CHAPTER V

THE OJAPALI

The Ojapali art form is one of the major ancient traditional art forms which occupies an important and significant place in the classical music and dance of Assam. The artform is mainly based on the themes of the two Mahakavyas and the Puranas. on the other hand, the performance is preserved in the memory and handed down in continual reworkings from generation to generation. That is why, the art form may rightly be called a folk tradition. Again the art form fulfils the need of gīta and nṛtya on one hand and on the other hand it contains narration with some gestures, i.e., abhinaya. Hence, the art form may also be treated as quasi dramatic art form.

Origin and Development of Ojapali and its Antiquity

Meaning of the term Ojapali:

The term Ojapali is a coined word. It has two parts (i) ojā or ojhā and (ii) pāli. Both the words are derived from two different Sanskrit words like
"Upādhyāya" and "Pālita".¹ The Assamese term ojā may be defined as— a teacher, a teacher subordinate to another teacher, a head artisan, the head man of a troupe of singers or reciters, a village doctors skilled in charm, spell, witchcraft etc., a skilled person, a master musician or instructor in music in the sāttras etc.²

In other words, pāli carries the meaning like—one of several persons who work by rotation, a subordinate or an assistant artisan, the subordinate of the ojāpāli art form, and a dose of medicine etc.³

An Upādhyāya is a sub teacher who instructs a part of the Veda or vedāṅgas, grammar for wages. He is inferior to an Acāryya. The Assamese ojā or ojhā is also a teacher in a sense, because he teaches the art of music, dancing, mudrā and other things to his pālis. Like Upādhyāya, the ojā also performs for wages unlike the Upādhyāya, the ojā does not teach Vedas or

¹ (i) OIA Upādhyāya (MIA Uajhāa) as. Ojhā, ojā
(ii) OIA Pālita (MIA Pālia) as. Pāli

³ Ibid., p.251.
Vedāṅgas; but the Assamese oja is skilled in many arts. Similarly, the term pali bears the same meaning of the Sanskrit word pālita. In the context of ojāpāli art form the pālis perform their function as assistant or helper of the chief singer, i.e., oja. The two words, i.e., oja and pali, join with each other and they seem to be one and a single word with a single meaning i.e., the living and popular art forms of ojāpāli.

Like other traditional art forms, the ojāpāli is handed down traditionally. As such, it is not easy, if not impossible to trace out the origin of this art form. Secondly, there is no written evidence regarding the origin of the art form. Hence, we have to depend various popular beliefs and legends handed down traditionally. Even belief goes that the Indian dramas have been created by the all father Brahma. Similarly, different beliefs and legends have been synchronized with the origin of the ojāpāli art form.

5 Sarma, N.C.; Loc.cit.,
In this connection, various theories may be mentioned.
A few such theories have been discussed in the following pages.

(a) The theory of Divine Origin:

The active bearers of the art form of ojapāli believe that the tradition of the ojapāli was brought by Arjuna from heaven to the earth. Indra, the king of heaven, being satisfied with Arjuna for his victory over the demons, summoned Urvasī and directed her to perform dance and music to entertain Arjuna. But in course of performance, Urvasī fell in love with Arjuna. Urvasī told Indra about her love. Then Indra requested Arjuna to wed Urvasī. But Arjuna rejected the proposal vehemently. As a result, Arjuna was cursed by Urvasī by saying that the third Pandava would be an eunuch for a year. Then Arjuna returned to the earth and remained as an eunuch. During the year, Arjuna performed songs and dances that he enjoyed in heaven in the form of a gandharva. It is also said that he brought dresses and musical instruments from heaven. In this way Arjuna brought the gandharva-vidyā, i.e., ojapāli art form heaven.\(^7\)

The sukma ojapali, i.e., ojapali associated with the worship of the snake goddess Manasa, circles believe that their art was at first brought on earth by Arjuna in the role of Bhananala from Indra's heaven, and it was introduced to both the Hindus and the Muslims by the Darrangi raja, i.e., the chief of Darrang.8

(b) The theory of Parijati:

The biyihar ojapali, i.e., ojapali associated with the worship of Vasudeva or Visnu and so on, circles of Darrang believe that the art form of biyihar ojapali was at first got by Parijati in her dream while she was busy with weaving at her loom suddenly she heard some melodious songs that came from heaven. All of a sudden, she came away from her loom and looked towards heaven and started to dance and sing in different ragas. It is said that she got all the essential dresses and instruments, such as nepur, jam, capkan and paguri in her dream. Later on, she taught the art

of dance and songs to others. That art form learnt by Parijāti and taught to others came to know as the biyāhar ojāpāli. 9

(c) The Theory of Vyāsa Kalāi:

Like the theory of Parijāti, another traditional belief goes that Vyāsa Kalāi was the originator of the biyāhar ojāpāli. According to D. Sarma a person who is well versed in musicology is known as Vyāsa Kalāi. The descendants of those scholars are still found at Vyasapara, a village of Darrang District. 10

The biyāhar ojāpāli circles believe that Vyāsa-Kalāi learnt the art of the ojāpāli from Parijāti and he taught the art to others. In this way the performing art form of ojāpāli came in vogue.

2) Scientific Approach:

The theories associated with the origin of the ojāpāli discussed above seem to have been unconvincing since these theories are not based on logic. First, the

9 Barua, A.C.: Manasa Kavya Aru Ojapali, pp. 73-75.
10 Sarma, D.: Mañgaldair Purañjii, p. 94.
theory of divine origin appears to be supernatural and unreal as the theory is not based on reason. As such the theory may be rejected.

Secondly, the myth of Pārijāti is also untenable on the plea that she is not a historical being. Hence, the myth seems to be a creation of folk mind.

Thirdly, the legend of Vyāsa-kalāi cannot be taken into consideration since Vyāsa-kalāi is a title. Any oja of the biyāha-gowa variety who generally acquired proficiency in the art of vyāsa-saṅgīta was called Vyāsa-kalāi. So we may assume that Vyāsa-kalāi is not a single man but there may be so many Vyāsa-kalāis.

So, it can easily be assumed that the art form never originated from Arjuna or Pārijāti or Vyāsa-kalāi.

The Ojāpāli is a social phenomenon. Like other social phenomena, the ojāpāli no doubt is an outcome of historical process. The ojāpāli is a kind of kathakata. Hence the origin of the art form is associated with the great tradition of kathakata. The tradition of the kathakata goes back to the pre-vedic period. The telling
of tale is also based on *kathakatā*. Characters like *upādhyāya*, *upāsthabāke* and *udgata* are found in the Vedic literature. The main function of the *upāsthabāke* is to explain the *mantras* or to teach the mantras. In the same manner, the *udgata* is to chant hymns of the *Gāmaveda*.

Although the functions of the *upāsthabāke*, *udgata* as well as *upādhyāya* are not same, nevertheless there is a common characteristic among the three. This characteristic is *kathakata*.\(^{13}\)

*Kathakata* literary means the performance of a *kathaka*.\(^{14}\) The *kathaka* is a singer, or a group of singers who recite the episodes of epics and *purāṇas* to the accompaniment of music and dance before an audience. M. Ghosh observes, "*kathakas* or those who read before and audience episodes from original epics (*Mahābhārata* or *Rāmāyana*) or the *purāṇas* and explain them with the art of a good story-teller interspersing their narration with songs, or musical recitation of Sanskrit passages".\(^{15}\)

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11 *Rgveda* XI, 879, *AtharvaVeda* III, 15.7
12 *Rgveda* II, 43.2
14 The term *kathaka*, narrator, relator etc. is found in *Mahābhārata*. *Kathā* also signifies stories.
15 Ghosh, M.(ed.); *Nandikesvara’s Abhinavadarpana*, p.19 FN.
The ojāpāli art form appears to be a successor of the tradition of epic recitation and abhinaya. The epic recitation involves the recitation of epic poems, viz., the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata, the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa and other Purāṇas. Such recitations are held in the contexts of religious festivals. These recitations are always associated with some kind of gesture and abhinaya. The Kathaka performs recitation along with gesture and abhinaya for impressing the audience with what he delivers.\(^{16}\) In the same way the oja or ojhā, of the ojāpāli art form also recites the themes from the Assamese versions of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata as well as the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and other Purāṇas. The oja, just like a Kathaka is required to make a liberal use of gestures for impressing the audience with what he delivers. The ojāpāli performance is also held in the religious contexts. From the above said discussion we may come to the conclusion that the ojāpāli art form is a bearer of the great tradition of khathakatā.\(^{17}\)

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17 Sarma, N.C.; Essays on the Folklore of North Eastern India, p.28.
Antiquity of the Ojapali Art form:

The ojapali art form is based on the tradition of performing mārgī arts of India. Prāgjyotisṭa, i.e., Assam has variously been described as a land of music and dance. The Abhinaya darpana of Nandikesvara states that the tradition of lāsya-nṛtya begins with ûsā who was the daughter of Sonitpur's King Vana.18

Like Indian dance and music, Assamese dance and music emerged from temples. It is believed that the offering of dance to the accompaniment of vocal and instrumental music assures the merit of sacrifice performed.19 The Natya-Sastra refers that the tradition of saṅgīta and nṛtya as well as vādyas was current in ancient Assam since the 1st Century B.C.20

It has already been mentioned21 that the Natya-Sastra mentions four kinds of Nātya-Praṣṭitis of which Odra-magadhi style was current in Assam from the ancient past. Dramatic style includes both gīta, nṛtya and vādyas. The ojapali art form bears many similarities

18 Ghosh, M. (ed.); Nandikesvara's Abhinayadarpana, ślokas, No.5-6.
19 Sivaramamurty, C.; 'Introduction' in Ashton, M.P. Yaksagāna), p.xi
20 M.Sastri; 'Asamat saṅgīt Carcā in Rāmadhenu, 6th year, Bohāg, p.3.
21 supra, Chapter IV,p.
with Odra-māgadhī style. "The ojāpālī comprising of gīta, vādyā and nrtya is a quasi-dramatic art form which bears many affinities with Odra-māgadhī style."  

The ancient Hindu Kings of Assam were patrons of music and dance. The Tempur copper plate issued by king vanamāladeva (9th century A.D.) records that the king propitiated God Śiva in the Hāṭaka Śūlīn (Śiva) temple with dance and song.23 It is said that king vanamāladeva appointed nartakas and nartakīs, i.e., daluhāṅganās in the said temple to perform dance and song during the hour of daily worship.24 The term daluhāṅganā may rightly be equated with the term deodhanī, meaning god wife and dancer associated with the sukmanī ojāpālī and Barmanī-gān or Māre-gān. So, the term daluhāṅganā may indicate a proto-form ojāpālī and perhaps such form of proto-ojāpālī was current during reign of King Vanamāladeva. Moreover term like devapālībhi25 which suggests the meaning

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22 Datta, B.: Asamīya saṅgītar Aitiḥya, p.4.
   Sarma, T.N.; Pracīn Asamat saṅgīt Āru Bartamanar samasya' in Samskritika, p.3.
25 Bhattacharyya, P. (ed.): Kāmarūpar sāsanāvalī, p.54
25 Bhattacharyya, P.: Op.cit., p.64,
of dancers. The pālis of the ojāpāli art form bear similarities with the deva-pālis in respect of functions. As such, the term deva-pāli may indicate the proto-form of ojāpāli institution.26

The śṛttiratnākara, a renowned Sanskrit work of vedācāryya, a well-known Kamarūpī scholar of the 13th century A.D. The book refers to the jāgara performance performed on the occasion of the worship of Viṣṇu (i.e., Viṣṇu jāgara).27 The jāgara performance is still regarded as an essential part by the Piyāhar- ojāpāli even to day. This may indicate the antiquity of the ojāpāli art form.28 Form the above discussion it is evident that a strong and long tradition of Margī sārgītā was prevalent in Prājyotisa-Kamarūpa from a fairly ancient time. The ojāpāli art form keeps the tradition of Margī-sārgītā of ancient Assam alive.29 Rightly does K.Vatsayana observe: "the dance of ojā bears many resemblances to the classical dances of India, the accompanying music is also close to the classical rāgas.30

26 Sarma, N.C.: Essays on the Folklore of North Eastern India, p.31
28 Sarma, N.C.: Cp.cit., p.31
30 Vatsayana, K.: Tradition of Indian Folk Dance, p.120.
References of the Ojāpālī found in the Early Assamese Literature:

The Ojāpālī art form continued to be a very popular and living art form. As such, the references of the Ojāpālī in the art and literature of Assam cannot be ignored.

