

## APPENDIX I

### **Sattriya Nritya's Timeline- Information Collected from a personal conversation with Prof. Pradip Jyoti Mahanta on 15 January 2013**

1935-1938: The organisation *Prachin Kamrupi Nritya Sangha* in Shillong, the capital of Assam during the British rule was set up. Activities of the organisation started with organising programmes based on Sattriya Music, Dance and Theatre on various public platforms in and around Assam. Most of these initiatives were spearheaded by late Jibeshwar Goswami with the support of some of the activists and connoisseurs.

Late 1940s (before independence): There was a move to identify the traditions in the Sattras as a representation of Cultural Heritage of Assam (prior to independence, Shillong was the capital of Assam) by scholars and the elites.

1952: Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA)- Republic India's National Academy for music, dance and drama, is established by the then Ministry of Education. It sets up The National School of Drama in 1959. The first of the national institutions of dance -- Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy in Imphal and Kathak Kendra (National Institute of Kathak Dance) in New Delhi - were set up in 1964 respectively. National Projects of Support to Kuttiyattam - the age-old Sanskrit theatre of Kerala, Chhau dances of Eastern India and Sattriya traditions of Assam were launched subsequently.

1956: The first project was the documentation of *Borgeet* titled *Swararekhat Borgeet* (literally, *Borgeet* in notations)

1958: SNA set up a committee with Pro. V. Raghavan (Chennai, then Madras) as its Chairman to suggest to the Akademi the ways of promoting the Dance and theatre traditions like Odissi, Sattriya and Ankiya Bhaona. The committee recommended these traditions for the Akademi Awards. Dr. Maheswar Neog was a member of this expert committee. The setting up of the committee was a sequel to the National Seminar on Indian Dance held in 1956 under the auspices of SNA. The *Swararekhat Borgeet* was followed by *Sur Saptak* which was a documentation of the Rhythm in the Vaishnava Music of Assam

SNA also organises a Dance Seminar at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi between 30 March – 7 April. Over 350 artists representing various schools and styles of Indian dance and 40 scholars and critics participated in the seminar, besides observers from Ceylon, China and Nepal. At this time only 4 Dance forms were recognised as Classical Dance forms from India which were: Bharatnatyam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri. In this conference Prof. Neog made a presentation along with demonstration by Maniram Dutta Mukhtiyar. This was the first time that people outside India were exposed to this art form from the interiors of the north-eastern region of this country.

The conference constituted an expert committee to explore the possibility of exploring other traditions like Odissi and Sattriya. This committee held its first meeting in Madras (now Chennai) under the chairmanship of Dr. V. Raghavan in 1959. Prof. Neog was also a member of the committee. The meeting made a strong case towards Sattriya and recommended SNA to consider Sattriya exponents for the National Awards alongside Odissi.

1960s: SNA initiated cultural programmes through field research, documentation and popularisation of Sattriya music and dance in Majuli.

There were three very important edited volumes by Dr. Maheswar Neog published out of which the first two were supported by the SNA

1963: Maniram Dutta Mukhtiyar was awarded the 1<sup>st</sup> SNA Award for Sattriya but as an exponent of a “Traditiona” dance form (not Classical). The second award went to Gohan Chandra Goswami of Nikamul Sattria, Tezpur for Ankiya Bhaona.

Many Sattriya groups frequently performed on many national platforms. However, solo performances had yet not begun.

1970s: Meanwhile, women had begun to take part in the *Rasleela* in Garamur Sattria. Slowly women started to learn Sattriya Dance and Music. Indira P.P. Bora, a trained Bharatnatyam Dancer under Rukmini Devi Arundale at Kalakshetra came back to Assam and begun her initial training under Adhyapak Pradip Chaliha. Garima Hazarika initially trained in Manipuri became a disciple of Raseshwar Saikia Barbayan and later Ghanakanta Bora Barbayan.

1975: *Sattriya Dance and its Rhythm* was published by the Publication Board of Assam

1995: Prof. Maheswar Neog passed away.

Between 1996-1997, Dr. Pradip Jyoti Mahanta led SNA team to various Sattras in Majuli as well as other parts of Assam for documentation as a refresher tour. Sattriya Dance with growing momentum increasingly figured in various occasions and festivals inside and outside Assam. More and more young talents outside the Sattras took to learning of Sattriya Dance with training in various institutions.

1999: Dr. Bhupen Hazarika became the Chairman of SNA and was urged to take up the cause of recognition of Sattriya Dance as a classical tradition at the formal level. He asked the Govt. of Assam to prepare a vision statement. The Govt. Of Assam formed an expert Committee with Jatin Goswami, Dr. Jaganath Mahanta, Nabakamal Bhuyan as members and Dr. Pradip Jyoti Mahanta as the member convener. An exhaustive report with details of the history, stages of development and contemporary practices was prepared and submitted to the Govt. by February 2000. For this to happen, a series of workshops and seminars took place in Guwahati where participants and teachers from Sattras and outside participated.

18-20 January 2000: Seminar-cum-Festival of Sattriya Dance Tradition was organized by SNA, in collaboration with the Government of Assam, Guwahati.

14 November 2000: The General Committee of the SNA, in a meeting held at Guwahati, resolved to include Sattriya as a Major Dance Tradition of Indian Dances.

15 November 2000: This SNA resolution was publically announced in a highly attended programme of Sattriya Dance at Rabindra Bhawan by Jayanta Kastuar, the then secretary of the SNA.

15 December 2000: A workshop is organized at Sankaradeva Kalakshetra, Guwahati to discuss the dynamics of the Sattriya performance for a proscenium stage and solo recitals. It is attended by 20 participants from all across the Sattras of Assam.

February 2001: This is shared with 250 participants in a two day workshop.

## APPENDIX II

### Personal conversation with Bayanacharya Ghanakanta Bora Muktiyar, Sangeet Natak Akademi and Padmashri awardee on 9 May 2015

**Shilpi:** What does Sattriya mean to you?

**Adhyapak:** Actually it is “from Sattrā” and it means where we take God’s name and sing in his praise, where there is sat-sanga. It has been told in the Bhagavata. Where there is sat-katha and sat-sangat [the place] is known as Sattrā.

Just as other dance forms like Bharatnatyam, Odissi have various parts/components like Mangalacharan, Kalaripu, Pallavi etc., similarly even Sattriya has various distinct numbers such as Jhumura, Cali, Nadu-Bhangi, Krishna, Oja-pali, Sutradhari, Gopi etc. are there. But all of them together constitute Sattriya. And just the way it is told that “I am going to perform a Pallavi”, it is said, “I am going to perform Cali”.

**Shilpi:** Since when are you learning this dance form?

**Adhyapak:** I came to Kamalabari Sattrā at 4 years of age. This was a Udasin Sattrā and not a domestic one. People lead celibate lives and do not get married. For almost past 600 years this celibate order is continuing. Children are brought to the Sattrā and are raised as their own sons. So my mentor, Maniram Dutta *Muktiyar* got me when I crossed 3 years of age. He was also Raseswar Saikia’s teacher. There are some rules of the Sattrā. These “adopted sons” are called Aldhara. Just like, fathers take care of their children, provide them the daily necessities, scold them if needed to keep them in discipline, same way young bhakats are also taken care of and kept under discipline. I was put under Raseswar Saikia to obtain my early education and training. This began when I was 5 years old. He taught me how to play the *Khol* and dance. Then I had to learn other dance forms alongwith music, percussions etc. Sattrā was bound by some rules where one needs to learn *Nam*, *Pathak*, *Gayan*, *Nac*, *Bayan* and all of them have different gurus.

An individual quarter of a Bhakat is called ‘Boha’ and the entire line of the residential quarter is called Hati. When I came [to the Sattrā], I had to learn all the rules and regulations of the Sattrā. At dusk we sing Gunmala bhatima, Lilamala etc. All the child bhakats must go to the Namghar and sing at this time of the day. It is during this time they analyse whether a bhakat can sing or play the *Khol*. If I cannot sing then I will be made to learn the *Khol*. It gets divided there into Gayan and Bayan. But all the Bayan who learn how to play the *Khol* need to learn music and songs [bargit] even if they

would never sing. They need to learn because this is the only way they would learn to play with and for singers i.e. the Gayans. There is a calculation of the tala to be played with every piece of music/song piece, that's why a bayan needs to learn music along with the *Khol*.

**Shilpi:** Was Raseswar Saiki slightly older to you?

**Adhyapak:** He was around 22-24 years older than me.

**Shilpi:** Please tell a little about your Gurus

**Adhyapak:** Raseswar Saikia went along with Fakruddin Ali Ahmad to Indonesia and performed the Ram-Bijoy Bhaona. He [Maniram Dutta *Mukhtiyar*] had passed away by then. He taught me how to play the *Khol*, various bhaonas, he played the part of Krishna very often. He had a lot of qualities. All the old bhakat from all the three Kamalabari Sattras (not the young ones) but the old ones have been his disciples. He taught not only taught in Uttar and Natun Kamalabari Sattras but also at Belaguri, Bhogmati, all the Sattras around Kamalabari Sattra. He was the guru of all these Sattras and he taught everywhere.

