



“Angika Abhinaya Techniques In Suknani Ojapali”

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Abstract

Angika Abhinaya is one of the major and fundamental parts for an actor. Along with the various forms, it is one of the first forms of performance mentioned in the Bharata Natyasastra and Abhinaya Darpana. Generally looking at the field of folk theater in Assam, it can be seen that dance music songs and acting have been able to spread in Assamese people's lives as a whole. But apart from these arts, there are many art forms scattered in different parts of Assam where the story of the play is narrated through dance song acting as well as body language. Like Indian folk theater or Sanskrit plays, Assamese folk theater also focuses on the angika, or body. The whole performance delivers a physical performance to the audience. During staging any play or act, they use their body as a tool. The features and usage of different forms of Angika abhinaya are somewhere accompanied by Ojapali folk form, even though the new generation is still unknown about the elements behind the performance. Understanding about the theatrical elements of ojapali form, which is basically similar with Angikabhinaya, an actor or a performer can use ojapali form and their appropriate body movements in modern theater. This study basically aims to get an idea of this folk culture and proposes to introduce to its basic movements.

Key words: Angika abhinaya, Assamese folk theatre, Ojapali

I. Introduction:

“Aangikam Bhuvanam yasya,” which denotes that whose body is the entire universe. It can be inferred from this first verse of Abhinaya Darpana that physical language has been given the utmost importance in acting since immemorial. In acting, the mental state of the character is highlighted with the use of wordless language of the body. Nowadays, people like to show different mental states in a gesture rather than words, because these kinds of gestures are clear, precise, and easily understandable by all. Like the Indian classical theater, the body language has been holding special importance in Assamese folk theater. In Assam, folk theater can be divided into three parts. The first part can include puppet dance, ojapali, dhulia, Kushan gaan, devdasi dance, deodhani, bhari song, etc. The second part includes bhaona, khulia bhaoriya, and the third part of the folk theater is jatraparty. The birth of folk theatre is the result of ancient religious festivals. It is born out of the combination of dramatic elements with the traditional dance-songs prevalent in the festivals of primitive society.

The body, or anga, is given more priority in folk theater. A character cannot be created without physical language. Every character has a body of his own. In reality, a body has to be given while presenting a visible character in front of the audience. Similarly, in Assamese folk theater, the expression of the body has been given more priority. The eyes are a major language part of these art forms, and the hands are used more to visualize it, which eventually takes the shape of a mudra, which is textually mentioned in ancient text as an Angikabhinaya. The physical language, observed mostly in Ojapali, Dheodhani, Khulia Bhaona, etc., is a combination of facial expressions, gestures, and various types of physical movements.

The study gives a focus on how Angikabhinaya is followed in Assamese folk theater in a similar manner as Angikabhinaya is used in other folk theater. To develop the challenge of acting skills in modern theater, a lot of physical acting can be used from Assamese folk theater.

II. Objectives:

The aim and main objective of the study are to know more about ojapali and to understand something new about their physical movements of the body. The focus of the study is to grasp the theatrical elements and create a new dimension in modern theatre by using the elements of ojapali form.

III. Methodology:

Both secondary and primary references are the main source of the study. The primary data has been collected through the interview and observation. References also have been taken from research papers, books, research articles, and few from the internet. For the purpose of this paper visited the villages and interviewed the people related with folk theater and observed the performances.

IV. Findings:

The impact of Ojapali on the emergence and development of folk theater is very deep. This art form is written for the folk life. The role of folk songs and folk dances in the emergence and development of this folk drama is far reaching. Within the sixty-four arts (kala), this art form is a confluence of the trinity of geetam, vadyam, and nrityam forms. According to "Abhinaya Darpana," mudras or gestures express the characteristics of musical forms, especially expressing the thought or meaning of the music. There is also a hint of a close connection between dance and acting in "Dasarupa." Dance is the one who expresses emotions with the help of gestures, and it is believed that from dance Ojapali have originated and developed. The influence of the Odra magadhi instincts mentioned in the Natyashastra in Ojapali is far-reaching.

