

CHAPTER- I

THE OJĀPĀLI ART FORM – AN INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study:

Performing art systems are enduring institutions and practices whose sustained appeal for the illiterate and the connoisseur alike stems from their organic roots and ancient traditions. The increasing recognition of their importance in academics, marked by the establishment of Performance Studies departments throughout the world is testimony to the endorsement of the need to give credence to the importance of folk systems in our community lives.

Storytelling is an important manifestation of the fundamental essence of human nature. It caters to the primeval instinct of human beings for participation in the broader spectrum of human experience, more so through a variety of appealing modes of representation. Storytelling that weaves together simple narration with a musical setting replete with euphonious vocals, rhythmic instruments, dance movements and with drama-like actions, became in time the basis of a different category of art form altogether.

Globally *Kabuki* and *Noh* of Japan and *Kumiodori* of China are some examples of such art forms. In India, such art forms can be most closely related to the *Kathakatā* tradition where *kathās* or tales (mostly from scriptures) were laid out in a lyrical narration in accompaniment to music and dance. The art form of Ojāpāli of Assam has been found to share features with other audio-visual art forms commonly occurring in different parts of India, all of which exhibit such traits as to be grouped under the wide canopy of the *Kathakatā* tradition. Along with *Ojāpāli* of Assam, the *Yakshaganā* of Karnataka, *Rāmlilā* of North India, *Pawadā* of Maharashtra, *Bhāgavat-Melā* of Tamil Nadu, are few examples of some such forms of performing arts that fall within the bracket of the *Kathakatā* tradition. Two commonalities running through all these performance types are the singing of tales from the epics and the Puranas and their obligatory participation in accomplishing a ritualistic event.

Examples of Audio-visual Performing Art within the Tradition of Kathakata		
Art Form	State of India to which it belongs	Ballads taken from-
Yakshaganā	Karnataka	Epics
Kathakali	Kerala	Epics and Puranas
Bhāgavat-Melā	Tamil Nadu	Bhagavata Puranas
Daskathiā	Odisha	Legends on Lord Siva
Pāwadā	Maharashtra	Popular Folk Figures
Punaram	Madhya Pradesh	Epics
Kuttu	Kerala	Epics
Ojāpāli	Assam	Epics and Puranas

There is no denying the fact that songs (*Gīts*) form a major component in the ritualistic aspects of perhaps all religions. Be it the *Bhajans* of the Hindus, the carols of the Christians or the *Jikirs* of the Assamese Muslims, the emotional appeal of lyrics and tunes envelope, as it were, the mind of the devotee and also the onlooker. An introduction to the significance of *Gīts* in an *Ojāpāli* recital appears pertinent at this juncture. The *Ojāpāli* performing art in general and the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* in particular, forms an important socio-cultural institution in service of the rural community in the Darrang district of Assam, India. Through the medium of the *Gīts*, the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* fulfills important functions that include imparting knowledge of scriptures and epics with a view to enabling and enhancing socio-moral instruction and edification in the members. Moreover, the current social and political scenarios also form, over and above the scriptures, epics and folk knowledge systems, the material that influence the *Gīts* and some other performance elements included in the art form.

1.2 Statement of the problem:

Through ages the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* has successfully protected and established its cultural hegemony and appeal in the minds of the people of Assam, let alone the inhabitants of the district of Darrang. Even after the rapid promotion of *Sattriyā Ojāpāli*, a much later form, it is perhaps because of its raw, incantatory nature that the magic of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* remains.

The alarming jeopardisation of the basic identity of the art form owing to varied reasons has posed as a genuine research problem. The primary factors contributing to the problem need to be addressed – firstly though scholarly inputs have gone into the understanding of this performing art popular in Darrang – the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* – the intricacies and nuances of these performances are disappearing at an alarming rate. Secondly, keeping in view that *Ojāpāli* might have had its origin in the tradition of *Mārgī Sangīt* (Indian classical music), it could be understood as a refined art form which works within its own uniquely structured framework. However, present-day *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is largely considered a folk form. The art form has over the years seen many unwanted changes, additions and deviations in its performance aspects thus threatening its singular nature.

Furthermore, because of the lack of a written system and a complete reliance on oral transmission, manipulation at the hands of each practitioner is an obvious possibility. Obvious transformations are bound to take place when the disciple (*Śiṣya*) within the *Guru-śiṣya paramparā* (the tradition involving the attainment of mastery by a disciple by learning under a scholarly teacher or *Guru*) is unable to acquire the intricate skills and thereby adjusting the demands of the forms according to their own choice, capacity and convenience. Moreover, assimilation is expected when an artist performs multiple art forms. Considering the above factors it can be stated that if the art form is left to be openly manipulated in this manner, then in all probability, it will very soon lose much of its uniqueness, beauty, grace and appeal and such a rich cultural heritage of Assam may perish. It was felt that through this research, much of such alterations may be identified and an attempt to establish its true nature may be made with honesty.

The researcher has aimed to explore and understand the art form of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* while internalizing its total artistic construct as a learner-performer.

Since this research product endeavoured to present an analytical study of the existing performance design of the art form, the music of the same had to be consequentially prioritized. Efforts have been made to address the known structure of the presently practiced form of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance. It has also led to concrete realization that getting competence over the musical

grammar involved in the making of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is of supreme importance for learning, performing, propagating and preserving the art form. This has thus necessitated notating down the still orally-practiced music in its existing state as far as possible in the third chapter of this work. The study has thus attempted at prioritizing the music of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* and putting efforts to set the same, found in scattered lots, into one justifiable framework during the course of the thesis.

My task thus involved documenting and analyzing the existing *Gīts* of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*- their content, context, characteristics, notational system, accompanying rhythms (*Tālas*), along with a selection of transliteration of *Gīts*. This, to me, is imperative as no such project has been undertaken till date. This has necessitated years of fieldwork and discussions with music scholars and the active bearers of this tradition some of who were lost in the midst of this research.

The present thesis is an expository piece of work which has attempted from a performer-researcher's perspective, to present a detailed exposition of *Gīts* of *Biyāh-gowā ojāpāli*. The material presented here is the result of years of extensive fieldwork, informed by a one-pointed agenda, so to speak, i.e to systematically present the *Gīts* and related information on *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* while involving the participation of the active practitioners in the field as well as of music scholars. As more and more artists choose to perform *Ojāpāli*, there is the attendant danger of this form being altered in the bargain.

It is the mandate of the discipline of Cultural Studies to document and highlight significant aspects of marginalized cultures of the world. *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is such an art form in Assam which is threatened by the overbearing intercultural influences both global as well as local. In this regard it is believed that a documentation work of this kind has thus become necessary and that the expository details be systematized and made available. So, not adopting a theoretical method at this point in time, in this study has been a deliberate and thought-out decision. From a Cultural Studies perspective, this work also simultaneously records, the socio-cultural impact on the art form. It will suffice as a reliable base for future Cultural Studies and Ethno-musicology scholars to

approach aspects of this system from any theoretical school they deem fit. It is the present researcher's belief that this thesis will provide such a foundation.

In simple terms, an organized study of the unexplored arena of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music has been greatly understood as the need of the hour and hence, the same has been treated as the prime locus in this research work.

1.3 The Ojāpāli Art Form:

The primary forms of *Ojāpāli*, widely popular in the district of Darrang, namely *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* and *Suknāni Ojāpāli* play functional roles in the observance of the rituals of *Vāsudeva* worship and the worship of the serpent-goddess *Manasā* respectively. As a matter of fact, the diverse types of *Ojāpāli* prevailing in Assam are classifiable on the ground of the deity involved. In simple terms, certain types like *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, *Durgābarī Ojāpāli*, *Sattriyā Ojāpāli* follow the Vaishnava tradition (worship of *Lord Viṣṇu* in his different forms), while others like *Suknāni Ojāpāli*, *Māre-Gowā Ojāpāli*, *Biṣahari Gān-Gowā Ojāpāli* are associated with the *Śakti* cult (worship of the Devi or goddess). Most of the Vaishnava-based *Ojāpālis* sing verses extracted from the epics like *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata* and *The Puranas*. The *Śakti*-based forms, on the other hand, sing orally-circulating verses or verses from non-epical texts.

1.3.1 Types of Ojāpāli

The classification of *Ojāpāli* presented below is largely based on the research done by N.C. Sarma, the conclusions of which have been regarded as authoritative by both scholars and practitioners. It may be wondered why a further account of the classification is required in this study. For one, additional information lies scattered and it was found necessary to collate most of such information on classification to provide a concise account and in a systematic format addressing separate performance aspects like context, music, costume and others. I believe that scholars who, in the future, pursue research on *Ojāpāli* would be greatly benefited by this. Furthermore, since this work is on *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, knowledge of the other forms and types of *Ojāpāli* would, by contrast,

bring out some of its unique aspects. However, *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* being the specified type that the present research precisely handles, other than it, the terms related to performance materials particular to other types of *Ojāpāli* have not been subjected to elaboration.

The various types of *Ojāpāli* can be broadly divided under two main categories – those following the Vaishnava tradition (worship of *Lord Viṣṇu* in his different forms) and the other, those associated with the Śakti cult (worship of the goddess in her different forms). Depending on aspects like context, structure, text and performance they are further subdivided. The *Ojāpālis* associated with the Vaishnava tradition are – *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, *Rāmāyan-gowā Ojāpāli*, *Bhāuriyā Ojāpāli*, *Durgābarī Ojāpāli*, *Sattriyā Ojāpāli*, *Pāncālī Ojāpāli*, *Dulaḍī Ojāpāli* and *Nagāonyā Ojāpāli*. The Śakti category consists of *Suknānni Ojāpāli*, *Bisahari gīt-gowā Ojāpāli*, *Māregān-gowā Ojāpāli*, *Padmāpurānar gān-gowā Ojāpāli*, *Tukuriyā Ojāpāli* and *Gītālu gīt*.

OJĀPĀLI WITHIN THE VAISHNAVA TRADITION	
Type of Ojāpāli	Region where Ojāpāli is performed
Biyāh-gowā	Darrang
Rāmāyan-gowā	Lower Assam (Kamrup)
Bhauriyā	Lower Assam (Kamrup)
Durgābarī	Kamrup
Sattriyā	Neo-Vaishnavite Sattras
Pāncālī	Auniati and Daksinapat Sattras
<i>Dulaḍī</i>	Auniati and Daksinapat Sattras
Nagāonyā	Nagaon

***Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* –**

Context: *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* has been associated with the worship of *Lord Vāsudeva* since ancient times the platform for which is also known as *Gondhcauparī sabhā*. The *Ojāpālis* actively participate in the ritual proper where they sing the *Gondhar gīts* as well as *Bandanās* and *Jhunā gīts*. As a part of the

social entertainment associated with the *Sabhā*, the *Ojāpāli* performs various songs and dances which are meticulously structured as well as rigidly sequenced. They also perform in social functions like marriages and death rituals.

Place: The *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is very popular in lower Assam, particularly in the districts of Darrang and South Kamrup.

Text: This type of *Ojāpāli* sings mainly from the epics, *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*. Episodes from the *Bhagavata Purana* are being increasingly performed while those from other Puranas, for example, the *Agni Purana*, are no longer practised.

Structure: The group comprises the leader- the *Ojā*, his main assistant, the *Dāināpāli*, two *Gor Pālis* and two *Āg Pālis*.

Costume: The *Biyāh-gowā Ojā* of Darrang wears a white costume consisting of a *Paṭṭajāma* (a long skirt known as *jāmā* to which a shirt is stitched), *Tañāli* (belt), a *Cādar* (stole), *Pāguri* (turban) and a pair of anklets called *Nepūr*. The turban is pointed and lifted upwards at the back like the ends of a boat. The *Cādar* hangs in front from the neck with one end wound around the back near the hip and brought forward to hang in front from a loop. The *Ojā* wears ornaments in his ears, neck and wrists. The *Biyāh-gowā Ojā* of South Kamrup wears a *Colā* (shirt), a *Jāmā* and a turban that is pointed upwards. The *Pālis* wear a shirt, a *Dhoti* (bottom wear made of a long white cloth wrapped round the waist) and the traditional scarf (*Gāmocā*) but do not wear turbans like the *Pālis* of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* of Darrang who wear a piece of white cotton cloth wrapped round the head in the form of a turban with one end hanging from behind. The group wears a white mark on the forehead (*Tilaka*) made of sandalwood paste and also at the tip of the nose.

Musical instruments: The cymbals known as *Khuti tāla* are the only accompanying musical instruments in the performance of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. N.C Sarma states that according to the active bearers of this art form, the *Pālis* previously used to play the stringed instrument *Vīṇā* (Sarma, N.C., 1996, 100).

Performance: The *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālis* of Darrang usually perform standing but they sit and sing during the rituals. There is ample scope to term this form of

Ojāpāli within the category of the classical art forms. The sequence of performance starts with the *Humkār* and *Gurubandanā* followed by the *Pātani*, *Viṣṇu Pada*, *Sangītālāp* and the *Gīts*. Ritual *gīts* are performed while the priest conducts the rituals while *Jāgar gīts* and *Mālci gīts* are a part of the ritual of *Jāgar* though *Mālci gīts* are also sung during *Vāsudeva* worship. The performance of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* of South Kamrup starts with the *Bhramar Rāga* followed by playing the cymbals six times which is termed *Humkār*. This is followed by the *Viṣṇu digār* or *Viṣṇu rāga*, *Swara sādhanā*, the *Gurubandanā*, the *Sabhā-pātani gīt* and *Pada* (206).

***Rāmāyan-gowā Ojāpāli* –**

The *Rāmāyan-gowā Ojāpāli* is also known as *Rāiman Ojāpāli* or *Rāmāyan-sangīt*.

Context: The *Ojāpālis* perform mostly in association with the rituals related to the worship of Lord Viṣṇu and in some other religious occasions.

Place: It is popular in lower Assam especially in Kamrup.

Text: Verses are sung only from the epic *The Ramayana*, especially the one composed by Madhav Kandali. Alternatively, they perform from Ananta Kandali's *Ramayana* or from Durgabar Kayastha's *Giti Ramayana* (Goswami, B.M., 1997, 57). They also sing from Raghunath Mahanta's *Adbhut Ramayana*.

Structure: The structure of *Rāmāyan-gowā Ojāpāli* is similar to that of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* consisting of the *Ojā*, the *Dāināpāli* and the *Pālis*.

Costume: The costume too is similar to that of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*.

Musical instruments: The *Pālis* play the cymbals known as the *Khuti tāla*.

Performance: The only distinguishing feature between the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* and the *Rāmāyan-gowā Ojāpāli* in the district of Darrang is the text. As mentioned, the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālis* sing from *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* whereas the *Rāmāyan-gowā Ojāpālis* sing only from the latter. However, in the other districts, the two forms are very different so far as the performance is concerned. Unlike in the *Rāmāyan-gowā Ojāpāli* of Darrang, the

music of *Rāmāyan-gowā Ojāpāli* of Kamrup is considered more of a folk art form.

***Bhāuriyā Ojāpāli* –**

The *Bhāuriyā Ojāpāli* is also known as *Bhaurā* or the *Bhāirā Ojāpāli*.

Context: They are associated with Vaishnava rituals and socio-religious gatherings (*Sabhā*).

Place: This *Ojāpāli* is popular in lower Assam, particularly in North Kamrup.

Text: They sing from *The Ramayana*.

Structure: It is similar to that of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* consisting of the *Ojā*, the *Dāināpāli* and the *Pālis*. The *Dāināpāli* here is known as the *Bhāuriyā*.

Costume: The *Ojā* of *Bhāuriyā Ojāpālis* wears a *Cougā* (shirt), a *Jāmā* (skirt) and a white *Cādar* as a turban. The *Pālis* wear *Dhoti* and *Colā* but do not wear turban.

Musical instruments: The *Pālis* play the cymbals known as the *Khuti tāla*.

