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Indian Devotional Music: Its Relation with Religion and Iconography (With special reference to the state of Assam)

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Abstract

Music is connected with the religious sentiments of human beings. Human religious believers have interpreted music as the utterances of Gods and lauded it as the purest expression of spirituality. Throughout the majority of human history, religious texts have been sung rather than written, and religious behavior has been expressed through prayer or devotional melodies or music in almost all religious traditions. Religious music's values, functions, and genres are culturally diverse and varied. Religious musical forms can transcend cultural barriers. Some religions, such as Buddhism, use music to prepare the mind for meditation by calming and focusing it. In India, the Kirtana, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Bhagawat Purana, and other Puranas are the religious or sacred books of Hindus. The poetic verse of these epic and non-epic is performed by the local artist or traditional artist in local languages in different musical tunes or notes. The iconography of Indian music contains numerous elements that represent the human religion, culture, traditions, way of life, thinking, values, customs, costumes, rituals, and behavior throughout the centuries through visual art and symbolism like sculpture, architecture, an idol of God, etc. Therefore, iconography is a specialized discipline of study that examines images of Gods and about existence. Indian music and dance are the culmination of one of the world's finest civilizations' evolutions. Iconography related to Indian music entails the study of dancing figures, images, deities, and pictorial representations of music, ragas, and musical instruments which are found in various temples, caves, and Mughal miniature paintings and Rajasthani Ragamala paintings.

Keywords: Religion, Devotional music, Iconography, Manuscript.

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Introduction:

The History of Music and Early Human:

When humans were in their primitive or early state, they eventually heard various sounds of nature such as animals, rain, wind, etc. and they were very curious about and drawn to the sounds of nature. Due to their enthusiasm, they followed the sound and attempted to speak it themselves. By striking two bamboo and animal bones, they attempted to sense the tone and rhythm. Thus, individuals began to follow diverse sounds. Early humans were afraid of natural disasters, pandemics, fatal diseases, rain, storms, and earthquakes. They believed that a superpower may have been controlling them. To appease the supernatural force, they sacrificed many things and began praying to trees, rocks, etc. They made numerous rhythmic sounds (beat) and movements when praying to these natural objects. This way, later on in different periods, humans have developed musical notes, melodies, rhythm, and Instruments. Under the cover of the devotional faith of human beings, music was brought up and took its standard and purest form. As people became more civilized and began to live in societies, they progressively developed distinct cultures, religions, and music.

Music and Religion:

In religious ceremonies, dance, music, and instrumental music remain integral components. Humans have a natural affinity for music. Since the commencement of recorded history, there have been traces of music. Every caste, religion, and ethnic group has its own culture, music, dance, and beliefs. In this manner, India possesses remarkable traditions and cultures. In India, people of all religions celebrate every occasion with music. Each religion, including Hinduism, Islam, Sikh, Buddhism, and Jainism, has its own way of commemorating auspicious occasions and festivals with musical notes or prayer songs. Music is a medium utilized by nearly all religions. It is a crucial and potent element that enables devotees to express their beliefs, innermost thoughts, and feelings. When used carefully, music can create an atmosphere conducive to worship. Music has the ability to elicit emotion and bring people together. Music plays a vital role in all of our lives. In our private lives, we choose the music we listen to, but we are subjected to music in other contexts. For this reason, music is performed and played at all events in human existence. From childbirth ceremonies, wedding songs, songs of cultivation, prayer songs to relief from diseases like pox and others, Children's songs like riddles or rhymes, folk songs based on love, sadness, separation, songs of nature, patriotic song, village songs, festival songs and other rituals-based songs on different God and Goddess, other auspicious songs, etc. have been existing not only in India but also different parts of the world. Music is an integral component of human existence. It also had to do with our emotional and spiritual health. Performers and listeners accomplish union with their higher power through music.

The values, functions, and genres of religious music are culturally diverse and varied. Religious musical forms can transcend cultural barriers. Some religions, such as Buddhism, use music to prepare the mind for meditation by calming and focusing it. In India, the Kirtana, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagawat Purana, and other Puranas are the

religious or sacred books of Hindus. The poetic verse of these epic and non-epic is performed by the local artist or traditional artist in local languages in different musical tunes or notes. In the Shikh religion, they follow Guru Grantha sahib and perform Gurvani, and offer prayers to God. Similarly, Vedic hymns in Hinduism were musical. By performing bhajans, devotional songs, Sanskrit mantras, etc. Hindus offer prayers to God. Muslims perform Sufi music, Qawwali, in mosques and offer prayers to God on their way and faith. In addition, it teaches religious teachings. Religious songs of any faith are characterized as a source of strength and a means of relieving pain, thereby improving one's mood. In the Christian churches of medieval Europe, hymns were prominent. In all religions, music is employed as a form of supplication. As a spiritual aid, music is believed to uplift and calm the psyche. The evolution of classical music has been multifaceted and consequential. They have infused it with streams of worship melodies.

