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The Transformation of the Custom of Bihu Dance Prevalent among the Koiborta Community of Nagaon District

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Abstract--In a folk society, the conventionally prevalent dance is known as folk dance. However, in recent times, the idea of 'Folk' has changed, and along with it, the changing notion in terms of folk dance is also a natural phenomenon. In this context, among the Koibortas residing in Nagaon, the as prevalent folk dance such as Bihu dance associated with the festival of Bihu and the 'Satriya' Or 'Sankari Nitya' propounded by Sankardeva is worth mentioning. Through the lenses of this dance, the specimen of their cultural diversity, unity, integrity, and harmony is displayed. In the bandwagon of time, the culture inclines towards modernization; just like that, the two types, as mentioned earlier of folk dance, are widely spread among the Koiborta community of Nagaon. Some of the community members have embraced the conventional traditional, and it also has fallen into the whole of modernity and witnessing a transformation.

Keywords--Nagaon district, folk dance, custom, transformation.

Introduction

As a custom folk dance among the Koiborta community, the Bihu dance associated with the Bihu festival is prevalent. Bihu dance is associated with the agro-based seasonal celebration. Even though this dance is associated with Bohag Bihu, which is celebrated in a specific period to enjoy the moments through music and dance, the Koiborta community opts for Bihu dance to commemorate any joyful event moments of life spontaneously. However, the dance during the time of Bohag Bihu is different. In this folk dance, the youth groups of both male and female dance together, or sometimes the dance in two separate groups, in the open fields, on the bank of the river, or under the bunion tree in the flow of various folk musical instruments such as Dhul, Pepa, Taal,

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Toka, Gogona, etc. and in the rhythm of Bihu songs they groove and dance. (Journalist: Toramai Das,(85), Purani Teliya Gaon).

From the time Ahom reigns, Bihu dance reaches out to the households from its place of origin, i.e., open fields or jungles. Before this, Bihu dance has yet to receive recognition. But when the Ahom's brought Bihu to the household and offered the due gratitude, gradually, the community accepted the dance publicly, and from the first day of Bihu, the populace of the community-initiated to start to perform Husori on each house together (by the public here denotes the male members of the community only). After that, they perform Bihu dance tuning to the music of Bihu Geet & other musical instruments, the householder takes the blessings by offering a token amount. The performers' showers blessings to them, accept the token amount, and bid adieu—the householder who has a solid economic background welcomes the performers with delicious traditional cuisine and offers the token amount.

Bihu dance and song are gaining popularity among the Koiborto Community with such custom. That is why in the list of renowned drum players and the Bihu dancers of Assam, the youth of the Koiborto community holds a unique position. If we roll through the pre-independence era, we can witness that Drum player Orindom Das, Bihuwa Moimonto Tatinga Bora, and the Bihuwoti Senai Bora from Puronigudam are to specially mentioned. (Journalist: Rudrokanta Borauah (98) Puronigudam). When the Bihu dance was regarded as obscene by the British rulers and many known people of Assam tried their best to band Bihu dance, at the same time, a different section of people became vocal against it. Among those protesters who opposed the band on Bihu, Orindom Das, Bihuwa Moimonto Tatinga Bora, and the Bihuwoti Senai Bora were also there.

The Koiborto's of Nagaon who loves Bihu dance & songs from its core, at the current time also the custom folk dance is prevalent, but with the changing time there the impact of modernization can be seen in this folk dance; also transformation can be witnessed. The weave of change came during the reign of Ahom, and the second wave is seen during the era of independence. In 1951-52, Bihu came from the open-river banks to closed stages in the cities (Nath 40) when Radha Gobinda Baruah, for the first time in 1951-52, advocated bringing Bihu to the stage in the Latashil. Right after that in next period, all across the popularity of the modern stage, Bihu soared high, and gradually the popularity spread in all the communities across rural Assam.

Gradually instead of the open podiums of villages, the splendor of Bihu enriched in the modern stages. And with that, in this folk dance, a myriad of artificial instructions is seen. For example, the Koiborto's of Nagaon didn't need to adorn special dresses or ornaments earlier. Though wearing new clothes is a custom, so wearing the best attire they used to take part in the dance. The males used to wear Dutti and a shirt as per their capability and with a Gamusa around the neck, females also used to wear cotton, or Kahdi or Muga traditional dress. Embellish themselves with the outfit made of these materials they used to participate in Bihu dance with their friends and peers. (Journalist: Patoli Das(80)Nonoi). But with the changing era, i.e., approx from 1970's a necessity is seen on the wearing of Bihuwa-Bihuwoti. In the current stage Bihu, special attention on the attire has

become a requirement. E.g., The male performers Suriya, Gamosa, black or red upper wear preferably with black color at the back, red cloth adornment on the waist, and wearing Gamosa on the head becomes necessary.

On the other hand, the female performers wear Muga Sador Mekhela, Muga Blouse or Red blouse, Raw silk or Assam Silk Riha, Hasoti, etc. Besides, in terms of ornaments and make-up, they use traditional Assamese ornaments such as muthi kharu(traditional bangles) and hear adornments such as Kakoi and Gogona(even though they don't use them Kakoi or Gogona during the performance, but using them as hair atonement become necessary). Furthermore, rather than using live orchids' Kopuful' (*Rhynchostylis retusa*), there is a drive to use artificial orchids; rather than the organic henna, ready-made Mehendi, or a mixture of turmeric & lime is used on hands as alternatives.

Besides, in the current era, it is seen that the artists need to follow some artificial rules & regulations to perform Bihu dance. This situation arises in the 90s stage Bihu such as how many performances are to be in a group, how many male and female performers should be there, the time limit, caution towards entry & exit, etc. comes under the artist playbook, and performers require to be attentive to this regulation. Hence, when though for exhibition or competition, participating in Bihu dance following all these rules and regulations are now an unstated necessity. The rules and regulations have positive impacts; for example, when the artist wears the uniform attire, it attracts the audience's attention towards traditional dresses; besides, leaving the financial situation or cast or creed aside, it is offering a streamlined uniformity towards the art and offering a refined outlook.

It is also becoming successful in getting popular across the globe while grabbing the attention of international tourists. However, along with these positive outcomes, we cannot ignore the negative aspects. It is non-viable to one to shun the vitality of the thespian just like the dance and the music; the performers have particular importance in Bihu. But in the present time, the effect of globalization has bought a wave where rather than offering the original training to the community's children; the focus is more on using distasteful, readily available distorted Bihu songs to train the kids. The wave of artificiality that globalization has bought can be termed as a negative aspect among the Koiborto community of Nagaon district. In that way, adhering to both positive and negative aspects, the Bihu dance is broaching among the Koiborto community of Nagaon district.

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