Performance: The *Bhāuriyā Ojāpāli* is a folk art form. The term ‘*Bhāuriyā*’ implies a person who enacts other people or characters especially with an element of satire and humour. Within their performance they incorporate satire on contemporary social issues which they term as ‘*Purāna*’. For example, *Belgā purāna* is a satire on the separation of a joint family. The *Cāh purāna* is the narration of stories related to tea (58). Unlike the *Rāmāyan-gowā Ojāpāli*, in *Bhāuriyā Ojāpāli* greater emphasis is given on dramatic performances (*Abhinaya*) than on the stylistics of singing. The sequence of performance is as follows – *Bhumi sewā* and *Sabhā bandanā*, *Swarālāpa* or *Sur-sāadhanā*, *Deva-bandanā* or *Guru-bandanā*, *Swara sādhanā* and *Sāmarāṇi gīt* (Sarma, N.C., 1996, 208).

***Durgābarī Ojāpāli* –**

Durgabar Kayastha, an established *Ojā*, compiled the *Giti Ramayana* taking elements from Madhav Kandali’s *Ramayana* and from orally transmitted local tales of *Rāmkaṭhā*. The *Rāmāyan-gowā Ojāpāli* groups who sang only from the *Giti Ramayana* came to be known as *Durgabari Ojāpāli*.

Context: This type of *Ojāpāli* too is associated with Vaishnava religious functions and socio-religious gatherings.

Place: The *Durgābarī Ojāpāli* was once very popular in the district of Darrang and in a few areas in Kamrup but is a rarity in Darrang nowadays.

Text: The *Ojāpāli* sings from the *Giti Ramayana*.

Structure: The *Ojā* known as *Gidāl* or *Gītāl*, is assisted by a group of *Pālis*.

Musical instruments: In *Durgābarī Ojāpāli*, the *Kara tāla* and *Khanjari* (tambourine) were used along with stringed instruments like the *Cerendā* and *Dotorā* (89,100).

Performance: Previously, like in the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, the *Durgābarī Ojāpāli*s used to perform standing but nowadays in Hajo, it is performed only while sitting. A type of *Durgābarī Ojāpāli* that was prevalent earlier in Kamrup had a strong element of dramatic performance. The *Ojāpāli* used to sit and sing from behind a screen while actors wearing costumes depicting characters from *The Ramayana* danced in front of an audience (52).

***Sattriyā Ojāpāli* –**

The *Ojāpāli* in the monasteries (*Sattras*) set up by Saint Srimanta Sankaradeva is known as *Sattriyā Ojāpāli*. *Sattriyā Ojāpāli* was introduced within the *Sattras* by Srimanta Sankaradeva and under the influence of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, it came to be known as *Biyāhīyā* or *Biyāhar Ojāpāli*. In Auniati Sattrā, it is called *Biyāhar Ojāpāli*, *Ojā gowā* or *Biyāhar Ojā* and in Dakshinpat Sattrā, it is known only as *Ojāpāli*. In Barpeta Sattrā, it is known as *Biyāh Kīrtana*. Though *Ojāpāli* was performed in the Patbausi Sattrā set up by Damodara Deva, it is no longer prevalent. According to Suresh Candra Goswami, the *Sattriyā Ojāpāli* was heavily influenced by the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* (53-55).

Context: The *Sattriyā Ojāpāli* performs in the daily rituals known as *Prasangas* set within the guidelines of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement. The *Sattras* set up by Damodar Deva and his disciples in Lower Assam do not perform *Ojāpāli* during the daily *Prasangas* unlike those set up in Upper Assam. Previously in Kamalabari Sattrā, *Ojāpāli* was not a part of the daily *Prasangas*. It was

incorporated later on during the time of Krisnakānta Deva Adhikār (55). The *Ojāpāli* in the Barpeta Sattrā also performs on occasions like the *Magh Bihu*, *Bohag Bihu*, *Kirtana Mahotsava*, birth anniversary of Srimanta Sankaradeva and Madhav Deva, in the festival of *Holi* (Doul utsav) and other special occasions. Though *Pāncāli Ojāpāli* and *Dulaḍī Ojāpāli* are present in Auniati and Dakshinpat Sattras, they are not a part of the daily *Prasangas* and are performed in special festivals and dates.

Place: The *Sattrīyā Ojāpāli* performance is restricted to functions within the *Sattras* spread across Assam.

Text: The *Sattrīyā Ojāpālis* sing mainly from the *Srimad Bhagavata Purana* composed by Srimanta Sankaradeva. On occasions like the Magh bihu, the *Ojāpālis* in the Barpeta Sattrā sing and perform from *The Ramayana* as well. The verses sung by the *Sattrīyā Ojāpāli* of Dakshinpat Sattrā are referred to as *Pada Ghosā*. In Bardowa Sattrā, the *Ojāpālis* sing from the *Kirtan Ghosa* composed by Srimanta Sankaradeva (Goswami, B.M., 1997, 61-62).

Structure: The *Ojāpāli* group in Auniati Sattrā consists of the *Ojā*, *Doheriyā*, the *Dāināpāli*, the *Pālis* and some learners, numbering around twentyfive to thirty in total. The *Sattras* set up by Srimanta Sankaradeva do not have a *Dāināpāli*. The *Sattras* under the Brahma Samhati like the Auniati Sattrā and the Dakshinpat Sattrā, may have more than one *Dāināpāli* (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 175).

Costume: The *Ojās* wear a turban, a silk shirt (known as *Cāpkan or Bāigan*), a *Dhoti* and a long scarf (*Celeng Cādar*). The *Cādar* hangs down in front of the neck on one end and the other is taken diagonally across to the other shoulder. He wears earrings, bangles, a necklace and a pair of *Nepūr*. The *Pālis* wear a costume that is similar to the *Ojā* but rarely wear ornaments. The *Ojā* and the *Pālis* of Kamalabari Sattrā and Barpeta Sattrā wear white turbans made from white cotton cloth. The *Pālis* of Auniati and Dakshinpat Sattras do not wear turbans. They wear a white mark in the forehead known as *Tilaka* or *Photā* of Sandalwood paste.

Musical instruments: The *Khuti tāla* is the only musical instrument played in *Sattrīyā Ojāpāli*.

Performance: The *Sattras* under the Sankaradeva school perform the *Sattrīyā Ojāpāli* in the following sequence – *Rāga diyā* or *Ālāpa* followed by *Śloka*, *Gīta*, *Dihā*, *Theopātana* and *Pada*, *Rāga Mālitā* or *Rāga Lakshana*, *Carāṇa* or *Caroṇa*, *Vādyā-khyāli*, *Dhurā(sthāyī)*, *Bānā* and finally *Upadesa* (Goswami, B.M., 1997, 134). The *Sattras* following the Damodardeva School has the following sequence of performance – *Bandanā* followed by *Rāga*, *Sloka*, *Gīta*, *Dasāvatāravarnanā*, *Pātanikā*, *Cārana*, *Vādyakhyāli*, *Ghosā* or *Dhurā*, *Pada* with *Mālitā*, *Bānā* and finally *Upadesa* (137). The *Ojāpāli* in the Barpeta Sattrā under the Madhav deva School has the following performance sequence – the *Rāga prakāśana* is followed by the recitation of the *Nāndīśloka*, *Bargīt*, *Pālā pradarshana* and finally *Sāmarāṇi*. The *Pālā pradarshana* includes *Dihā*, *Junā*, *Rāga Bānā*, *Nikhi* or *Niśi* and *Thakā* (Sarma, N.C., 1996, 214-16). According to M.Neog, the dance of *Sattrīyā Ojāpāli* bears similarities with that of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* (53).

***Pāncālī Ojāpāli* –**

The *Pāncālī Ojāpāli* is also known as the *Pāncālī-gān* or the *Pāncālī gāyana-bāyana*. Performers sing from *The Ramayana*. Though it is present in both Auniati as well as in Daksinapat Sattrā, *Pāncālī Ojāpāli* is not considered under the category of *Sattrīyā Ojāpāli* as it is not a part of the daily ceremonies in the *Sattras*. Some people, however, differentiate the *Pāncālī Ojāpāli* from *Pāncālī gāyana-bāyana* as only the latter is learnt within the *Guru-Śiṣya paramparā* (Sarma, N.C., 1996, 56).

Context: This form of *Ojāpāli* is performed on special occasions such as *Ekādasi* and *Samkranti* and in festivals like Bihu.

Place: *Pāncālī Ojāpāli* is performed only in the Auniati and Daksinapat Sattras.

Text: The *Ojāpāli* group sings from the *Bhagavata Purana*, the *Kirtana*, *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata* and the *Vadh Kavyas*.

Structure: The group consists of the *Ojā*, a *Smārak* (prompter), a *Daināpāli* and a few *Pālis* out of which two *Bāyans* play the *Mṛidanga* or *Khol* (kinds of drum) and two *Gāyans* assist the *Ojā* in singing while playing the cymbals with both hands (57).

Costume: The members of the *Pāncālī Ojāpāli* group wear turbans. They wear a *Dhoti*, a *Colā* and a *Cādar*.

Musical instruments: The *Ojā* plays the *Manjirā* while the *Pālis* play *Mṛidangas*.

Performance: The performance of *Pāncālī Ojāpāli* has the following sequence – *Ālāpa*, *Dhurā* or *Ghosā*, *Mulghosā*, *Pada* and *Upasamhāra*. From a thematic point, there are five stages in the performance. They are – *Nāma-mangala*, *Ghosā-mangala*, *Rāsa-mangala*, *Haramohana-mangala* and *Śiva-mangala*. From the musical point of view *Pāncālī Ojāpāli* has the following sequence of performance – *Ārambhani* or *Pātani* followed by *Tolani*, *Melāni*, *Niśi* or *Nikhi* and *Bhāngani* (220).

***Dulaḍī Ojāpāli* –**

The *Dulaḍī Ojāpāli* is also known as *Dulaḍī Gān* (Goswami, B.M. 1997, 65).

Context: This form of *Ojāpāli* like the *Pāncālī Ojāpāli* is also performed only during festivals and special occasions and is not included within the daily *Prasargas* (prayers).

Place: Like the *Pāncālī Ojāpāli*, it is performed only in the Auniati and Daksinapat Sattras.

Text: The *Ojāpāli* sings from the *Bhagavata Purana* and other Puranas.

Structure: The group consists of the *Ojā*, the *Doheriyā*, the *Dāināpāli* and a few *Pālis*.

Costume: Performers wear a *Dhoti*, a *Colā* and a *Cādar*.

Musical instruments: The *Pālis* of *Dulaḍī Ojāpāli* play the cymbals or *Manjirā* with both hands (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 57).

Performance: This form of *Ojāpāli* is performed only while standing. They sing verses of the Puranas particularly in the *Chabi Canda* (metre) (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 65). It is performed in the following sequence – *Ālāpa*, *Bandanā* or *Mangalācaraṇa*, *Rāga*, *Rāga-Mālitā* or *Rāga-Varna* or *Rāga-Lakshana*, *Dhurā* or *Ghosā* or *Sthāyi*, *Pada* and *Upasamhāra* (141-42).

Nagāonyā Ojāpāli Nṛitya –

The *Nagāonyā Ojāpāli Nṛitya* is believed to be a confluence of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* of Darrang and the *Sattriyā Ojāpāli* (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 58).

Context: The *Ojāpāli* sings from the *Kirtana Ghoṣā* in the rituals within the Bordowa Sattrā. They perform in death rituals, marriage ceremonies and in Vaishnava rituals (116). This *Kirtanīyā Ojā* or *Kirtanīyā Phaid* is believed to have been prevalent earlier than the now established *Sattriyā Ojāpāli* (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 61).

Place: This form of *Ojāpāli* is prevalent in areas of Nagaon namely Kaliabar, Ranthali, Barhampur etc.

Text: As mentioned, the *Nagāonyā Ojāpālis* sing from the *Kirtana Ghoṣā*.

Structure: Like the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, the *Ojā* is accompanied by a *Dāināpāli* and a few *Pālis*.

Costume: The *Ojā* wears a *Paṭṭajāmā* and a *Pāguri* known as *Pāgīyā* and a pair of anklets (Sarma, N.C., 1996, 192-93).

Musical instruments: The performance is accompanied by cymbals.

Performance: The performance is similar to the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* of Darrang. Instead of the terms *Mālitā*, *Srīphal* and *Jhunā* of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, the terms *Janmāi*, *Rahasya* and *Rāngālī Gīt* are used respectively in the *Nagāonyā Ojāpāli*. The role of the *Dāināpāli* here is comparatively less. *Gurubandanā*, *Samāj Bandanā* (obscience to the audience) and *Samāj Bidai* (bidding farewell to the audience) are specific to *Nagāonyā Ojāpāli Nṛitya* (58-59). Stages of performance of *Nagāonyā Ojāpāli* are as follows – *Swarālāpa*, *Bandanā*, *Gurubandanā* and *Samāj Bandanā*, *Janmāi*, *Gā-Pada*, *Rāngālī* and finally *Samāj Bidāi with Sāmarāṇi* (210).

The *Ojāpāli* forms following the *Śakti* tradition shall be discussed below.

OJĀPĀLI WITHIN THE SHAKTI TRADITION	
Type of Ojāpāli	Region where Ojāpāli is performed
Suknānni	Darrang
Bisaharigān-gowā	Kamakhya, Sualkuchi Gerua
Māre-gowā	Pāti Rābhās of South Goalpara, South Kamrup like Chaygaon, Boko
Padmāpurānar gān	North and, South Goalpara
Tukurīyā	Pāti Rābhās of Boko
Gitālu gīt	Hajong community

Suknāni Ojāpāli –

The *Suknāni* or *Suknānni Ojāpāli* is also known as *Rang-gowā Ojāpāli* or *Māraigowā Ojāpāli*.

Context: *Suknānni Ojāpāli* is primarily performed in association with the worship of the serpent goddess *Manasā* or *Padmā*.

Place: They perform in the Manasa temples and also in the households organising the ritual of *Manasā Pujā* (worship). It is also performed in association with the worship of goddess *Durga* since ancient times in the Royal palace in Darrang (Darrang Rājhowli) and in other places where goddess *Durga* is worshipped.

Text: The *Suknānni Ojāpāli* in the district of Darrang sings from the *Padma Purana (Manasa Kavya)* composed by Sukavi Narayan Deva while in other parts of Lower Assam (undivided Kamrup), orally transmitted verses are sung.

Structure: The group consists of the *Ojā*, the *Dāināpāli* and four to five *Pālis*.

Costume: In Darrang, the *Ojās* wear an egg-shaped turban, a shirt (*Cāpkan colā*), a *Dhoti* and a *Cādar* (scarf) round his neck. Like the *Biyāh-gowā Ojās*, he too wears ornaments – earrings, bangles and a necklace – and previously, used to wear anklets as well. The *Pālis* wear a *Colā* and a *Dhoti* along with the *Gāmocā* on their left shoulder. The *Pālis* in Darrang wear the *Mairācāli Pāg*. ‘*Mairācāli*’

literally means ‘peacock feather’. One end of the turban cloth is tied in such a way that it resembles the *Mairācāli*. According to N.C.Sarma, traditionally, the *Ojā* should wear a long white *Colā* like a coat and the *Pālis* should wear a *Khārīcolā* (kind of shirt). The *Ojā* of Kamrup *Manasā Ojāpāli* wears a *Kavach Gāmocā* round his neck which is believed to offer protection (193-94). The *Ojās* and *Pālis* in other parts of Lower Assam do not wear a turban. The group wears a round red mark of red sandalwood paste or vermilion (*Sindur*) on the forehead. The *Deodhanī* (female shaman) wears the traditional dress- *Mekhelā, Cādar* made of Muga silk and a red blouse. A yellow scarf is tied around the chest with the ends hanging at the back and three knots are tied at the end of each. The *Dedhānī* associated with *Māre-Gān* wears a *Dakhanā, Rihā*, blouse and a yellow scarf round the chest. The *Deodhā* (male shaman) associated with *Manasā Ojāpāli* wears a red *Dhoti* and *Cādar*.