He had some other qualities too like in a Sattra, there is a Sattradhikar who is more of a spiritual guru or leader. But there is a position in the Sattra known as '*Mukhtiyar*'. In today's world I would call it the secretary. *Mukhtiyar* can do all the adhikar's works. He is granted the power which is registered by the court of law. He can also sign in place of the Sattradhikar like now I am the *Mukhtiyar* of Kamalabari Sattra, Titabor. Similarly he was the *Mukhtiyar* when Chandrasahas Goswami was the Sattradhikar. Our Sattras are Devottar which means that the king had granted us the land. A lot of land around 22000 pura was granted to us in which many villages were there. Whatever land is there around Kamalabari Sattra in Majuli, they are the Sattra's property. Others also eat or cultivate on these lands but they have to pay a tax to the Sattra just the way taxes are paid to the Government. But along with this all the problems to do with these lands is also Sattra's responsibility. The case is never taken outside to the Police and is resolved from within. He [Maniram Dutta *Mukhtiyar*] dealt with all of this. He didn't go to a formal school but he was literate. I have his handwritten notes on the tree barks intact. He noted down all the *bols* of the Sattriya Dance, music and Theatre. He gave it to me in the end. I also have his *Khol* which has been passed down for the past 5 generations which makes it approximately a little more than 400 years old. The names of the previous owner before me are- Maniram Dutta *Mukhtiyar*, Roop Ram Pathak, Bhola Ram Gayan and I forgot the

fifth name. Of course the leather wears out and it needs to be changed, but apart from that nothing else is changed.

**Shilpi:** Since when did you start teaching?

**Adhyapak:** We have rules inside the Sattrā regarding playing the *Khol*. As soon as I finished my Bhatima, I started playing with the *prasanga* in the evening. This is the way it happens depending on the age. And I began to learn how to dance ever since I went to the Sattrā. I first came out for an external programme when I was six or seven years of age. I first came to perform at the Guwahati Refinery where Jawaharlal Nehru had come. I had gone there with the troop of elders. Raseswar Saikia was also there.

I took the responsibility of teaching at the age of 15-16 years. Actually what happened was Maniram Dutta *Mukhtiyar* fell ill and the responsibility came onto Raseswar Saikia Barbayan. Tragically at that point of time, on some other matter, 30 people from the Sattrā left including Raseswar Saikia. They all went into domestic life. But we had to commemorate the tithis atleast. I was very small- hardly 16 years of age. I could not have been given the responsibility. To take the responsibility you have to be a Borbayan. Borbayan is equivalent to an M.A. degree. To receive the Borbayan title, one has to face a *mohola* (a kind of a panel interview). The Sattrādhikar, Samaj i.e. bhakats and the functionaries of the sattrā, all the borbayans and borgayans would all sit together. One needs to answer to whatever they ask. Additional to knowing all the dances like there are eight ramdanis in Cali Nac, Geetor Nac, Roja-griha Cali, so whatever one has learnt from the guru, one needs to compose his own original composition, bind it in a *tal*. There are 35 *tals* in totalilty. So one needs to create a bol in any of *tals* which is an original piece of work and perform in presence of that congregation. After that one is called a Borbayan. I did so too. After that they conferred upon me the title of Borbayan and thereafter the responsibility of teaching in the Sattrā came upon me. Then I taught for ten years. The Kamalabari Sattrā was still in Majuli. After the flood of 1975 [which washed away the sattrā] I came out of Maj uli and did not go to Titabor [where the new Sattrā was constructed]. After I came out, I roamed around for a few days, stayed in Guwahati, Delhi etc. Then the Sattrā was rebuilt in Titabor. In the meanwhile I got married. Post that, I also got a job in Guwahati and I settled here. Then I taught at various institutions in Assam.

While I was at the Sattrā, I was sent to Shillong- then the capital of Assam to teach Ankiya Bhaona. I went there on the instructions of the Sattrādhikar. Inside the Sattrā one cannot teach the women disciples but such rules did not apply outside the Sattrā. So in

Shillong I taught Bhaonar Nac, Gayan-Bayan for a year. That was the first time I had students from outside the Sattrra (girls and boys both).

After that I travelled a lot. Went to Delhi and taught to non-Assamese students. Unfortunately I do not remember the names of those students. This is when Jogen Saikia was a minister during Fakhruddin Ali Ahamd's time. I was even granted 6 acres of land near Raj Ghat. But then both of them passed away and I came back. I could not have followed up myself with the Government

**Shilpi:** So you still go to Majuli to teach... How do you manage your time as you have your own institute as well? Do you go to Kamalabari Sattrra or Majuli before the tithis?

**Adhyapak:** I go before the *tithis* i.e. Sankardeva's Madhavdeva's and Badula Ata's and I conduct one *tithi* myself, play the *Khol* on my own. Even now I am invited by various Sattrras to teach them. So I have to go and help them. So I go around a month before the *tithi*. It takes time to teach Nac and other things.

**Shilpi:** Who teaches in your absence in Titabor?

**Adhyapak:** there are people but they do not yet know everything. Here the music tradition in Assam is a little more complicated and very big as compared to other places. I have traveled quite a bit so I realized the Music canvas of Assam is very large. There is a reason behind it. In Assam there are people from various communities and tribes which will find nowhere in India [concentrated in one place. And each one of them have their own respective culture and heritage. So all of this has led to a very complicated fabric of people here. Ups and downs keep on happening in the development of these cultures but all of them do co-exist.

And Sattriya music is a living tradition. It did not die in the middle unlike Baratanatyam or Odissi which became extinct at some point. There have been ups and downs in Sattriya too but it never died. What Badula Ata set up in Majuli- the flame is still burning there today as well.

**Shilpi:** How is it different to perform at *Namghar* and perform at various urban platforms?

**Adhyapak:** There is a huge difference when I perform in a Namghar, it is extremely spiritual. In *Bhadra Maas*, one sweats in the Namghar and when I used to perform in it used to be a mud floor and one would look as if one loathed in a paddy field. But who does one perform for there? There was so much physical pain one endures. At times I would bleed and at times there would not be a single person in the Namghar. So for whom does one perform where no one would clap for you? That is for Dharma- spiritual

reasons. Whether people are there or not there one would perform. But on stage one performs so that the audience would applaud. Another difference is, on a stage I perform in front of an audience sitting only on one side. But in a Namghar people are sitting all around. So one needs to play or enact everything atleast 8 times for the people to be able to see it so it takes a lot of time. But on the stage the pieces are done only once or twice.

Actually the thing is the motive- on the stage I dance for people and in the Kirtanghar I do not “perform”, I offer my prayers. So when I perform on the stage I am bound to think about how to dance so that it is accepted and appreciated by the audience.

Accordingly changes have been made. The compositions had to be shortened, the speed had to be increased so necessary changes were made.

Another very important thing is that in the Sattrra only men folk dance. There are no women in the Sattrra. But here [on the stage] women dance. Though there is no difference in the dance form or the grammar. Just the way men dance, women dance too. But there have been changes in the costume. It had to be done. Bhakats dance in Dhuti, how could women be giving recitals wearing that? Ironically, here [in the cities] most of the dancers are girls. There aren't too many boys. Even in my own school I just have four boys and rest all of them are girls.

**Shilpi:** So how was the format for the stage for a Sattriya performance developed?

**Adhyapak:** A very important work done. These days ‘groups’ do not get invited to perform so often. Besides in the Sattrra there are many dances like Jhumura, Cali, NaduBhangi etc. each with its own distinct costumes. So if you have to perform a Nadu-bhangi piece for 10 minutes, how would you change soon after that? Unlike other dance forms where they have the same costume throughout. So it was decided that there will be a costume for women dances and a costume for men dances. Ever since then one says that its Sattriya Dance and not jhumura or Cali but Sattriya.

If it's a feminine piece, costume for women will be worn and if it is a male piece, a costume for male would be worn. The concept is based on *Purusha-Prakriti*. There is difference from Odissi or Bharatnatyam i.e. of the *sthiti*. In Sattriya this ‘*sthiti*’ is called *ora*. In other dance forms whether you dance the feminine or the masculine, it doesn't make difference to the costume. But in Sattriya- if a man dances a feminine piece his ‘*sthiti*’ would be different. The same applies for a woman dancer.