Hinduism in India has been associated with devotional music since the Vedic period. Regarding the worship of Gods, hymns are significant and are sometimes regarded as sacrosanct. They are often reverent and solemn forms of music containing often sacred lyrics but are intended to elevate the spirit toward God. In christens, church music is also performed as prayers. Muslims perform their daily 'Azan' in a musical melody that somehow resembles the notes of the Indian classical raga. 'n al' known human societies, the emergence of music occurred simultaneously and spontaneously. In ancient India musical instruments were discovered at least 30,000 years ago.

Music in Hinduism:

Hinduism is always associated with deities and Goddess is music. In India, the divine origin of music is attributed to certain Gods through the arts. Religion and deity are connected to music not only in India but also in Western cultures. In Greek mythology, instruments are affiliated with Greek Gods. In India, Shiva is associated with dance and music, Lord Brahma is frequently associated with the nada Brahma, and Lord Vishnu wields the shankha or conch, a wind instrument. In Indian music, the five faces of Lord Shiva gave rise to ragas such as raga Bhairava, raag Hindol, raag Dipak, and raga shree. It is said that the Goddess Parvati in Hindu tradition sang raga Kaushiki[1]. The Goddess Saraswati is linked to music. She is observed with a Veena instrument in her hand. Lord Srikrishna is depicted with the flute instrument. The Vedic sage Narada is depicted carrying Tanpura instrument. In addition, he is credited with inventing the instrument called Mahati veena. Jaydev Goswami (12^{th}–13^{th} centuries) was one of India's earliest mystic vocalists in the Vaishnavite bhakti (tradition of praying lord Vishnu) tradition. His book 'Geet Govinda' is considered a devotional music[2]. Here, he sang Srikrishna and Radha's devotional melodies with great emotion and sincerity. Chaitanya Deva of Bengal also sang about Krishna and Radha's mystical love. Srimanta Sankardeva and Sri Sri Madhabdeva composed numerous Srikrishna-based devotional Borgeet themes. Tansen's teacher, Swami Haridas, was an expert in the dhrupad style of devotional music. In India, the Bhakti movement gave sacred music a boost.

Music is sanctified by religion. It is given the standard form while being combined with religion. In India, lord Rama and lord Srikrishna plays an important role in the daily lives of people. Both Rama and Krishna are believed to be the human incarnations of Lord Vishnu, the eternal protector. Rama was born in Treta yuga, the second of the four eras that define the age of the world. Their stories are often depicted in songs, paintings, literature, dance, and music. The epic Ramayana exists in many versions in different languages and with different titles such as Valmiki Ramayana, Adbhuta Ramayana, Uttara Ramayana, Tulsi Ramayana, Kamba Ramayana, Jain Ramayana, Pampa Ramayana, Saptakanda Ramayana, Adikanda Ramayana, etc. Lord Krishna however was born in Dvapara yuga. Rama is depicted with Sudarshan Chakra in hand and a musical instrument flute. Krishna's story is described in the Bhagavata, which details the lives of all the avatars of Lord Vishnu. Songs and hymns often tell tales of Srikrishna's Rasaleela (dance with the gopis in 102rakash102s), playing of flute, etc.

In India, music is regarded as a living and revitalizing art, with matter for its body and spirit for its essence. Raga, which consists of combinations of notes, microtones, emotions, and moods, can be characterized as the psycho-material body of music.

Music in Jainism:

Jainism originated in India and Mahavir Jain was the 24th Tirthankar of the Jain religion. According to Pratima Waman in her article published, she said that singing songs, dancing, and drama have a very intimate relationship with Jain. Rsabhadeva is the first Tirthankara of the Jain tradition. The stone inscription of Samarasimha Deva at Jalore in Rajasthan describes the construction and renovation of the Sri Kuvaravihara in 1242. Dances performed by dancers in the Jain temples in front of the idols of Tirthankaras were very popular.[3] Some padas are performed in a tune in Jainism. Banarasidas, Daulatram,are the writers of Jain padas.[4]

Sufism and Music:

Sufism is the mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through the direct personal experience of God. It consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to ascertain the nature of humanity and of God and to facilitate the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world. It has Islamic ascetics. By educating the masses and deepening the spiritual concerns of the Muslims, Sufism has played an important role in the formation of Muslim society. Sufis have elaborated on the massage of the Prophet Muhammad the founder of Islam. Sufi music refers to the devotional music of the Sufis, inspired by the works of Sufi poets like Rumi, Hafiz, BullehShah, Amir Khusro, and Khwaja Ghulam. Qawwali is the best-known Sufi music. It is devotional music.

