

## CHAPTER II

### GĪTS OF BIYĀH-GOWĀ OJĀPĀLI

#### CONTENT, CONTEXTS AND CHARACTERISTICS

##### 2.1 Introduction:

The introductory chapter presented, among other things, the background of the study, statement of the problem, an introduction to the topic of study, a review of selected literature and objectives and methodology related to the study. It was also necessary to put forward reasons why this present work sought to be more descriptive in nature and why it chose not to adopt a theoretical orientation.

This present chapter on the contents of the *Gīts of Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is, as far as known, the first detailed study ever conducted on this primary aspect of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance. Apart from a close presentation and exploration of *Gīts*, an attempt has also been made to provide the contexts and to identify salient musical features of the *Gīts*. This chapter attempts, therefore, at elaborating, analysing and assessing each strain of musical material in sequence, i.e., keeping in mind their position in the discovered order of performance in a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*. What has been endeavoured is to figure out with considerable fidelity the pattern and disposition unique to each stage in the sequence. In short, the present chapter is devoted to a stage-wise elucidation of each melodic composition, collected from active performers and subjected to subsequent musical transcription in collaboration with music scholars, which is representative of a melodic type that in turn aids in formulating a decent understanding of the broad musical body characteristic of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* system within a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*.

##### 2.2 Role of Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli in a Gondhcauparī sabhā:

Upon arrival at the *Sabhā* locale, on the first day in the afternoon, the band of *Ojāpāli* artists is received with warm salutations. That the performers share the same dignified disposition as the priest is testified in this majestic reception portioned out to each and also in the act of gifting clothes and money to the band

known as *Baran* (PS, Pic1-baran). As the priest sets off the ritualistic procedure with *Adhibās*, the troupe participates by singing three *Adhibāsar gīts* or special songs meant for rendition only at the time of *Adhibās*. The daytime performance, primarily directed towards lending a hand to and subsequently magnifying the dynamic force of the priestly activities, involves a certain degree of leniency on the part of the performers as they are not seen maintaining the norms of costume or displaying the broad picture of performance nuances. Thus, the *Ojāpālīs* come in everyday wear and sit casually while singing. The sitting posture does not accommodate the adoption of any dramatic or prescribed dance gesture. However, the *Ojā* is found bringing into use a few hand gestures to emphasize specific terms in the textual content of the songs. The *Gīts* are all aimed towards eulogizing *Lord Kṛṣṇa*'s image with parallel treatment of the subject of fragrance. Apart from the *Adhibāsar gīts*, *Kṛṣṇar gīts* or songs dedicated to *Lord Kṛṣṇa* happen to be a part of the performance schedule. The exaltation of *Lord Śiva* forms the crux of the *Śivar gīts* which too are permitted entry into the recital. The *Kṛṣṇa and Śivar gīts*, however, though usually put to performance do not happen to be mandatory like the *Adhibāsar gīts*. *Mālcī gīts* are also renditioned provided special offerings are made to the goddess within the plan of the *Lord Vāsudevā* ritual. As the routine of *Adhibās* winds up with the distribution of *Prasād* (devotional offering made in the form of food items to the deity), the role of the *Ojāpālī* comes to an end. The crowd then disassembles and returns late in the evening to witness the full-length concert staged by the *Ojāpālī* troupe.

The evening performance of the first day is scrupulously designed to last overnight. The recital thus continues for considerably long hours and the performance plan, accordingly, includes five different stages characterizing considerable musical richness. Though the priestly role has ended with the closure of the daytime event, the primary aim of appeasing the invoked deities is not abandoned by the *Ojāpālīs* in the evening. It is true that the aim of assisting the highly patterned ritualistic exercise of the daytime no longer exists. Yet the objective of propitiating the gods through the appealing medium of music remains. However, it needs be taken into account that a considerable proportion of the programme is directed towards gratifying the aesthetic craving of the audience. Nevertheless, plain amusement cannot be counted as the singular

objective. Efforts at didacticism and stimulating the devotional instinct while praising and appeasing the deities runs parallel to the end of entertainment. This testifies to the variety yet commonality marked in the five distinct stages.

'*Ojā uthā*' is the local phrase used to signify the beginning of the overnight performance. The performing group this time enters the *Sabhā* wearing their prescribed costume and faces the altar. While the rest stand still, the *Ojā* walks towards the altar holding the pair of *Nepūr* within his folded hands. With a kneeled posture the *Ojā* demonstrates a gesture of obeisance by bowing first to the altar and then on either side to the audience. Taking his right *Nepūr*, he then shakes it as a cue for the *Pālis* to start playing the *Khuti Tāl*. The left *Nepūr* is then shaken and worn on the left foot. The wearing of the *Nepūr* symbolizes in a way that the performance is all set to start. With the *Nepūrs* being worn, the *Ojā* moves backwards with hands folded towards his *Pālis* who in the meantime have been demonstrating the various rhythmic cycles to be put to use in the performance. Such a demonstration is known as *Tāla pātā* (PS, Vid 1a- beginning of day 1 performance / PS, Vid 1b- nepūr and tāla pātā). The stage is thus all set for the recital to begin. The discipline that the performers follow before setting off the actual concert proves to be an accurate introductory move while the cymbals' jangling help to colour the ambience sombre and grave. With *Humkār* which involves an iterative singing of set syllables, the curtain is raised on the recital. The performers stand still in their respective places and pay obeisance to the Guru with *Humkār*. It continues for a very short while and the act of *Tāla bhānā* (primarily a method that combines certain signature strokes of different *Tālas* to signify the end of a section within a melody or the total melody itself) brings it to a close. What follows is *Gurubandanā* where the stillness of motion continues, although the chant-like method is abandoned and the piece is marked with definite melodic progression. With the invocatory end being achieved in *Humkār* and *Gurubandanā*, the proper attempt at the appeasement of the deities begins with the next stage of *Pātani* where melodic complexities surface and the recital achieves a definite momentum. The larger part of *Pātani* involves a cymballic silence not creating a conducive environment for extensive dance-like activities. However, as the *Pātani* closes with the *Pātani gīt*, the rich rhythmic texture accompanying a melodic excitement builds a solid floor for

varied dance movements and eventually turns the recital plot quite interesting. The stage of *Pātani* lasts for a considerable period of time as the different stages within it – *Ghunni*, *Pāli rāga*, *Śloka by Ojā*, *Śloka by Pāli* and *Pātani gīt* – are each an elaborate treatment of the *Rāga* introduced. The dynamic force of the recital reaches its peak with the next stage of *Viṣṇu pada* which involves the *Daśāvatāra* dance, an elaborate plan of dance treated by the *Ojā* while the ten incarnations of *Lord Viṣṇu* are sung. The music pauses for a while after *Viṣṇu pada* as the *Ojā* and the *Daināpāli* now engage in a witty conversation called *Kathopakathan* which helps in moderating the grave mood lingering till *Viṣṇu pada*. With the rendition of the *Rabhār janma*, the first three stages of the performance come to an end. In the fourth stage of *Sangītālāp*, the audience is entertained with a magnificent presentation of *Rāgas* and *Ākhyāns* (or scriptural tales). Mandatorily, the *Gor bānā / Thiya rāga*, with or without *Doṇuwā bānā*, is recited to commence *Sangītālāp* which is then followed by *Ākhyān(s)*. While a definite gravity in the mood sustains through the *Bānā* recitation, the *Ākhyān(s)* come with expert treatment of dance-drama features colouring the performance with great exciting hues not known earlier. The *Rāga-bānā* intersperses *Ākhyān* recitation and it helps in its own manner in striking a balance between a sombre and a light mood and also in creating a palette of melodic tastes.

There are frequent breaks in the performance to accommodate the *Ojā's* act of expounding the scriptural verses sung. As the *Sangītālāp* ends, many hours have already passed and the tired performers now enter into the last stage of *Miśra gīts* which feature certain degree of leniency in maintaining a strict performance discipline. Whether it be the decision of playing the cymbals or not playing them, or whether to stand or sit during the recital, things are settled according to the voluntary wish of the artistes. Most of the time, the singers now sit in a relaxed manner and sing some light songs. These songs are varied with regards to their textual and melodic nature. They necessarily help in filling the void between *Akhyāns* and the *Puweli gīt* or the song of dawn with which the entire recital of the first day comes to a close.

The performance regime of the second day maintains a synchronicity with that of the first day. The *Ojāpāli* troupe makes itself an invariable part of the priestly engagement during the daytime. As the priest conducts the *Homa*, the *Ojāpālis*

recite the *Homar gīts* or songs where the verses singularly encapture the subject of *Homa*. While the *Homar gīts* are rendered on a note of compulsion, the other melodic varieties such as *Śivar* or *Kṛṣṇar bandanā gīts* are put to recitation on the singers' volition or on the audience's request. Similarly, the treatment of *Mālcī gīts*, as already seen, depends on the condition of separate ritualistic reverence being paid to the goddess. The non-adherence to norms of costume and sparsely-demonstrated hand gestures are marked in the second day ritual-recital too. In the evening, the concert routine of the previous day is put to practice with a touch of flexibility. Precisely, the plan of the first evening is essentially shortened with careful deletions to fit into the compressed recital length as on the second day the performance is not meant to last overnight. Thus, most of the time the *Humkār* directly leads to *Viṣṇu pada* while in the fourth and fifth stages too, the materials are not subjected to sincere elaboration. Since the recital this time does not stretch to dawn, it is not the *Puweli gīt* with which the musical plan is rounded off but with the definite piece, *Sāmarāṇi gīt* which marks the end not only of the second day recital but of the *Gondhcauparī sabhā* as a whole.

### **2.3 Sequence of performance of the Gīts in a Gondhcauparī Sabhā:**

The musical design of daytime and evening recitals is expertly moulded to cater to the respective aims. While the *Ritual gīts* hold in their text verses explicitly dealing with eulogization and glorification of deities or that clearly describing what goes into the making of the ritual, the performance materials put to practice in the evening include more a balanced play of devotional, didactic and aesthetic motives. The melodic constructs are accordingly framed to suit each occasion and other performance tactics to adapt to the changing aims. For convenience of understanding, the *Gīts* performed by the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* within a *Gondhcauparī sabhā* have been charted below according to their place in the sequential map.

GĪTS PERFORMED WITHIN A GONDHCAUPARĪ SABHĀ		
(Day 1): Ritual gīts during Adhibās		
Adhibāsar gīts	Kṛṣṇar and Śivar bandanā gīts	Mālcī gīts
(Day 1): Overnight performance		
Stage I – Huṁkār and Gurubandanā Stage II – Pātani - Ghunni, Pāli rāga, Śloka by Ojā, Śloka by Pāli and Pātani gīt Stage III – Viṣṇu pada and Daśāvatāra dance (Kathopakathan and Rabhār janma) Stage IV – Sangītālāp <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bānā               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gor Bānā, Thiya rāga, Doṅuwā bānā</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ākhyāns               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pada chanda Ākhyāns</li> <li>- Chabi chanda Ākhyāns</li> <li>- Lecāri chanda Ākhyāns</li> <li>- Dulaḍī chanda Ākhyāns</li> <li>- Jhumuri chanda Ākhyāns</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Rāga-Bānā                (examples) - Sāranga, Kalyān, Nāt, Śyāmgadhā, Rāmgiri, Barāḍī, Suhāi etc.             </li> </ul>		
Stage V – Mísra gīts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kṛṣṇar Jhunās and Śivar Jhunās</li> <li>- Kabirar gīts</li> <li>- Durgābari gīts</li> <li>- Bāramāhi gīts</li> <li>- Puwelī gīts</li> </ul>		
(Day 2): Ritual gīts during Homa		
Homar gīts	Kṛṣṇar and Śivar bandanā gīts	Mālcī gīts

(Day 2): Evening performance
<p>Stage I – Huṁkār and Gurubandanā</p> <p>Stage III – Viṣṇu pada and Daśāvatāra dance</p> <p>Stage IV – Sangītālāp</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thiya rāga with or without Doṅuwā bānā</li> <li>- Ākhyāns</li> </ul> <p>Stage V – Mīśra gīts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kṛṣṇar Jhunās and Śivar Jhunās</li> <li>- Sāmarāṇi gīt</li> </ul>

It appears pertinent to mention at this point the fact that while describing a particular *Gīt*, the key on which the Shadaj (tonic) has been fixed by the singer in the recorded material has been indicated by the letter name of the note followed by the octave number (3 for low octave, 4 for middle and 5 for high), example- F4

#### 2.4 Ritual gīts during Adhibās:

A total understanding of the specific musical formulation performed by a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* troupe within a *Gondhcauparī sabhā* has been attempted below. As mentioned earlier the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* begin their role in a *Gondhcauparī sabhā* during the ritual of *Adhibās* on the first day afternoon of the two-day affair by singing the *Adhibāsar gīts*. The body of *Adhibāsar gīts* bears a distinct status because it is with the set of three *Adhibāsar gīts* that the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* makes its first entry into the specified corridor of a *Vāsudevā* ritual. As stated earlier, the *Ojāpālis* hold a similar importance as a priest in directing and accomplishing the ritualistic task with a proper hand. This is well observed, as stated earlier, in the manner the *Ojāpālis* are greeted into the ritual site and honoured with gifts in the form of clothes and money. Being on an equal footing with the priest, the *Ojāpālis* participate hand-in-hand with the latter right from the beginning. Thus, as the priest conducts the *Gondh* or *Adhibās* on the first day afternoon of a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*, the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* troupe sings the *Adhibāsar gīts* followed by other *Gīts*. Though the troupe customarily sits and

sings without wearing the performance costume during the *Adhibās*, a photograph of *Ojāpālis* sitting and singing *Bandanā gīts* while dressed in the prescribed concert costumes has been found in Paban Bordoloi's book on *Devadāsi* (Bordoloi, P., 2004, 292). It can be conjectured from the content of the picture that the leniency seen now in following the costume discipline might not have been the case in earlier times. Of course, reference to *Bandanā gīts* here may actually mean *Jhunā gīts* sung during the end stage of an overnight performance and in this sense the picture content cannot be read in the context of *Adhibās*. Though only three *Adhibāsar gīts* circulate in the present times, the high possibility of the existence of other such *Gīts* cannot be summarily denied. In fact, a fourth *Adhibāsar gīt* has been traced in Nareswar Barua's compilation (Barua, N. S. 1975, 46). Upon interviewing many *Ojās*, only Ojā Dugdham Kalita was found familiar with the said piece which has been subsequently documented as a part of this study (PS, Vid 2 -adhibāsar gīt-4). Further, it is to be noted that all the three known *Adhibāsar gīts* are Kṛṣṇa-centric songs although during field survey priest Achyutananda Sarma informed that both *Suknānni* and *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* used to sing in praise of the primordial deities during *Adhibās* (field note12/10.02.18). This statement almost establishes two things – first, many *Adhibāsar gīts* have been lost and second, it is possible that under the influence of Neo-Vaishnavism only Kṛṣṇa-centric *Gīts* survived. The ritual of *Lord Vāsudevā* in fact, pertains to the worship of the *Vāsudevā* form of *Lord Viṣṇu* and not of the *Kṛṣṇa* form. Besides *Lord Vāsudevā*, the five primordial deities too occupy an important place in the ritual and this is plainly observed in the textual content sung in *Gurubandanā* during the evening performance. This being said, it can be safely assumed that what Achyutananda Sarma claims of the past prevalence of *Adhibāsar gīts* regarding other deities holds sufficient ground. Under the given circumstance, the Neo-Vaishnavite mark on the *Adhibāsar gīts* stands only too clear. As a matter of fact, Ojā Durgeswar Nath too states that the present three *Adhibāsar gīts* had been possibly composed when Neo-Vaishnavism had become an established trend in Assam (Ojā D. N., 1989, 22). Other elements sufficing the Neo-Vaishnavite hold can be traced in the use of the Brajavali language, originated by Srimanta Sankaradeva, in the first *Gīt* and also in the presence of a *Bhanitā* (that ending part of the verse mentioning the name of the poet) in the



second *Gīt*. It must be remembered that the style of *Bhanitās* is popular in Neo-Vaishnavite literature.

### **Adhibāsar gīt - I:**

The *Adhibāsar gīt* “*O Prāner Nātha*” (PS, Vid 3-adhibāsar gīt-1) is primarily an eulogical song praising little *Kṛṣṇa*'s mesmerizing appearance. It describes the Lord playing the flute and also individually mentions the different accessories worn by *Kṛṣṇa* which contribute to his unique image. For example, the peacock feather on his head, a flower garland around his neck or gem-rings on his ears. The later part of the song suggests *Kṛṣṇa* returning in the evening and indulging in playful activities with fellow cowherds. The melody of this first *Adhibāsar gīt* adopts a *Madhya laya* (moderato) and the relaxed pulse pace coupled with repetitions make the two-lined *Dihā* absorb a considerable amount of time. The first phrase of the *Dihā* can be held as the most important component as it constantly plays a significant role throughout in instituting cadences. The style of ending a melodic phrase on the first beat in the three-beat cycle of *Heseni II tāla* (see page- 361) is regularly witnessed.

The *Dihā* establishes well the melodic parameters followed throughout the piece. Total omissions of Ga (major third) are brought to notice as the cluster of ‘Re Ma Pa Dha’ frequently occurs and also when the descent to the tonic (Sa) is found made every time from Re (the supertonic) tied to Ma (the subdominant). Occasionally, a Ḡa (minor third) as an accidental is fleetingly seen in the progression of the quatrains. The Ni (major seventh) is left out in the ascending while a regular Nī (minor seventh) in the descending cancels the *Audav* or pentatonic mode noticed in the ascending patterns. In the documented sample of the song, as rendered by Ojā Tirtha Nath and his troupe, the base pitch is found to rest in F4 (note F in the middle octave on piano). The ascension to the octaval end or F5 (note F in the high octave on piano) is made in the second phrase of the *Dihā* itself. The progression of the quatrain essentially sticks to the second half of the octave and as such the usual upper register work is clearly felt in the piece. (field note m1/ 04.02. 19).

## Adhibāsar Gīt II:

The poetic content of the second *Adhibāsar gīt* involves materials directly pertaining to the ritualistic processes carried out to perform *Vāsudevā* worship during a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*. The significance of the elements of fragrance in such a *Sabhā* has already been emphasized. Since the given piece has direct references to this element it is generally termed as *Telar gīt* where 'Tel' stands for fragrant oils. The verses comprise such lines as “*Cowā candana kasturi bharāi / dehu dayālara ange-range caḍāi*” (the devotees adorn the deity with fragrances), (*Ojā*, D. N., 1989, 119-120). The *Gīt* narrates certain basic events constituting the ritualistic design of the *Adhibās*. For instance, the incident of *Ghatā sthāpan* or the establishment of the ceremonial pot wherein to invoke the deities is clearly represented in these verses.

Another interesting incident is noticed in the verse line “*Sindura dhupa ārati diyā Rādhā Kṛṣṇaka nibediyā*”- ‘*Rādhā Kṛṣṇaka*’ is found replaced by ‘*Rāma Kṛṣṇaka*’ in *Ojā* Durgeswar Nath's book (*Ojā*, D. N., 1989, 120). This is found done by the active performers in the documented audio too (PS, Vid 4-adhibāsar gīt-2). It is, however, stated as ‘*Rādhā Kṛṣṇaka*’ according to A. C. Barua (Barua, A. C., 1974, 886). The substitution of ‘*Rādhā*’ by ‘*Rāma*’ is a clear indication of the influential force of Neo-Vaishnavism acting in the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī* system since the *Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa* cult is not celebrated within the Neo-Vaishnavite ambit.

The melodic design of the second *Adhibāsar gīt* has much in common with that of the first. The emergence of Ga (minor third) only in the upper register in the note cluster ‘Rė Gȧ Rė Sȧ’ and that of Ni (minor seventh) solely in the descending route are two such incidents common to both *Gīts* (field note m2/ 03.03 19). The triple-metered accompaniment of *Heseni II tāla* is another notable commonality. Repetition of the word ‘*Ānanda*’ in the verses is entrusted to differing melodic combinations in the progressions which accounts for considerable beauty. In the entire piece, the *Ojā* is regularly found to initiate a phrase which the *Pālis* actively catch and carry forward. The ascension to the upper octave is found in the *Dihā* itself. However, this ascension is bold and long-sustaining in the stanzas that follow. The first stanza after the *Dihā* reveals a progression that differs from the rest of the poetic body. The initial point of note ascension in the first stanza is

located in the lower tetrachord (*Purvanga*) while in the remaining stanzas the ascension starts from the upper tetrachord (*Uttaranga*). In the documented audio, the voice range chosen extends from F4 to F5 and there are points beyond F5 too. This characterises the usual *Ojāpāli* tendency of sticking to such a vocal work area.

### **Adhibāsar Gīt III:**

The third *Adhibāsar gīt*, “*O Āratu bidhi he Madan Gopāla*” (PS, Vid 5-adhibāsar gīt-3) too contains references to the element of fragrance though this time it is introduced in a contextual setting involving *Lord Kṛṣṇa*. It is a quintessential *Ārati* (ceremonial praise of God) song comprising verses dedicated to a terse description of how *Ārati* is carried out and at the same time of the divine glow of the Lord. The musical layout of the given piece brings the rhythmic arrangement to immediate notice. The constant alternation of the cymballic language owing to the use of two different rhythms captures attention and delivers striking pleasure.

The *Dihā* bearing the binary form of the *Thokā tāla* proceeds in a *Madhya laya* (moderato) and the punch in the vocal output matching the energy aimed in the composition is plainly discernible. In the poetic body excluding the *Dihā* a set pattern is followed. Each thought is couched in a set of two lines where the first line initiating the thought invariably begins with ‘*Hari he*’. Interestingly, in this first line the tempo suddenly falls as the rhythm shifts to the eight-beat cycle of *Heseni V tāla* (see page-362). The first half of the line is laid out by the *Ojā* and the other half receives a choral treatment by the *Pālis*. Following this solo-chorus division, the first line is repeated many times before the second line again gets back to the duple-metered *Thokā tāla* (see page-357) and an increased tempo specific to it. Each time the rhythm is changed, the ongoing cycle is completely broken leading to a brief pause before the new rhythmic cycle begins. The pauses not only help in the shift but at the same time do much to enhance the beauty. Each time the audience is settled with the rhythm it suddenly shifts. Not only this but what accounts for significant pleasure is the alternating design of slowed and increased tempo.

The melodic build of this *Gīt* does not tally with those of the other two *Gīts*. The notes Re and Dha (major second and sixth) are absent in the *Dihā*. Though the combination of Ga and Ni is continued in the later parts, the use of Re disrupts the

pentatonic flow. Much like the other two *Gīts*, the third *Adhibāsar gīt* sticks to a prominently upper register as the composition is found within the octaval range F4 and F5 in the documented audio (field note m3/ 23.03 19).

## 2.5 Gīts during the overnight performance:

The evening performance, as already noted, is a disciplined set of materials categorised in five different stages. Below is given a detailed study of *Gurumandalī* followed by *Sangītālāp* and *Misra gīts*. *Gurumandalī* as seen, begins with *Humkār*.

GURUMANDALĪ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humkār and Gurubandanā</li> <li>• Pātani</li> <li>• Daśāvatāra</li> </ul>

### 2.5.1 Humkār and Gurubandanā (Stage I):

#### Humkār:

*Humkār* is also called *Gurudhyān* by some of the practitioners. The common etiological ballad of all *Rāga-bānās* state “*Humkār bhaileka guru*” (Sarma N. C., 1991, 240) or “*Humkār bhailanta guru*” (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 73) which equates the status of *Humkār* with the *Guru* or master. The *Guru* (master) is venerated through the *Humkār* and such veneration is traditionally considered an auspicious gesture before commencing any ceremonious activity in *Ojāpāli*. *Ojāpāli* is based on the age-old *Guru-śiṣya paramparā*. Such a tradition admits the supreme importance of the teacher and finds it obligatory to pay due homage to him while making a propitious beginning. The *Ojāpālis*, thus, concentrate on the form of the *Guru* with reverence while chanting some syllables. However, here *Guru* also signifies *Ādi Guru (Lord Śiva)* as ‘*Hum*’ in ‘*Humkār*’ is considered the seed syllable of *Lord Śivā* in Tantricism. According to priest Achyutananda Sarma the ritual of *Lord Vāsudevā*, predominantly Tantric in its procedures, of which *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is an inseparable part, too involves the worship of *Lord Śiva* as the first step in a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*. The fact that any performance of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* must set forth with the compulsory singing of *Humkār*, substantiates its

deep-rooted association with the ritual of *Vāsudevā* worship (field note13/10.02.18).

In *Humkār*, the syllables 'Om Na NaNa' or 'Om Ta NaNa' are sung by the *Ojā* in a chant-like intonation and the *Pālis* sing the syllable 'Ha' each time the *Ojā* finishes his part (PS, Vid 6- humkār) Sometimes, the *Ojā* instead takes to singing 'Gopāla Govinda Hari Rāma' and on repetition, 'Bāndhaba Hari Rāma'. Such phrases deviate from the order of Tantricism and were most likely absorbed in the system of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* under the influence of Neo- Vaishnavism.

### **Gurubandanā:**

The invocatory objective introduced in the *Humkār* is found amplified as we reach *Gurubandanā*. Another popular name for it is *Sur sādhanā* (Barua, A.C., 1974, 1062) which possibly connotes the disclosure of and the emphasis on the note patterns summarizing the *Rāga* handled. The *Gurubandanā* is set in *Gunjari* or *Bhramari rāga* (Barua, A.C., 1974, 1062) because of which it takes another name 'Gojārani' which means the sound produced by the humming of bees suggesting that this *Rāga*, on its rendition, gives the impression of bees humming (Barua, A. C. 1974, 1012). Though not found in practice, texts claim *Rāga Sindurā* or *Rāmkiri* or *Rāmgiri* as the one to be sung in *Gurubandanā*. N. C. Sarma mentions that within the performance of *Gurubandanā* or *Pātani gīt* (he uses both these performance features synonymously), a *Gīt* in praise of *Viṣṇu* or *Vāsudeva* is sung which is set in *Sindurā* or *Rāmkiri / Rāmgiri rāga* (Sarma, N. C., 1991, 80).

The *Gurubandanā* is musically transcribed on the basis of the audio depicting the recital of the same by *Ojā Dharmakanta Deka* (PS, Vid 7- Gurubandanā). It is found to be a two-part piece, each part being initiated by the *Ojā*. The phrases 'Gopāla Govinda Hari Rāma' and 'Bāndhaba Hari Rāma' are sung by the *Ojā* in the first and second part respectively. In both the parts, the *Pālis* play vital roles in making respectful appeals to the deities for instituting their holy presence. The five syllables that they extensively sing – 'Ha', 'Ta', 'Na', 'Ṛ', 'Ṛta' – are actually symbolic representations of the *Panchadevatās* or five primordial deities (*Ganesh*, *Sadaśivā*, *Bhabāni*, *Kṛṣṇa* and *Gandharvas*) who are invoked and worshipped during the *Vāsudevā* ritual. In this context, the ritualistic connections of *Ojāpāli* become more clearly recognizable. 'Ha' stands for *Ganesh*, 'Ta' for

*Sadaśivā*, ‘Na’ for *Bhabāni*, ‘Ṛ’ for *Kṛṣṇa*. ‘Ṛta’ is considered to stand for *Gandharvas* (celestial musicians) within the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* system. It is, however, linked with *Suryā* or the sun deity in the ritual invoking the worship of the *Panchadevatās* (Oja, D.N., 1989, 57). The rendering of these syllables is interspersed with the singing of another syllable, ‘Ba’, which represents the deity *Brahmā* (Hazarika, S., 2014, 2).

Though the *Ojāpāli* within the *Sattras* start their performance with syllables ‘He Re Ṛ’ or ‘Ta Ne Nā’ they do not attach any meaning or deity to these syllables (Barua, A. C. 1974, 1062). This is probably because Srimanta Sankaradeva as believed took materials from the then popular *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* to popularise Neo-Vaishnavism even though his philosophy did not recognise the primordial deities (Barua, A. C. 1974, 1093). A. C. Barua relates these syllables as forming the nucleus of the *Rāga* when he states: ‘*Rāgar guri Tā Nā Nā*’ (the root of *rāga* rendition is Tā Nā Nā), (Barua, A. C. 1974, 1062). In this sense, the *Gurubandanā* can be considered a serious effort at elaborating a tabled *Rāga* with the help of a set of specific syllables.