**Shilpi:** So did the time bifurcation also happen for the stage?

**Adhyapak:** Yes it was done. Like there is a Ganesh Vandana or a Shiva Vandana in other dance forms but in Sattriya performance starts with Krishna Vandana (Narayana



Vandana). After that one needs to take a piece or a couplet from our Gurus- Sankardeva or Madhvdeva i.e. from the Namgosha or Kirtan Gosha etc. This has been taken only for a stage production. The same thing doesn't happen in a Sattrā.

There is another characteristic of performances in a Sattrā i.e. Jin-thak (it's a pronami piece) and is to be performed before every dance in a Sattrā. But on stage it is done only in the beginning and not repeated before every piece. Jin-thak is bound by a *bol* of three *matras* that needs to be performed before every dance piece whatever you might perform but on a proscenium stage.

The jin-thak starts with a *ahdn gesture ala-padma-hasta* which basically means the performer has a padma [lotus flower] in his heart and that is what he is offering to the audience. A Sattriya dance even on the stage does not think the audience as fellow human beings but bhakats of god. So I offer the padma flower to the bhakats [audience] and offer my salutations to the divine and begin the programme.

**Shilpi:** Have you ever collaborated with your contemporaries from other dance forms?

**Adhyapak:** I have observed, discovered and learnt about various dance forms but have never collaborated. Although I did one programme which I choreographed myself in which I incorporated Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Sattriya and Kathak pieces. It was of course an experiment.

**Shilpi:** Your generation witnessed a transition from Majuli to the proscenium. Women dancers during that time like Garima Hazarika, Indira PP Bora etc. took up Sattriya even after coming from other dance forms in which they had invested a lot of time. Please throw some light on them.

**Adhyapak:** I taught them both when they started learning Sattriya Dance. Although there were some problems in getting into this form at the beginning, they have been taken care of.

**Shilpi:** It is not easy to unlearn a dance form and begin to learn another one. Besides, Sattriya was initially performed only by men so the rasa and the form was very robust and not feminine, How did you teach them? It is easier if you learn from a young age.

**Adhyapak:** The younger ones do not face a problem. They pick up very fast. But they [Garima Hazarika and Indira PP Bora] had difficulties. While they were in the class with me and danced in front of the mirror, they were very conscious. But as soon as they were on their own, their body went back to the original dance they had learnt. It is natural.

There aren't many bhangas in the body posture in Sattriya like Odissi. There is a slight bhang in the Krishna Dance.

**Shilpi:** Who is there after you to take the responsibility of teaching in the Sattras and take it forward?

**Adhyapak:** Currently it is a cause of concern. The state of the Sattras are not very good. There are a few but not as dynamic people anymore. This work needs a lot of patience and perseverance. I am noticing that that in the forthcoming time, it will be in the hands of the girls- this responsibility. Women will only keep it safe. There are 2-3 boys in my dance school. One of them is Hari Saiki- he is good. There are 2-3 more but women are a lot more in numbers. Women have a lot more composure and concentration. Boys get easily distracted. I am talking about today. It was not the case when I was growing up. Only spirituality can save the humanity. They do not have basic sensibility towards each other and giving due regards to each other.

**Shilpi:** Why did you feel the need to take it out of the Sattras?

**Adhyapak:** it was our tradition. In the Sattras everything is passed on orally. Everyone follows and learns like that. Never was there a concept of written notation. No one earlier bothered to open the Shastras. Like Rupak tal in Carnatic music and Rupak talk in Sattriya have similarities. Similarly all instruments are taught orally too.

When I came outside, I interacted with others and started studying and that's when I realized to call something "shastriya" it needs to have some characteristics mentioned in the 'shastras' which Sattriya had. Like Nrta, Nritya and Natya had to be there. That's the most important thing. There are some other elements also which need to be there which forms the grammar of the dance form. Sattriya had them.

I didn't know any one of these till I came out. When I saw other dance forms, I understood better and then I thought- what is the reason for Sattriya to not be a classical dance form. Then I was forced to think and contemplate seriously on this matter.

My guru Maniram dutta *Muktiyar* passed away but Raseswar Saikia worked very hard towards this. He too unfortunately died before it was formally declared. He could not hear the see the formal declaration but I think he heard the news that this was on its way. Then the Sangeet Natak Akademi organised a 5 day seminar and workshop in Assam. Participants from all over Assam- from Sattras and outside Sattras were invited. Meetings and programmes happened day and night. Other folk forms from Assam were also considered and performers were asked to make their presentations. It was organised by SNA but coordinated by Sunil Kothari. Dances, Bhaonas were showcased. I

performed too. Since I went outside of the Sattras, I was able to understand a few things. I was forced to study the Shastras. I had never studied them earlier. Natyashastra, Abhinaya Darpana, Sri-hastamukhtavali. I studied the last one in great detail. So when I gave my demonstration, I appropriated various elements of Sattriya Dances to the Shastras. I showed them the difference in the feminine and the masculine. It ended in 5 days and SNA recorded everything. On the last day all the presentations were discussed and reviewed in front of all the participants. Sunil Kothari said, "I saw Sattriya Sangeet, Sattriya Dance, Sattriya Bhaona. I saw them all. All the performers had a distinctive characteristic about their respective performance. But one needs to take only one route." Like, Auniati and Garamur Sattras perform very differently from that of Kamalabari Sattras. There are 700 Sattras in whole of Assam, Then he consulted Jatin Goswami about which '*dhara*' should be considered for a formal consideration. That's when it was decided that the demonstration by me was most appropriate and well explained since I was able to justify according to the shastras. And since then the style of Kamalabari [Sattras] was recorded and accepted for a classical recital.

### APPENDIX III

#### Personal conversation with Dr. Anwesa Mahanta on 10 May 2015

**Shilpi:** Anwesa, What does Sattriya mean to you?

**Anwesa:** The definition of Sattriya again is like the dance itself. You know the meaning of Sattriya has varied at different points of time in different ways. When I started learning the dance form when I was just a kid, I didn't know it was Sattriya as such it was a kind of ritual that was given to me. When I got introduced through the form through Kirtans and Bhaona, watching my father, watching my grandmother teaching me and not only teaching me, doing congregational chantings and discourses, the entire form was a kind of a ritual. Gradually when my formal training started, I was introduced to this particular term that I am learning Sattriya Dance. So then it was a different kind of a formal approach to the entire concept of Sattriya. Then gradually the definition for Sattriya enlarged in the sense of learning the intricacies and nuances of the entire form. And when today I am doing my research and every other thing related to it including dancing, as I see myself today-I see myself as a devotee. Earlier traditionally it is said that the form itself was not known as Sattriya. All the art forms related to Sattras were clubbed together as Sattriya. So is any devotee who pursues the art form, that is known as Sattriya. So to be Sattriya, you do not have to be a dancer but it is very important to imbibe the culture, most importantly to understand the philosophy, the entire environment, the entire society and the culture. So Sattriya is a huge term. Of course it is one aspect to understand the arts related to the Sattras but at the same time it is very important to understand the entire culture related to the Vaishnava art forms in which the culture and society go together. So Sattriya in a sense who might not be dancing but he is working in the congregational chanting, which is also known as a Sattriya performance. So that way the definition doesn't remain constant. It evolves through one's understanding varying in time and space.

**Shilpi:** Since when have you been learning Sattriya and how did you come to it? ...Because you learnt two dance forms simultaneously and it is interesting as most of the women dancers [senior] to you had been trained under some other art form and then they took up Sattriya later.

**Anwesa:** My training has been very interesting. My first introduction has been and was definitely Sattriya. I was born into a family of domestic Sattras where you hear, you see ritual events from morning to night and even lullabies are the kirtans. So that's how it

gets into the blood. And gradually, the rhythms and everything became a set of a playful syllables. That was my first initiation into the world of Sattriya. I can't even remember the age when it started. But the formal training started when I was 6 years old. I still remember the day when my dad carried me to Adhyapak's place, it was raining ... He has been my adi-guru right from the beginning I have been trained only under him. I was very interested in the Krishna because even in Bhaona, Krishna plays a very important role with his colour and costume and somehow I was very fascinated as a kid.

So the moment he saw me he said- "so you will learn Krishna Nac." And that touched me so much. I don't know maybe he understood the psychology of a child. And gradually my training started. And it was not a vigorous training when I was a child. It was basically how I responded to each and every move and he took it that way. And of course I was in the meanwhile also given training in Bharatnatyam. Now the interesting phase i.e. the dance as a serious discipline started from that moment. Whatever I learnt in Bharatnatyam classes, immediately after two days my sessions with Adhyapak would also continue and then he would ask me what did you learn? Show me some of the moves. He never teaches in the form of a dictat kind of a thing. He always becomes a friend. So he would say- what did you learn? And then he would relate all the jumps and moves and then he would point out and show me the particular differences. So immediately I realized the differences. There are a lot of similarities and there are a lot of difference as well. Through body language he made me understand them gradually.

