



Triennial Committee *Bhaona* of Charaibahi of Morigaon District in the form of Environmental Folk Art

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ABSTRACT: Environmental folk art is an elaborative field study of folk culture. The birth of environmental art or performing art depends upon the cultural sense of a society. In one word, society is the patron of folk environmental art. The environmental art is one of the specific parts of north eastern cultural aspect.

In Assam *Bhaona* is one of the environmental arts performed with traditional musical characteristics in specific moments. The continual history of Assamese drama art started from *Ankianat* introduced by Mahapurush Sankardev. Though, Sankardev started drama art by Chinchayatra, but prior to Sankardev, various folk drama programme was introduced in Assam. In the discussed article efforts have been made to discuss various objective such as the source of historical environmental arts of Charaibahi region of Morigaon district, Assam. The triennial committee *Bhaona* festival which has already crossed glorious 150 years is the significant cultural document of Charaibahi region. Efforts have also been made as a whole pertaining to the fact, how the committee *Bhaona* of Chariabahi region has been able to bind unitedly the various people irrespective of caste and creed apart from a consolidated study on place of temple, rehearsal technic and *pandal* formation.

The triennial Committee *Bhaona* helps in development of Shankarikala Kristi which not only reflects the life of Assamese community but also convey the messages in all India level that it is also a reflection of political and social lifestyle.

Key Words: Mahapurush Sankardev, Ankianat, Bhaona, Folk culture, Pandal, Committee Bhaona, Khel

0.0 Introduction:

Environmental folk art is an elaborative field study of folk culture. The birth of environmental art or performing art depends upon the cultural sense of a society. In one word, society is the patron of folk environmental art. Though scholars opined that dance, song and drama are the part of folk environmental art, but some people wanted inclusion

of folk talk and folk song in folk environmental art which is performed with physical gesture. Dr. Nobin Chandra Sharma opined that actually the environmental art transforms basic or written art into a distinct form. The environmental art is one of the specific parts of north eastern cultural aspect. Environmental art is the reflection of traditional music or acting performed in perfect form. Music-dance-drama are within the ambit of environmental art. Actually, performance of an acting which is complete with physical gesture is the environmental art.

Environmental art can be classified into three categories namely-a) song, b) dance and c) drama. The refined form of song is the dance and drama is the creation of dance. Hence, a deep relationship prevails among song, dance and drama.

Bhaona is one of the environmental arts performed with traditional musical characteristics in specific moments. The continual history of Assamese drama art started from *Ankianat* introduced by Mahapurush Sankardev. Though, Sankardev started drama art by *Chinhayatra*, but prior to Sankardev, various folk drama programme was introduced in Assam. If the meaning of the *Bhaona* is observed, it is found that *Bhaona* is the performance of posture -thinking of one person by another person.

In the discussed article efforts have been made to discuss various objectives such as the source of historical environmental arts of charaibahi region of Morigaon district. Efforts have also been made as a whole pertaining to the fact, how the committee *Bhaona* of Charaiabahi region has been able to bind unitedly the various people irrespective of caste and creed apart from a consolidated study on place of temple, rehearsal technic and *pandal* formation.

0.01 History of Charaibahi region:

The entire Charaibahi is a populated region situated in the northeast side of Morigaon district. The charaibahi begins from Bokultol region which exists in the middle of the Morigaon-Nagaon connected road which is 12 kilometres away from the east of Morigaon District and 60 kilometers away from the west of Nagaon district. For convenient transportation, one bus stand also exists in the Bokultol and Charaibahi can be visited via Dhing connected road which is just 2 kilometer away from the northern side of the bus stand. The people of several communities such as Ahom, Konch, Chutia, Heera, Koibarta, Tiwa etc. have been residing amicably in this region apart from establishing various institutions. The place known as “Chandrapur” has become the birth place of all these institutions. The *Nath* temple, Sankar temple, state health centre, Central library and a Boriali temple are located in the western direction of this Chandrapur. The traditionally triennial committee *Bhaona* are being organised in these temples. Though the majority of the people of Charaibahi belongs to Nath and Yogi community but all the other community such as Chutia, Ahom, Kooch, Kaibarta, Tiwa, Heera etc, jointly participate in the triennial committee *Bhaona*.