There are seven types of Ojapali in Assam, and the only two surviving forms are Vyash and Sukanani Ojapali. In Vyash Ojapali, the story is taken from the epics, while the story of Sukanani Ojapali is taken from Padmapuran, which is believed to be written by Sukabi Narayandev. This art form is found around the Darrang district. Ojapali has music beats; there are around 4 palis in a group with "Taalas" and one Ojah. The one who sings the padas is called Ojah, and those who sing alongside are called Pali. Also, there is a Dainapali who takes part in the conversation of the story; they often incorporate some contemporary elements in the story.

Anyway, the recital has music, story, and also has movements, expression, gati, abhinaya, makeup, ornaments, and costume. It's a total theatric performance. Ojapali is enriched with dramatic elements that we exponents of the modern stage form are eager to explore. In this form there is no permanent, predetermined codification of gesture movement or speech, but the everyday element of speech is sound gestures and body movement used according to the requirement of a performance. The extension of the movement, or Angika abhinaya, plays many roles in a performance. Rhythmic movement is one of the main attractions of these theatrical performances as well as the basis of the stylization in their acting. Simultaneously, the original movements are modified according to the needs of the Ojas. The steps, movements, gestures, postures, rasa, and bhava are all related to the Angika abhinaya of the Natyashastra and the Abhinaya Darpana, from which an actor bears the techniques of walking and movements of features and limbs. Likewise, Ojapali plays have the forms of gestures and body movements prescribed in manuals of ancient texts.

In the scriptures, three types of Natan Kriya have been considered - Nritta, Natya, Nritya. “When studied minutely, dance appears to be the foundation of both drama and dance.” When the meaning of the songs in Ojapali performance is presented through postures and acting, then it is called dance. Whenever dance or emotional aspect is presented in Ojapali it is seen in a mixed form of dance and drama. The emotional part of Ojapali performance be called nritya and the rest of the other physical movements will be considered under nritta. Some of the physical gestures that come under Nritta Paksha are:

- **Nachon:** Khuti Nachon, Moirasali Nachon , Chitkoni Nachon,Paroghuroni Nachon,Khoroki or Konniya Nachon , Beng Nachon, Lesari Nachon , Kokalbhangha Nachon etc.
- **Gati and Bulan:** (Pada bheda,)Soloni Bulan , Hangsha Bulan , Bhatou Bulan, Ashwa Bulan, Gaja Bulan , Sarpil Bulan , Beng Bulan and Moira Bulan etc.
- **Mudra(Hasta bheda) :** Khula Mudra , Bandha Mudra and Soloni Mudra.
- **Dristi(Drishti bheda):** Shanto sawan , Karun sawan,Lajuk sawan, Voyat sawan and Ugro Sawan etc.

V. Discussion:

The basic structure and style of Ojapali folk theater are very similar to the Angikabhinaya of Natyashastra. The important features to be noted are the vigorous movement of the feet by Palis and spacious Hasta mudra and dances by Ojah while the narration of the story. Angika or Body gesture, is the most important weapon for an actor. Angika is not just in the hands or legs; it is in the entire body. There can be no drama without Angikabhinaya. This word can be reflected in Ojapali folk theater. The Ojapali form is merely connected with various features of physical acting. The physical acting, or angika, can be presented in this form in two ways: one is where every word of the lyric is expressed through action, mostly through hand gestures, and the other is where the communication of a general mood or behavior is expressed through the karanas(unit of movement) and even the Hastas. Every human being has the natural ability to read a gesture; likewise, in Ojapali theater, the Ojah simply converts this natural ability into a language system. Direct and indirect communication, body contact, eye contact, different emotions, jokes—everything can be found in this folk form. The physical gesticulation of a concept through the synchronized movement of the body, or anga, is the main attraction of an Ojah. In this form, the body by itself, in its natural process, speaks through the upper and lower limbs. In every rhythm and speech, Ojah changes the shape from within and transforms from one emotion into another immediately. The gestures are there. While performing, they use some gestures of the limbs, which are those belonging to the body, those belonging to the face, and those resulting from movements of the limbs, which are closely related with the three parts—**Sarira**(of the body), **Mukhaja**(of the face), and **Cheshtrakrita**(of the entire body), as covered in Natyashastra Angikabhinaya.