**Shilpi:** Under whom did you learn Bharatanatyam?

**Anwesa:** Indira PP Bora

**Shilpi:** But when did you decide that you wanted to take Sattriya as a path of your expression?

**Anwesa:** That happened when I was totally into it. I was practicing for Arangetram, the ceremonial Rangpravesha in Bharatanatyam. And similar continuous, vigorous training of Sattriya also happened. There is a very interesting phase. Till that time dance was a playful activity for me. I enjoyed dancing. And I have been blessed as Indira Aunty was in her best teaching period at that time. Our training sessions have been very intense during her time. Later she gave her disciples to take classes but during my time she personally took classes. And on the other hand my Sattriya Adhyapak also gave personal attention to learning in Sattriya. He gives it even today to each and every student of his. Indira Aunty asked my parents to take me to Chennai to see the festivals during the Music and Dance season. This was in 1993. There I saw many maestros performing on

stage from very close quarters. They were at the peak of their careers. Chennai had such a serious approach to Dance. In the morning they were having conferences in Dance and Music as well. It was also an enlightening experience. I didn't understand ABCD of anything but I could feel the seriousness there. Coming back I personally got very serious about my approach towards dance and not only Bharatnatyam but Sattriya too. I had to learn with a sense of promise. Seeing things you get inspired. Then I was trained very vigorously for my arangetram while my Sattriya training was also on.

**Shilpi:** Is there any kind of Rang-pravesh in Sattriya? What is that called?

**Anwesa:** Adhyapak mentioned about *moholadiya* ceremony in the Sattria where a *bhakat* adept in music or dance has to prove his credential for the conferment of a higher status. Keeping that in mind, my parents in consultation with my Adhyapak organised the *ashirwada* ceremony which was done in 2001 immediately after my School Certificate examination. His holiness the *Sattradhikar* of Natun Kamalabari Sattria came and blessed me with *Bakul Phulor Mala*. The entire ceremony was all public done on stage which was followed by a three hours performance.

**Shilpi:** That varied from disciple to disciple or was it a standard thing?

**Anwesa:** It was a new idea. The entire repertoire got decided earlier. My dad had a major role to play in the exercise of formulating a repertory for Sattriya on stage. The idea behind holding such a ceremony, which is not out of place in the traditions, was to set some kind of a standard for a student to perform on stage. In the presence of the Sattria exponents, it should be accepted that they get trained by some standards and see if a performer is actually eligible to perform. So keeping that in mind it was done like offering *prasadam* etc on the stage in which Adhyapak take the lead. Even in the Sattria, the Adhyapak took the lead because it is his disciple who is to perform.

Honours in the programme were done to the *Sattradhikar* followed by a *purva-ranga* done by Natun Kamalabari and the second one was done by Uttar Kamalabari. So it happened in that way. The *Sattradhikar* gave me the *nirmali*. The first presentation was done with the *purusha* dress, doing some male numbers followed by a female number in the *prakriti* dress. One more important thing was that in a way I was the first one- but it was a new introduction of a new set up of complete solo recital in Sattriya Dance and a formal way how a disciple could present in an *ashirwad* ceremony. There was a very large gathering. Some of them were wondering what she was going to dance? In Sattria, do we have that kind of a repertoire? Earlier whatever people had seen, it wasn't a concert kind of a thing. It was a half an hour presentation or a fifteen minute presentation

in which a dancer would have just shown a Cali. The feminine numbers are more known like the Cali. But for the first time a lot of work on the male presentation was done. So in a way it was a very new introduction even to the public.

Shilpi di, I always feel, my dance career has been very blessed. In a way I have not been a part of the transmission and in a way I have been a part of it. A lot of decisions happened in front of me. Because my dad had played a very important role in the entire discourse. He led the discussions and made all the drafts. There was a critical period when he Sattriya as a classical name was questioned. Things were discussed in our home. Hearing and observing that- I see myself as very lucky and blessed.

**Shilpi:** You are because you were a part of a process that changed the face of Sattriya.

**Anwesa:** And I was a participant observant. Recognition of Sattriya by SNA was a very important and all the people related to Sattriya. It was a joy but they didn't know the tactics of classical and non-classical. As pursuer of this tradition I feel what stands most important is that the living heritage or the tradition with so much of faith and belief involved with it. It is still being pursued ritually as a religious work. But the problem is the moment you get into the tactics of classical and the showcasing of the things, the faith might get affected.

**Shilpi:** What about your collaborations with other people? You have travelled well enough in the country and abroad... See firstly it is not easy to understand *bhakti* secondly, it is more difficult to understand Sankardeva's *bhakti*. Sattriya- as you said is a living ritual and has not yet disassociated from the rituals at the Sattras.

**Anwesa:** Let me define how dance stands for me. See even today, when I am performing on a stage, never in my mind does it come that I am performing for an audience. Whenever the performance happens- be it at Habitat or Rabindra Bhawan wherever, the moment I prepare myself, it is actually a ritual happening for me. That is the orientation with which I am groomed. Infact it actually doesn't matter how many people are there in the audience for me. The moment it starts- whether there is someone important sitting or no one is sitting, I dance as a work of devotion . That's how I have been brought up. The moment I start putting the makeup I get into performing the ritual. The conscious level today has gone. It is a devotional art form in which pray with dance. I feel the essence, I perform the philosophy, I feel each and every movement, the content of the movement with the philosophy that is behind the movement. I am not a conscious performer. The consciousness happens only when I am rehearsing, practicing, when I am dancing in front of the mirror, perfecting my moves. But the moment I prepare myself to offer the

dance, it is a totally a different orientation and is very difficult to describe what exactly it is. Right now I see myself as an explorer and I am trying to explore and understand the depth and nuances of this form. How could I understand this nuances of *bhakti*? So when a collaborative work comes how do I work with it? The conscious Anwesa- the form is there in me-it is my language now. I speak that language only.

We did a collaborative work with Mohiniattam under the supervision of Bharati Shivaji Ji. So Mohiniattam and Sattriya together. We tried to explore could we do and where could we meet? We both are from *lasya* traditions. So we had a sitting together. We didn't have much time unfortunately and we had to do it with a recorded music because of certain problems. So whatever tracks we had, we tried to go back to them. There is an interesting concept of *Melam* in Mohiniattam where *Idacca* is being played and in Sattriya we have the *Mela Nac*. So we brought these two together. When I do a collaboratve work, it is understanding that form and at the same time it helps me understanding my form. I do not use the word experimentation. It's always the issue of understanding each other.

**Shilpi:** It's more of an assimilation?

**Anwesa:** Yes. Another interesting thing was with Taraka. We did not say its Sattriya or Kuchipudi. We said our form itself would speak. But the main focus was on the content. It was a very different work. People said it was a choreographic work. But we did not claim anything. The content is Taraka. So that is the focus. I did this with Srilaxmi Govardhan. She took the role of Taraka and I took the role of Rama. The story was a different approach to the public man and a private man- Rama. Taraka was a *Dravida Rajkumari* (Dravidan princess). So when the sage came, he asked Rama to kill her. But Rama was appreciating her beauty. It was V. Ramavarma's poem. In Kuchipudi they use *mridangam* and in Sattriya we use the *khol*. So we did not use either of them. We used *Idacca* and *midaw* of Kerala. The sahitya was a Malyalam work too.

**Shilpi:** Mohiniattam is also based on Kirshna *bhakti* . So it cant be very different.

**Anwesa:** Whatever I have presented outside I have always chosen stories known to the people. I was not sure about the response but it was overwhelming. The content is always open- motherly love of Gopis towards Krishna or how others see Krishna. So it depends to what extent you are interpreting and to what extent you caninterpret. It was presented in New Zealand and Malasia for the first time. So a lot of people came only to see Sattriya. It was very critical for me as I was introducing a form.



Another collaboration happened through Felicity Moloy from Auckland. We are thinking now to transform it into a production- Anahata. She is a yoga expert and practices Somatics. When we were talking, we somehow interacted with each other so well and we could connect with each other. That understanding or connection of the concept of Dance got transformed in a kind of research work. You will not find any theoretical background to it. It was a kind of an organic evolution. When we presented in Velance (in France)- they said it is path breaking work in a sense of an organic treatment to the content.

You feel a connection where Art is the medicine and somewhere you meet. That meeting being a research itself becomes a performance. You think what is going on inside your mind and writing itself becomes a performance. The title was Anahata- Bound by Space and Time. Anahata is the un-striking chord. There is a meeting that happens with spontaneity. So that was our presentation.

**Shilpi:** Have you ever collaborated with any other disciple of any other Guru?

**Anwesa:** No. Mostly it has been a solo presentation throughout but of course with Adhyapak's students, we have performed together. But I have not worked with other Gurus at all.