A close analysis of the recorded and transcribed material pertaining to *Gurubandanā* reveals it to be a slow, non-metrical unfolding of a melodic format. Just as in an *Ālāp* (an improvised unmetered opening section preceding the formal expression of a *Rāga* in North Indian classical music), there is a steady progression of the permitted notes up along the octave in *Gurubandanā*. With sufficient meditation on *Gā* upon commencement, the progression proceeds to reveal a framework not allowing Re and Dha in both ascending and descending and keeping the major third and seventh in minor (*Gā* and *Ṇi*) .

As the *Pālis* enter into a choral rendition of *Gurubandanā* shortly after it is introduced by the *Ojā*, the scope of improvisation is completely nullified. The major identity of the melody revealed in the first part known as *Thāk one*, continues in the second although Re surfaces and the progression too is restricted to feature in detail all the melodic promises in the second. If the sample of *Gurubandanā* as obtained from the named *Ojā* is to be considered as a rendition keeping intact one melodic specification of *Rāga Gunjari*, then it would look like Sa *Gā* Ma Pa *Ṇi* Sȧ (in ascending) and Sȧ *Ṇi* Pa Ma *Gā* Sa (in descending) (field note m4/ 26.05 19).

But interestingly, this pentatonic mode is found strewn across the entire musical body of an overnight performance. As it will be revealed as each performance material is separately treated while this analytical study progresses, this pentatonic formation is put to use in several events which makes it impossible to equate it to the singular identity of one *Rāga*. For example, the main body of *Thiya rāga* in the fourth stage of *Sangītālāpa* follows this same pentatonic structure. (field note m5/ 27.05.19). Theoretically, *Gunjari* and *Thiya rāgas* are two different *Rāgas*. In this sense, the pentatonic progression in hand cannot constitute the melodic identity of two *Rāgas*. Hence, it is highly possible that the *Gunjari rāga* has become inextant and in the *Gurubandanā* now what matters most is the treatment of the syllables ‘*Hā Tā Nā Ṛ Rtā*’ to muse on the form of the invoked deities.

The status of *Gurubandanā* being *Swar sādhanā* (or extensive play of notes of the *Rāga*) seems to have lost ground in today's time. Therefore, the commonly known melodic framework is put to use for the primary purpose of treating the syllables symbolically representing various deities. From the musical point of view, the *Gurubandanā* definitely does not display a rich and lustrous perusal of the characteristic aspects of a *Rāga*. It now merely appears a tool to pay obeisance to the deities. Thus, the *Gurubandanā* at present is to be realized as a musical stance primarily adopted to maintaining the association with the wide ritualistic ambitions of a *Gondhcauparī sabhā*.

The *Eksebiyā Cābtāla* or *Rupahī tāla I* (see pages 356 and 358) is played at the beginning while the same *Tāla* is repeated towards the closing of the *Gurubandanā* followed by a few strokes of *Jikirī* (or *Jikari*) and *Lecāri tālas* (see pages 360 and 358). The briefly demonstrated *Tālas* are peripheral additions to the main body and to an extent contribute to making sacred the atmosphere being built. Further, the performance of *Gurumandalī* till this point is bereft of any hand gestures and dance movements on the part of the *Ojā*.

### **2.5.2 Pātani (Stage II):**

The stage of *Pātani* within *Gaid* is a detailed one characterized by the disciplined assembling of different units to form a well-defined musical order. In this stage a meter-free treatment of the chosen *Rāga* is followed by the exuberant execution of the *Pātani gīt* which, cast in different rhythmic moulds, carries forward the same

*Rāga*. However, the current process of documentation has revealed that the same *Rāga* is often not handled throughout the *Pātani* stage. As stated by Tirtha Nath Ojā, irrespective of what *Rāga* is attended to in the *Pātani gīt* only *Rāga Śyāmgadā* or *Nāt* is sung in the earlier section (field note 24/ 22.05 18). This is an undesirable change hinting at the shrinkage and the resulting corruption of the original fabric of *Ojāpāli* music owing to the changing socio-economic conditions faced by the active practitioners among other things.

The initiation of *Pātani* is effectuated through what is called *Ghunni* (PS, Vid 8a - pātani ghunni and *rāga*). The material handled next include *Pāli rāga* or the narration of the *Rāga* introduced in *Ghunni* primarily by set syllables. *Pāli rāga* leads to the treatment of the *Rāga* with *Śloka* “*Śri Kṛṣṇa..*” the beginning part of which is subjected to *Ojā*'s solo rendition and the latter part to the *Pāli* chorus starting from “*...Vasudevaya Daivaki nandanayacha...*”. With this the cymballic absence ends and the *Pātani gīt* which signals a sufficient shift in the musical texture is taken into hand. For a clearer understanding, the stage of *Pātani* can be held as a dual structure which seems to be planned as a detailed discussion of the melodic possibilities of the *Rāga* in hand followed by the melody proper in the given frame work.

For the present work, *Ojā Dharmakanta Dekā*'s rendition of the first lot of *Pātani* in *Rāga Śyāmgadā* has been musically transcribed. A close study of the transcription seems to offer contours of a melodic framework which is more or less sustained throughout the body in the material. If this is considered to exploit the melodic features of *Rāga Śyāmgadā*, then certain characteristic moves encountered time and again in the progression can be taken into account to define *Śyāmgadā*. For example, the use of both *Komal* and *Prakrit* ‘Dha’ (minor and major sixth) stands out prominently. The plan involved in the use of each Dha is to a considerable extent understood. Phrases like ‘Pa Dha Dha Pa Ma’ and ‘Dha Pa Ma’ speak of the *Vakra* (curved) nature of Dha. Thus, it is the Dha that seems to hold the place for direct up and down movement in the progression. The other swaras *Vikrit* (accidental) in nature are Ga and Ni.

In the first part of the *Ghunni*, phrases like ‘Sa<sup>ˆ</sup> Ni Dha Ni Pa’ suggest a direct descension from Sa<sup>ˆ</sup> to Ni. The use of Re with Ga on one hand and Sa on the other hold importance in characteristic note clusters which seem to be set units for



completing the descending mode. The use of Re in direct ascension is not witnessed though in *Pāli rāga* where there is only one instance of ‘Re Ma Dha’ which appears a little out of place. Certain instances which are not found include such direct ascending routes as ‘Re Ga Ma’ or ‘Pa Dha Ni Sa’°. Since only one recording of *Rāga Śyāmgadā* has been analysed all the prominent melodic phrases cannot be satisfactorily unearthed and the scope of analyses cannot sufficiently expand to figure out the exact melodic profile of the *Rāga*. But whatever insight is gained into the nature of progression, a rough estimate of the ascending and descending of the *Rāga* can be made which is as follows – ‘Sa Re Ga Sa, Ma Pa Ni Dha Ni Sa° / Sa° Ni Dha Ni Pa, Dha Pa Ma, Ga Ma Re Ga Re Sa’. If more samples of the performance of *Rāga Śyāmgadā* are analysed in later research projects, then a better understanding of melodic features singular to the *Rāga* can be obtained (field note m6/ 11.06. 19).

*Ghunni* is a term based on the Assamese word *Ghūraṇi* meaning movement in a circular fashion. It has been felt that the melodic mode worked upon throughout the body surfaces in the *Ghunni*. The successive rise and fall of the notes imitate a cyclic motion and in this sense the term ‘*Ghunni*’ stands justified. The syllables ‘Tā Ṛ Ṛ’ are presented in three different ways by the *Ojā* in *Ghunni* while developing the phrases encapsulating the essence of the *Rāga*. It is noteworthy that the *Ojā* only introduces a few introductory phrases each time ‘Tā Ṛ Ṛ’ is repeated. The *Pālis* quickly take over.

On observation of the plan of the piece, it is quite obvious that *Ojāpāli*, being an art form seeking a balance between solo and choral formats, cannot afford to accommodate improvisation. The performers sing their part as a pre-composed piece and any idea of equating the non-metrical *Ghunni* with *Ālāp* of Hindustāni music stands weak. It may be noted in passing that the words ‘*Ghunni*’ and ‘*Gurumandali*’ are sometimes synonymously used (Sarma, N. C. 1991, 81) which is incorrect as *Ghunni*, as we have seen, does not stand for a group of adjacent units but only accounts for a small portion.

In *Pāli rāga* the *Pālis* seem to chorally attempt a schematic emphasis of the primary and secondary notes of the *Rāga*. The characteristic style adopted by the progression specific to the *Rāga* is found sustained in the *Pāli rāga*, although clusters like ‘Ma Re’, ‘Re Ma Dha’ reveal newer possibilities within the

framework. (field note m7/ 11.06. 19). The defining section within *Pāli rāga* includes what is called *Rāga tulā*. There is no precise explanation offered by the active practitioners as to why this part is termed as *Rāga tulā* (where ‘*tulā*’ means to lift). Going by the name, this sub-section within *Pāli rāga* gives the impression that it is a piece in which the main elements determining the basic melodic structure of the *Rāga* have been summarizingly upheld. On observation, it is, of course, realised that certain primary elements outlining the format are present in *Rāga tulā*. Secondly, the *Rāga tulā* takes an overtly descending movement as the progression does not prefer to elaborate more within the space of the beginning octave and descends down to an octave where it exploits the melodic design. The mood of descent is also reflected in the fact that the piece begins at a high pitch placement which is sufficiently lowered towards the end. Further, although the *Rāga tulā* exploits higher notes upon commencement, the stay on a high frequential plane does not last long and as already said, there is an explicit instance of the notes stepping down. This being said, the usual tendency of some performers to relate *Tulā* to an extended stay at a high register does not stand justified. From the practitioners’ standpoint *Rāga tulā* simply implies that the *Pālis* repeat the *Rāga* once again.

After the *Pāli rāga*, the *Ojā* starts singing the initial part of a *Śloka* ‘*Śri Kṛṣṇaya...*’ from the *Bhagavata Purana*. The basic melodic frame remains undisturbed although there is the absence of the regular phrase ‘*Dha Pa Ma*’ or any cluster involving ‘*Dha*’ (field note m8/ 11.06. 19). In fact, the *Ojā*’s share of the *Śloka* does not melodically sustain for a longer time, which is why the piece does not go on to touch upon all the known defining phrases. This *Śloka*-part handled by the *Ojā*, further, is one area where the solo vocal liberty is utilized fairly to improvise upon the *Rāga* structure. However, whether such liberty is actually properly recognised and used cannot be realised by looking at just one recorded sample of *Pātani* performance. Further analyses of more recorded samples of *Pātani* collected during field work can reveal the given point.

As the latter part of the *Śloka* ‘*Vāsudevāyā Daivaki Nandanayā cha...*’ is taken over by the *Pālis*, almost all the melodic possibilities revealed in the *Ghunni* are attended to. After *Ghunni*, this section of *Pālis*’ treating the *Śloka* seems to be the most crucial one as the pathways involved in the melodic plot appear more

distinct. The presentation of the *Rāga* reaches a denser state at this stage as significant materials are enunciated. Again, this part being narrated by the choral voice, the matter of improvisation stands impracticable.

Thus, this first part of the *Pātani* (preceding the *Pātani gīt*) though resembling to some extent *Ālāp* in traditional Hindustani music in being a slow, non-metrical and improvised narration of the *Rāga* elements to help recognize the melodic qualities specific to the *Rāga*, the dominance of the choral strength in it almost rules out the factor of improvisation. The act of reiterating the *Rāga-tulā* after the *Śloka* seems to serve multiple purposes such as underscoring its special significance, adding drama to the melodic arrangement and also drawing the curtain on a style that is relaxed and unrestricted by time.

The *Pātani gīts* are believed to have been composed during the seventeenth century under the patronage of the Koch kings in Darrang (*Ojā*, D. N., 1989, 20). *Pātani gīts* are metered compositions marked by fascinating alterations in metric cycles throughout its course. In spite of the rhythmic variations, the audience can almost instinctively identify the pulse and thus extract a substantial amount of pleasure. It is sung predominantly in a style close to the syllabic style as opposed to the melismatic style followed in the earlier section. The textual component that is sung is often repeatedly used to fit into different melodic themes.

For the present work, the *Pātani gīt* as renditioned by Ojā Sanjay Nath (PS, Vid 8b - *pātani gīt*) has been subjected to transcription and analyses. Upon observation, the *Pātani gīts* appear to be a collection of four units, one leading to the other with a touch of spontaneity. According to Ojā Dharma Kanta Deka, these four units are named as *Dihā*, *Digār*, *Pada* and *Moraṇi*. The *Pātani gīt* in hand has been claimed to be in *Śyāmgadā rāga* by active performers. In the *Dihā*, a dominant major pentatonic structure is immediately felt, although the use of ‘Ma’ in one particular phrase ‘Ga Ma Ga Re Sa’ that makes occasional occurrence in the progression disturbs the pentatonic mode. An entrancing quality of the *Dihā* of the *Pātani gīt* as seen in the *Pātani gīt* in hand, lies in the fact that the same textual line ‘*Nanda nacaya bāhu tuliyā*’ is set to three different *Tālas* - *Lecāri*, *Rupahī* and *Jikirī* – while skilfully administering a few melodic variations. By the time, the *Dihā* enters into the *Jikirī* phase, the mentioned phrase with ‘Ma’ completely disappears and the major pentatonic appears much bolder

(field note m9/ 14.06. 19). The shifts from a three-beat cycle in *Lecāri* and *Rupahī* to a two-beat one in *Jikirī* on the one hand and from a medium to a faster tempo on the other, speak of a structural grace that is virtuosic and enrapturing at the same time. It is to be noted that literature pertaining to *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī* records the use of one of the two *Tālas*, *Lecāri* or *Jikirī* (Sarma, N. C., 1991, 81).

The *Digār* (PS, Aud 1- *pātani gīt digār*) in *Lecāri tāla I* is a short piece marked by absolute textual sparseness where the ending syllable drifts through a series of notes, thereby signifying a break from the style that precedes and follows it. Though the active bearers consider the *Digār* as one way of re-accenting the form of the *Rāga*, there is witnessed a solid disruption of the pentatonic mode found in the *Dihā* as the *Swarā* ‘Ni’ is put to considerable use. Further, a note few microtones below ‘Pa’ has been represented by ‘Má’ in the transcription. All these instances concretize a distinct break between the *Dihā* and the *Digār* (field note m10/ 14.06. 19). Moreover, as the *Digār* does not last long, it restricts the growth and realisation of the melodic framework assumed in the *Dihā*.

The *Pada* that comes next handles most of the textual content. The *Tāla* continuously changes in the *Pada* too and the demonstration of *Tāla bhānā* gives the impression of a break and also helps in the introduction of a different rhythm. There is a constant shift from triple to duple meter which accounts for considerable musical delight. The melodic design of the *Pada* is in keeping with that of the *Dihā*. However, ‘Ma’ now makes a sharper and straighter presence (field note m11/ 14.06. 19). The *Dihā* and the *Pada* can be likened to a *Chotākhyāl’s Sthāyi* and *Antarā*. A *Chotākhyāl* is one of the two variants of a specific type of Hindustani classical music called *Khayāl* and *Sthāyi* and *Antarā* are parts of a *Khayāl* song. The *Pada* chooses to traverse on a pitch plane markedly higher than that of the *Dihā* and also like the *Antarā*, the *Pada* has greater textual density than the *Dihā*.

The *Moraṇi* represents the gradual closing of the *Pātani gīt*. A single line is sung in *Drut laya* (an accelerant tempo) and after a climax is reached the *Tāla bhānā* follows and the *Pātani gīt* comes to an end. The *Moraṇi* which presents the concluding line(s) is shown to contain the *Bhanitā* or as stated earlier, the act of mentioning the name of the poet in the ending verses of a poem by the poet (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 61). However, the practitioners refrain from singing such a *Bhanitā*

on the ground that they have never learned such a thing from their master, nor have they ever heard any of their predecessors or contemporaries perform the same. In place of *Bhanitā*, they sing a single line of which no mention is detected in available literature.

The nature of the melodic progression of *Moraṇi* is strikingly different from that of *Dihā* and *Pada*. The use of ‘Ma’ is regular and does not appear like a forced entry into a pentatonic form. Further, ‘Ni’ is sufficiently brought into use, thereby making a complete deviation from the earlier format. Taking these observations into consideration, it can be assumed that the *Moraṇi* has been attached as a unit to end the *Gīt* without paying heed to the melodic discipline.

It is now clear that the *Pātani gīt* in hand fails to conform to one melodic identity throughout for it to be understood as a sample piece based on *Śyāmgadā rāga* as claimed. As a matter of fact, the *Pātani gīt* appears to be maintaining the factor of structural units in showing a disciplined progress from *Dihā* to *Moraṇi* but not in sustaining one melodic framework to claim one particular *Rāga* identity. If, however, some frame has to be guessed at looking at the *Dihā* and *Pada*, the ascending and descending mode would roughly appear as follows – Sa Re Ga Ma Ga, Re Pa, Dha Sạ / Sạ Dha Pa, Ga Ma Ga Re, Ga Re Sa. Now, this mode has nothing to do with that found in the earlier part of *Pātani* (field note m12/ 04.07.19).

It can be said that throughout the *Pātani* the same *Rāga* format is not maintained. Further, though both the earlier part of and the *Pātani gīt* are claimed in this case to be in *Śyāmgadā rāga*, the claim now, after this analysis, stands void and it has become clear that the practitioners could not understand the relation of a *Rāga* and the melodic format it represents, which is why probably the name of the same *Rāga* is used for differing frameworks.

### **2.5.3 Viṣṇu pada and Daśavatāra dance (Stage III):**

The *Viṣṇu pada* stands out as a separate stage because of its two distinctive attributes - the rendering of the verses narrating the ten incarnations of *Lord Viṣṇu* and the *Ojā*’s elaborative dance portrayal while remarkably essaying diverse *Mudras* (hand gestures). The three main parts of this stage are *Dihā*, *Rāga* and *Pada*. After this is found the repetition of a *Dihā* in a different rhythm and tempo

while keeping the melodic figure unharmed and then of the *Rāga* without any transmutation. It may be noted in passing that in *Sattrīyā Ojāpāli*, the *Viṣṇu pada* along with the *Daśāvatāra* dance is together termed *Dihā* and the performance then is termed *Dihā gowā* (Barua, A. C., 1974, 1065).

The *Dihā*, a couplet sung in *Lecāri tāla I*, is considered a necessary precursor of the *Rāga* which the active bearers sometimes call *Pāteni* (or beginning) to mean that it is a way to initiate and lay out the *Rāga* for detailed presentation in the subsequent stages. Texts on *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* boldly declare that the *Rāga* usually rendered during *Viṣṇu pada* bears no specific name and is simply called *Viṣṇu pada* or *Viṣṇu padar dhek* (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 64). On the other hand, contemporary professional experts like Ojā Dharma Kanta Deka of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* plainly state that the *Rāga* chosen in the stage of *Pātani* should be continued through *Viṣṇu pada* till *Sangītālāp*, although in real practice it appears to be a distant thought. Many a time, the *Dihā* is found disjointed from the *Rāga* and the *Pada* that follow it. For example, the *Dihā* “*Govindāi Govindāi Hari Mai*” which is considered the *Dihā* of *Sāranga rāga* is followed by *Pada* which stands for another completely different *Dihā* “*Bolā mukhe Rām*” supposed to be set in a *Rāga* other than *Sāranga*.

This highlights the fact that the grammatical build lays scattered during a present-day performance of *Viṣṇu pada* owing to its misrepresentation and unfortunate manipulation while being handed down orally for generations. That the bodily conformation of a *Rāga* suffers is also evident in the fact that the current performing artistes have no definite idea and differ among themselves as to which set of *Rāga* and *Pada* should get which particular *Dihā* before it. Considerable efforts need to be made to conduct an intensive musicological study directed towards discovering and grouping those *Dihā*, *Rāga* and *Pada* which are cast in the same melodic framework, or simply, in the same *Rāga*.

Another text-based claim is that the *Dihā* can also be called *Thāvar* (Ojā D. N., 1989, 64). This sounds inexact as *Thāvar* or *Caraṇ* is the name given to different stages of *Rāga* development while a *Rāga* is performed using verses in the *Sangītālāp* stage. The number of *Thāvares* within a *Rāga* are fixed; for example, *Sāranga Rāga* has five *Thāvares*. The thinning of the Tantric film under the subjugating influence of Vaishnavism and Neo-Vaishnavism at large is

conspicuous in such practices as the use of the text of the *Viṣṇu pada dihā* “*Bolā mukhe Rām*” in sattras and of another *Dihā* “*Amaya mādhuri jura prabhure nāma*” in the art form known as *Thiyanām* (Barua, A. C., 1974, 1065). Further, out of the seven *Dihās*, the *Ojāpālis* now learn only one or two which signals the decline of the rich dimensions of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music.

The *Rāga* that follows the *Dihā* is characterized by free time and in this it acts in accordance with the trend observed in the rendition of *Rāga* during the *Pātani* stage. The *Jikirī tāla* is played in the background and it is not in harmony with the vocal part. The *Rāga* is sung by the *Ojā* and then by the *Pālis*. But this is seldom found today. This is a matter of great concern because on account of the *Ojā*'s discontinuation, the *Dāināpāli* would no longer be able to get promoted to the *Ojā*'s position nor can the *Rāgas* be saved from getting out of use with time.

The *Daśāvatāra padas* are next sung in *Lecāri tāla*. The verses are set in two different sets of melodic matter; the act of cymbals briefly falling silent and dissolving the meter-barriers for the singers at the beginning of the second set speaks of a stylistic convention aimed at delivering an enhanced pleasure. Originally, the Sanskrit *Ślokas* composed by the poet Jaidev describing the *Dasavatāras* of Lord *Viṣṇu* were used for performance (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 199). With time, Assamese translated verses came to be used but are found to differ from those existing in the *Kirtana* composed by Srimanta Sankardeva. Kaviraj Chakravarty translated *Gīt Govindam*, *Sankhasura Vadh*, etc. The *Sankhasura Vadh* episode might have been incorporated from Chakravarty's work into the *Daśāvatāra* verses relating to the first incarnation of Lord *Viṣṇu* (Barua, A. C., 1974, 1065). According to Ojā Tirtha Nath, the verses of the *Daśāvatāra* have been taken from *Dangshi Puran* (PS, Aud 2 – dangshi puran). Moreover, in the practical field, due to the verses being orally transmitted, the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performers are found to sing such *Daśāvatāra* verses which differ from those found in *Ojāpāli* literature. For example, while describing the second incarnation of Lord *Viṣṇu* the three sets of verses given below are found to use word variations in some parts:

- a) *Anantare bhaila prabhu kurma avatāra*  
*Pr̥thibī sāgara p̥r̥sthe dharilā mandāra.* (Barua, A. C., 1974, 888)
- b) *Anantare bhaila prabhu kurma avatāra*  
*Kṣīra sāgarata p̥r̥sthe dharilā mandāra.* (Oja, D.N., 1989, 67)
- c) *Dwitīyate namo kurma rupī Bhagawanta*  
*Kṣīra sāgarara p̥r̥sthe mandāra dharilanta.*

(collected from Ojā Dharmeswar Nath)

As already stated, the *Pada* is followed by a partially-altered repetition of the *Dihā* and then the *Rāga* is exactly reiterated. The *Viṣṇu pada* closes with *Tāla bhāṇā* before which the textual phrase of *Dihā* is repeated several times in fast tempo more like an utterance as opposed to a song-like pattern.

The recorded sample of *Viṣṇu pada* as performed by Ojā Sanjay Nath reveals sufficient incongruity in the melodic plan of different units. (PS, Aud 3 - viṣṇu pada tune1 & dihā) and (PS, Aud 4 - viṣṇu pada tune 2 & Rāga) / (PS, Vid 9 - viṣṇu pada and daśāvatāra dance). The *Dihā* has a clear major pentatonic format. Though the *Dihā* is not an elaborate piece and moves within a restricted space, the melodic mode as realized in the ascending and descending patterns is understood well. The *Rāga* that follows moves far away from the melodic layout presented in the *Dihā*. It is to be noted that the *Rāga* rendition is not sufficiently sustained to facilitate a better understanding of the specific framework. Nonetheless, the frequent occurrence of note communities like ‘Re Ma’, ‘Ma Re’ along with the use of ‘Ni’ in direct dissension speaks of a major deviation from what has been realized in the *Dihā*. The *Padas* are sung in two different tunes. These two movements, again, are incongruous to each other in terms of the melodic rules. While the first movement is more like the *Dihā* in exploiting a major pentatonic design, the second movement is found to follow more or less the melodic parameters set earlier during the *Rāga* stage. In the second movement, the use of ‘Ga’ in the short non-metrical piece preceding the main melody introduces a further hurdle in figuring out the format. *Komal Ga* is however not brought into use even once in the melody (field note m13/ 23.08. 19).



It is mentionable that since multiple samples of *Viṣṇu pada* were not analysed, it cannot be accurately understood whether the *Padas* are sung in different movements. Observing the present sample, it appears that the first movement which is not in sync with the *Rāga* format is a forceful entry into one ongoing melodic system. Further, the *Dihā* appears to be a free-standing piece which cares not for the melodic propensities of the following units. Thus, it is quite evident that the claimed sustenance of a *Rāga* format from the *Dihā* through the other subsequent units of the *Viṣṇu pada* is not at all practically realized. There is a possibility that the performers being grammatically incompetent bring in differing melody-lines within the total structure. The primary concern, as it appears, is to maintain the sequence - *Dihā, Rāga, Pada* – than to acknowledge and strictly maintain a *Rāga* format.

#### **2.5.4 Kathopakathan:**

The succeeding step of *Kathopakathan* or *Kathanī* behaves as a tailpiece to the *Gaid*. Working as a brief hiatus in a *Sabhā's* musical performance, it features the *Dāināpāli* explaining in a lucid dialogic manner, the arrangements made for the *Sabhā*, the deities present in the *Sabhā*, etc. (PS, Vid 10 - viṣṇu bhāṇani - kathopakathan 1). Besides, he throws light on the *Bhakti rasa* or the essence of devotion, of moral values and of the importance of chanting god's name- “*Hari nām māhātmya, pāpīr śāsti*” (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 65). The humour-rich conversation between the *Ojā* and the *Dāināpāli* interwoven with witty satire aids the much-needed digression from the long-standing gravity generated by the performance so far. It is to be noted that the active practitioners prefer to designate this *Kathopakathan* as *Viṣṇur bhāṇani* (exposition of *Lord Vāsudeva/ Viṣṇu*) to mean the comprehensive description of all the central and peripheral factors involved in performing the ritualistic worship. The term ‘*Viṣṇur bhāṇani*’ is however, not to be found in the available *Ojāpāli* texts.

Further, what seems more important is that *Kathopakathan* is not exclusive to this particular standpoint between *Gurumandalī* and *Sangītālāp*. The space for *Kathanī* or prosaic explanation of verses sung along with strains of humorous discussion of diverse subjects is created in the stages of *Sangītālāp* and *Miśra gīts* too by the performers. The material of *Kathopakathan*, thus, serves multiple

purposes of breaking the monotony, explaining things in regular discourse for better comprehension of the audience and of lightening the mood (PS, Vid 10a - kathopakathan 2).

Late Durgeswar Nath Ojā mentioned the *Dāināpāli*'s performance of the *Rabhār janma* after the *Kathopakathan* (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 65). The verses and the meter constituting the *Rabhār janma* are found to vary from text to text (Oja, D. N., 1989, 68 and Barua, A. C., 1974, 891). It is interesting to note that no *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* group is found to recite such an etiological ballad in the present day although the performance of *Gurumandalī* is generally considered to completely close only with *Kathopakathan* followed by the *Rabhār janma* (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 65). Ojā Tirtha Nath opines that this ballad material might have been an integral part in detailed performances in the past but have gone out of use with time. For the purpose of documentation, he even offered to put to tune the verses of the *Rabhār janma*.

