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কলকাতার তবলা পরম্পরায় পণ্ডিত জ্ঞানপ্রকাশ ঘোষ — অজন্তা জানা	7	• A comparative study of Indian classical music with Bargeet prevalent in Barpeta sattra — Jinti Das	54
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Borgit in Sattriya Dance

Dimple Salkia

Introduction :

Assam is widely famed because of its age-old traditions of music, dance and drama. Ankiya Naat having its religious perspective was associated with neo-Vaishnavite movement initiated by Sankardeva in 15th -16th Century in Assam. Yakshagana of Karnataka, Bhagawat Mela of Andhra Pradesh, Rasleela of Uttar Pradesh are some of the forms that can be described as the Assamese cognate of Ankiya Naat. The dances and music that employed in the Naats by Sankardeva are today known as Sattriya dance and music.

Sankardeva's contributions towards Assamese culture and literature is tremendously commendable. Besides composing various dramas (Naat) like *Kaliya damana*, *Parijata harana*, *Keligopala* etc, theological works on *Bhakti* such as *Gunamala*, *Bhakti Pradipa*, *Anadi Patana*, Rendering of different books like parts of *Bhagawata* (*Ajamilopakhyaana*, *Amrita-Manthana*, *Adi part* etc), *Ramayana* (*Uttarakanda*), he was a great lyrical composer too that includes *Borgits*, *Bhatimas*, *Poyers* etc. Music plays a significant role in the neo-Vaishnavite movement, laying much emphasis on *Shravana* (listening) and *Kirtana* (singing) from among the nine forms of *Bhakti*. Sankardeva composed various devotional songs to draw people to the gist of his Vaishnavite faith and he was successful in spreading the message of *Bhakti* in lyrical form. He asked his spiritual successor Madhavdeva to write *Borgits* and accordingly he composed devotional songs by following the footsteps of his Guru. The devotional songs composed by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva in the 15th-16th Century are ascribed as '*Borgit*'. Later poet's composition of such similar songs are not referred as *Borgit*. According to the *Charit Puthis*, "Sankardeva and Madhavdeva referred to their songs as *git* only" (Goswami, *Bargit: A musicological exploration*, 2001, p.1). The prefix '*Bor*' (*Bawr*) must have been added later by the disciples of the two Vaishnava saints. Two reasons can be concluded for the addition of such prefix *Bor*. The first one is its place of importance in the religious rituals.

They are sung in a proper decretals style in the *Mahapurusiya Sampradaya* (sect). The other being the non-manipulation of these songs by the provincial traditional decree. The term *Borgit* means 'great songs'

or the 'celestial songs'. "Kirtinath Sarma Bordoloi opines *Borgit* as the crown pearls of music" (Gogoi, 2014). They are sung in congregational prayer in the *Sattras* and village *Namghars*. It is known from the *Charit Puthis* that Sankardeva himself composed 240 songs out of which 34 are extant, the rest being lost in the fire. On the other hand, Madhavdeva composed 191 songs, out of which only 157 are present. A total of 191 *gits* are in vogue today. Sankardeva written his first *Borgit* '*Mana Meri Rama Caranahl lagu*' on his first pilgrimage at Badrikashram.

Language:

The lineage of the Assamese poetry is always drawn from the *Bauddha Caryagits* prevalent between 8th-12th Centuries by different scholars and archaeologists. *Ragas* such as *Baradi*, *Mallari*, *Dhanasri* are found in the *Charya Pada* Stanzas that concur with the *Kamarupa* music. It is claimed that the language of the *Charya Padas* is closer to that of the ancient Assamese language and this context adds weight as Buddhist poets like Meennath, Gorakhnath belonged to Kamarupa. The language employed in these devotional songs are in *Brajavali*. The scholars believed that "it was never the language of any people of any place and time. Instead it was an artificially designed idiom that has been known in the Sattriya circles as *Brajavali*" (Goswami, *Bargit: A musicological exploration*, 2001, p.30). There are differences in opinion among the scholars regarding the formation of the artificial poetic idioms. It is believed that the *Brajavali* is an admixture of *Maithili*, *Assamese*, *Bengali*, *Hindi*, *Udiya*, *Newari* and *Brajabhasa*.