Musical instruments: The *Khuti tāla* is used in the *Suknāni Ojāpāli* performance. During the ritual proper and in accompaniment with the *Deodhanī* performance, the *Jay dhol* (kind of drum) and the *Bar tāla* (large-sized cymbals) or the *Māju tāla* (medium-sized cymbals) are used.

Performance: The *Ojāpālis* usually perform standing and the songs they perform are known as *Utheni gīts* (meaning those songs that are sung while standing). They perform the *Ālāpa* followed by the *Bandanā, Dihā, Pada* and *Upasamhāra*. The singing of *Jhunā gīt* is necessary only if the *Deodhanī* dance is performed in the *Suknāni Ojāpāli* performance. Only the *Pālis* sing these songs without the aid of any instrument. The *Pujār gīts* are songs sung in association with the ritual proper and are known as *Baheni gīts* as they are performed while sitting (the term ‘*Baheni*’ indicates ‘while sitting’). They are sung in the following sequence – *Ālāpa, Jāgani, Tāla aru Pātar janma* (etiological ballads of cymbals and jute) *Bandanās, Sristir Pātani* (etiological ballad of creation of universe), *Mandapa-sthāpana, Bandu-Biracini Bandanā*, followed by etiological ballads regarding gods and goddesses and of *Ghat* (pot) and *Kumāra* (potter). *Devī-avāhana* (invocation of goddess *Manasā*) precedes the singing of songs related to *Mandapātā Vighraha Sthāpana, Adhibāsa, Mandapa Jāgani, Panitolā, Mandapa Shuddhi karana* and other rituals. The *Ojāpāli* thus is an integral part of the ritual of worship of goddess *Manasā*. They assist the priest in every step of the ritual.

The *Suknānni Ojāpāli* group in South Kamrup, except the groups in the Rajapukhuri area, performs only while sitting. The *Ojāpāli* in the Barak Valley and those prevalent among the tea tribes perform the *Ārambhani Bandanā* followed by *Dihā, Pada* and *Sāmaraṇi Bandanā* (221-227).

***Biṣaharīgān-gowā Ojāpāli* –**

Context: The *Biṣaharīgān-gowā Ojāpāli* sings in the ritual of *Biṣaharī pujā* – worship of goddess *Manasā* who is also known as *Māre-Devī* or *Biṣaharī*.

Place: The *Biṣaharī* worship is performed in Kamakhya, Bamun Sualkuchi, Pacaria, and Gerua.

Text: They sing verses from the Manasa Kavya composed by poet Mankar and Durgabar Kayastha. The orally transmitted verses that were prevalent then were compiled by poet Mankar and poet Durgabar. (Interview 29)

Structure: The *Biṣaharīgān-gowā Ojāpāli* consists of the *Gītāl* or *Pāthaka (Ojā)*, the *Juris (Pālis)* and a male performer known as the *Deodhā, ghorā, jaki* or *Deulā*. The *Dāināpāli* is distinctly absent. The *Gītāl* sits in front and the *Juris* sit in a row behind him.

Costume: The *Gītāl* and the *Juris* wears a *Dhoti* and a shirt.

Musical instruments: The *Gītāl* and the *Juris* play the *Manjirā* with both hands unlike in the *Suknānni Ojāpāli* where the *Pālis* play the cymbals with one hand only. They also play drums – the *Dhol* and the *Nāgara* – and the flute known as *Kāli* especially in association with the dance of the *Deodhā*.

Performance: The *Ojāpālis* always sing while sitting but the shaman known as *Deodhā* dances while the *Ojāpālis* sing. The sequence of performance starts with the *Ālāpa* or *Gurubandanā* followed by *Dihā, Pada*, and *Sāmaraṇi prārthanā*. The act of singing the Manasa Kavya chronologically from the beginning to the end is called ‘*Jāgar*’ (75-76).

***Māre-Gowā Ojāpāli* –**

Context: The *Māre-gowā Ojāpāli* sings the *Māre Pujār gān* during the *Māre Pujā*. This ritual is also known as *Bisaharī Pujā, Padmāvati Pujā, Padumāi Pujā*

or *Barmānī Pujā* (77). *Māre-gowā Ojāpāli* is also performed along with social functions like marriages, death rituals and other rites of passage. Depending on the duration of the ritual, the *Māre Pujā* is of three types – *Bhar Māre*, *Phul Māre* and *Ekbeliyā Māre* or *Jāgar Diyā*.

Place: This type of *Ojāpāli* is prevalent amongst the Pāti Rābhās of South Goalpara and in places of South Kamrup like Chaygaon, Boko, Bamunigaon and Khatalpara to name a few. Though previously it was confined to the Pāti Rābhās, the *Māre-gān* became common amongst the Bodo-Kacharis (76).

Text: The *Māre-gowā Ojāpāli* sings songs from the *Manasā* saga handed down orally through generations.

Structure: The *Ojā* and the *Deodhanīs* stand in line at the front. Behind them, three pairs of *Pālis* stand one behind the other. The *Dāināpali* is absent here. Unlike in the *Suknānni Ojāpāli*, the *Deodhanī* is mandatory in *Māre-gān Ojāpāli* and there are more than one *Dedhānī* or *Deodhanī* (77-78).

Costume: The *Ojā* wears a white *Cādar* or *Gāmocā* as a turban. The *Pālis*, however, do not wear turbans. The *Ojā* wears a coloured *Cādar* and a *Dhoti* while the *Pālis* wear short *Jāmās* and anklets known as *Lempur* (94). The *Pālis* also tie a piece of cloth round the waist known as *Batuk*.

Musical instruments: The *Pālis* play the cymbals with one hand. They also play the *Dhol* while sitting. The flute (*Kāhilā* or *Kāli*) is played in accompaniment with the *Deodhanī* dance (100).

Performance: The distinctive feature here is that the dramatic element is very prominent unlike many forms of *Ojāpāli*. The characters wear masks and specific costumes according to the roles they enact. The sequence of performance is as follows – the *Saraswati Bandanā* is followed by the singing of etiological ballads of the ingredients necessary in a ritual, *Dihā*, *Pada* and finally the *Samāpati*. *Jhunā gīts* are sung at the request of the audience only. They are sung with *Abhinaya* (acting) and accompanied by the cymbals. *Jhunās* are known as *Kari* amongst the Pāti Rābhās of North and South Goalpara (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 153-154).

***Paddāpurānar Gān* –**

Context: The *Paddāpurānar gān* or *Padmāpurānar gān* is a form of *Ojāpāli* that sings in praise of the goddess *Padma*. The term ‘*Paddā*’ is a distortion of the term ‘*Padmā*’. The *Ojāpāli* performs in the ritual of worship of goddess *Bisahari* a day prior to a marriage ceremony. This is especially practiced in the Golokganj area. In some areas, this form is also known as *Bisaharī Gān* (Sarma, N.C., 1996, 80).

Place: It is practiced in North Goalpara and parts of South Goalpara.

Text: The verses sung are from those written by Sukavi Narayanadeva though the stylistics of performance vary from that of *Suknānni Ojāpāli* in the district of Darrang.

Structure: The *Gītāl* or *Gīdāl* is the *Mulgāyaka* (chief singer) and is assisted by the *Dohārī* in expounding the verses. The singers are known as *Pālis* or *Pāils* and the *Khol* is played by the *Bāins*. The group performs standing in a circular manner. Sometimes, young children are seen to accompany as dancers (81).

Costume: The *Ojāpālis* here do not wear turbans. The *Ojā* wears a *Colā* and takes a *Cādar* or *Gāmocā* round his neck. Some of the *Pālis* wear anklets (94).

Musical instruments: The *Pālis* play the *Khuti tāla* with one hand or both hands. They also play the *Khol* and occasionally, the flute.

Performance: The performance starts with the *Ālāpa* or *Swara Sādhanā* followed by *Bandanās*, *Dihā*, *Pada* and *Sāmarāṇi* (230). According to B.M.Goswami, the performance has no distinct sequence like the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* and the *Sattrīyā Ojāpāli* (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 150). The *Gīdāl* holds the *Cāmar* (long strands of animal fur tied at one end) during the dance. The dramatic element is very conspicuous in some areas with the use of masks also depicting characters like *Padmā*, *Śiva*, *Cānda* and *Beulā*. During the dramatic performance the *Gīdāl* and *Pāils* do not sing the verses.

***Tukurīyā Ojāpāli* –**

Context: *Tukurīyā Ojāpāli* is performed in association with the worship of goddess *Narayanī Bhagavatī* and was started by an elderly named *Tukurā*.

Place: It is prevalent amongst the Pāti Rābhās of South Kamrup, especially in Boko.

Text: The *Ojāpāli* sings verses in praise of goddess *Narayanī Bhagavatī* (81-83).

Structure: The *Ojā* and a few *Pālis* make the group and the role of the *Dāināpāli* is compensated for by the other *Pālis* (175).

Costume: The *Ojā* as well as the *Pālis* tie the *Gāmocā* as a turban. The *Ojā* wears a *Colā* and takes a *Cādar* or *Gāmocā* round his neck (193).

Musical instruments: The *Pālis* play the *Khuti tāla* with both hands. They also play the *Bhor tāla* during the ritual proper (89-90). The 'Benu' (flute) is played at intervals between the verses and also along with the *Dadhani* (*Deodhanī*) performance. Stringed instruments like the *Lautokari* and *Ektara* are also played occasionally (100).

Performance: The performance starts by invoking the goddess (*Devī āhbān*) which is known as *Ārambhani* followed by a *Saraswati Bandanā* or *Mangalācarana*, recitation of *Padas* (*Pada ābritti* or *Pada gowā*) and ends with *Samāpti* (230). Ritual *gīts* and etiological ballads are also sung.

***Gītālu Gīt* –**

Context: The *Gītālu Gīt* or *Gītālu-Gāhan* is performed by the Hājang community in association with the worship of the serpent goddess *Manasā* (*Bisahari*, *Padmā* or *Kāni*) especially in the month of 'Śāuṇ' (July 15th to August 15th) (86).

Place: The Hājang community in areas of Goalpara, Boko, and North Cachar and in some parts of Darrang performs this type of *Ojāpāli* (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 85).

Text: Orally transmitted verses in praise of goddess *Paddā* or *Bisahari* are sung.

Structure: The group comprises of the *Gītāl*, supported by his *Pālis* but here too, the *Dāināpāli* is distinctly absent. Five female shamans dance along with the *Gītāl* (84-85).

Costume: The *Gītāl* wears a *Colā* and adorns a *Cādar* or *Gāmocā* round his neck.

Musical instruments: The *Pālis* play the cymbals as well as the *Khol*.

Performance: During the performance, the *Gītāl* carries a whisk (*Cowar*) in one hand while showing hand gestures with the other. The female shamans dance along with the *Gītāl* and his *Pālis*.

According to N.C. Sarma, the majority of *Ojās* of different *Ojāpāli* groups carry a handkerchief (‘*Urmāl*’) (194).

Āpi Ojāpāli:

Āpi Ojāpāli does not fall within the classification of *Ojāpāli* into the two said groups. The term ‘*Āpi*’ denotes a girl. Since the word ‘*Likirī*’ denotes the same in Darrang, *Āpi Ojāpāli* is also known as *Likirī Ojāpāli*. The *Ojāpāli* group initially consisted of only female members but later, the *Pālis* included men as well. The structure, text, performance and costume are similar to *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* but here, the female *Pālis* wear the traditional dress - *Mekhelā Cādar*. They perform in various religious and social occasions. Another form of *Āpi Ojāpāli* has similarities with the *Suknānni Ojāpāli*. This is seen in Bheularcok in Barpeta and Silarguri cupa in Vyaskuchi. The *Ojāpāli* performs in both Vaishnava and *Śakti* rituals; the texts vary according to the context. The female *Ojā* is called *Ojenī* or *Ojānī*. She wears the traditional *Mekhelā Cādar* and takes a *Gāmocā*. If the *Dāināpāli* is a male, he wears the skirt known as *Ghurī*. The male *Pālis* wear the *Dhoti* and a loose shirt known as the *Piran* (60).

1.3.2 Origin of Ojāpāli:

Ojāpāli as an art form is denotative of a group of arrangements where the *Ojā* is the central figure surrounded and supported by a band of few performers called ‘*Pālis*’. From this, the term ‘*Ojāpāli*’ is well understandable as a compound of the words ‘*Ojā*’ and ‘*Pāli*’. The *Ojā* in the *Ojāpāli* system can very well be likened to the ‘*Kathak*’ in the *Kathakatā* tradition who used to sing and enact epic-based and Puranic tales while being assisted by musical instruments for creating a richer presentation. Like that of the *Kathak*, one *Ojā* shares the responsibility of illuminating the scriptural knowledge while providing sufficient entertainment. Earlier the *Kathaks* staged performances only within the premises of a temple but

later as rich men came forward to act as patrons, the performance began to be showcased in front of the common non-literate mass (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 7).

It is not that the origin of the art variety of *Ojāpāli* has been exclusively closed down with the tradition of *Kathakatā*. Various texts uphold the belief that a strong tradition of classical music unique to the land of Assam existed in the ancient era. As a matter of fact, many scholarly works describe ancient Assam or Pragjyotish Kamrup as the land of music and dance. M. Neog writes, “Assam seems to have a long and strong tradition of culture of music and dance” (Neog, M., 2011, 61). As stated by B.M. Goswami another strong evidence of the prevalence of the tradition of *Sangīt* (music) in Pragjyotish since the first century B. C. has been traced in the famous text of the *Natyashastra* (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 20-21). Moreover, the migration of people, including expert musicians, from the mainland through time resulted in the assimilation of elements of Indian classical music (*Mārg* of *Mārgī Sangīt*) into the music of Pragjyotish Kamrup. Similarities are found in the *Rāgas*, rhythms and melody between those of Hindustani classical music and those in *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* (Barua, A. C., 1974, 1077). It would, thus, be reasonable to assume that the artistic characteristics of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* have taken shape in accordance to the then existing musical system of Pragjyotish Kamrup and the music that entered the land later. It needs not to be forgotten that the *Ojāpāli* art, especially *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, has a rather rigid and structured sequence of performance and thus this tendency to adhere to rule-bound performance criteria, the affinity to a classical system of music, cannot be denied. T. N. Sarma states that “the art form of *Ojāpāli* keeps the tradition of *Mārgī Sangīt* of ancient Assam alive”. Moreover, K. Vatsayana states, “the dances of *Ojā* bear many resemblances to the classical dances of India, the accompanying music is also close to the classical *Rāgas*” (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 23).

Some try to opine that the recitation of the hymns of the *Samaveda* or of the epics might have been the ancestral prototype or a very early form of *Ojāpāli* which must have surely attained a much developed and refined form later. Apart from the general inclination to relate the *Ojāpāli* roots to the *Kathakatā* and *Mārgī* tradition, there exist some popular beliefs regarding the origin of the art form which however do not hold much ground. There is a myth relating to the divine

origin of *Ojāpāli* according to which the Pandava prince Arjuna brought this *Gandharva vidyā* (music of the celestial beings) from heaven to earth. Another belief credits a simple weaver-woman Pārijāti to have learned the art in her dreams and later taught it to others. N. C. Sarma, states that Dineswar Sarma in his book *Mangaldair Buranji*, mentions that the term ‘*Vyās-kalāi*’ meant a person well-versed in the art of music. A third myth suggests that Vyāskalāi and Kendukalāi are the progenitors of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* and Suknāni *Ojāpāli* respectively. Further, some believed that Pārijāti taught the art of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* to *Vyās-kalāis* (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 17- 18).