#### **2.5.5 Sangītālāp (Stage IV):**

The musical sphere of *Sangītālāp* features a systematized mass enclosing almost all the signature elements defining *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music within itself. Employing in profusion the stylistic devices vital to his craft, an *Ojāpāli* artiste realizes the stage of *Sangītālāp* as an apt opportunity to uphold his level of proficiency over the creative plot of the art learned. The geometry of the music, refined and remodeled over the centuries, enables articulation of a wide range of vocal ornaments by the singer while inspiring an aural flamboyance. In fact, the decorative character of both content and style is seen to mirror the silken finish of *Sangītālāp* music.

The artistic apparatus of the stage preceding *Sangītālāp*, which is the *Gurumandalī* or *Gaid*, is projected more toward establishing a ritualistic linkage. Being reckoned almost an extension of the priestly actions within the confines of the ritual of *Vāsudeva* worship, *Gurumandalī* exploits a unidirectional musical formation regulating experimentation in textual and methodical variety. In contrast, as the *Sangītālāp* music is tailor-made for generating an aesthetic excitement in the audience present, while also illuminating them on scriptural knowledge, it is marked with an enforced play of wide-ranging technicalities. On

the one hand, the stage of *Sangītālāp* is unlike the preceding *Gaid* in not sharing the latter's overpowering ritual-centric goals, and on the other, to the *Gīts* that follow in comparatively possessing much more technical magnificence and constitutional rigor.

Herein the stage of *Sangītālāp* presides the scintillating glamour of an *Ojāpāli* recital. That it comprises stellar performances of verses from epic poems or Puranic literature which actually reflect much of the defining character of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is a testament to that. It needs to be reasserted at this juncture that ritual affiliations aside, a fair part of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*'s popularity hinges on the musical treatment of the epic narratives or sacred writings. As a matter of fact, the term '*Biyāh-gowā*' (literally meaning, as mentioned earlier, singing from Vyās) that forms the name directly refers to Vyāsdeva and his *Mahabharata*. This sufficiently demonstrates the focal importance attached to epic-based recitation in the art form and the inclusion of such a recitation in *Sangītālāp* speaks of its immense value within the performative landscape of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. It may be however mentioned at this point that the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* groups also sing from *The Ramayana*.

The musical narration of epic/Purana-extracted verses is, however, not the sole subject handled in this stage nor can it be considered the exclusive representative of the entire body of *Biyāh-gowā* music especially marked for its rich multiformity. Besides the rendition of *Akhyāns*, a circumstantial presentation of *Rāga-bānā(s)* is a major attraction too and in fact, it is this rich treasure which pronouncingly asserts the remarkable individuality of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. Thus, the duo of *Rāga-bānā(s)* and *Ākhyān(s)* together account for the considerable build-up and appeal of *Sangītālāp*. This stage commences with a *Bānā* followed by an *Ākhyān*. The rendition of *Rāga-bānā* is interspersed with that of *Ākhyāns*.

Stage IV – SANGĪTĀLĀP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bānā               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gor Bānā</li> <li>- Thiya rāga</li> <li>- Doṇuwā bānā</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ākhyāns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pada chanda Ākhyāns and Doṅuwā pada</li> <li>- Chabi chanda Ākhyāns</li> <li>- Lecāri chanda Ākhyāns</li> <li>- Dulaḍī chanda Ākhyāns</li> <li>- Jhumuri chanda Ākhyāns</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rāga-Bānā</li> </ul> <p>(examples) - Sāranga, Kalyān, Nāt, Śyāmgadhā, Rāmgiri, Barāḍī, Suhāi etc.</p>

### 2.5.5.1 Bānā:

The *Rāgas* in *Sangītālāp* have been retitled and categorized as *Bānās* and *Rāga-bānās* in the present study though no such demarcation has ever been attempted by the scholars in their works or by the active performers. Such a division is justified on the ground that the *Bānā* and the *Rāga-bānā* differ in many respects. Firstly, while the set of three *Rāgas*, classified here as *Bānā*, raises the curtain on *Sangītālāp*, the *Rāga-bānās* are rendered at a later phase of the said stage. Further, *Rāga-bānās* can be voluntarily chosen by the performers or by the audience present whereas the inaugural *Bānā* is fixed according to the occasion. But most importantly, the *Bānā* and the *Rāga-bānā* bear structural and methodical differences too.

The word ‘*Bānā*’ is considered to have evolved from such terms as ‘*Bīṇā*’ and ‘*Benā*’. *Bīṇā* or *Benā* refers to the melody-producing string instrument which, according to some practitioners, was an integral part in a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpālī* performance in the distant past (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 100). B. N. Dutta, too, holds the term *Bānā* to owe its origin to *Bīṇā* – sage Narada played the *Rāgas* with the help of the *Bīṇā* which with time came to be known as *Bena* and later *Bānā* (Dutta, B. N., 2011, 52). This brings us to the point that *Bānā* refers to *Rāga*. As a matter of fact, N. C. Sarma mentions that *Bānā* and *Rāga* are interchangeable terms (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 100). In common parlance, *Bānā* refers to a kind of ornamental accessory worn by women. For being a sophisticated piece of work that is ornamental in nature, a *Rāga* can be perceived as possessing the same

beauty and symmetry inherent in the intricate patterns of a piece of ornament and in this sense, *Bānā* seems an apt word to mean *Rāga* and almost a direct translation of the term ‘*Alankār*’ (progression of notes) found in Hindustani music.

Further, Sarma, among other scholars, considers *Bānā* as the *Pada* (part in the performance material of *Bānā* and *Rāga-bānā*) which actually refers to the section of *Carans* comprising the primary text and sung relatively on a high pitch (Sarma, N. C., 1991, 200) as opposed to the *Thokā* part which suggests the ending *Moraṇi* section where the accelerated tempo hurries to end the piece and as such where the pitch falls and the importance of the text exceedingly diminishes. It is probably because of the high pitch demarcation of the *Carans*, B.N. Dutta quotes from the *Natyaśāstra* to define *Bānā* –“*Ucchaswarare gowā padar surak bānā bolā hoi*” (the *pada* sung in a higher pitch is called *Bānā*) (Dutta, B. N., 2001, 50).

Although in this explanation *Bānā* has been used to primarily mean the *Carans*, the inference can be better understood as making a clear demarcation between the *Moraṇis* and the section preceding them. It would be wise to consider *Bānā* not just as *Carans* but every other part that accompanies it before the *Moraṇi* sets in. After the *Moraṇi*, of course, there is a *Dihā* which for many reasons seems to be a postlude somewhat distanced from the main body. In this study the word ‘*Bānā*’ has been taken to be something related to *Rāga* or, in another sense, a proper composition exploiting the framework of a *Rāga*. Further, as already stated, *Bānā* and *Rāga-bānā* have been separately categorized because although both deal with *Rāgas*, the layout of presentation is different in the two among other things.

#### **2.5.5.1.1 Gor Bānā:**

Though not learned and practised by the young *Ojāpāli* performers now, a very few *Ojās*, rooted in the old school, admit performing the *Gor bānā*, quite back in time, in its entirety and reflect that with the discontinuation of this *Bānā*, it now remains confined only to their memory. Such senior *Ojās* emphasize the significant role of *Pālis* in a *Gor bānā* performance, but with the fall of the trend no *Pāli* today can recite this *pas*se music. The term ‘*Gor*’ literally means root. The coinage of *Gor bānā* possibly bespeaks that significant important basal unit providing anchorage to the entire musical collection of *Sangītālāp*. As a matter of

fact, lying at the roots, or so to say, performed at the outset, the *Gor bānā* encases a myriad of subtler tools employed in evolving the musical ideas and in developing a unique musical character. It engulfs one whole range of melodic movements representing the delicacy of the *Rāga* system. A powerhouse of technical details, the *Gor bānā* can be perceived as an extended lecture on thematic manoeuvres and melodic articles of great finesse. It is, therefore, appropriately called *Rāgar rajā* or ‘King of *Rāgas*’ (*Ojā*, D. N., 1989, 72). In simple terms, such a dignified address refers to the *Gor bānā* as one complex whole containing the finer details of a number of other *Rāgas*. In standard reference, it is called *Māllab Rāga* (*Ojā*, D. N., 1989, 72). The *Gor bānā*, in fact, takes on some other names too which are to be dealt with in the further course of this discussion.

The *Gor bānā* proclaims its difference from a later-phased *Rāga-bānā* in its basic layout. The latter, a seven-layered entity, comprises four necessary segments preceding the *Caraṅs* or that crucial lot containing the mainline text and greater methodical density. The initial quartet of *Huṁkar*, *Ghunni*, *Tolani* and *Mālitā* are left out in the *Gor bānā*. *Ojāpālis* flag off the *Bānā* with the *Caraṅs* but *Ghunni* has been mentioned in *Thiya Rāga* by the active bearers as we shall see later. A total of six or seven *Caraṅs* are sung before the *Gor bānā* draws to a close just like any other *Rāga-bānā* with the *Dihā*.

The *Gor bānā* most closely resembles a concise cyclical form. The *Caraṅs* are more or less self-contained pieces dexterously arranged into one large composition. Rather than working on a lyrics-based artistry, the performer affixes much more importance to shaping the musical passages. Consequently, the choice of text is kept open and even the same phrases may roll over a couple of *Caraṅs*. Besides, it is noteworthy that a few syllables, very much characteristic of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music, run as motifs and they aid in covering the space beyond a textual phrase where the melody-line needs to be carried forward.

The time dimension is handled by the *Cābtāla* (see page 355) for most parts of the *Gor bānā* and the rhythmic accompaniment of two different types of *Cābtāla* is witnessed. Because of this thorough *Cābtāla* assistance, the *Gor bānā* is also called *Cābar bānā* (*Ojā*, D. N., 1989, 72). Though most active bearers follow this

*Cābtāla*-format, a few have been found replacing the *Cābtāla* with another duple meter rhythm called *Thokā tāla* in some parts. However, it is quite settled that the *Gor bānā* cannot do without *Cābtāla* and hence it being called *Cābar bānā* holds ground.

The first two *Caraṇs* are set in one of the two variants of *Tinteliyā* or three-beat *Cābtāla*. In both the *Caraṇs*, episodes of a conjunct melodic motion (the melodic phrases move in a stepwise manner) are conspicuous. The first *Caraṇ* reveals a restraint in experimenting with different pitch registers. The progression restricted to mid-pitch in the first and displaying a controlled expansion to the high register in the second, echoes the conventional method of working on the formal structure of a *Rāga* while gradually moving from a low or mid to high pitch placement. The sudden jolts on a note much close to a *Khatkā*, which is characteristic of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* singing, runs through the *Gor bānā* and the first two *Caraṇs* are no exception. Both these initial *Caraṇs* ending on ‘Ma’ (perfect fourth) suggest a slightly weaker cadence.

The next three *Caraṇs* feature a gradual thickening of the texture as notes of the *Rāga* are free-handedly played with while the melodic shape grows bolder. In these five primary *Caraṇs*, an extensive use of vocal styles such as smooth *Meend-like* glides between notes, grace notes, oscillations between adjacent notes etc. are found which lavishly enrich the musical output of *Gor bānā*.

The *Tin-sebiyā* or three-beat *Cābtāla* is found to cover the first three *Caraṇs*, although Durgeswar Nath Ojā observes that the three-beat *Cābtāla* must continue till the fifth *Caraṇ* and the single-beat one is to be used in the sixth *Caraṇ*. There may be a lack of unanimous agreement on the point at which the *Cābtāla* changes, but the fact remains that there is a necessary shift from triple time to duple time (the single beat in *Eksebiya cābtāla* is to be read as a two-time movement) which enhances the taste and colour of the melodic presentation of the *Gor bānā*. Further, the tempo is even-paced till the fourth *Caraṇ*; it is a toned-down *moderato*. In the fifth *Caraṇ*, the tempo increases to become a full-grown *moderato*. The rise of tempo is at its pinnacle in the sixth *Caraṇ* wherein the closing part displays a further upswing.

The racy, fetching melodic ripples created in the sixth *Caraṇ* give the tonal power of the *Bānā* added impetus. The animated run of the *Thokā pada*, a specific kind of verse meant only for a speedy execution, grants a special kind of buoyancy to the auditory image. The beauty lies in the fact that the hurried executionary narrative of the sixth *Caraṇ* seems to be the climactic episode planned from the beginning; as if the audience could speculate such a phase coming ahead of time. Through a rise in the relative rapidity of pulse before the sixth *Caraṇ*, the device of foreshadowing is effectively implemented and one is led into this *Caraṇ* quite naturally.

Though each *Caraṇ* is resolving in nature, an ongoing build-up of a tension or musical intensity effecting an emotional or psychological unrest in the audience, is an overt realization of the same. This single strain of tension, more rhythmic and textural in nature that unwinds across the length and breadth of the *Bānā* and opposed to those numerous tensions quickly releasing in each *Caraṇ*, reaches a peak, more towards the end, in the sixth *Caraṇ*. An instant release is achieved with the melody breaking free of the shackling principles of rhythm and tempo dictated by the cymbals and the *Tāla bhañā* being demonstrated.

As stated earlier, *Tāla bhañā* is a style which instantly dissolves the ongoing meter and pulse by demonstrating characteristic strokes of two or more rhythms in a row and usually ending on a single clap-like stroke of *Cābtāla*. This is a cathartic moment for the audience and with this final repose the end of the *Bānā* is sensed complete. The *Ojāpāli* artists call this *Caraṇ* as *Moraṇi* which as mentioned earlier stands for an action that brings forth a closure. In this sense, *Moraṇi* is a befitting word to mark this stage within the *Bānā*.

Though the available literature on *Ojāpāli* does not corroborate a seventh *Caraṇ*, *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* troupers admit suffixing a *Caraṇ* to the sixth one. Dharmeswar Nath Ojā affirms that this *Caraṇ* includes the exact melodic copy of the second *Moraṇi* of *Doṇuwā bānā* (field note 8/ 10.12.17). In such a case, this *Caraṇ* is nothing but a labored entry into the melodic expanse of the *Gor bānā* because being two different *Bānās*, each has its stipulated note pattern and progressions and melodic profile.



A musicographical attempt of *Gor bānā*, made during this study, has revealed no harmony as such between these two. The notated scripts, thus, seem to convincingly refute the assertions of the named *Ojā*. Observing the given turn of events, it can be supposed that an oral tradition being deprived of strong fortifications to defend itself against mishandling and distortion must have encouraged such interchanging of materials between their prescribed locales. Since no text records a seventh *Caraṇ*, it is highly plausible that the performing artistes appended an extra *Caraṇ* to the *Gor bānā* during their practice, most possibly to add beauty by extending the denouement presented in the sixth *Caraṇ*.

It is to be noted that the interviewed *Ojā* confessed that this seventh *Caraṇ* is a detachable part of the *Gor bānā* and is rendered on the volition of a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* group (field note 68/ 27.03.19). Such a statement reaffirms the view that the seventh *Caraṇ* has never been an essential part of the *Gor bānā* and loosely subjoined later. Secondly, since the practitioners lack hold of musical grammar, they fail to acknowledge that every *Rāga* or *Bānā* is a set of inviolable rules and that a new compositional section added to a *Bānā* must be in accordance with those rules. They must have been able to only draw the inference from their practical knowledge that it is safe to interchange, although restrictively, melodic parts between the different *Bānās*.

Though the attempted scores apparently decry the connection claimed between *Gor bānā*'s seventh *Caraṇ* and second *Moraṇi* of *Doṇuwā bānā*, what needs to be taken into consideration is that the notations are based on the renditions of two different *Ojās*, namely *Gor bānā* by Tirtha Nath Ojā and *Doṇuwā bānā* by Dharmeswar Nath Ojā. Just as a *Rāga* in the established classical systems are presented while framing it in different compositions, it is probable that the two named *Ojās* learned two different compositions of *Doṇuwā bānā*. Since no research has gone into discovering the exact melodic structure either of *Gor bānā* or *Doṇuwā bānā* by recording and preparing multiple scores of the *Bānās* as rendered by different *Ojās* and studying the trends similar to all the varieties, it cannot be instantaneously denounced that Ojā Tirtha Nath's version is not a part of *Doṇuwā bānā*.

One more interesting thing to note is that although not trained grammatically, the performers do hold a definite idea of musical form and appeal and on that basis attempt additions that do not look totally out of place. There is, in fact, great textural similarity between the seventh *Caraṇ* and the claimed *Moraṇi* of *Doṇuwā bānā*. Moreover, the seventh *Caraṇ* bears all the cardinal traits of the sixth *Caraṇ* to help understand it as a naturally occurring elongation of the latter (field note m14/ 23.08. 21) In other words, like the sixth, the seventh *Caraṇ* displays such features as a rising tempo, dissolution of meter and pulse to signal the end, etc.

The *Dihā* is specifically prefixed with the word ‘*Bandhā*’ (meaning ‘tied to’ as mentioned earlier) in a later-phased *Rāga-bānā* where it is understood as a postlude briefing the fundamental melodic tendencies of the *Rāga* while being perceived, at the same time, as an indispensable piece before commencing an *Ākhyān* in which the text is composed of verses set in the meter called *Pada*. The *Dihā* in a *Bānā* can be treated likewise; the performance sets of both *Thiya Rāga* and *Doṇuwā bānā* have fixed movements of *Nayan dihā* and *Nārāyan dihā* respectively as their end parts. However, *Gor bānā*'s defunct *Dihā* cannot be recovered even from the most seasoned *Ojās*. It is interesting to note that Ojā Durgeswar Nath in his book negates the existence of any *Dihā* (and the parts of the *Ākhyān* that follow) in both the *Gor bānā* and the *Thiya Rāga* (Oja, D.N., 1989, 72). Only fleeting reference to the text of *Gor bānā*'s *Dihā* has been made by Ojā Dharmeswar Nath and Ojā Dharmakanta Dekka. Further there is disagreement between them on the textual component too. While the former considers the *Dihā* as beginning with “*A Hari rākha dinadayāla karuṇāmai*”, it is “*E bāndhāba Gopāla Jai Hari*” for the latter. (PS Vid 11 - Cābtāla dihā DKD/DN).

Interestingly, in Durgeswar Nath Ojā's book, these are charted as two of the twenty-three *Kholā dihās*. A *Kholā dihā*, where ‘*Kholā*’ means ‘open’ is indicative of a loose movement not fastened to any fixed performance unit and is thus diametrically opposite to a *Bandhā dihā*. Its usage is generally observed with a *Ākhyān* in *Pada*-meter that does not follow a *Bānā* or a *Rāga-bānā*. What can be conjectured from the two named *Ojās*' reference to *Kholā dihās* as *Bandhā dihā* of *Gor bānā* is that the *Ojās* in their past recitals must have chosen a *Kholā dihā* probably because the *Bandhā dihā* might have become extinct long back These

two *Ojās* or their mentors ended up affixing a *Kholā dihā* to the *Gor bānā* not knowing that it was at odds with the rule of melodic arrangement observed in the *Bānā*. On the other hand, Late Durgeswar Nath *Ojā* states that the *Dihā-calana* part does not follow the *Moraṇi* of *Gor bānā* as well as the *Dulārī Rāga* (Ojā D. N. 1989, 72).

Durgeswar Nath *Ojā* claims *Gānkā Rāga* to be another name for the *Gor bānā*; he cites the successive ascension of notes found in *Gor bānā* as the reason behind such a name (Ojā D. N., 1989, 72). N. C. Sarma too, walking on Durgeswar Nath *Ojā*'s footsteps, considers the term '*Gānkā*' as denoting the upward moving trend showed by the notes and he specifically holds the fourth *Caraṇ* to be the point where the ascending notes culminate (Sarma, N. C., 1991, 63). An active practitioner, Dharmeswar Nath *Ojā*, however states that it is the fifth *Caraṇ* and not the fourth where the climax is reached. As a matter of fact, the textual statements seem to present a naive understanding of the general musical plan of the *Gor bānā*.

On close observation, the *Caraṇs* appear free-standing entities yet at the same time constituent parts of an assemblage. In another sense, there seems to be no exact serial ascending and descending pattern running throughout the *Bānā* as claimed. The ascent and descent are a regular matter for each *Caraṇ*; the fact that most of the *Caraṇs* end at the final resolution tone, suggesting the completion of a musical thought, lends each of them a sense of autonomy. But what is probably meant by a sequential ascent is that the *Gor bānā* does not directly land on a high pitch register on its commencement. There is, of course, a gradual revelation of a forward moving pitch. From the third *Caraṇ*, high notes are exploited and from there on longer stay at such a high placement is observed for the next two consecutive *Caraṇs*. Further, the first two *Caraṇs* begin somewhere from the first half of mid-register while from the third a trend of starting with the 'Sa' (perfect eighth tonal) is observed which might have been possibly read as a peak.

Further, both N. C. Sarma and A. C. Barua declare *Gānkā* or *Ādarśa* (both meaning 'exemplary') *Rāga* as a perfect model to be followed because in all probability, it comprises most of the notes sung in the majority of *Rāgas*. (Sarma, N. C., 1991, 83; Barua, A. C., 1974, 1067). What the scholars probably mean to

say is that since the *Gor bānā* exploits most of the twelve notes covering the octave in different combination and permutation, it creates the shadow of different other *Rāgas*. It has been observed that except for the *Madhyam swara*, all other variable *swaras* are used along with their variant forms while ‘Pa’ (perfect fifth) being subjected to a regular usage in the *Gor bānā*. This wide range of notes has definitely led to the broadening of scope of the *Rāga* for it to pursue multidimensional melodic movements and create allusion to other *Rāgas*.

A high pitch exploitation in the rendition of a *Rāga* has been given such an exaggerated importance that the practitioners who possess no knowledge of a musical grammar tend to locate the pulsation of *Rāga* thereon and even limit its absolute identity to it. Possibly because the *Gor bānā* displays an extended stay at elevated frequencies while dealing with complex note combinations and broadly expositing the acquired vocal expertise, it has been generally considered as setting an example for other *Rāgas* to follow and hence the name *Gānkā* must have entered the *Ojāpāli* discourse.

However, nothing can be said with absolute surety on many grounds – firstly, since the *Gor bānā* has gone out of use now, a documenter cannot have the luxury of witnessing, studying and comparing multiple performances of this *Bānā* staged by different *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* groups. Secondly, the present observations are exclusively confined to the *Gor bānā* score prepared as per Tirtha Nath Ojā’s presentation and the accuracy of his rendition depends on many factors such as how well he remembers it, how strong is his pitch grip to suggest the correct notes or how much manipulation, if any, he has done of the original material. Since no attempt at musicographically documenting any strand of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music has been made before this, a safe station has been chosen between the textual description and attempted notation to develop a somewhat decent understanding of the music of *Gor bānā*. Besides, the *Gor bānā* demonstrated by Oja Dharmakanta Deka sounded much different from what Oja Tirtha Nath had sung; a study and comparison, if attempted in a later research work, of the notations of *Gor bānā* as presented by the two different *Ojās* might help in unearthing a more accurate skeleton of the *Bānā*.

The transcribed material of *Gor bānā* makes clear the deviation from the hypothesized melodic framework in the different *Carāṇs*. In the first *Carāṇ*, (PS, Aud 5 - *Gor bānā thāk 1 & 2*) ‘Re Ga’ seems to play an important role in the progression. The voice set of ‘Sa Re Ma’ hints at the fact that normal and direct ascension like ‘Re Ga Ma’ is not permitted in the arrangement. The usage of both the ‘Dha’ gives an interesting tint to the melodic hue. ‘Dha’ is not used to mean ascension but used with tact in combination with ‘Pa’ to suggest an *Avarohī* (descending) movement. The idea of moving from ‘Pa’ to *Shuddha* ‘Dha’ delivers a pleasant shock and it becomes clear that ‘Dha’ is brought into use to ascend further to ‘Ni’. However, the *Avarohī* pattern starting from the peak of ‘Ni’ witnesses the clever entry of ‘Pa Dha’ to solidify the clear-cut usage of ‘Dha’ as the progression descends (field note m15/ 20.09. 21).

In the second *Carāṇ*, (PS, Aud 6 - *Gor bānā thāk 1 & 2*) another melodic possibility with the ascending pattern ‘Sa Re Ma Pa Dha Sa’ is found surfacing. The return to the *Shadaj* (Sa) not realized in the first *Carāṇ*, is made here with the help of the cluster ‘Re Ga’ which sufficiently suggests one important trait of the structure. Similarly, the descending behaviour appears clearer – note communities like ‘Sa Ni Dha Ni’ frequent. An arrangement that seems of much importance is ‘Sa Ni Dha Ni Pa Dha Sa’ which carries the potential of determining a clear melodic pathway (field note m16/ 22.09. 21).

The third *Carāṇ* presents certain deviations, (PS, Aud 7 - *Gor bānā thāk 3*) the first being the use of *Shuddha* ‘Ga’ which plays a prominent role in both *Ārohi* and *Avarohī* styles. For example - ‘Sa Re Ga Re Sa’ or ‘Re Ga Sa’. The progression reveals complications with the use of the ‘Ga’, ‘Dha’ and also ‘Ni’. The pentatonic mode boldly surfaces with such moves ‘Re Ga Ga Pa, Pa Dha Pa Ga’. What complicates the assumed structure is the use of ‘Dha’ with ‘Ni’. ‘Dha Ni’ has not been witnessed even once before this *Carāṇ*. In fact, ‘Ni Sa, Dha Ni, Ni Ni Pa’ – such an instance hints at the sudden activation of a different melodic mode altogether. The progression then returns back to the so far familiar movement. However, it tilts more towards the pentatonic style and the framework of the first two *Carāṇs* remains dormant (field note m17/ 26.09. 21)

The fourth *Caraṇ* is a continuation of the third one (PS, Aud 8 - Gor *bānā thāk* 4). In fact, it appears a more disciplined combination of the frameworks of the first two *Caraṇ*s and that of the third one. That is, in the use of ‘Re Ga’ and ‘Dha Ni’ it resembles the first two movements. While in ‘Sa Re Ga Pa Dha’ it seems to follow the pentatonic method of the third movement. However, the pentatonic mood is not made to last long during the initial stage as the regular use of ‘Dha Ni’ proves disruptive. Although towards the later stage it is elaborately handled. The fourth *Caraṇ* is bereft of the shocks of the previous *Caraṇ* as located in such phrase as ‘Dha Ni’. As a matter of fact, ‘Dha’ completely disappears from this *Caraṇ* itself (field note m18/ 28.09. 21).

The fifth *Caraṇ* follows the pathways developed in the fourth *Caraṇ*. (PS, Aud 9 - Gor *bānā thāk* 5). However, there is no exact realisation of the pentatonic formula as the entry of ‘Ni’ and ‘Ma’ at specific points do not allow the progression to tilt towards an absolute pentatonic pattern (field note m19/ 30.09. 21)

The sixth *Caraṇ* (PS, Aud 10 - Gor *bānā thāk* 6 & 7) is unique in the sense that although there is no ‘Ma’ or ‘Ni’ in the progression, a pure major pentatonic is prevented from being realised for the use of Ga now and then. However, towards the end where the tempo suddenly accelerates ‘Ga’ is completely dropped and the five-toned method is realised undisturbed. (PS, Aud 11 - Gor *bānā thāk* 6 & 7). The last *Caraṇ* witnesses an adherence to the pure major pentatonic format. Thus, it is seen that throughout the *Gor bānā*, there is felt the presence of two-three frameworks which witness *Āvirbhāv* (disclosing the original form of the *Rāga*) and *Tirobhāv* (camouflaging the *Rāga*) at different points (field note m20/ 06.10. 21).

#### **2.5.5.1.2 Thiya Rāga:**

As *Gor bānā* is exclusively meant for an overnight concert, the *Thiya Rāga* is what replaces it in a performance relatively of shorter duration or in one that lasts only till early evening such as in second evening of *Gondhcauparī sabhā* and in *Eporiā sabhā*. However, the *Gor bānā* being outmoded today, irrespective of performance duration, it is mostly with the *Thiya Rāga* that the stage of *Sangītālāp* embarks on its musical voyage. Some amount of ambiguity surrounds the denomination of this evening-performed *Rāga*. In regular usage, the current

bearers call this *Pāteni dhāl pada* which in actuality stands only for the specified verses in the three *Carans*, though they mean the entire inaugural stage preceding the *Ākhyāns*.