Subject-matter and Rasas:

The *Borgits* of both the saints excels in poetic beauty. They generally reveal the theme of Lord Krishna. These devotional songs mainly manifest the *bhakti rasa* along with the *viraha* (separation of gopis from Krishna). Sankardeva beautifully express the Vedantic Philosophy in his *Borgit* composition. His *Borgit* revolve around the supreme deity and ultimately attaining salvation by chanting the name of god. *Paramartha tatva* (the ultimate divinity) is the main subject-matter of his *Borgit*. He describes in his *Borgits* the uselessness of transitory life attached with worldly desires. Madhavdeva's *Borgit* depict the deeds of child Krishna containing *vatsalya*

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rasa. His *Borgits* mainly convey the *chora*, *chaturi* and *leela* themes. Both the saints never express the love of Radha and Krishna. These are free from the conjugal love. According to different themes the *Borgits* are divided into the following categories —

1. *Viraha* (Separation)
2. *Virakti* (Annoying)
3. *Chora* (Stealing)
4. *Chaturi* (Clever)
5. *Leela* (Divine sports)
6. *Paramartha* (to attain the knowledge of Supreme being)

These six subject-matter are the six basic sentiments or *rasas* of *Borgit*. The *leela* theme *Borgits* are again sub-divided into six classes —

1. *Jagaran* (Mother Yasodha wake up child Krishna)
2. *Chalan* (Going to graze the cows)
3. *Khelan* (Playing with the milkmaids)
4. *Nritya* (Dancing)
5. *Chora* (Stealing butter-milk)
6. *Chaturi* (cleverness)

According to B.C Mahanta there is not even the slightest present of *Karuna*, *Bibhatsa* and *Raudra* in the *Borgits*. Besides this, the other six *rasas* are present. Among this six *rasas* *Veer*, *Bhayanaka* and *Hasya* are observed in scanty. *Shringar* and *Adbhuta* are clearly noticed (Mahanta, 1992, p.10). But the pivotal theme of *Borgit* is *bhakti* and the main *rasa* is *bhakti*.

Ragas And Talas :

Raga (raag) define the traditional pattern of musical notes which express different moods in a musical piece. There are 36 *ragas* of *Borgits* viz *Aowari*, *Dhanashri*, *Suhai*, *Basanta*, *Sri*, *Kedar*, *Gauri*, *Natmallar*, *Mahur*, *Tur-Basanta*, *Kalyan*, *Bhupali*, *Belowar*, *Baradi*, *Kau* etc. *Tala* spelled as *Taal* is define as musical meter or rhythmic beat that measures musical time. It is represented as hand clapping. The *raga* is generally mentioned at the top but no *tala* is indicated in the *Borgits* except the "*Sadachandar gita*" of Sankardeva. The *Sadachandar gita* determines the *tala* but why he used the term *Sadachandar* is not ascertain. "A *bargita* does not always have to keep rhythm in its singing. When an individual Vaishnava pours out his devotion in public or in a domestic temple in the measures of a *bargita*, he does not generally submit to the control of rhythmic beats. At other times, especially in congregations, when one man or a group of individuals performs a *bargita*, *tala* is to be maintained. The adept knows what such rhythm is to be adopted in executing

a particular melody. The *Aowari* *raga* is commonly timed to *yati-man*, *Kalyana* to *Kharman*, and so on. In the case of each of the three *bargitas*, known as *sadachandra gita*, three *talas* are successively prescribed" (Neog, 1998, p.278). Another important aspect of the *Borgits* is that no *raginis* are used. This may be due to the fact that "no female principle is to be found in the religious system of Sankardeva" (<http://atributetosankardeva.org>, 2008). In a *Borgit* a *tala* comprises three parts —

1. *Ga-man* or *Mul Bajona* (main *bol* repeated several times)
2. *Ghat* (interim completion to a *tala*)
3. *Cok* (*ghat* is played after a *cok* to indicate final completion of a *tala*)

The *talas* employed in *Borgits* vary from *Sattri* to *Sattri*. Some of them are *Ektali*, *Jyoti*, *Paritala*, *Suta*, *Sutkala*, *Kharman* etc.

Instruments :

The main instruments played with *Borgit* in the ritual performances of *Sattras* are the *Khol* (Percussion instrument) and The *Taal* (Cymbals, Idiophones). The same instruments are used while doing a *Borgit* presentation on the proscenium stage. Used of *Flute*, *Tanpura* have also been observed.