1.3.3 Antiquity of Ojāpāli:

The antique nature of the institution of *Ojāpāli* has been supported by solid historical evidence as primarily located in copper inscriptions and textual records. Texts written in Sanskrit are found to provide well-grounded indications of the prevalence of *Ojāpāli* since ancient times. *Smritiratnakar* written by Vedacharya in the 13th century CE can be cited as a major work in this context which attempts at detailing the ritual of *Jāgar* which is prevalent even today, where a special group of musicians mandatorily perform. *Jāgar* involves the worship of *Lord Viṣṇu* and *Ardhanārīswar Śiva*, accompanied by music and dance. This mandatory dance-music involvement can very well be read as an early form of *Ojāpāli*. M. Shastri too claims that *Ojāpāli* is performed within the ritual of *Jāgar* (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 24-25). Further, different works on *Ojāpāli* directly claim *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* to have been adopted by Srimanta Sankardeva to structure and popularize *Sattrīyā Ojāpāli*. B. M. Goswami claims that *Sattrīyā Ojāpāli* is a modified version of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* (61). He further refers to Dineswar Sarma’s claim that a *Dāināpāli* of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* named Choto Balaram was brought by Sankardeva and the former introduced *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* elements within a Neo-Vaishnavite framework (60). N. C. Sarma too states that Sankardeva employed the vehicle of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* in his feat to popularize Neo- Vaishnavism (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 52). All these instances, in fact, pose as sufficient material to prove the pre-Sankarite prevalence of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* institution and hence establish the ancient nature of the same.

A *Biyāh-gowā Ojā* is quite often equalled to a *Gandharva* (*Gandharvas* are considered heavenly creatures with solemn expertise in music). For example, late Durgeswar Nath *Ojā* is found stating, “*Gandharva swarupe Vyās Ojār udaya*” (A *Vyās / Biyāh-gowā Ojā* takes the form of a *Gandharva*). This reference of a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* as a *Gandharva* can also be read as proof of the antiquity of the very art form. A bulk of Assamese literature dating back to the 15th century CE abounds in the terms ‘*Ojā*’ and ‘*Pāli*’. N. C. Sarma refers to the enormous popularity of *Ojāpāli* as an art form during that time (22). Mention of an *Ojāpāli* involvement in the death ceremonies of many eminent personalities within the *Sattra* tradition in the distant past is found in different texts. For example, *Katha-Gurucarita* and *Guru Lila* refers to the *Ojāpālis* performing in the *Śrāddha* (death ritual) of Sankardeva, Damodardeva and Bhattadeva- “*bhakte nāma gāi khol-tāle, gīta gāle ojā gāi*” (22) (Translation: The devotees perform *Ojāpāli* in accompaniment to the *Khol* and *Tāls*.)

Ojāpāli nata natuvā biyāsa

Brāhmana yateka jāntā

Dāne māne sama- stake santoṣaya

Bidāya diyā pathānta (22).

(Translation: The band of *Ojāpāli* and the other performers along with the priest were paid reverence with gifts at the time of their departure.)

Among other references, mention may be made of Ramaraya's *Guru Lila* where he states that Damodardeva used *Ojāpāli* in spreading the core of *The Bhagavata* (22).

Copper inscriptions dating back to medieval Assam possess clear references to the *Ojāpāli* art form. To substantiate, a copper inscription of 1738 refers to King Siva Singha endowing the responsibility of performing *Ojāpāli* regularly at Dharieswar Siva temple to an *Ojāpāli* troupe. A few 1739 inscriptions that were issued for the maintenance of Pingalesvara Siva temple and Dirgheswari temple have references to the art form. Mention must be made of two other inscriptions of 1774 and 1775

issued by King Lakshmi Singha for granting land to *Biyāhar Ojās*, Sāgar from Salmara and Cantai Dasa of Hajo respectively (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 28-29).

1.4. The *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī*:

Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī is known by several other names such as *Vyās-sangīt*, *Vyās Ojāpālī*, *Biyāh Ojāpālī*, *Biyāhar Ojāpālī*, *Biyāsar Ojāpālī* and *Sabhā-gowā Ojāpālī*. The term '*Biyāh*' is believed to have originated from the Sanskrit word '*Vyāsā*' which stands for "a Brahmin who expounds the Puranas in public" (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 43). A. C. Barua, on the other hand, considers '*Vyās*' to mean to expand or elaborate. He further writes that previously all classical verses (*Śāstriya Pada*) sung with dance movements were considered as *Vyās Sangīt*. Later, it was divided into *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī* and *Suknāni Ojāpālī* (Barua, A. C., 1974, 1062). The term '*Vyās*', however, can also be read in the context of Vyasdeva from whose *Mahabharata* the *Ojāpālīs* sing. '*Sabhā*' stands for a social gathering and since the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī* troupe sings in various *Sabhās* apart from the main *Gondhcauparī sabhā*, the name *Sabhā-gowā Ojāpālī* is undoubtedly pertinent.

Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī is divided into two types or groups, namely *Biśuddhva* or *Parampariṇ Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī* and *Pharingatīyā* or *Aparampariṇ Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī*. The performers belonging to the *Biśuddhva Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī* group came into being under the patronage of the Kings of Darrang. During a performance, the *Ojā* holds a metallic object known as *Tourjyatrik Mudrā* which works as a royal seal. This type of *Ojāpālī* is specifically associated with the ritual of *Jāgar* which is marked by the compulsive rendition of a special category of songs known as *Mālcī gīts* sung in praise of the Goddess. The *Ojās* here are known as *Jāgar-gowā Ojās*. They are Daivagña-Brahmins who reside in the village of Byaspara and are believed to belong to the clan of Sagar Ojā.

The *Pharingatīyā* or *Aparampariṇ Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī*, on the other hand, stands for the general group which never received any royal patronage. The practitioners are not Brahmins nor are the *Ojās* permitted to hold the *Tourjyatrik Mudrā* during a performance. They are not allowed to perform in a *Jāgar ritual* which comes

under the exclusive domain of the *Biśuddhva* or *Parampariṅ Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 44). This group performs mainly in the ritual of worship of *Lord Vāsudeva* in the *Gondhcauparī sabhās* and other *Sabhās*. As this study is on *Gīts* of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* in a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*, this type of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* shall be addressed here.

1.4.1 Structure of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* troupe:

The *Ojā* is the principal performer in the troupe who is accompanied by a few *Pālis* who offer assistance by playing the instrument, maintaining rhythm and bestowing more power on the overall performance by enwrapping their vocal parts in a choral coat.

In *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, the *Ojā* is usually assisted by five *Pālis*. The *Ojā* at the centre conducts the performance and leads the group. To his right is the *Dāināpāli*, the main assistant or the ‘right hand man’ of the *Ojā*. It needs to be noted that ‘*Dāinā* in *Dāināpāli* implies ‘the right side’. Two *Gor Pālis* or *Bānā-dharā Pālis* stand behind the *Ojā* and the *Dāināpāli*. They primarily help the *Ojā* in singing special melodic parts set in a high pitch especially during the rendition of the *Bānās*. They help to carry forward the *Bānā* introduced by the *Ojā* and are thus called *Bānā-dharā Pālis* where ‘*dharā*’ means to hold. Behind them stand the two *Āg Pālis*, also known as *Sahāyikā Pālis* (‘*Sahāyikā*’ means one who assists or helps) (Fig.1: BGO, Pic 1 – performance while standing). Occasionally, the number of *Pālis* and the roles assigned to the members of the band seem to vary within a recital. For instance, *Kathopakathan* or the dialogue between the *Ojā* and *Dāināpāli* is sometimes seen to take place between the *Dāināpāli* and any other *Pāli*. The positioning of the *Ojā* and his troupe is also found to differ. For example, when the *Ojāpāli* assists the priest in conducting the ritual, the band sits and sings where the *Ojā* sitting at the centre is surrounded by the *Pālis* on either side and also behind him (Fig.2:BGO, Pic 2 – performance while sitting). On the other hand, on stage the *Ojā* stands at the centre and the other band members surround him in a semi-circular pattern (Fig.3: BGO, Pic 3 – performance on stage). Though the different types of *Ojāpāli* art forms have similarities in various aspects, they bear unique differences in their structure as well as in their style of presentation. For example, in *Sattriyā Ojāpāli*, the

Doheriā (one who repeats after the *Ojā*), with or without the *Dāināpāli*, stands behind the *Ojā* followed by the *Pālis* and finally the learners (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 99). The *Sattriyā Ojāpāli* prevalent in Barpeta Sattrā is marked by a band consisting of the *Ojā* who stands at the centre while the *Dāināpāli* and the other *Pālis* stand behind him in a semi-circular manner (Fig.4:BGO, Pic 4 – Sattriyā Ojāpāli). The non-epic based *Suknāni Ojāpāli* is similar in structure to that of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*.

1.4.2 Role of the Ojā:

The *Ojā* leads the performance as well as controls the activities of the *Pālis* during the rituals of awakening and appeasing the invoked deities. He is well versed in the epics and the *Puranas* and is expected to memorize the verses especially for overnight recitals as in a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*. For him there is neither a *Smārak* nor prompter like in *Pāncāli Ojāpāli* nor can he take the aid of manuscripts during performances like in *Bisaharīrgān-gowā Ojāpāli*. During the *Kathopakathan*, the *Ojā* with the help of the *Dāināpāli* explains the meaning of the verses that are sung in simple prose or sometimes in verse with the use of relevant proverbs, riddles and phrases, interspersing raw humour and satire to engage with the audience. Occasionally the *Ojā* may add something new to the original story without distorting the theme. *Ojā* Durgabar Kayastha, for example, omitted many parts of the *Ramayana* written by Madhab Kandali and introduced new verses whilst keeping the theme intact (105-106). The *Ojā* intelligently brings to focus current social and political issues to spread awareness amongst the audience. Additionally, he is an expert in all aspects of *Sangīt*. During a performance, the *Ojā* introduces a verse which is taken up as a refrain by the *Pālis*. He dances while maintaining the rhythm with his anklets which is also employed as a signal to the other performers about a transition within the performance. A couplet prevalent amongst the locals as well as within *Ojāpāli* groups in Darrang describes the attributes of a good *Ojā* goes as follows:

<i>Hāte Mudrā mukhe pada</i>	<i>pāve dhare tāla</i>
<i>Mayura sadṛśa nāce</i>	<i>sei Ojhā bhāla</i>

(Sarma, N. C., 1996, 171)

These verse lines can be translated as – “The *Ojā* who can demonstrate hand gestures, maintain rhythm with his feet and simultaneously sing while dancing gracefully like a peacock is considered a good performer”. Instead of the comparison with the dance of a peacock, the dance is also compared with that of the bird *Garuḍa* – “*Garuḍa sadrśa nāce*” (dances like the *Garuḍa*) - (Barua, A. C., 1974, 1026).

Apart from his role within the performance of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, the *Ojā* often plays the role of a healer or a village doctor skilled in traditional medicine and charms. He may also act as a teacher to the unlettered village folk. The *Ojā* of the *Suknāni Ojāpāli* is often an expert snake charmer and can heal people from snake bites. In rare occasions, in the absence of a priest, an *Ojā* has the capacity to conduct the ritual on his own. This is seen in *Māre gān-gowā Ojāpāli*. The *Ojā* also teaches the female shamans or *Deodhanis* how to perform. In *Gītālu gīt*, the *Ojā* too goes into a trance along with the *Deodhani*.

1.4.3 Role of the Pālis:

The group assisting the *Ojā* is collectively called the *Pālis*. As already seen, the three primary roles played by them include singing the refrain, taking full charge of the percussion and also accompanying the *Ojā* with dance steps. The role of the *Pālis* can be understood by referring to the word ‘*Pālikhutā*’ where ‘*Khutā*’ in Assamese means post or pillars supporting a structure. Therefore, in the performance of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, the *Pālis* act as supporting aids like the *Pālikhutās* (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 172-174). The phrase “*Ojār bal Pāli*” meaning, the strength of the *Ojā* is his *Pālis* as mentioned in the following verse lines appears quite appropriate.

Dhuliār bal tāli, Ojār bal Pāli

Berār bal kāmi, tirīr bal swāmī. (174)

(Translation: The drummers strength is rhythm, the *Ojā*’s strength is his *Pālis* just as the wall’s strength is its slats and a wife’s strength her husband)

A few more notable factors pertaining to the different categories of *Pālis* already introduced can be added here. The *Dāināpāli*, as seen, takes an active part in the segment of *Kathopakathan* with the *Ojā*. The difference in their roles, however,

lies in the fact that while the *Ojā* is more targeted towards laying out the verse lines, most of which is incomprehensible to the audience, in a simple prosaic form, the *Dāināpāli* aims at presenting the same with humorous twists for the sake of pure amusement (BGO Vid – 1 Humorous Kathopakathan). A saying goes as follows:

Ojā pon *Pāli hālā*
Tāra mājate *rasar melā* (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 36)

(This passage states that while the *Ojā* stands straight, the *Pālis* bend down and with this the gaiety of performance is elevated).

Among all the *Pālis*, the *Dāināpāli* holds a superior position. As a matter of fact, he can go to the extent of creating a new *Ojāpāli* band in two ways - either he is promoted to the level of *Ojā* so that he can provide training to new learners or he can help another person acquire mastery over the art form and take up the role of *Ojā*. The important position of *Dāināpāli* is, however, found missing in *Māregān-gowā Ojāpāli*, *Tukuriyā Ojāpāli*, *Gītālu Gīt* and *Sattriyā Ojāpāli* of the Sankardeva school. If there arises the need of a *Dāināpāli*, the purpose is served by any other *Pāli*. Interestingly, in *Sattriyā Ojāpāli* as prevalent in Auniati Sattra and Dakhinpat Sattra, there may be more than one *Dāināpāli*. On the other hand, in *Paddā Purānar gān-gowā Ojāpāli*, the role of the *Dāināpāli* is played by the *Dohāri* (Sarma N. C. 1996, 175).

1.4.4 The *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* costume:

Regarding the costume discipline followed by the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performers, it can be said that a far richer costume is prescribed for the *Ojā* than the *Pālis*. The *Ojā* usually gets a white attire on. According to N. C. Sarma, white is usually worn during rituals in the temples and occasions like festivals, marriages, death rituals and other rites of passage. One of the defining elements of the costume includes the *Pāguri* or *Pāg* which is the headgear marked with a special shape and features. The *Pāg* is flattened and curved in the front. The rear end is long, pointed and lifted upwards like the end of a boat. The *Pāg* is also flattened on the rear giving it a conical shape in contrast to the *Pāg* worn by the *Biyāh-gowā Ojā* of South Kamrup which is lifted upwards. The *Pāg* is also known as *Koṣāpātiyā*, that is, like the cone-shaped vessel used during rituals

(191-192). A coloured border, which is generally not specified, is stitched at the rim of the Pāg (Fig.5: BGO, Pic 5 –Ojā’s Pāg). Apart from the Pāg, the main dress consists of the long skirt known as *Jāmā* to which is stitched the shirt or *Cāpkan*. These are worn over a vest and a *Dhoti*. Such a dress is believed to have been worn by the Pandava prince Arjuna during his disguise as Vrhanalla in the kingdom of king Virat. Further, the *Tañāli* is a multi-coloured belt, predominantly red, tied round the waist. The costume gets the final finish with the *Cādar* or that long piece of green cloth which is made to hang in front from the neck. Multi-coloured floral designs are woven at both the ends and the entire length has two white borders. This *Cādar* is also known as *Saraswati*. (Fig.6: BGO, Pic 6 – Costume of the *Ojā*). Among the accessories worn by the *Ojā*, mention may be made of *Dholmādali* which is a necklace with a locket, *Kundala* or earrings, *Muthikhāru* or bracelets or bangles and gold-plated, silver or copper rings respectively (Fig.7: BGO, Pic 7a – Bangles). A pair of *Nepūr* is a must as it helps in maintaining the rhythm in a performance (Fig.8: BGO, Pic 7b – Nepūr). (BGO, Vid 2 – Use of Nepūr) The *Ojā* wears the *Nepūr* round his ankle with a loop made of jute string or cotton cloth to wound it around the second toe. Another important facet that is considered vital to the *Ojā*’s appearance is the *Tilaka* or a circular white mark or spot usually made from sandalwood paste which is applied on the forehead. N. C. Sarma remarks that the *Tilaka* can serve the purpose of an ornament (190). What needs to be noted is that a very specific order is followed while putting on the different parts of the total costume by the *Ojā*. For example, the *Ojā* starts with the headgear and ends with the anklet (Fig.9: BGO, Pic 8 – Sequence of wearing).