Mādhava Kandalī (14th century A.D.), most celebrated poet of the early Assamese literature, rendered the Rāmāyana of Vālmīki. In the Assamese version of the Rāmāyana, Mādhava Kandalī mentions:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{madhura mṛdaṅga dhari vidyādara bāve /} \\
\text{gandharva sakale sulalita gīta gāve /} \\
\text{mukhya mukhya bāchi apesvarā kare nāta /} \\
\text{nārā chandre bicharde capaya parhe bhāta /} \\
\end{align*}
\]

— The vidyādharas play on mṛdaṅgas pleasantly. The Gandharvas sing sweetly. The Apsarās stage drama and the Bhātās recite capaya verses.

Elsewhere of his work Mādhava Kandalī records:

\[
\begin{align*}
pṛtya gīta yādva bhānda savade \\
\text{miliqālā kolāhal /} \\
\end{align*}
\]


32 Ibid., V.1346.
An uproar was being made by the sounds of \textit{nrtya}, \textit{gīṭa} and \textit{vādyā}.

It is easily discernible that \textit{nrtya}, \textit{gīṭa} and \textit{vādyā} are essential ingredients of the \textit{ojāpālī} art form. Hence, perhaps, it would not be irrelevant if we say that the above observation of Madhava Kandali may indicate the \textit{ojāpālī} art form.

The \textit{ojāpālī} music is popularly known as \textit{gāndharva-vidyā} or \textit{gāndharva} art, eg.;

\textit{gāndharva svarūpe vyāsa ojhāra udaya},

\textit{i.e., Thus the vyāsa-ojhā (oja) emerges in the form of a Gandharva.}\textsuperscript{33}

Both the \textit{oja} or the \textit{ojāpālī} is also known as \textit{gīṭāl} or \textit{gīḍāl}. Mention of the term \textit{gīṭāl} or \textit{gīḍāl} is found in the \textit{Dāka-Pravacana}, e.g.;

\textit{danta khasile kisar gīṭāl /}\textsuperscript{34}

\textit{i.e., A gīṭāl, i.e., singer, is not a gīṭāl if he loses his teeth.}

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\textsuperscript{34} Sarma, N.C.: \textit{Dāka-Pravacana}, p.12.
Manakara (15th century A.D.) one of the major poets of the Manasa-lore of Assam, mentions the term *gītal* in his book *Manasa Kāvyā* to suggest the sense of *ojāpāli*, e.g.:

*gītalā hāte kānte jāgok edāla cāmar* /35

i.e., Awake in hand and throat (for tone) of the *gītal* and the fly-brush.

Saint-poet Saṅkaradeva (1449-1568 A.D.) records the term *gītal* in his *kīrtana-putthi*, which goes thus:

*heriyā quñiare vēra bhramare gītal* /36

i.e., The *gītal* begins to sing like the humming sound of bees.

The *ojāpāli* was a living and popular art form at the time Saṅkaradeva. In favour of this observation we can put forward a statement found in the *Guru-Carita* of Rāma Caraṇ Thākura. The statement narrates that Saṅkaradeva brought Choto Balorama by Pārayaṇa Thākura. Choto Balorama was a *dāinapāli*, i.e., chief of the assistants of an *oja* or *ojha*.37

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36 Neog, M. (ed.): *Kīrtana-Puthi*, 13/146.
The Kathā-guru-Carita records that the ojāpāli art form was performed at the śrādha ceremony of Saṅkaradeva.\(^{38}\)

One of the renowned hagiologists of medieval Assam composed an important hagiography entitled Guru-Lila. The Guru-līla of Rāmarāya mentions that at time of the Śrāddha ceremony of saint Deva Dāmodara (16th century A.D.) art form like ojāpāli and nāṭa and nātuwa

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ojāpāli nāṭa} & \quad \text{nātuwa bijāga} \\
\text{brahmana vateka vānta} & \\
\text{dhune māne} & \quad \text{samastake santosaya} \\
\text{bidāya diya pathānta} & / / ^{39}
\end{align*}
\]

i.e., The Śrāddha ceremony of Dāmodaradeva was solemnized with the performances of Biyāh ojāpāli, nāṭa (male dancer) and nātuwa (dancer). The Brahmins assembled there had been given farewell with due donations and respects.

Similarly, Rāmarāya states that the ojāpāli performance was performed in the Śrāddha ceremony of Kāviratna Vaikunthanātha Bhāgavata Bhattācāryya, e.g.:

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\(^{38}\) Lekhary, U.C.(ed.): Kathā-Guru-Carita, p.228.

nāta nātī ojāpālī aneka āsilā

i.e., Many nātas (male dancers) and nātīs (female dancers) as well as ojāpālī presented their performances in the śrāddha ceremony of Kaviṅratna Vaikunthanātha Bhāgavata Bhāttācāryya.

Again, Rāmarāya mentions that saint Dāmodaradeva took the help of ojāpālī art form in preaching of the tenets of the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa. Similarly, it is well known that saint poet Śāṅkarađeđa also took the help of the ojāpālī for propagation of his new doctrine.

Further, the Kathā-guru-catita mentions that one Laksmana ojha could get by her art the entire Assamese versions of the Dasāma (Book X of the Sanskrit Bhāgavata-Purāṇa) and the Ekadā̄sa skanda (Book XI of the Sanskrit Bhāgavata-purāṇa) and then he was publicly recognized as ojā or ojha.

Mentions of the Ojāpālī art form are also found in the copper inscriptions, written in both Sanskrit and Assamese language as well. These copper inscriptions

40 Ibid., V.923
41 Ibid., V.427
42 Nath, R.M.(ed.): Śaṅkarađeva-Madhavadeva Carīta, 19/1-4.
were issued by the Ahom kings in connection with the land donation. Of the copper inscriptions granted by King Siva Sihha one (1660 Saka year, 1738 A.D.) refers to the ojāpāli. The inscription assigned one ojhā and six pālis to perform their daily duties (i.e., singing and dancing) in the temple. Another copper-plate of Siva Sihha issued in the Saka year 1661, i.e., 1739 A.D. in connection with the well management of the temple Pīṅgaleśvara. The plate records ojhā and pālis. King Laksmi Sihha granted a copper inscription in the year 1774 A.D. The inscription mentions one sāgara biyāh ojha of Kamarupa. The king donated land to sāgara Ojhā who was a well known biyāh-ojha.

Another copper inscription was issued by King Laksmi Sihha in the year 1775 A.D. to one Cāntāi Das Biyāhar Ojhā of Mādhava Temple, Hazo.

The Tripura-Buraṇjī, a well known mediaeval chronicle of Assam, indicates that one who possesses proficiency in gītā-nṛtya and vādyā is called gunin.

44 Neog, M. (ed.): Pracya Sāsaravali, p.29.
46 The inscription is preserved by the son of late Gurucharan Misra, Salmara, Kamrup.
47 The inscription is in the possession of Sri Umesh Chandra Ojhā, Cjētolā, Hazo.
The term gunin is used in lieu of the term ojāpāli still today. M. Neog says that a gunin is nothing but the Bīyār ojāpāli. 49

From the above discussion it can easily be assumed that more references may be cited to prove the antiquity of the ojāpāli art form.

Different Forms of Ojāpāli:

From the view points of text, context, structure and performance, the ojāpāli art form may be classified into a few genres:

A. Epic-based ojāpāli and
B. Non-epic-based ojāpāli. 50

(a) The Epic-based ojāpāli:

The ojāpālis who solely depend on the themes of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana as well as the purāṇas, are called epic-based ojapali. The following forms of ojāpāli may be included in this genre. e.g.:

1. *vyāsa-saṅgīta* or *bīyāhar ojāpālī* or *bīyāh-gōwā ojāpālī* or *vyāsa ojāpālī* or *sabha-gōwā ojāpālī*;

2. *Rāmāyana-gōwā ojāpālī* or *Rāyman ojāpālī* or *Rāmāyana-saṅgīta*;

3. *bhāura* or *bhāuriyā* or *bhāirā ojāpālī*;

4. *Durgāvari ojāpālī*;

5. *sattrlyā ojāpālī* or *bīyāhlyā ojāpālī*;

6. *pāčālī ojāpālī*, and

7. *Dulādī ojāpālī*.\(^5\)

(b) The non-epic-based *ojāpālī*:

The non-epic based *ojāpālīs* are mostly associated with the worship of the snake-goddess Manasa. As such, this style of songs may also be called *Manasa saṅgīta*. The *ojāpālīs* of the non-epic based variety never sing songs of the *Rāmāyana* or the *Mahābhārata* but sing songs of the *Manasa Kāvya* of Manakara and Durgavara as well or the *Padmā-Purāṇa* of Sukavi Narāyana Deva or traditional songs related to the snake deity current orally.

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51 Goswami, B.M.: *Critic.*, pp. 75-76.
This form of *ojāpālis* may again be subdivided into a few genres in accordance with their themetic differences plausible in the contexts of performances, e.g.:

i) *suknāni ojāpāli* or *Raṅg-gowa ojāpāli*,

ii) *Bisahārīr gān* or *Gīt-gowa*,

iii) *Māre-pūjār gān* or *Māre gān*,

iv) *padmā* or *Paddā purānār gān*, and

v) *Tukuriyā ojāpāli*.

The Ojāpāli form current in the undivided district of Kamrup:

Although the *ojāpāli* is a very popular art form in Assam, particularly in lower Assam, i.e., the undivided districts of Kamrup and Goalpara and the newly formed district of Darrang, nevertheless, all the forms of the *ojāpāli* art form mentioned above are not equally popular in all the districts of lower Assam. Even some forms of the *ojāpāli* current in the districts of Kamrup are totally absent in the districts of Goalpara and Darrang. Similarly forms current in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup are also not found in the district of Darrang.
Epic based ojāpāli:

Of the epic-based ojāpālis the following forms are found prevalence in the undivided district of Kamrup, e.g.:

1) Rāmaṇa ojāpāli or Rāmāyana-gowā ojāpāli or ojāpāli based on the themes of the Rāmāyana.

ii) Bhāuriya ojāpāli or Bhāurā ojāpāli or Bhāira.

iii) Durgāvari ojāpāli;

iv) Biyah-gowā ojāpāli;

v) Sattrīya ojāpāli, and

vi) Api ojāpāli.

I) Rāmaṇa ojāpāli or Rāmāyana-gowā ojāpāli or ojāpāli based on the themes of the Rāmāyana:

The Biyah-gowā form of ojāpāli which sings songs from the Assamese versions of the Rāmāyana or from the various episodical narratives based on the Rāmāyana tradition is termed as Rāmaṇa ojāpāli or Rāmāyana-gowā ojāpāli or ojāpāli based on the themes of the Rāmāyana. M. Sastrī rightly observes that any form of the Biyah-gowā variety who sings songs from
the Ramāyana is to be known as the Ramāyana-gowa ojāpāli. From the viewpoints of structure and performance both the Rāimān ojāpāli and the Bīvāh-gowa-ojāpāli are more or less similar in respect of the district of Darrang. But both the forms possess distinctive characteristics in respect of the undivided district of Kamrup. The Ramāyana-gowa ojāpāli of Kamrup sings songs invariably from the themes of the Ramāyana. The art form never sings songs from the Mahābhārata or other purāṇas. But the Ramāyana-gowa ojāpāli current in the newly formed district of Darrang sings songs from the Assamese versions of both the Mahābhārata and the Ramayana. This variety of ojāpāli is still a living and popular art form particularly in Kamrup. H.N. Datta Barua writes: "The Ramāyana-gowa ojāpāli is still a living art form, of course, due to some reasons the art form has dwindled to some extent, yet its prevalence cannot be ignored. In our childhood we saw the performance of the Ramāyana-gowa ojāpāli very frequently. This form of ojāpāli recites songs from the Assamese version of the Ramayana or Madhava Kandali". The art form is associated with various

52 Informant: Acaryya Manoranjan Sastri (72), data collected on 29.12.84
53 Skt. Ramāyana as. Rāimān, due to metathesis.
54 Datta Barua, H.N.(ed.): Asamīyā Ramāyana, Introduction, p.03.
religious celebration such as puja, sabha, and so forth.

The Ramayan-gowa ojapali consists of one oja, one dainapali and a few palis.

