

## The Change and Extension of 'Bhaona': Socio- Historical and Literary Context.

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### Abstract:

The impact of Bhaona has great influence in socio-cultural context. It has religious and philosophical dimension. Vernacular Bhaona is picking its fame in the society, still the pride of 'Ankiya Bhaona' is prevailing in Satras, Namghars etc. On the other hand in the development of changing taste, society and time, the vernacular Bhaona has been undergoing huge change and extension in a new shape. The present paper will highlight the change and extension of Bhaona in the socio historical and literary context.

### Key Words:

Change, extension, bhaona, socio-historical, literary, context.

### Introduction:

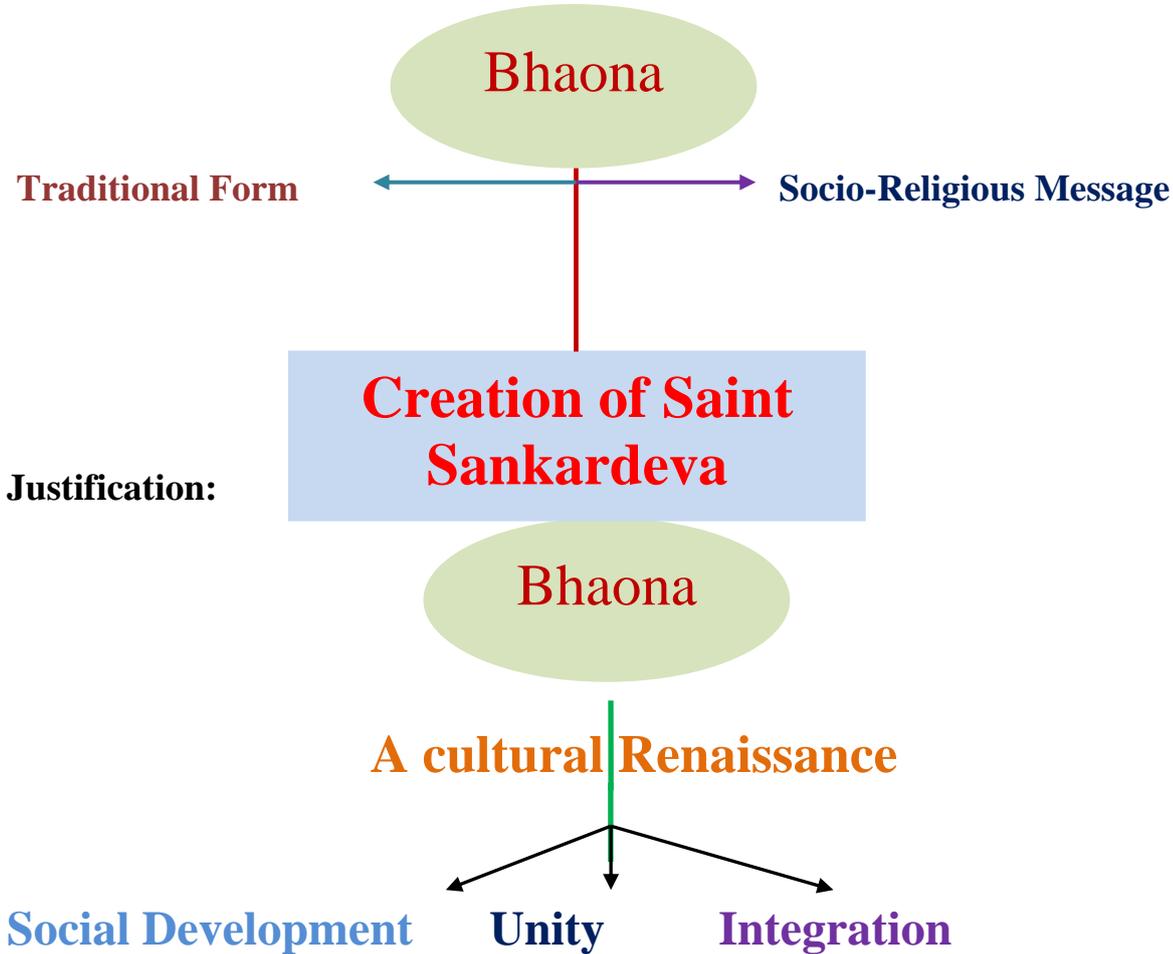
The Bhaona tradition of Assam is the outcome of Neo-Vaishnavite Movement. The precursor of the Nava Boisnad movement, Sankardev initiate the Assamese drama literature with the help of folk-dramas, Sanskrit drama and experience collected from different pilgrimages. Madhavdev and other religious leaders created plays following the Guru. Though 'Ankia Bhaona' has been flourishing as the conveyance of social, cultural and religious tradition in Satras, Namghars and various festivals of Assam, but it higher spiritual language, subject matter, usages rules have been merging with changing things. In course of time the complexity of Brajawali and Sanskrit decreases and merges with vernacular languages.