In certain texts, this particular performance material has been termed *Thiya Rāga*. For example, A. C. Barua mentions that most *Ojāpālis* resort to singing *Thiya Rāga* which is relatively easier as compared to the complex anatomy of *Gor bānā* (Barna, A. C., 1974, 1067). N. C. Sarma too holds that *Thiya Rāga* is sung in place of *Māllab Rāga* (Sarma, N. C., 1991, 83). When questioned about the textual reference of this performance material also as *Thiya Rāga*, the performers state with certitude that *Thiya Rāga* is that refrain of high-pitched progression expressed through specific syllables which is precursory to each *Caran* containing the *Padas* or verses. This can be read as another fine example of the proclivity of an *Ojāpāli* professional to recognize the identity of a *Rāga* singularly in a characteristic melodic phrase or passage with prominent high register exercise. On observation, the character of melodic progression has been found to remain same both for the preliminary *Thiya Rāga* and the *Pada* that follows which testifies that they are not separate units working within differing frameworks. It is thus clear that the *Padas* are a continuation of the same musical thought introduced in what the performers call *Thiya Rāga* (field note m21/ 10.10. 21)

Furthermore, Ojā Durgeswar Nath mentions in his book, which is supported by a few active performers like Ojā Tirtha Nath too, that it is *Dulārī Rāga* which replaces the *Gor bānā* on the second day evening of a *Gondhcauparī sabhā* (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 72). Ojā Tirtha Nath, however, sang the common composition of *Thiya Rāga* or *Pāteni dhāl pada* when asked to perform the *Dulārī Rāga*. This instance sufficiently substantiates the fact that all three refer to the same thing. If the term ‘*Pāteni dhāl pada*’ is broken down, it would mean verses that initiate the *Sangītālāp*. It reflects a more casual understanding of the material. Although it is, as already seen, the only term the present performers know and use, in this work *Thiya* or *Dulārī Rāga* has been chosen for the purpose of referring to this phase of performance mostly on the ground that the tradition of commencing *Sangītālāp* with a *Bānā* or *Rāga* is an established one.

The structural topography of the *Thiya Rāga* is analogous to that of the *Gor bānā*. The only exception is that there exists a full-grown part acting as a prologue to the

*Carans* in the *Thiya Rāga* It is to be noted that the older generation *Ojās* such as Dharmeswar Nath and Dharmakanta Deke use the term *Ghunni* while young *Ojās* such as Ramesh Kalita prefer to call this part *Dihā* (PS, Aud 12a - Pāteni dhal pada discussion 1). However, *Ghunni* seems to be a far more appropriate term because it leads to sufficient confusion when the term *Dihā* is used for *Ghunni* because the ending section of the composition is invariably called *Dihā*. Under such a circumstance, naming two sections within the same composition with the same term gives rise to inconvenience. Besides, *Ghunni* is that which an invariable part of a *Rāga-bānā* is. Thus, *Ghunni* seems more apt to be used for *Thiya* or *Dulārī Rāga* because it too refers to a *Rāga*.

The active bearers declare the pre-eminence of the *Ghunni* by resorting to its rendition even when the other segments are left out in a performance compressed due to time constraints (PS, Vid 12 - *thiya Rāga*). As a matter of fact, an observation of the current trend of performance has revealed that most of the performers today go to the extent of mastering only the *Ghunni* and the concluding *Dihā* to represent the *Thiya Rāga*. Keeping aside the fact that such a practice is damaging to the exquisite build of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music, what is clearly felt is the paramount significance of the *Ghunni* over other constituent units in the eyes of the practitioners.

The *Ghunni* seems to be an attempt at condensing the key concepts of the *Rāga*. Though cast in a restrictive frame, it is more or less an elaborate *Calan* or movement describing the pathways of the *Rāga*. The smooth descend to the key tone suggests a final cadence in the end, yet the general impression that abundant materials of the *Rāga* would follow this brief introduction remains intact (field note m22/ 18.10. 21) Though *Coutāla* (see page 357) runs through all the *Carans*, the *Ghunni* has an obvious duple feel.

The three *Carans* that follow bring into play, in their own ways, specific note clusters delineating the unique construct of the *Rāga*. A musical motif, traced in the short melodic passage that is repeated at the onset of each *Caran* and marked with ornamental oscillations, enhances the overall appeal while working as an effective cue to the commencement of a new *Caran*. A resolution is assiduously strived for in the succeeding *Moraṇis*.



As in the *Gor bānā*, here too, the second *Moraṇi*, borrowed from that of *Doṇuwā bānā*, flexibly hangs on to the main body of the *Thiya Rāga*. The *Moraṇis* display a behaviour similar to that of *Gor bānā*'s. The brisk movement delivers an extraordinary haste in flattening the curve and settling the musical turmoil. What is interesting to note is that here the first *Moraṇi* too makes some prominent melodic deviations markedly producing a tonal difference (field note m23/ 24.10. 21) Of course, this is a view based on documentation done on a single *Ojā*'s rendered version. A comparison of *Moraṇis* as renditioned by different *Ojās* might greatly help in blowing the dust off its actual picture. The inference that holds ground in this context is that individual impressions have been allowed more into the *Moraṇi* than the rest of the *Rāga-bānā*. The *Thiya Rāga* ends with the duple-metered *Bandhā dihā* popularly called *Nayan dihā* if what comes next is the recitation of an *Akhyān* in the verse meter of *Pada*.

The transcribed material of the *Thiya Rāga* present an undisturbed pentatonic progression for one major part of the body, that is the *Carāṇs*. (PS, Aud 12b - *thiya Rāga*). The melodic arrangement appears simple with regular use of 'Ga' and 'NI' and 'Pa' acting as an intermediate note supporting the ascending and descending movements. What needs to be noticed is that this melodic structure involving a minor pentatonic formula, (where 'Dha' and 'Re' are completely left out) is a frequently used pattern witnessed in all the stages of a full-performance. If this is so, it would be safe to a large extent to conceive that this readymade pentatonic formation has been put to use in the event of the loss of the original material (field note m24/ 27.10. 21).

The existing *Thiya rāga* has no melodic novelty to offer nor does it possess a good degree of significance in the text line. Under such circumstances, the *Thiya rāga* now appears to be a casual attempt at filling the void before an *Ākhyān*. The performers are keen to maintain the sequential rule attached with the performance materials, which is why they did not try to abandon the *Thiya rāga* in spite of the loss of its original melodic details. The performers, however, do not admit of any such loss possibly on the ground that they have learned it in a way not grammatically sound and since there is no scope of extempore singing to support the idea of a melodic framework within the performance of *Thiya rāga*, they

could not afford to give meaningful comments on the kind of *Rāga* being essayed in the composition.

Interestingly, the two *Moraṇis* drift away from the format of the preceding section. ‘Dha’ and ‘Re’ enter the scene while ‘Ga’ and ‘Ni’ disappear. ‘Re Ma’ is the most commonly occurring phrase while ‘Dha’ is subjected to regular use in the progression. The second *Moraṇi*, again, matches with neither the initial section of the *Thiya rāga* nor with the first *Moraṇi* as it uses ‘Dha’ but follows the ‘Ga’ and ‘Ni’ combination with the exclusion of ‘Re’ (field note m 25/ 30.10. 21).

One thing that is noticeable is that the performers consider the *Moraṇis* as such parts enjoying some kind of flexibility because they do not prefer to continue the melodic format of the earlier part in the *Moraṇis*. In this sense, it can be conceived that the *Rāga* or the *Bānā* is held as something to be maintained till the *Carans*. But from an opposite angle, it can be held that in the *Thiya rāga* presently in hand it is the first *Moraṇi* which speaks something of the *Rāga* format since the earlier section displays the use of a common structure used in other materials too. The second *Moraṇi* can be safely neglected because it is most of the time considered a detachable part not integral to the composition (PS, Vid 28 DN ghunni thiya rāga, Moraṇi 2).

The *Dihā* called *Nayan dihā* that comes in the end reveals a sufficiently different behaviour as compared to the earlier *Carans*. Of course, on certain points it seems an elaboration of the *Ghunni* moves. ‘Dha’ introduced only once in *Ghunni* is brought into constant use in the *Dihā*. Though ‘Dha Ni Sa’ is not seen, ‘Ni Dha’ comes frequently. Like the *Ghunni*, ‘Re’ is subjected to considerable use. However, the phrase ‘Re Ma’ did not appear in the *Ghunni*. ‘Re Ga’ combination was mostly seen in it. One claim can be made that the *Ghunni* and *Dihā* have common elements and on this ground it can be conjectured that these retain the actual framework of *Thiya* or *Dulārī rāga* (field note m26/ 04.11. 21). Further research work collecting more samples of *Ghunni* and *Dihā* can aid in figuring out the melodic structure of *Thiya* or *Dulārī rāga*.

### 2.5.5.1.3 Doñuwā bānā:

The term *Doñuwā* is read in common discourse as a kinless person living alone. Further, *Doñuwā bānā* is also known as *Gharjiyā bānā* where the word ‘*Gharjiyā*’ individually stands for a son-in-law who lives at his wife's place (PS, Vid 13a - *Gharjiyā*). Ojā Tirtha Nath while using the term ‘*Gharjiyā*’ states that this *Bānā* is so called because it is not self-dependent or, in other words, being a piece of lesser importance is usually performed as a supporting piece of the *Dulārī rāga*. Using the son-in-law analogy, this *Bānā* has to depend on different materials for its survival. *Doñuwā* is a suitable name for this *Bānā* because the *Doñuwā bānā* is not a fixed composition but a loose or free piece of work which can be attached to the *Thiya rāga*.

Like the *Thiya rāga*, the *Doñuwā bānā* was originally meant to be performed only in shorter evening performances. The practising artistes seem to attach secondary importance to this *Bānā* as it can be completely dropped during a performance. For instance, if *Nayan dihā* is performed at the end of *Thiya rāga*, then the *Pada*-metered *Ākhyān* must begin and the stage of the *Bānā* naturally comes to an end leaving no scope for the performance of the *Doñuwā bānā*. If the troupe, however, intends to present *Doñuwā bānā* as a succeeding step of the *Thiya rāga*, then after the latter's *Moraṇi* they enter into the *Doñuwā bānā* with the omission of the *Nayan dihā*. Some performers, on the other hand, admit to completely eliminating the *Thiya rāga* and performing only the *Doñuwā bānā* during the stage of *Bānā*; such a practice nullifies the idea of compulsive presentation underlying the *Thiya rāga* and of secondary status being assigned to the *Doñuwā bānā*.

What has been observed is that the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* troupes handle the *Bānā*-stage materials in conformity with their individual choice. For example, as already seen in *Thiya rāga*, most of them perform and even learn only the defining and irreplaceable parts of a *Bānā*, such as *Ghunni* and *Bandhā dihā* and this is true for *Doñuwā bānā* too. Sometimes, a recital of *Thiya rāga* is immediately followed by the *Bandhā dihā* of *Doñuwā bānā* which encourages the unpopularity of the wide musical expanse preceding the *Dihā*. All these instances substantiate the primary reality that *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is facing a permanent diminution of its original musical extent. Exquisite musical pieces are perishing at

a fast pace owing to lack of practice, factors related to performance restrictions and other hostile socio-economic conditions often encouraging synoptic or abridged training of new learners.

It is interesting that *Doñuwā bānā* finds no place in any available scholarly work on *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. Since the credence of this *Bānā* is not braced by any written text, it is possible that the *Doñuwā bānā* is not a product of the distant past, nor an established affair in the long tradition of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. Whatever may be the case, the present *Ojāpāli* groups acknowledge it as content within the stage of *Bānā* and considering the *Doñuwā bānā*'s stylistic disposition and methodical features, its affinity to *Gor bānā* and *Thiya rāga* lies confirmed and its inclusion in the stage of *Bānā* appears apropos. Following the footsteps of *Thiya rāga*, the *Doñuwā bānā* includes a sequential performance of *Ghunni* followed by three *Caraṇs*, two *Moraṇis* and the *Bandhā dihā* (PS, Vid 13b - *Doñuwā bānā*).

As noticed in the *Gor bānā*, the *Ojāpālis* display a tendency of randomly picking textual material and this is found to continue both in the *Thiya rāga* and the *Doñuwā bānā*. In the *Ghunni* of *Doñuwā bānā*, as in the *Thiya rāga*, the text is composed of some signature syllables of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music that bear no meaning. Beneath this plain inattention to text possibly lies the convention of laying greater emphasis on briefing the distinctive melodic properties of the *Bānā* on its incipience.

Though some degree of textual crowding surfaces in the *Caraṇs*, the auxiliary status of the poetry remains consistent. The *Caraṇs* include a gorgeous exhibition of the elegant web work of the *Bānā* melody and with each *Caraṇ* the audience becomes more familiar with the respective design of the *Bānā*. The *Moraṇis* show their habitual behaviour and work towards drawing the drapes on the *Bānā*. The first *Moraṇi*, as Dharmeswar Nath Ojā sang it for this research, appears to be in sync with the preceding melodic disposition. The second *Moraṇi*, on the other hand, seems to deviate and catch a different track (field note m27/ 16.06. 20).

The rhythmic representation is located in the duple meter that runs through the entire *Bānā*. What is especially noteworthy is that a sudden rise in tempo towards the end of the third *Caraṇ* ignites the flame and prepares for the grand welcome

of the first *Moraṇi*. This unanticipated turn enthralls the audience and also arouses tangible interest in them for the coming phase. Though the *Bandhā dihā* is meant to be a summarized version of the characteristic design of the *Bānā*, the *Dihā* and the preceding musical bulk of *Doṅuwā bānā* foreground quite disparate melodic diction. It can be well understood as resulting from the chaos within oral transmission being inexpertly handled. Though unfortunate, the deviations in the *Moraṇi* are still understandable but corruption at the level of *Bandhā dihā* can be termed rather disastrous.

The notated script of *Doṅuwā bānā* helps in figuring out a rough melodic structure that faintly continues across the entire composition. What has been felt is the fact that the different sections are essentially short in length which problematizes the understanding of the use of certain notes in the progression. The *Ghunni*, if held to be a necessary introduction to the melodic design of the *Rāga*, does not seem to encompass the broad picture of the melodic promises to surface in the major sections of the composition (PS, Aud 13 - *donguwā bānā ghunni & thāvars*). In the *Ghunni*, both ‘Ga’ and ‘Ga’ are brought into use. ‘Dha’ is prominently found in descension with ‘Ni’. Further, though ‘Pa’ is significantly applied ‘Ma’ is left out (field note m28/ 23.06. 20).

As the first *Carāṇ* begins, sufficient melodic materials not realised in the *Ghunni* surface. For example, while the *Ghunni* saw the use of ‘Ga’ or ‘Ga’ with ‘Re’, in the first *Carāṇ* the phrase ‘Re Ma’ is witnessed along with ‘Re Ga’ or ‘Ga Re’. However, ‘Ga’ is almost dropped and it appears only once in combination with ‘Ma’. Further, the emergence of ‘Dha’ in place of ‘Dha’ instantly changes the tonal colour. The second *Carāṇ* begins exactly as the first one and being short in nature, does not offer a broader realisation of the melodic elements. It, thus, is a continuation of the first *Carāṇ* although the sudden use of ‘Dha’ in the ending phrase comes as a shock. Similarly, the third *Carāṇ* opens with the same linear ordering of notes as the first two *Carāṇs*. It follows the same combination as seen so far in the *Carāṇs*. However, like the first, no ‘Dha’ is seen here. Looking at all the three *Carāṇs* it can be said that the format does not support a ‘Dha’ but a ‘Dha. This is the main difference that is seen with the *Ghunni*. Similarly, ‘Ga’ is not found to be a part of the *Carāṇs* as it is in the *Ghunni* (field note m29/ 25.06. 20).

The two *Moraṇīs* neither match with each other nor completely with any of the earlier sections (PS, Aud 14 - donguwā bānā thāvars & moraṇi). The first *Moraṇī* drops the ‘Ni’ while maintaining the other elements formed with such notes as ‘Re, Ma, Ga, Pa and Dha’. The second *Moraṇī*, on the other hand, brings in ‘Dha’ in place of ‘Dha’ (PS, Aud 15 - donguwā bānā moraṇi 2). The *Bandhā dihā* makes sufficient deviation from the patterns understood so far because ‘Ni’ boldly surfaces and completely replaces ‘Ni’, although the latter is witnessed fleetingly once. Further, ‘Ma’ is dropped along with ‘Ga’. Instead, it is ‘Ga’ which finds place in the progression. Looking at the *Dihā*, it is instantly felt that it is a disjointed piece bearing sufficient incongruity with the rest of the composition (field note m29/ 25.06. 20).

What, then, can be conclusively commented is that in the section comprising the *Carans* there is somewhat felt a continuous framework as almost same notes and their combinations are brought into use. The *Dihā*, of course, seems to be a laboured entry and the *Ghunni*, on the other hand could have been a better specimen for comprehending the format had it been a little more elaborate. In the present condition, whatever material the *Ghunni* presents, it does not help in understanding one continuous format that runs throughout the composition. Thus, the *Doṇuwā bānā* seems to be an amalgamation of different sections to form one composition which fail to sustain one tonal nature throughout to give the feeling of one holistic format. More samples of *Doṇuwā bānā*, if collected in further research works, would surely contribute to a better understanding of the melodic profile defining the *Bānā*.

### 2.5.5.2 Rāga-Bānā:

The *Rāga-bānās* are subjected to a somewhat locomotive recital within the order of performance followed in *Sangītālāp*. To speak more fluidly, a *Rāga-bānā* has the freedom to intervene in the *Ākhyān* that invariably follows the curtain-raiser *Bānā* but not vice-versa, that is, the recital of a *Rāga-bānā* must be completely over before rehandling any material of *Ākhyān*. Usually if the epical episode chosen for an *Ākhyān* runs for a long time, the *Ojāpālis* interrupt it with the rendition of a *Rāga-bānā* to relieve the burden of a gradually arising flatness slowly staling the taste of the audience. This interruption, however, is many a time instituted by a desire articulated by the audience too to relish a *Rāga-bānā* of

their choice amid the course of an *Ākhyān*. Thus, a *Rāga-bānā*, unlike a *Bānā*, resists a sharp fixity in the point of performance although the laws of its rendition during the later phase of *Sangītālāp* and only after an *Ākhyān* has been placed and developed to a certain extent remain constant. Further, it is largely on the total span of a performance that the possibility of staging more than one *Ākhyān* and *Rāga-bānā* rests.

The claimed footing of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* in a *Rāga-rāgini* system evinces its historicity and also an obvious inspiration derived from Hindustani classical music. But most importantly, what it brings to the fore is that *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* had been a deep repository for a kaleidoscopic range of *Rāgas*. This range, however, has dwindled so much over the years that the practically prevailing number of *Rāgas* is miserably small. The senior *Ojāpāli* folks, who are past their prime, admit mastering the subtleties of a good many *Rāgas* and performing them during their productive stage. During field analyses, Dharmakanta Deka Ojā was recorded demonstrating a total of eleven *Rāgas* whereas Dharmeswar Nath Ojā could fully recollect only four *Rāgas* citing the reason that with the passing of all his associate *Pālis* much valuable musical matter has been lost because as an *Ojā* he was never meant to learn, memorize or recite a *Pāli's* part.

The above calls attention to another crucial fact that fresh mentees do not receive an elaborate schooling in the art form today. As a matter of fact, a study of the current scenario has revealed that the initiates of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* institution now seek to earn an elementary knowledge of only one *Rāga*. Their learning is savagely truncated by acute financial strain restricting quality-time investment in learning and practising an art form which is not monetarily rewarding, by increasing non-demand of extended recitals, dwindling platform of a seriously-interested audience who hold such level of familiarity of performance content as to request the recital of a particular *Rāga*. The progressively declining state of *Biyāh-gowā Rāga* system is a matter of great concern and accordingly efforts have been directed in this study toward preparing *Rāga* scores capturing the detailed methods of a *Rāga* recital known to performers today and studying the discovered *Rāga* format to estimate the factors contributing to the uniqueness and richness of its substance.

Different scholarly works posit discording outlooks on the origin of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāga* system. Since the fifty *Padas* of the Buddhist *Charyapadas* are sung in *Rāgas* that bear the same name as many *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāgas*, one school of thought holds these *Charyapadas* to be the inspiring force behind the conceptualization of a *Rāga* complex within *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. A few scholars estimate a prototypical form of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāga* in a system of music precisely popular in ancient Assam while others strive to establish a correlation with Hindustani classical music.

Besides revealing a stronghold in medieval *Rāga-rāgini* system, in validating a time theory specific to the rendition of *Rāgas*, the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* system almost certifies its palpable associations with Hindustani music. Of course, *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is not a replication of the traditional Indian classical music. For example, *Purvi* is a morning *Rāga* in *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* but an evening one in Hindustani. Similarly, while *Bhairavi* is sung late at night in the former, it is meant for morning rendition in the latter.

A serious address of the antagonistic socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions encouraging the disturbing popularity of the lighter subjects of *Ākhyān*, *Kathopakathan* and various *Gīts* within *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance far above the gravity-laden *Rāgas* is the pressing need of the moment and such an address seems the most likely force to revive the wide practice and propagation of *Rāga-bānās*.

In the absence of documented specimens, it is rather absurd to surmise the changes that were let into *Biyāh-gowā rāga* system with the advent of the modern period. Hence, what has been presently endeavored is to capture in all its transparency the existing model of a melodic product without tirelessly theorizing its formulatory aspects or hypothesizing its original behaviour. In other words, an objective opinion of the precise exteriors of a prevalent *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli rāga* with fleeting assumptions on its inner mechanisms has been aimed for.

A present *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāga-bānā* is, thus, found to be an ordered entity involving a sequence of seven stages that record the melodic odyssey of the *Rāga* from a seed to an exotic bloom. The limited volumes available on the art form grant precise names to the seven levels in a *Rāga-bānā – Humkār, Ghunni,*



*Tolani*, *Mālitā*, *Caran*, *Dhurā* and *Bandhā dihā*. Though the performers do not meticulously prepare such a list sequencing the performance material within a *Rāga*, they actually render a *Rāga-bānā* in seven steps. They recognize the names of some of these text-claimed stages while using different terms for the others.

The present study of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāga-bānās* revolves around the grossly attempted musicographical representation of *Rāga Relī*. To begin with, as a sojourn in the pedestal pitch, the only musical importance of *Humkār* lies in it behaving as a preparatory act for instituting the melodic mass detailing the formal complex of the *Rāga*. The hammering of the *Ādhār shadaj* using set syllables signals the audience to compose themselves and to mobilize their attention. The *Humkār* can also be safely judged as a meditation on the form of the *Rāga Devata* (the assigned divine form) and also as a veneration of the *Guru* in the line of the *Guru-shishya parampara*.

Like an *Ālāp*, the *Ghunni* appears to be a slow, non-metric effort to establish the individual character of the *Rāga-bānā* by presenting a note-by-note account. It must be remembered that an *Ojāpāli* singer is ignorant of musical grammar. Thus, to his untutored ear the *Ghunni* is a fixed movement to memorize but not a framework wherein the improvisation of the *Rāga-bānā* structure can be done. This might be one reason why the *Ghunni* sounds a little shorter than a usual *Ālāp* where the classical singer continues to play with notes till the characteristic phrases are fully elaborated.

*Tolani*, referred to as *Rāga tānā* or *Rāga diyā* in performers' discourse, is generally understood as a re-emphasis of the salient melodic norms of the *Rāga - bānā* introduced in the *Ghunni*. There is somewhat a restless rise to and an elongated stopover at 'Sā' whereon continual oscillations while touching the periphery of the upper adjacent note are displayed as a major embellishment of the vocal arrangement and possibly also as a distinguishing *Gamak* pattern of the *Rāga* found in the preceding *Ghunni* too. Textual insignificance is marked till the point of *Tolani*. While *Ghunni* features only syllables, the *Tolani* combines such syllables with short meaningful phrases adopted from the *Mālitā* that follows. Further, freedom from a rhythmic cycle continues in the *Tolani*.

Textual density surfaces in the *Mālitā* as it recounts the etiological story of a *Rāga*'s creation. The *Mālitā* of each *Rāga* narrates with superior artistry the incidents leading to the causation of the *Rāga*. This is one concrete example of the medieval phenomenon of the invasion of the concept of *Rāga* into poetry and painting. A description of a *Rāga* was, indeed, a major element of the musical literature of that period. Further, each *Rāga* was presented as a living male or female deity or a hero or heroine possessing exquisite physical beauty. In *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, for example, the *Mālitā* of *Rāmgiṛi Rāga* describes in a grandiose manner a pulchritude female figure. Since *Rāmgiṛi* is considered a *Rāgini*, its personification as a female supports the theory that *Rāginis* are wives of *Rāgas*. The presence of *Mālitā* in a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāga* almost establishes its medieval linkage. In *Rāga Reli*, its *Mālitā* describes the *Rāga* as originating from the teardrops of *Lord Kirat (Śiva)*. The melodic shape acquainted in the *Ghunni* is clearer and more pronounced in the *Mālitā* while it remains rhythmically free too.

Similar to a *Bānā*, each *Rāga-bānā* has a fixed number of *Carāṇs* which in being meter-bound brings forth a prominent textural change. The opening part is the same for all the four *Carāṇs* in *Rāga Reli*. In fact, the *Carāṇs* being marginally different upset the melodic expectations held by the audience. It is difficult to come to a conclusion regarding the factors leading to such an event. Minimal variation in the content of the four *Carāṇs* can be either read as a stylistic element or an abuse of the original material in unskilled hands or as the performers' trick to somehow cover the entire extent of *Carāṇs* with the meagre matter in hand on account of the loss of the actual material over the years. A much broader study and comparison of different *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāga-bānās* is hinted at this point.

The sixth stage is invariably understood as *Moraṇi* by an *Ojāpāli* performer. Just as in the *Moraṇi* of a *Bānā*, the *Madhya laya* (moderato) here suddenly transitions. In fact, the *Moraṇi* is nothing less than an allegro (fast tempo) finale aiming at a firm resolve. The haste in rounding off the underlying melodic thought is musically pleasing and assists a successful foregrounding of the denouement. Thus, the duple meter introduced in the *Carāṇs* accelerates all at once in the *Moraṇi* adding power and colour to the overall finish. Employing both medium and fast tempi to exploit the dominant melodic features within itself, the

*Rāga-bānā* emerges stylistically richer and far more satisfying. The artistic construction of the *Moraṇi* is a major contribution to the rhythmic texture of the *Rāga-bānā*.

The word '*Bandhā*' as mentioned earlier means 'tied to'; the *Bandhā dihā* suggests a passage tied at the back of the composite structure of the *Rāga-bānā* that recapitulates its primary melodic attributes. The *Moraṇi* has already been realized as a coda and for the audience, with the musical turmoil being ironed out in the *Moraṇi*, nothing seems to be left for presentation. In this sense, the *Rāga-bānā* can be said to rise de novo in the *Dihā*.

The *Dihā*, in fact, is both an end and a beginning in itself. Elaborately speaking, on one hand the *Dihā* is more or less an epilogue to the *Rāga* briefly laboring out its predominant qualities and on the other, a necessary forerunner to a *Pada*-metered *ākhyān*. Though bearing the melodic definition of the *Rāga* it is very much a part of it, the *Dihā*'s appeal is more realized in its unalterable bond with the *Pada ākhyān*. It is more like a bridge between the two, mobilizing a facile transposition of the audience from one to the other. The end was, indeed, complete with the *Moraṇi*. The performers, as a matter of fact, are found to start afresh with a slowed-down pulse in the *Dihā* and fluidly enter into the *Ākhyān*. Thus, while harking back to one and looking forward to another, the *Dihā* appears to be an intelligent inclusion justifying the structural logic of the overall performance.

However, the essence of the term '*Bandhā*' has dwindled in the current times as the *Ojās* now admit using the *Dihās* interchangeably for all *Rāga-bānās*. This unfortunate development renders the *Bandhā dihā* only as a pre-requisite piece before a *Pada ākhyān* totally dissociated with the preceding *Rāga-bānā*. Such mishandling of material is a major blow to the structural beauty and a distortion of the picture of the *Rāga-bānā* hinting at a shrinkage of the performative dimensions of the art form.