II) Bhauriya ojapali or Bhaur or Bhair:

The Bhaur-gowa-ojapali current in North Kamrup and which gives emphasis on the aspect of bhava is generally called Bhauriya ojapali or Bhaur ojapali or simply Bhair. Observe M. Sastri: "This variety of ojapali arouses the hasya rasa by gestures and movements as well as behaviour and customs and by dialogue. As such, this form of ojapali is called Bhauriya ojapali." 55

B. Datta also holds similar view. Commenting on the texts and style of representation of the Bhauriya-ojapali he says: "This particular form bases its plays almost exclusively on episodes from the Ramayana. It is characterised by long dramatic breaks and frequent humorous interludes." 56 Humour is an indispensable part of the


Blyāha-govā ojāpāli, but because of its grand nature it gives stress on the aspects of gītā and nṛtya profoundly rather than humour which is exclusively a character destined to the Bhāūriya ojāpāli form only.57

The Assamese term Bhāūriyā and its folk term Bhāirā (i.e., actor, performer etc.) have been derived from Sanskrit root bhū.58 The term includes rasa which is necessary for its full accomplishment. "The performer of bhāva may be a bhāūriyā or bhāūriyā or bhāirā and the troupe as a whole Bhāūriyā ojāpāli troupe".59 The literal meaning of the term bhāvariyā is 'one who represents on other's character'.60 It is seen that both the ojā and the dālmāpāli of the Bhāūriya ojāpāli or-simply Bhāirā represent other's characters like Rāma, Laksmana, Sītā, Hanumān, Sugrīva, Rāvana and so on with gestures and movements while the troupe sings songs from the Assamese version of the Rāmāyana.

58 bhū iti karane dhātustathā ca bhāvitam / 

vāsitam krtamityaarthantar taram //

K.G. Ramaswami Sastrī(ed.): Nāṭya-Sastra, Ch. VII, p. 344.

bhāūriyā (O.I.A. bhāva + kāra, kārika + āka) 

M.I.A.* bhā + ariā + ā + əs) bhā + ariā, 

bhāūriyā.

60 Meu, M.: Saṅkaradeva And His Times, p. 68.
Moreover, the Bhauriya ojapali represents social satire viewing the contemporary society in the midst of the main performance. This social satire is commonly known as Purāṇa, such as, belca-purāṇa, i.e., story of separation of a joint family; Cāh-Purāṇa i.e., story of tea: citka-purāṇa, i.e., story of hotch-potch, C.R.P. Purāṇa, i.e., narration of atrocities of the C.R.P. in Assam in 1980 and so forth. 61

The Bhauriya ojapali or Bhairā is not a stylistic form like the biyāh-yowa-ojapali, it is rather a folk art form. Like the Raiman ojapali the bhairā is also associated with pūjās festivals, fairs and so on.

A Bhauriya ojapali or Bhairā troupe consists of an ojā and a dāināpāḷi or bhairā and a few pālis.

III) Durgāvari Ojāpālī:

Among the various distinctive forms of the ojāpālī current in the undivided district of Kamrup, the Durgāvari form is an important variety which, in sense, can be called a dying form, since the tradition of this form of ojāpālī is confined only to a very few

old active vearers of Hazo area. Once it was a very popular in lower Assam, particularly in Kamrup and Darrang. According to M. Sastrī the Durgāvārī ojāpāli was performed stylistically in the district of Darrang. Of course, the tradition of the art form is totally lost in that area. In the undivided district of Kamrup also "the singing of Durgāvārī. Rāmāyana song is restricted today to a very few isolated pockets and a handful of experts". The reminiscence of the Durgāvārī ojāpāli can be found in Hazo only. The art form is meant for singing in religious assemblies.

The nomenclature of the form is being done by adding the term ojāpāli after Durgavāra. The adjectival form of the term is Durgāvārī. Durgavāra was renowned poet, musician and singer as well as ojā. His title is Kayastha. Durgavāra Kayastha flourished in the 16th century A.D. He used to live on the Nilachala Hill during the reign of king Visvā Simha, the founder of the Koch line. Visvā Simha was the patron king of Durgavāra Kayāstha. K. Bardoloi opines that Durgavāra

62 Bordoloi, K.: Sura Paricaya, p.10
64 Datta, B.: Bulletin, published on the occasion of Festival of Traditional performing Art Forms of Assam, Deptt. of Folklore Research, Gauhati University, 1982, p.4.
65 Neog, M.(ed.): Durgavārī Giti-Rāmāyana, Intro., p.38.
66 Barua, B.K.: History of Assamese Literature, p.14
was born at Hazo. The *Gītī-Rāmāyaṇa* of Durgāvara Kayāstha may be termed as an ojāpāli version of Madhava Kandali's version of the Rāmāyaṇa. "With all its original lyrical beauty", says M. Neog, "Gītī-Rāmāyaṇa is for the most part only popular version of Madhava Kandali's work meant for the use of the ojā or ojāpāli chorus. The narration of the story is sometimes scrappy and disjoined; but then the gape could be filled by the ojā or daināpāli".

The form of the ojāpāli which sings songs from the *Gītī-Rāmāyaṇa* of Durgāvara Kayāstha is known as the *Durgāvari ojāpāli*.

The art form is a combination of an ojā who is also known as Gītāl and a few pālis.

**iv) Biyāh-gowā ojāpāli:**

Although the tradition of the Biyāh-gowā ojāpāli is not current now in middle, North, west of the district, nevertheless it is current in West and

South Kamrup. In Hazo area particularly at Kusudra dadhi sattra and in Suwalkuchi areas this form of ojāpāli is still current. Once it was widely current in Patbūsī sattra near Barpeta, Byākhuchi sattra adjacent to Sarthebari and so forth.

The tradition of the Biyāh-gowa-ojāpāli or Biyāhar ojāpāli traces back to Vyāsa-saṅgīta. It can also be assumed that the tradition of Vyāsa-saṅgīta emerged with the recitation of the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. This style of saṅgīta begins with the great sage Vyāsadeva and that is why the style of music comes to be known as Vyāsa-saṅgīta. The term Vyāsa denotes various meanings. Of the one, refers to a Brahmin who recites or expounds the Purāṇa publicly.

The Assamese term of Biyāh emerges from Sanskrit Vyāsa. As in Sanskrit, Assamese Biyāh also recite and expound the epics and the Purāṇas. The term Biyāhar-ojā

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69 The Practical Sanskrit Dictionary of V.S. Apte suggests the following meanings of the term Vyāsa, viz.:

1) Distribution, separation into parts,
2) Dissolution or analysis of a compound,
3) Severalty, distinction,
4) Diffusion, extension,
5) Width, breath,
6) The diameter of a circle,
7) A fault in pronunciation,
8) Arrangement, compilation,
9) An arranger, a compiler,
10) Name of a celebrated sage,
11) A Brahman who recites or expounds the Purāṇas in public.
indicates one who has acquired proficiency in the art of *vyasa-sangita*. Similarly, the assistants of the *Biyahar-oja* are commonly known as *Biyahar ojapali*. The Sanskrit tradition maintains that a *vyasa* must be a Brahmin. Originally, the active bearers of the *Biyah-gowa ojapali* were confined only to the Daivajña Brahmins. We can put forward a few lines in favour of our hypothesis from a copper plate issued by king Lakṣmi Sīmha in *Saka* year 1696, i.e., 1774 A.D.; e.g.:

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ayam pradat keiti simam kamrupa nisire /
śrī śrī sāgarakhyaya daivajña kula jamnane
tasmāi gathaka varyaya tāmra patramidaicah //
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i.e., The copper-plate issued by king Lakṣmi Sīmha, to Sāgara, an inhabitant of Kāmarūpa who is born of an astrologer family, and is the best among the Purāṇa singers, i.e., ṛgathakas as means of securing his livelihood.

But in the course of time, this rigidity became flexible to some extent, since persons other than a daivajña Brahmin family came forward to learn the art

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70 The copper plate is preserved by Gurucharan Misra, Salmara, Kamrup.
form. As for example, we may refer to Sri Durgeswar Nath Ojhā, an active bearer of the art form of the time who hails from the Nath or Yogi community. His father and his grandfather were also active bearers of the Biyāh-gowa ojāpāli. Another well-known ojā or ojhā whose name is Cāntāi. He was a non Brāhmin. Cāntāi was associated with the temple of Madhava, Hazo, Kamrup. King Lakṣmī Simha donated lands and pāikas to Cāntāi by issuing a copper plate in the year 1697 Śaka, i.e., 1775 A.D. 71

According to another tradition, a ojhā who recites songs from the works of Vyāsadeva, i.e., the Mahābhārata or the Purāṇas is commonly called Biyāhar ojhā or Biyāh-gowa ojhā irrespective of caste and creed. 72 "The latter type of songs (i.e., Biyāhar ojāpāli) is known as Vyāhar-gīt (i.e., songs of Vyāsa, presumably the author of the Mahābhārata and the chorus singing these songs is called Vyāh-gowa ojāpāli". 73 The vyah-gowa ojāpāli or Biyāh-gowa ojāpāli is also known as the sabhā-gowa ojāpāli as the art form generally sings and dances in the religious sabhās, i.e., assemblies.

71 Informant: Sri Umesh Ojhā, Ojhatolā, Hazo, data collected on 11.11.84.
73 _________: Sattriya Dances of Assam and Their Rhythms, p. 9
The tradition of the Biyāh-gowa ojāpāli is handed down from the remotest past. So, it can only be assumed that this form of ojāpāli was the only model from which the other forms of ojāpāli emanated. This hypothesis can be substantiated from the thematic, structural and contextual points of view. The art form usually takes themes from the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. Of course, themes are also taken from the Rāmāyana also. As the term vyāsa or Vyāh or Biyāh has extended sense to include the work of Vālmīki, observes M. Neog: 'vyāsa is traditionally the author of the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, and the word vyāsa has the extended meaning to cover Vālmīki's work also.

So far as we know, the Biyāh-gowa ojāpāli recited songs from the Sanskrit epics and Purāṇas. But gradually, the art form used to recite songs from the Assamese version of the Mahābhārata, more particularly the Vadha Kāvyas, i.e., a variety of Vaisnava Kāvyas dealing with the killing of demons composed by Rāmasarasvatī, a major Assamese poet of the 16th century A.D. The Vadha-Kāvyas are also termed as the Yuddha-Kāvyas i.e., the Kāvyas relating to fierce battles, such as, Khaṭāsura-vadha.

74 Goswami, B.M.: Op. cit., p. 82
75 Neog, M.: Śāṅkaradeva and His Times, p. 251
Baghāsura Vadha, Jāṅghāsura-Vadha, Nagāksa-Yuddha of Bhavadeva Vīpra or the Adbhuta Rāmāyana of Raghunātha Mahānta and so forth. Further more, the art form also sings themes from the episodical narratives entitled the Usā-Parinaya, i.e., marriage of Usā of Vītāmbara Dvīja and the Gītī-Rāmāyana, i.e., Rāmāyana in songs of Durgāvara Kayastha.

There is a popular dictum current among the ojāpāli circles that the ojāpāli of the Biyāh-gōwa school should not sing songs of the Manasā-lore. Similarly the ojāpāli of the Manasā variety should not recite themes of the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. This popular dictum is maintained traditionally by most of the active bearers of North Kāmrūp and the newly formed district of Darrang but the ojāpālis of South Kāmrūp do not maintain this popular dictum. Because, there is no water tight difference between the Biyāh-gōwa variety and the Sukrāṇi form.

Observes D. Kalita “Both Biyāh-gōwa variety and the Sukrāṇi variety are quite different forms and are performed by different troupes, particularly in the district of Darrang and North Kāmrūp. But in the context of South Kāmrūp, there is no such rigidity. Since the same troupe may perform double-role, i.e., the Biyāh-gōwa-ojāpāli troupe may perform the performance of the Sukrāṇi ojāpāli if the situation
demands. Similarly, the suknāṇi ojāpāli form may present performance of the biyāh-gowā ojāpāli form if necessity occurs. So, it can easily be assumed that in practice, there is only one ojāpāli troupe among the non tribals of South Kamrup. Hence the form is not known as the biyāhar-ojāpāli or the suknāṇi ojāpāli but is known as the ojāpāli. As such the difference cannot be ascertained from the viewpoint of form but depends on the style of performance. The name of the biyāh-gowā-ojāpāli or the suknāṇi ojāpāli is given to an ojāpāli form viewing on the theme they sing and the style they perform and the context they participate.

