

# Contribution of 'Ankiya Nat' In Socio-cultural interpretation accompanied with Noteworthy citation of Contemporary time

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**Abstract:** Sankerdeva is the architect (initiator) of Assamese Dramatic Literature. In the Pre-Sankerdeva era there was no audio-visual medium of Drama in India (Although there were some local dramatic programmes like Uja-Pali, Putola Nach, Dhuliya Bhawona etc.). The Sankerdeva had built the path of the Assamese Dramatic literature. In the Post-Sankerdeva era many writers had tried to write the Ankiya Nats, but unable to maintain the cardinal framework. That is why those dramas were not called 'Ankiya Nats', but a type of Ankiya drama. The modern drama arose based on Ankiya Nats. There are much more influences of Ankiya Nats in the Socio-cultural life of Assam. Although its influences are going less with changing of time. Apparently it is also true that through the Philosophy of Ankiya Nat, Sankardeva wanted to bring positive approaches to the society. In this paper the influences of Ankiya Nat in the Society and its Philosophy are the core matters to be discussed. The role of folk-culture plays a crucial role which is described here. Along with the importance of Ankiya Nats in contemporary times, comparison of Ankiya Nats with the Modern Dramas, Role of Ankiya Nats in making a healthy Assamese Socio-Cultural environment, Objection of youths towards Ankiya Nats and Future of Ankiya Nats will be discussed here.

**Keywords:** Ankiya Nats, Contemporary Times, Socio-Cultural etc.

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## 1. INFLUENCE OF ANKIYA NATS IN SOCIETY

Sankerdeva is the publisher of 'Nava-Vaishnava' Dharma and like the father of Assamese Culture. Sankardeva had created Ankiya Nats to popularize the Bhakti-Dharma in the then Society. From antecedent times, Assam is a religious state, although Assam was not flexible before Sankardeva era. Sankardeva's Nava-Vaishnava Dharma brought positivity to Assam and Ankiya Nats played an important role here. They got much popularity among the common masses. Ankiya Nats consisted religious melody, classical Rag-Tal, which helped in the development of Assamese culture and tradition.<sup>1</sup> In Assamese society, especially in Rural areas, Ankiya Nat was in a higher position and still its maintaining the same. But the most important thing is that Ankiya Nat was not developed as Dramatic literature, it developed only as performing Art in rural society. This types of performing art is called 'Bhawona'.

### 1.01 Religious influence of Ankiya Nat:

The most powerful influence of Ankiya Nat is the religious influence as it aims of performing was to give religious education and to make people attracted towards the Vaishnava Drama. After Sankar-Madhava, the playwright was able to make plays in people's heart by using their own potentialty and that's why Ankiya Nats got a precious position in the Sankerdeva and Post-Sankerdeva eras. The radiant respect of these playwrights for Sankar-Madhava helps them to attract people towards their plays. And in the contemporary period, its values are same in the rural societies. But there arises a question mark that among the educated people there is less importance of Ankiya Nat due to the development of Science and Technology.

**1.02 Ankiya Nat as a means of Society Building:**

By the medium of Ankiya Nat, Sankardeva wanted to unite the society. By providing equal representation by irrespective of Caste and religion, Sankardeva established the base of a Progressive Democratic society. The actors of the Ankiya Nat are selected from different caste and classes. Hence the Ankiya Nats are endeavoring the Society to distribute Social Equality and Democratic thinking.

Again the Ankiya Nats have been playing the role of Local Self Governance institution among the villages. It is a social institution, which is a part of the Namghar system.

**1.03 Reflection of Healthy Thinking in Ankiya Nat:**

Sankardeva himself possessed a healthy mindset. In his workings, like- Ankiya Nat, Borgeet and others, it can be assumed. Sankardeva used some local techniques to make vibrant the presentation of Ankiya Nats. However, Ankiya Nat is a medium of popularizing the Nava-Vaishnava Religion among the then society. Hence he used this medium as a tool to attract the masses.

**1.04 Comparison between the Ankiya Nat and Modern Drama:**

- i) Religion is the central theme of the Ankiya Nats. But the Modern Drama may be Political, Social, Romantic or Satire.
- ii) Generally Ankiya Nats are presented in Namghar or Satra. But the modern Dramas are presented in proscenium stages. However in recent days, the Ankiya Nats are also played in proscenium stages.
- iii) Ankiya Nats are classical in nature. It relates with the folk culture of Assam. On the other hand, Modern Dramas are Western output.
- iv) Ankiya Nats possess a higher position than the Modern Dramas in the rural society of Assam.
- v) The modern Dramas are based on commercial purpose while the Ankiya Nats are based on religious and spiritual purpose.

