

# IGNCA INVENTORY ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Edited and Maintained by  
Prof. Molly Kaushal  
Janapada Sampada Division  
IGNCA

**Name of the Element:** Sattriya Music, Dance and Theatre

**Community/ies:** The communities which are distinctively associated with it are:

- (i) The Assamese Hindu Community in the entire Brahmaputra Valley in Assam including Majuli, the river-island of the Brahmaputra,
- (ii) The Rajbanshi Community in Chatrasal in the bordering areas of Assam as well as Cooch Behar in West Bengal,
- (iii) Some groups of the Nocte Community in Arunachal Pradesh,
- (iv) Some groups of the Bodo Community in Assam and Nagaland border,
- (v) Mising and Sonowal tribes spreading over different areas of the valley and
- (vi) Some groups of the Naga tribes living within Assam and bordering areas of Assam and Nagaland.

**Region:** Geographic location of the Sattriya tradition ranges from some areas in the Arunachal Pradesh, in east to Cooch Behar, West Bengal in the West with the vast expanse of the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam and parts of the Barak valley in southern Assam.

**Brief Description:** Sattriya Music, Dance and Theatre is a composite body of multiple forms of artistic expressions combining music, dance, drama and other allied arts bearing great significance and impact on both spiritual and social life of Assam. Based on a vast corpus of devotional compositions in Brajavali as well as in vernacular Assamese and woven with a melodic and rhythmic structure distinctive of its own, this body of cultural expressions is inextricably associated with rituals and ceremonies in the Sattri, a monastic institution of Vaisnavite faith and learning. Permeated with intense spiritual fervour and educational value, the Sattriya tradition has become an indispensable part of the religious, social and cultural life of the practicing community as a medium of internalizing the experience of the Divinity. Always performed with deep emotional attachment to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals, this is a unique testimony of religious experience integrated with aesthetic elegance. The style of music and dance combining elements from the pan-Indian and Indo-Mongoloid traditions is distinct from the major schools of North and South Indian music and dance. The theatre also, celebrated as a tradition next only to the Sanskrit drama and theatre, has several distinguishing features of its own. The Sattriya Music, Dance and Theatre incorporating melodic and rhythmic improvisations from time to time, is mostly a group work having a performance text orally handed down to generations.

**Photographs:**

**Video:**

**Consent:**

**Submitted by:** Secretary  
Sangeet Natak Akademi  
National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama  
Rabindra Bhawan, Ferozshah Road, New Delhi – 110001  
Tel: 23387246-48,23382495 Fax: 91-11-23385715  
E-mail: [sangeetnatak@bol.net.in](mailto:sangeetnatak@bol.net.in), Website: <http://www.sangeetnatak.org>