Presentation Style :

In traditional style the *Borgits* are sung in prayer songs. The *Borgits* form an indispensable part of *Nama-Kirtana* in the *Sattri* circles. They are grouped together and sung at different hours of the day. There are specific restrictions regarding which *raga* is to be sung in which part of the day. Traditionally, the rules are —

1. Morning *ragas*: *Ahir*, *Shyam*, *Kau* etc
2. Afternoon *ragas*: *Gauri*, *Basanta*, *Sri*, *Dhanashri* etc
3. Evening *ragas*: *Aowari*, *Belowar*, *Kedar* etc
4. First part of night *ragas*: *Suhai*, *Sindhura*, *Kanara* etc
5. Second part of night *ragas*: *Bhupali*, *Kamod* etc

At the very beginning of *Prasanga*, *Borgit* has to be sung set in that *raga* but without maintaining any time beat by the *bhakats* and after that *ghosa* written by Sankardeva or Madhavdeva is followed. It starts generally with *Guru ghat* (playing of the *Khol*) followed by *Alapa* starting with the words like *ri-ta-na-na-na-hari*, *rama*, *hereri*, *hauri* etc.

Mostly the *Guru ghat* and the *Rag Talani* are played in every *Sattras*. In *Rag Talani*, "the chief *gayan* of the group initiates the singing of a *raga* of *bargit* suitable

for the hour.

Subsequently the group joins the chief gayan in the singing and there follows a choral elaboration of the raga" (Goswami, *bargit : A Musicological Exploration*, 2001, p.18).

Borgits are generally sung in two ways, with *tala* and without *tala*. When a *Borgit* is sung with one *tala* or more *talas* is known as *Bandha raga* while it is sung without *tala* is known as *Mela raga* (Baruah, 2017, p.6). Pabitraran Goswami cites, "these epithets have nothing to do with the restriction or otherwise of rhythm" (Goswami, *Bargit : A musicological exploration*, 2001, p.20). The *Borgits* in the routine rituals of *Nama-Kirtana* in the *Sattras* and *Namghars* are sung in the *Mela ragas*. The *Mela ragas* starts with the resonance of *Govind, Raam, Gopal* etc. while the *Bandha ragas* starts with *Hereri, tanena, hauri* etc.

The *Sattriya* dances are broadly divided into two categories –

1. Dance numbers in *Ankiya Naat*
2. Independent dance numbers

The *Borgits* and *Ankiya gits* both are employed in *Sattriya* dance. In *Jhumura nritya* (male dance) the *Borgit* is employed in the *gitar* part sing in *bandha raga*. The dancer keep the rhythm in the *ga-man* and dances in the *bhangani* and *cok* part.

Uddhava Chalahu Gokula Lal

Hamu Bine Gopir Tilaka Jug Jal

(Sankardeva, *Borgit in Sri raga*) (*Bandha raga*)

Similarly, in *Chali nritya* (female dance) both *Borgits* and *Ankiya gits* are employed. The *gitar* part of *Chali* is danced with a *Borgit*. First the rhythm is sustained by foot movements and no dance is performed in the *ga-man* part, while in *ghat* and *cok* part the dancer dances. At the completion of *cok* part the *git* comes to end.

JashomatI pekhite nayana Jural

Jagajan-jivana bhakata paramadhana

(Madhavdeva, *Borgit in Bhupali raga*) (*Bandha raga*)

In *Nadubhangi nritya* (Male dance) the same performance style is followed as *Chali* and *Jhumura* but here instead *Bandha raga, Mela ragas* are used.

Ab Sakhi Pekho Madana Gopala
(Madhavdeva, *Borgit in Saranga raga*) (*Mela raga*)

Traditionally, the dance numbers like *Jhumura, Nadubhangi, Bhojan Bahar* are all performed in special occasions in the *Sattras* without employing any *abhinaya* in *Borgit*. But today as a performing art form on the proscenium stage, *abhinaya* is performed in the *Borgit*. In *gitar* part of any dance number a *Borgit* is depicted with *abhinaya*, while playing the *ghat* and *cok* the performer danced instead of *abhinaya*. Moreover, different choreographies have been incorporated in different ways in a *Borgit*. One such widely vogue is presenting *sanchari abhinaya* in between the couplets of a *Borgit*. The *git* is represented with *rasa* and *bhava* by the performer. But whatever the dancer depicted it ultimately merge in *bhakti rasa*.

Conclusion :

Borgit is an indispensable part of the *Sattriya* rituals and an integral part of *Sattriya* dance. Till today, they are sung in the beginning of every *Nama Prasanga* and no *abhinaya* is represented when dance numbers are performed as ritual part in the *sattriya* occasions. On the other hand, a *Borgit* is represented with *abhinaya* on stage in accordance with the theme of the lyrics with different *rasas* and *bhavas*. Visualisation of the themes of a *Borgit* are extensively vogue today and forms an important part of the *Sattriya* Repertoire.

Whatever may be the *bhava* of a *Borgit*, it ultimately merges in *bhakti*. These *Borgits* proved to be one of the strongest vehicles of propagation of *bhakti* faith in the neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam..

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