Music in Buddhism:

In 8th-12th century, Charyapadas (Buddhist prayers) are also found in Nepal and Assam, and different parts of India. These Charyapadas have words similar to Assamese, Bengali

language. Charyapadas is a collection of mystical poems, and songs of realization in the *Vajrayana tradition* (tantric tradition) of Buddhism in Assam, Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha. The Buddhist sacred book *'charyacharyavinichaya'* was found in Nepal. It was written between the 8^{th} -12^{th} centuries[5].

The prevalence and use of'music and dance in re'igious or auspicious places and occasions in India are depicted in the archaeological survey. Indian Iconography has shown much evidence which expresses the relation of music with religious faith in India.

Indian Music and Iconography:

Iconography is derived from the Greek words 'eikon' which means image and 'graphic' which means writing, drawing, etc. The term "eikon" is equivalent to the Indian word "arca" or "image." Consequently, the term 'icon' refers to an object of worship, a representation of a God or saint in painting, sculpture, etc. It is connected with sacred rituals involving the worship of particular deities. The visual images and symbols used in a work of art or the study or interpretation of these. Iconography is therefore a specialized field of study that examines images of deities. The traditional or conventional images or symbols associated with a subject and especially a religious or legendary subject. It is the pictorial material relating to or illustrating a subject. It serves to identify the particular representation[6]. Hinduism has adopted several iconic symbols, forming part of Hindu iconography, that are imbued with spiritual meaning based on either the scriptures or cultural traditions. Over time some of the symbols, for instance, the 'swastika' has come to have wider association while others like 'Om' is recognized as a unique representation of Hinduism. It also covers the term *Murti*, for icons, and *Mudra* for gestures and positions of the hands and body. There is various idol or *murti* prayed in Hindu culture. For example, Shiva Murti, Saraswati Murti, etc. The *'Tilaka*' is a mark worn on the forehead or other parts of the body as a sign of spiritual devotion in Hindu culture. *Vibhuti* is the holy ash obtained from sacred pooja rites involving fire. *"Om"* is the sacred sound symbol that represents the universe, the ultimate reality. It is prefixed and sometimes suffixed to all Vedic mantras or chants and prayers. Likewise, there are many signs and symbols which represent the iconography of Hinduism. In Hinduism God and Goddesses are also symbolized with various symbols. For example, Devi Saraswati is symbolized with the instrument Veena, Lord Sri Krishna is symbolized with the instrument called venue, etc. Indian music and dance represent the pinnacle of the evolution of one of the world's greatest civilizations[7].

The iconography of Indian music also refers to the study of figures, pictures, deities, and pictorial representations of devotional music. India is the birthplace of ancient civilization, and vast representations of dance, music, and instruments may be found throughout history. The rich cultural existence in Indian music since ancient times was symbolized by literature and sculpture of various ages. We can observe statues of musicians carrying various instruments. Dancing sculptures in temples from various periods are representations of Indian culture. Music, dance, and sculpture are all diverse art genres, but they are all interconnected.

We also find out many pieces of evidence of musical representation in temples and auspicious places in India from ancient manuscripts.

Indian Manuscripts and Indian Ragas:

The names of the paintings that depict music, particularly Indian raga music, are called Ragamala Painting created by Rajput painters. These are also known as Rajput Paintings. Rajput painters who had worked at the Mughal court and learned some of the science of miniature painting as developed in Persia must have returned to their homes and produced such works as the Rasikapriya illustrations. More significant for the future are the earliest Rajput Ragamala paintings, which also date to roughly the Mughal era, as these themes were to dominate the school's output throughout the entire 17th century. Songs and dance were inextricably linked to the religious revival that Shri Chaitanya so strongly influenced in the early sixteenth century. As we have seen, music and poetry have a reciprocal relationship. This collection of musical poems and images is known as Ragamala[8]. Artists depicting dance and music in pictures and sculptures have been discovered in royal places, temples, and Buddhist religious sites.

