

Sattriya Dance

July 20, 2020

The Government of Assam has awarded Dr. Sunil Kothari, a dance Historian with Madhabdev Award for popularising Sattriya dance

About Sattriya Dance

- **Sattriya originated in Sattria, monastery, as a part of neo-Vaishnavite movement started by Srimanta Sankardev in the 15th Century.**
- **He propagated the “ek sharan naama dharma” (chanting the name of one God devotedly).**
- **It consists of dhemali, drum playing, known as gayan bayan, where several men play drums, in various talas and also use hand gestures.**
- **Corpus of Sattriya dances thus consist of ankiya bhaona, dance-dramas in Brajabuli which is understood by common people.**
- **They also consist of Ojapali dances in which the main singer sings and enacts abhinaya, telling stories and a group of dancers dance as back up dancers playing small cymbals**
- **Sattriya dances are devotional in nature as they were intended for propagation of neo-Vaishnavism. Its highlights are intense emotional fervour, and in its solo avatar now dramatic abhinaya is prominent in contrast to nritta, pure dance**
- **The dance was formerly performed by celibate monks and female roles were also enacted by them.**
- **Sattriya Nritya is divided into many genres: Apsara Nritya, Behar Nritya, Chali Nritya, Dasavatara Nritya, Manchok Nritya, Natua Nritya, Rasa Nritya, Rajaghariya Chali Nritya, Gosai Prabesh, Bar Prabesh, Gopi Prabesh, Jhumura, Nadu Bhangi, and Sutradhara, to name but a few.**
- **Like the other seven schools of classical Indian dance,**

Sattriya Nritya encompasses the principles required of a classical dance form: the treatises of dance and dramaturgy, like Natyashastra, Abhinaya Darpana, and Sangit Ratnakara; a distinct repertoire (marg) and the aspects of nrta (pure dance), nrtya (expressive dance), and natya (abhinaya).

- It is **celebrated during winter** in many places in the north east.
- Sattriya dance consists of **three distinct parts – Guru Vandana, Ramdani and Geet Abhinaya**. The first two are performed without any music and to a great extent still remains unaffected by changes. It is only in the third part, based on the childhood tales of Lord Krishna, that the dance form now gets a facelift.
- Some of the leading male artists include Guru Jatin Goswami, Guru Ghanakanta Bora, Manik Barbayan and Bhabananda Barbayan, while the prominent women dancers include Sharodi Saikia, Indira PP Bora, Anita Sharma, Anwasha Mahanta and Mallika Kandali, among others. It is celebrated during winter in many places of north east
- Though long recognised as a traditional dance form, **Sattriya was given the status of a classical dance in the year 2000 by the Sangeet Natak Akademi**.

How is it different from other classical dances?

- In its basic **stance for male and female known as Purush Pak and Prakriti Pak**, Sattriya dances differ from other dance forms.
- They have special mnemonic bols, typical Assamese music known as Borgeet, musical instruments like large cymbals, drums, colourful costumes which stand out from other dance styles, besides complicated choreographic patterns using various talas for each stanza sung by the vocalist. Dance-dramas are a distinct living tradition and use vachikabhinaya, dialogues.
- Special masks are also used in dance-dramas