**Shilpi:** How was your interaction with the students from New Zealand?

**Anwesa:** Some of them were exercise scientists. Some of them are into hard core dance. One of them is a ballet dancer. One of them is a hip-hop dancer. They are into hardcore practice. So for me, like my Adhyapak tries to understand the psyche of the students. I also try to do that for a new comer as you have to make your form a substance interesting. But for persons already into dance or into full-fledged practice, for them you gave the entire practice skills and that's what they enjoy. In the workshops that have happened. In New Zealand I am dealing with students from Universities of Otago and Waikato University. They were full fledged workshops in which they actually came to learn Sattriya. So I gave them basic training of Sattriya and at the same time, some amount of *natya* which is very strong here. In western dance forms, the *abhinaya* is not there. Whatever expression happens, it happens only with the body- the total body movement where the eyes do not have to speak much. But here, the facial expression is important in response to the body also. I was trying to give a glimpse of that particular aspect that was very fascinating for them apart from the training. And this time when we worked out *sannidhi*, we took the dancers to various performances. There was a group dance- I would not like to use the work folk. So holding each other and dancing together, it turned to be a wonderful experience. The togetherness is important for the entire

community. So unless and until you perform it, it is very difficult to understand the context. So I also took them to Natun Kamalabar Sattrā, Majuli where one Adhyapak taught them. They got an idea of the nature of training in the Sattrā. This happened in the *boha* itself. There were the little monks also who were demonstrating.

## APPENDIX IV

### Interview with Adhyapak (Dr.) Bhabanada Barbayan, Sangeet Natak Akademi's Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar awardee.

**Note:** This interview was taken over the e-mails. The researcher had sent a list of questions over the mail and Adhyapak had answered to the questions over the mail and sent it to the researcher. This interview is a compilation of mails received on 26 January 2012, 23 April 2015 and 25 April 2015.

**Question- 1:** What is Sattriya? (Please throw some light on the various parts of Sattriya i.e. Jhumura, Sali, Oja-Pali, Ankiya Bhaona, Gayon-Bayon, Naam)

**Ans:** Sattriya is a system of practice spirituality not only prayer but also Art and Culture through aesthetic way of thinking and applied in daily hood life of a normal human being , propounded by Srimanta Sankardeva in 15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Sattriya dance is a integral part of occasional practiced of Sattriya which is evolved into an independent art from and has established itself as a classical style in the Indian panorama of classical dances but it has its origin as an integral part of the one act plays written and enacted by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. Madhavdeva presented the dance items on attractive stage separated from the main drama and nurtured them as independent art forms.

A list is given below of the different Sattriya dances that are practiced in the different Satras.

Dances that are presented through Ankiya Bhaona :

Gayan- Bayan: One who singing is ' Gayan' and who plays is ' Bayan'. The presentation which combines these two aspects is Gayan-Bayan. *Boha –chahini, Thia-chahini, Dhemali* and *Guru-ghat* are the sequence of Bayan procedure. In the Dhemali portion, the Bayan applies various techniques and dances ' Gayan-Bayan' is similar to the Purvaranga of Natyashastra. In other words the word ' *Dhemali*' in Assamese is the same as ' *Ranga*' in Sanskrit. It is a common practice to begin a performance with Gayan- Bayan in the Satras and Villages of Assam.

Sutradhari Nach: Sutradhar is the co-ordinator and director who connects the audience with the character of the play with dance. As a dancer the Sutradhar presents varied techniques of which Ga-nach, Ragor-nach, Gotor-nach and portions of pure dance ,

acting with hand gestures and expressing different sentiments in Nandi slok- song- bhattima are significant.

Goshain Prabeshar Nach: The dance that is presented by the main characters like Krishna or Rama just after entering the stage with his friends is called Goshai prabeshar Nach. It is a pure dance, when slokas are also used. Although the slokas convey meaning , the dance accompanying them are pure dance.

Gopi Prabeshar Nach: The dance performed by the main heroine after entering the stage with her companions is known as Gopi prabeshar Nach. There are three stages of this dance , dance that accompanies songs, dance performed after the songs are sung and dance with Sloka. All these are pure dance with sloka. All these are pure dance.

Rashar Nach : The dance that is performed by the Braja-gopis at the time of Rasaleela in the play ‘ Keligopal’written by Sankardeva is called Rashar nach. This dance is of three varieties- Kelir Nach, Gopi birahar nach and BhaonaGopi Bhabanar nach etc.

Khormanar Nach : At the grand final of the Ankia Bhaona the dance that is performed by the hero and the heroine together with their companions in Tala ‘ *Khorman*’ is known as Khormanar Nach. This is a dance of jubilation when Krishna or Rama protects the devotees by establishing peace on earth.

Goshain Bhangi Nach : In Ankia Bhaona, Rama and Krishna perform different dances on special occasions. Rama at the time of breaking the bow, Krishna when stealing butter, at the time of taming Kaliya the snake, when playing with the milk maids, or stealing the Parijat flower or abducting Rukmini. Different kinds of dances and performed to enumerate different occasions.

Others Bhangi Nach : In Ankiya Bhaona , some techniques are used to create the atmosphere for presenting a situation of which sorrow, war and merry making are the main issues. The dances that are presented on these situations are *Gopabalakar Cholonor Nach, Gopabalakar Khelonor nach, shokar nach, Juddhar nach* etc.

Dances that are presented exclusively:

Chali Nach: It is a lasya style of dance. There are two varieties- Suddha Chali and Rajaghoriya Chali , Chali Nach is presented in three sequences Ramdani, Geetor and Mela. In suddha chali there are 8 Ramdanis and 4 Rajaghariya. Chali nach is practiced only in the Satras of Kamalabari group of Satras.

Boha or Bihar Nach: This dance commemorates the ‘*Leela*’ that has been performed by Krishna with his friends in Brindavana. This dance is performed by male dancers and is

presented in two sequences. Ramdani and Geetor. This dance is also practiced in the Satras of Kamalabari tradition.

Jhumura Nach: Madhavdeva composed a few dance dramas on sub-plots of main dance dramas. These are based on war. The dances that are composed on the themes of these sub-plots is known as Jhumura nach. Performed mainly by male dancers these dances are presented in three sequences- Ramdani , Geetor nach and Mela. This presentations is only found in the Satras of Kamalabari tradition.

Nadubhangi : Sri Krishna had performed a particular dance at the time of Kaliya daman ( taming of the serpent kaliya) in the lake. This dance is known as Nadu bhangi . This dance is also a speciality of Kamalabari tradition.

Bor Prabeshor Nach: On Sri Krishna's return from Brindavana mother Joshoda, very lovingly takes care and gives him many things. The dance that is composed to enumerate, the entrance of Sri Krishna is known as Bor Prabeshar nach. There is only one kind of this dance , and it is a part of Kamalabari tradition only.

Jatra Ghosha : On Sri Krishna departure to Mathura, the Gopabalikas were hearstly broken and they went to see him off singing his praise. The dance sequence that depicts incident is known as Jatra ghosha. Like the previous ones, this dance is also presented only in the Satras of kamalabari tradition.

Maanchok : From Mathura Sri Krishna had sent his friend Udhav to console the heart broken Gopis of Gokul and were overwhelmed. They should proper respect to Udhav by singing and dancing, '*chok*' stands for the 3 stages of a tala presentation- *Ga-man, Ghat, and Chok*. The dance that explains the 3 stages of tala is known as Manchokar nach. This dance is also exclusive to the Kamalabari tradition.

Ojapali : 'Oja' or the leader is placed in the centre and the 'pali' or the group dance encircling him and accompanying him. The ' Oja' tell a story by acting singing and dancing with the help of *raga, sloka, diha, pada, dhura, bana* and *Upadesh* . The ' Oja' sing and dances and the 'Pali' accompanying the oja. This presentation of ' Oja' & ' pali' is known as ' ojapali'. Thios dance is common to all the Satras in Assam.

**Question- 2:** Since when have you been learning Sattriya? (Please explain about how you came to the Sattra and began your learning)

**Ans:** When I was three and half year , parent sent me to Satra , I was brought up under my Uncle Adhyapak Baloram Bargayan , doyen of Sattriya music he was seventh generation from our family members sent to the Satra. So, since then I have been

learning Sattriya Dance, Bayan, Gayan, Ojapali, Namlogowa, Pathak, Dramas ( Ankia Bhaona) under the able guidance of respected Adhyapaks of Uttar Kamalabari Satra. As I born in a acculturate family .I was playing with khol at early age when my father Mr. Rampad Hazarika let me play with khol and introduced me how to produce such divine sounds as his duly as a Barbayan of the village.