The biyāh-gowā ojāpāli commonly performs its performances in the context of Vasudeva—worship or religious sabhās. A troupe of the biyāh-gowā variety consists of one ojā, a dāināpāli, two gor-pālis and a few sahāyak pālis.


77 Scholars are of opinion that the tradition of Vasudeva pūjā goes back to the 4th or 5th Century A.D. This can also be testified from the iconographical evidences. The Kalikā purāṇa (c.12th) enumerates five manifestations of Vasudeva with their pithās. Of these pithās Hayagrīva-Madhava at Manikuta and Vasudeva in the Dikkaravāśini region are most important (Chapter 80). The origin of the cult of Vasudeva may be traced back in the Pañcaratna saṁhitās. The mode of worship of Vasudeva is found in the Kalikā-purāṇa (Chapter 80).

sabhās are religious assemblies generally held in the different villages or in the various sattras and Namgharas (i.e., Public Prayer halls) annually.
v) Sattrīyā Ojāpāli:

Ojāpāli form which is confined only to the four walls of the Sattra institution is called the Sattrīyā ojāpāli. The Sattrīyā ojāpāli form current in the Kamalabāri Sattra (Majuli) of the Saṅkaradeva School is generally termed as the Biyahiya ojāpāli. Similarly, ojāpāli form prevalent in the Sattras like Junāti, Dakṣinapāt, and so forth (Majuli) of the Damodara School is known as Biyāh-gowā ojāpāli. Both the forms (i.e., Biyahiya and Biyāh-gowā as well) are nothing but the sattraite editions of the Biyāh-gowā ojāpāli which is still a living institution of the newly formed district of Darrang. The Sattras of the Damodara School scattered in the different places of the undivided district of Kamrup, had given patron to the Biyāh-gowā ojāpāli form. This form of ojāpāli was known as Byasa or Vyasa ojāpāli. But presently, not a single ojāpāli is found in the Sattras of the Damodara School of the undivided district of Kamrup. Even the Sattras of the Saṅkaradeva school restricted to the district of Kamrup do not have the Sattrīyā style of ojāpāli. Only the Barpeta-sattra appears to be an exception, since a very few troupes of the Sattrīyā ojāpāli form are still living in this Sattra.
From the themetic point of view it can be said that the *Satrīya ojāpāli* confined to the Barpeta sattrā sings songs of Śaṅkaradeva and Madhavadeva as well as of the Assamese versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the *Mahābhārata* as well as the *Pūrāṇa*. Generally, inside the main prayer hall of the *Sattra* the *ojāpāli* shall have sung songs of Śaṅkaradeva and Madhavadeva as well. But this restriction is not operative at the precinct of the above hall. As such, the *ojāpāli* can sing songs of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* as well as *Pūrāṇas* at the outer part of the main prayer hall.  

The *Satrīya ojāpāli* is not allowed to sing songs which are devoid of the glory of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The art form must have recited devotional themes.

The *Satrīya ojāpāli* performs performances in the contexts of the springtime *Bihu* as well as the wintertime *Bihu* festivals, birth days of both Śaṅkaradeva and Madhavadeva and *Holi* festival and so on. A troupe of the *Satrīya* variety of *ojāpāli* consists of nineteen members. The leader of the troupe is called the *ojā*. The main

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79 Das, A. *Ibid* pp. 20-21
helper of the ojā is the dāināpāli. The remaining seventeen members of the troupe are pālis.80

vi) Āpī ojāpāli:

The Āpī-ojāpāli is one of the important forms of the epic-based ojāpāli. The term āpī has emanated from Sanskrit word ātman.81 The term āpī is widely current in the Kāmrūpi dialect which indicates the sense of a girl or a female.

The ojāpāli form confined to the girls or women is called Āpī-ojāpāli. It is nothing but a modern form of the Biyāh-gowā-ojāpāli. The Āpī-ojāpāli current in the newly formed district of Darrang is termed as Likīrī-ojāpāli. The word Likīrī is a synonym of the term āpī. In the folk speech of the district of Darrang the term Likīrī is used to indicate the sense of a girl, or a female hence, the ojāpāli form restricted to the women folk is designated as the Likīrī ojāpāli or Ligīrī ojāpāli.

The tradition of the Āpī-ojāpāli obviously begins very recently. It is very difficult to furnish any evidence

81 Skt. ātman+ika\(\text{MIA. appa+ī}\) As. āpa+ī, āpī, i.e., a girl or a female.
in support of the antiquity of this form of ojāpāli. But we can put forward ample evidences in support of the antiquity of other forms of ojāpāli.

Secondly, according to the prevalent tradition the women folk cannot perform ojāpāli in the proper contexts, i.e., temples, as such the Ḡḷ-ojāpāli is undoubtedly untraditional, therefore it is rather a modern phenomenon.

In another way we may say that the Ḡḷ-ojāpāli is a kind of modern form of the Biyāh-gowā ojāpāli or the Rayman ojāpāli. From the structural point of view the Ḡḷ-ojāpāli bears affinity with that of the traditional Biyāh-gowā or Rayman ojāpālis. Like the traditional ojāpāli restricted to the menfolk, the Ḡḷ-ojāpāli troupe consists of an Ojā, a Daināpāli and a few pālis. From the view point of theme it is apparent that the Ḡḷ-ojāpāli strictly follows the line of the Biyāh-gowā or the Rayman ojāpālis. Like the Biyāh-gowā or the Rayman ojāpālis, the Ḡḷ-ojāpāli also sings songs of the Assamese versions of the epics and the Puranās. 82

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82 Sarma, Rebanath: Samākrti-Parampara, p.11
Originally both the ojā and the pāliś including the Daināpāli were confined only to the women folk. But presently the ojā and the Daināpāli hail from the women-folk and the pāliś come from the menfolk.

The Api-ojāpāli performs performances in connection with sabhas and various worships such as Durgā Pūja, Laksñi Pūja, Sarasvatī Pūja and so forth. Generally such performances are held at the afternoon, at the end of the Pujās, and last for the whole night.

Non Epic based ojāpāli:

Of the non epic based ojāpāli the following forms are still living in the undivided district Kamrup, viz.:

1) Suknāni ojāpāli,

2) Bisaharīr gān or git-gowā,

3) Mare-gān, and

4) Tukurīyā ojāpāli.

(I) Suknāni Ojāpāli:

The ojāpāli art form that recites the songs of goddess Manasā from the Padma-Purāṇa composed by Sukavi Nārāyanadeva (c. 17th), a poet of the Manasā-saga and

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83 op. cit. p.12.
performed ritualistic dances in connection with the worship of Manasā is called the sukānā ojāpāli or Raṅg-gowā ojāpāli or Māri-gowā ojāpāli.

The word sukānā or sukānāni is a coined word which is formed by putting the first letter of each word of the sentence: Sukāvī Nārāyanadeva nīgadāti, i.e., Sayeth Nārāyanadeva, the poet par excellence, e.g.: su+ ka + nā + ni = sukānāni, and due to initial stress, intervocal 'a' is dropped and it is heard as sukānā or sukānāni.

Secondly, Māre-gowā ojāpāli indicates the ojāpāli form that sung the songs of goddess Māri or Māre.

The term mare or mār-i may be explained in the following ways:

a) Goddess Manasā is also known as Māre-devī. The goddess may be equated with the South Indian goddess Māriāmman, who is commonly known as a goddess of epidemic diseases.84 In Assam Māre or Māri or Mārai is also regarded as the presiding deity epidemic diseases and bad omens.85  

85 Sarma, N.C.: Asamiya Loka-sanskritir Abhas, p. 94
(b) M.C. Goswami observes that the word *mare* has been derived from Sanskrit *matr* with the addition of Assamese privative suffix to an Assamese base *mar* (of the mother). According to Goswami *Maraí* is the presiding deity over epidemic disease like cholera, small-pox and unnatural deadly afflictions like snake bite. 86

(c) On the other hand, Sukumar Sen has given the etymological meaning of the above terms in the following way:

"mare and marai come from Sanskrit* mandapikā, *mandapika > * mandavika > * mandavia > *mandaia > * mandai > marai > marai, by contraction, Mare. It cannot be derived from matr". 87

The hypotheses mentioned above seem to have been unconvincing, hence these may be rejected. It appears that the term *mare* or *marai* is related with the Assamese phrase *mari-marak*, i.e., epidemic diseases. According


to a folk belief mare or marai is a presiding deity over epidemic diseases. As such, the term mare or marai may come from the above phrase mari-marak. 88

The Suknani ojāpāli is also styled as Raṅg-gowā ojāpāli. The worship of goddess Manasā limited only to one or two days is called Raṅg-pūja. It is believed that the snake goddess Manasā is highly pleased by pūjas, hence the worship is also termed as Raṅg-pūja. 89 In the same manner, the ojāpāli performed in connection with the Raṅg-pūja is called the Raṅg-gowā ojāpāli. 90

Again the worship of Manasā is invariably associated with dancing, singing and acting (i.e., Raṅga). The term Raṅga also denotes the act of dancing, singing and acting. So, the worship may be styled as the Raṅg- pūja and similarly, the ojāpāli, art form associated with the Raṅg-pūja may be called Raṅg-gowā ojāpāli. 91

The Suknani ojāpāli is confined to Darrang and Kamrup. However, in respect of content and style of music,

89 Sarma, N.C.: Loc. cit., p. 98
91 Sarma, N.C.: Loc. cit., p. 98
both Darrang and Kamrup bear various dissimilarities. In Kamrup, the term ojāpāli indicates only the Manasā variety. Whereas in the newly formed district of Darrang and eastern Kamrup adjacent to Darrang, the term suggests both the Biyāh-gowā form and the Manasā form as well.

The Darrang variety sings themes of the Padmā-Purāṇa of Sukavi Nārāyanadēva (c 17th) with seems to have been transmitted orally from one ojā to another. But the Kamrup variety depends on the oral tradition of the Manasā saga.

The Darrang variety of sukñāni ojāpāli is heavily influenced by the Biyāh-gowā form in its musical aspect. So, it is nearer to the classical style to some extent. On the other hand, the ojāpāli current in Kamrup appears to be pervaded by folk elements.

A sukñāni ojāpāli troupe is a combination of one ojā, a dāināpāli, two gor-pālis and two ag-pālis.

(II) Biṣahari gān or git-gowā:

Biṣahari gān or git-gowā, i.e., songs associated with the snake goddess Biṣahari is an important genre
of the non-epic based ojāpāli which is current particularly in Kamākhya-dāham and Bāmunsuāl-kuchi of Kamrup. The term Bisahātī as a synonym of goddess Manasā indicates one who kills or allays venom. Snake-deity Manasā is also known for her power of allaying venom of snakes.

Although originally the terms Bisahātī and Manasā denote different connotations nevertheless in the long run both the terms used to convey the same meaning. That is, both the goddesses Bisahātī and Manasā seem to have been merged into a single deity, i.e., the snake goddess in Assam and Bengal. As such, the worship of the snake goddess Manasā is known as the worship of Bisahātī in the contexts of the above places. Similarly, the ojāpāli form which presents performance in the context of the Bisahātī-pūjā is termed as Bisahātī-gān or gīt-govā.

On the other hand, Bisahātī-gān or gīt-govā is also called Māre-Pūjār gān, i.e., performance performed in connection with Māre-Pūjā or Bisahātī-pūjā.

Again, this form of ojāpāli is simply called gīt-govā, i.e., singing of song in praise of goddess Bisahātī.

The term gān is generally used in lower Assam to suggest both song and performance ranging from dance and
dramatic representation. Here, the word is used to indicate both song and dramatic performance. The ojāpāli performance includes both song and dramatic representation and hence, an ojāpāli art form is also known as ḍān.

Bisahari-gān or Māre-pūjār gān obviously bears differences with the suknānd form of ojāpāli in the contexts of theme, structure form, and style of music. Firstly, Bisahari-gān or Māre-pūjār gān does not depend on the padmā-purāṇa or sukavi Narāyaṇadeva, but depends on the songs written by Manakara and Dūrgāvara. Secondly, this form of ojāpāli obviously sings songs of Bisahari or Manasa in sitting position. Thirdly, the ojā is known here as gītāl or Pāthak. He recites songs from the manuscript of the Manasa saga composed by both Manakara and Dūrgāvara. Fourthly, the gītāl is followed by another performer known as juri, i.e., helper or pāli. Both gītāl and juri hold the cymbals in the either hand. Fifthly, this form of ojāpāli does not possess stylistic music as we find in the Biyāh-gowa and the suknānd ojāpālis respectively.

