

An Introduction to the folk dances of Assam

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ABSTRACT: Assam is one of the eight sister state of north east India known for its rich cultures and diverse population, the culture of Assam is a fusion of Indo -Burmese, Mongolian and Aryan influences. Assamese culture has been influenced by each of its rulers except the British rule which ended the AHOM dynasty. It is often said that the folk dance is the best manifestation of the culture and tradition of a particular place. The best example to this statement can be seen in the various ethnic dance forms that are prevalent in the different corners of Assam. In this study I am going to introduce some of the folk dance of Assam in descriptive method.

Keywords: Assam, Assamese culture, Folk dance of Assam.

I. METHODOLOGY:

The present study of folk dances of Assam is presented in the descriptive method. For discussion and analysis I have collected both primary and secondary data. For primary data collection I used some books related Assamese culture. Secondary data are collected from articles and books.

II. INTRODUCTION:

Assam is the land of diverse cultures. The people of the enchanting state of Assam is an inermixture of various racial stocks such as Mongoloid, Indo-Burmese, Indo Iranian and Aryan. The Assamese culture is a rich and exotic tapestry of all these races evolved through a long assimilative process. The natives of the state of Assam are known as ASOMIYA (Assamese) which is also the state language of Assam. The state has large number of tribes, each unique in its tradition, culture, dress and exotic way of life. Diverse tribes like Bodo, Kachari, Karbi, Miri, Mishimi, Rabha etc co exist in Assam, Most tribes have their own language through Assamese is the principle language. In Assam there are many folk dances in different caste, tribe and community. A

Folk dance is a dance developed by people that reflect the life of the people of a certain country or region. Not all the ethnic dances are folk dance. The term "ethnic" and "traditional" are used when it is required to emphasize the cultural roots of the dance.

Description: The different dance forms in the state can be broadly categorized under two headings, classical dance and folk dance.

Folk dances of Assam:

Bihu Dance:

Bihu dance is the most popular folk dance of Assam and as its very name suggests is related to the Bihu festival, which is celebrated with pomp and glory within the state. The festival is mainly a celebration of the different phases of cultivation and is observed by all the Assamese. There are three types of Bihu festivals are celebrated in Assam - Bohag Bihu, Magh Bihu, Kati Bihu. During Bohag Bihu apart from Dhol and Pepa other traditional instruments used in the dance include tala (a cymbal), gogona (a reed and bamboo instrument) and toka (a bamboo clapper). Bihu geet sung during the festive season, accompany Bihu dance and have become almost like a heritage for the people of the state, the lyrics being handed down from one generation to another.

Jhumur Nach (dance):

This is a typical folk dance performed by the tea community in the state, locally called "Chah Baganor Jhumur Nach" or the jhumur dance of tea garden. Boys and girls hold each other waist and dance to the tunes of the jhumur dance with exact precision of foot work. Watching them sway to the tunes of the song is indeed a very pleasant experience. The male members wear long traditional dresses and keep the rhythm with few traditional instruments. Generally a drum, hung on shoulder, a flute and a pair of Taal. The dance gets

its name from the cluster of bells worn round the ankles, which make a changing noise. It is believed that jhumur was originally a mean of recreation between phases of tedious agricultural work.

Bagurumba:

Bagurumba is a folk dance of indigenous bodo tribe in assam and north east India. It is a traditional dance which is traditionally inherent to one generation to another generation. The Bodo women perform the bagurumba dance with their colourful dokhna, (jwmgra(fasma) and aronai. The Bagurumba dance is excepted as main traditional dance of bodo people. But there are some other important dance like-Bardwisikhla dance, Mwsaglangnai dance, Dahal tungri sibnai dance, Sikri-Sikla dance and so on. All these dances are known as kristi dance.

Ali Ai Ligang Dance:

This dance is highly popular among the Mishing community of Assam. This festival is interlinked with agriculture and is celebrated during the Ahu Paddy cultivation. They also perform the dance to praise their deity- the Mother Earth.

Ali means root or seed, Ai means fruit and Ligang means sowing. This festival took place during the months of February and March. Tree cutting is forbidden during this season and certain exotic dishes are cooked. The dance form expresses the ups and downs of the man's life and is aptly portrayed. The musical instruments used mainly are flutes, drums, gong and so on.

Barpeta's Bhortal Nritya:

It is one of the popular traditional dances of Assam which was developed by a well known Satriya artist Narhari Burha Bhakat. It is an extension of sankari culture. In this dance six to ten dancers equipped with cymbals perform to the first bit of "7hiya Nom" and produces a number of attractive and colourful formations by displaying the cymbals. The dance is performed during the festival season like Bihu. It can be seen in and around Barpeta and in the stages of Guwahati Bihu sanmilan. It is basically performed in groups. It is performed to a very fast beat which is known as "7hiya Nom". People of all age group can enjoy this dance. Some of the best performances of the dance can be seen during Bihu festival when the stage performances held in Guwahati and Barpeta. The "Barpeta's Bhortal Nritya" is mirror image of the rich cultural heritage of Assam.

Deodhani:

Deodhani dance is a folk dance from the Indian state of Assam. It is a solo or group performance. It essentially comprises three or four women. This dance form is associated with the worship of the snake Goddess Manasa or Maroi. A deodhani dance is generally performed to the accompaniment of songs sung by an oja, an assamese traditional chorus leader, during the dance.

Dhuliya and Bhawariya:

It is generally accompanying bhawuas, i.e. theatrical performances of the type of miracle plays of Europe in the middle ages. These dances verging on acrobatics are performed to the tunes of vigorous music provided with drums and cymbals. Masks are sometime used.

III. CONCLUSION:

Folk dance of assam has a long and diverse history. Traditional folk dances performed at social functions by people with little or no professional training often to traditional music or music based on traditional music. There are number of modern dances, such as Hip Hop dance, that evolved spontaneously, but the term 'folk dance' is generally not applied to them and the term street dance or vernacular dance are used instead. The term 'folk dance' is reserved for dances which are to a significant degree bound by tradition and originated in the times when the distinction existed between the dances of common folk and the dances of the high society. It is very important to preserve this traditional folk cultures. It will obviously can enrich our cultural heritage and new generation will know their real culture in future.

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