In literature, pictures, sculpture, and iconography, dancing has been depicted extensively during various historical eras. From the Indus Valley civilization, a dancing girl with bronze metal sculptures has been discovered. The great book Natyasastra written by Bharata in India (Approx-2nd -5th century) is the earliest surviving Sanskrit text of Drama, Music, and dance. In India's ancient and medieval temples, sculptures of musicians singing, playing musical instruments, and dancing are abundant[9]. Ancient temple dancing rituals may have influenced ancient sculptors to incorporate dance and music into temple architecture. Although music and sculpture are distinct art forms, they are interconnected in a social, cultural, historical, and religious manner. These two forms evolved religiously and evoked rasas in the minds of the general public. The science of iconography is also closely related to religion or a religious cult that teaches one to realize divinity in a manner in an object. Art is an expression or a symbol of nature and it unveils as well as represents the exquisite beauty of nature which in its turn is the representation of world essence. Music has been present from the history of Vedic and Upanishad periods up to the present time. According to Venkateswara – "The pre–Vedic Aryans did not know about idols. From Vedic Samhita and Upanishad period, when priests devote sacrifice in fire, the tendency of anthropomorphic integration towards symbolism regarding Hindu God has been developed"[10]. Rajput painting is the name of a famous art. It has a wider extension. Rajput painters who had worked for a time at the Mughal court and learned some of the science of miniature painting as developed in Persia. Further Rajput developed Raga Mala painting in around the 17th century[11]. It portrays the states of love or the type of heroism of Rajput kings. Also, it has expressed the sentiment and emotion of ragas imagining various Gods and Goddesses in human form. Many pictures of raga and Ragini have been depicted in ancient Ragamala paintings. Mughal paintings and Rajasthani paintings are examples of Raga Mala paintings in the medieval age. The emotion or rasa-bhava elicit from these ragas pasteurized very well in those paintings. Also, maintain the time'theory of ragas-ratings it is pasteurized.

Manuscripts and Iconography related to music in Assam:

There are many pieces of evidence that say that the state of Assam has a very rich cultural heritage. This evidence is found in ancient texts, manuscripts, coins, sculptures, architecture, etc.

Manuscripts of Assam:

In the 8th-12th century, there are charyapada which is the Buddhist prayer found in Assam. These charyapadas are found in Assamese, Bengali, language. The Charyapada is a collection of mystical poems, and songs of realization in the Vajrayana tradition of Buddhism from tantric tradition in Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Odisha. According to the book Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, "The charya gitis were discovered in 1907 and were published in 1916 in a collection called 'Buddha gana O Doha 'by Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Hara Prasad Sastri[12]. The work contained 50 gitis with a Sanskrit commentary by Acarya Munidutta. A palm leaf manuscript of the Charyapada was rediscovered in the early 20th century by Haraprasad Shastri at the Nepal royal court library. As songs of realization, the Charyapada were intended to be sung as prayers for the Buddhist faith. It has the elements of the ritual gathering of practitioners. The rediscovery of the Charyapada is created by Haraprasad Shastri, a 19th-century Sanskrit scholar and historian of Bengali Literature. He visited Nepal in 1907 and chanced upon 50 verses at the Royal Library of Nepalese kings. This was written on trimmed palm leaves of 12.8x0.9 inches. In Assam, there were many Buddhist monks who lived in earlier times.

Ancient charyapadas of Buddhist people in Assam:

Numerous references have been found about the worship of Lord Vishnu in Assam during ancient times. But the history of music in ancient Assam becomes clear only after the 15th century A.D. According to archaeologists and music experts, the status of the music of that time can be presumed only through the Bodhik(Buddhist) charya stanzas or the pada geets found in a sacred book "Charyacharyavinichaya" of the Buddhist faith. The Charya Pada stanzas composed between the 8th to 11th centuries refer to the names of ragas, and these tunes have been mentioned in those stanzas that match with the music of Kamrup or ancient Assam. It was believed that many of the Buddhist monks lived in Assam many centuries back. The name of the ragas such as Baradi, Mallari, Dhanashree is found in these stanzas.

Some names of ragas matched with those of the borgeet of Assam are:

Ragas in ancient Buddhist Charya Stanza	**Ragas in Borgeet**
Varadi	Varadi
Dhanasi	Dhanashree
Mallari	Mallar[13]

Pieces of evidence were found, the Buddhist community people lived in Assam from the 9th to 10th centuries like poets Meennath, Gorakhnath, and Sarahpad. The manuscripts

'Charyacharyavinishchay' that were discovered in Nepal mention the raga-based songs composed by these people for pursuing religious devotion. The ancient Assamese music tunes and words which are similar to these Charyapadas have also been found. The Charyapadas was written and composed in ragas. Charyapadas were composed at the denouement of Magadhi and Pakritdilect and it was the period of rising different languages like Assamese, Bengali, and Oriya language. Therefore, it is found that there have been many similarities between the Charyapadas dialect with Assamese, Oriya, and Bengali.