**Question- 3:** Could you please introduce us to your Gurus?

**Ans:** Yes, what I am it because of my great gurus' Ashirbad :

1. Adhyapak Cheniram Barbayan ( Bayan)
2. Adhyapak Paramananda Barbayan (Dance and Drama)
3. Adhyapak Tuniram Barbayan (Dance and Drama)
4. Adhyapak Baloram Bargayan ( Oja, Pathak and Gayan)
5. Adhyapak Gupiram Bargayan ( Oja)
6. Adhyapak Kamal Chandra Bargayan ( Namlogowa and Gayan)

They are form Uttar Kamalabari Satra ,

**Question- 4 :** From your 1<sup>st</sup> Performance to being a Borbayan....How has the journey been?

**Ans :** I am trying to learn new things which is valuable for improve my artistic knowledge for spreading Sankardeva's art and philosophy , still I am student.

**Question- 5:** You have taught in Majuli. Now you teach in Delhi. What made you take a decision like that?

**Ans:** Still I teach in Majuli , even I am now in Delhi I need to be give my lesson in the Satra, Majuli as I am Adhyapak of Uttar Kamalabari Satra, I was coffered Barbayan from Uttar Kamalabari satra when I was hardly 17 years old , as I was took in charge in this responsibility , as youngest amongst other Adhyapaks , of course I should have responsible to this job. But at the same time we should have also responsibility for spreading this massage for the mass , as we have available in side of our province why not out side of Assam or abroad . So, I decide and choose Delhi first to start. As you aware that this initiation not only in Delhi but abroad also. But my root is still Majuli.

**Question- 6:** You come from a celebate order of the faith where interacting with women is restricted. So how did you begin to accept women as your deciples? (Was'nt it a problem for you internally? Wasn't it a problem with the Sattras that you belong to?)

**Ans:** Yes it was little problem from the Satra at beginning stage , now Satra overcome about that kind of unnecessary issue. As human being we have also same sentiments as

you have , but we have been learning since childhood that how should we transform our sentiments to act for welfare to the universe. Celibacy life is a lesson of sacrifice.

**Question- 7:** How are your disciples of the Satra different from the disciples in the Metropolitan?

**Ans:** Definition of disciple is same whenever in Satra in Metropolitan. But I found some dissimilarities because of their different desire. Satra's boy sent by parent for permanent residing but metropolitan parents sent their child only for take lesson for few hours. Even this, both of them need to follow their lesson as prescribe course. But, as per style of living their thinking and behavior etc, are very special , I mean very unique. I think it is very important thing for communicate to both ascent feelings. I am a lucky person who can give classes in the Satra and at the same time metropolitan city like Delhi and Europe also.

**Question- 8:** Where all have you performed outside Assam (Please mention your world tours as well)? Did you ever saw yourself as a 'Performer' rather than a Bhakat while growing up?

**Ans:** Yes I would be happy if someone recognize me as a performer. Here I mentioned about some major performances both platform:

[Note: His detailed resume was about 10 page long so I am leaving that out for this thesis]

**Question- 9:** How is it different performing in the Namghar in Majuli and a Foreign audience in a strange land?

**Ans:** In simple we perform in Namghar not only for prayer to the God at the same time for pleased to Bhakats ( namghar audience) also. Same way when we perform even in front of foreign audience our goal is only how to pleased the audience as well as God.

' as god is exist in side of heart of every creature , at first we need to pleased to that creature who can realize the necessity of creation of aesthetics value of this art form . The Arts devoted itself as a medium of promoter living standard of human being.

**Question- 10:** Have you interacted with other performers? (In terms of a collaborative production or maybe experimentation within or outside India).

**Ans:** Yes, I interacting with some contemporary dancers from France for my proposed production will be in Paris in June of this year.

**Question- 11:** From rituals to proscenium...Have these interactions and exposures changed you in any way especially in terms of Production themes/stories or approach?

(Please mention about the themes you take and why? Mention about the Troupe as well as in the west people commercially form Dance Companies but Bhakats are not like that...Has it changed?

**Ans:** I think it will better to say that we have some opportunity to extend the subject . What are you say about change, I did when I was in the Satra , I did some experiments which is accepted by even Satra's people . Now what I doing its my continuation on the basis of relevant to the time.

Example : Now I am working for a new choreograph based on 'Brindavani Bastra' , a magnificent textile weaved under Srimanta Sankardeva in 16<sup>th</sup> Century in Barpeta Assam, it said to be preserved in Musee Guimet in Paris. Before no body think about this, as I am searching such type of document I need to be go deep as subject demand. Obviously we need to put that elements what exactly in the ' Bastra, even some thing difficult to accept by the expert of this traditions due to not seen in practical time. But it is true that I have always been respect our originality, and my mission and vision also based on this .

**Question-12:** Somebody's gain is somebody's loss....Dont you feel like going back to the place where you learnt everything and staying and teaching?

**Ans:** You are absolutely right, I am fortunate that still have the link with the main stream and also a member of this family.

**Question-13:** Where do you want to see Sattriya Dance as a Classical Form in the future?

**Ans:** devoted platforms- where the Sattriya considered as a infinite value of spiritual development.

**Question- 14:** In all your experimentations, some conventionalists would resist your taking up Sattriya as a form of expression and grammer, since it is a "Temple Dance Form". What drives you to breakfree from the conventional themes and step out of the "Sattriya" narratives?

**Ans:** I have deep concern about keeping the traditional beauty at the same time it should have to related to relevant to society. So, some time we have to concern beyond the tradition. I have deep concern about keeping the traditional beauty at the same time it



should have to related to relevant to society. So, some time we have to concern beyond the tradition.

I have been trying to present authentic beauty of the form artistically even performed as ritual. Similarly, I concern about the same when we present in the secular stage also, but here you can see a bit difference, because the presentation are composed as per performance purposes and requirements of production theme .

I have been composed some choreography since beginning of my teacher career charged upon me by the Satra Authority as ADHYAPAK in 1997.

My first experimental choreography was \* ‘Dhemali Samahar’ based on Gyan-Bayan composition in 1997, Some scholars and senior practitioners were disappointed and claimed against this work According to them I had imported the idea from Manipuri Pung-chalam. But, it was not at all, I convinced them that the all techniques what I included is very authentic elements of the Sattriya . Now we see everywhere the techniques which are accepted by practitioners.

Likewise I continue to compose as mentioned bellow -

\*‘Brindavana Yatra’ a dance-drama based on ; Brindavani Vastra’ a historic textile piece preserved in Musee Guimet , Paris, woven under the guidance of Srimanta Sankaradeva in 16<sup>th</sup> Century, in 2012.

\*‘ Rasa-kalpa’ a dance –drama based on Nava-rasa in 2013.

\*‘ Hindu Ki Musalman Eke Allah Pharamaan’ ,( In 2013), based on Zikir and Jari , the Assamese Muslim holy song composed by Muslim prophet AJAN PHAKIR in early 17th century AD. AJAN PHAKIR was born in Bagdad, came to Assam across Banga via delhi and settled downed in KAMRUPA, the capital city of Ancient Assam. AJAN PHAKIR was inspired by the Sankaradeva teaching method, so he composed himself few songs with essence of local tune for propagating to Islamic practices , which are popularly known as Zikir and Jari.

( Note : I have given training of Anika Bhaona ( Ram-Vijoy) in Muslim Community ( Kaya Kosi Muslim Village ) in 2006. A controversy was raised when a news came out about my boarding & fooding hospitality in Muslim village. Likewise , the same controversy raised after the performance of Hindu Ki Musalman Eke Allah Pharamaan’ at Bangla Academy : Dhaka : Bangladesh in 2013.

\*‘ Joyaa Aai’ based on life history of Joymoti, a histornic character in 17<sup>th</sup> century Assam who sacrificed her life for the sake of the Nation in 2014.

**Question- 15:** Could you give us a brief detail about how the women dancers started taking up Sattriya as a dance form in Assam? (From Indira PP Bora till now.... Please mention the other pioneer female dancers as well even the ones who were not very famous)

**Ans:** Sorry I have not enough idea about it , but I know some senior dancers who come from different disciplines and continue their practice on Sattriya. They are - Indira PP Bora and Pandmasree Puspa Bhuyan from Bharatanatyam, Garima Hazarika from Odissi and Sarodi Saikia from Manipuri .

**Question-16:** You were present in the workshop that was conducted after the national recognition of Sattriya dance by the Sangeet Natak Akademi. What was the change in the format for a stage performance made?

**Ans:** Sattriya is a ritual and is performed as offering to the supreme being. But in a stage one performs for the audience.

The largely accepted format was:

Invocations:

Guru Vandana

Ishar [Divine/Supreme Deity] Vandana

Pure Dance Piece:

Ram Dhani

Elements:

Shloka Nac [Literally- Dance of the Shlokas]

Barnam [Literaly- Description]

Mela [Literally- Elaborate], which is a pure dance piece

Kharman [Benedictory presentation]

## APPENDIX V

### Interview with Gargi Goswami

**Note:** This interview was taken over the e-mails. The researcher had sent a list of questions over the mail and Gargi Goswami had answered to the questions over the mail and sent it to the researcher. This interview was received over a mail on 5 May 2015.