0.02 Evolution of Committee Bhaona:

The triennial committee *bhaona* festival is the significant cultural document of charaibahi region. Sankarikala Kristi is the universal organization of maintaining the unity and harmony. It has been learnt from the elders that there are evidences to show that the flow of main stream of this environmental art has been continuing in Charaibahi since 1885. An incident of British rule is involved towards the birth of committee *bhaona*. Prior to the nineteenth century India was under the control of British East India company. Due

to mis-governance of the East India Company, especially for Doctrine of lapse introduced by Lord Dalhousie, the Sepoy Mutiny started in the year 1857 throughout India; consequently the role of East India Company came to end. Since, India was under the direct control of British government, Queen Victoria signed a charter on 1st November, 1858 for the satisfaction of the Indians declaring that – “all the people will be treated equally irrespective of religion, class and caste by the British rule and the competent Indian will also get the employment opportunity in the higher post”. It was also declared that, amnesty will be granted to all except those who were involved directly in massacre caused during sepoy mutiny.

This declaration of Queen Victoria delighted all the Indians and as a mark of welcome Indian people celebrated the festival of joy throughout India and like various parts of Assam, all the people of Charaibahi irrespective of different caste, class and community also jointly organized cultural activities like *Ankia Bhaona*, *Ojapali* etc. to honour Queen Victoria.

0.03 Story behind the nomenclature of Committee *Bhaona*:

The festival that thrilled the people from youth to elder is the committee *Bhaona* of Charaibahi. A committee was constituted to manage conveniently the festival organised on regional basis. The *Bhaona* was managed by a committee as such the *Bhaona* is still popularly known as “*Committee Bhaona*”.

0.04 The place and limitation of Committee *Bhaona*:

Though initially the Committee *Bhaona* was organized every year but subsequently it has been organized triennially. The triennial committee *Bhaona* organised in the Autumnal (Saradiya) *Rass Purnima* has completed glorious 150 years in the year 2010.

The triennial committee *Bhaona* was organized in the public ‘Sankar temple premises’ and ‘Nath Temple Premises’ situated 10 kilometers away from Morigaon town, but subsequently, as the number of villages and Clans (*Khel*) increased due to rise of population for which the committee *Bhaona* had to be shifted to ‘Nath Temple’ premises.

In the “*Committee Bhaona*” people of twenty eight villages participates. Prior to one to two months of Committee *Bhaona*, the people of the gaons and clans perform rehearsal of *Ankia* drama in the evening time. Through this *Ankia* drama all the people of the society get involved in the love of the *Bhagabat* which creates a god centric feeling among them. After a joint procession organized in the evening by the people of Charaibahi irrespective of caste, creed and race, the auspicious ceremony of Committee *Bhaona* starts in the following morning. Book fair and an exhibition are organized adjacent to the place of ceremony in connection with the Committee *Bhaona*. The co-operation of various government departments and officials in this regard is highly appreciable. The items used in pandal and exhibition clearly express the artistic expertise of local artists. During the Committee *Bhaona* the endless joy touches each and every family of Charaibahi region. The hospitable people of Charaibahi feel self satisfaction in doing hospitality happily to the invited guest during this period.

0.05 The *Pandal* decoration of Committee *Bhaona*:

Attractive *Pandal* decoration is made for this colourful ceremony. Thousands of people construct *pandals* on their own in the public interest only to enjoy the *bhaona* together even in the technological era of twenty first century. This is an instance for all the