Conclusively the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāga-bānā*, as it exists today, is realized as a fixed movement rather than a melodic framework wherein to improvise. An *Ojāpāli* artiste considers the *Rāga-bānā* as a prearranged formation and commits the specific linear succession of notes to his memory. For being ignorant of

musical grammar, it is beyond his comprehension that a singer can present his individual impression of the *Rāga* by studying its specified behaviour. This musical analphabetism can be attributed to the handover of the art form by the learned Ganak/Brahmin community to the uninstructed peasantry in the course of history (field note 72/ 20.03. 20). The performers' musical naivety, however, does not put the credibility of the *Rāga* at stake, as a musicographical observation of the *Rāga Reli* has revealed that it satisfactorily projects, at least in its initial stages, the rules governing the formulation of melodic phrases and sequences specific to the set framework. The most potent realization, however, is that the *Oja's* role is most of the time overwhelmed by that of the *Pālis* signifying the centrality of a choral texture in a *Rāga-bānā* recital. This being the case, practically no scope whatsoever is left for improvisation because a chorus is bound to recite the music learned by rote.

Another interesting observation is that a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performer is found to singularly relate the term '*Rāga*' to the *Tolani* which has been perceived as a brief emphasis of the distinct melodic identity. *Tolani* can, in fact, be safely likened to a *Calan* which provides a condensed definition of the melodic thought particular to the *Rāga*. It is, thus, clear that the *Ojāpāli* singer has some kind of understanding that the soul of the *Rāga* resides in the *Tolani* without, however, acknowledging that the entire composition comprising seven stages for which he actually uses the full expression of *Rāga-bānā*, has to comply with the *Tolani's* injunctions. It cannot be denied that in its formula of progressing from non-metrical movements to ones designed according to a chosen rhythmic meter, the *Rāga-bānā* achieves a semblance of Hindustani music where an unaccompanied prelude *Ālāp* that tables and expands a *Rāga* eventually leads to an ensemble recital where the melody-line moves within the confines of a rhythmic cycle.

Further, the *Moraṇi* in its bold pronunciation of the rhythmic material over the melodic one to implicate a conclusion can be equated with a *Jhālā* (fast-paced concluding part of an Indian classical composition). The reduced stature of the *Rāga-bānā* mirrored in its treatment almost like a non-classical composition is suggestive of a considerable shrinkage of the musical dimensions of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*. What is more, even the extant material is subjected to restricted practice further posing an existential threat to the *Rāga-bānā* which is why extensive

efforts toward its proper preservation through authentic documentation and expert analyses has been solemnly realized.

#### 2.5.5.2.1 Rāga Relī:

Upon observing the musicographical arrangement of *Rāga Relī*, it is realised that incongruous elements are detected in certain sections comprising the piece. In the audio collected from Ojā Tirtha Nath for notating the *Rāga*, from *Ghunni* till *Mālitā*, the progression reveals sufficient instances proving the adherence to one particular set of rules (PS, Aud 16 - Rāga relī).

Beginning with *Ghunni*, it is seen ‘Ma’ and ‘Ni’ are dropped in the ascending progression upholding a major pentatonic formulation. But in the descending movement, ‘Ni’ along with ‘Ma’ occupy prominent positions and disrupt the pentatonic feel realised as the notes rise up. The descend to the *Shadaj* (Sa) in *Ghunni* is found made from ‘Ga’. There is used a *Meend*-like glide pattern where the tonal beauty of ‘Re’ is included while gliding from ‘Ga’ to ‘Sa’. In *Rāga-diyā* and *Mālitā*, the notation pronounces the movement from ‘Re’ to ‘Sa’ while resolving the melody-line. However, the style of gliding between notes cannot be missed. ‘Sa° Ni Dha Pa’ is realised as a permitted phrase but ‘Ma Ga Re Sa’ is not. Instead of allowing such a direct descension from ‘Ma’ to ‘Sa’, what is seen is a *Vakra* style to resolve at ‘Sa’. For example, ‘Ma Ga Re Ga Sa’. Although ‘Ga Re Sa’ is found, it sounds more of ‘Ga Sa’. ‘Sa Re’ is the most frequent phrase which is used also as a *Gamak* in a high pitch register (field note m30/ 03.02. 22).

The four *Thāvars*, however, make prominent deviation from the melodic rules traced in the earlier sections from *Ghunni* to *Mālitā*. The phrase ‘Re Ma Ga Re’ although do not completely defy the ascending rule found earlier, it is something newly realised in the piece progression. It is true that the use of ‘Ma’ is not seen in a manner to arrive at the conclusion that this *Swara* is now a part of the ascending structure, however, the pentatonic movement is faintly hinted at in the quickly resolving *Thāvars*. The use of the phrase ‘Re Ga Ma’ complicates the picture. Further, the most incongruous factor is the use of ‘Ni’ in combination of ‘Ni’. While stepping down, both the ‘Ni’ are put into use (field note m31/ 08.02. 22).

The *Moraṇi* moves within a very restricted space to actually present a clearer picture. The use of ‘Dha’ is seen to rise on the one hand, while on the other, the instance of ‘Ma Dha’ with the exclusion of ‘Ga Pa’ leads to confusion and it cannot be concluded whether the pentatonic mode is still on. In the *Bandhā dihā* too, although ‘Pa Sa’, ‘Dha Sa’ hint at a pentatonic feel, a phrase like ‘Re Ma Pa’ with the bold use of ‘Ma’ in straight ascension disrupts the feel. The *Moraṇi* and the *Dihā* provide more or less a similar tonal texture. However, the sudden introduction of ‘Ga’ towards the end brings in a very different quality to the overall mood. It can be, of course, considered as a *Vivādi* (dissonant note which is not a part of the given ascending-descending format) used for beautification (field note m32/ 12.02. 22).

So, looking at just one sample neither all the prominent melodic elements nor one melodic framework defining *Rāga Relī* can be sorted out. Conclusively, it can be commented that one framework stands undisturbed from *Ghunni* to *Mālitā* and this can be relied on as a baseline formulation for understanding *Rāga Relī* in combination with other materials collected in further research works. Another video collected during field work is included here (PS, Vid 14 - *Rāga relī*)

Rather than merely meaning a *Rāga*, the term ‘*Bānā*’ is realized to stand for a scrupulously-planned composition wherein a *Rāga* is tabled and developed. Each *Bānā* is a specifically designed structure within which the *Ojā* and the associated *Pālis* are assigned well-defined roles. In case of *Rāga-bānā* too, an *Ojāpāli* singer refers to the entire structure of seven stages by the complete expression of *Rāga-bānā* and what he understands by it is a composition in which a *Rāga* (which he inclines to locate only in the fourth stage of *Tolani*) is the most essential component. While the expression *Gor bānā* connotes the fixed all-important inceptive piece, the *Doṇuwā bānā*, in contrast, means not a fixed composition but a loose work dependent on the performers’ will. Further, the phrase *Pātani dhāl pada* can be broken down into ‘laying forth the beginning (here of *Sangītālāp*)’ and its popularity among the practitioners is quite understandable because most of the time it is with the *Pātani dhāl pada* that the troupe commences *Sangītālāp*.

A chorus-centric exposition of the *Rāga* comes with its own limitations; for example, the wordless-syllabled *Ghunni*, roughly akin to an *Ālāp* and not being decorously steered by a soloist's imaginative flavour of the *Rāga*, moves along

shallow pathways preventing a broader realization of the mood, tone and signature melodic assemblies of the rule-governed format of the *Rāga*. Besides, there is no essay into sol-fa syllables in the vocal composition and this may be taken to indirectly testify that the singers are not subjected to any *Sargam*-practice during their vocal training in the art form.

The rhythmic simplicity administered by the cymbals works only for assisting the melodic outfit and not for decorating it. In simple terms, a *Pāli* playing the rhythms in the *Khuti tāl* has no scope to individually stylize the *Tāla* in motion because the cymbals do not possess a rich language and the *Tālas*, as such, involve technically simple strokes. The *Rāga* presentation in a *Bānā*, thus, involves a unique procedure the absolute beauty of which has been possibly framed over the centuries by an amalgamation of various musical elements borrowed from different trends specific to an age in other parallel systems.

Since this study is a maiden project pitched towards methodically documenting and understanding the ancient *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* system of music as it exists today, an intensive musicological analysis offering a comprehensive interpretation and discovering its affinity to any dormant pattern or to any immediate practice of mainline Hindustani music does not come within its sweep. The main aim throughout has been to present a bare-bones version of *Rāga* presentation in a *Bānā* without fully ignoring the foundational principles contributing to its unique construct.

### **2.5.5.3 Ākhyān:**

The stage of *Ākhyān* is the showstealer embracing a plethora of enchanting musical subjects such as vocal embellishments, magnificent poetry, textural eloquence and other paraphernalia. Its tasteful richness of design is also a by-product of arresting dance moves displaying at times lyrical relevance while magnifying the overall musicality and of wittily-framed dialogues too in interspersing conversations marked with a dramatic feel. This is for the first time that the centrality of the performance is located at textual and musical formats alike and the sense of pleasure generated is rounded and an end in itself. Fully exploiting man's instinctive craving for storytelling, this stage presents a musical narration of one or more *Ākhyāns* or versified tales from the oldest surviving epic

poems *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*. Parts from the encyclopaedic Puranic literature were also subjected to a musical treatment during this stage in the past but are not found in vogue now.

As with the *Daśavatāra* verses of the *Viṣṇu pada*, the poetry of the *Ākhyāns* transitioned from literary Sanskrit to colloquial Assamese as translated versions became accessible. Most of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* groups are found to musically frame the segment of *Virāt parba* within *The Mahabharata* and from *Adbhut Rāmāyana* by Raghunath Mahanta (Mahanta, R., 1972). The poetic narratives concerning *The Mahabharata* are mostly chosen from Ram Saraswati's work in which he translated the epic from Sanskrit to early Assamese. What is exceptionally remarkable is the fact that the active practitioners are found to readjust the textual detail set in one poetic meter to fit into another. For instance, the poetic content framed in *Chabi* meter is expertly modified to edge into *Lecāri* meter.

*Chabi*-metered verses:

“Kar|na|ka|sam|bo|dhi|pā|ce|      Kṛ|pe|he|na|bu|li|lan|ta  
Su|ni|yo|ka|Rā|dhā|ra|te|na|ya”

*Lecāri*-metered verses:

“Kar|na|ka|sam|bo|dhi|eve|pā|se|      ku|pe|bu|li|lan|ta|Kṛ|pā|char|ya  
|Su|na|he|ra|Rā|dhā|su|ta|Kar|na|du|ra|sa|ya.”

Such instances thoroughly suggest that the performers are an accomplished hand at framing melodic constructs to support modulated texts. Further, the act of remodelling the metrical layout without affecting the meaning of the poetry and of designing a supporting musical frame can be read as a sound device employed by the artistes to neutralize the musical aridity arising out of handling the same syllabic construct of a poetic stanza.

To achieve convenience at comprehension, the term ‘*Ākhyān*’ is used here to mean the entire musical composition and not merely the textual component. An *Ākhyān*, in this context, has to be understood as a single composition standing as a fixed construct hardly allowing any critical change in the linear succession of



notes and in rhythmic meter. It is diametrically opposite to a *Rāga* which thrives on the concept of a melodic framework working within which numerous compositions are possible. Each *Ākhyān*, further, within its composition comprises a fixed number of movements where each movement is designed to suit the prosodic meter of the verses that form the text. It is this crucial importance attached to the prosody that each *Ākhyān* takes the name and is identified by the metrical specification of the text. Thus, there are five types of *Ākhyāns* corresponding to five *Chanda* or meters namely *Pada*, *Lecāri*, *Chabi*, *Dulaḍī* and *Jhumuri*.

The metrical system of syllabic verse, in which the number of syllables is counted with no attention to stress in a verse line, is found followed in the poetry of the *Ākhyāns*. In another sense, the meter in the text of each *Ākhyān* has to be read in terms of the number of syllables present in each line of a poetic stanza. Understanding this underlining metrical method leads to comprehending the important concept of *Pāch pada* where *Pāch* stands for back and *Pada* for verse. Together they can be read as the end part of a verse line. Also called *Śriphal* (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 44), this part is to be invariably recited by the *Pālis*. As a matter of fact, a line of metrical text is strictly split between the *Ojā* and the *Pālis*. The *Ojā* being the star songster always sets a line of poetry in motion which the *Pālis* expertly catch and continue. In fact, the shift from leader to the associates is smooth and uninterrupted. The pulse and the melodic movement are continual, preventing any pausal injury to the general structure.

Depending on the type of *Ākhyān*, the number of syllables in one metrical line are apportioned between the *Ojā* and his *Pālis*. Moreover, the syllable-quantity of a *Pāch pada* is found to differ not only in each *Ākhyān* but also in the movements within an *Ākhyān*. Though Durgeswar Nath Ojā in his book exclusively holds *Pāch pada* as containing the end syllables of a metrical line, in actual practice however, not these ending verse syllables but the most determining component of a *Pāch pada* has been found to be a variable set of syllables which bear the characteristic definition of an *Ākhyān* rendition. These syllables are most of the time interspersed with certain meaningful words such as *Hari*, *Rām*, *Jai*, etc.

In certain *Ākhyāns*, the *Pālis* go to the extent of restricting their delivery of *Pāch pada* only to the execution of this typical cluster of void syllables. The set rule for the division of a verse-line syllables between the leader and the accompanying performers is also not subjected to close compliance in an actual concert. Further, the different *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* troupes are found refashioning the length and content of the *Pāch pada* while keeping the general identity intact. The theoretical arrangement is, thus, found practically altered or manipulated according to the free will of a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* group.

The alternate singing pattern of the soloist *Ojā* and the *Pāli* chorus comes somewhat closer to responsorial singing where the musical phrase ensuing from the commencing phrase betokens a response. This call-and-response like design adds drama to the primary act of storytelling and the objective of scriptural instruction is fluidly achieved as the frequent disruption of the solo monotony by a vocal ensemble successfully keeps the audience fast engaged in the development of the storyline and simultaneously of religious ideas. The solo literature extends more relaxation to the *Ojā* for realizing vocal techniques, modifying syllables in the melodic movement to fit into the rhythmic pulse, more accurately expressing *Bhāva* or emotion and exploiting individual elements within the solo repertoire.

The choral setting established by the *Pālis*, on the other hand, with its one dominant tonal colour accounts for an electrifying performance as the seamless yet diagrammatic sound reflects back and dramatizes the ambience. The separate techniques of vocal usage adopted by the *Ojā* and the *Pālis* along with dance-like and drama-based performance accompaniments, add force to the overall recital and substantiate the fact that in an *Ākhyān* the musical geometry is far more sophisticated to merely support a somewhat entertaining presentation of a poetic tale. In other words, the music is not employed as a mere arsenal to disperse religious entertainment but carefully perfected as an artistic mode to generate a considerable aesthetic thrill.

Nonetheless it remains a fact that the didacticism sought in the musical presentation appears to guide the articulation of the vocal style to a certain extent. To elucidate, the level of energy is considerably very high from the outset; it is

not that the *Ojā* starts gently with careful attention to subtle dynamics and that the real force is felt only with the choral entry of the *Pālis*. In contrast, an emphatic vocal output emerges with the solo pronouncements of the *Ojā* and continues with equal power and impact as the *Pālis* take over. In fact, the melodic structure of each *Ākhyān* magnifies exploitations of high frequency and the vocal design goes to the extent of involving prominently loud and strained voices. This basic plan of extensive high-register activities accomplished through exceptionally sonorous vocal styles may be read in the context of the key purpose of dispersing clear didactic lessons amongst a large audience.

As the art form of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* harks back to an ancient age where modern equipments of microphones were not known, it is most likely that to reach each individual in a big gathering, the performers did adjust their musicianship to perfectly suit the aim of imparting scriptural knowledge. Put simply, the art of *Ākhyān* was born out of a strong objective to entertainingly instruct the unlettered in religious concepts and for an appropriate realization of this a loud, high-pitched singing was a necessity as the sonority of the singing voice(s) tends to make the words of the metrical text more intelligible. It is true that the artistically wrought poetry of the text is not fully comprehensible to the audience and the performers have to frequently pause for a prosaic explanation of the same. Nevertheless, with the words being clearly heard as the performers stick to a full-throated treble, the audience become familiar with some of the key words constituting the verses and consequently more easefully comprehend the prosaic exposition later. In fact, too much vocal modulation involving intricate play of dynamics in the absence of amplifying gadgets runs the risk of rendering the poetic text completely unintelligible to the audience and thus as a result savagely uprooting the latter's interest and attention. It is, therefore, clear that the didactic object of an *Ākhyān* regulates its musical design to a significant extent.

The sparse amount of *Ojāpāli* literature available provides nothing near to a deep insight into the elaborate musical construct of an *Ākhyān* composition. Only fleeting mention of the name of the meters in which the *Ākhyāns* are set is found in the accessed texts. That each *Ākhyān* has a definite musical design with different sets of movements and possesses particular methodical characteristics has been realized only during several consulting sessions with competent

performers. Thus, finding the sketchy textual particulars plainly inadequate even to fashion a near decent foundation resting on which to discover the detailed programme of musical disposition involved in a work of *Ākhyān*, investigations and observations on field have been solely relied upon both to collect significant amount of data and to analyse the accumulated information. This has helped to figure out the specific *Ākhyān* features as evident in a present-day recital. A largely fieldwork-centred analyses of all the five different types of *Ākhyāns* are presented below:

### 2.5.5.3.1 Pada chanda Ākhyān:

The offbeat element in a *Pada chanda ākhyān* is traced in its invariant style of setting off with, as mentioned earlier, a prefixure piece called *Dihā*. As stated earlier, a *Dihā* can be either *Bandhā dihā* or a *Kholā dihā* and usually a *Bānā* or a *Rāga-bānā* recited in the stage of *Sangītālāp* closes with a *Bandhā dihā* which synopsis the central melodic features of the treated *Rāga*. As a performance norm, a *Bānā* or a *Rāga-bānā* is followed by an *Ākhyān* and a *Dihā* being an unalterable fixture fraction only of a *Pada ākhyān*, both naturally lead to the same. A *Kholā dihā* is not mapped in the domain of any *Rāga* but is an independent movement whose primary usage is to open a *Pada ākhyān* issuing out not of a *Rāga* recitation but of another *Ākhyān* variant (PS, Vid 15 - Ākhyān - pada chanda).

The musical score of a *Pada ākhyān* prepared on the basis of the audio source bearing Ojā Tirtha Nath's rendition with his troupe, (PS, Aud 17 - nayan dihā/ PS, Aud 18- Ākhyān -pada chanda) establishes it as an amalgamated mass of seven different movements excluding the *Dihā*. Ojā Dharmeswar Nath states that depending on the particular *Dihā* sung, the first one or two movements may vary although the latter part of the *Ākhyān* always remains the same. As this present work cannot afford to include a study of several samples of *Pada ākhyān* with different *Dihās* within its set compass, the statement cannot be practically verified. The rate of pulse progress escalates with each passing movement in a *Pada ākhyān* and is epitomized in the last movement where the duple meter of the *Coutāla* is taken over by *Thoka tāla* which is singled out for its characteristic pulse rapidity. Note A4 (note A in the middle octave on piano) remains the key

tone for a large portion and the entire melodic body moves within the octave range of A4 to A5 (note A in the high octave on piano). Very occasionally it descends to the point of E4 (note E in the middle octave on piano). Thus, the vocal range strictly sticks to the high register with absolute absence of any bass treatment. Another point to be discussed is the division of verse syllables between the *Ojā* and his *Pālis*. In a *Pada ākhyān*, a thought attains completion in a couplet or a pair of successive lines where each line is fourteen-syllabled:

Example: *Baiśampāyan badati śuniyo Nareśwara*

*Hena śuni nāmi matsya rājāra kumara*

The words in the above couplet are divided into fourteen syllables in each line as shown below.

Bai|śam|pā|yan|ba|da|ti|śu|ni|yo|Na|reś|wa|ra  
 He|na|śu|ni|nā|mi|mat|sya|rā|jā|ra|ku|mā|ra

The *Ojā*'s solo reign continues till the twenty-second syllable of the couplet while the remaining six syllables are rendered by the *Pālis*. The eight-six division stated in Durgeswar Nath Ojā's book is realized only in the seventh movement characterized by a rhythmic rush to effectuate a closure.

Content: The verse lines subjected to musical representation in this *Ākhyān* are extracted from the section of Virāt Parba of *The Mahabharata* in which Prince Uttara and the Pāndava prince Arjuna (disguised as the eunuch Vrhanallah) are found indulging in a conversation at the end of which the prince recognises Vrhanallah as Pāndava Arjuna (PS, Aud 18a- DN Pada ākhyān discussion).

The first movement (*Calanā*) has been further categorized into two sub-movements as the melody is entrusted to minor changes while the second couplet is being handled in the second sub-movement. The second *Calanā* follows the same linear ordering as the first in its initial eight measures and deviates after that. The 'Ga' is well established and the emergence of the 'NI' in the second sub-movement reinforces the minor mode. The steady use of 'Dha' in the given format convincingly reveals a Dorian mode. The complete omission of the 'Re' is a major facet and the jump from the 'Ga' to 'Sa' (tonic) is regularly witnessed (field note m33/ 18.03.18).

A very short intermittent movement which the performers call *Dihā tulā* is renditioned between the two sub-movements by Ojā Tirtha Nath and his *Pāli* band. The different practitioners, however, assert that this special movement can be showcased anywhere within the confinements of the first and second movements and not beyond. It is read only as a pre-requisite gesture before repeating the *Dihā* within the main body of the *Pada ākhyān*. In fact, its function is to act as an intermediate between the ongoing movement and the repeated *Dihā*. The set of *Dihā tulā* and the repeated *Dihā*, however, is not an essential component and can very well be dropped. It, of course, has its own role to play as a complimentary beautification. The *Dihā tulā* appears to be a terse statement quickly but clearly depicting the ascending and descending style of the modal character followed in the main movement.

The first movement as a whole traverses more within the lower tetrachord than the upper. This is followed in the second movement too and in it, the occasional upper tetrachord support seems even weaker than what it was in the first. Interestingly, the third movement is an absolute exercise in the first quartet of the octave. The anticipated pattern of *Sthāyi-antarā* (parts of an Indian classical song) that runs through the bulk of Indian classical and non-classical songs appears breaking down here. The *Anya swara* (note not included in the given *Āroh-avaroh* pattern) status of ‘Re’ is defragmented in the fourth movement as the *Swara* boldly surfaces and interestingly replace the ‘Ga’ accounting for combinations that induce a different tonal colour altogether. In the last eight measures, however, it suddenly disappears and the ordering gets back to the formula of the past three movements and with resurfacing of the ‘Ga’, the fourth movement closes in a similar manner as the preceding ones and the *Purvāng*-centred practice is found continued in this segment too (field note m34/ 24.03.18).

The continuous use of ‘Ga’ in the fifth movement announces a transition to a major mode. ‘Re’ introduced in the fourth movement happens to be central here as the entire movement is constructed around its presence. ‘Ga’ is fleetingly touched and, in the ending, the descent to ‘Sa’ is made from the ‘Re’ for the first time. Further, the key tone lowers to Aflat4 (note Aflat in the middle octave on piano) which remains same for the sixth movement too. The major mode is found

continued in the sixth movement and its second half displays an extraordinarily simple style (field note m35/ 26.03.18).

In the seventh movement, four short sub-movements have been identified. The varieties aid in suspending a melodic monotony and are, in fact, deemed necessary to render a huge bulk of poetic text. It is to be noted that the rapid tempo in the seventh movement consumes many verse lines within the space of a few measures and in such a frame, the act of forwarding the tale by narrating the huge mass of events in a single melodic movement would lend quite an uninteresting tinge to the bright shade of the overall performance. The replacement of ‘Ga’ by ‘Ga’ is strictly maintained and in the seventh movement the regular use of two combined *Swaras* to form one *Mātrā* is supplanted by the pattern of one *Swara* forming one *Mātrā* (field note m36/ 26.03.18). The culminated pulse rapidity in this movement had already staged the denouement which is fully achieved as the movement leads to a short, unmeasured piece which accounts for the release of the tension and final resolution of the musical turmoil. The end is complete with the *Tāla bhāṇā*, a characteristic style of demonstrating few strokes of two or three different rhythms.

Two distinct musical motifs are marked during the course of the *Ākhyān*. The first is termed *Digār* or a very short melodic order comprising a distinct ascension which the *Ojā* renders at the beginning of the movements. The *Digār* is attached or detached on an *Ojā*’s wish and does not signify a vital component. It is also taken as a fitting cue by the *Pālis* for the change of a movement. However, it is not found to continue for long. The *Digār* style is dropped after two or three movements probably because the increasing tempo becomes resistant to such a style. *Digār* is found sparingly employed nowadays by the current *Ojāpāli* performers. Among other cues adopted by the *Ojā* for change of movement includes his act of making his feet stamp on the ground so that the small bells of his anklets resound prominently (see BGO, Vid 2 – Use of Nepūr in chapter I). The textual motif of ‘*Ha haha yā*’ is the sole method followed to mark the end of each movement till the sixth. ‘*Yā*’ is invariably sung to ‘*Sa*’ and the descend to it is made from the nearest note usually found in the descending format. As a matter of fact, these two motifs are not exclusive to *Pada ākhyān* and run through other varieties of *Ākhyān* as well.

### **Doṅuwā-pada Ākhyān:**

Usually *Pada*-metered verses are treated with the elaborate melodic organization comprising seven different movements. However, an entirely different variety of *Pada ākhyān* exists which is adopted by a singer in rare occasions when in a scriptural tale the verse lines in *Pada* meter are rather few in number. In such an event, the usual *Pada ākhyān* cannot be employed because it is a large body of seven movements which once put to action would fall short of verse material. It is to mitigate this problem that one *Doṅuwā-pada ākhyān* exists which handles *Pada*-metered verses but which is not prefixed with a *Dihā*. It needs to be remembered that the singing of the *Dihā* would necessarily lead to the main *Pada ākhyān* which is why the *Doṅuwā-pada ākhyān* is a special form or a shorter piece sung without a *Dihā*.

A *Doṅuwā-pada ākhyān* is, however, unknown to many of the performers today. The existence and practice of such a piece has been discovered at the end of interviewing several *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* groups on field. Only a handful of singers reported the practice of singing a *Dihā*-less *Pada*-metered *ākhyān*, in special occasions which is termed *Doṅuwā-pada ākhyān* or *Doṅuwā ākhyān*. The primary compositional aspect determining a *Doṅuwā ākhyān* is the existence of four separate movements which signify no critical distancing from each other in terms of melodic arrangement (PS, Aud 19 - *Doṅuwā pada*). All the movements are considerably brief in length; a couplet is narrated out within a few measures and the *Pāch padas*, too, are compact bodies with less of the usual material of wordless text.

The two-time paradigm is upheld by *Cābtāla (type II)* and *Thokā* in the *Ākhyān*. The common tendency of gradually increasing the pulse pace till it culminates at *Thokā* is found sustained in this variety too. Of course, the culminated tempo suddenly breaks down as the cymballic activity is brought to a halt and the progression makes way into a free-time arrangement which acts as an apt closure technique. The style of forming one *Mātrā* by combining four *Swaras* is a prominent facet of the musical design.

For the first two movements (*Calanās*), ‘Ga’ and ‘NI’ based pentatonic plan rules, while in the next two movements ‘Ga’ replaces ‘Ga’ and the so far omitted ‘Re’ surfaces with sufficient strength. In the source audio, the basal pitch rests at note



D5 (note D in the high octave on piano) and the progressions sees frequent rise from that point. This time the vocal strain is way too bold which accounts for an undesirable noise in the aural body. It seems the main singer Haren Nath fails to place himself in a safe and comfortable pitch height (field note m37/ 09.06.18).

### **2.5.5.3.2 Chabi chanda Ākhyān:**

The binary form of the rhythmic accompaniment sustaining through all the three movements within a *Chabi chanda ākhyān* is one of its primary aspects. Incidents of syncopated (disruption of normal flow of rhythm) accentuation where the downbeat (the first accented beat) is omitted (especially in the beginning of a phrase) and the accent is transferred to an otherwise weak group of two half-*mātrā* notes, regularly occur throughout the first two movements. The third movement with a raised tempo shifts to the duple-meter variant of *Cābtāla* from the ongoing *Coutāla*, primarily because the *Cābtāla* is an essentially simplex rhythm involving the same mnemonic syllable (or the style of stroke it represents) struck twice.