Given below is a *Mālitā* describing the costume and accessories of the *Ojā*:

Viṣṇurupī pāga goṭa śirata prakāśa

Kapāle tilaka bhakti mātāra nibāsa

Parihita Paṭṭajāmā Śiva mulādhāra

Kundala kaṅkaṇe sthiti svarupa māyāra

Grīve dolāyita bastra Brahmā prajāpati

Gangādevī mañjirā tañāli Saraswatī

Gandharba svarupe byāh Ojhāra udaya

Devara karaṇī manuṣyata prabartaya (194)

(Translation: The different deities such as *Viṣṇu*, *Śiva*, *Brahmā* etc. are ascribed to the various parts of the *Ojā*'s costume and accessories such as *Pāg*, *Tilaka*, *Paṭṭajāmā*, *Kundala* etc.).

The *Pālis* are prescribed a much simpler costume possibly to highlight the central position held by the *Ojā* in the band. A *Pāli* wears a white shirt *Colā*' and *Dhoti* or a long piece of cloth used as the bottom wear. The traditional Assamese scarf known as *Gāmocā* is worn around the neck with both ends hanging in front. The white *Tilaka* is also an essential part of a *Pāli*'s get-up (Fig.10: BGO, Pic 9 – Costume of the *Pālis*).

1.4.5 Place of performance:

Places where <i>Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli</i> is performed	
1	Temples
2	Royal palace
3	Community areas
4	House hold
5	Proscenium
6	Spreading Government awareness schemes in villages

It is to be noted that there has been a considerable shift in the places where a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* recital is held through time. In another sense, with the passing of time the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* troupes came to perform in various places while at the beginning such a concert was supposed to be staged at only a prescribed setting. Specifically, *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* as an art form was initially confined to the premises of temples as when a ritualistic worship of *Lord Vāsudeva* was held there. It needs be mentioned that this rigid association with *Vāsudeva* ritual attained flexibility when the Koch King Dharmanarayan called for *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* involvement in the rituals pertaining to the goddess and also *Ardhanāriswar Śiva* at the temple located at Patidarrang. Besides temples, the *Ojāpālis* began to be invited to be a part of death rituals (*Śrāddha*). Further, in

Sabhās or social gatherings, (for example *Gondhcauparī sabhā*) which are held in community fields and village households, a performance by a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* band began to be considered indispensable. Moreover, in current times, *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* has begun to be widely appreciated on stages purely as an object of art while its ritual-centric role still continues. Interestingly, the scope of performance has also widened with the Government currently employing the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* vehicle in public awareness programmes and as a means of future rehabilitation of prison inmates.

1.5 Occasions for performance of Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli:

The two most important ritualistic platforms, namely *Gondhcauparī* and *Jāgar*, account for an elaborate and mandatory *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* recital and thus it seems pertinent at this point to work on a somewhat detailed sketch of both the occasions.

1.5.1 Gondhcauparī Sabhā:

As practised in the Darrang district, a *Gondhcauparī sabhā* is specifically the ritual of *Vāsudeva* worship. It is usually held anytime between *Āghon* and *Jeth* (months in the Assamese calendar) that is, between mid-November and mid-May. In some places, such a *Sabhā* is also organized during *Bohāg Bihu* – the spring festival associated with the Assamese New Year (Sarma, B. K., 2005, 135). ‘*Gondh*’ in ‘*Gondhcauparī*’ stands for fragrance. As a matter of fact, the use of various aromatic substances such as *Karpur*, *Agaru*, *Candan* and *Kasturi* to fill the air with rich fragrant notes is one of the defining elements of a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*. Further ‘*Cauparī*’ in ‘*Gondhcauparī*’ has come from ‘*Caupar*’ or ‘*Chatuhprahar*’ which stands for twenty four hours (125). It is mentionable that in Darrang district there exists mainly three different types of *Sabhās* - *Gondhcauparī*, *Ādcauparī* and *Eporiā*. These *Sabhās* are classifiable on the basis of their duration. For example, an *Eporiyā sabhā* is of shortest duration - it begins in the morning and ends in the evening. On the other hand, an *Ādcauparī Sabhā* continues for twelve hours. It begins in the evening and continues till next morning. The *Gondhcauparī sabhā* continues for full twenty-four hours.

There are, of course, different myths and beliefs regarding the origin of *Gondhcauparī sabhā*. One common myth is that the king's practice of *Rājāsuyā*

yagñā or a ritual method conducted for the wellbeing of his people later came to be adopted by the common man in the form of *Vāsudeva* worship. Another myth claims that sage Parashuram performed *Nidhanyajñā* in Kurukshetra to erase the Kshatriyās. On being advised, Vasudev, *Lord Kṛṣṇa's* father worshipped his son. Vasudev's ritualistic act was later taken up as *Vāsudeva* (*Kṛṣṇa's* another name) *pujā* by others. The scholars of Kashi Benaras claim that the Vedic mantras of Darrang's *Vāsudeva* worship have much in common with the *Rājāsuyā yagñā mantras* (121-127). Priest Achyutananda Sarma stated during field work undertaken for the present research that the worship of *Lord Vāsudeva* is conducted following Tantric methods. However, B.M. Goswami opines that Vedic as well as *Paurānic* modes are employed in the worship of *Vāsudeva* (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 56).

The ritualistic design of a *Gondhcauparī sabhā* has strict plans religiously followed. The main tent-like structure called *Rabhā* is the first requirement. Earlier the *Rabhā* was built using natural products such as banana stems and leaves, coconut tree leaves etc. However, the structure is seen built today with modern synthetic products such as plastic sheets and iron trusts. Within the *Rabhā* the sanctum sanctorum is placed towards the east and the priest is required to face toward it. The *Ojāpāli* troupe, on the other hand, usually sits facing north and the audience on either side (Fig.11: SABHĀ, Pic 1 - Sabhā Mandap). Within the *Rabhā*, arrangements are made for a special seat of the *Gurujan* or the spiritual mentor provided the *Sabhā* is organized within a Neo-Vaishnavite *Nāmghar* (prayer hall) premise. The entrance route of the *Rabhā* is adorned with banana saplings while lamps called *Bar-bhot* or *Bar-pradīp* are kept lit throughout the night in the passage (Fig.12: SABHĀ, Pic 2 – Bar-bhot / SABHĀ, Vid 1a – Multiple bhots in gondh). These bhots are circumbulated around the *Rabhā* before keeping them in the entrance and passage (SABHĀ, Vid 1b – Procession with multiple bhots). The tradition of lighting lamps overnight has its roots in the belief that the light wards off the darkness which is symbolically held to represent negative human propensities. In front of the *Rabhā*, a smaller structure called *Pujā mandap* is constructed. It is inside the *Pujā mandap* that the ritual is carried out (Fig.13: SABHĀ, Pic 3 – Pujā Mandap). The structure is closed with banana tree posts on three sides while the roof is made with banana sheaths (SABHĀ,

Vid 2 – Gondh preparation). Inside the *Mandap*, an earthen altar is prepared. The *Sarbatabhadrā Mandal*- esoteric diagram pertaining to *Lord Vāsudeva* – is drawn on the altar with varied coloured powder (Fig.14: SABHĀ, Pic 4a – Sarbatabhadrā Mandal/ Fig.15: SABHĀ, Pic 4b – Sarbatabhadrā Mandal). Four banana saplings are placed on the four sides of the altar and barring the front, three sides are enclosed by white cotton threads or a piece of white cloth. A *Candratāp* (canopy) is fixed above the altar and a *Cowar* – whisk made of yak’s tail - is hung from its centre. Most importantly, the *Ghat* (ceremonial pot) to be consecrated is placed on the altar (Fig.16: SĀBHĀ, Pic 5a – Baldevpara Śiva Mandir/ Fig.17: SĀBHĀ, Pic 5b – Patgirichuba Namghar). As already seen, a *Gondhcauparī sabhā* is a two-day event. The first day acts as a precursor to the main ritual held the second day. As the *sabhā* begins, the ritual of *Adhibās* is carried out. This ritual involves the worship of *Lord Śiva* at the outset. This is followed by the consecration of the pot in which the primary deity *Lord Vāsudeva* is invoked (*Ghatssthāpan*) (SABHĀ, Vid 3a – Ritual in gondh). Following the worship of the five primordial deities (*Pañca Devatā*), the priest meditates on the form of *Vāsudeva* and establishes the form in the pot. Apart from this, different forms of *Viṣṇu* such as *Nārāyana*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha* are also held up as subjects for ritualistic prayers along with the goddesses *Lakshmi* and *Saraswati*. It is in be noted that the nine planets (*Navagrahas*) are also worshipped during *Adhibās*.

It has been already mentioned that *Gondh* or fragrance is the primary essence of a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*. As a matter of fact, the terms ‘*Adhibās*’ and ‘*Gondh*’ are used interchangeably because during the ritual of *Adhibās*, considerable importance is attached to the use of fragrant oils and sweet-smelling garlands. According to B. Sarma, in *Eporiā sabhā* there is no *Gondh* (Sarma, B. K., 2005, 133). However, Priest Achyutananda Sarma states that *Gondh* or *Adhibās* is present though not as elaborate and also that the *Ojāpāli* do not sing *Adhibāsar gits* since the *Sabhās* other than *Gondhcauparī* continues for shorter duration (field note 16/26.08.18). Though B.K. Sarma states that there is no *Homa* in *Ādcauparī Sabhā*, according to *Dāināpāli* Hareswar Kalita, *Homa* is performed and the *Ojāpālis* too sing the *Homar gīts* (133) / (field note 18/26.08.18).

GĪTS PERFORMED WITHIN A GONDHCAUPARĪ SABHĀ		
(Day 1): Ritual gīts during Adhibās		
Adhibāsar gīts	Kṛṣṇar and Śivar bandana gīts	Mālcī gīts
(Day 1): Overnight performance		
Stage I – Huṁkār and Gurubandanā Stage II – Pātani Stage III – Viṣṇu pada and Daśāvatāra dance (Kathopakathan and Rabhār janma) Stage IV – Sangītālāp Stage V – Mīśra gīts		
(Day 2): Ritual gīts during Homa		
Homar gīts	Kṛṣṇar and Śivar bandana gīts	Mālcī gīts
(Day 2): Evening performance		
Stage I – Huṁkār and Gurubandanā Stage III – Viṣṇu pada and Daśāvatāra dance Stage IV – Sangītālāp Stage V – Mīśra gīts (ending with Sāmarāṇi gīt)		

As the rituals progress, the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performers sing the *Gondhar gīts* (*adhibāsar gīts*) along with *Gīts* in praise of *Lord Kṛṣṇa* and *Śiva* alongside the ritual of *Gondh* as conducted by the priest. (Fig.18: SĀBHĀ, Pic 6 – Adhibāsar gīts by Ojāpāli / SABHĀ, Vid 3b – Ojāpāli in gondh). All the three *Adhibāsar gīts* bestow precise importance to the subject of *Gondh* or fragrance to make the ritualistic theme appear bolder and sharper. The *Adhibās* sees the inclusion of other *gīts* such as *Kṛṣṇar gīts* and *Śivar gīts*. These *gīts* involve a thorough glorification of the images of *Lord Kṛṣṇa* and *Lord Śiva* respectively. A different variety of *Gīts* called *Mālcī gīts* are given place within the performance regime assisting the *Adhibās* on the condition that special provisions have been made

within the ritualistic design of *Adhibās* for a special appraisal of the *Devī* or the goddess. With the end of *Adhibās*, fragrant substances are sprayed across the premise and the gathered people join for a community feast. The audience again assemble in the evening to enjoy the rich spectacular *Ojāpāli* music as the performers stage a concert that lasts till dawn (SABHĀ, Vid 3c – Evening performance – Day 1).

The overnight performance comprises different stages which can be considered to lay forth the defining musical content of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* system. Of the five stages, the first three stages namely *Humkār* and *Gurubandanā*, *Pātani* and *Viṣṇu pada*, are together called *Gurumandalī* or *Gaid*. The *Ojā*'s act of tying the *Nepūr* - (pair of anklets) on stage signals the commencement of the recital. Immediately the *Humkār* follows which is simply a static repetition of syllables. The actual music starts with *Gurubandanā* which is believed to be bound in a *Rāga* (a melodic framework in Indian music with set ascending and descending patterns). The *Gurubandanā* has two *Thāks* (loosely understood as sections). The non-metrical format of *Gurubandanā* is sustained into the stage of *Pātani*. *Pātani* is a stage lasting relatively longer as within itself it comprises different systematic steps namely *Ghunni*, *Pāli rāga*, *Śloka by Ojā*, *Śloka by Pāli* and lastly *Pātani gīt*. The prime charm of *Gurumandalī* rests in the *Pātani* as it sees the elaborate treatment of a selected *Rāga*. Moreover, *Pātani gīt* brings in, for the first time, the disciplined role of the cymbals and the performance achieves a definite momentum. The stage of *Viṣṇu pada* is specially marked for the *Daśāvatāra* (ten incarnations of *Lord Viṣṇu*) dance as presented by the *Ojā*. The overall performance turns more electrifying at this stage as the musical momentum is supported by spectacular dance moves. *Viṣṇu pada* involves three essential parts – *Dihā*, *Rāga* and *Pada*. The end of *Gurumandalī* is, however, not located at *Viṣṇu pada*'s rendition but at *Kathopakathan* followed by *Rabhār janma*. *Kathopakathan* acts as an interlude and involves humorous conversation between the *Ojā* and the *Dāināpāli*. *Rabhār janma* is a ballad that tells the origin of the *Rabhā* or the structure within which the ritual is conducted.

The fourth stage of *Sangitālap* is a rich body of the most defining materials of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music. It begins with what is called a *Bānā*, which involves a *Rāga* rendition. After the compulsory singing of the *Bānā*, *Ākhyāns* and *Rāga-*

bānās follow. The *Ākhyāns* are elaborate musical pieces which treat a scriptural tale. There are different types of *Ākhyāns* which are categorized according to the meter used in the verse text. Generally, the musical composition of an *Ākhyān* is found to possess a fixed number of movements. A *Rāga-bānā* like the *Bānā* is nothing but systematic treatment of a *Rāga*. However, a *Rāga-bānā*'s structure bears little difference from that of the *Bānā*'s since the latter is found to omit a few initial parts which together account for the composition as a whole. As a matter of fact, a *Rāga-bānā* is a composite body of seven parts - *Humkār*, *Ghunni*, *Tolani*, *Mālitā*, *Caran*, *Dhurā* and *Bandhā dihā*.

The last stage of the recital is marked by the presentation of a mass of *Misra gīts* or varied songs. Within *Misra gīts* come different categories of songs such as *Jhunā gīts*, *Kabirar gīt'*, *Bāramāhi gīts*, *Durgābarī gīts*, *Puweli gīts*, *Sāmarāṇi gīts*. *Jhunā gīts* further involve *Kṛṣṇa jhunās* and *Śiva jhunās* which are classified according to the deity treated in the textual content of the *Gīts*. The first day evening performance ultimately closes with the *Puweli gīt* as it is a special variety of song meant only to be sung at the dawn. At the break of dawn, *Puweli gīts* are rendered and the recital closes with it.

On the second day, the actual ritual involving the worship of *Lord Vāsudeva* invoked the previous day is performed. The morning begins with collection of water from a nearby pond or river to be used in the ritual. Interestingly, the group of people setting out for the water is accompanied by a few *Suknānni* and not *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* artists. The singers sing the *Pānitōlā Dihā* while playing the *Jay dhol* (a kind of drum) and the *Khutitāl* (cymbals). (SABHĀ, Vid 4a – Pāni Tolā/ SABHĀ, Vid 4b – Suknānni Ojāpāli during Pāni Tolā). While at the *Mandap*, the priest starts the main ritual stage, that is, *Homa*. *Homa* is the name for the sacrificial fire for which the priest at the very outset circumbulates the *Mandap* holding the firewood (Fig.19: SABHĀ, Pic 7a – Place of Homa / Fig.20: SABHĀ, Pic 7b – Homa Kunda / SABHĀ, Vid 5 – Pradakṣin). It can be noted in passing that a practice of igniting the fire using the sunrays with the help of a magnifying glass is found during field study (Fig.21: SABHĀ, Pic 8 – Magnifying glass/ SABHĀ, Vid 6 – Agni Āhban – Day 2).