people of the state. The *pandal* is one of the attractions of Committee *Bhaona*. In round lotus flower shape, extremely beautiful *Mandap* is built. The *Lai Khuta* of the temple is erected in the *Ekadashi Tithi*. It is notable that every clan (*khel*) participated in the *Bhaona* receive land allotted in proportion to the number of people. Each *pandal* is constructed connecting to each other. A list containing the name of the *bhaona* to be performed by the different clans is affixed in front of every *Bhaona* place. The list having the name of the *bhaona* to be performed by the different clans (*Khel*) along with name of the each clan (*Khel*) is also posted in the main entrance for the convenience of the public. Two extremely beautiful entrance gate is constructed in the eastern and southern side of the temple apart from making an arrangement for entrance gate ahead of the Borbhogia Tiniali road towards Charaibahi. In all these main gates, the name of clans (*Khel*) and the name of the respective *bhaona* to be performed by them are also mentioned in a list. Each and every *mandap* is beautifully decorated with flower after the *Chandra-tap* (canopy) is hanged. As the day ends in the heart of Charaibahi, the *pandal* is converted into an extremely delightful place by electrification.

0.06 Acting Style:

All the people of Charibahi and Morigaon district being culturally rich, organize the *bhaona* by contributing their labour, own savings and hard work. In the preceding night of *bhaona*, every clans (*khel*) sing *Ghosha* or *Gandha* after completing the rehearsal. On the day of *bhaona*, the main programme is inaugurated with *Usha Kirtan*. On that day, every clan (*khel*) offers *Sarai* in the main temple apart from offering two *Sarais* complete with *Prasad*. Thereafter, attending their respective *mandap*, the *gayan-bayan* of each clan (*khel*) jointly starts *khul prasanga* with reverberated *harinaam*. In the night, each clan (*Khel*) get their *Sutradhar* enter at the same time. The *Gayans-Bayans* get the actor (*Bhaoriya*) of their *khel* danced, returned to their *khel* after circumambulation once around the temple. On that day as many as twenty eight numbers of *Bhaonas* are performed by the people of each village. On the day of *bhaona* the Charaibahi is crowded with people. Dialogues of actors, acting, and dresses jointly converts the *bhaona* place into a *baikunthapuri*. Before dawn, the *bhaona* comes to an end. Each and every *khel* comes out of the *pandal* along with their actors (*Bhaoriya*). One of the attractive ending scene of the *bhaona* is the fight occurred within the phalanx of troops. However, the *Bhaona* like *Abhimanyuvadh*, *NaariParva* etc. are performed within the phalanx of troop. The expression of acting performed within the phalanx of troops is really attractive. Mentionable that the *bhaona* ends with the prayer of well being (*Kalyan Khorman*) made by all *khel* after the ending of acting for their inadvertent error that might have occurred during the *bhaona*. The Charaibahi teeming with people turns into holy place (*Tirtha puri*) of great union of people on that day.

0.07 Role of Committee *Bhaona* in unifying various tribes:

The majestic environment art "Triennial Committee *Bhaona*" prosperous with the Shankarikala Kristi of Charaibahi of Morigaon district is a glorious institution for maintaining harmony among various tribes. This festival of Charaibahi Mouza, which is running since the day of enthronement of Victoria maintains the significance of harmony in Charaibahi region and of both Morigaon and Nagaon district. This festival plays a specific role in maintaining solidarity and unity among various tribes of a large area as a whole. Charaibhai is full of different tribes like *Nath (yogi)*, *Tiwa (Lalung)*, *Ahom*, *Chutia*,

Kalita, Brahmin, Heera etc. Despite of having own characteristics of different tribes, the "Committee *Bhaona*" festival plays a vital role in maintaining a pleasant and favorable cultural, socio-economic, spiritual and political environment among various tribes of the region. The spiritual inspiration provided by the Committee *Bhaona* strengthens the thread of love-affection and solidarity among the various tribes. The people never hesitates to contribute voluntarily for celebrating *Bhaona* despite plagued with various problems. The main objective of the festival is to strengthen the unity, solidarity and the pillars of harmony of the assamese people respecting the ideal of the Guru, hence all the people fully co-operate in the Committee *Bhaona* irrespective of caste, creed and race. It can be said that the Committee *Bhaona* as a messenger of harmony has succeeded in binding the people of the region with the thread of unity.