It is to be remembered that the *Pālis* not only serve as vocal accompanists but are also solely responsible for operating the percussive mechanism. As such, when the speeding tempo introduces an additional stress in the vocal arrangement, a simpler cymballic language is opted for. This aspect, already noticed in *Pada* and *Lecāri ākhyāns*, is very much definitive of the *Chabi ākhyān* too. What needs to be noted at this point is that the tempo in *Cābtāla* never accelerates to an extreme point as *Thokā tāla*. In *Chabi* thus, when there is a distinct rise in pulse pace, the *Cābtāla* enters. The tempo rise, however, is quite controlled and it is not allowed to freely speed up to the ultimate point.

The basal pitch chosen by the performing group of Ojā Sanjay Nath in the video document is Dflat4 (note Dflat in the middle octave on piano). (PS, Vid 17 - Ākhyān-chabi chanda). The melody moves within the tonal range of F4 to Aflat5 (note Aflat in the high octave on piano). And the high tessitura is nothing but clear. This vocal range aids the singers, without microphone assistance, in adequately projecting over the orchestra and the audience alike. The singers with no command over subtle modulation techniques could not cover up, on certain occasions, the strain sourcing out of constant upper register vocal phonation. In

certain instances, due to lack of controlled exercise of vocal amplitude, the notes do not fall softly on ears but account for a musical noise. Moreover, the correct expression of the emotion handled in the poetic text has also to be compromised in such targeted loud singing. It, however, remains a fact that the treble hold of the singers speaks of a finesse and they display sufficient ease in treating the chosen register so that the artistic beauty and the ensuing pleasure are not ruthlessly affected. Furthermore, the melody is subjected to a richer presentation with the use of embellishing oscillations, runs of beamed notes and a very brilliant distribution of textual syllables in the melodic progression.

The quatrains forming the poetic text of a *Chabi chanda ākhyān* follow a rhyme-scheme of ABCB. The pattern of sixteen-syllabled line followed by a ten-syllabled one runs through each stanza:

*Jetikṣaṇe Dhanañjaya Gāndhīva dhanuka lai*

*Uttare sahite khedi jānta*

*Bhiṣma Droṇa ādi kari Kouravara senā jata*

*Sabe dekhi bismaya bhailanta*

Je | ti | kṣa | ṇe | Dha | nañ | ja | ya |                      Gān | dhī | va | dha | nu | ka | la | i

Ut | ta | re | sa | hi | te | khe | di | jān | ta

Bhiṣ | ma | Dro | ṇa | ā | di | ka | ri |                      Kou | ra | va | ra | se | nā | ja | ta

Sa | be | de | khi | bis | ma | ya | bhai | lan | ta

Content: Here the verse text is a continuation of what forms the preceding *Pada ākhyān*. Guru Dronacharyya is shown to recognise the powerful sound ringing in the air as one that can be produced only by Arjuna with his set of bow and arrows and he warns his Kaurava army regarding the same (PS, Aud 29- DN chabi ākhyān discussion).

Each ten-syllabled line receives a choral treatment by the *Pālis* while the other longer lines come under the solo canopy of the *Ojā*. The concept of *Pāch pada*

understood as the last few syllables of a verse line is upturned in a *Chabi ākhyān*. In such an *Ākhyān*, thus, verse-lines within the stanza and not syllables of a line are divided between the *Ojā* and his *Pālis*.

In the first movement, the first eight syllables opening the recital display a linear progression different from those at the beginning of the other following quatrains. The next eight, however, remain same for all the stanzas. In the opening octosyllabic group aimed at setting the pace for the music on wait, the *Ojā* does not bother to maintain a strict meter (rhythmic) confinement. It is only with the *Pālis* singing that the pulse settles down and the progression is evenly put into action. The other quatrains begin with F4 (note F in the middle octave on piano) and make stepwise ascent to the point of Eflat5 (note E in the high octave on piano) in the octosyllabic group in question. For the initial quatrain, on the other hand, the said group moves within a narrower compass with the melody ascending from Aflat4 to Dflat5 (note Dflat in the high octave on piano) after a brief play between the commencing note and the next adjacent note in the format.

Further, except the first quatrain, the *Ojā* begins with F4 (note F in the middle octave on piano) in the first line but with F5 (note F in the high octave on piano) while ascending farther from that point in the third line of a quatrain. This style of maintaining an octaval difference between the two lines adds a distinct charm to the *Ojā*'s part. The *Pālis*, too, display a similar technique in starting with the middle octave (Aflat4) in the second line and making prominent confinement to high pitch placement with Eflat5 as the starting note in the fourth line. Moreover, the body of *Pāch pada* in the latter is wider than the former. The style of repeating the entire group of textual syllables in the second line is not followed in the fourth. The syllables in both the lines, too, differ partially in kind and fully in ordering. The ending phrasal motif '*Ehe / aha heiya*' of each *Pāch pada* has different melodic constructs, although they show similarity in not resolving in the tonic but in a 'Pa' (dominant) and 'Ga' (median) respectively suggesting a weaker cadence.

The beauty of the second movement lies in beginning (in both *Ojā*'s and *Pālis*' part) almost similarly as the previous movement but making some blunt deflections in the progression to make the melody-line sound different. In the

first/third lines of this movement, the *Ojā* drops the ornamental treatments found in the corresponding first/third lines of the first movement and keeps it shorter and simpler. The *Pāch pada* body is cut in length with the *Pālis* abandoning the method of repeating the verse syllables. The end is also brought about in a similar fashion with the last three measures remaining same and a cadence marked at the ‘Pa’. For the next set of alternate lines (second and fourth), the linear ordering of the *Ojā*’s melody remains the same as that found in the previous movement. The only thing is that the end is kept simple with the exclusion of the short embellishing part marked with a prominent oscillatory string.

The third movement is characterized by a relatively increased tempo. Of course, the pulse rate does not accelerate as much as in the case of *Thokā tāla*. More than the pulse, the fourth speed, that is, inclusion of four notes (and four corresponding textual syllables) in a single beat, mimics a tempo rise. In fact, the style of singing clusters of four textual syllables neatly with each passing beat accounts for a musical exquisiteness quite pleasing to the listening audience.

It is generally opined by *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performers that *Chabi ākhyāns* are exercised to detail out a melancholic episode. Dāināpāli Hareswar Nath informs about a *Chabi ākhyān* performance by Ojā Govinda Barua and Dāināpāli Iccharam Barua in which the rendition was so accurately touching in all fronts that not only the singers but audience too could not hold back their tears. The musical structure, however, does not seem to properly support a plaintive mood and evoke the dark emotion of dejection and misery. The major mode, firstly, is suggestive of a peaceful and untangled affair and it rather evokes positive emotions. Further, the *Pālis*’ part all throughout bares out a distinct punch in the pulse pace which drifts the musical mood far away from any seedbed evoking a dampened emotional state (field note m42/ 01.07.18). It can be thus concluded that it is not the melodic arrangement but an expertly expression of the *Bhāva* (emotion) inherent in the poetic text by the singers by different vocal techniques in accompaniment to befitting dance moves that successfully objectify the melancholy aimed in the poetry.



### **Dulaḍī chanda Ākhyān I:**

In this *Ākhyān*, the *Pālis*' share of verse text is remarkably small and the word 'Nārāyan' is a recurring motif in the text of the *Pāch pada*. In fact, it is the employment of the clever device of casting *Nārāyan* in different melodic moulds in the *Pāch padas* of the different movements that such a *Dulaḍī-ākhyān* turns interesting and also achieves a mark of singularity. Further, frequent accentuation on *Nārāyan* in great dynamic height by the strong choral force of the *Pālis* soberizes the character of the surrounding air and stimulates the devotional instinct in the audience. The *Pāch padas*, in fact, almost alienated from the poetic text present each time throughout the main body of the *Ākhyān*, a new melodic manner of combining *Nārāyan* with a set of syllables and thus end up greatly beautifying the recital. The motif of 'Hā haha yā' to mark a resolution is a regular phenomenon in this *Ākhyān* too (PS, Vid 18 - *Ākhyān-dulaḍī chanda 1*).

*Dulaḍī-ākhyān I* as recited by Ojā Tirtha Nath is witnessed to involve seven constituent movements (PS, Aud 20 -*Ākhyān-dulaḍī chanda1*). The general melodic and rhythmic character remains same for the first five movements and these movements together account for the main melodic body wherein a huge portion of the textual material is treated. The last two movements, as usual, work together to round off the piece and settle the surging tension. F4 (note F in the middle octave on piano) remains the referral pitch almost for the entire *Ākhyān*. However, the thorough exploitation of the mid register here makes it stand out from the other *Ākhyāns* discussed so far. Throughout the main body, the melody is primarily confined to the tonal space between F4 and C5 (note C in the high octave on piano) with occasional rise to the point of Aflat5. Till the third movement, the ascension to the point of octaval end is fleeting and infrequent. *Coutāla* fulfills the duple feel of the melody till the tempo sticks to a *Madhya laya*. The relatively simpler rhythmic variety of *Cabtāla II* is adopted from the sixth movement as the medium tempo experiences a rise.

In the first movement (*Calanā*), the *Pālis* get only the last two syllables of second/fourth lines of the quatrain. The first/third lines are exclusively subjected to the *Ojā*'s solo treatment. The melody of the first two lines sees some changes in the next two lines. Of course, the *Ojā*'s part remains more or less similar with

very little variations attempted over the linear progression in the initial measures of the latter lines save the music from turning unexciting. The major difference and the resulting beauty, however, is witnessed in the *Pālis*' part in the quatrain. The *Pāch pada* at the end of the second line is relatively shorter than the one sung next after the fourth line. This lengthening of the *Pāch pada* in the second time is also seen in some other *Ākhyāns* too. The *Pāch pada* is lengthened by inserting more syllables meant for treatment in the melody-line. *Nārāyan* is sung only once in the first *Pāch pada* but twice in the second one thereby expanding the latter. The technique of changing the linear ordering in the second *Pāch pada* while keeping in use specific melodic clusters turns the music richer and finer.

The style of transferring the accent to a weak beat at the beginning of a phrase constitutes a major element of the *Ojā*'s music. As a matter of fact, the said style is very natural to the melodic design in this movement because the beginning beat of each phrase is assigned only one note which comes after the tap of the downbeat and it thus transfers the accent to itself.

The melodic format that *Ākhyāns* like *Pada* and *Lecāri* plainly manifested runs through this variant of *Dulaḍī ākhyān*. A combination of 'Ga' and 'NI' with complete non-application of 'Re' and 'Dha' bears the specific melodic identity. What can be speculated from the repetition of this formation in different *Ākhyāns* is that this is something well-learned by the singers and there is high possibility that they make certain necessary modifications in the linear arrangement and keep reusing the same melodic pattern to fit into the differently-metered verses. A measure with a melodic rhythm in which the first *Mātrā* depicts *Chaugun laya* while using three notes (an eight and two sixteenth notes) and the second *Mātrā* involving two notes including *Dugun laya* (two eight notes) commonly occur towards the end of each movement (till the third) (field note m43/ 20.01.18).

The short melodic phrase called *Digār* runs as a motif till the fifth movement. It occurs at the beginning and acts as a necessary cue for the transition to another movement. The second and third movements comprise a number of identical clusters. Beauty is created by executing close changes in a controlled manner in the third movement while keeping the basic appeal and tonal identity of the second movement undisturbed. While for the fifth movement the syllabic

distribution remains same, for the fourth and sixth movements, it sees a slight change as in the last line of the quatrain, the entire line is handled by the *Pālis* and the *Ojā*'s share of six syllables is uprooted. The repeated stroke on 'Sa' (the eighth tonal degree) as the fourth movement opens is much needed to break the cycle seen till the third movement that was building a sort of monotony. In the fifth movement, the tempo experiences a slight rise. The rise is fully realized in the sixth movement that continues till the end of the recital.

It is to be noted that the two-timed *Cābtāla* takes over the *Coutāla* in the sixth movement. Though the pace of the beat relatively increases, the feeling of rapidity is mainly delivered by the style of executing the melody in *Chaugun* or fourth speed. Out of the style of assigning a cluster of four notes to each beat is evolved a sense of haste or an urgency to cover a lot of textual syllables within the space of a few beats. In fact, this quick rendering of the verses accounts for a definite magnetism and the style harmonizing with energized dance moves greatly contributes to the heavy dynamism of the performance. 'Dha' is introduced in the sixth movement while 'Re' is also brought into use in the last movement. The seventh movement is characterized by three brief sub-movements which avert decolorization of the audience's taste. Further, the soloistic appeal overshadows the chorus as only the last line of the quatrain is attributed to the *Pālis* while the *Ojā* covers all the preceding three lines.

### **Dulaḍī chanda Ākhyān II:**

This second variant of *Dulaḍī ākhyān* differs primarily from the first in adhering to a triple-metered progression and leaving out *Nārāyan* in the prescribed frame of the *Pāch pada*. Besides, the syllabic share held by the *Ojā* and the *Pālis* does not correspond with that of *Dulaḍī ākhyān* I (PS, Vid 19 - Ākhyān-dulaḍī chanda 2). This *Ākhyān* administers a relative simplicity as the usual trend of introducing prominent changes in the linear ordering defining the melody of the quatrain's alternate lines is not followed here. The set of five movements display a similar tendency like other *Ākhyāns* of engineering distinct moves in the rhythmic design to energize the performance. For example, the tempo and the rhythm are subjected to change mid-way in the performance and this definite formulation seen in all the other *Ākhyāns* succeeds this time too in instituting a bigger appeal. Very much



like the triple-metered *Lecāri ākhyān*, this *Ākhyān* too shifts from *Lecāri* to three-timed *Rupahī tāla* to support well the rising tempo.

The first movement witnesses an opening in *Madhya laya* (controlled moderato) which is beautifully maintained for the entire length of the movement. The *Pālis* let the *Ojā* sing the entire text of first/third lines and their *Pāch pada* comprises only the characteristic syllables. For the second/fourth lines, however, the *Pālis* take the share of the last three verse syllables. Incidents of delicate ornamentation traced in the *Ojā*'s solo feats add to the exquisiteness of the music. In fact, the markers or specific melodic gestures acting as lucid embellishments are well realized in the *Ojā*'s part than that of the *Pālis*.

The second movement opens almost similarly as the previous one and the *Pālis'* *Pāch pada* for the first/third lines remains only a cluster of meaningless words. As a matter of fact, this tendency of organizing the *Pāch pada* with only meaningless syllables in the first/third lines and with two verse syllables and only syllables in second/fourth lines of the quatrain continues till the fourth movement. It needs to be remembered that the body of *Pāch pada* even when it has only syllables does not stick to an absolute meaninglessness in the textual frame as inclusion of one or more meaningful words like *Jai* (victory), *Hari* (Lord *Kṛṣṇa*), *Rāma* (Lord *Rāma*) is invariably seen.

The third movement is marked for the change of rhythm from *Lecāri* to *Rupahī*. The shift to *Rupahī* is, of course, necessitated by the tempo rise – an incident already marked in *Lecāri ākhyān*. The pulse rate, however, does not achieve a marked rapidity from the very commencement of the third movement. The ongoing *Madhya laya* remains though a tendency to accelerate any moment is well hinted and the stealthily building restlessness in the music excites a similar restlessness in the audience. The gradual pulse pace ascension is short sustained and the apogee of the rising tempo is achieved very soon. The pinnacle speed of the pulse rolls over three movements and the built pressure is pacified only at the very end with *Tāla bhānā* as the melody is unshackled from the dictates of the rhythmic frame and the cymbals simply accompany with no systematic rule of musical meter.

Though the first movement almost leaves out ‘Re’, it witnesses a more frequent usage in the second and third movements. The second tonal degree suddenly disappears in the fourth movement but skilfully brought into use, although sparingly, in the concluding one. The dominant melodic structure that runs through the majority of *Ākhyāns*, in which the combination of ‘Ga’ and ‘Ni’ allows very less application of ‘Re’ and ‘Dha’ is what is followed in this variant of *Dulaḍī ākhyān* too.

However, it is the third movement which in presenting an interesting deviation deserves special attention. The skilled method of using both ‘Ga’ and ‘Ga’ accounts for enhanced beauty. ‘Ga’ is brought into play in plain ascension such as ‘Re Ga Ma’ while ‘Ga’s’ role is noticed every time the melody plans to land at the tonic, that is, the descend to the tonic is not directly made from ‘Re’ but with the phrase ‘Re Ga Re’. More clearly, instead of ‘Re Sa’, ‘Re Ga Re, Sa’ is invariably seen. Similarly, while in *Ārohi* (ascending) passages not ‘Re Ga Ma’ but ‘Re Ga Ma’ is allowed in the melodic layout (field note m44/ 22.01.18). Further, the melody is rendered in the tonal range roughly between G4 (note G in the middle octave on piano) and Aflat5 (note Aflat in the high octave on piano). The *Ojā’s* vocal dexterity is well realized as even in high pitch placement, he exploits melodic subtleties.

Ojā Dharmeswar Nath and Ojā Tirtha Nath claim that apart from the five movements, one or more movements can be suffixed to the melodic body of *Dulaḍī ākhyān* II (field note 60 / 26.01.20)/ (field note33 / 18.07.19). This substantiates the fact that different *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* groups handle the *Dulaḍī* II composition according to their own volition. In fact, there are other instances too which depict the provision available in an *Ākhyān* performance to administer free-handed modifications or to restyle the material in hand. For example, different *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* groups admit framing and performing *Kholā dihās* on their own (field note 42 / 27.02.19) Thus, the twenty-three *Kholā dihās* listed in Durgeswar Nath *Ojā’s* book (Oja, D.N., 1989, 83-85) is not exhaustive and there are many more composed, recited, circulated and orally handed down by the different troupes.

#### 2.5.5.3.4 Lecāri chanda Ākhyān:

The triple-metered *Lecāri tāla* accounts for the constant rhythmic frame wherein the melody is cast in a *Lecāri chanda ākhyān*. Of course, the simple triple-metered variant of *Rupahī tāla* is found taking over the *Lecāri* later. A *Lecāri ākhyān*'s three-time construct with two individual movements in which the triple time is a defining factor aids convenient syllabic distribution in the melody as well as acts as an authoritative backing for stylized dance moves.

The prepared score of *Lecāri ākhyān* as renditioned by Ojā Sanjay Nath and his troupe (PS, Vid 16a - Ākhyān -lecāri chanda) reveals note Bflat4 (note Bflat in the middle octave on piano) as the basal pitch. The singing is exclusively confined to the octaval space between Bflat4 to Bflat5 (note Bflat in the high octave on piano) throughout both the movements and only once, quite fleetingly, G4 (note G in the middle octave on piano) is touched. The ascension to Bflat5 accounts for distinguishable vocal strain. Of course, in the absence of a key-establishing and melody-producing musical instrument, the singers run the risk of catching a pitch range uncomfortably high. However, most of the time the *Ojā* who opens the performance and establishes the specific frequential range to be handled in the rendition, seems to have a decent idea of settling on a secure treble compass and he along with the *Pālis* is found to skilfully make up for any loop. In short, the treble training of the entire group of singers is too well realized while analysing the recital of *Lecāri ākhyān*.

The verse of a *Lecāri ākhyān* consists of quatrains with a rhyme scheme of ABCB, popularly found in ballad stanzas. Each four-lined stanza has alternating twenty and fourteen syllabled lines:

Example:      *Karṇaka sambodhi eve pāce kope bulilanta Kṛpacarjya*

*Śuna hera Rādhāsuta Karṇa durāsaya |*

*Kouravara māje kino tumi dhumketu parilāhā āsi*

*Sabāhare milāilā prachanda pralaya ||*

Kar | ṇa | ka | sam | bo | dhi | e | ve | pā | ce |      ko | pe | bu | li | lan | ta | Kṛ | pa | car | jya

Śu | na | he | ra | Rā | dhā | su | ta | Kar | ṇa | du | rā | śa | ya

Kou | ra | va | ra | mā | je | ki | no | tu | mi |                      dhu | m | ke | tu | pari | lā | hā | ā | si  
 Sa | bā | ha | re | mi | lā | i | lā | pra | chan | da | pra | la | ya ||

Content: The verse lines subjected to musical representation in this *Ākhyān* are extracted from the section of *Virāt Parba* of *The Mahabharata*. The subject matter is in continuation of the previous *Dulaḍī chanda ākhyān* and centers around the conversation between Guru Kripacharyya and Karna where the former advises the latter to tone down his arrogance and not to compare himself to prince Arjuna (PS, Aud 30- DN lecarī ākhyān discussion).

In the first movement, out of twenty, the *Ojā* is assigned thirteen and the *Pālis* seven syllables in the first and third verse lines while for the other two alternate verse lines the *Ojā*'s solo fraction extends up to ten syllables and the *Pāli* chorus takes charge of only the remaining four of fourteen syllables.

The basic melodic format of the first movement features a steady use of 'Ga' and 'Ni' with the non-inclusion of the 'Re' and 'Dha' respectively. 'Re' and 'Dha' are well realized and the emphasis on 'Ga' stands clear. Moreover, the distinct style of descension from 'Ga' to 'Sa' is employed to signify both temporary and final cadences (field note m38/ 18.06.18). The motif of 'Haha yā' as already noticed in *Pada ākhyān* surfaces here too and the melodic construct supporting these syllables also remains same. The *Madhyam laya* remains unchanged throughout the first movement and the performers state that a large proportion of the poetic tale is covered in this movement itself because with the coming of the second movement the rising tempo hurries to institute the musical denouement which calls also for the verses to parallelly end.

Another noticeable aspect is that the melody in the first/third lines opens with a run marked by quick alternation of 'Ma' and 'Pa' to ultimately settle on notes of larger relative duration from the second beat onwards. The quick alternation of neighbouring notes is found repeated in the constituent phrases. The *Pālis* during the *Pāch pada* repeat the last four syllables though such a repetition is not found during the rendition of the second/fourth lines. The second/fourth lines of the quatrain commence from 'Sa' (the basal pitch) and involve no distinct ornamentation within its compact motion (field note m39/ 18.06.18).

For the quatrains in the second movement, the *Ojā* and *Pālis*, each get ten syllables in the first/third lines and as a gesture to enhance the beauty, the *Pālis* repeat their part of ten syllables while the characteristic syllables and words like ‘*Rāma*’ contributing to the body of the *Pāch pada* are dealt with by them. In the next pair of alternating lines, the *Pālis* only sing the last two syllables as the *Ojā* treats the first twelve syllables. The continuation of the minor mode is thwarted in the second movement with the emergence of ‘Ga’. ‘Re’ and ‘Dha’ reveal as regular elements while ‘Ni’ is completely dropped and the dissolution of the melodic design of the first movement appears to be complete (field note m40/ 20.06.18).

The rhythmic treatment is of special importance in the second movement. It is to be noted that the first ten syllables with which the *Ojā* opens this movement are cast in the *Lecāri tāla* while with the entry of the *Pālis* thereafter, the entire bulk of verses is subjected to a *Rupahī tāla* treatment. Interestingly, the transition of *Lecāri* to *Rupahī tāla* appears to be a requirement of the melody set in an accelerating tempo. The simple manner of making two strokes where the first one is one *Mātrā* and the second two *Mātrās* longer to form the three *Mātrā* cycle in a *Rupahī tāla* is conducive to a relatively faster tempo setting. On the other hand, the *Lecāri tāla* with its half-*mātrā* strokes becomes less easy to handle with pulse acceleration (field note m41/ 20.06.18). As such, the *Leceri tāla* is adopted only for the few opening syllables and immediately the *Rupahī* is put into action because the gradual increase in tempo gears up soon. Further, the use of *Murkis* (a fast ornamentation in Indian classical music) during the short span of the melody in *Leceri tāla* is eventually abandoned as the *Rupahī* increasingly speeding up demands melodic simplicity and fetches little room for ornamentation. As a matter of fact, with the entry of the *Rupahī*, the rhythm of the melody relatively simplifies and most of the time, one note forming one *Mātrā* (one quarter note) neatly makes a beat of the cycle.

Of course, in second and fourth lines of the quatrain, a slight change in the melodic rhythm (in the *Ojā*’s part) accounts for sound beauty. The beginning beat of each cycle becomes two combined half-*mātrā* notes (two beamed quavers) instead of a single note forming one *Mātrā* (a single crotchet). One syllable (of the verse text) being assigned to each half-*mātrā* note (quaver) and the hurried

vocalization of two syllables in one beat speaks of a style that easefully breaks the monotony of the over-simplified rhythmic manner adopted by the melody in the first and third verse lines (field note m41/ 20.06.18).

In the second movement, two consecutive verse lines invariably end with the syllabic group of ‘A *haha heiyā*’ for which the notes too remain same. The culminated tempo sufficiently prepares the audience for a closure, but the final end strikes quite abruptly as the high-speed pulse suddenly breaks down and the ultimate conclusion is brought into effect with a brief non-metric treatment of signature syllables used for a closure (PS, Vid 16b - Ākhyān -lecāri chanda).

### 2.5.5.3.5 Jhumuri chanda Ākhyān:

An assemblage of four movements, the *Jhumuri chanda ākhyān* administers the typical vehicle of ‘Ga’ and ‘Ni’ with the duo of ‘Re’ and ‘Dha’ as *Langhan* (or skipped) *swaras* to modulate the melodic fashion. ‘Re’ however, emerges in one episode of the second movement and is employed as a direct and not *Vakra swara* in both *Ārohi* and *Avarohi* passages. In the second part of the same movement, it is blotted out and the regular design surfaces (field note m45/ 22.12.18)

The *Jhumuri* metre is comprised of couplets where each verse line is of eight syllables:

Kripa bacana jata |  
 ehimāne samājate ||  
 Karnara bhitika cāi |  
 aśvathāmā maharani ||

Kri|pa|ra|ba|ca|na|ja|ta |  
 E|hi|mā|ne|sa|mā|ja te ||  
 Kar|na|ra|bhi|ti|ka|cā i |  
 Aś|va|sthā|mā|ma|hā|rā i ||

Content: The verse lines subjected to musical representation in this *Ākhyān* are extracted from the section of *Virāt Parba* of *The Mahabharata*. The subject matter is in continuation of the previous *Lecāri chanda ākhyān* and centers around the statements made by Guru Dronacharyya’s son Aswasthama to Karna where he

tries to point out the futility of the war against the Pandavas and the reasons that have culminated in creating the present situation for which Sakuni and Karna is responsible (PS, Aud 31- DN jhumuri ākhyān discussion).

Each movement completes a cycle when two couplets of the verse text are handled and several such cycles involving two couplets are rendered in a movement. Therefore, in the second movement, the first couplet in a cycle features a strong 'Re' while the second couplet witnesses its omission. So, when the recital brings into play one cycle after another, there appears a constant rise and fall of the *Rishabh*. As a matter of fact, the orderly emergence of and deviation from the proposed melodic structure accounts for the definite tonal hue that is technically pleasing.

The *Jhumuri ākhyān* is marked for its rhythmic diversity as three different metrical cycles namely *Lecāri*, *Coutāla* and *Thokā* define the melodic arrangement. The shift from a triple to duple meter in the middle of the composition is an incident singularly traced in this *Ākhyān* only. The stance of readjusting the pattern of melodic phrasing to fit into a two-time formation speaks of a deft technique yielding a magnified musical delight. The *Coutāla* enters in the third movement and surrenders to *Thokā* in the fourth as the tempo fiercely accelerates. The altered colour of the duple aura produced with the progress from *Coutāla* to *Thokā* makes a marked difference in the overall musical appeal (PS, Vid 20 - Ākhyān-jhumuri chanda). As already noticed, except for an episodic emergence of *Rishabh* in the second movement, the nature of the general musical concept relies on a minor third and seventh combination. The *Ārohi* progression witnesses an almost symmetric usage of 'Ma' and 'Pa' (field note m46/ 02.01.19).

