plays, he indicated as "Aahe Xongi, ki badya xunie," (O companion, what instrument is being heard?) and the xongi of the dohar speaks "Xokhi debo dunduvi bajoto, debo dundibi bajoto." (O friend, divine drum is beating, divine drum is beating.) After that, Ramchandra with Lakshmana enters the stage. The Sutradhara indicates this as such: "Aahe Xobhaxodo, Hamu jakoro kotha kohoisi se Shri Ram Lakshmana xohite aaoto aaaoto." (O audience, Sri Rama whom I am talking about is coming with Laksmana.) After such expository formalities are over, the actual acting begins. The Sutradhara sings a song followed by the entry of the characters. This song is called Pravesh Geet. This entry song is followed by the raising of the white screen once again. As soon as the actors enter the stage, the curtain is withdrawn and the self-revelatory songs by actors begin, and they occupy their positions and wait for their respective turns. The bhaorias wear different costumes according to their characters, and makeup is always stylistic. Once, the makeup was prepared by Henghulhaital and different colors found in nature. Nowadays, artificial colors, foundation, cream, rouge, and beard are used in the makeup of Ankia Naat. Different characters such as King or Devata wear headgear. Some characters like Taraka Rakshasi, Hanuman, Ravan, etc., wear masks. After that performance, Muktimangal Bhatima are sung for the well-being of the members of the team.

The Natyashastric influence in Ankia Naat:

In Ankia Naat, we find lots of influences or similarities of the Natyashastra and Sanskrit plays.

1. **Anka** - There are ten classifications of Rupaka according to Natyashastra. They are Natok, Prakaran, Din, Ehamriga, Bithi, Samavikar, Prahasan, Byaug, Bhan and Utsritik Anka or Anka. The Ankia Naat is called an Anka or one-act play. According to many scholars, the name Ankia is derived from the word "Anka," which means one act.
2. **Purbaranga** - In Sanskrit play, Purbaranga is the part which are performed before the main play begins. Before the play, the instrumentalists do a performance for the welfare and betterment of the programme. They pray to the God, and this act was called Purbaranga. The parts of the Purbaranga are: i) Pratyahar
ii) Abotoron
iii) Ashravana
iv) Aarmava

After the Purbaranga, the Nandi Sloko is recited by the Sutradhara, followed by Uthapan (raising the flags) and Poriborton (dancing and singing prayer song moving the entire stage). In the same manner in the Ankia Nat, we also find the Purbaranga in a different style. In Ankia Naat this part is called as Dhemali. Before the beginning of the play, a certain kind of dramatical environment was created with the use of various instruments and the Gayan Bayon performing different modes of Dhemali like Xoru-Dhemali, Deva-Dhemali, Naat-Dhemali, Bor-Dhemali. These Dhemalia are a certain kind of feet and body movement accompanying with Khol and Taal.

The principal character of Ankia Naat is the Sutradhara. He is also like a manager and director. The character of Sutradhara is another main connection with the Natyashastra and Sanskrit play. He narrates, sings song, explains the activities of different characters through Sanskrit sloko, explains the agony and pathos of the patra and discusses the matters which have not shown on the stage. Ankia Naat's Sutradhara is remained on the stage from beginning to till the end, narrate and link different situation whereas the Sutradhara of Sanskrit theatre is confined only in the beginning or prologue and concluding part of the play.

3. **Prarusana** - Prarusona is the part where the Sutradhara or narrator acknowledges the story of the play. This part arises before the actors are entering. Sanskrit plays had these type of Prarusona. In Ankia Naat the Sutradhara ends the prarusona part after saying "Mukti Hadhokom." There is no acknowledgement of the story in the Ankia Naat. The Sutradhara carried the prasuna "BhoBhohamajiko Luko" and he praised and acknowledged Krishna as the Supreme Lord.
4. **Prastabona** - The Sutradhara or Sthapak makes a talk to other patrapatri and the actor enter the stage which is called the Prastabona. In Ankia Naat the Sutradhara questions as "Aahesongi, kibadyabaje" and then he introduces the entry of the character saying as "Aahe luko, hamu je koholu sohi poromo Isswara Sri Krishna sobhajye jatra nimitye etha awoto, pormo habodhano huiya ta dexoho sunoho." (O people, whom I am talking about, that Supreme God Sri Krishna is coming here with His wife. Watch and hear very attentively.)
5. **Sloko** - In every Sanskrit Naat there are some slokas. In the beginning of Ankia Nat Nandi sloko was recited. Ankia Naat have also Nandi sloko in the beginning of the play. The sloko of the Ankia Naat portray different environment, obostha.
6. **Sandhi** - In the Sanskrit theatre there was five sandhis or obostha. The obostha or situations are: i) Aromvo (beginning)
ii) Prajatna (effort)
iii) Praptyakhya (prosect of success)
iv) Niyotapti (certainty of success)
v) Pholagam (Attainment of the result)

