

**INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS,  
ERC, VARANASI**

**A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF "ŚĀSTRA UTSAVA EVENT"  
29th March, 2016**

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Eastern Regional Centre, Varanasi organised a one-day Symposium-cum-Dance Performance based on Performative Texts and Traditions of North-East India under the title "Śāstra Utsava Event" on 29th March, 2016, in collaboration with B.H.U., Parshvanath Vidyapeetha and Jñāna Pravaha, which was held at the library hall of IGNCA office at its Parshvanath Vidyapeeth campus.

On 29th March, 2016 the programme started at 10 a.m. with chanting of Vedas rendered by the students of Pattabhrama Sastri Veda-Mimamsa Anusandhana Kendra. The programme was chaired by Smt. Veena Joshi, Member Secretary of IGNCA while Prof. Y.K. Mishra, former V.C., Jagatguru Ramanandacari Sanskrit University, Jaipur graced the chair of Chief Guest.

After the formal rituals, Smt. Veena Joshi, Member Secretary of IGNCA delivered a brief Welcome Address to the audience. Then Dr. Sudhir Lall gave a short Introduction of IGNCA and its Major Activities with a Power-Point presentation. Next to it, Prof. K.D. Tripathi, Advisor, IGNCA, ERC delivered Keynote Address and with this lecture he introduced the theme of Symposium *Ankia-Bhaona and Sattriya – Influence of Nāṭyaśāstra Thereon*. In a nutshell he explained contribution of Nāṭyaśāstra and its significance in the culture of India. In his speech he also mentioned the interdependence of *śāstra* and *prayoga* and their

interdisciplinary approach. The session ended with a vote of thanks extended by Dr.S.P. Pandey, Dy. Director, Parshvanath Vidyapeeth.

The first academic session was chaired by Prof. K.D. Tripathi and speakers were Prof. K.K. Sharma, Dr. Mallika Kandali and Smt. Sharodi Saikia. At first Prof. K.K. Sharma presented a short demonstration lecture on **Interrelation between Nāṭyaśāstra and Ankiya Nat.** Prof. Sharma explained in detail the revival and continuance of dramatic elements (e.g. *kutapa*, *mattavāraṇī*) of NŚ in the Ankiya Nat. He also explained "*nāmaghara*", why it is lodged in *Sattra*? The *nāmaghara* is situated in *sattra* and further *maṇikuṭa* is situated inside the *nāmaghara*. By religion Assamese people are Vaiṣṇavas, **Śrīmadbhagavadgīta** and **Śrīmadbhāgavatam** are their basic texts, hence, in this *nāmaghara* they place these two texts on the throne instead of any deity. In course of his lecture he described how the dramatic elements of NŚ have been survived in Ankiya in a modified form and in a different name. He focussed on the *kutapa*, *pāriṭāṣvika*—their placement on the stage (which is usually placed behind the *raṅgaśiṛṣa*) and in parallel he explained *sattrādhikāra* and *dohāra* of Ankiya which have been termed as *kutapa* and *pāriṭāṣvika* in Nāṭyaśāstra. He continued that entry and exit of the dramatic personae should be made by the side of *kutapa*. In course of his lecture he explained plan of *raṅgamaṇḍapa*. In the context of *sattra* and *nāmaghara* he told about the use of *nāndī*, *pratāvanā* etc. with special reference to *Rāmviṣaya nāṭaka* of Śaṅkaradeva. He continued that *pūrvaraṅga* is absent in Ankiya Nāt, but some elements of *pūrvaraṅga* are obviously present there, e.g. use of *avanaddha* and *ghanavādya*, *nartana*, *gāyana-vādana*: their arrangement etc. Similarly in

Classical Sanskrit Drama *śuṣkāṅśara* is inserted in the *dhruvāgīti* as prescribed in the NŚ but in the songs of Ankia meaningful words like Rāma, Hari, Govinda are used. *Bhūmipūjana* ritual is conventional in *pūrvaraṅga* of Nāṭyaśāstra. Similar type of puja ritual is conventional in Ankia, but that should be done outside the stage. He also told about the utterance of *bharataavākya* in Sanskrit drama (prescribed by NŚ) and similarly utterance of *muktimaṅgala* which is conventional at the end of Ankia Nat.

Next speaker was Ms. Sharadi Saikia, a reputed dancer of Assam who delivered a brief note on **Bhaona**—its introducer Śaṅkaradeva, his *sattras* and his contribution in Bhakti movement of Assam. Main thrust of her brief note was how *bhaona* was introduced and how it is continued through ages by Saṅkaradeva and then by his apostle Śri Mādhavadeva. She told on four types of *abhinaya* prevalent in 'bhaona' and with the aid of demonstration through her group, she explained *pātrapraveśa* (both the male and female) *cārī*, *mukha cārī*, *ākāśacārī*, *muktimaṅgala* etc. which are prevalent in *bhaona*.