**Question-1:** What is Sattriya? (Please throw some light on the various parts of Sattriya i.e. Jhumura, Sali, Oja-Pali, AnkiyaBhaona, Gayon-Bayon, Naam). What does Sattriya mean to you?

**Ans:** Sattriya is a tradition that has been preserved in Sattras of Assam since 500 years ago as a style to do rituals. Sattriya does not only refer to Nritya but also Geet, Vadya and Naat. Sattriya includes many elements like Gayan Bayan, Naam, Sali, Nadubhangi, Jhumura, Gupi Preveshar Nac, Oja pali etc.

Gayan Bayan is usually performed before bhaona. Saali dance, a female oriented dance, divided into Suddha and Rajaghariya. Nadubhangi is male oriented dance, originated from Kamalabari sattras and based on the way Lord Krishna swam in Kaali lake. This type of dance is categorized into Ramdaani and Geetar Nac. Jhumura dance is said to be based on Madhavdeva's Jhumura Naat. Mati Akhora is the backbone of Sattriya dance. Ojapali is part of Sattriya tradition that includes singing and dancing as a part of enactment of various mythological stories. Ojapali is divided into Biygoa and Sukanani, the former embodies subject of various parts of Mahabharata and Ramayana, later narrates the tragic story of Behula Lakhinder. Sattriya for me is a movement in Assam that has been practicing since years, and it is a tool to bring spiritual equality throughout Assam and leave an example for future unity and brotherhood among Assamese community.

**Question-2:** Since when have you been learning Sattriya? (Please explain about how you came to your first Guru and began your learning process)

**Ans:** I belong to Sattras (pukhuripar alengi sattras) and since I attained consciousness I have been an earnest audience of the Sattriya dance but I was a late learner as my parents were in search of a devoted Guru who would be able to impart to me the real essence of Sattriya dance. I started my learning process in the year 1996 under Guru Jibanjit Dutta in the institution called "Rag Ragini " where I learned basic steps of Sattriya. But due to discontinuation of the institution brought break to my learning process. In the year 2003 I

joined the newly born dance institution Rangayan where Aai Saradi Saikia and Adhyapak Bhabananda Hazarika Barbayan gave me lessons of Sattriya. Rangayan was not just another school for learning Sattriya. Sattriya dance was not taught to us as some body moves ,but as a sacred way to worship almighty. After Rangapravesh I shifted to Delhi for higher education. As luck would have it, my Adhyapak came to Delhi for the noble cause of mobilizing Sattriya culture throughout the country as well as across the globe. I have the privilege to continue and keep on improving my dance skills under guidance of Adhyapak.

**Question-3:** Could you please introduce us to your Gurus?

**Ans:** My first guru was Sri Jibanjit Dutta who is a dedicated dancer and teacher, key to my inspiration towards continuing dance as my passion. Later I earned elaborate knowledge about sattriya dance under Aai Saradi Saikia and Adhyapak Bhabananda Barbayan.

**Question-4:** From your 1<sup>st</sup> Performance to your ‘rang-pravesh’ ....what has been the journey like?

**Ans:** Any learning process is easy to start but very difficult to complete and even more difficult to continue. Learning Sattriya dance was always my dream, I completed at a young age but had the fear of not being able to continue it. I think if Adhyapak had not shifted to Delhi, I would have been a deprived disciple. After Rangapravesh my journey has become even more enthusiastic. Adhyapak has always motivated to dance. He made me learn dance as worship, he always gave us the freedom to take part in choreography making process, we are always free to add our creativity taking into the basic pattern. I'm still learning and feel blessed to continue learning Sattriya dance as oldest disciple of Adhyapak.

**Question-5:** You began learning an art form that was pre-dominantly that of the celebrate order of the faith where interacting with women is restricted. How were you accepted as a deciple? (Was'nt it a problem for you internally? Wasn't it a problem with the Sattra that you belong to?)

**Ans:** Srimanta Sankardeva's philosophy is that liberal where irrespective of caste, creed, gender everyone gets place. Some Sattras maintained their culture in isolation away from women. However once Sattriya dance attained its recognition, approach towards mobilize the dance form became a movement and many of earlier regulations were taken into consideration and necessary amendments were made. Many Bhakats from Sattras came to town to teach Sattriya dance. I,being disciple of an Adhyapak who is an Udasin

Bhakat have learned many peculiar things of Sattras. To me, such interaction between different poles have brought closer connection between two different mindsets, and such syncretic approach would always lead to betterment of the living tradition. If better coordination between tradition and modernity can be made, we can hope to see Sattriya dance in a better position.

**Question-6:** Have you started to teach Sattriya? If yes then please introduce us to your 'shishyas' and your fellow dancers who dance as a part of your choreography.

**Ans:** Though I teach Sattriya, yet I cannot consider myself as a teacher, because I m still swimming in the ocean of learning . I assist Adhyapak while he teaches his disciples, and sometimes in his absence I run his institution. Teaching young learners who are born and brought up outside Assam is always a motivation, as their inquisitiveness towards Sattriya tradition make us learn about the form more intensely and minutely

**Question-7:** Where all have you performed outside Assam? Did you ever see yourself as a 'Performer' rather than a 'Bhakat' while growing up' in Dance? (Please elaborate on the sentiment with which you learn as Sattriya is a living tradition unlike Bharatanatyam, Odissi etc where the dance forms were revived).

**Ans:** I have performed in various places like Taiwan, Dehradun, Goa, Mumbai, Jodhpur and various parts of Delhi. I am born and brought up in a Sattriya tradition. As a performer, I believe I can relate to God, I can beautify the sanctity of worship. The other classical forms have got their prominent positions, their play with different tastes is acceptable, but to attain that pinnacle we have a long way to go. Sattriya is a dance form which is solely based on worship of God. Sattriya, being a living tradition, it is very important to survive its form of originality and purity. Bhakats in various Sattras across Assam have devoted their lives to survive the living tradition which is the uniqueness of the form. Changes or adding modern flavor to the dance form must be undergo check and balance so that purify of the form doesn't wither away.

**Question-8:** Have you interacted with other performers? (In terms of a collaborative production or maybe experimentation within or outside India).

**Ans:** Yes I have interacted with performers from various forms of dance. But taking into account collaborative performance, I haven't taken any initiative. To begin such a project needs acute analysis of one's form of expertise along with comprehensive knowledge about the form of dance you want to collaborate with. Hopefully in future I'll be able to take such step. However we have worked on certain Assamese songs choreographed in Sattriya style.

**Question-9:** Where do you want to see Sattriya Dance as a Classical Form in the future?

**Ans:** Sattriya has been continuing as a living tradition since more than 500 years ago, but late recognition has slowed down the journey of Sattriya dance as mainstream dance. After recognition as 8th form of classical dance, the dancers got the motivation to mobilize the form and make people to understand how it is peculiar to other forms of classical dances. Sattriya dance still undergoes controversies regarding footsteps, aharjya etc. In order to give it the image of classical form it is imperative for all Sattriya dance scholars to come into an agreement regarding pros and cons of Sattriya dance. Unless this criteria is being full filled Sattriya dance would face further struggle. Sattriya dance for the dancers shouldn't be a means to attain glamour but an objective to spread the verse of Gurujana and take it to the level it deserves to be. The beauty of Sattriya should touch heart of every art lover. It is our responsibility to preserve this form of dance as intangible heritage of Assam.

**Question-10:** What have been the themes of your performances? Have they been Sankaradeva's and Madhavadeva's scriptures or you have broken-free from such conventional themes? If you have then, what drives you to breakfree from the conventional themes and step out of the "Sattriya" narratives?

**Ans:** The performances I'm part of are choreographed by Adhyapak. We work on "dashavatar", "Totay", parts from Ramayana and also performed Srimanta Sankardeva's "Rambijoy" and Sri Madhavdevas "Chor Dhora aru Pimpora Gosowa". I personally haven't taken up such projects within or outside the binary of GuruJana's creation.