Puthichitra:

The epic and the Purana tales were depicted in ancient Puthichitra found in Assam. The Satriya styles, under the direction of Vaishnavite preachers SriShankardeva and Sri Madhabdeva. Different colour combinations were employed to represent dramatic narration, straightforward composition, and exact draughtsmanship. The aloe or Sanchi tree's bark is used to create the manuscripts, also known as Sanchi pat, after a laborious, elaborate process it was made. The most notable of these traditional paintings, dating from the seventh century AD, were Hastividyaranya and Chitra Bhagavata[14]. The Patuas' paintings were referred to as pats. Excellent artistic creations were produced by the khanikar or the artists in their works that were centered in the satra religious institution of Vaishnavite tradition and naam ghars (sacred place). Additionally, this painting style displayed Rajput, Pahari, and Mughal influences.

The coin, manuscripts, etc are the source of data collection in music and cultural research. In Bengal and Orissa states, this kind of painting is known as pattachitra.

A drape known as the Vrindabani Vastra:

VrindavaniVastra was woven in the 16th century by Assamese weavers under the direction of Srimanta Shankardeva. They were led by Mathuradas burha aata, a revered Vaishnava saint in Assam. The substantial drape depicts lord Srikrishna's early pursuits. Srmanta Shankardeva used to perform Gayan-bayan (a devotional songs-dance form of Assam) with instruments with his disciples and carrying and showcasing vrindavani vastra (a cloth where painted and drawn by artists about Srikrishnaleela) around different places of Assam. He moved on walking to various places to spread Vaishnavite tradition in Assam.

Devotional songs prevalent in Assam and iconography and Manuscripts found related to music in Assam:

Religious songs of any religion are described as a source of strength and a means of relieving pain, thereby enhancing one's disposition. Srimanta Sankardeva's neo-Vaishnavite movement played an important role in the social transformation of medieval Assam. The period between the 15th and 18th centuries A.D. was a pivotal time in the medieval history of Assam. In addition, the Ahom-Mughal conflict in the 17th century in Assam was marked by the rise of the neo-vaishnavite movement propagated by Srimanta Sankardev and his disciple practice of Vaishnav bhakti. The movement brought about significant modifications to the caste system. During that time period, the majority of kingdoms practiced a complex blend of

indigenous worship with elements of Saivism (Praying Shiva) and Saktism (Praying Goddess).In the midst of chaos, Srimanta Sankaradeva preached devotion to a single God, Srikrishna, and his incarnations. To spread Vaishnavism, in Assam Srimanta Shankardeva utilized the music he had composed. In assam, the popularity of puranic (Purana age) and folkloric traditions asserts that the earliest rulers of Kamrup(earlier name, capital of Assam) were non-Aryan. But much evidence was found in Assam which depicts that Vedic chants, Gandharva (singers of heaven of artists for praying God and Goddess) music was practiced in earlier ancient Assam. The subject matter of the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha based on Rama Katha, Vishnu Katha, and Srikrishna kathas had been performed in the Sanskrit language in earlier times and narrated and performed by singers in Assam in the ancient period. Madhab Kandoli(great Assamese poet and guru of Srimanta Shankardeva in13th century)translated the Ramayana into the regional language Assamese from the Sanskrit language[15]. The Kalika Purana describes the story of Narada's (Narakasura –the demon) origin and his conquest of the kingdom of Pragjyotisha (Earlier name of kamrup, Capital of Assam) and his destruction by Lord Krishna. There are numerous indications that Assam once had a rich cultural heritage. There were many examples that depict that Assam was culturally very rich. Devotional music was prevalent not only in temples but also in Vaishnav sattra (religious institution of praying lord Vishnu) from the medieval age. There are many other music traditions and folk performing art prevalent in Assam from the ancient period. Over and above traditional folk devotional music and prayers are performed on different occasions in Assam. There are few examples of devotional music prevalent in Assam are given below-

Ankiya Geet:

Ankiya Naat is a type of dramatic performing art written by Srimanta Shankardeva and Sri Madhabdeva.Ankiya Bhaona is the name given to the performance enactment of Ankia Naat. Sri Sankardeva and Sri Madhabdeva referred to it as Nataka, Naat, or Yatra, rather than Anka or Ankia. The plays were composed in one plot (anka), which was not separated into parts, hence, it became known as Ankia later on. The legends of Ankia Naat were created with Lord Krishna at the center. It expresses Lord Krishna's devotion and splendor. It consists of dance, songs, and theatre. The main goal of Ankiya naat was to spread the message of bhakti to the masses. It has various unique features, such as the narrator or Sutradhar who explains the plot in between acts. It included songs, slokas, and prayers. The use of the Brajawali language, dance, and rhythmic prose is standard in its form. Songs in Ankiya Bhaona are written in ragas and talas. The music performance is divided into several segments. The stories are mostly taken from Bhagawata Purana and the Ramayana. Shankardeva wrote his first play at the age of 19 and is chihna yatra at his birthplace. He later composes six plays. These are-1. Patni prasad 2. Kaliya Daman 3. Rukmini Haran 4. Parijat Haran 5. Keli Gopala 6. Rama Vijaya.