The Devadhvand or ghorā or deulā or jākā or deodā (i.e., male shaman) is always associated with the worship of Bisaharī in Kamākhyādham and Bāmunswālkuchi
as well as Geruwa and Pachariyā. The qhoras or deodhas or devadhvanis or deulas or jakis function as the representatives of the different gods and goddesses. They "represent shamanistic dances to the accompaniment of beating of drums and playing on pipes as well as cymbals. They dance very vigorously and violently. The dancing numbers, however appear to be very limited and seems to be monotonous. They shriek and howl as well as jump. Very often they run aimlessly as if they are unconscious about their physical environment and about the crowd of visitors. They move dākhars, i.e., long swords, batons and animal offerings on their hands and shoulders. They very often jump so frantically that it creates fear in the mind of new comers. The deodhas jump on dākhars without any injury to their feet".  

(III) Māre-gān

Māre-gān or Māre-gowā olāpali is traditionally handed down in the newly formed district of Goalpara and South Ramrup and is only confined to the Pati Rabhas and Bodo-Kacharis of Chaygaon, Bāmunīgaon, Boko, Khātalpāra

and so on. Originally, the art form was limited to the Pati Rabhas, but presently, the Bodo-Kacharis of those areas also have shown keen interest to this form of ojāpāli. Even a few pālis of the art form have come from the Bodo-Kachari society.

Māre-gān is always associated with the worship of Māre, i.e., Snake goddess Bisahārī. The Pati-Rabhas worship the goddess publicly and privately. According to their belief Manasā and Bisahārī are not identical. Manasā cannot be equated with the goddess as she was born out of the respiration of the Anādi Gohāi, i.e., Primāval God. Again the snake goddess Bisahārī is also known as Bārmārī. The word Bārmārī has emanated from Sanskrit Brahmanī. The term Brahmanī is invariably used to suggest the snake goddess Manasā in the non-tribal societies of Assam and Bengal.

Active bearers of Māre-gān form of the ojāpāli neither depend on songs of Durgāvāra-Manakara nor Sukavi Pārayanadeva. They invariably sing songs associated with the snake goddess Bārmārī or Padmāvatī which are traditionally handed down and are still living among the Pati

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93 Rabha, Pranswar, (ed.): Ṣāvyāvantī Bīsahārī, p. 41
Rabhas of South Kamrup and the newly formed district of Goalpara. But surprisingly enough the echo of the songs of both Manakara and Durgavara as well as Sukavi Narayana deva can easily be heard. In many cases, these songs are nearer to the songs of Manasa saga current in the name of Sukavi Narayanadeva. Even some such songs are attributed to Sukavi Narayanadeva. The art form consists of one Ojā and few Pālis. The Daināpāli cannot be traced in this form of ojāpāli. The Deodhāni (female shaman) popularly known as Dedhāni is an integral part of this variety of ojāpāli. The Dedhāni dances in harmony with the recitation of the Ojāpāli. The Pālis including Deodhānis occasionally play roles like Cāndo Sadāgar, Pārada, Gāro-Gārowāni while the Ojāpāli recite the songs of the snake goddess. These characters dress themselves and put on masks according to the local conventions. They present some dramatic scene full of crude humour.

(IV) Tukurīyā Ojāpāli:

Like Māre-gān, the Tukurīyā ojāpāli art form still current among the Pati Rabhas of South Kamrup.

94 Sri Pramāņwar Rabha of Raṅjuli, Goalpara has collected and edited these songs. The book is already been printed.
Of course, once this art form was very popular in the societies of the Pati Rabhas of the different places of the newly formed district of Goalpara such as Rahgjuli, Dudhnai, Krishnai and so on. Now the tradition of the Tukurlya-øjapali is only confined to Boko areas of South Kamrup.

The ojapali form, which is associated with the worship of Tukurlya is called the Tukurlya ojapali. The tradition of the Tukurlya worship goes back to the ancient past. Tukura was a legendary person who used to worship the goddess Nārāyaṇi supposed to be the household deity of the Pati Rabhas by singing songs. He had two sons: Luhai and Kuhai. They were taught the mode of worship of the deity including the songs by their father. At the death of Tukura his sons gave up the worship of the deity. As a result their condition had gone from bad to worse. They had already forgotten the mode of worship and the songs which were sung during the time of the worship. Ultimately, they were taught the worship including the songs by the goddess in the form of an old woman.

The tradition of the worship of the goddess Nārāyaṇi was started by Tukura, hence the worship came to be known as the Tukurlya-pūjā and the ojapali sung
Songs in praise of the deity is termed as the Tukurliyā Ojāpāli. 95

The Tukurliyā Ojāpāli sings song in the sitting position. The troupe consists of one Ojā and three or four pālis. A Dedhnā (i.e., female shaman) is also essential. She dances while the Ojā and the pālis are singing. The Tukurliyā Ojāpāli performance may be held privately or publicly. The art form bears similarity with Mēre-gān in respect of the style of music and the dance-movements of the Dedhnā. 96

Musical Instruments used by the Ojāpālis:

The musical instruments such as cymbal, flute, drum, lute, bell are said to be the outer lives of a pātra, i.e., a dancer. The Abhinayadarpāṇa mentions:

pātrasyah vahih prānah / 97

The Ojāpāli forms also use different musical instruments. Of these musical instruments the cḥanḍ-

yantra plays an important role in the context of the

ojāpāli art form. The ghanā-yantra includes different cymbals and anklets. The cymbals played by the biyāh-gowā variety of ojāpāli is called kartāl or karatāla. It is played with the both hands. The karatāla used by the biyāh-gowā ojāpāli bears similarity with the karatāla mentioned by the Sangītaratnākara, viz.:

trayodasaśāntulavāsau sūdha kāmasya vinirmi tau / madhyamukhastanākaraus tanmadhye raju yumphitau//
padmipatraśārṣasau kārābhyoṃ rajjuṣasthitau /
karatālavabhau vādyau ne vādyau pāte jhamati//"98

The karatāla is made of pure brass or bell-metal and the frontal diameter of the karatāla is thirteen angules. The middle face of the cymbal appears to be a youthful lady’s breast or of a blooming lotus petal. The middle part of this variety of cymbal protrudes outward like the nipple of the breast of a youthful lady. A bunch of string is tied there."99

The size and the shape of the karatāla mentioned in the Sangītaratnākara are bigger than that of the karatāla used by the biyāh-gowā ojāpāli. The diameter of

"98 Rotated from M. Sastri's "Asamat Sangīta Cakrā" in Rājadhani ed. B.L. Bhakta Charyya, p. 262.

"99 Ibid."
Various tāls (cymbals) used by the Ōjāpāli
the faces of right and left hands karatālas of the Biyah-gowā variety of ojapali are 9 cm. and 10 cm. respectively against 16.5 cm. of the original karatālas (13 ăngulas = 16.5 cm.). The circumference of both the left hand and the right hand karatālas are 31.4 cm. and 28 cm. respectively, and thickness as well as the height of this kind of cymbal measure 3 cm. and 5 cm. respectively. Both the right hand and the left hand karatālas vary in weights. Generally the left hand karatāla a bit heavier than the right hand karatāla. The karatāla holds by the left hand contains a bunch of strings which is termed as cowār while the right hand karatāla contains only a long double strings. The ojā does not hold any kind of cymbal, but on the other the pālis hold the cymbals. The pālis of the Biyah-gowā and the Rayman as well as the Bhāirā and the sattriya and the āpi form of ojāpālis hold the karatālas by either hand. The karatāla used by the sattriya and Bhāirā forms of ojāpāli appear to be a bit smaller than the karatāla of the Biyah-gowā ojāpāli. The Durgāvari form of ojāpāli uses both the karatāla and the khaṅjari. 100 According to F. Bardoloi

100 khaṅjari may rightly be placed both in the classes of avon.ddha (membranophones) and phang-yontras.
the *Durgāvari ojāpāli* current in the area of Barpeta used *cerenda*\(^{101}\) and the *dotara*\(^{102}\) along with both the *karatāla* and *khañjari*.\(^{103}\)

The *suknāni* form of *ojāpāli* also uses a kind of cymbal which is commonly known as *khutitāla*. Of course, the tradition of the uses of the *bhortāla* cannot also be ruled out. Both the *suknāni* and the *Māre-Fūjā-gowā* (i.e., *Māre-gān*) use the *khutitāla*. It is generally seen that a pair of *khutitālas* is connected with a rope made of cloth with two knots at the extreme points. These two knots keep light the two *khutitālas*. Both the *khutitālas* are 9 cm. each and circumference of each tāla is 28.3 cm. and the height is 3.5 cm.\(^{104}\) Each *khutitāla* contains a hole. It measures 5 cm. x 2 cm. The *pālis* hold a pair of *khutitālas* between the thumb and the first and the second fingers in such a way that the rope wraps 2½ times round the thumb. The remaining portion of the rope keeps tight round the other two fingers. The tāl under the first and the middle fingers is kept always fixed and the tāl that is kept under the thumb moves

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\(^{101}\) The *cerenda* falls within the periphery of the *tāla yantra*.  
\(^{102}\) The *dotara* is a kind of stringed instrument, i.e., *tala-yantra*.  
\(^{103}\) Bardoloi, F.: *Sura Paricaya*, p. 10.  
\(^{104}\) Goswami, B.K.: *Op.cit.*, p. 139
according to the necessity of tāla (i.e., rhythm) at the time of action. The bhūrtāḷ is played by a few pāliṣ at the time of the awakening of the goddess as well as at the context of the Deodhānīṇāc, i.e., shamanistic dance. But bhūrtāḷ is never used during the time of singing and reciting.

The shape and the size of the tāls of Māre-gān are by no means similar to the tāls used by the suknāṇī form of ojāpāli. The circumference of the tāl played by the pāliṣ of Māre-gān is 22 cm. and its height is 2 cm. and diameter is 7 cm. "A pair of tāls is connected with two ends of a 10 cm. long rope made of jute. The two ends of the rope keep between the thumb and the first finger which is known as the mātrī, i.e., female tāl and between the ring finger and the little toe known as the mātrā, i.e., male tāl in such a manner that the two tāls are hanging at the bottom of the fingers. The pāliṣ move the fingers in accordance with tālas".

The cymbal played by the member of the troupe of Bīsahārī-gān is termed as mañjurā, i.e., a kind of smaller cymbal in comparison to the tāl of the suknāṇī.

105 Goswami, B.M.: Locom., p. 143
variety. The gītal, i.e., the oja and the juris or pālis play the cymbals by either hand or by single hand.\textsuperscript{107}

The pālis of the Tukuriya form of ojāpāli play khutītals which are a bit bigger than the cymbals used by the pālis of Māre-gān. The cymbals are played by the pālis with the both hands.\textsuperscript{108}

The sukānd ojāpāli including Māre-gān play on the joydhōl or decdhōl or mādal, i.e., a kind of drum, at the context of the awakening of the snake goddess and at the time of the dances of female shamans.

The nepur or nīpur\textsuperscript{109} includes in the periphery of the ghara-vādy class. Anklets are of various shapes. The material of construction is brass, though ornamental balls are made of silver. More than the musician, it is the dancer for whom it is indispensable; indeed, to a dancer in India the ankle-bell is almost a totem, and to tie them on ceremoniously is a sign of entry into the profession.\textsuperscript{110}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{107} Informant : Shri Ramesh Sarma (71), Bamun Suwālkuchi, data collected on 19.6.88.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Informant : Shri Dokana Rabha (82), Lamāgāon, South Imrurup, data collected on 26.9.88.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Sanskrit nīpura, i.e., anklet.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Chaitanya Deva, B.: \textit{Musical Instruments of India}, p. 52
\end{itemize}
This tradition is also strictly maintained by the active bearers of the Blyah-gowa form of ojāpāli. The ojā, at the very beginning of his profession enters by putting on the nepura ceremoniously at the behest of his guru. In the same way, the ojā leaves the profession by giving away the nepura to another ojā.

The ojas of the sattrīyā and the Āpi forms put on a pair of nepuras at the both legs. The pālis of Māre-gān use the nepuras at the either legs. But the ojā of this form of ojāpāli never uses the nepura. The term nepura is known as nempur among the active bearers of Māre-gān.