As the priestly activities are being carried out, the *Ojāpālis* offer assistance by singing content-based *Homar gīts* and some etiological ballads pertaining to the

ingredients crucial for the ritual such as mango tree, betel nut and the *Rabhā* itself (SABHĀ, Vid 7 – Vāsudeva Homa/ SABHĀ, Vid 8 – Homar Gīt by *Ojāpāli*). *Kṛṣṇa* or *Śivar gīts* are rendered if time permits or if the audience requests to hear such *Gīts*. *Mālcī gīts* are made a part of the *Ojāpāli* performance provided a special offering is made to the goddess. This stands same to the morning ritual of both the days.

The evening performance is similar in all methods and technicalities to that staged the previous day. However, due to the restriction of time certain materials are dropped from the prescribed sequence (SABHĀ, Vid 9 – Evening performance – Day 2). Unlike day one, the recital this time ends with the *Sāmarāṇi gīt* (*‘Sāmarāṇi’* here means to conclude) which indicate the total closure of the *Sabhā* itself (SABHĀ, Vid 10 – *Sāmarāṇi Gīt*).

1.5.2 The ritual of Jāgar:

Jāgar is a ritual with an elaborate prescription of events which is directed primarily towards awakening a chosen deity. An ancient ritual product, the subject of *Jāgar* befits the present context of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* since *Ojāpāli* participation is indispensable to the entire event. What is, however, interesting to note is that the special class of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* are separately categorized because of its exclusive engagement with *Jāgar*. This class is specifically denoted as *Jāgar-gowā Biyāhar Ojāpāli*. One of the most characteristic features of such an *Ojāpāli* is the *Mudrā yantra* or a special metallic object with tantric connotations held by the *Ojā*.

Vedacharya mentions *Viṣṇu Jāgar* in the text *Smritiratnakar*. Similarly, reference to the *Śiva Jāgar* and the *Devī Jāgar* are found in the texts *Devi Purana* and *Kalikapurana* respectively. The word ‘*Jāgar*’ has originated from the term ‘*Jāg*’ or ‘*Jāgaran*’ which implies awakening a deity from the state of slumber (Sarma, N.C., 1996, 112). Atul Chandra Barua also mentions that *Jāgar* has its origin in the act of awakening the specific deity meant to be worshipped (Barua, A.C., 1974, 898). Additionally, its origin has been linked to the Sanskrit word ‘*Jāgriti*’ and the language used in *Jāgar* gīts is also found to be heavily influenced by Sanskrit (Rajbonshi, P., 1997, 154). The active-bearers of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* hold the opinion that the *Jāgar* festival can be traced back to *Markandeya Puran*

(Goswami, B.M., 1997, 132). The *Jāgar* festival is conducted in the Ardhanariswar temple at Patidarrang, Rudreswar Devalaya of Maheripara and in the temple of Tamreswar (Sarma, B., 2003, 71). In the Ardhanariswar temple at Patidarrang, *Jāgar* ritual is performed on the *Sankrānti* (the day when the sun shifts from one constellation to another) of the Assamese month of *Jeth* (15th of May to 14th of June) and *Āhār* (15th of June to 14th of July). In the Rudreswar Devalaya, it is performed on the *Sankrānti* (last day of a month and beginning of the next) of the Assamese months of *Kāti* (15th of October to 14th of November) and *Āghun* (15th of November to 14th of December). Initially, it was performed only in the Royal Palace (*Rāj Howli*). Later, it was also held in the households of the *Jāgar-gowā* *Biyāh Ojās* as well as at the temples mentioned above. Even today, this ritual is performed in the *Rāj Howli* in association with the worship of goddess *Durgā*. *Jāgar* emerged as a complete ritualistic form under the patronage of the Koch King Raghunarayan of Darrang.

A myth pertaining to the origin of *Jāgar* worship in the Ardhanariswar temple states that Nayana Rajan Vidyanidhi, a Brahmin, witnessed his cow giving milk on a *Śiva linga* (a sacred structure personifying Lord Śiva) in the woods. Following this, he was instructed in his dreams to establish that *Śiva linga* for people to worship. When King Raghunarayan heard about this, he had a temple constructed in that specific area. He further settled a village there named Darrang Maddhya which is now known as Patidarrang. In his dream, the king was instructed by *Lord Śiva* to arrange for a festival at a specific time of the year in that place (Rajbonshi, P., 1997, 153-154). Another myth, in relation to *Jāgar*, states that in every *Jāgar* ritual at Patidarrang, a silver-gold boat would appear on the bank of the pond beside the Ardhanariswar temple carrying all the essential utensils required for the ritual. The local residents paid reverence by lighting lamps and burning incense sticks. Following the ritual, those utensils were again loaded on the boat with due respect and gratitude after which the boat would then immerse under the water. The boat was never to be seen again when once a few utensils were stolen. (*JĀGAR*, Vid 1 – Myth 1.50-2.50 minutes) (field note 29/15.06.18). Locals believe that *Jāgar* gīts can fulfil wishes like protection from epidemics, misfortunes and dangers and provide blessings for progeny (Sarma, B. K., 2005, 229-235).

As mentioned, the *Jāgar* ritual is performed in the Ardhanariswar temple in Patidarrang on the day of *Sankrānti*, between the months of *Jeth* and *Āhār*. During fieldwork it was observed that a photograph of *Ardhanārīswar Śiva* was placed in the Sanctum Sanctorium inside the temple (Fig.22: JĀGAR, Pic 1 – Ardhanārīswar Śiva photo). The priest informed that the *Śiva linga* is present beneath the surface which was covered by a piece of red cloth. The ritual is performed according to local religious beliefs as well as rules laid down in scriptures. The common man, however, considers *Jāgar Pujā* as the establishment of marital bond between *Śiva* and *Pārvati* (230). In Darrang, the *Jāgar* ritual is performed according to the rules laid down in the *Smritiratnakar* by Vedacharya (Sarma, B. K., 2005, 228). According to informant Akshay Kumar Deva Sarma of Patidarrang only the Brahmins belonging to the *Sāndilya gotra* (clan) are allowed to perform the *Jāgar* in the Ardhanariswar temple at Patidarrang (JĀGAR, Vid 1b – Gotra 1.30-1.50 minutes). The participation of *Jāgar-gowā Biyāh Ojāpāli* is mandatory in the *Jāgar* ritual but only *Ojāpāli* from the village of Vyaspara are allowed for the same (JĀGAR, Vid 1c – Byāspārā 4.05-4.24 minutes).

The main events before the ritual proper include *Jethuwā Nām* or choral devotional songs and *Mālcī gīts* recited daily throughout the entire month of *Jeth* by the local residents. Lamps are lit on the bank of the nearby pond in the evening prior to the ritual day proper as mentioned earlier. In the morning of the day of the *Jāgar*, water is collected from that pond to be used for the worship and lamps are lit and kept afloat. The ritual proper starts with the *Ghāi* (main) *Pujā* worshipping goddess *Caṇḍī*. This is known as *Ghāi Jāgar* (Fig.23: JĀGAR, Pic 2 – Ghāi puḷā / JĀGAR, Vid 2 – Ghāi puḷā). During this time the *Ojā* submits his *Mudrā* or *mudurā* to the priest who places it in the altar for consecration (*Suddhi*) with particular chants or *mantras*.

The *Mudrā*, a metallic object held by the *Ojā* in his hand during performance, is an indispensable part of the *Jāgar* ritual. According to the informant Barun Sarma *Ojā* of Byāspara, the *Ojā* has to bring his own *Mudrā* from the altar of his household temple for the ritual in Patidarrang but the Maheripara Rudreswar Devalaya (temple) has its own *Mudrā* and the *Ojā* need not carry his own for the ritual. The *Mudrā* is placed in the altar while the *Ghāi puḷā* is performed (Fig.24: JĀGAR, Pic 3 – Mudrā in the altar / JĀGAR, Vid 3a – Mudrā in the altar). Later

it is brought out (JĀGAR, Vid 3b – Mudrā outside the altar) and kept along with the general offerings under the shed attached to the sanctum sanctorum (Fig.25: JĀGAR, Pic 4 – Mudrā outside the altar).

The main homa (the sacrificial fire) is known as the *Ghāi homa* which follows the *Ghāi pujā* (Fig.26: JĀGAR, Pic 5 – Ghāi homa / JĀGAR, Vid 4 – Ghāi homa). In ancient times, as many as one thousand homas accompanied the main ritual which attracted a huge assemblance of people (Sarma, B. N., 2001, 38). The womenfolk sit by the side and sing *Nām* (devotional songs) (JĀGAR, Vid 5 – Nām during ritual). Another priest sits outside and recites verses in praise of *Lord Śiva* from the scriptures (JĀGAR, Vid 8 – Priest reciting verses/ Fig.29: JĀGAR, Pic 8 – Priest reciting verses). Meanwhile, the *Ojāpāli* team sits outside the Sanctum Sanctorium and sings the *Mālcī gīts* as well as *Śivar gīts (Jhunā)* with the accompanying *Khuti tāla* (JĀGAR, Vid 7 – Mālcī gīt / Fig.28: JĀGAR, Pic 7 – Mālcī gīt). However, they do not wear their usual performing costume here.

This is followed by the *Pāli pujās* or *Pāliā Jāgar*. *Pāli pujās*, sponsored by individual families, are similar to the *Ghāi pujā* but smaller and multiple (Fig.27: JĀGAR, Pic 6 – Pāli pujā / JĀGAR, Vid 6 – Pāli pujā). *Pāli homas* (smaller size sacrificial fire) are performed serially in a row in the shaded space outside during which the *Ojāpāli* sings the *Homar gīt* (Fig.30: JĀGAR, Pic 9 – Pāli homa / JĀGAR, Vid 9 – Pāli homa) (JĀGAR, Vid 10 – Homar gīt). It was observed that ten *Pāli homas* were being simultaneously performed during the *Jāgar* ritual on the 15th of June, 2018 in Patidarrang. As the *Pāli homas* end, the devotees offer *Anjali* (Fig.31: JĀGAR, Pic 10a – Anjali) (flower offering) to the deity and they in turn receive flowers and *Bilva* leaves from the altar as a form of blessing (*Nirmāli*). Finally, people who had been performing the month long *Jethuwa nām* perform *nām* once more along with distribution of food offerings (*Prasād*) given to the deity. This signals the end of the morning session. It was also observed that during the course of the ritual, light snacks were served to the public who had come to offer their prayers and witness the rituals (15th June 2018, Patidarrang, self).

The evening session starts with the *Ojāpāli*, now in their performance costume with the *Ojā* holding the *Mudrā*, performing the stages of *Jāgar Pātā*. (JĀGAR,

Vid 11 – Jāgar Pātā / Fig.32 : JĀGAR, Pic 10b – Jāgar Pātā) During *Jāgar Pātā* they perform the *Jāgar gīts* comprising the birth of *Jāgar* festival and birth of *Mudrā*, birth of *Raga* and also the worship of goddess *Saraswati*, *Lord Ganesh* and other deities (Saharia, K. C., 2007, 25). The *Ojāpāli* then sings *Mālcī gīts* while demonstrating the characteristic dance movements and stylistics of singing. The session ends here and the *Ojā* places the *Mudrā* back (JĀGAR, Vid 12 – *Mālcī gīt*). It is the prerogative of the *Jāgar-gowā Ojā* to invoke all the deities for the ritual and, at the end of the ritual, bid farewell to the deities next morning.

After a short break, the *Ojāpāli* begins their overnight performance as a means of appeasement of the invoked deities. The *Guru Bandāna*, *Viṣṇu Rāga* along with the *Daśāvātāra* dance is followed by the *Ākhyāns (Kāhini gīts)* and *Rāga*. This performance is similar to a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance within a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*. The *Ojā* then holds the *Mudrā* again and performs the *Gosāni thān bidāi* – bidding farewell to the goddess. One or two *Mālcī gīts* are followed by the *Puweli gīt* at dawn. The performance ends with the *Sāmarāṇi Gīt*.

As mentioned earlier, the *Mudrā* or *Mudurā* (Fig.33: JĀGAR, Pic 11 – *Mudrā*) is an indispensable part of the *Jāgar* ritual and is held by the *Ojā* in his hand during the *Ojāpāli* performance. In many parts of India, kings used to give gold *Mudrās* resembling *Lord Indra's* weapon *Vajrā*, to poets and musicians as a symbol recognizing their proficiency in arts. This, according to N.C. Sarma, may also apply to the kings of Darrang who gave *Mudrās* to *Ojāpālis* or men proficient in music and dance. It is also believed that the *Mudrā* might have had its origin in Bhutan and had later been brought to Assam. The Bhutanese called this *Mānipemā* or *Mahāmuni* (Fig.34: JĀGAR, Pic 12 – Bhutanese *Mānipemā*) (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 81). It is commonly believed that the *Kalāis* (expert musicians) in the ancient times used to perform holding these *Mudrās* in the Kamakhya temple. There is another *Mudrā* known as *Rāngeli Khāti* where the term '*Rāngeli*' indicates the colour red (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 83).

1.5.3 The ritual of worship of the goddess:

The worship of the goddess in forms like *Durgā*, *Jagadhātri* and *Kāli* is practised in different times of the year in various parts of Assam. In Darrang, this practice was very popular especially in the *Raj Howli* of the Koch Kings. Even today, it is practiced, but without much grandeur, in Mohanpur *Raj howli* and Nau Howli (Fig. 35, 36, 37: MISC, Pic 1-3 – Nau Raj Howli Durga Puja / MISC, Vid 1 – Ritual in Raj Howli), Vyaspara Durga than (Durga temple) and in other temples and community fields. According to *Jāgar-Gowā Ojā* Barun Sarma, the ritual of *Jāgar Pātā* by the *Ojāpāli* is practised only in Mohanpur *Raj howli*, Nau Howli (MISC, Vid 2 – Ojāpāli at Raj Howli) and in Vyaspara Durga than. In other places, during the worship of the goddess, only the *Ojāpāli* perform as in a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*.

1.5.4 Miscellaneous occasions:

The worship of *Lord Vāsudeva* and the associated *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance is also seen along with rites of passage like marriage, the Hindu ritual of *Upanayana* and death rituals (*Śrāddha*). Depending on the ritual performed by the priest, the *Ojāpāli* sings the *Adhibāsar gīts* and *Homar gīts*, followed by an evening or overnight performance. Even though Raghunandan of Bengal (15th century) introduced the worship of *Lord Viṣṇu* (53) instead of *Lord Vāsudeva* in death rituals, the practice of worship of *Lord Vāsudeva* along with these rites persists even today in Darrang. The Brahmins following the old customs are known as *Prācin panthīs* though they do include the worship of *Lord Viṣṇu* nowadays.

As expected, the government takes advantage of the popularity of *Ojāpāli* in the introduction of awareness programs. Some of these are awareness regarding AIDS, importance of using urea as a fertilizer, the necessity of drinking ORS in diarrhoea especially among children and most recently, taking precaution during the Covid-19 pandemic (MISC, Audio 1 – Public awareness program BGO / MISC, Audio 2 – Public awareness program suknāni ojāpāli). The *Ojāpāli* performs newly composed verses in relation to the message it needs to convey to the masses especially in remote areas. The government has also made arrangements for rehabilitation of prison inmates in Mangaldai through training

programmes under Ojā Tirtha Nath. The *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is also gradually making its presence felt in the proscenium. (MISC, Vid 3 – Performance on stage / Fig. 38: MISC, Pic 4 – Performance on stage). Though they enjoy the freedom to decide what they want to showcase, they always start the performance with the *Humkār* as an obeisance to their teacher or *Guru*. They have self-imposed restrictions in performing the *Gīts* associated with the rituals.

