A performance, as pointed earlier, always has a tendency towards diversification, when it is repeated. Hence, it is obvious that, when a traditional performance continues, it is inclined to modifications in the course of a period. An argument in this aspect has been made in the previous section. The individual competence, creativity or the innovative nature can be regarded as the operative factors in the evolution of emergent forms within a performance-tradition.

As the consequence of these factors operating into the tradition of Bhāona, Matrbhaṣar Bhāona emerged in the course of time. However, even though, it is condensed and identified as one form, it is actually a multifarious phenomenon. In form and content and in context of performance, variations seem to occur within the genre itself. In brief, these dramas usually vary on the basis of language, time, place and playwrights etc.
Although, it is not possible to make a classification of this vast performance genre, which is actually in transition, an attempt has been made in this present study. With the verification of a few written Nāfs and observation of performances at different places, it is assembled into certain groups as discussed below.

Firstly, a classification has been traced, in support of the language used in these dramas. As it is already noted, that, Matrbhāṣā is usually termed on the basis of language. To be precise, the change of Brajabuli language to spoken Assamese was regarded to be significant in demarcating Matrbhāṣār Bhāonā from Aṅkiya Bhāonā. This genre has other features too to characterize as Matrbhāṣār Bhāonā, which has been already argued in the Chapter: 5, as focused in the changing elements of the tradition.

Even on the change of language, it has been observed that, Matrbhāṣār Bhāonā can not be recognized as a single entity. In fact, variations in the use of language also seem to occur at diverse levels. This difference of language is mainly due to the varied playwrights involved in writing these scripts. Following is the classification as such ---
- Dramas with the influence of Brajabuli language
- Dramas with the influence of Sanskrit language
- Dramas with the influence of old Assamese
- Dramas with the influence of colloquial Assamese language

A few excerpts with the evidences on the use of language, as categorized above, are given below respectively.

After the two Gurus the other followers as, Gopaldev, Rāmcaran Thākur, Dvija Bhuṣan, Daityārī Thākur have more influence of the Brajabuli language in their plays, especially in dialogues. For example:

- .........Narasingha bolala:

  Kathā II  Aye papisṭa daitya: Toho trijagatak
  jataye lāñcanā Kayali: Bhakta
  Prahlādak jateka jatanā delahi:
  Āju tāhāra pratiphal dite: Ohi
  narasingharūpe stambhar bhitare
  bekata bhelo: Āju hante daityakul
  nirmul karaba.¹

  [Nṛśīṇha Jāṭrā, Daityari Thakur]
Katha II Ajamil bola II hari hari: hamu mahapapi: tini dute narake laiyā jai: cāri parisade āsi rākhala: tārār mukhe nāmar mahimā sunalo: papini besyār sange nij kul nastsa kayalo:

[Ajamil Upākhyaṇ, Dvija Bhusan]

Many scholars are of the opinion that, the Sanskritic dramatic tradition has its impact on the creation of Aṇkīya Nāṭs. This has already been argued in the Chapter 2. Various elements of Aṇkīya Nāṭs are analogous to Sanskrit dramas which signify the influence of the Sanskritic dramatic tradition.

In the Aṇkīya Nāṭs the influence of Sanskrit language is evident in the language of Nāndi (invocation) and other ślokas, which are strewn all over the drama. Bhattacharyya described the use of Sanskrit language in the Aṇkīya Nāṭs as:

"In addition to Nandi slokas written always in Sanskrit, there are other Sanskrit slokas also. Next to the Nandi there is one Sanskrit Sloka addressing the audience and introducing the play to them. It generally begins with words like “Bho
Bho Samajikaha” (Oh you, the members of the assembly’). Thus to introduce new roles and turns of events, Sansrit slokas are used, while, another is used to signify that the play is ended by the grace of God. Some of these are borrowed from the epics or the other sources."

And, the use of Sanskrit language mostly in the ślokas by the later playwrights formed as one of the characteristic feature in the emergent genre. There are variations in employing this language in these plays, i.e., Māṭrābhāṣār Nāts.

More accuracy in the language was seemed to maintain in the plays written within the Satras by the playwrights during the 17th - 18th century. In the recent times, the Sanskrit language is very sparsely used even in the ślokas and verses. It is either imitated or written incorrectly. A few specimens are provided below:

• Śloka: Srūmaṇā laṅkhaṇaṇā rāghubaraṇā

sītāpati sunḍaraṇe hari rāma

rāma

[Amar Hari Bhakti, Charing, Sivasagar]
Use of old Assamese was evident, as mentioned in the Chapter: 5, in the plays of Dvija Bhusan, Daityari Thakur, Ramcharan Thakur, mostly in the verses and songs. Instances are provided below:

- **Pada II** Sadhu loka dvija pitṛ sujana

  Māri curi kari ānala dhana

  Asatir sange duṣṭa bhaila mati

  Kahe dvija bhuṣaṇe gobinde gati

  [Ajāmil Upākhyān, Dvija Bhusan]
As observed, influence of Assamese as the language, are evident in the plays of Madhavadeva, followed widely by Gopaldeva, Dvija Bhusan, Daityari Thakur, Ramcaran Thakur, specifically in the songs and verses. In the later part of 17\textsuperscript{th} century, Niranjandev, the founder Adhikara (Head) of Auniati Satra, wrote Mahamoh Nat, an Assamese translation of the Sanskrit drama, Prabodhchaändodaya, on the basis
of the principles of Aikīyā Nāṭ as one Aikīka (scene) play.