The nepura is used to maintain the harmony of musical rhythm, i.e., tāla along with the cymbals.

structure of the various Forms of Ojāpāli:

The epithet ojāpāli is a generic term which includes its various forms and varieties. The forms

111 Informant: Shri Bhabiram Sarna Oja(95), Vyāsapārā, Darrang, data collected on 16.1.85.
112 Informant: Shri Sarat Chandra Sarma Oja(75), Vyāsapārā, Darrang, data collected on 16.1.85.
113 Informant: Shri Thelaram Rabha(50), Banunigaon, South Kamrup, data collected on 1.11.87.
bear distinctive characteristics in respects of singing, dancing and presentation. As such, these forms always maintain independent structure while they presenting their performances.

The term structure indicates act of putting together and arrangement of parts as well as an organic form. The ojāpāli may rightly be regarded units. Similarly, each form of the ojāpāli institution is a combination of different units. These units are conceptually equivalent to the phonemes or morphemes of a language, and, hence, they may be compared cross-culturally. Different members of an ojāpāli troupe is a unit whole and each member of the troupe is one of the units of the unit whole.

The structures of the Biyāh-gowa and the śuknāni forms of ojāpāli seem to have been similar. The various units of the these two forms are the ojā, the dāināpāli, the bānādharā gor pāli and the sahāyaka-pāli. The structure may be shown in the following way:

```
A

B0  O

C0  O

D0  O
```
A - The oja (leader of the troupe)
B - The dainapalis (chief assistants)
C - The baradhara gor-palis (chief helpers of the dainapalis)
D - The sahayaka-palis (assistant palis)\textsuperscript{114}

During the period of action the Oja gets stand between the two dainapalis. The Biyah-gowa form and the Suknand variety need at least six palis, but exception cannot be ruled out.

The structure of the Suknand form of ojapali current in the eastern part of the undivided district of Kamrup bears similarity with that of Biyah-gowa form of ojapali prevalent in the newly formed district of Darrang. The structure may be shown in this way:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node at (0,0) (A) {A};
  \node at (0,-1) (B) {B};
  \node at (-1,-2) (C) {C};
  \node at (1,-2) (D) {D};
  \node at (0,-3) (E) {E};
  \node at (0,-2) (O) {O};
  \draw (A) -- (B) -- (C);
  \draw (B) -- (D) -- (E);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{114} Informant: Dr N.C. Sarma, Gauhati University, data collected on 3.9.88
A - The oja,
B - The dāināpāli (the left hand chief assistant),
C - The so-dāināpāli (the right hand chief assistant),
D - The gor-pālis (chief helpers of the dāināpāli),
E - The āg-pālis (assistant pālis).

Of course, the suknānī form of ojāpāli can perform its performance with the help of even two pālis.

The structure of the Rayman ojāpāli and the Bhairā as well as the Api ojāpāli more or less similar to that of the Biyāh-gowā form. The Bhairā's structure is given below:

(I)  

A
0
B
0
C
D
E
F
0
0
0
0

(II)  

A
0
B
0
C
D
E
F
0
0
0
0
0
0
A - The ojapali,
B - The dainapali or Bhaira,
C/D/E - The ag-palis; i.e., the frontal palis,
F,G,H - The gor-palis; i.e., the back palis.

The Sattriya form of ojapali current in Barpeta sattra is not akin to the ojapali forms current in various sattras concentrated in Majuli, the world renowned river island of Assam. The structure of the Sattriya-ojapali of Barpeta sattra can be shown in the following way:

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>C₀</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>OC 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>C₀</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>OC 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>C₀</td>
<td></td>
<td>OC 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>C₀</td>
<td></td>
<td>OC 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>C₀</td>
<td></td>
<td>OC 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>C₀</td>
<td></td>
<td>OC 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>C₀⁸</td>
<td>C₀⁹</td>
<td>C₀¹₀</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A - The oja,
B - The dainapali,
C - The palis.
The performance of the Satrīva variety of ojapāli can also be held with the help of at least eight or ten pālis.

The units whole or Nare-gān comprises the following units such as the oja, the pālis and the dedhānis. The structural units of this form of ojapāli is given below, e.g.:  

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
A & 0 \\
B_0 & 0^C \\
D_0 & 0^E \\
F_0 & 0^G \\
H_0 & 0^I \\
\end{array}
\]

A - The oja,  
B - The dedhānis,  
D, E, I  
F, G, I - The pālis.  
H, I, I  

The Bisahari-ojapāli or Bisahari-gān or It-gowā is held in the sitting position. This form of
ojāpāli never sings songs in standing position. The various units of the structure of this form of ojāpāli are gītāl or pāthak and juris or pālis, e.g.:

A

B

C  D  E  F  G
0  0  0  0  0
H  I  J  K  L
0  0  0  0  0

A - The Manuscript,
B - The gītāl or pāthak (can be equated with the ojā)
C, D, E, F, G, I - The juris or pālis.
H, I, J, K, L - The palis.

The structure of the Tukuriyā ojāpāli is almost akin to that of Mare-γān. Like Mare-γān, the Tukuriyā ojāpāli also sings songs in standing position. Singing of songs in standing position is never allowed in this form of ojāpāli, e.g.:

F  G  B  A  C  D  E
0  0  0  0  0  0  0

A - The ojā
B, C, D, E - The palis.
Place and Occasion of the Ojāpāli performance:

The ojāpāli art form was originally associated with the temple. This can be definitely substantiated by the copper inscriptions issued by the kings of medieval Assam. But now-a-days the tradition of ojāpāli art form is confined only to various worships which are performed privately or publicly.

The Suknāni style of ojāpāli is associated with the Manasā pūjā or the Māre Pūjā. The troupe sings some mālitās (etiological narratives) relating to the origin of the snake goddess Manasā or Padma, her sister Neta, the eight nāgas (aṣṭaṅgasa) and other materials necessary in connection with the worship of the goddess Manasā in the sitting position, while the priest worships the goddess by the Vedic and the Paurānic as well as Laukik modes. After the completion of the worship the Suknāni form of ojāpāli performs gīta and nṛtya till the fall of night. In the gōta-raṅg pūjā, the Suknāni ojāpāli awakens the snake goddess at night with the beating of drums and playing on bhortāls as well as khutītāls with song and dance. At the end of the Sastric worship, the ojāpāli presents performance for the entire night. The next day again the ojāpāli sings songs relating to the
worship of the snake-goddess Manasa in the sitting position by keeping constant touch with the priest. Again the ojapali presents performance till to the evening.

In the Māre-pūjā, i.e., the worship of the snake goddess which continues more than two days, the ojā including the pālis awakens the deity along with her attendants in the evening of the first day of the worship. This part of the worship is popularly known as jagωā, i.e., act of awakening. The last but second day of the worship is called bhar puja, i.e., full worship. The singing of ojapali lasts for the whole night of the bhar puja. In some places, the performance of sukarnī ojāpali in the context of the Māre-pūjā is associated with the dancing of male shamans, i.e., deodhas or devadhvanis. The outline of the place of performance of the sukarnī ojāpali may be indicated in the following way:

[Diagram showing the outline of the place of performance]
A - An altar of Goddess Manasā
B - An altar of God Dharma
C - An altar of goddess Sitalā
D - place of the priest or guru
F - Place of the Ojāpālis
G - Places of audience
H - The Ojā
I - The Dānapālī
J - The pālis
K - Entrance.

Like the sukrāṇi form of Ojāpālī, Māre-gān is associated with the worship of goddess Paddā (Skt. Piśūpātī) or goddess Barmanī (Skt. Brahmānī). The outline of the place of performance of Māre-gān is given below:
A - Altar of the goddess Barmanī (a decorated maju, made of paper and kühila is set up as a symbol of the goddess.)

B - Female shamans fallen in trances.

C - Female shamans in dance-movements.

D - The ojā or ojhā.

E - The pālis

F - Sitting place of the ojā including pālis.

G - Place of the deuri, i.e., priest.

H - Place of the drummers.

I - Place for male audience.

J - Place for female audience.

K - Offerings to the goddess.

L - Entrance.

The ojāpāli form associated with goddess Bisahārī or Padmāvatī; i.e., Bisahārī-gān or gīt-govā performs its performance in the sitting position. The performance is held at the time of worship and continues till to the evening if the worship is held privately.

But in the context of the worship of Bisahārī worship which is held publicly and continues for days together (i.e., hāre-pūjā) the recitation is generally held during the times of worship and ends at the afternoon and again begins at the early part of the night and continues for the whole night. During night the dance of male shamans...
is essential. The sketch of the place of performance of this form of ojāpāli is given below:

Rectangular open stage.

A - Pūja mandapa,
B - store room,
C - sitting place for male shamans,
D - Place for the priest,
E - Place for the Deurl,
F - Place for the audience,
G - Place for the audience,
I - Entrances,
The Tukuriyā ojāpāli performance is held either publicly or privately. The Mare-pujā or Baramani worship is generally started with the Tukuriyā worship and the Tukuriyā ojāpāli. The Tukuriyā worship continues for two or three days. During the time of the worship and after the worship the singing of the Tukuriyā-myth by the singers is a must. The sketch or the place of performance of the Tukuriyā ojāpāli is given below:

Rectangular open stage.

A - The mandapa of the goddess Tukuriyā
B - The ojā
C - The pālis
D - Place for audience.
The Blyah-gowa ojapali associated with worship of Vasudeva and the sabhā and so on. The Vasudeva-pūjā which is held in the later part of the morning and ended in the afternoon is designated as the ekparīya sabhā. The worship comprising only one night is called eka-cāparī, and the worship of Vasudeva lasts for two days and one night is termed as the gondh cāparī. During the time of the pūjā the Blyah-gowa form of ojapali sings various etiological narratives which are known as mālitās in the sitting position. But the Blyah-gowa variety of ojapali current in South Kamrup never sings any song or mālitā in the sitting position. This form of ojapali always sings songs in the standing position. The mālitās are also sung while the troupe is performing in the standing position.

At the ending of the pūjā the art form current in eastern part of the undivided district Kamrup sings and dances in the standing position. The Blyah-gowa form of ojapali prevalent in South Kamrup does not perform the whole night. It is always preceded by other art forms like

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115 As. ek parīya (Skt. eka prabha)
116 As. ard-cāparī (Skt. ardha catusprahara)
117 As. gondh cāparī (Skt. gandha catusprahara)
Dhuliya and so forth. On the contrary, in some sabha where there is no other performance the ojapali continues until the dawn. The performance is ended by a jumah singing in the context of eastern lamrup and in the context of South Kamrup the performance is ended by singing of a vandara, i.e., a prayer. The sketch of the place of performance is given below:

Rectangular open stage.
A - The deity or Bhāgavata-purāṇa,

B - Place for the Guru (spiritual guide),

C - Place for the priest,

D - Place for audience,

E - Place for ojā and pālis,

F - Place for audience,

G - Restricted place,

H - Place for performance,

I - The ojā,

J - The dāināpālis,

K - The pālis,

L - The pālis,

M - The entrance.

The Rāyman and the Bhairā forms of ojāpāli perform their performances on the various occasions, such as different worships, sabhās and Bhatheli and so on. The performance begins with the singing of a vandāra and a few mālitas and ends with a singing of a prayer. The following sketch will furnish an idea regarding the place of performance of these forms of ojāpāli, viz.;
Rectangular open stage.

A - Kandapa or altar,
B - Place for priest or Guru,
C - Place for audience,
D - Place for audience,
E - Place for the ojā and the pālis,
F - The ojā,
G - the bhājā or dānāpāli,
H, I, J, K, L, M - the pālis,
N, P, O - The entrances,
U - Place for performance.
Style of Performance:

The setting and the standing are the two positions by which the different forms of ojāpāli perform their performances. But ojāpāli forms like the tukuriyā, Biṣaharī-gan or gīt-gowā form and the Suknāṇi form current in South Kamrup perform their performances in the sitting position. Of course, the Suknāṇi variety prevalent in South Kamrup may perform their performance in the standing position if they are requested by the audience. This is not obligatory. The sattrīyā form of ojāpāli never sings in the sitting position. Similarly, the Rāiman and the Bhairā forms of ojāpāli generally sing in the standing position. The Biyāh-gowā and Suknāṇi forms of ojāpāli sing vandanās in the sitting position without attaining themselves in the traditional costume. But they use traditional dresses when they perform in the standing position.