1.6 Introduction to music (Sangīt):

To form a well grounded opinion of the various *Gīts* of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* it is deemed important to briefly deal first with the history of music in India in general and Assam in particular and also throw light on the music and tradition of *Kathakatā* since therein lies the roots of the artistic construct of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*.

1.6.1 History of music in India and Assam

Sangit Ratnakar, one of the definitive texts of Indian classical music, describes *Sangīt* or music as—‘*Geetam vādyam tathā nṛtyām sangītamuchyate*’, or ‘*Sangīt*’ is the amalgamated form of song, dance and musical instruments (Vasant, 1994, 33). A host of theories and beliefs revolve around the origination of Indian music. Many ancient scholars regard music to be a creation of *Brahma*, one of the major Gods of Hinduism.

Damodar Pandit, who wrote *Sangit Darpan*, on the other hand, held the musical notes to have emerged from different birds and animals. For example, *Shadaj* (first note of one octave) from peacock (Vasant 1994, 12-13). Apart from such beliefs, the solid historicity of Indian music has been located in the *Sāma vedā* (one of the four vedās or religious texts of ancient India). The Vedic period roughly ranging from 4500 BC to 2500 BC saw after it the emergence of many important texts like *Natyasastra*, *Sangīt Makaranda*, etc. which established the tangible guidelines regulating the Indian musical system. The advance of Buddhism in the 10th century CE and later in the Middle Ages saw the surfacing of such eminent scholars like Sarangdeva, Ahobal, etc. and musicians like Swami Haridas, Tansen etc. gave Indian music a definite direction. The Bhakti movement

made its own contribution from the 15th to 17th century CE while the Mughal period ran parallel to it and shaped Indian music in its own way.

The antiquity of Assamese music is evident in such episodes of *Bhagavata Puran* where the daughter of Banasura, (an asura king in Hindu mythology) Usha could bring her beloved Aniruddha (*Lord Kṛṣṇa's* grandson) to Sonitpur (district in Assam) with the help of the mesmerizing musical talent of her friend Chitrlekha. The already mentioned text of *Natyashastra* also specially mentions the music of the north-eastern part of India (Goswami, B. M., 1997, 21). Hiuen Tsang (Chinese traveller) of 7th century AD also mentioned in his notes the unique music of Assam. The Buddhist *Caryapadas* and later the Sankarite music made their own contributions to the growth of *Raga-music*. B.M.Goswami mentions “The *Rati-śāstra* mentions that women of Kāmarūpa are skilful in the arts of *gīta* and *vādyā*” (20). *Srihastamuktavali* by Shubhankar on hand gestures (*Hasta Mudrās*) is considered an important text for music belonging to the eastern tradition of India. Assamese music, however, is a rich treasure-house of folk songs and these hold the singular quality of the music enriching the land of Assam.

1.6.2 Music and the tradition of Kathakatā:

The richness of Indian music is plainly expressive in its ancient nature. There is no doubt that the variety and intricacies establishing the exquisiteness of Indian music have developed through many centuries. Music has not been simply a tool of entertainment. It has been employed to fulfill different other purposes pertaining, for example, to religion and mass awakening. One big instance of music being used for religious teachings keeping in mind the inherent element of pleasure and entertainment in it is the tradition of *Kathakatā* which flourished throughout the country. *Kathakatā*, as already seen, involved a musical presentation of episodes from scriptures so that the common mass can indulge in religious learning in a more entertaining manner. The local colour added to the *Kathakatā* style in different parts of the country is also well discernible. Assam, too, imbibed regional attributes to such a tradition and *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, as already marked, seems to be the outcome. Adopting the defining habits of *Kathakatā*, *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* has an established band format with the *Ojā* as the head and the *Pālis* or other members as assistants. Music, understood in its wholistic form, that is involving singing, dancing and playing instruments, is

primarily used as an effective medium to assist ritualistic practice while also imparting religious knowledge and delivering pure entertainment. The *Gīts* or songs forming the body of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music are reflective of a richness derived from different musical strands popular in a particular age. For example, while *Kathakatā* offered one direction, *Mārg sangīt* (or simply Indian classical music) and also music unique to the land of Assam seem quite possibly to shape the individual character of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music. It is this tendency to bring in material from variant sectors that has resulted in the singular musical nature of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* which speaks of great variety and the ensuing exquisiteness.

1.6.3 Introduction to the Gīts of Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli:

That *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is an ancient artistic system has already been discussed. Considering its antiquity, it can be safely held that through many centuries, the art form must have adopted performance substance from other accessible methods prevailing in one particular era and also have adapted to the changing trends witnessed in the socio-cultural front. As a matter of fact, the system of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* has been exposed to and thereby shaped equally by Tantrism and Vaishnavism / Neo-Vaishnavism. While a performance move like *Humkār* reflects a strict tantric regime, the surfacing of *Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa* element signifies Vaishnavite influence and lavish inclusion singularly of *Kṛṣṇa* element among other things denotes the stronghold of Neo-Vaishnavism. The *Rāga* system within the art form also displays a voyage through time. The name of many *Rāga-bānās* tally with those included in Buddhist *Caryapadas* (10th century A.D.). Later, the classification of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāgas* according to *the Rāga-rāgini* system marks a primary medievalistic tendency within the north-Indian classical system of music.

A specific performance material like *Gurubandanā*, where the *Guru* or mentor is meditated upon speaks of *Guru-śiṣya paramparā* or the ancient mentor-protégé system of learning in India. The incorporation of a *Pātani gīt* is believed to have taken place in the seventeenth century during the reign of the Koch kings. Similarly, the fifth stage of performance comprising of *Miśra gīts* kept on including materials at different points in history under diverse influences. For example, *Durgābarī gīts* became popular as a musical matter of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* possibly from the sixteenth century onwards as it is the poet Durgabar

Kayastha (1515-1560) whose works are musically treated by the *Ojāpāli*. Similarly, *Kabirar gīts* are believed to be based on the poetry of the mystic poet Kabir who lived in the 15th-century.

The poetry chosen in *Ākhyāns* have seen change with time as the Sanskrit verses of Vyasdeva's *Mahabharata* came to be replaced with the Assamese version written by Rama Saraswati dating back to the 16th century. A similar shift from Sanskrit to vernacular poetry is also marked in *Viṣṇu pada*. Originally, poet Jaidev's Sanskrit *Ślokas* had been subjected to a musical treatment but later Assamese verses came to be used by the *Ojāpālis*. All this sufficiently support the fact that *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* has been continuously evolving through adaptations and assimilations.

Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli gives us a complete picture of *Sangīt*. It is considered a *Panchānga sangīt* genre, i.e., there are usually five parts or *Angas* to every aspect comprising its complete structure. For instance, it is mentioned that there are five sequential stages of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance (namely, *Gurubandanā*, *Pātani gīt*, *Viṣṇu pada*, *Sangītālāp*, and *Jhunā*), five kinds of *Tālas* used (namely, *Cab tāla*, *Coutāla*, *Jikirī or Jikari tāla*, *Lecāri tāla* and *Thokā tāla*), five kinds of musical elements (namely, *Rāga*, *Mālita*, *Dihā*, *Calanā* and *Pada*) (*Ojā*, D. N., 1989, 30-31).

A study of the performance of *Ojāpāli* would, therefore, make it mandatory for a scholar to conduct a detailed analysis of the broad musical structure involved in it.

1.7 Review of literature:

There are three major works written on *Ojāpāli* till date – Nabin Chandra Sarma's *Asamar Ojāpāli* (1991) and *Asamar Paribeshya Kalā Ojāpāli* (1996) and Bhriugu Mohan Goswami's *A Study of the Ojāpāli art form of Assam* (1997). In these works, the dance and the music of *Ojāpāli* has been handled in individual chapters. They offer some detail regarding the performance aspect of *Ojāpāli* in comparison to the other available literature. To a large extent, these texts can be followed as reliable guides to understand the general aspects of *Ojāpāli* and can very well be considered as foundational works. With the help of these, as well as the information collected from the active bearers of the art form through field

study, a detailed research on the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance can be successfully attempted.

The articles “Manasā Pujā āru Ojāpāli” (1974), “Suknānir Ojāpāli – āleksya” (1974), “Ojāpāli: its different types and functions” (1982), “Biyāhar Ojāpāli” (1974), “Ojāpāli gitanusthanat bahiragata prabhav” (1974) and “Biyāhar Ojāpāli – āleksya” (1974) provide detailed accounts of the ritual of *Vāsudeva puḷā* and *Manasā puḷā* associated with *Biyāh-gowā* and *Suknānni Ojāpāli* respectively. They also elaborate the important role *Ojāpāli* plays during the rituals. The two features (*Āleksyas*) mentioned state the performance sequence of both forms of *Ojāpāli*. These articles also throw light on the antiquity of *Ojāpāli* as well as on some socio-historical background within which *Ojāpāli* evolved in medieval Assam. Yet this information is limited and forms only the platform upon which the performance of *Ojāpāli* can be further elaborately studied with special reference to its music.

The following two texts deal with the performance of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* and also include the verses sung. Even though *Byās- Sangītar Ruprekḥā* (1989) by Durgeswar Nath Ojā deals with the various stages of performance, the information provided in relation to its music is not all exhaustive. *Byās Sangīt Sangrah* (2014) compiled by Shobharam Hazarika mainly touches upon an introduction on various aspects of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. The remainder of the text includes many of the verses that are sung.

A broad overview of the sequence of performance, names of the *Rāgas*, rhythms played in the cymbals and names of the various physical representations such as dance steps, eye movements, hand gestures used in both forms, *Biyāh-gowā* and *Suknānni Ojāpāli* is obtained in a good number of books and articles. It is to be noted here that the following texts document identical features regarding the performance aspects of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. Hence it has not been considered necessary to describe at length each of the following texts. Some of the references include M. Neog and K. Changkakati’s *Satriyā Nritya āru Satriyā Nrityar Tāl* (1975) M. Neog’s *Tradition and Style* published in 2011, N. C. Sarma and K. C, Saharia’s edited volume entitled *Asamar Sanskriti Samikshya*, published in the year 2000, D. N. Ojā’s “Mangaldair Biyāh Gīt: Ojāpāli” (2003), R.K. Baruah’s

“Mangaldair Suknāni Ojāpāli” (2003) are two other research articles that also depict identical features. Articles in *Darangar Samāj Sanskritir Swarnarekhā* (2013) do not include details regarding the *Sangīt* of *Ojāpāli*. For example, N. C. Sarma’s, “Mangaldai Ojāpāli aru Deodhāni” (2013) and A.C. Barua’s “Mangaldair Manasā Pujā āru Suknānni Ojāpāli” (2013).

References regarding the performance patterns of *Ojāpāli* in the *Jāgar* ritual are minimal and have been found scattered in the articles mentioned here: P. Rajbonshi’s “Darangar Sanskritir Amulya Sampad Biyāh-gowā Sangitar Anyatam Jāgar” (1997), B. Sarma’s 2003 article “Jāgarar Mudrā Aru Mālaci Gīt” and B. Sarma’s “Darangar Mālaci Gīt” (2001).

The following article mentions that *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance is a highly evolved classical art form. It also states that Maheswar Neog and Nabin Chandra Sarma have discussed *Ojāpāli* within a folk platform but as having classical affiliations as well: Saharia, K.C. “Darangar Loka Nritya: Eti Samikshyā” (2001). In *Sur Parichay* and *Kamrupiyā Sangīt* (2011) by Kirti Nath Sarma Bordoloi and *Sangītar Dhārā* by Mukti Nath Sarma Bordoloi, (1965) the probable Bodo and Bodo-Aryan origins of the stylistics of singing in *Ojāpāli* are mentioned. However, they do not explore the same in detail.

In *Asamīyā Sangītar Aitihya* by Birendranath Dutta (2011), chapter four is devoted solely to *Ojāpāli sangīt* which includes a broad overview of the performance sequence: names of *Rāgas* sung, the different rhythms in *Khuti tāla* and verses of a few of the *Rāga mālītās* and others. This book serves as a reliable background to start further work on *Ojāpāli*.

Rinjumoni Sarma in *Asamīyā Dharmamulak Gīt* (2006) presents information in a tabular form regarding the *Rāgas* prevalent since the times of the *Caryāpadas*, *Ojāpāli*, *Bargīt* and *Nātor gīt* and *Rāgas* in post-Sankaradeva *gīt* and drama. This would provide valuable clues during the work on the *Rāgas* performed in *Ojāpāli*. In *Durgabar Kabir Biracita Manasā Kābya* (2017) Nabin Chandra Sarma mentions each specific *Rāga* associated with the singing of a specific verse of the text. No further details have been included as to how the *Rāgas* are sung. In S.Mahanta and B.K. Doley’s edited volume *Asamar Loka Nritya-Nātya Paramparar Gathan āru Paribeshya Kalā* (2017), a host of articles on *Ojāpāli* by

different authors are included but information regarding the details of the *Sangīt* of *Ojāpāli* is scarce.

S. Baruah's book *Ojāpāli, The Ancient Music Tradition of Assam, Its Application in Vaisnav Sattrā and Classical Elements* (2017) on *Ojāpāli* deals with the different types of *Ojāpāli* and also, to some extent, the musical aspect of the art form. It presents a few *Rāga Mālītās* and the musical notation of a *Gīt*. Though the book succeeds in providing some performance-related data, it cannot be considered a complete performance directive. The content of this book, thus, can be used as a basis for further research that is more detailed and all-encompassing.

Other texts reviewed that may be mentioned include S. Bharali's *Asamīyā Loka-Nātya Paramparā* (2000), N. C. Sarma's *Asamīyā Loka Sanskritir Ābhās* (2011), P. K. Nath's *Asamīyā Sahitya Sanskritir Ruprekḥā* (2017) and K. C. Saharia's, *Darangar Loka-Sāhityar Ruprekḥā* (2007).

It is observed that the available literature merely touches upon the performance methods involved in *Ojāpāli*. Many of the texts provide only the names of *Rāgas*, *Tālas* or the dance patterns. A few give a broad outline of the performance sequences, and only two texts have attempted to put into notation a peripheral part of the broad musical spectrum of *Ojāpāli*. So, it has been felt that it has become imperative that a detailed research be carried out to provide an elaborate guide for performing *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, so that the existing structural conditions of the art form are saved from manipulation and are maintained for all time to come.

1.8 Aim and Objectives of the study:

The aim of this study is to formulate from a performer-researcher's perspective, a detailed understanding of various *Gīts* of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* to help figure out a basic picture of the existing musical body of the art form. In order to properly place the main subject matter titled, '***Gīts of Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli: An expository study***', the following objectives have been outlined for the present study.

1) To identify and define the existing salient features of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* in the Darrang district of Assam.

- 2) To present the *Gīts* of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* with reference to their contexts, content and characteristics.
- 3) To attempt notational representations of the *Gīts* of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*.
- 4) To present transliterations of *Gīts* and explorations of *Tālas* of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*.
- 5) To note changes in the *Gīts* and other performance aspects of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*.

1.9 Methodology and structure:

The methodology of the study includes audio-visual documentation, observation and interviews that remain the primary part of the data used in the study. Conclusions have been derived from analyses of the content present in the data. Secondary sources in the form of texts form the supporting material in this study. All methods of documentation and collection of primary data were conducted between the year 2016 and 2022.

Collection of Data –

- a) Collection of primary data –
 - i. The research has entailed systematic documentation and keen observation of as many performances of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* as possible in varied relevant situations. These audio-visual recordings have enabled the researcher to peruse these multiple times in the course of the research.
 - ii. Interviews have been conducted and information collected from hierarchies of practitioners e.g. the *Ojā*, *Daināpāli*, *Pāli* etc. The contents of the interview have been analysed to arrive at a conclusion regarding the present status of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance.

- iii. Discussion with music experts to gain preliminary insights into the musical structure of the *Gīts*.

b) Collection of secondary data – Previous printed material has been studied and available audio-visual documentations also analysed to have a further understanding on the subject at hand.