### Objectives of the Study:

The highlighting objectives of the study are

1. To study the changing pattern of Bhaona.
2. To highlight the extensive impact of Bhaona.
3. To explore the Socio-historical and literary context of Bhaona.

## Rationale:



## Importance of the Study:

The very importances of the study are:

1. Bhaona highlights the socio religious impact towards the people.
2. Bhaona has spiritual and artistic importance.
3. 'Vernacular Bhaona' entered in to the field of competition along with attaining popularity even in the first part of 20<sup>th</sup> century in changing society, time and changing taste.
4. In comparison to the dramatists of 'Ankia Bhona' with the later play writes who were less knowledgeable about the Sanskrit terms, use skill and Brajawali language.
5. The mass people could not make act the said language and as a result 'Ankia Bhaona' turned in to Vernaculars Bhona.
6. The Vernacular Bhona seems to maintain a few traditional rules, but at the same time it can be said that it slips from the track. Modernisation bring a changing taste to cope with the field of competition and even stepped in digital media.

7. In this context we cannot refuse the need of scientific study of it.

### **Methodology:**

The research paper is based on secondary sources. It is explanatory in nature. The secondary sources are collected from research papers, articles, periodicals, magazines etc.

### **The Past and Present Status of Bhaona:**

In the middle age, towards the end of Bhakti movement in India, the need for rectification against social, cultural, and religious gloominess helped a lot in creating Neo-Vaishnavism genre of religion in Assam by Sankardev.

As a tool of preaching, drama and Bhaona have attracted interesting art, higher understanding of culture and mass learning by creating spiritual conducive environment. The leaders of Neo-Vaishnavism lead by Madhavdev have brought a solid movement by creating Nats.

The simple, illiterate people got attracted towards religious stories related to lord Krishna, Vishnu, Ram and such Gods and their spectrum childhood stories and characters in the forms Bhaona and thus reformation Mass education was given.

The Aesthetic beauty as well as Indian songs, music, dance and Nat tradition's serves as the purpose of Ankia Nat. In Sankardev's Ankia Nat, purposeful stories, dance, songs, music, Brajawali language, Sanskrit verse, etc are seen in good numbers. Even the Satradhikar left Brajawali and the started using the Assamese, Bangali, Hindi, non –standard Snskrit language and even a few English words and initiated 'Foujia Bhaona'. Thus Ankia Nat takes the present form Bhaona in course of time due to lack of realization of real prestige of traditional Bhaona, by accepting assamese song, dialogues and Bangali(culcuttas) costumes.

Along with present Bhaona's wide popularity all around Assam, the paretic of Ankia Nat is being done in higher spiritual environment. On the other hand, the present Bhaona is its popularity to a little extent and it is heading towards competitive shape. At the same time audio – visual media is trying to preserve and broadcast in their own way.

### **The Changing Method of Bhaona:**

Sankadev, Madhavdev and other preacher creation, Ankia Nat gradually came through the Jhumura, Dhuranat, Fujia Bhaona and finally took the shape of present(Mother tongue) Vernacular Bhaona, later the fast modernisation and the audience interest lead Bhaona to competitive.

Sometime a purposeless narrative is taken and entertainment prefers to devotion. The purposeful stories of Ankia Bhaona, higher spiritual performance skill, language custom, the dominance of the, Suttradhar(Anchor) character, melody, music –lyric, dance nutrient and traditional believes attached to it have undergone change.

The Bhaona have gone away in regard to performance skill, stories, character, dance, song, Anchor(suttradhar), language, mask, costumes and heads to newness to some extent and stricks to tradition of its origin in great respect.

### **Change Regarding Stories:**

The story of Ankia Nat is deeply devotional and purposeful. As Sankardev and Madhavdev successor preacher indited dramas to preach religion, So the stories were taken from the Bhagwat Purana, the Ramayana, the Haribongsha, the Vishnu Purana, the Mahabharata about Krishna, Vishnu, Rama and related Gods and their divine activity like-Suppressing the mischievous and nurturing the humbles. The playwrights included stories in order to educate the mass and to deeply reform the society, but in course of time, the playwrights were more attracted to the stories related to wars than the themes related to deep meaningful religious ones.

It is seen that the stories were taken from various Puranas, Upapuranas, Badhkabya etc and some sub-stories were created to exaggerate the details on wars giving a heroic touch and thus Bhaonas were lengthened unnecessarily in which the theme of social reform is seen less while entertainment is as prime purpose. Imaginary tales also got its place in the Bhaonas. Though these stories were taken especially from archaic stories, themes and characters but the stories are not perfect from dramatic point of view.