One of the important questions is how the Ojapalis used their entire body through hand gestures. As prescribed in Angikabhinaya, the entire body is derived in two divisions: Anga and Upanga. Anga include the upper body part, and Upanga are the lower part of the body. While performance Anga and Upanga are to be used every time, when Anga moves, the Upanga also moves. For example, one of the simple movements of ojapali is when the ojah says, ‘Go there’ or there’s a lotus blooming there; at that time their hands will point out to wherever is there; that is a simple movement of the hands, but here not only used the upper limbs, ojah used lower limbs too. There can be seen a body movement, style of walking, which is called in Angika as Stanaka or Stance. Stanaka is well exploited in this folk performance. When the stance gets mobilized into action with the help of the upper and lower parts, they give rise to the cari, which are movements with a single foot that entail them from the root, including the hip. In their performance, they keep their both feet in constant contact with the ground, and another is they keep their one foot raised in the air.

Basically, they used five arts; these are: Julan, Sawan, Ora, Laya, and Mudra. The ojah is generally observed to perform mudras of the Dasavatar of the Lord Krishna. There are other kinds of mudras as well. For instance, when Ojah tells about Lord Krishna, Ojah shows flute using both hands and adopts pataka mudra, slightly bending of all the fingers. With the mudra of Lord Krishna, they often use the continuous movement by dipping down the upper body and bending the knees; the ankles keep apart, and the heels are up and down dynamically with the rhythm and music of palis. On the other hand, for creating Rasa or Ananda, the ojah shows various sentiments and emotional states of the character through his eye movement, lips, and other

limbs. Various objects, activities, and changes are all sought to be expressed through Angika abhinaya. While the pali increases the speed of the rhythm and songs, the ojah increases the speed of his body movements; he uses various kinds of jumps and dynamic movements of the entire body along with the hand mudras. Somewhere Ojah explains the childhood of gods; he uses the tribhangi as their basic stance with the legs bent, upper body forward, and walking rapidly with the small step. These basic movements reduce the overall height of the ojah, which indicates the character of a child. From here we can find the use and development of Angika abhinaya.

VI. Conclusion

The characteristics of ojalali include the harmony of highly regulated body movement, hand gestures, significant facial expressions, and eye movements with a wide variety of embellishments to simplicity. With the assistance of percussionists, the actors' whole body in Suknani Ojalali stimulates the audience's imagination rather than merely translating words or syllables. The application of Drishti bhedas, based on Bhava and Rasa, is crucial in presenting a dance unit, expressing inner Bhavas through eye glances, and creating Rasa and beauty. It is seen that the Ojalali performer follows the norms and principles of the Drishti bhedas as mentioned in the Shastras. The movement of eyes bears an important role for expressing the inner Bhavas properly and creating the aesthetic beauty of a dance piece. From the above point of view of study in the context of angikabhinaya like hasta bheda, pada bheda, and drishti bheda, it can be understood that the techniques that an Ojalali artist performs while performing a piece of dance follow the principles of angikabhinaya mentioned in the Natya Shastra and Abhinaya Darpan along with the local traditional once. There may be some difference in the name, but the technique bears similarities for expressing the Bhava and Rasas for creating the aesthetic beauty of the performance. In conclusion, the integration of Angika abhinaya into the Ojalali folk theatre will develop the beauty and versatility of Indian performing arts. By blending expressive body movements with storytelling prowess, Ojalali performers will be able to create a sensitive experience that will resonate with audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

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