The ojā including the pālis dress themselves in the greenroom. Then both the ojā and the pālis enter the Sabhāgrha or the stage through the west side. The pālis enter the stage by holding the cymbals in their right hand. The ojā of the Biyāh-gowā form enters the stage through the same direction by holding a pair of
anklets in his right hand. Then both the ojā and the pālis offer prānāma to the altar and the mother earth as well as the audience in the style of striking three beats at the cymbals and by stamping three times to maintain the tālās. Then the pālis start to beat the cymbals vigorously. The ojā, particularly the Biyāh-gova variety seats on his feet at the proximity of the altar of the deity and by offering prayer he puts on the pair of anklets on his feet and makes tinkling sounds by moving his feet. The pālis also start to beat the cymbals simultaneously with the tinkling sound of the anklets of the ojā. There upon the ojā moves gently back towards the west and takes place himself between the two dāināpālis and starts surasādhanā, i.e., ālāpa. The the ojā including the pālis recite guruvandana with appropriate hastamudrās.

Similarly the sukhānḍ form of ojāpāli enters the Sabhāgrha and the different members of the troupe take their seat in the style of the Biyāh-gowa ojāpāli. Initially they offer prayer to the deity and the Mother earth and the audience. Thereafter the ojā takes his seat between the dāināpālis and starts surasādhanā. After a while the ojā and the pālis recite a vandana.
The ojā and the dāināpālī as well as the pālis of the sattrīyā form of ojāpālī enter the sabhāgrha and stand in the form of English letter 'U'. The ojā stands in the frontal position. He is followed by the dāināpālī and he is followed by the pālis. Then the ojā and the dāināpālī as well as the pālis start sursādhanā.

The style of presentation of the Ṛayman and the Bhāira including the Ḍapī forms of ojāpālī are more or less similar to the style of presentation of the biyāh-gowā variety. Only difference is that the Bhāira form gives emphasis on the abhināya aspect, while the biyāh-gowā form is stressing on saṅgīta aspect.

The style of presentation of hāry-gān is quite different from that of the sukram form or the biyāh-gowā variety. The ojā is followed by two or more dedhānīs—i.e., female shamans and they are followed by the pālis. This form of ojāpālī starts performance after singing a vandana in the standing position. Sometimes they move in circling position also. During their performance, they recite jhunāqīt for merriment. Now and then this form of ojāpālī performs dramatrical performances in close conformity with the theme they recite.
Bisahari-gaṅ or git gowa form of ojāpāli sings songs from the Manasa-Kavya written by both Manakara and Durgāvara. The manuscript is kept on a sarāl in front of the-gitāl. The gitāl sings from the manuscript and the juris or pālis take up the refrain.

Functionaries of the Ojapali:

Two functionaries are mainly associated with the ojāpāli art form, viz.; (I) the oja and (II) the pālis.

(I) The Oja:— The oja is the chief of an ojāpāli troupe. He is skilled in many arts specially in gita-vadya and nrtya. An oja should know about the different aspects of music such as rāga, tāla, laya, mudrā, gati bhaṇḍā. It is said that an oja alone is good, who, with songs on his lips, gestures in his hands, and rhythm on his feet goes round and round like the bird Mayūra.

119 hī lo mudrā mukhe pada pāḍa dhūre tālā / mayūra sadṛṣā nīce sohi oja bhāla //
According to M. Sastri, the oja acts as the controller as well as manager of the troupe. He is something like sutradhāra of the Sanskrit drama.  

The chief function of an oja is to lead the chorus. He sets the refrain of the song of the theme for both dāināpāli and other pālis to repeat the refrain. The oja sings the main body of verses of the narrative taken up on the occasion. He makes dancing movements with appropriate gestures and mudrās keeping harmony with the songs. Occasionally he shows bhāva to expound and to elaborate his songs.

Both the ojas of the Bhūrā-gowā and the sukhārī as well as the Bhāra expound the themes in prose (verse also cannot be ruled out) with the help of the dāināpāli. "He addresses his audience as a story-teller does, and explains to them the different incidents of the tale, wherever such explanation is thought necessary. This is sometimes done by the dāināpāli, with whom the oja occasionally holds conversation."

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120 Sastri, M. 'Avamat Sajjīta Carca' in Kāmadhenu, p. 82
Even the ojā may elaborate or may add something new in the original theme if thinks it necessary to cater to his audience. The act of such adding is always done in keeping the unity intact with the outlines of the main theme which is taken up by him for singing.

The ojā always acts as stage-director. He very often corrects mistakes committed by his dālmāni or other pālī on the stage by the hint of eye or hand. The ojā may act as a teacher particularly in the folk-society, even he may offer service to the non-elite village folk as a village doctor. It is also seen that many ojās of the sukṛnā ṛa variety act as snake-charmers or snake-doctors or they possess the power of nullifying the evil effects by invoking mantras.

(II) The Pālīs:—The term pāli indicates the meaning of helper and assistant of an ojā. According to some scholars the word pāli has emanated from Sanskrit term pālīta. But Acharyya Manoranjan Sastri, a well known specialized scholar in the field holds the view

Chaliha, P.: 'Achara Matya-Tala' in Assa Gaurava, p. 407
Skt. Pālīta > * MIA. Pālī > As. Pālī.
that the term *pāli* has come from Sanskrit word *pāli* or *pāli* which carries the meaning of the Assamese *pāli*, i.e., subordinate of the *ojā*. As such, there is no necessity to show relation with the word like *pālītā*. So, it would not be apocryphal if we say that the Assamese word *pāli* has come from Sanskrit term *pāli*.

The *ojāpāli* performance cannot be held without the help of the *pālis*. From this point of view the *pālis* may rightly be termed as the real strength of an *ojā*. An *ojā* is good only because of his *pālis*. To substantiate our hypothesis a popular saying can be cited which goes thus:

\[ \text{chulīyār bal tālī,} \]
\[ \text{ojār bal pāli /} \]
\[ \text{berār bal kāmī,} \]
\[ \text{tīrīr bal svāmī} //^{125} \]

i.e., strength of the drummer is the *tālī* i.e., who plays on the cymbals;

strength of the *ojā* is in the *pāli*, i.e., assistant,

strength of the walls is in *kāmī*, i.e., a long narrow piece of split bamboo which supports the wall.

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124 Informant: Acharyya Monoranjan Sastri, Malbari, data collected on 11.12.84.

125 Informant: Robin Ch. Sarma, S.U., data collected on 1.9.86.
Strength or the woman is her husband.

The pālis assist the ojā in different aspects of the performance comprising gīta, nṛtya and arthimāna. The ojā leads the chorus and sets the refrain (dīhā) for his pālis. The pālis repeat the refrain with marking hands striking cymbals. The ojā sets the first parva of a carana of a pada, i.e., a verse and the second parva of the carana of the pada, is recited by the pālis. This part recited by the pālis is termed as śrīphala in the context of the kāvya-govā ojāpāli. Like the ojā, the pālis are also expert in dance, gait and gestures and mudrās as well.

The pālis can be classified into the following classes, e.g.;

(I) Dāināpālis,
(II) Gor-pālis, and
(III) Āg-pālis.

(I) Daināpāli:

The daināpāli is a right hand man of the ojā. He is like a second leader of the troupe. The word daināpāli has come from Sanskrit word daksinā pāli.  

126 Skt. dākināṣṭaka > MLA. dāhīṣṭaka > AS. daināṣṭi, dainā, medial ā > due to compensatory lengthening.
During the time of performance, the ojā expounds the theme of the songs in prose and verse with the help of the dāināpāli, so that the non-elite village folk can be acquainted with the theme without any difficulty.

The act of a dāināpāli is called dainādharā, very frequently in the middle of the performance both the ojā and the dāināpāli introduce humous episode in order to give the entertainment. Occasionally the ojā questions the dāināpāli and he answers accordingly in the style of dramatic dialogue. The dāināpāli occasionally represents dramatic performance with vacana (dialogue) and bhāva (state) mixed with crude humour. This is evident particularly in respect of the Bhāira. The dāināpāli of this variety presents all the bhūyas in terms of abhinaya. From this point of view the dāināpāli of the Bhāira form of ojāpāli may be called a caricaturist.

Ojāpāli forms like Ha-re-gān and Bisahari-gān or gīt-gowā as well as Tukuriya are quite unfamiliar to the dāināpāli.

(II) Gor-pāli:

The gor-pālis, i.e., back-pālis are next to the dāināpāli. They help of back the ojā and the dāināpāli in all respects. As such they are known as gor-pālis. They
take their place just behind the dāināpāli in the context of the ojāpāli performance. In an ojāpāli troupe there must be at least two gor-palis. Harmony of their voice is an requisite qualification of this category of pāli. They play an important role in respect of the continuity of the rāgas and the bānā set by the ojā. A rāga or a bānā cannot be completed until and unless the active cooperation of the gor-pāli.

The tradition of gor-pāli is not found in the ojāpāli forms like Hare-gān, Bisahāri-gān and Tukurilīyā.

(III) Ag-pāli:

The term Ag-pāli suggests the sense that a pāli who helps the ojāpāli art form from the frontal side. The word Ag has come from Sanskrit aga, i.e., front. The Ag-pāli again may be called grhayak pāli, i.e., helper. Generally the number of the Ag-pāli or sahāyak pāli is not less than two. Any person who enters the profession of the ojāpāli must act as Ag-pāli or sahāyak pāli. The Ag-pālis help both the gor-pālis and the ojā, even they occasionally work as a substitute of the gor-pāli when they take rest for a while or at the absence of the gor-pāli.

127 Skt. agra) MIA. agra) Ag. aq.
Costumes used by Ojā and pālis:

The ojāpāli art form mainly depends on the ṣhāryya aspect of abhinaya. Again ṣhāryya abhinaya comprises on the alamkāras, i.e., ornaments and the vaśabhusā, i.e., dress and decoration.

Alamkāras:

The alamkāras include both mālya, i.e., flower garland and abharana, i.e., ornament and vāsa, i.e., drapery as well.¹²⁸ Both the ojā and the pālis except the sattāraya form of ojāpāli use flower or basil garlands. This tradition is not found in respect of the ojā and the pālis of the other forms of ojāpāli.

The abharana may again be subdivided into four categories viz.: (I) avedhya, i.e., to be pierced, (II) bandhanīya, i.e., to be tied, (III) kṣepya, i.e., to be put on and (IV) aropya, i.e., to be put round the neck.¹²⁹ The avedhya abharana consists of the ear ornaments such as kundalā and the like.¹³⁰ The ojās

¹²⁸ Patya-Sāstra, XXXIII/I
¹²⁹ Patya-Sāstra(NS), XXXIII/II
¹³⁰ (NS), XXXII/12
excepting Mare-gan and Bisobari-gan and the Bhairā as well as Tukuriya forms of ojāpāli wear the ear ornaments in the either ear which are known as kānar sōrh, i.e., ear ornament made of gold or anti or unti or kundāla or phuti, i.e., clove-like ear pin. The dānāpālis of the Biyāh-gowā and the Suknānī forms of ojāpāli generally wear ear-ornaments in both ears.

The bandhanīya ābharana comprises the girdle and the arm band. The ojās never use any ornament made of silver or gold as the bandhanīya ābharana. Of course, they use a long and narrow cloth which serves as a girdle. On the other hand the ojās wear arm band at their either hand. The arm band used by the ojās is known as mūthi-khāru or gām-khāru, i.e., broad bangles made of silver or silver worked by gold. Even the dānāpālis of both Biyāh-gowā and Suknānī as well as Bhairā forms of ojāpāli may use bangles. The dedhānī associated with Mare-gan puts on bangles on either hand. The ojās of both the Biyāh-gowā and the Suknānī forms of ojāpāli enter the profession by putting on the bangles and leave the profession by putting off the bangles from the hands.

131 Nātya-sāstra (NS), XXXIII/12
The **ksopya abharana** includes anklets and decoration of dress.\(^{132}\) The ojas of **Uiyah-gowa** and **Sattriya** as well as **Apl** forms of **ojapali** use anklets. The *pulis* excepting **Mare-gan** never use anklets.