0.08 Characteristics of Committee *Bhaona*:

Committee *Bhaona* is majestic of its' own characteristics. The Committee *Bhaona* is involved in the practice of *Shankarikalakristi*. One of the notable characteristics of committee *Bhaona* is the presentation of *gayan –bayan, sutradhar's* dance, entry dance of Krishna or Ram and of various *bhaoria* (Actor) in their respective *pandals* by all the parties by observing the rules and regulations of Ankia *Bhaona* of the Guru simultaneously in a specific period. Winding up of Committee *Bhaona* by circumambulating the main *mandap* with a prayer of *KalyanKhurman* by the *bhaoria* of all *khel* as soon as all the dramas performed in the *mandap* are completed is also a mentionable characteristic of Committee *Bhaona*. Like the *Barechaharia Bhaona* of Jamugurihat, the committee *Bhaona* of Charaibahi is also majestic of its' own characteristics. The people of Charaibahi have attained the success in their socio-economic and cultural objectives apart from religious objectives through this colorful *Bhaona*. On the day of *bhaona* in the *pandal*, five to six hundred *gayan -bayan*, artist and *Bhaoria's* (Actor) acting get the people immerge in devotion apart from getting thousands of fascinated viewers creating a spectacular environment is a unique scene which is not available anywhere except Assam.

0.09 Conclusion:-

The triennial Committee *Bhaona* is undoubtedly an important environmental art. It helps in development of *Shankarika Kristi* through both visual and audio means. It substantiates the performance art of this *bhaona* that the *bhaona* not only reflects the life of Assamese community but also convey the messages in all India level that it is also a reflection of political and social lifestyle.

The breeze of technological development has also brought changes in our heritage Triennial Committee *bhaona* of Charaibahi. The *bhaona*, once celebrated under the lamp of *Nahar guti* and kerosene is now celebrated with the colorful illumination of electric lamp.

The remarkable cultural document Committee *bhaona* of Charaibahi is the brightest sign of great unity of the people. Like the *Barechaharia Bhaona* of Jamugurihat, the committee *Bhaona* of Charaibahi is also majestic of its' own characteristics. Focusing this environmental art, a healthy cultural heritage is emerging apart from lots of contribution in the socio-economic field of the people in the region. Becoming a center point of attraction of various region, the Committee *bhaona* has converted Charaibahi into one of the tourist places of Assam.

Respect, devotion and purity are the characteristic virtues of Committee *Bhaona*. Constant vigil should be maintained so that dignity of this great event is not degraded. It is mentionable that the *Krishnadance*, *Gupidance*, *Sutradhari* dance, *gayan -Bayan*, warfare, dancing art at the time of entry and exit and practice of this art performed in the *bhaona* provides knowledge on various types of physical training to every participants. On the otherhand, the manufacturing of the ornaments, colour-cosmetics, *Su-Mukha*, dresses, articles of warfare, musical instruments etc. used by the *Bhaorias* (actors) not only open the scope of self-employment by employing the new generation but it can also be thought of as a contribution in the socio-economic development. The technological developement has also touched the field of committee *Bhaona* of traditional Charaibahi like the sun of epochal transition. The social systems should be completely conscious so that the old tradition of committee *bhaona* is not lost. In order to keep our own tradition, culture, language etc. alive, each and every Assamese should continue his/her own efforts and every Assamese should play an active role in maintaining the traditional trend of presentation. At the end, it can be reiterated that by losing one's own existence, no caste can gain any permanence. Consciousness should be there to attract the spectators towards *Ankia Bhaona* by continuing the traditional trend of acting through environment and performance art of this *Bhaona* for ages. The *bhaona* committee should work harder to place the Committee *bhaona* of art-culture lover Charaibahi in the all Indian backdrop. However, the way the dedicated efforts, inspiration of work, artistic mentality of the public of Charaibahi has been making the committee *Bhaona* ever radiant, prosperous and majestic, such startling possibility cannot be denied in the future also.

Footnote:-

1. Sharma, Nabin. "Bharotor uttarpurbanchalar poribashya kola" P: 5
2. Hussain Ismail. "Charaibahir Committee bhoana aitiya aru Baichitra" P:25

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