The poetic text that depicts conflict and war is generally handled in a *Jhumuri ākhyān* as stated by expert *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* professionals. The minor mode, no doubt, succeeds to some extent in casting a darker film over the melodic arrangement and its employment within a poetic frame narrating episodes of war and conflict and thereby stimulating darker emotions has a role to play in creating a tense musical atmosphere. Further, the tempo acceleration in the last movement with the advent of the *Thokā tāla* has a distinct function this time in making clear the tension hinted in the lyrical content. Also, the general pitch level falls within

the space between A4 (note A in the middle octave on piano) to G5 (note G in the high octave on piano). The high tessitura has its own role to play in musically supporting the poetic context.

The poetry of *Jhumuri ākhyān* comprise two-lined stanzas per couplet with ending rhymes. Each couplet is a run-off or open couplet with the meaning achieving completeness only in the second line. In the first movement, for each couplet the *Pālis* are assigned only the last four syllables of the second line. The *Pāch pada* for the second couplet begins similarly as the first one but shortly the linear ordering is subjected to distinct changes making the two *Pāch padas* entirely different. It is notable that the first *Pāch pada* does not end with ‘*Ha haha yā*’. This regular refrain is marked only at the end of the second *Pāch pada*. This incident is usually not detected in other *Ākhyāns*. The second *Pāch pada*’s use of ‘*Rāma Rām*’ speaks of its distinction from the first one.

In the second movement, the *Ojā* and the *Pālis* each neatly divide the lines of the couplet between themselves – the first line being taken by the *Ojā* and second by the chorus. In this movement, the decorative detail of the *Ojā*’s vocal arrangement is less intense. The *Ojā*, further, renders two different progressions for the first and the second couplet. He begins the second couplet nearly four whole tones lower than the commencing note in the first. This marked pitch disparity aids in signalling the beginning of a new poetic stanza, and also in moderating melodic dullness.

The wide thematic variation in *Pālis* melodic parts for the first and second couplets is spotted in the use of ‘Re’ in the first as already discussed. Besides this, the sudden and skilful treatment of a major sharply contrasts the tonal behaviour manifested by ‘Ga’ (the minor third) progression. What is more, the *Komal* ‘Ga’ is masterfully restored in the ending phrase reviving the original colour (field note m47/ 09.07.19).

The third movement is specially marked for a gradual rise of tempo and the two-timed meter. The musical climax is ultimately reached and the power-angle added to the recital electrifies the audience. This time the *Ojā* sings all the verse lines while the *Pālis* support the performance by rendering only syllables in the *Pāch padas*. This trend continues in the fourth movement too. The audience prepares



for release of the tension and waits for a resolution of the climax to strike the scene any moment. However, the fourth movement with a further increased tempo in *Thoka tāla* breaks the illusion that the denouement had already been staged in the third movement. This last movement, in fact, appears to be a concentrated block of all the musical properties in their intimate climactic positions. Be it pulse pace, dance gestures or melodic and rhythmic runs, every performative aspect ascends to a superlative pinnacle. The excitement of the audience too parallelly experiences a dramatic soar. The drop to the settling point is sudden and the performance is brought to close with one stroke as the melody and the accompanying rhythm loosen the tempo hold and both free themselves from their respective obligation to each other.

## **2.6 Miśra gīts (Stage V):**

The auditory data manifested in the unsophisticated demeanor of the melodic pieces grouped under this category succeeds well in counterpoising the staid decor inherent in the complex artistry of *Rāgas* on one hand and highly concentrated attempt at treating scriptural poetry on the other.

The musical spectrum of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is broadened and made snazzier by the inclusion of these varicolored ditties. This group of simple compositions aids in augmenting the length of the performance (as an overnight concert cannot wind off before dawn) and also in foregrounding the end of entertainment found many a time superseded by devotional, didactic ends and deeper artistic thought in the preceding stages. It cannot, however, be denied that the musical body of the fifth stage is not essentially severed from subjects centering the divine world and it necessarily involves the treatment of deities in a motley context. This wide group of songs, although characterized by less artistic complexity do not sharply swerve to announce an acute inconsistency with the primary essence immanent in the auditory image of a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* recital.

The musical unit of the fifth stage is composed of different varieties of songs that can be categorized under separate groups keeping in mind certain qualities. Ojā Durgeswar Nath in his book denominates the entire stage as '*Jhunā*' (*Ojā*, D.N., 1989, 85) and in a way considered all varieties of songs as *Jhunās*. Nabin Chandra Sarma, on the other hand, although entitling the stage in question as '*Juna* or

*Jhunā*’ (Sarma N.C 1996, 202), made a distinction between the *Jhunā* and *Puweli gīts*. The active bearers too, do not consider *Puweli gīts* to be *Jhunās* and clearly differentiate between the two (PS, Aud 21a - *jhunā* discussion 1). B. M. Goswami, while positioning *Jhunā* and *Puweli gīts* in separate compartments, addresses the former as ‘light songs’ and states these to appear “sensual, erotic and crude in nature” (Goswami BM 1997, 127). It seems that for possessing light-hearted and jocular elements in the poetic matter or involving themes lacking an apparent religious depth, Goswami plainly terms the *Jhunās* as light songs.

It needs to be remembered that *Puweli gīts* are held to be based on *Purabi rāga* by scholars and performers alike. *Jhunā*, on the other hand, is generally understood as denoting verses distinctly bearing a folk identity. This being the case, the mutual incompatibility between *Jhunā* and *Puweli gīts* can be said not to result only from their difference in poetic subjects and themes but largely from the innate melodic gravity and intricacy of anything that is *Rāga*-based or classical as opposed to the unaffected simplicity inherent in the formulatory definition of a folk-derived melodic entity. If *Jhunā* is unquestioningly held to mean only light verses cast in traditionally sustaining musical frames, then, of course, all the varieties enlisted to be performed in the fifth stage can be considered as *Jhunās*. The *Puweli gīts*, no doubt, would stand out for being *Rāga*-derivative and thus, for following a definite grammar. In the present study, however, it has been considered quite pertinent to attempt the categorization a little more elaborately and not just stick to the demarcation of *Jhunās* and *Puweli gīts*. Based primarily on the communicative vocabulary current among the active practitioners and also considering the differing nature of the songs staged in fifth stage, the categorization of the melodies newly attempted in the present work would stand as below:

1. *Jhunā gīts*
2. *Kabirar gīts*
3. *Durgābari gīts*
4. *Bāramāhi gīts*
5. *Puweli gīts*
6. *Sāmaraṇi gīts*

Thus, mostly taking into note the regular tendencies of the active performers to address a particular song within the confinements of their common idiomatic gestures, here the term '*Jhunā*' is applied to specific melodies pertaining to *Lord Śiva* and *Lord Kṛṣṇa* which depict lighter subjects related to the gods such as their deeds and actions as simple earthly beings. It needs to be made clear at this point that *Jhunās* and not *Junā* has been chosen because *Jhunā* is invariably used by the current professionals. *Jhunā*, in fact, appears to be a dialectical deformation of *Junā*. The residents of Darrang district are regularly found to replace the speech sound '*Ja*' with '*Jha*'; for example, *Jhiyā* (girl) for *Jiyā*.

Since the term *Jhunā* has been brought into use here to mean only one category of songs, it has been left out in the broad heading to mark the entire fifth stage. Primarily to avoid confusion, this stage of performance has been named *Miśra gīts* and not *Jhunā* or *Junā* like the other scholars. Now, having classified the compositions in which the textual material correspond to *Lord Śiva* and *Kṛṣṇa* under the category of *Jhunā gīts*, other *Gīts* like *Kabirar gīts*, *Durgābari gīts* and *Bāramāhi gīts* have been placed in three different categories since they possess no common element to be grouped together. The *Puweli gīts* are placed in the fifth category as they stand apart for being special songs sung only at the break of dawn and for having a distinct identity of being cast in the framework of *Purabi Rāga*. A last variety of songs namely *Sāmaraṇi gīts* has been classified as a separate group because such a melodic composition is precisely meant to be renditioned as a closure piece bringing the total concert to a close.

Ojā Durgeswar Nath dates back the *Jhunās* to the time of the Koch King Dharmanārāyan (Ojā, D.N., 1989, 20). However, the wide practice of these songs since distant past within the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* system is questionable. The main reason behind this can be traced to the impermissibility of *Jhunā* recital in a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance in the past. B.M Goswami considers *Jhunā* as a "later development" as it was "formerly regarded as taboo" and further states that the *Ojās* residing in the village of Vyāspārā refrain from singing *Jhunās* even today (Goswami, B.M., 1997, 127). This precise hesitancy that hovered long within the performative discipline of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* can be construed as a restrictive strategy adopted by the performers to preserve the solemn image of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* system as a serious instrument of achieving religious and

devotional ends. As a matter of fact, the light songs of the fifth stage reveal themselves as bold medium for the treatment and expression of the aesthetic flavor of *Sṛīṅgāra rasa* that is usually translated as romantic love or attraction. With Gods being represented as mere mortals many songs are distinct embodiments of the emotion of desire often carnal in nature. This being the case, the *Ojāpāli* artists holding the content of the songs coarse and morally improper certainly kept this outside the domain of the art form.

With the new generation of performers, the objective of entertainment probably received a pronounced importance and resultingly these songs made their way into the disciplinary confinements of performance as a whole. The audience, too, must have shown a convincing degree of fascination towards these variously seasoned melodies as they did a fair job in attenuating the severity of a toneless seriousness lingering in the performance materials till this point. The *Ākhyāns*, no doubt, do not hold the same measure of heaviness in mood and melodic disposition as the bunch of heterogeneous *Rāgas*, but they too, however, tend to strike a dull note after dealing with scriptural content mostly solemn, for a long time. Therefore, the brief composition dealing with lighter subjects received vast acceptance by the performers and audience alike.

Furthermore, since the onus is on the artist to carry on the performance till the crack of dawn, some amount of material is certainly needed to fill the void between the recital of *Ākhyāns* and *Puveli gīts*. These compact melodies acquire a distinct significance at this point. Sometimes with the end of a scriptural tale narrative in an *Ākhyān*, there remains such less time to dawn that the performers cannot afford to lay their hands on another *Ākhyān* since a tale cannot be left unfinished nor *Puveli gīts* recited past dawn. It is at this juncture that this group of simple songs is realized as the need of the hour. Since there is no inflexible convention of rendering a definite number of songs, the artists can avail themselves of the freedom of singing any number and type of songs before the *Puveli gīts*.

In short, it seems that chiefly as a measure to bridge the gap between *Ākhyāns* and the *Puveli gīts*, songs varied in nature have been drawn into possibly from different folk sources and presented with a unique *Ojāpāli* touch. The assimilation

thus, at the fifth stage is well understandable. As mentioned earlier, the songs have what is called *Bhanitās*. If this is the case, then the names of a number of poets, such as Srinanda, Haridasa, Madhavadasa, Dvija Rāmananda, Durgadas Dvija, etc. come to notice. A. C. Barua plainly rejects the idea that Madhabadasa could be the Neo-Vaishnavite saint Madhavadeva (Barua, A.C., 174, 887). However, what needs to be assessed is the fact that Madhavadeva was originally initiated into the *Śakta* tradition and he became a part of the revolutionary surge of Neo-Vaishnavism much later. Hence the notion that he wrote songs in praise of *Lord Śiva* or other deities does not deserve an outright denial. Further A. C. Barua holds names such as Durgadasa and Madhavadasa as only certain meaningful words, framed by the real poet, that does not necessarily mean the poet existing in the real world (Barua, A. C., 1974, 887). This contention of Barua appears fairly convincing on the grounds that a name such as Durgadāsa, for example, can be broken down as ‘slave of goddess Durgā’ or a devout worshipper of the goddess and may not necessarily refer to a living poet.

An exceedingly important feature common to all the fifth stage songs is the invariant rhythmic accompaniment of different types of *Heseni tāla* with the melodies. It is interesting to note that Ojā Durgeswar Nath states in his work that *Jhunās* are sung in *Jikirī* and *Lecāri tāla* (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 86). Investigation carried out in the field has, however, proved such a statement inaccurate. The practitioners admit exercising a good amount of leniency with respect to the performance of the melodic products of the stage in question. For instance, they do not hold it obligatory to follow a strict rhythmic regime in a piece. The use of and way of bringing into use the cymbals with a song is not subjected to a fixed method (PS, Vid 21 - *Heseni tāla* discussion).

In other words, the inclusion of the cymballic language within the expanse of the melodic literature in hand entirely rests on the volition of the performing group. Further, most of the time the meter is found adjusted to fit into the melodic rhythm. This incident in turn gives rise to different types of *Heseni tāla*. However, the defining element of *Heseni tāla* which is traced in the way the cymbals are held (which is in contrast to the other *Tālas* like *Coutāla*, *Lecāri* etc.) remains the same for all the songs. The performance in the fifth stage further enjoys flexibility

in respects other than the rhythm such as whether the artists would give a standing recital or sing while sitting is entirely decided by them.

In the present work, one popular piece representing one specific type of song has been recorded in audiovisual format and the captured information has been set to musical transcription. Given below is an assessment of the notated pieces specific to a particular group of songs:

### **2.6.1 Jhunā gīts:**

The term ‘*Jhunā*’ literally refers to a poetic meter in which each verse line is eleven-syllabled (Ojā, D.N., 1989, 85). However, the poetry of the *Jhunā gīts* has nothing to do with the *Jhunā* meter and it instead employs different meters such as *Chabi*, *Lecāri* etc. The songs dealing with *Lord Śiva* as the central figure have been classified as *Śiva Jhunās* and those with *Lord Kṛṣṇa* as *Kṛṣṇa Jhunās*. As already stated, the thematic content of *Jhunā gīts* generally revolves around the gods as simple mortal beings and depicts stories related to their deeds, actions and experiences on earth. Another class of *Jhunā gīts*, *Nāgeri jhunā*, has been identified which is however non-prevalent in the current era. The three types of *Jhunās* have been discussed below:

#### **2.6.1.1 Śiva jhunā:**

The *Śiva Jhunās* narrate amusing episodes in the lives of *Lord Śiva* and his consort *Parvati* while they being mostly represented as poverty-stricken man and wife in the mortal world. Instilling the deities with human qualities proves a pertinent tool primarily to let the rural audience visualize a scene frequently experienced in their own households and thereby to derive distinct pleasure. The verses of the *Śivar Jhunā* “*Nandire bhrngire*” in hand portrays an entertaining incident involving *Lord Śiva* and *Parvati* in a domestic setting. That *Jhunā gīts* do not essentially carry the objective of striking deeper religious notes is evident in the text of this song. The Lord asks *Parvati* to serve him his meal before he goes out to beg for alms. The goddess voices her fear of not having anything to cook. At this, *Śiva* fumes in anger and finds fault in his wife. The series of events described in the verses, thus, abound in jocular elements and its presentation by

the performers with appropriate vocal expressions accounts for considerable amusement.

The ending quatrain, however, deviates as the narrative shifts from a third person to first person as the poet referring to himself as Durga Dasa seeks the blessings of the Lord for the fulfillment of his wishes and professes to remain a slave to him for all times. A sudden didactic turn that the poetry achieves in the end assists the view that irrespective of the overpowering angle of entertainment, kindling the devotional instinct of the audience is strived for to some extent by the poet. The quatrains of the poetic text are set in *Chabi* meter in which there are alternating lines of sixteen and ten syllables. It is noteworthy that the *Chabi*-meter poetry is preceded by a short stanza with which the song opens.

The opening lines are repeated after every two lines of a quatrain. This opening stanza can be, thus, likened to a *Sthāyi*. Since on many occasions, the performers are found making use of the term ‘*Dihā*’ to mean a refrain, it would not be inappropriate to refer to the opening stanza as the *Dihā*. The *Dihā* does not follow any known meter and aids well in introducing the theme. In the given *Śivā jhunā*, Lord *Śivā* himself is the speaker who expresses his displeasure to Nandī and Bhṛngī, his devotees, and speaks out his wish to leave Kailāś, his abode.

The documented copy of *Śivā Jhunā “Nandīre Bhṛngīre”* in hand pertains to its performance by Ojā Sanjay Nath and his *Pāli* band (PS, Vid 22a - śiva jhunā). Aflat4 is found to be the referral pitch establishing the key and the melody covers the space between Eflat4 and Eflat5. The primary aural flavour that is *Ojāpāli* in nature is the immediate tendency to quickly ascend to prominent high frequencies. Generally, the *Sthāyi* of any popular Hindustāni (classical) song restricts its upper register exploitations and chooses to make good use of the first half of the octave. This *Śivār Jhunā* too, in this sense while rising to and not going beyond the point of Eflat4 (note Eflat in the middle octave on piano) retains the general nature of a *Sthāyi*. Yet the pitch placement chosen for the *Dihā* destabilizes the notion of *Sthāyi*. If the actual poetry which constitutes the main body of the song is tried to be equated with the concept of *Antarā* then certain aspects certainly support such an equation. For instance, that the *Antarā* section features textual density is clearly seen as the main text is contained in the series of quatrains. However, this

*Jhunā* flouts a specific norm set for an *Antarā* which is to treat a pitch register higher than the *Sthāyi*.

On the contrary, in the present song, the variable sections are not marked with any of this distinguished pitch ascension in comparison to the *Dihā*. While the *Dihā* resorts to a distinct rest on Eflat4 (note Eflat in the middle octave on piano), the quatrains do not ascend beyond B4 (note B in the middle octave on piano). They, in fact, move within a very narrow tonal space and are designed well to smoothly return to the *Dihā*. The *Pālis* only sing the *Dihā* and the entire text is given a solo treatment by the *Ojā*. Such a distribution also aids in retaining the general *Ojāpāli* feel. Another instance that accounts for heightened pleasure is the cymbal accompaniment with the *Tāla Heseni V* being withheld each time the *Ojā* sings. The on-and-off pattern adopted by the cymbals serves to attach an extraordinary zeal to the parts when the rhythm is brought into play suddenly. The language of the *Heseni tāla* here is based on a rough imitation of the rhythmic style that the melody bears. That is, the way of forming the eight-beat cycle by demonstrating four consecutive strokes to mean first four *Mātrās* followed by one stroke representing the next four *Mātrās* (four crotchet beats followed by a whole beat) appropriately matches the eight-beat construct of the melody.

#### **2.6.1.2 Kṛṣṇa jhunā:**

The image of child *Kṛṣṇa* as an endearing prankster happens to be the common content of the *Kṛṣṇa jhunās*. The Lord's 'Bāla lilā' or light-hearted episodes of childhood form the central theme of these songs. Although, songs dealing with delightful mischiefs of the Lord in his early years abound in different folk systems outside the domain of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli*, it is noteworthy that many of such melodic pieces talk at length about the divine force imbibed in the *Kṛṣṇa* image. In other words, the popular *Kṛṣṇa* songs describing the childhood deeds, most of the time carefully choose those actions which reveal the godly magnanimity in his mortal existence. However, the *Kṛṣṇa jhunās* essentially confine themselves to the little *Kṛṣṇa*'s simple, lovable and naughty misdoings and mother *Yaśodā*'s reaction to such mischievous acts. Such *Jhunās* do not seem to attempt symbolic representation of spiritual matters while describing deeds and actions within the material realm. The simple delineation of child *Kṛṣṇa*'s playful activities does not,



however, fail to excite pure emotions of love and devotion towards the figure of the Lord in the audience's mind. A devotional tinge is, thus, hard to be missed in the sincere amusement strived at in the *Kṛṣṇa jhunās*.

The popular *Kṛṣṇa jhunā* documented during the course of this study stands as a fine example of the common thematic object of *Kṛṣṇa jhunās* in general (PS, Vid 22b - *Kṛṣṇa jhunā*). In this song, the *Dihā* portrays Yaśodā as the speaker who expresses her displeasure to Kṛṣṇa on his naughty acts which are becoming increasingly difficult to handle. In the verse that follows, she tells him about the constant complaints of the *Gopinis* (female cowherds/ milkmaids) regarding the misdeeds of Kṛṣṇa such as stealing butter and creating disturbance in their regular visits to the banks of the Yamunā river. The speaking voice, then, transfers to little Kṛṣṇa who tries to appear innocent and confesses that he only minds his business as a cowherd and does not disturb the *Gopinis*. Yaśodā is instantly charmed by her child's words and blames the complaining women instead. In the ending *Bhanitā* quatrain there seems to be a kind of wordplay on 'Mādhava'. The poet reveals his name as Mādhava who says that he is singing 'Mādhavar lilā' (playful acts of Kṛṣṇa also referred to as Mādhava).

The poetry of this given *Jhunā* is in *Dulaḍī* meter in which twelve and eight-syllabled lines alternate in the quatrains. The *Ojā* lays out the initial phrases and the entire *Dihā* is then chorally treated by the *Pālis*. The traversing area of the *Dihā* not extending beyond the lower tetrachord comes closer to a *Sthāyi* concept. The progression restricts itself to simple experiments and the combinations of notes are kept simple though no serious ornamentation is attempted. The characteristic *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli khatkās* or sudden jerks at calculated points throughout the melodic run are easily felt and the style instantly tends to establish a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* flavour.

The progression in the *Dihā* reveals a tendency to quickly revert to the tonic with its phrasal end. The narrow tonal space covered gives the impression that the melody will adopt a distinct ascension soon after the *Dihā* ends. 'Ni' is neatly established in the *Dihā* measures though its usage is noticed only in one particular combination. The melody in the main verses reveals an immediate ascending move and the rest at the octaval end declares the change of pitch placement in

comparison to the *Dihā*. A sudden and shrewd application of the ‘Ga’ in an ornamental cluster enhances the melodic beauty (field note m48/ 12.04.19).

The simple yet calculated split of the melody-line between the *Ojā* and the *Pālis* also accounts for sound pleasure. For instance, while the *Ojā* introduces the first two lines of the quatrain, the *Pālis* repeat the second line and before each repetition they slip in a phrase “*Ehe he ehe prān Gopāla*” that is not part of the poetic matter. The next two lines of the quatrain receive a choral treatment though the *Ojā*’s common act of putting forward a new melodic/ poetic thought in his solo voice is well detected in his rendition of the third line. The melody is marked for its compound time in duple meter. The *Heseni VI* here, again, mostly imitates the melodic rhythm and thus, fits well into the musical frame.

### **2.6.1.3 Nāgeri jhunā:**

This class of *Jhunās* are subjected to a separate categorization altogether for its text being specifically marked by coarse content or ribaldry. Aimed at pure amusement, *Nāgeri jhunās* were used to be staged quite late at night when generally the audience would not comprise the womenfolk. The coarse humour in such *Jhunās* were considered inappropriate to be put on stage without any restraint. These *Jhunās* are, however, not in practice today. The trend of overnight recitals witnessing a rapid decline might have led to the defunct status of the *Nāgeri jhunās*. As Ojā Tirtha Nath observes, these became obsolete some thirty years back. He further mentions how an *Ojāpāli* singing *Nāgeri jhunā* would be teasingly called as “*Nāgeri*’ – ‘*A he mor nāgeri jhunā a – a Ojā ghorat āsā nā a*” (Hey, *Nāgeri jhunā*... *Ojā* are you at home?) (PS, Aud 21b - *Nāgeri jhunā*).

### **2.6.2 Kabirar gīts:**

In this group of songs termed *Kabirar gīts* the ending stanza invariably including such phrases as “*Kahato Kabir*” which directly corresponds to the style adopted by the saint poet Kabir in his poetic works, firmly establishes the influence of the real poet Kabir in these songs. Secondly, the content of these melodies centre around certain lofty, philosophical ideas in the line of Kabir’s poetry. Thirdly, the language of this group of songs is marked with a distinct oddity. Though not written in vernacular Hindi as Kabir’s poems, these are either not in Sanskrit, or in early / modern Assamese. On the contrary, the lyrics, A. C. Barua claims,

comprise an interesting combination of Assamese, Arabic, Hindi, Persian and Bengali words (Barua, A. C., 1974, 1100). This incident boldly hints at possible working of multiple strains of external forces on such songs from time to time. As a matter of fact, it is quite likely that with the dispersal of Kabir's *Dohās* (couplets) across India, these were absorbed and restyled according to the linguistic and musical norms of the region and the given *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Kabirar gīt* drew into elements of different regional versions of Kabir's poems within itself. The assimilation is however, found crude as the songs, include certain meaningless words and sometimes lines too. This is to say, the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performers upon exposure to Kabir-centric songs learned the same, but possibly failed to capture correctly the lyrics in some parts and instead used meaningless words to support the tune learned.

There is no evidence further of the correct occasion of such an exposure of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* to Kabir's songs in the historical context. However, scholars like A. C. Barua opine that Assam and *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* in particular happened to come across Kabir's songs as Guru Nanak and Guru Teg Bahadur along with their disciples visited Assam in 1517 and 1569 respectively (Barua, A. C., 1974, 908). Ojā Durgeswar Nath, on the other hand, tries to draw a possible connection of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* to Kabir's songs on account of the former's encounter with the Mughal soldiers kept as prisoners in a village in Mangaldai that came to be known as 'Mogal becā gāon' during the reign of king Chandranarayan known to ally with the Ahoms against the Mughals (*Ojā*, D. N., 1989, 21).

*Kabirar gīts* are also referred to with various other names. N. C. Sarma lists 'Patchahi' or 'Badchahi' *gīt* as some other popular names of *Kabirar gīts* in his book (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 204). On the other hand, A. C. Barua calls them 'Pātcha' or 'Pātchi' *gīts* (Barua, A. C., 1974, 907-908). The current *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performers profess that certain varieties of songs in the fifth stage also find an entry into the performance design specific to the actual ritualistic prose carried out by the priest during day time. The *Kabirar gīts* are always subjected to an evening performance that lasts overnight (PS, Aud 22 - kabirar gīt). It is true that the poetry of these *Gīts* is not plainly bereft of a devotional perception yet *Kabirar gīts* are probably unfit to be recited during the ritual proper since they never deal with any subject related to a deity.

One popular *Kabirar gīt* ‘*Guruji Tumji*’ has been documented during the course of the present study. The realization of the transitoriness and ensuing futility of human life can be read as the crux of the verses. Kabir calls men to surrender to the divine faith in order to evade the misery of the transient world. The poetry is not set in any known meter nor does it follow any rhyme-scheme. In each four-lined stanza, besides the *Dihā*, however, the first line is eight-syllabled and the two constituent phrases are made to rhyme.

In the *Dihā* itself the melody progresses with a definite swiftness and the lively pace accompanying the clever distribution of textual syllables within the four-time (quadruple) meter frame lends an interesting tinge to the melodic picture. Incidents of two syllables clustered to form one *Mātrā* abound in the *Dihā* as well as in later sections. Ojā Tirtha Nath’s demonstration of the melody in question reveals a thorough exploitation of a high pitch placement. With Aflat4 (note Aflat in the middle octave on piano) as the base pitch the progression strictly moves within the octaval area between Aflat4 and Aflat5 (note Aflat in the high octave on piano). The pitch choice in the song, thus, successfully advocates a typical *Ojāpāli* character.

The *Dihā* nearly unravels the basic construct of the melodic plan. The omission of ‘Ga’ is instantly felt and the combinations of ‘Re’ and ‘Ma’ are found crucial in the progression. The ‘Ni’ is fleetingly touched in the *Dihā*, though its use becomes more pronounced as the melody progresses. ‘Dha’ is missing in the opening stanza but the melody for the rest of the verses introduces and well exploits the ‘Dha’ (field note m48/ 12.04.19). In this *Kabirar gīt*, too, the typical understanding of *Sthāyi* / *Antarā* is found maintained as each time a new stanza is treated the melodic progression reveals a clear ascension and does not fail to signify a distinct pitch difference from that of the *Dihā*.