Dramas written by Sri Madhabdeva are:

1.Arjun Bhajan (Breaking down the Arjuna trees)
2.Sur dhora(Capture of the thief)
3.Pimpara Gosowa(Removal of the ants)
4.Bhumi letowa (Rolling on the ground)
5.Bhojana Behar (Pastoral picnic)[16]

Borgeet (Devotional Music):

The name 'Borgeet is popularly ascribed to a special set of devotional songs composed during the late 15th and early 16th A.D.by Srimanta Shankardeva and his disciple Sri Sri Madhabdeva, The two chief exponents of Vaishnavism in Assam. In India from 14- the 15th-century bhakti movement started based on devotion with the main objective of spreading the Vaishnav religion and strengthening the tradition of worshipping different incarnations of lord Vishnu. In the medieval age, music developed rapidly because of the growth of music based on devotional songs which were bound up by classical ragas and its rules. The devotional music was based on the raga -raginis of that period. The rich treasure for bhakti literature and developed new forms of arts like Satriya dance (classical dance), Borgeet (devotional music), Ankiya Naat or Bhaonas (a form of one-act play), Rasaleela geet, etc. This form of performing art was natured and preserved by the Sattras. The borgeet are called celestial or great songs in Assamese literature. Those songs where the devotion generated imagination of Srimanta Sankardeva and Sri SriMadhavdeva come alive in sentiment, idioms, and tune. Srimanta Shankardeva and his follower Sri Madhabdeva created and composed Borgeet using brajavali dialet (Ancient Assamese language) and in various subjects of Sri Krishna. In the later part of the 15th century, Srimanta Sankardeva and his closest disciple Sri Madhavdeva established sattra religious institutions in Assam and composed a large number of devotional songs based on ragas and fixed talas[17].

They used devotional music as a medium to spread Vaishanvism in Assam. Srimanta Shankardeva created Khol instrument (percussion instrument) and applied different talas in borgeet and other songs. Borgeet is based on moral and spiritual sentiments. Borgeet has many similar elements to Indian classical music. The tune which directly touches our hearts and pleases our minds is called Raga. A raga is a tonal composition of musical notes having a sequence form or structure of a particular significance. In India, the term classical music is generally used to denote raga music which is an ancient art claiming its origin to the Vedas. Long before the advent of the Christian era, the raga music system had not only developed its own definite rules and grammar of theory and practice of music but also formed fairly comprehensive theories about the art of music appreciation. Most of the saint -composers belonging to the bhakti movement of medieval India, used raga music for their song compositions. All the saint composers like Tulsidas, Kabir, Mira, Nanak, and others used raga music for their compositions. Borgeet is a very rich culture of northeast India. It is a classical form of devotional music popular in Assamese culture. It has owned its characteristics. It follows the strict rule of classical raga and tala.

Other devotional Music of Assam-

Many more folk traditions and rituals have been noticed in Assam state, which have been widespread among various community-non-community, tribes, and different religions in Assam. Assam is a microcosm of India, where people of many castes and creeds coexist in peace and love. They are distinct in terms of language, religion, and cultural identity. They have always observed their religious rituals, dancing, theatre, and other traditional cultural practices. Dances and dramas play a vital role in social life among these religious devotional prayers.

In Assamese culture, the term Naam dharma (devotional belief and prayers) refers to a devotional prayer song. These are the following:

Naam – (songs of auspicious occasion)

People in Assam perform various ceremonies on various occasions. Naam is a devotional prayer or geet(songs) that has traditionally been performed on auspicious occasions. The females and males participate in their unique ways. Various sorts of naam dharma are traditionally performed by artists. As an example,

1.Ai naam – It is performed for the prayer of ' Ai', maa or mother Goddess. The mother Goddess is prevailing in different forms according to Hindus. It may be Goddess Durga, mother or maa called Sitala (She is the mother of diseases like pox), and other Goddesses. The Tradition of the deepest feeling, belief, and devotion is expressed in 'Ai naam'.