While perusing the research material of this project, it was felt that a definitive structure and focus would go a long way in providing a different presentation of the material than has been found in the existing works of *Ojāpāli* scholars. Perhaps the many similarities and repetitions found in texts on *Ojāpāli* by various authors show a certain tediousness of repetition precisely because of the lack of variety in presentation. It was therefore felt that channelizing my varied materials which include printed text, audio-video recordings and interviews into a specific mould, namely performance sequence, would bring a freshness and tidiness to the present study. Following this decision, this study has woven its descriptions, arguments, documentations around the *Gīts* and their contexts, content and characteristics. Each chapter has been so designed that no matter what its specific subject matter, the structure would have performance sequence as its strategic framework and narrative *raison-d’-etre*.

1.10 Chapterization:

The opening chapter entitled ‘*The Ojāpāli Art Form: An Introduction*’ delves into the characteristics of *Ojāpāli* as an art form. In addition, it describes the objectives of the study, the methodology undertaken and a brief overview of the core literature consulted.

The following chapter entitled ‘*Gīts of Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli: Contexts, Content and Characteristics*’ is an indepth exploration of the songs of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, placing them in the context of the *Gondhcauparī sabhā*. The contents of the songs are showcased and analysed and their special characteristics are highlighted.

The third chapter of the study, ‘*Notational System of the Gīts*’, presents the notated songs performed in sequence in a *Sabhā*. This is the very first attempt that has been made to bring the *Gīts* within a musical structure and system.

The fourth chapter, “*Transliteration of the Gīts and Exploration of the Tālas*”, comprises what may be safely considered as the first comprehensive and systematic attempt to present to the academic fraternity the transliterations of as many as twenty *Gīts* or songs. In addition, the rhythms or *Tālas* of the songs transliterated are classified and presented in detail. This is also the first time such a detailed attempt has been made.

The final chapter brings together the salient features and findings of the study and suggests ways and themes for future research on *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*.

The present research intends to direct itself towards collecting considerable amount of data, through extensive field surveys, pertaining to the *Gīts* that account for holding the musical identity of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. Such a detailed systematic study of the performance aspects have not been touched upon by any research work so far and thus it would enable the creation of specific guidelines for the performance of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* in its available form. It has also been felt that a well-ordered subjection of the data in hand to systematic analyses and evaluation would provide a much deeper insight into the present status of the art of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. In other words, a proper understanding of the *Gīts* would reveal with sufficient clarity the extent to which the system has undergone changes, the influencing factors working on it, the unhealthy transformations these influences are encouraging. This would help in preventing the on-going improper, sometimes hasty, assimilation within *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* from other prevalent performing art forms.

1.11 Area of study:

The present chapter attempts to delineate a general artistic design of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, practised, as already mentioned, primarily in Darrang district of Assam, in order to crystallize a basic picture drawing in the pivotal aspects associated with the given institution. It is deemed pertinent to present a brief sketch of Darrang while dealing with an exclusive hand with the art form of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* centralized in the named district. Darrang came into being in 1983 when the erstwhile Mangaldai subdivision was converted into the district. Situated in central Assam, Darrang is on the northern side of the river Brahmaputra. While the Udalguri district is in the north, districts of Sonitpur and Kamrup are in the

East and West respectably. (<http://darrang.nic.in>>dist), (see Appendix VI). The present study is based on the data collected from the bearers of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* art form and participants from the community such as the priest residing in Darrang and more precisely in and around the town of Sipajhar.

Darrang is primarily notable for bearing the folk identity of Assamese culture. In others words, the district is the chief representative of many different strands of the folk culture of Assam. For example, art forms like *Ojāpāli*, *Deodhāni*, *Nāneli gīt*, *Siyā gīt*, *Dhepādhuliyā*, *Sitalā* or *Āi Nām* are almost exclusive to this district. Besides this, its popularity rests on a number of folk instruments such as *Dhepādhhol*, *Jaydhol*, *Kāliyā*, *Khunjari* etc. which help define the unique folk identity of Assam. Certain rituals and festivals such as *Deul*, *Pācheti*, *Matheni*, *Gondhcauparī sabhā* etc. are central to the district of Darrang.

1.12 Limitations of the present study:

This research work being the first of its kind, the dearth of secondary sources supporting it is understandable. Majority of the information in the main body of the text has been taken from primary sources – the active bearers of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* art form in Darrang. It had been considerably hard to gain access to majority of the primary data providers on the field, viz. the current practitioners of the art form. This is mainly because the concerned people reside in very remote areas, transportation facility to which is notably poor. Secondly, they had not been readily available as they could not afford to take a break from their livelihood activities which basically involve farming. What is interesting is that when they came forward for interviews, they could not lay forth the expected data in clear terms. This led to a good amount of confusion for the researcher which necessitated multiple interviews with the same source and much effort had to be put to systematically arrange the data obtained from varying sources in order to arrive at a conclusion.

Another aspect to mark is that the *Guru-Śiṣya parampara* had been witnessed in a somewhat disjointed form on field. More clearly, one particular performer had not been found to learn all his performing skills from one master as the said tradition actually demands. There is, thus, no one school to adhere to or one method to follow on the part of the performer.

Similarly because of the lack of a written system and a complete reliance on oral transmission, the notational system of the *Gīts* had to be done *ex nihilo* with no previous reference work for assistance. Due to the vastness of the objective undertaken and the limitations as realized on field demanded for an explanatory approach to the entire subject. A descriptive concern naturally developed and guided the course of the research.

The necessity to include the transliterated verses sung by the performers in this work has been felt due to the following reasons – firstly, since the verses are a vital component of the *Gīts*, it was necessary to handle these separately in detail. Secondly, as the verses lay scattered in few printed texts and among performers, it was deemed necessary to transliterate and present them in the sequential order followed during a performance. Finally, transliteration would provide good understanding of the actual pronunciation of the words.

Since rhythm or *Tāla* is an inseparable aspect of *Gīt* performance, including an account of the *Tālas* becomes imperative in such a study. The available literature on the art form lack adequate information regarding and organized study on the rhythms. Moreover, even preliminary field-work suggested disparity in the understanding of the rhythms among the performing groups. The treated area of study being considerably extensive in nature, the subject of dance within a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance could not be included within its scope.

To conclude, in this chapter, the purpose of study, the background for the study including origin and antiquity of *Ojāpāli* in general, classification of *Ojāpāli*, the overall characteristic of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, the rituals within which it is an integral part, along with an overview of the sequence of performance in a typical *Gondhcauparī sabhā* has been dealt with. The performance within the ritual of *Jāgar* held in Patidarrang is also briefly discussed. The objectives for the study, review of literature, methodology and structure undertaken to conduct the work have been laid out. Finally the constraints of the study have been pointed out.

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Fieldwork Documentation

Biyāh-gowā ojāpāli (BGO)

Photographs-

Fig.1: BGO, Pic 1 – performance while standing

Fig.2: BGO, Pic 2 – performance while sitting

Fig.3: BGO, Pic 3 – performance on stage

Fig.4: BGO, Pic 4 – Sattrīyā Ojāpāli

Fig.5: BGO, Pic 5 – Ojā's Pāg

Fig.6: BGO, Pic 6 – Costume of the Ojā

Fig.7: BGO, Pic 7a – Bangles

Fig.8: BGO, Pic 7b – Nepūr

Fig.9: BGO, Pic 8 – Sequence of wearing

Fig.10: BGO, Pic 9 – Costume of the Pālis

Videos –

BGO Vid – 1 Humorous Kathopakathan

BGO, Vid 2 – Use of Nepūr

Gondhcauparī sabhā

Photographs –

Fig.11: SABHĀ, Pic 1 – Sabhā Mandap

Fig.12: SABHĀ, Pic 2 – Bar-bhot

Fig.13: SABHĀ, Pic 3 – Pujā Mandap

Fig.14: SABHĀ, Pic 4a – Sarbatabhadra Mandal

Fig.15: SABHĀ, Pic 4b – Sarbatabhadra Mandal

Fig.16: SĀBHA, Pic 5a – Baldevpara Śiva Mandir

Fig.17: SĀBHA, Pic 5b – Patgirichuba Namghar

Fig.18: SĀBHA, Pic 6 – Adhibāsar gīts by Ojāpāli

Fig.19: SABHĀ, Pic 7a – Place of Homa

Fig.20: SABHĀ, Pic 7b – Homa Kunda

Fig.21: SABHĀ, Pic 8 – Magnifying glass

Videos –

SABHĀ, Vid 1a – Multiple bhots in gondh

SABHĀ, Vid 1b – Procession with multiple bhots

SABHĀ, Vid 2 – Gondh preparation

SABHĀ, Vid 3a – Ritual in gondh

SABHĀ, Vid 3b – Ojāpāli in gondh

SABHĀ, Vid 3c – Evening performance – Day 1

SABHĀ, Vid 4a – Pānī Tolā

SABHĀ, Vid 4b – Suknānni Ojāpāli during Pānī Tolā

SABHĀ, Vid 4c – Returning from Pānī Tolā

SABHĀ, Vid 4d – Cultural procession

SABHĀ, Vid 4e – End of Pānī Tolā

SABHĀ, Vid 5 – Pradakṣin

SABHĀ, Vid 6 – Agni Āhban – Day 2

SABHĀ, Vid 7 – Vāsudeva Homa

SABHĀ, Vid 8 – Homar Gīt by Ojāpāli

SABHĀ, Vid 9 – Evening performance – Day 2

SABHĀ, Vid 10 – Sāmarāṇi Gīt

Jāgar

Photographs –

Fig.22: JĀGAR, Pic 1 – Ardhanārīswar Śiva photo

Fig.23: JĀGAR, Pic 2 – Ghāi pujā

Fig.24: JĀGAR, Pic 3 – Mudrā in the altar

Fig.25: JĀGAR, Pic 4 – Mudrā outside the altar

Fig-26: JĀGAR, Pic 5 – Ghāi homa

- Fig-27: JĀGAR, Pic 6 – Pāli puḷā
- Fig.28: JĀGAR, Pic 7 – Mālcī gīt
- Fig.29: JĀGAR, Pic 8 – Priest reciting verses
- Fig.30: JĀGAR, Pic 9 – Pāli homa
- Fig.31: JĀGAR, Pic 10a – Anjali
- Fig.32: JĀGAR, Pic 10b – Jāgar Pātā
- Fig.33: JĀGAR, Pic 11 – Mudrā
- Fig.34: JĀGAR, Pic 12 – Bhutanese Manipema

Videos –

- JĀGAR, Vid 1a – Myth 1.50-2.50 minutes
- JĀGAR, Vid 1b – Gotra 1.30-1.50 minutes
- JĀGAR, Vid 1c – Byāspārā 4.05-4.24 minutes
- JĀGAR, Vid 2 – Ghāi puḷā
- JĀGAR, Vid 3a – Mudrā in the altar
- JĀGAR, Vid 3b – Mudrā outside the altar
- JĀGAR, Vid 4 – Ghāi homa
- JĀGAR, Vid 5 – Nām during ritual
- JĀGAR, Vid 6 – Pāli puḷā
- JĀGAR, Vid 7 – Mālcī gīt
- JĀGAR, Vid 8 – Priest reciting verses
- JĀGAR, Vid 9 – Pāli homa
- JĀGAR, Vid 10 – Homa gīt
- JĀGAR, Vid 11 – Jāgar Pātā
- JĀGAR, Vid 12 – Mālcī gīt

Miscellaneous (MISC)

Photographs –

Fig.35: MISC, Pic 1 – Nau Raj Howli Durga Pujā

Fig.36: MISC, Pic 2 – Nau Raj Howli Durga Pujā

Fig.37: Fig-10: MISC, Pic 3 – Nau Raj Howli Durga Pujā

Fig.38: MISC, Pic 4– Performance on stage

Videos –

MISC, Vid 1 – Ritual in Raj Howli

MISC, Vid 2 – Ojāpāli at Raj Howli

MISC, Vid 3 – Performance on stage

Audio-

MISC, Audio 1 – Public awareness program BGO

MISC, Audio 2 – Public awareness program suknāni ojāpāli

FIELDWORK DOCUMENTATION

(Photographs)

BIYĀH-GOWĀ OJĀPĀLI



Fig.1: BGO, Pic 1 – performance while standing (08/03/2019)



Fig.2: BGO, Pic 2 – performance while sitting (07/03/2019)



Fig.3: BGO, Pic 3 – performance on stage (30/12/2018)



Fig.4: BGO, Pic 4 – Sattriyā Ojāpāli (15/01/2019)



Fig.5: BGO, Pic 5 –Ojā's Pāg (10/05/2016)



Fig.6: BGO, Pic 6 –
Costume of Ojā (10/05/2018)



Fig.10: BGO, Pic 9 –
Costume of the Pālis (21/06/2017)



Fig.7: BGO, Pic 7a – Muthikhāru
(10/05/2016)



Fig.8: BGO, Pic 7b – Nepūr
(10/05/2018)

Fig.9: BGO, Pic 8 – Sequence of wearing the costume by the Ojā (10/05/2016)



1 Pāguri



2 Cādar



3 Tañāli

Sequence of wearing the performance costume by the Ojā

- continued



4 Ornaments



5 Nepūr



6 Costume of the Ojā

PHOTOGRAPHS OF A GONDHACAUPARI SABHĀ



Fig.11: SABHĀ, Pic 1 – Sabhā Mandap
(08/02/2020)



Fig.12: SABHĀ, Pic 2 – Bar-bhot
(08/02/2020)



Fig.13: SABHĀ, Pic 3 –
Pujā Mandap (08/02/2020)



Fig.14: SABHĀ, Pic 4a –
Sarbatabhadrā Mandal (08/02/2020)



Fig.15: SABHĀ, Pic 4b –
Sarbatabhadrā Mandal
(14/03/2020)



Fig.16: SĀBHĀ, Pic 5a –
Baldevpara Śiva Mandir
(14/03/2020)

PHOTOGRAPHS OF A GONDHACAUPARI SABHĀ – continued



Fig.17: SĀBHA, Pic 5b –
Patgirichuba Nāmghar
(08/03/2020)



Fig.18: SĀBHA, Pic 6 –
Adhibāsar gīts by Ojāpālī
(07/03/2019)



Fig.19: SABHĀ, Pic 7a –
Place of Homa (14/03/2020)



Fig.20: SABHĀ, Pic 7b –
Homa Kunda (14/03/2020)



Fig.21: SABHĀ, Pic 8 – Magnifying glass (14/03/2020)

PHOTOGRAPHS OF A JĀGAR RITUAL (15/06/2018)



Fig.22: JĀGAR, Pic 1 –
Ardhanārīswar Śiva photo



Fig.23: JĀGAR, Pic 2 –
Ghāi pujā



Fig.24: JĀGAR, Pic 3 –
–Mudrā in the altar



Fig.25: JĀGAR, Pic 4
Mudrā outside the altar



Fig.26: JĀGAR, Pic 5 –
Ghāi homa



Fig.27: JĀGAR, Pic 6 –
Pāli pujā

PHOTOGRAPHS OF A JĀGAR RITUAL – continued



Fig.28: JĀGAR, Pic 7 – Mālcī gīt



Fig.29: JĀGAR, Pic 8 – Priest reciting verses



Fig.30: JĀGAR, Pic 9 – Pāli homa



Fig.31: JĀGAR, Pic 10a – Anjali

PHOTOGRAPHS OF A JĀGAR RITUAL – continued



Fig.32: JĀGAR, Pic 10b – Jāgar Pātā



Fig.33: JĀGAR, Pic 11 – Mudrā



Fig.34: JĀGAR, Pic 12 – Bhutanese Mānipemā

MISCELLANEOUS PERFORMANCE PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig. 35: MISC, Pic 1 –
Durgā Pujā (16/10/2018)



Fig. 36: MISC, Pic 2 –
Nau Rāj Howli Durgā Pujā
(16/10/2018)



Fig.37: MISC, Pic 3 –
Nau Rāj Howli Durgā Pujā (16/10/2018)



Fig.38: MISC, Pic 4 – Performance on stage (22/01/2017)