**1.05 Role of Ankiya Nat to build the Socio-Cultural structure of Assam:**

The Ankiya Nat is an inherent element of Assamese Nava-vaishnava Culture. In the Ankiya Nats, several folk instruments like 'Doba', 'Khul', 'Borkah', 'Tal' etc. are played. Again in the Ankiya Nat, the role of 'Borgeet' and 'Satriya Nritya' can be cited.<sup>2</sup> to enhance the socio-cultural environment of a village; Ankiya Nats have been playing the most crucial role.

**1.06 Impact of Ankiya Nats to the enhancing of thinking capacity of audience:**

One of the key features of the Ankiya Nat is that it helps the audience to think. Due to the technical distribution of 'Ankas', it cannot visualize every scenarios of the story. Hence to visualize the scenarios, it takes the help of 'Sutradhar' (One kind of Anchor). Basically the Sutradhar describes every scenario by the medium of dialogues and Body Movement. As for example, a dialogue can be mentioned:

"ÍyÁÁ ü±±±;æÁßÁ İü±ßÁ, æÁðßÁ ð;µðÍ üİİÁ±, ;ßÁ;=İÁ !±İ§ Uúþ±, üàİü» ü;ýÁÁİÁ ÚßÁ Áó±ú Uúþ± İýÁÁü¼ [İ±;ßÁ äÁİİ ;äÁ;™L, ÁðüþÈð ýÁÁ±İÁ äÁİ±ý×ÁÁ, ÖÈñ±+ÁÈà Uúþ± İýÁÁü¼] İÁðÁð™LÈİ ðÁüİİ İ±æÁ±ßÁ >ĴÈ»ú İðÁàýÁÁ¼"<sup>3</sup>

(Hey the Folks, Sita, the daughter of Janak, has born and lived with her friends... Now see, how the King Dasharath comes to the Stage) (Translation: Own)

From the above description, we can visualize the environment in our mind. By this, every audience can visualize the concepts of Heaven, Hell, Brindaban etc. by their own realization and understandings. At last it can be remarked that the Ankiya Nats help its audience to think and imagine the theme of the Nat.

**1.07 The viewpoint of New Generation to the Ankiya Nat:**

To discuss the impact of Ankiya Nat, we have to discuss the viewpoint of the New Generation as well. Ankiya Nat is not above from the criticism. The New Generation, generally raise these types of complaints against the tradition of Ankiya Nat—

(i) Ankiya Nat has been listed as Performing Arts. But the presentation of the Ankiya Nat is not Gender-sensitive. Apart from a little example, maximum Ankiya Nats has been playing by the men class. So from this viewpoint, it can be remarked that the Ankiya Nat has been playing a discriminatory role in terms of the gender representation.

(ii) The Ankiya Nat is limited in the circle of Religious doctrine. So it has no any scope to enhance scientific temperament among the folks.

(iii) The Practice of Ankiya Nat is limited in the rural areas. The Satra institutions and Namghar should take some effective initiatives to enhance the area and scope of Ankiya Nat. there should be some experienced producers to promote the Ankiya Nats in a uniform mode.

#### **1.08 Future of Ankiya Nat:**

The Ankiya Nat is an inherent part of the rural life of our society. Jugal Lochan Das, one of the prominent playwrights have mentioned in his famous book "Bayanar Khul" that- "The Ankiya Nat is an asset, given by Sankardeva, connected to our rituals and traditions. If you need, make it more soft and clear."<sup>4</sup>

With the evolving of time, the trend of Ankiya Nat has been also changed. It is a good sign that the Ankiya Nats has been performed in many international stages. Some new techniques have been introduced to the performances.

The future of Ankiya Nats depends on our awareness and the reactions towards the changes. To sustain the future of Ankiya Nats, the breaking of stereotypes are must necessary.

## **2. CONCLUSION**

Ankiya Nats are the finest creation of Sankardeva. The relevance of Ankiya Nats is still undoubtful. From the paper, we can come to some conclusions, like—

i) The Ankiya Nats are popular among the rural people as an artform. The style of presentation still attracts irrespectively age and gender.

ii) To make the Ankiya Nats being compatible with the Modern Dramas, technical changes are must necessary.

iii) The Ankiya Nats have been endeavoring to distribute social equality as well as Eco-Social development in the villages.

iv) One of the impacts of Ankiya Nats in the contemporary times is to maintain peace and harmony in the society. Etc.

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