The time or process from one situation to another situation is called as Sandhis. They are: i) Mukh
ii) Pratimukh
iii) Bij

- iv) Garva
- v) Vimarsha

As Sanskrit Nataka, Ankia Naat also follows the Sandhis or Obsthās. As far as Sanskrit drama is concerned these sandhis are not totally clear in Ankia Naat, but in some plays as Parijat Haran and Ram vijay where a total story is told, the Sandhis are found clearly.

7. **MuktimangalBhatima** - Like Sanskrit drama in every Bhaona, Sutradhara sings the MuktimangalBhatima after the story was unfolded.

These are influences and similarities of Ankia Naat with the Natyashastra and Sanskrit Theatre. But, lots of dissimilarities are also exist in these two theatre forms. With the influence of the Sanskrit Theatre and various folk or traditional art forms like Ojhapali and Yakshagana, Sankaradeva has the credit to renovate and establish a new and unique theatrical form.

Acting perspective of Ankia Nat and its influence from Natyasastra-

The acting of Ankia Nati is highly stylized and melodramatic; exaggerations are occurred in the acting. It was not realistic but a highly louder acting. The characters' entries and exits in the stage are in rhythmic patterns accompanied by prabeshageets and playing of instruments mainly khol and taal. The physical gestures, dances, songs are varied according to character or situation. They sing the stuti (prayer) or bilap song (lament song), speak the brajavuli dialogue in a unique recitation pattern, and acted according to the direction and narration given by the Sutradhara who is the Stage Manager. The acting of Ankia Naat are Natyadharmi or stylized according to Natyashastra.

In the Natyashastra acting are divided in four parts:

- i) Angika
- ii) Vachika
- iii) Aharya
- iv) Sattivika

In Ankia Naat all the four parts of acting are found.

1. The acting of Ankia Naat is mainly Angika. All the three parts of Angika Abhinaya Anga, Upanga, Pratyanga are used in the acting of Ankia Naat. The physical movement, dances, gestures, body postures are main components of Ankia acting.
2. Basika acting is the dialogue-oriented play. Though in Ankia Naat the characters movement, dances and physical gestures are the central place in acting, the dialogues or basikis are also important. The Brajavuli dialogues are spoken by the character according to their status and situation.
3. The aharya means the outward decoration of the characters. The bhaoriya of Ankia Naat uses makeup in their face according to the character. For instance, the cruel persons like Jarasandha, Shisupala, Taraka etc. are given black makeup, spiritual characters like

Lord Krishna, Rama are given the blue makeup, angry characters like Parashurama, Viswamitra are given reddish makeup, innocent characters like gopi or gopa boys are given white makeup (regarding Sutradhara it is to be Goura or pale red color) etc. All the characters wear different costumes according to their character. The pago of gayan bayan is different from the pago of the Sutradhara. Lord Krishna wears yellow dhuti or bhuni, the royal characters wear chapko and hangadecorated piece called Nimai from the neck in both front and back. Some of the characters wear Pithia. Characters like Viswamitra and Parashurama wear simple dhuti and seleng. Viswamitra carries a kamandalu in his hand. The female characters wear Mekhela, riha, ghuri etc. The married characters cover their heads with an Orani. The characters also wear different ornaments like kanphuli, motamoni, dugdugi etc. to beautify the necks. The kings and deities wear Chandrahar and the female characters wear Baju. Lots of characters wear masks. There are three types of masks prevalent in Ankia Naat - Bormukha, Lutkorimukha and Shumukha. Colour was a powerful ingredient of Aharya. Dr. Poona Mahanta stated, "The players who didn't wear costumes for entire body they paint colour which is connected with the costume. According to Natyashastra four types of color had been found - white, blue, yellow and red. Combining these four main colours mixed with other colours which was made from henghul, haital, xendur, Nil, dhalmati, geruwa clay, ashetc. and put to actors' body and face according to their role (Mahanta, 2017, P:103).