2. Durga naam – People pray to Goddess Durga, who is the holy faith of Hindu mythology. Ladies perform devotional songs and worship the idol of Goddess Durga, during the autumn season. They observe the Durga Pooja celebration and seek the blessings of the Mother Goddess.

3. Manasha Maa naam (Snake Goddess) – Manasha Devi is the Goddess of snakes according to Hindu mythology. According to Hindus, the Goddess fulfils the wishes of humans.

4. Lakshi naam, Saraswati naam – People in India celebrate hindu Goddess Lakshmi Pooja as the Goddess of wealth and Saraswati pooja depict as a Goddess of knowledge.

5. Naam Prasanga-In the birth and funeral ceremonies for Vaishnav gurus and followers perform *Naam Prasanga* in Srimanta Shankardeva established 109rakash109 satras. Many occasions are celebrated in Vaishnava satras dedicated to Srikrishna and his incarnations, which were founded by the monarch of Assam in the Middle Ages. *Naam prasanga*(prayers) is performed at these celebrations by devotees. As part of their daily devotional practice, devotees in the 109rakash109 sattras of Assam recite the *Naam prasanga*. (prayers).

6. Gopinir naam-In Gopinir naam, (prayer song) ladies together perform devotional songs for the prayer of lord Srikrishna on different auspicious occasions.

7. Nagara naam-Nagara Naam is performed with the instrument called *Nagara(*percussion), and the instrument called *Bhoortal (*Ideophonic) in different auspicious ceremonies like Durga pooja, shiva pooja, Manasha pooja, etc.

8. Thio naam-Naam (music) which is performed by standing way by the male artist and also performs prayers of lord srikrishna and his incarnation is called Thio naam.

9. Diha naam-Diha naam(prayers) is performed in a sattra (Vaishnava religious place) by bhakat or devotees for the prayers of lord Srikrishna and his incarnations.

10. Ghosha naam-Ghosha naam is also performed in vasinav sattras(religious places) by the devotees in the prayers for lord Sri Krishna. They perform *ghosa –pada* (the parts of the composition) from the auspicious book *Namghosha* written by SriMadhabdeva and from the book *Kirtana* written by SriShankardeva.

11. Jura naam-Jura naam is performed by the artist in the bihu festival. Gents and ladies sing *Bihu naam* (geet) by teasing each other with the Jura naam.

12. Shiva naam-In Hindu mythology lord Shiva is prayed to by Hindus and so
People perform naam or devotional songs related to lord Shiva.

13. Krishna naam-God of Hindus, lord Srikrishana is prayed and people offer prayers by performing devotional songs or *naam-kirtan.* (Prayers from the Holi book Kirtana). In Assam and other parts of India people celebrate the same according to their traditional style. In Assam, people celebrate *"Rass"* or Rasalila, about the prayers of God Srikrishna.

14. Janmashtami naam-In the occasion of Srikrishna's birth ceremony people perform naam kirtan. *Janmashtami* is celebrated in *Naamghar*(prayer house) established by Mahapurusha Srimanta Shankardeva(saint of Assam), Sri Madhabdeva and their followers in Assam(A sacred place for naam –kirtan and Bhagawat -kirtan)At home the ladies and other members celebrate this festival. This auspicious festival is celebrated at night. Generally, people offer *'sarai*' (devoted Prasad of sweets, coconut, and many things to lord Srikrishna) on this occasion.

15. Aulla pooja r geet- *Aulla* is another name for Goddess *Durga*. Generally, the pooja is celebrated by unmarried women and they performed songs in Assam.

16. Apeswari sabahar geet-It is a folk festival celebrated in the village area. For some reason, if the child becomes sick and suffers illness, people believe that the Goddess *"Apeswari'* may has saved them from disease. Accordingly, people pray and sing the *Apeswari* song.

17. Pachotir naam-After *Janmashtami*, people celebrate *'Pasoti*' festival. According to the belief of certain areas and different other reasons, these festivals are celebrated 2 days, or even more males are also involved in this festival. But generally, it is a ladies-oriented festival. In *pachotir geet* people sing *'kirtan' pada* about *Gopal Deva's* (Devotee of Srimanta Shanakardeva's 111rakash111 sattra) birth, Nandostav, etc.

18. Tulsi naam-In Hindu culture *Tulsi* plant is regarded as a pure plant. In Assam, this plant is prayed with light, *dhoop-banti*. (Lighting lamp) Ladies clean it properly and pour water on it. In this regard, ladies sing *Tulsi naam* and offer prayer for *Tulsi maa plant* (sacred plant of Hindus).