**Question-11:** Could you give us a brief detail about how the women dancers started taking up Sattriya as a dance form in Assam? (From Indira PP Bora till now.... Please mention the other pioneer female dancers as well even the ones who were

**Ans:** It was Late Sri Rasheswar Saikia Barbayan who has the greatest role bringing Sattriya dance from Sattri to proscenium. Women were not directly related to Sattriya parampara. Sri Rasheswar Saikia Barbayan taught sri Dipali Das Sattriya dance for the first. Her details are not found as she discontinued her dance. The eminent women dancers in Assam who are experts in various forms of classical dance had realized that time the significance of Sattriya Dance. They learnt the form and tried their best to mobilize Sattriya dance among new generation. I have to mention the name of Sri Indira P.P.Bora, Garima Hazarika, Pushpa Bhuyan, Saradi Saikia. Sometimes there arouse difficulty in interaction between the bhakats and Gurus in cities but hopefully every clash will wither away one day and we will maintain the purest form of Sattriya dance. The

journey of learning Sattriya dance for women from Bhakats yesterday and today have not been that easy where interaction is bound by Sattras ' regulations, but nothing demotivates Assamese women their passion to learn Sattriya. Today we can see each family has a Sattriya dancer. If the dance form is taken in good spirit, outcome it brings in future will definitely be fruitful.

## APPENDIX VI

### Interview with Dr. Mallika Kandali

**Note:** This Interview was taken over the e-mails. The researcher had sent a list of questions over the mail and Dr. Mallika Kandali had answered to the questions over the mail and sent it to the researcher. This interview is a compilation of 2 mails received on 7 May 2015.

**Question-1:** What does Sattriya mean to you?

**Ans:** For me, Sattriya is not only a dance form, but a way of life. Assamese society is highly influenced by Sattriya Culture and I am happy that I could dedicate my life to Sattriya.

**Question-2:** Since when have you been learning Sattriya?

**Ans:** From 1973 I have been taking training on this dance form. My first Guru was Guru Harendranath Sarma. During that initial period he taught me Sattriya in Diphu Kala Kendra, Karbi Anglong.

**Question-3:** Could you please introduce us to your Gurus?

**Ans:** My Gurus are Late Guru Harendranath Sarma, Guru Nilapadma Paul, Guru Tileshwar Tamuli, Guru Ghanakanta Bora Barbayan and Guru Naren Ch. Baruah.

**Question-4:** From your 1<sup>st</sup> performance .....Guru and a Choreographer yourself .....what has been the journey like?

**Ans:** My first performance was in the year 1974 at Diphu club auditorium. I performed Krishna nritya and Guru Harendranath Sarma played the khol. After that I was trained in the Diphu Shilpi Sangha under the guidance of Guru Nilapadma Paul. There I performed in many dance dramas like – Uddhava Sambad, Gopi Birah, Ojapali, Krishna Sambad and many other dance numbers of Sattriya. In this context I would like to say that my parental place is near the Bardowa Sattri, where Srimanta Sankaradeva, the architect of Sattriya dance was born. From my child hood I had a close association with this Sattri. Our family in the ancestral village had been known for decades around in the Nagaon district for its cultural engagement with Sattriya specially in the enactment of Bhaonas where along with performances the members took active part in set design , props and others aesthetic assemblage. Therefore I



grew up taking part in all these activities. Further I have learnt Sattriya under the three noted Gurus as mentioned above. They were initially bhakats of the Kamalabari Sattra, and now they are living in outside the Sattra.

Gradually, besides performing, I also started exploring the theoretical field of Sattriya. I registered my name for the Ph. D degree in Guwahati University under the guidance of Dr. Pradip jyoti Mahanta. My topic was “The Sattriya and Odissi dances : A comparative Study.” I got Ph.D in 2005. On the basis of my Ph.D research work I have written one book in Assamese in 2007 and another one in English in 2014. The books were published by Written Word, Guwahati, and Publication Board Assam. For better grip in handling my Ph.D work I in the mean time learnt Odissi dance under the guidance of Guru Garima Hazarika and Odiya language. I have an institution of Sattriya dance- ‘ Parampara Pravah.’ I have composed certain dance composition based on various themes like – ‘*Rasa Bichar* (based on ten rasas)’ *Ashta Nayika* ,(Eight heroines of Natya sashtra), *Gopi Biroh*, *Hai Prana Nath*, *Bharata Borishe*, *Jiya mora ghabaraye*; *Jibono Raga Sandipanam*; *Katha Ek Jajabor ki*; *Bongshi Sambad*; *Mondudori puche Ravakana*’ etc.

**Question-5:** You began learning an art form that was predominantly that of the celebrate order of the faith where interacting with woman is restricted. How were you accepted as a disciple? (Wasn’t it a problem for you internally? Wasn’t it a problem with the Sattra that you belong to ?

**Ans:** I never faced any problem as a woman from the Sattra community. I grew up in a very liberal atmosphere in my childhood. During my research period also I got full help and response from the Sattra community.

**Question-6:** Please introduce us to your ‘Shishyas’ and your follow dancers who dance as a part of your choreography?

**Ans:** ‘Guru’ and ‘Shishya’ – both the words have very wide perspective. Its very difficult to be a real Guru or Shishya. Yet I have some talented shishyas or students like – Mayuri Goswami (CCRT Scholarship holder), Drishadwitee Baruah, Deerga Baruah, Senjsanhya Changmai, Meghna Choudhury Goswami, Anamika Goswami , Kritanjali Bora, Medha Mishra, Amrita Baruah etc. who take part in my choreography.

**Question-7:** Where all have you performed outside Assam? Did you ever see yourself as a performer’ rather than a ‘bhakat’ while growing up in Dance?

**Ans:** I have performed in many festivals and places outside Assam and India like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Vishakhapatnam, Kolkata, Patna, Bhubaneswar, Aurangabad, Trishur, Trivandam, Hyderabad, Tripura, Manipur, Detroit, Washington D.C., VSA, Bangkok, Thailand etc.

Originally, Sattriya has been a male tradition. Only the male bhakats are allowed to stay in Sattria premises. Though I didn't grow in Sattria as a bhakat but in my performing career I started by learning only Sattriya and always pay respect to the vast Sattriya tradition. I used to visit and stay in Sattria itself as when necessary for learning and updating my performance.

**Question-8:** Have you interacted with other performers? (in term of collaborative production or may be experimentation within or outside India)?

**Ans:** Yes. In 2007 I composed a comparative dance number between Sattriya and Odissi. In 2010 and 2013 we made an experimentation with Manipuri and other classical dance forms. In 2010 we performed a jugalbandi of Sattriya and Manipuri. In 2013, another experiment was done with Sattriya and other 7 classical dance forms of India. Guru N. Shing of Manipur was the director in these two compositions.

**Question-9:** From rituals to proscenium .....have these interactions and exposures changed you in any way especially in terms of production/ themes/ stories or approach?

**Ans:** Sattriya has a very rich literature of its own. Srimanta Sankaradeva, Sri Sri Madhavadeva and their followers composed many verses, devotional songs which are very suitable for abhinaya. These are basically related with Lord Krishna, Rama etc. Bhakti is the prime rasa in all these compositions. But we can observe the other nine rasas also. Besides these I have used some themes from Natya Shastra like Ashta Nayika, Rasa Bichar etc. Certain themes were taken from Mahabharata and Ramayana also. For example – ‘Mandudori Puche Ravaraka’—through the character of Mandudori (wife of Ravana), I tried to highlight the deplorable status of women within the social power structure. My another composition ‘Jiya mora gaborai’ is also based on woman issue. ‘Bharat Borishe’ is based on integration, patriotism, ‘Katha Ek Jajabor Ki’ is based on Dr Bhupen Hazarika's life and songs. ‘Chukher Alo’ is another composition of mine which is based on Kabiguru Rabindra Nath Tagore's song and poem.

Sattriya bhakats are not like commercial dance companies or troupes that you witness in the west or in some parts of India. They are still followers of the sacred

tradition that Sattriya dance is a medium for devotion. Though now and then they perform outside the Sattra premises and are given some honorarium, they can never be compared to the dance companies or commercial organization associated with dance performances. In my personal level I too follow the similar path shown by the bhakats and perform more for my spiritual fulfillment than commercial gain. However this is not to say that the performance of Sattriya dancers should not be given their due honorarium. Because it is also a question of livelihood for most, unlike some of us who fortunately have a job to earn bread and butter.

**Question-10:** Where do you want to see Sattriya Dance as a classical form in the future?

**Ans:** As an established Indian classical dance form in the world dance scenario.

**Question-11:** In all your experimentations some convention artists would resist your taking up Sattirya as a form of expression and grammar, since it is a temple dance form. What drives you to break free from the conventional themes and step out of the Sattriya narratives?

**Ans:** Things have changed over the decades since independence. Now Sattriya is performed parallelly in the secular spaces like proscenium along with the Sattra spaces. As a performer, I have worked within the Sattriya narratives. But as mentioned earlier in my previous answer I have tried to experiment with universal and contemporary issues within the thematics. For example- character like Mandudori, also became a thinking woman besides being the traditional mythic character from Ramayana. She speaks as a voice of dissent and woman empowerment by questioning Ravana, the patriarch about the plight of women in general thereby about the abduction of Sita.

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