4. The Sattvika abhinaya consists of two elements complementary to each other. They are the Rasa or emotional flavour and the bhava or the mood to suit a particular emotion. Rasa is the primary and most important requirement of Ankia Naat. In the abhinaya and nritya part the rasa is derived. There are nine Rasa according to Natyashastra. They are as follows -
 - i) Sringara Rasa (love)
 - ii) Raudra Rasa (krodh)
 - iii) Veera Rasa (utsaha)
 - iv) Hasya Rasa (mirth)
 - v) Karuna Rasa (compassion)
 - vi) Vibhatsa Rasa (disgust)
 - vii) Advuta Rasa (amazement)
 - viii) Bhayanakar Rasa (fear)
 - ix) Shanta Rasa (peace)

All these Rasas or sentiments are developed from the acting of different characters in Ankia Naat. In Ram Vijaya or Rukmini Harana mainly Raudra and Veera rasa are found, similarly sringara rasa mainly arises in Keli Gopala. There is one more important rasa recognized by the scholars of Ankia Naat is Bhakti Rasa. To differentiate Madhavdeva's plays from Sankaradeva's, Batsalya rasa is also recognized. Rasa anubhuti is indeed a very complex phenomenon of human mind and behaviour. That is what done in the Natyashastra (Pathak, 2015, P.8). Bhava is also divided in some categories as bhava, bivabha, anubhava, sancharibhava and sattwik bhava. All these bhavas have played an important role in Ankia Naat. Actors have to feel the sentiment or feelings to live and depict the character brilliantly.

Result –

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva's Ankia Naat is influenced by Natyashastra in different perspectives. Although Sankaradeva influenced and took elements from Natyashastra he, with his abundance of talent and knowledge, gave a new identity to Ankia Naat by bringing so many elements from local indigenous culture and traditions of different tribes of his native land. He incorporated many thoughts from his own mind and thus Ankia Naat established as his fundamental creation. Common people of Assam in the 15th century where most of the people were illiterate, renovated and gained intellectualism and knowledge after watching the Bhaona. Bhaona is a traditional drama form where all the aesthetics of art have been preserved and tasted by the audience. Spectators today also after watching this unique performing art form engaged and enthralled and left the performing space or namghor in sheer delight of rasa nisipatti with Bhakti in mind. Importantly the popularity of Ankia Naat has increased day by day and younger generation and children took part, want to learn it and through this spreading the ideology of this age-old drama form and its master maker Srimanta Sankaradeva.

Conclusion –

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva gives an identity to Assamese culture, literature, theatre with Ankia Naat. Sankaradeva laid the foundation of drama by connecting with the local masses and bringing lots of elements from community people. The religious and devotional aspect of Bhaona gives a pure joy to the common people who literally connect with the Bishnu and Krishna and go to the path of Vaishnavism. Bhaona also gives an intellectualism and assimilation to the people of Assam. Namghar is the main place where all the people were gathering and took the Shrabana Kirtana of Eksharania Naam Dharma of Sankaradeva. Ankia Naat unites the Assamese society. It was open for all; no class or caste boundaries are prevalent there. The age-old theatre forms of Assam are time-worthy and still performed all over Assam with great zest and determination. It created a bridge to the mainland culture of India and contributed immensely to Indian classical and traditional theatre arena. Though, Ankia Naat remains mainly devotion or Bhakti based Mahapurusha Sankaradeva did never overlook the entertainment or aesthetic value of Bhaona. He incorporated every aspect of performing or fine arts in Ankia Naat with great enthusiasm and energy and gave this traditional art form a heightened form.

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