As soon as the Bhaona become competitive the addition of imaginary stories increased, considering the benefit of less actors, time consciousness and financial consciousness made the Bhaona with imaginary theme. Moreover, in order to enter into the stage, the Bhaona needs to be concisely themed. That is why Bhaona at present is only the medium of entertainment rather than erstwhile traditional, spiritual and social reformative purpose.

### **Change towards Character:**

The Suttradhar(Anchor) in Ankia Bhaona plays one of the major and important role. So the Suttradhar is indispensable in Ankia Bhaona. The drama is incomplete without this fetal

character. But in Vernacular Nat Suttradhar's importance has been curtailed and limited to only anchoring(suttradhari) dance, Nandislook, and songs, at the beginning of Nat.

The character of Suttradhar(anchor) has been omitted in some of the Vernacular Nat, but in some case the Suttradhar(anchor) has a minor role and the Suttradhari dance they make just a formality of body part movements with "Khul" which is actually not real Suttradhari dance. The causes of curtailing the importance of Suttradhar(Anchor) may be lack of expertise artist or repetitions of same with the help of dance and song which may be boring, Besides, expert Suttradhar(anchor) with the knowledge of Sanskrit verse and Brajwali language are not found to give the part of Suttradhar.

In some case the Suttradhar(anchor) are from outside who are not aware of the main drama and even they are not given any dialogues and their parts before the actual drama begins. Same situation is seen in the Bhaona of two of the major College at Goalaghat Town and Police station, Namghar(Field Study). Sometimes some dance expert ladies are given the role of Suttradhar.

### **Change in Dialogues:**

The dialogues of Ankia Nat is melodious and in Brajwali verse. The Brajwali languages started creating trouble for both playwrights and actors.

In village areas the Nat are taken from other place and are copied, Dialogues are sometime redrafted and sometimes it is copied in a different way for some reason and as a result it becomes improper such act of copying, sometimes make the whole story improper.

The vernacular Bhaona has not and slips the second verse dialogue of Ankia Nat but also distracts the depth, melody and lyric of Bhaona of Sankardev created Ankia Nat, so it is clear that the change in dialogue and languages has comparatively more negative effect.

### **Change in Aharjya:**

Due to modernization the impact of Bengali Jatra of Kolkata takes its place. Some ancient weapon like-Bow and Arrows, Goda, Hul, Swords, Masks, Crown, came in existence in Bhaona. Gradual attraction towards imported dress up created an Acting dress up market.

The increased attraction towards this dress up by both actors and audience has resulted the extinction of original dress up in Bhaona. Moreover, the cause of change in costume are due to lack of skilled and interested makers of mask, crown, swords, weapons and hair dress with bamboo, wood, cane, jute, etc which is comparatively harder. The main purpose of Ankia

Bhaona was to improve social unity through preaching. To attain such great target simple dress are quite appropriate rather than sophistication.

The vernacular Bhaona came a part from it and sets its aim as to entertain the audience which result in sophisticate dress up. The competition in vernacular Bhoana turned it as commodity as well as it started using high-tech audio –visual media, Even the interest of the audience has changed, and emphasis is given not on spirituality but on beauty and energetic dialogue delivery.

### **Change towards Skill:**

The other actors follow the Sstradhar after his dance. Though the dance of Suttradhar (anchor)is different in different Satra, but anchoring is same in all Satras. Ankia Bhaona is dominated by dance and song, because every character has his own, specific entrance and exit dance and lyric with rhythm or music.

In Vernacular Nats dance of characters at the time of entrance is dropped. Some light music took the place of specified music at the time of Krishna, Ram, and Vishnu etc. At the entrance time of character of Krishna, Vishnu, and Ram some specified dance like Gushain entrance dance along with certain entrance music is played.

### **Conclusion:**

The Ankia Nat Bhaona of Sankardev, Madhavdev and his followers in middle age, has undergone change due to gradual shift of interest and thus Vernacular Nat Bhaona got created. Though Vernacular Bhaona could not hold fast the tradition of Ankia Nat Bhaona, but it is successful in continuing the Bhaona tradition.

As the time and interest of people change, so it is indispensable for the Bhaona take modern shape. In the same time way the Gayan-bayan, Anchory dance, spirituality is still there to some extent in the Bhaonas held annually in the Namghars in the villages. In the Namghars in the villages the Bhaona has a reformative view point, mass education, religious purpose though comparatively low than the earlier ones.

It covers the customs of beginning and ending of Bhaona, the use of Sarai in the rehearsal itself along with merging the new actors with the old and thus continuing the tradeisn with a bit give and taking tradition.

The Vernacular Bhaona has turned in to competitive one and become market commodity and these Bhaona turned to a shorter version than the earlier ones. Even up to three Bhaonas are

stage in a single night now a day. Though competitive Bhaona is relatively shorter but it makes correct use of characters, dialogues, dance, song, music, Anchory dance etc.

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