Thus, the practice of using Assamese language has been started in the dramas written by the Vaishnavite leaders of the Satras. During the later part of 18th century to till date, the influence of Assamese language seems to be more prominent. Particularly, the profuse use of Assamese language has been observed in the writings of the non-Satra people. Gradually, it is becoming a distinctive feature of the Matrbhāṣār Bhāonā with its use in a more spoken style or non-lyrical, with less ornamentation, in contrast to its use in the early part of 19th century, when dialogues are more in verse. Some instances from a few scripts of the contemporary period, which have the impact of colloquial Assamese language, are extracted below:

- **Hanu:** Mahīrāvaṇ, loi āh sei mānun duṭāk:

  Āru mor maramar Mahīrāvaṇe bali
dilehe moi ihatak grahaṇ karim

  [Mahīrāvaṇ Badh, Na-ali Dhekiajuli, Jorhat]
• Sujajña: RāṇI, aranyā pray śeṣ hoiche.
  Nagaraloi āru bechi dūr nāi. Mātra
dudinar bāt he āche. Gatike āji sou
durat thakā muṇir āśramatei rātito
katāi kāiloī punar nagaraloi gaman
kariba lāgiba

Mālāvatī: Mahāraj, moi āru caliba nowārā
hoicho. Belio āru bechi nāi. Gatike
āji konobā muṇir āśramat thakāi bhāl
haba

[Sujajña Rajār Dharma Parikhya, Kaloogaon,
Sivasagar]

Secondly, classification can also be made on the
basis of their writers or playwrights, as:

• Dramas written by the Vaiṣṇava leaders or the
  Mahantas of the Satras

• Dramas written by the laities or non-Satra
  people

Śaṅkaradeva initiated this performance-
tradition which was later continued and developed by
the posterior Vaiṣṇavite leaders and Mahantas of the
Satras. Later, when the writing of the plays was
started by the laities of villages and towns then,
divergence between the Satra and non-Satra people
appeared in the tradition, not only in the scripts, but also in the performances.

As discussed earlier, significantly, the people of the Satras set off the new developments in the traditional practice of Bhāona. Simultaneously, they also hold the tradition and helped in its extensive dissemination. Thus, apart from introducing the newness into the tradition, they basically try to maintain the devotional character as imperative in the tradition.

Again, these dramas are characterized by the individual style of writing of the playwrights in both inside and outside the Satras.

It has been already been argued that, the dramas of Mādhavadeva have a distinctive character as compared to the dramas of Śaṅkaradeva. So, since then, deviation crop up into the tradition. Despite of the fact that, Mādhavadeva’s dramas are regarded as Ankiyā Nāṭa, these are specifically identified as Jhumurās by the Caritkārs (biographers) and scholars. The individuality of the playwright is also reflected in conjunction with the standards intrinsic to the tradition.

The dramas written during the 17th century-early part of 18th century are more akin to the dramas of
the two Gurus. This can be classed as one group Gopaldev, Dvija Bhūṣāṇ, Rāmcaran Thākur, Daityārī Thākur. They used the Brajabuli language in the prose dialogues, although, in the verses and songs, the use of Assamese language is observable.

Gradually, the use of Brajabuli language became thinner in the Satras from the later part of 18th century onwards.

Again, Satrādhikāras of many Satras initiated several significant developments as Juri Bhāonā, Dhurā Bhāonā, Phaujiyā Bhāonā etc. as illustrated in the Chapter: 3.

As mentioned earlier in this section, Niranjandev, started a new movement in the traditional practice of Bhāonā with his Assamese translation of the Sanskrit drama, Prabodhchandrādaya. In that period, this development in the Aṅkīyā Nāṭ, also became popular among the people outside the Satras.

In the later period, during the 19th century, some other deviations can be noted.

In Bhetiani Satra of Bordowa at Nagaon, a distinctive diversion in the tradition can be identified in the plays of Harendranath, as the use of soliloquy in the dramas.
The characteristic of the Satra performance vary in the use of music. Some Satras play the selective preliminaries while some play all the dhemalis.

The dramas written by the Non-Satra people are often characterized with non-lyrical dialogues, mostly in spoken Assamese language with less ornamentation. Such plays have more expression of the scenes of fights, abduction, love and comical rather than projecting the devotional temperament. Further, the episodes from Mahabharata and Ramayana and sometimes imaginary Puranic story line are generally selected as the themes of such plays.

The dramas of the non-Satra people can further be classed in the line of time in which it is written, as the dramas which were written in the later part of 18th century -19th century and the dramas written in the recent period. The dramas of the former group are more devotional in character than the dramas of the recent period. More secular commitments are noticeable in the later with much sophisticated and stylized innovations in many aspects as costume, mask-making, make-up, lighting arrangement, use of prop and other cho-effigies, in the manner of presentation, change of performance
arena from namghars to stages and the platform of media.

Again, within the same period the dramas may vary from place to place or community to community. In the broadest category for instance:

- Dramas prevalent in an urbanized area
- Dramas of rural area

These variations occur in the manner of presentation, music, dance-style, stage-setting, cho-effigies, costume, make-up, etc.

The dramas of the urban areas are more sophisticated in its presentation, especially in lighting arrangement, stage-setting, i.e., the performance-area setting, even when performed inside a namghar, costume, make-up etc. which, are often influenced by the media.

Moreover, Bhâonâs performed in the namghars of rural areas observed to have much association to the religious ideals of the tradition. The rituals that preceded and succeeded the actual performance as Nâmela and Nâtsâmara are seemed to have been maintained to a great extent by the rural dwellers. Besides, the devotional temperament in the actions of the performers and in the reactions of the
audiences is more noticeable in the performances of the rural areas.

It has been observed that in this performance-tradition variations occur in very minute levels that it is often overlapping with each other with the slightest distinctiveness.
Notes


2 ibid, 516.


5 ibid 585-586.


8 Pitambar Deva Goswami, personal interview, 02 Nov 1998