### **2.6.3 Durgābari gīts:**

*Durgābari gīts* derive their name from the well-known poet and *Ojā* of the sixteenth century Durgabar Kayastha (1515-1560). His work *Giti Ramayana* is an expertly transformation of the verse matter of Madhav Kandali’s *Ramayana* into arresting songs which made their way into an *Ojāpāli* concert. These songs, however, rarely find a place within the basic performance design of *Biyāh-gowā*

*Ojāpāli* in the present time. The verses features a treatment not of the heroic feats of *Lord Rāma* or *Lakṣmanā* but regular day-to-day matters surrounding the lives of the three central characters of the epic *The Ramayana*. Ojā Tirtha Nath's rendition of a *Durgābari gīt* “*O he bhāi lakhāi*” has been documented in the present work (PS, Aud 23 - *durgābari gīt*). The song pictures the lamentation of *Lord Rāma* following his separation from his consort *Sitā*. The *Dihā* depicts *Lord Rāma* calling out to his younger brother and aide *Lakṣmana* in great affliction. The quatrains that follow are in *Dulaḍī* meter with alternating twelve and eight-syllabled lines. The ending stanza follows the usual style of mentioning the poet, here *Durgabar*.

The given *Durgābari gīt* is marked for its pentatonic formation. The combination of ‘Ga’ and ‘Ni’ with the exclusion of ‘Re’ and ‘Dha’ is common occurrence noticed in the different types of *Ākhyāns*. Since this absolute minor pentatonic structure is a frequently emerging episode in the bulk of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music not designed for a systematic representation of a *Rāga* melody, it can be assumed that this melodic order corresponding to folk methods is responsible for characteristic format which is readily put into action if a need arises to support a poetic text never treated musically (field note m49/ 18.04.19). The use of this common melodic pattern in the *Durgābari gīt* in hand, however, can also be read as an act of sustaining the popular lyrics on the occasion of the loss of the original tune.

Like the discussed *Śivār jhunā “Nandire Bhṛngire”*, this *Durgābari gīt* has eight beats to a measure represented by the cymbals through the rhythmic frame of *Heseni V*. Ojā Tirtha Nath sets the basal pitch at E4 (note E in the middle octave on piano) and the progression figures continuous episodes of an upward bent. In fact, the need to touch A5 (note A in the high octave on piano) as the composition includes, on a few occasions, ‘Ma’ occurring beyond the octaval demands definite skill on the part of the singer. It is evident that each *Ojā* knows his limits and attempts to deal with a particular pitch placement accordingly. In the present piece, incidents of proper ascension to a high register occur in the *Dihā* itself although the typical nature of an *Antarā* traced in its exploitation of the high treble space more than the mid is well evident.

#### 2.6.4 Bāramāhi gīts:

*Bāramāhi* (lit. pertaining to the twelve months of the year) *gīts*, as the name suggests, are those songs the poetic content of which invariably draw in matter referring to the twelve months of the year. Absolute non-prevalence of this *Gīts* in the current time has been marked in the field survey record. The host of performers interviewed reveals its obsolete status. The only extant example of a *Bāramāhi gīt* has been traced in Ojā Durgeswar Nath's book (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 99-101). The said *Gīt* appears to be a broad narrative detailing various events surfacing the acute longing of one Phulmati for *Lord Kṛṣṇa*. The subject of twelve Assamese months has been found to have been astutely taken into the poetic plan of the *Gīt*. Marking the content of the song, the absorption of *Bāramāhi gīt* from an established folk system into the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* complex at some point in history can be safely ruled in. Perhaps with the unwelcome shrinkage of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music owing to different hostile factors, a *Bāramāhi gīt* could not sustain on the performance plane of the *Ojāpāli* art form.

#### 2.6.5 Puweli gīts:

'*Puweli*' in *Puweli gīts* is derived from the word '*Puwā*' meaning 'morning'. As the name suggests, this group of songs is meant to be put to performance only at the crack of dawn and hence are strictly time-bound. The *Puweli gīts* enjoy special importance in the sequential map of a nightlong concert as they signal the time nearing summing up and eventually of the rounding off of the recital of the first day of the ritual of worship of *Lord Vāsudeva*. In order to keep in tune with the subject of morning, a *Puweli gīt* is found to invariably include overt references to the dawn in its songs. Nevertheless, the deity-centric thematic concerns are not abandoned and the question of dawn is introduced only in relation to a plot formula involving an episode in the life of a deity (or deities).

Most of the *Puweli gīts* listed in *Ojāpāli* texts and recited by the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* groups centre around the figure of Rādhā and in fact the image of Rādhā yearning intensely for Kṛṣṇa is embedded in the text of these *Gīts*. The primary emotion of desire is coupled with numerous other emotions like fear, pain, doubts, anger, jealousy, etc. Further, the longing of Rādhā can also be read as a metaphor for the spiritual quest for unison with the divine soul and such an analysis tends to

lay bare the actual idea of devotional submission backing these songs. Although the content of *Puweli gīts* might be inspired by a religious enthusiasm and thought this might be the reason behind their inclusion and practice within the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* system it remains a fact that such a perspective is not realized and beheld by the active artistes.

There are, of course, exceptions to the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa themes in *Puweli gīts*. One example is the piece where the central figures are *Lord Śiva* and his consort *Pārvati*. There is only one such *Śivar* *Puweli gīt* detected in texts and actual practice. *Ojā* Durgeswar Nath lists this as a *Puweli gīt* in his book (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 105). Another is “*Gopāla jāga jāga Nārāyana*” (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 206). In this song is found Yaśodā insisting Kṛṣṇa to wake up as dawn has broken. However, *Ojā* Durgeswar Nath goes on to chart down a few other songs with major thematic deviations under *Puweli gīts*. These songs, numbered 11 to 17 centre around little Kṛṣṇa’s adorable pranks (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 93-98). They, therefore, appear fit to be grouped under Kṛṣṇa *Jhunās*. The most crucial point that justifies the categorization of the Śiva-centred and Kṛṣṇa-Yaśodā song but not the said *Kṛṣṇa-Jhunā* like song as *Puweli gīts* is that the former two evidently treat the subject of dawn while the latter do not.

Further, a current practitioner *Ojā* Tirtha Nath considers the song “*O he gaurāi tumi kene karā rāva*” as a *Jhunā* (PS, Aud 24 - *puweli* vs *jhunā*). This song, however, is listed as one of the *Puweli gīts* in *Ojā* Durgeswar Nath’s book (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 90). As the content of the song in question celebrates the usual thematic idea running through the *Puweli gīts*, indexing the song within the group of *Puweli gīts* stands justified. One explanation of *Ojā* Tirtha Nath’s contradictory statement may be located in the possibility that the named *Ojā* and his troupe must have in their regular practice sung the given song within the time span running from the end of *Ākhyān* and beginning of *Puweli gīts*. Probably they never tried to acknowledge the content-centric commonality characterizing all the *Puweli gīts* in general.

However, there is another bolder point that needs to be assessed in this context. In fact, what demands close notice is that the text of various *Puweli gīts* are found subjected to only one specific tune during field analyses. In other words, the same

melodic progression is used to treat the textual matter of different *Puweli gīts*. It needs to be unfailingly remembered that a *Puweli gīt* has been firmly stated as *Purabi-Rāga* based by *Ojāpāli* literature and active singers alike. If this be the case, there is high possibility that the melodic structure of *Purabi Rāga* is maintained in this one prevailing tune. Other compositions exploiting the melodic design of *Purabi Rāga* must have gone out of practice with time. Further, the current practitioners reveal the non-inclusion of the *Purabi rāga* in regular practice. Nor do they possess the grammatical expertise to detect the melodic identity of a *Purabi rāga* in a particular composition. As a result, possibly since Ojā Tirtha Nath melodically handles “*O he gaurāi*” in a manner different than that of the usual *Puweli gīt*, he considers it a *Jhunā* (PS, Aud 21a - jhunā discussion 1).

Another *Puweli gīt* “*Āju kadambara tale rai rai*” that finds place in Ojā Durgeswar Nath’s book deserves special notice (*Ojā*, D. N., 1989, 92). During the course of field work, the opening line of the said *Puweli* has been found sung as a *Dihā* both within the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* and *Suknānni Ojāpāli* systems (PS, Aud 25a - āju kadambar *Dihā* bgo/ PS, Aud 25b - āju kadambar *Dihā* so).

Ojā Tirtha Nath’s rendition of a commonly sung *Puweli gīt* “*Kār bāri puhāilā rajani*” has been documented as a part of the present work (PS, Aud 26a - purabi Rāga / PS, Aud 26b - puweli gīt). The lyrics of the given song weave a picture of the unrest in Rādhā’s mind as she voices her disappointment at Kṛṣṇa’s absence during the night. The opening line stands as a question thrown to Kṛṣṇa where Rādhā asks where he had spent the night. Here itself can be traced a distinct reference to the end of the night and break of dawn. The textual content is a plain exploration of the romantic angle in Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s relationship. The quatrain-poetry set in *Chabi* meter or alternating sixteen and ten-syllabled lines is thus a standard effort at painting Rādhā’s desire and the subject of dawn is found shrewdly wrought in the lines.

The primary melodic features that come to notice on observation consist of the major pentatonic ascending pattern. ‘Ma’ is not allowed in the format and its very fleeting occurrence in one or two instances can be safely considered as the skilful manner of bringing into use a *Vivādi* (or dissonant) pitch for colour. The ‘Ni’ in



descending motion is regular and it cancels the pentatonic effect. The behaviour of the ‘Ni’ many a time reveals its *Vakra* or curved nature. A voice community like ‘Dha Ni Pa Dha’ that frequents the progression is one fine example. Further, not any instance of straight descension like ‘Sa Ni Dha Pa’ is witnessed. The dominance of ‘Dha’ followed by ‘Ga’ is realized as the progression moves forward. If it is supposed that the given composition bears the melodic identity of *Purabi rāga*, then a rough sketch of the *Āroh-avaroh* or ascending-descending pattern defining the melodic framework can be drawn as- ‘Sa Re Ga Pa Dha Sā / Sā Dha, Ni Dha Pa, Ga Re Sa’ (field note m50/ 20.04.19).

The basal pitch of the piece is set to E4 (note E in the middle octave on piano) in the documented audio copy. In the *Dihā* itself, there is a quick ascension and it has been observed that the ascended progression of the second part of *Dihā* matches with the opening section of each quatrain-melody that follows. The pitch height reaches Aflat5 (note Aflat in the high octave on piano) and the characteristic high register work is found maintained. The verses of the entire quatrain are subjected predominantly to a solo treatment by the *Ojā*. There exists an interesting intermediate melodic section treating mostly meaningless syllables sung by the *Pālis*. This section is rendered as the *Ojā* finishes the first two lines of the stanza and before he begins the other two remaining lines. The balance observed in the solo and choral parts in the performance accounts for considerable beauty.

#### **2.6.6 Sāmarāṇi gīt:**

A *Sāmarāṇi gīt*, being the closure piece, stands as the compulsory musical material placed at the finale of a performance plan, that is, on the closing point of the second-day evening performance. The available *Ojāpāli* texts do not provide any notable material on such kind of a *Gīt*. Ojā Durgeswar Nath’s discussion of the fifth-stage *Jhunās* do not mention the existence of such an entity. N. C. Sarma cursorily mentions the practice of ending a *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performance by specified verse matter involving the praise and glorification of *Vāsudeva* or *Nārāyana* or *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rāma* (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 206). Analyses on practical grounds have substantiated the compulsion attached to the stationing of such a composition oriented towards the deified images surrounding the figure of *Lord*

*Viṣṇu* at the conclusion of a two-day long recital. As the verse content of the *Sāmarāṇi gīt* practically sung by the artistes is untraceable in the available literature, it can be concluded that the poetry of a *Sāmarāṇi gīt* sustains though the medium of oral transmissibility or that the link to any textual existence of these songs has been lost over time.

The *Dihā* popularly sung with the *Sāmarāṇi gīt* is “*Kṛṣṇa ye Hari bāndhaba Rāma*”. However, another *Dihā* “*Govindāi japa mana bhāi...*” has been provided for documentation by the Ojā Muktarām Sarma (PS, Vid 23 - gobindai japa mana bhāi). Ojā Sanjay Nath’s rendition of a *Sāmarāṇi gīt* has been musically transcribed for the present work (PS, Vid 24 – samaraṇi gīt). The first musical feature that attracts attention is the spirited tempo that expresses a definite urgency. Secondly, it is only the *Dihā* which carries the air of a melody proper as the rest of the piece bears a chant-like nature with very less prominent melodic motions.

The *Dihā* with ‘Ga’ and ‘Ni’ with the exclusion of ‘Re’ and ‘Dha’ is another instance of the use of the commonplace *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* melodic method. The verses following the *Dihā* are handled in two different melodic manners. First is to keep playing with tonic and its adjacent notes which facilitates the use of only the ending phrase of the *Dihā* after it. In the second method, the same play is marked on the ‘Ma’ and its adjacent notes which very easily lead to the beginning of the *Dihā* and so the latter is repeated in its entirety after this method. The cymballic run breaks into a non-metrical arrangement and subsequently into *Tāla bhāṇā* with which the musical plot resolves and ends. The melodic structure attempted in the *Dihā* is kept intact in the ending section (field note m51/26.04.19).

Ojā Durgeswar Nath claims the *Jhunās* to be *Rāga*-based melodic pieces (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 85). Nabin Sarma on the other hand, opines these to be folk-derived songs (Sarma, N. C., 1996, 205). What needs to be reinstated at this point is that both the scholars meant the entire body of *Gīts* described so far in the fifth stage by *Jhunā*. Now, to arrive at a solid statement resolving the debate whether the *Gīts* are compositions exploiting the melodic framework of a *Rāga* or entities drawing its essence from folk systems appears difficult at this point. It is

necessary to note that the musical complex of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* is rich with a unique system of *Rāgas*. However, as already seen most of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāgas* have become extinct. Further, the handful of *Rāga*-related material subjected to study and analyses in the present work can in no way act as a detailed body counting on which to establish the relation of these *Gīts* with *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāgas*.

Another fact that calls for interrogation is related to the question of which system of *Rāgas* (*Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* or Hindustāni) Ojā Durgeswar Nath related the *Gīts* with. The probability that with the loss of the elaborate mass of the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāga*-system, he tried to parallel the *Gīts* with the popularly circulating Hindustāni *Rāgas* during his lifetime, cannot be ruled out at one strike. Whatever be the case, if a relation needs to be established between the fifth-stage *Rāgas* and *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāgas*, then further research activities must attempt at discovering the melodic formulation of as many *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāgas* as possible and then try reading the *Gīts* in a *Rāga*-context. The position at which the present work stands does not favour establishing a correspondence between the *Gīts* and *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli Rāgas*.

## 2.7 Ritual gīts during Homa:

Ritual *gīts* during homa are divided into two categories namely *Homar gīts* and Other devotional *Gīts*. *Mālcī gīts* and *Bandanās* fall under the second category.

### 2.7.1 Homar gīts:

‘*Homa*’ is the sacrificial fire which is integral to the priestly orbit surrounding the ritual. So, the set songs which accompany the process of *Homa* are termed *Homar gīt*. During investigations on field the *Homar gīts* have been found popularly practised. The *Gīts* have been documented and the collected material reveals discrepancy between the textual content of the *Gīts* printed in books and that actually sung. The first *Homar gīt* is traced in Ojā Durgeswar Nath’s book (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 121-122), A. C. Barua’s book (Barua, A. C., 1974, 888-889) and in (Sarma. N. C., 1996, 106-107) too. This *Gīt* generally identified by the *Dihā* “*Kṛṣṇye Hari...*” opens with a description of the ten incarnations of *Lord Viṣṇu* followed by content related to such matters as the specific deities called upon for worship, the origin of the *Gondhcauparī sabhā* and how the *Rabhā* is arranged.

However, the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performers initiated into the Neo-Vaishnavite system restrict themselves to the singing of Viṣṇu's incarnations only. Thus, though the poetic content of a *Homar gīt* is meant to assist the process of *Homa* by presenting a narrative involving substance directly linked with the ritualistic order, many performers tend to disable this obvious motive of the text. A second *Homar gīt* opening with the *Dihā* “Jaya namo Nārāyāna Yajñeswara Hari” has been traced in Sobharām Hazarika’s book (Hazarika, S., 2014, 27). This second *Homar gīt* describes the origin of the different elements brought into use during the *Homa* such as mango tree – ‘*Āmgachar janma*’ (Barua, A. C., 1974, 890), origin of *Rabhā* – *Rabhār janma* (Barua, A. C., 1974, 891), etc.

The available *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* literature mentions three *Dihās* that are sung with the *Homar gīts*. The *Dihā* “*Kṛṣṇaya Hari Bandhaba Rām*” as demonstrated by Ojā Tirtha Nath has been documented (PS, Vid 25a - homar gīt). The *Dihā* “*Jaya namo Nārāyāna Yajñeswara Hari*” has also been recorded during field work (PS, Aud 27 - *Dihā* 2 for homar gīt). A third *Dihā* “*O lailo Caraṇata sarana tomāra, O ahare dharma rupe yajña avatāra*” has been traced in N. S. Barua’s work (Barua, N. S., 1975, 48). This *Dihā*, however, was not found existing in popular practice. It may be mentioned here that the poetic text pertaining to *Rabhār janma* of a *Homar gīt* reveals striking differences from that of the etiological ballad sung after the *Gurumandalī* during an evening performance. Though the verses for both the mentioned compositions deal with the narrative of the *Rabhā*'s birth, they differ in both component verse words and the meter. The *Rabhār janma* verses meant to be rendered during *Homa* are found in A. C. Barua's book (Barua, A. C., 1974, 891) while Ojā Durgeswar Nath charts the text of the ballad sung during an evening recital (Ojā, D. N., 1989, 68).

The musical anatomy of first *Homar gīt* has been tried to be comprehended on the basis of its rendition by Ojā Sanjay Nath (PS, Vid 25b - homar gīt). The triple-metered structure of the song and supported by *Heseni IV tāla* adopts a moderate tempo throughout. The minor pentatonic pattern is well established in the *Dihā* and it continues through the rest of the progression without any deviation. The verse lines following the *Dihā* are treated in two different styles. In the first style, a verse line sticks to a progression that rises from the tonic and is restricted to ‘Pa’. On the other hand, the second style is marked by the beginning from a

higher point of the octave, the leading note, and a treatment primarily of the upper frequential range (field note m52/ 30.04.19).

It is interesting to note that while the first style is in execution, the return to the *Dihā* is signalled by singing only the last phrase and not the complete *Dihā*. In fact, observing the progression of the first style a smooth return to the *Dihā* appears difficult. However, with the second style, the *Dihā* is sung completely after a verse line(s) and the return to the *Dihā* stanza is understood as hassle-free. Further, it has been felt that the performers do not distinctly divide the text for a first style or second style treatment. They seem to simply keep in mind the fact that the monotony of one style must be regularly disrupted by the other.

The performance of second *Homar gīt* has been successfully captured while documenting a *Gondhcauparī sabhā* (PS, Vid 26 - homar gīt 2). The melodic progression of this second *Dihā* is found almost similar to that of the first. However, this piece has also been found treated in the manner of *Thokā pada* which involves a fast iterative singing of the verses on one of two reciting tones.

## **2.7.2 Other devotional songs:**

### **2.7.2.1 Mālcī gīts:**

*Mālcī gīts* are singular compositions detailing out the magnificent form of the goddess and indulging in an elaborate appraisal of the feats and deeds of the female deity. Such *Gīts* are central to the organized plan of a *Jāgar* ritual and their entry into the performance locale of a *Sabhā* is restricted to the occasional incident of a devotional offering made to the *Devī* within the ritualistic domain of *Vāsudeva* worship both on the morning of the first day of *Adhibās* and on that of the proper ritual day held on the next.

Field explorations undertaken during this study have revealed that only one such *Mālcī gīt* is presently performed by the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* performers. However, participation in live *Jāgar* ritual brought to the fore the practice of many other *Mālcī gīts* too. What was interesting was the fact that the *Jāgar* performers sang different lyrical texts pertaining to the goddess almost to the same tune. In short, the difference in the *Mālcī gīts* performed was marked mostly in the textual content than in the melodic identity of the compositions.

The term ‘*Mālcī*’ has been considered a distorted derivation from the actual term ‘*Mallabshree*’ (Sarma, N.C., 1996, 113). The latter term refers to a *Rāga* and in this sense, all *Mālcī* gīts can be held to be *Mallabshree rāga*-based songs. These *Gīts* are believed to have been written and composed based on *Rāga Mallabshree* by the musician Sarbananda Vyās at the instruction of King Dharmanarayan (Barua, A.C., 1974, 884). Further, it is exceptionally crucial to note that *Mālcī gīts* were permitted entry into the performance expanse of the *Sabhā-gowā* only a few decades back when in a *Sanmilan* (meeting), the proposal of calling off the exclusive hold of *Mālcī* gīts by the *Jāgar* faculties and of the conditional recitation of this *Gīts* within the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* system had been agreed upon by the scholars with unanimity. This important change has been reported by Ojā Dharmeswar Nath during field work. (field note 85/ 19.10.19).

The popular *Mālcī gīt* circulating among the *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* singers has been documented from Ojā Mukta Rām Sarma (PS, Vid 27 - *Mālcī gīt*). What attracts attention at the outset is the one permeating melodic rhythm from beginning to the end of the piece. The accompaniment of *Heseni I* (see page 361) on the cymbals which is a close imitation of the melodic rhythm accounts for considerable beauty. The piece is subjected to a moderate-speed treatment which experiences a slight rise as it progresses. The choice of B3 (note B in the low octave on piano) as the basal pitch and the vocal range falling down to the octaval stretch between B3 and B4 (note B in the high octave on piano) is a somewhat offbeat incident as the usual high register tendency seems to be uncared for. ‘Ga’ and ‘Dha’ are absent leading to a pentatonic format. ‘Ga’ however, surfaces for one short instance. The ‘Ni’ plays a dominant role. The combinations of ‘Re Ma’ and ‘Pa Ni’ are main contributors to the melodic design (field note m52/ 30.02.21).

#### **2.7.2.2 Bandanā gīts:**

While *Adhibāsar gīts* and *Homar gīts* are the primary pieces nucleic to a ritual-time performance, there exists a separate group of musical material though not strictly but popularly practised. To this group belongs the *Mālcī gīts* centering around the goddess and other songs that pertain not to the female deity but male deities like *Lord Śiva*, *Lord Kṛṣṇa* etc. These *Śivar gīts* and *Kṛṣṇar gīts* are essentially different from the *Jhunā gīts*, mainly sung in the evening, that deal with the subject of these deities. The main difference lies in the element of

devotion. The *Śivar* and *Kṛṣṇar gīts* accompanying the ritual are more like songs of praise of the Lord which focus on the devotion-laden voice of the devotee. The *Śiva/Kṛṣṇa Jhunās*, on the other hand, as already noticed, narrate humorous episodes or lighter subjects, marked by non-devotional angles, related to the Lords.

One popular *Śivar gīt* “*Aba aba dandavata*” has been documented for the present study. It has been rendered by Ojā Tirtha Nath (PS, Aud 28 - śivar gīt). The incident of rhythmic variety executed in a planned manner throughout the piece greatly enhances the pleasure. In the *Dihā* is found the accompaniment of the three-timed *Heseni IV tāla* which runs in *Madhya laya*. As the melody catches a patterned pace there is a sudden dissolution of the rhythm while the quatrain-text is taken into hand. Interestingly, the first two lines of the quatrain are rhythmically unattended while the third line brings in the duple meter of *Coutāla*. In the last line of the quatrain, the melody returns to a *Heseni IV* accompanied format.

The constant play marked in the rhythmic texture accounts for unanticipated musical images that shock and please at the same time. The general melodic plan speaks of a total omission of the ‘Ni’. All the used notes are *Prakṛiti swaras* (natural notes) and ascending cluster with straight patterns such as ‘Re Ga Ma’ is a rare incident and it makes it stand out from the usual melodic tendencies seen in the rest of the pieces constituting the musical body of *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* (field note m53/ 29.04.21). As in the source audio, the base pitch stands at G4 (note G in the middle octave on piano) the high pitch placement is only but too clear. The constant rise to and stay on the octaval end or G5 in this context speaks of a full-throated treble activity.

To summarize, this chapter, while closely looking into the dimensional aspects of the *Gīts* in an ordered manner can be, thus, considered to have fulfilled the primary research aim of furnishing an organized study of the currently circulating *Biyāh-gowā Ojāpāli* music.

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## Fieldwork Documentation

Photographs –

PS, Pic 1 – Baran

Audios -

PS, Aud 1- pātani gīt digār

PS, Aud 2 – daṁśī puraṇ

PS, Aud 3 - viṣṇu pada tune1 & Dihā

PS, Aud 4 - viṣṇu pada tune 2 & Rāga

PS, Aud 5 - Gor bānā thāk 1 & 2

PS, Aud 6 - Gor bānā thāk 1 & 2

PS, Aud 7 - Gor bānā thāk 3

PS, Aud 8 - Gor bānā thāk 4

PS, Aud 9 - Gor bānā thāk 5

PS, Aud 10 - Gor bānā thāk 6 & 7

PS, Aud 11 - Gor bānā thāk 6 & 7

PS, Aud 12a - Pātani Dhāl Pada discussion 1

PS, Aud 12b – thiya Rāga

PS, Aud 13 - Doṇuwā bānā ghunni & thāvars

PS, Aud 14 - Doṇuwā bānā thāvars & morañi

PS, Aud 15 - Doṇuwā bānā morañi 2

PS, Aud 16 - Rāga relī

PS, Aud 17 - nayan Dihā

PS, Aud 18- Ākhyān -pada chanda

PS, Aud 18a- DN pada ākhyān discussion

PS, Aud 19 - Doṇuwā pada

PS, Aud 20 - Ākhyān -dulaḍī chanda1

PS, Aud 20a- DN dulaḍī ākhyān discussion

PS, Aud 21a - jhunā discussion 1

PS, Aud 21b - Nāgeri jhunā

PS, Aud 22 - kabirar gīt

PS, Aud 23 - durgābari gīt

PS, Aud 24 - puweli vs jhunā  
PS, Aud 25a - āju kadambar Dihā bgo  
PS, Aud 25b - āju kadambar Dihā so  
PS, Aud 26a - purabi Rāga  
PS, Aud 26b - puweli gīt  
PS, Aud 27 - Dihā 2 for homar gīt  
PS, Aud 28 - śivar gīt  
PS, Aud 29- DN chabi ākhyān discussion  
PS, Aud 30- DN lecāri ākhyān discussion  
PS, Aud 31- DN jhumuri ākhyān discussion

Videos -

PS, Vid 1a- Beginning of day 1 performance  
PS, Vid 1b- Nepūr and tāla pātā  
PS, Vid 2- Adhibāsar gīt- 4  
PS, Vid 3- Adhibāsar gīt- 1  
PS, Vid 4- Adhibāsar gīt- 2  
PS, Vid 5- Adhibāsar gīt- 3  
PS, Vid 6- Humkār  
PS, Vid 7- Gurubandanā  
PS, Vid 8a - Pātani ghunni & Rāga  
PS, Vid 8b - Pātani gīt  
PS, Vid 9 - Viṣṇu pada and daśāvatāra dance  
PS, Vid 10 - Viṣṇu bhāñani - kathopakathan 1  
PS, Vid 10a - Kathopakathan 2  
PS, Vid 11 - Cābtāla Dihā DKD/DN  
PS, Vid 12 - Thiya Rāga  
PS, Vid 13a - Gharjiyā  
PS, Vid 13b - Doṇuwā bānā  
PS, Vid 14 - Rāga relī  
PS, Vid 15 - Ākhyān -pada chanda

PS, Vid 16a - Ākhyān -lecāri chanda  
PS, Vid 16b - Ākhyān -lecāri chanda  
PS, Vid 17 - Ākhyān -chabi chanda  
PS, Vid 18 - Ākhyān -dulaḍī chanda 1  
PS, Vid 19 - Ākhyān -dulaḍī chanda 2  
PS, Vid 20 - Ākhyān -jhumuri chanda  
PS, Vid 21 - Heseni tālā discussion  
PS, Vid 22a - Śiva jhunā  
PS, Vid 22b - Kṛṣṇa jhunā  
PS, Vid 23 - gobindai japa mana bhāi  
PS, Vid 24 - sāmarani gīt  
PS, Vid 25a - homar gīt  
PS, Vid 25b - homar gīt  
PS, Vid 26 - homar gīt 2  
PS, Vid 27 - Mālcī gīt  
PS, Vid 28 DN ghunni thiya rāga, Moraṇi 2

**FIELD VISUAL DOCUMENTATION**



PS, Pic 1 – Baran