19. Jagannath naam-This kind of devotional *naam –kirtan* (prayers from kirtan-the holy book of Vasihnavas) is performed and popular in lower Assam. This occasion is also known as rath yatra. The ladies perform and offer prayers to lord Jagannath.

20. Nagara Naam- In Assamese society, people celebrate many festivals and perform songs and dance. *Nagara naam* is one of the devotional theme-based musical forms where a gents group or a ladies' group performs on the auspicious occasion. The *Nagara naam* group consists of a minimum of 11/12 persons to a maximum of 30-40 people. Here, the main singer is called *Oja* or *Pathak* and other members or assistant artists are called *Pallis*. The number of *Nagara* percussion instrument player consist of 1-3 persons,1 *khool* (percussion instrument) player,1 flute player, *Bortala*(metal instrument), and *Bhoor tala(*metal instrument). The other members sing maintaining rhythm by clapping their hands. 'Oja' begins the song and narrates the story accordingly. There may be *pallis* of 8 to 30 numbers. *Nagara* is the major instrument in *Nagara naam.* The big-size *Nagara* is called *Bor nagara* and the small size is called *Kurkuri.* One long and one small size stick are used to play the *Nagara*. The size of *Nagara* played by ladies is comparatively smaller than male *Nagara. Nagara* party sometimes plays *Manjira, Khool* instrument. The singers perform on the theme of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagawat Purana, Shiva Purana, Kalika Purana, etc. Oja begins the song and Pali follows. Oja stands middle of the circle and Palis sits in a circle.
In Gowalpara district of Assam Radha- Krishna songs are very popular among people. In different places of Assam people worship 111rakash111s111ana pooja, trinath pooja,burha-burhi(God-Goddess)Pooja etc. On this occasion, people sing sacred lyrics and hymns in verse style or chant them in a tune that brings a different feeling and energy to the people as blessings. Trinath pooja means Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswar Pooja. These devotional songs are performed in auspicious ceremonies by ladies and gents. In a group, people use to clap their both hands together, while performing *naam*. On a few occasions, *naam(prayers)* is performed by using musical instruments *kartaal* (ideophones), and *Ramtaal (*Ideophonic) instruments by the artist. In *Nagara* naam performers played the Nagara instrument. This way in Assam state, people celebrate different pooja or rituals and accordingly they perform songs and dance with instruments. Besides these cultures, there are traditional theatres in Assam. These are as follows-*Ojapali, Puppetry, Khulia Bhaona, Bharigaan, Kushangaan, Dhulia*

Bhaona, Dhuranat, Palagan, and puppetry. On the other hand, some semi-folk narrative poetry and performing arts are also practiced in Assam on different 112rakash112s.These are- Dhepadhulia, Mohoho, Matheni, Pasoti, Kalipuja, Kali Chandi dance, Charak Puja, Nagaranaam. There are many folk performing arts where artists perform through music, dance, drama, and playing instruments together in groups. These forms have their specialty or characteristics. According to place, language, and faith different communities celebrate their festival differently. So, although the purpose of artistic expression is the same, the expression is different.

Conclusion:

In India, people also celebrate many auspicious occasions, festivals, seasonal festivals, calendar festivals, festivals related to agriculture, festival related to tradition, and festivals related to rituals. Accordingly, people celebrate it in their way. People mostly celebrate different festivals, and rituals traditionally according to their cultural preferences and celebrate occasions on their style and way of thinking and belief. The songs, dances, Instruments, folk dramas like puppetry, and Folk theatres are the way of expression and reflection of common and folk people's sentiments, feelings, and emotions. Their simplicity, beliefs, customs, costumes, and traditions are all reflected in folk songs, dance, dramas, folk tales, art, etc.

Human is a social animal and to live in society people has to follow many rules, customs, tradition, culture, and religion. For the development of a community or a society, people must have to develop their culture and tradition. Music makes bonding among people. So, it has the power to grow sentiment, and emotions among people of a society, community, and religion. That is why many saints of religious faith have used music to spread religion and religious sentiment worldwide. Music is pure art and when it enters religion it reached the highest purity. Because the standard text, tune, rules, customs, costumes, tala or rhythm, etc. are used in devotional music, it becomes the standard form filled with various rules and regulations. To preserve religious faith, spread religious faith, and make a bonding among people through religion, music is considered a powerful medium. Music elicits emotions and grow-sentiment. To protect every tradition and culture, music must be used as a medium for heart-to-heart connectivity among people of the world. Musical sounds are related to humans from the beginning of an early age and later humans created musical notes from the sounds of nature. The iconography of India has many pieces of evidence of the relationship between music and religion.

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