Last speaker of the session was Dr. Mallika Kandali who told on **Some Technical Aspects of Nāṭyaśāstra and Śrīhastamuktāvalī in the Performance of Sattriya**. Sattriyā is derived from Ankia by Śaṅkaradeva. The learned speaker told how Śaṅkaradeva introduced these dance forms (Ankia Nat, Bhaona and Sattriya) and she also mentioned its importance in Assamese culture. In course of her lecture she stated definite structure of Sattriya dance—sixty four *māḷi akhārā*-s, utilisation of various dance-postures (*nṛtyabhaṅgimā*-s) in Sattriya, which is something like *cārī*, *māṭṛkā*, *karaṇa*, *khaṇḍa*, *aṅgahaṛa* (actually structural patterns, as

described) in the NŚ. It is most striking to note the similarity of these structural patterns both in classical dance derived from NŚ as well as in Sattriya. With demonstration she explained *cārī*, *khaṇḍa*, *māṭṛkā*, *aṅgaharā-s* prevalent in *maṭi akhārā-s*. In this context she shown some specimen of body-stances, foot-works etc. She also told on *sthānaka* and its varieties—which are utilised in Sattriya.

At the end of Session, Prof. K.D. Tripathi gave chair-person's remarks on all the three lectures delivered in this session.

In the second session, there were three speakers: Dr Malini Goswami, Dr. Khagen Sharma and Dr. Sashadhar Acharya and the Session was chaired by Prof. K.K. Sharma. First speaker, Dr. Malini Goswami delivered her lecture on **Bhakti Theory: It's Application in Sattriya Performing Art with special reference to Bhaktiratnākara**. She started her exposition by explaining what is meant by *Sattriya*—derived from *sattra* - a monastic Institute of Assamese Vaiṣṇavas, introduced by Śaṅkaradeva and his disciple Śrī Mādhavadeva. In course of her speech she stated about the contribution of *sattra-s* in the Bhakti movement in Assam. She also explained *bhakti* as defined in **Nāradiya Bhaktisūtra** "*sā ṣarānuraktirīśvare – sā tu ṣaramapremarūṣā*". She told the audience about nine varieties of *bhakti*, viz. *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, *smaraṇa*, *keli*, *guhyebhāṣaṇa* etc., especially how these types of *bhakti* are utilised in Sattriya performance as described in different monastic compositions like Haricarita, Ajāmila Upākhyāna and how they are to be shown in Ankia performance.

Second speaker was Dr. Khagen Sharma who delivered a lecture on the **Tradition of Teaching-Learning Process in the Monastic Sattras of Assam**. In his lecture Dr. Sharma explained what is *Sattra*—its two

classification based on the marital status of *sattrādhikāra* and *bhaktas*, viz. (1) monastic and (2) non-monastic. These *sattrādhikāra* and *bhaktas* spent their life in celibacy. In this context the learned speaker discussed monasticism and monastic *sattras*—their special features, their gradually decreased number in comparison to ancient days. He also discussed structure and components of Monastic *sattras*. Consequently, he stated nine types of *bhakti* which are constantly practised in these *sattras*. Generally he focussed on the cultural activities practised in the *sattras*. With reference to this context he also discussed the problems faced by *sattras* in recent times.

Last speaker of the Session was Dr. Sashadhar Acharya who discussed on **Socio-Cultural Impact of Orissa in Assam**. According to Dr. Acharya fundamental tenets of Śāstra always remain same in all the regions of country, be it Orissa or Assam. He discussed various facets of social and cultural activities which are running in parallel simultaneously in Orissa and Assam. Social practices and traditional thoughts also remain similar, only terminologies used for the same are different, e.g. *nāmghar* of Assam is almost reflection of *bhāgavataṭuṅgī* of Orissa or *Ojapali* of Assam may be called a counterpart of *pālāgayan* of Orissa. Concept and style of *kīrtana* are also similar in Assam and Orissa. Through demonstration he proved how *gotipua* of Assam and *chau* of Orissa are internally connected. In both the regions style of male dancer is vigorous (somewhat forceful) whereas female dancer's style remains delicate. Utilisation of various musks are similar practice in *Ankia-bhaona* as well as in *Chau*.

After these three lectures Chairperson Prof. K.K. Sharma discussed on all the lectures and offered illuminating comments on the

same. The academic session ended with vote of thanks extended by Dr. Sushama Jatoo.

Evening programme was arranged at Svatantrata Bhavan of Banaras Hindu University at 6.30 p.m. In this session two dance-performers presented their dance-forms. At first Dr. Mallika Kandali presented Sattriya dance in two units (1) *slokor nāch* and (2) *aṣṭanāyikā* of Alaṅkara Śāstra.

Next to it, Ms. Sharodi Saikia performed *Ankia bhaona*; with her full group she presented *sattriya* with monks of Kamalabari Sattrā and *raṅga-daśāvatāra* with melodious songs and musical accompaniments.

At the beginning of this performance Dr. Sushama Jatoo gave an introduction about the programme. After this performance the artists were introduced before the audience and felicitated accordingly. The function ended with vote of thanks extended by Dr. Vishwanath Pandey.

(Pranati Ghosal)