The **āropya abharana** comprises golden neck chain and various necklaces.\(^{133}\) The ojas of **Uiyah-gowa** and **Sukhāndi** as well as **Apl** and **bhāirā** forms of **ojapali** wear **dhol-madalīs**, i.e., a kind of necklace made of a few golden beads and other red coral beads with a small drum-shaped gold bead in the middle. The *dedhāṇi* of **Mare-gan** uses different **āropya abharanas**.

The **abharana** includes even the ornaments of the fingers. According to the **Natyā-sastra** there are four kinds of the finger-ornaments.\(^{134}\) The ojas of the various forms of **ojapali** put on one or more rings. Accordingly the *dedhāṇi* associated with **Mare-gan** puts on one or more rings made of either gold and silver round her fingers.

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132 NS., XXXIII/13
133 NS., XXXIII/13
134 NS., XXXIII/34-35
Costume:

The extraneous representation is always associated with costume used by the pātra and pātri. The costume may broadly be divided into two categories, e.g. (i) male costume and (ii) female costume.

The male costume may again be subdivided into three subclasses, viz.; (i) suddha (white), (ii) vicitra (variegated) and (iii) malina or rakta (red).¹³⁵

The ojas and the pālis of most of the forms of ojāpāli wear suddha or white dresses. The ojas of Biyāh-gowē and sattrīyā as well as bhāirū and āpi forms of ojāpāli use head-gear (pāguri). The two ends of the head-gear are pointed like the two ends of a boat.¹³⁶

The head-gear mentioned above may be termed as kosāpatī-yāpāg.¹³⁷ The head-gears of the ojas of suknāri and māre-gān are made from gāmochā, or a piece of white long cloth. This variety of head-gear is called kuhumīyā-pāg, i.e., oval shaped head-gear.

¹³⁵ NS., XXXIII/39
The ojas of Blyah-gowa, Sattriya, Bhairā and Apī forms of ojāpāli put on pattajāmā or capkan or bāigān, i.e., silk coat connected with gown with long sleeves. The pattajāmā opens like the feathers of a peacock when the oja moves round and round in the course of his dance movements. The ojas used a belt which is commonly known as taṅgālī. It works as a girdle on the waist. A gala-vastra, i.e., scarf is also used by the ojas. The oja of Bhairā form wears a cantā or jāmā. It is something like the pattajāmā, but a pattajāmā cannot be separated from each other but the cantā and jāmā can easily be separated from each other. The pālis of Māre-gān use jāmā. But the jāmā used by the pālis of this variety of ojāpāli is shorter than that of the Blyah-gowa ojāpāli form. They wrap a batuk, i.e., a kind of long narrow towel around the waist. The ojas of Suknāni, Tukuriyā, Bishahari-gān, Māre-gān put on white dhuti. Similarly the pālis of the different forms of ojāpāli excepting Māre-gān use white dhuti and shirt or gaṅji and keep a gāmochā on their shoulder. They also wear pājuri made from cădar or gāmochā. Both the ojas and the pālis use tilaka in their fore head. The pālis or Apī form of

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Ojapali put on mekhela, i.e., a kind of gown, riha, i.e., a kind of scarf made of muga and cadar. The oja of Sukhna variety wears a traditional coat or a shirt and a choti with long ends in front. The dedhali of Mare-gan puts on a typical Assamese dress like a mekhela, a cadar and a red spotted riha, i.e., a scarf used as upper garment. She also uses a girdle made of cloth. Her forehead is decorated by a big round vermilion mark.

Musical Aspects of the Ojapali:

The ojapali music is basically a triple symphony of gita-vadya and nrtya. As such, the art form may rightly be called sangita. The ojapali circle describes the art as Gandharva vidya. The Gandharva music is so-called since it belonged to Gandharvas and this genre of music was very dear to gods and goddesses.

The Natya-Sastra states that Gandharva music is based on Svara, tala and pada as well as various musical instruments. Similarly, the ojapali music is also

139 Sarma, N.C.: Essays on the Folklore of North Eastern India, p. 29
140 NS., XXXVIII/9
based on svara, tāla and pada as well as various musical instruments. From this point of view the ojāpāli music can be termed as gāndhārva music. The Vācika aspect of abhinayā of the ojāpāli is exhibited by its music.

The ojāpāli music, particularly the music of the Biyāh-gowa form comprises five folds. Hence it is called Pañcānga-saṅgīta, i.e., five fold music, viz.; (I) alāpa, (II) guru vandana, (III) Viṣṇupada, (IV) Saṅjītalāpā and (V) jhunā or jurā.

(I) Alāpa: The first step of the music of Biyāh-gowa form of ojāpāli is alāpa or svara-sādhanā. It is a kind of musical exposition of some rāga. The alāpa begins with such syllables as hā, tā, rā, ri(r) and rītā. The ojāpāli circle explains the syllables in the following way:

hā stands for Gaṇapati,
tā stands for Sadasiva,
rā stands for Brhma,
ri(r) stands for Kṛṣṇa or Visnu,

rītā (rtā) stands for Gandharva.142

142 Sarma, N.C.: "The Biyāh-gowa ojāpāli music of Assam" in Journal of the Assam Research Society, p.27
According to the active bearers of the ojāpāli art form the svarga-śadhana or sura-śadhana is the very basis of the various rāgas. So it is said, "The basis of rāga is ta-na-nā." The ojā including the pālis recite the alāpa without the aid of any musical instrument.

(II) guru-vandana : The second step is called guru-vandana or prologue. In this step the ojā and the pālis sing a very long pada containing the eulogy of lord Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva. It is sung either in sindhura rāga or Rāmagiri or Rāmakiri rāga with dance movements. The guru-vandana may also be sung in Guñjarī rāga or Bhrāmuri-rāga. In this step the pālis use musical instruments particularly tāla, i.e., cymbals. The song which is sung at the time of guru-vandana is termed as pātani-gīta, i.e., introductory song.

Both the alāpa and the guru-vandana including pātani-gīta are called the guru-mandali or gaid or ghunni.

The third step is the singing of viṣṇupada. The rāga or degar used in this step is called viṣṇu-rāga or Viṣṇu padar cheka. Dance-movements play important role

143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid., p. 29
in this step. It is followed by the singing of a few mālitās, i.e., etiological narrative of the rābha (pandel), the am-gach (mago-tree) and so on.

The sānjītalāpa is the fourth step of the niyāh-gowā ojāpāli music. Terms like cāvarbāna and gānkār rāga are also used in lieu of the word sānjītalāpa. "This rāga form is occasionally presented both as the notes of ascending order, i.e., ārohi and also as the notes of descending order, i.e., avarohi, by the ojāpāli troupe and hence it is termed as the gānkār-rāga." 146

The sānjītalāpa comprises five categories, e.g.;

(a) rāja, (b) mālitā, (c) bāna, (d) dīhā, and (e) thōkā or pada or mokhanī.

The singing of the jhuna ālā, i.e., light song and the puwell ālā, i.e., song of day-break, is the fifth step of the ojāpāli music. The biyāh-gowā ojāpāli music ends with a vardana to Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva.

The sattrīyā ojāpāli music consists of five steps, e.g.; (i) alāpa or svara-sādhanā or sura-sādhanā, (ii) rāja, i.e., the ojā sets a particular rāga form and pālis repeat

the rāga, (iii) singing of a nāndī sloka, i.e., Sanskrit verses containing the eulogy of lord Kṛṣṇa, (iv) singing of bārgītas and (v) singing of pādas from the various works of Śaṅkaradeva and Nādhavaideva and the Assamese versions of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata.

The last step, i.e., singing of pādas can be categorized into the following steps, e.g., (i) dihā, (ii) juna, (iii) rāgabāna, (iv) kathān, (v) nikhī (nisi ?) and (vi) thaka.147

The sukānī ojāpāli music may be classified under the following heads, e.g.; (i) alāpa, (ii) vandara, (iii) alāpa, (iv) dihā, (v) pāda and (vi) upaśāmāra.

(I) Alāpa : Like the niyāh-govā ojāpāli music the sukānī ojāpāli music also gets a start with the svara-yādhanā or alāpa. This step starts with such syllables as hā, ta, rā, ri(r), rīta(rīta).148

(II) Vandara : The vandara step begins with the syllables hā, ta, rā, ri(r), and rīta(rīta). It is followed by the singing of a vandara. There are many vandara gītās,

but in the context of musical performance this variety of ojāpālī sings only one vandana. 149

(III) Ālāpa: At the end of the singing of a vandana-gīta the ojāpālī again begins the ālāpa with the syllables ha, ta, na, ri(r) and rit(a).

(IV) Dīhā or sthāyī: The next step of the Suknāṇi music is dīhā or sthāyī. Although the term sthāyī is used here as a synonym of the word dīhā nevertheless it is not used among the active bearers of the Suknāṇi form of ojāpālī. Each pada is sung along with dīhā.

(V) Pada: The singing of pada is an important step of the Suknāṇi ojāpālī music. In the ojāpālī context the term pada indicates a chapter containing at least ten to fifteen caranas.

(VI) Upasamhāra or Sāmarāṇī: The singing of pada is followed by upasamhāra or sāmarāṇī. In this step both the ojā and the pālis give farewell to the snake deity Manasā by singing songs from the padmā-purāṇa of Sukavi Nārāyanadeva.

149 Ibid. op. cit.
Ojāpāli forms like niyāhari-gān and Tukurīyā have no subtle musical steps like the niyāh-gowa form of ojāpāli. Of course, a few musical steps in connection with the above two forms may be shown in the following ways, e.g.:

(I) ālāpa, (II) vandana, (III) pada and (IV) sāmaranā.

From the musical point of view kare-gān may be subdivided into the following steps, e.g.:

(1) vandana; (ii) singing of etiological ballads, (iii) dīhā, (iv) pada, (v) jhunā and (vi) sāmaranā.

Rāgas used by the Ojāpāli Art form:

The conception of rāga and rāginī is current in the Ojāpāli music in general. The rāga and the rāginī are particularly known as dhek or digār in the undivided district of Kamrup. Secondly the term rāga is used to convey the sense of both the rāga and the and rāginī. The niyāh-gowa Ojāpāli music uses only the following rāga forms, e.g.; sarangā, susarangā, barārī, cālānī or cālana, vasanta, Blairavi, rāmagiri or rāmakiri, Gāndagiri, Pāhārī, Śyāmāgārā, Sahāi or Suvāi, Dharārī, Dīhāwārā, Kalyāna, Relī or Relī (Lalita ?), Śrījārāhāra, Behāga.
Caurata, Saroda, Nata, Malavi, Puravi, Cauratha, Desaga, Megha or Meghamallara, Dipaka, Ahira, Vasanta, Bhatriyali, Malari, Kadara, Karunya, Kadara and so forth.  

The concept of raga-laksana or raga-dhyana is popularly known as raga-malita in the Ojapali music.  

According to a tradition current among the active bearers of this profession each raga is associated with a malita, but Malaya raga has no such malita.  

Like the Indian music, the music of the Ojapali in general and the Biyah-gowa as well as the Satra forms of Ojapali in particular follow the time theory in respect of singing of different ragas.  

Svara: The tradition of the classification of svara is more or less apparent in the Ojapali music in general. The Biyah-gowa Ojapali music classifies the svara into ghora, manda and cha. Again some active bearers of this art form enumerate svara into the following groups, e.g.:  

(i) nabhisura, i.e., navel svara, (ii) naksura, i.e., nasal svara, (iii) talu sura, i.e., palatal svara.  

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151 Ibid.  
Again the svara of the ojapāli music may be classified into five parts, e.g.:

(i) Udbhāra, (ii) hūhkāra, (iii) tarā, (iv) jhura and (v) mardan (mandra ?). 153

Tālas (Rhythm):

Tāla is regarded as the foundation of music. The conception of tāla is found in the ojapāli music. The nāyak-gowā ojapāli music uses five kinds of tālas, e.g.:

(i) cāb-tāla, (ii) cautāla, (iii) jikaritāla, (iv) lecheri tāla and (v) thokatāla.

The sattrīya ojapāli music uses various tālas, e.g.: ekatāla, khāmn, dasabari, bar-yati, bar-visama, paritāla, rūpaka and so on.

The suknārd ojapāli music employs the following tālas: (i) vandana tāla or bānīnā tāla, (ii) dopari tāla, citkuni tāla, (iv) cautāla, (v) rūpahitāla, (vi) bit or khutitāla and (vii) mālci tāla.

The nāre-gān music and the nīssāharī-gān music have no varieties of tālas. They simply employ two or three tālas only.

153 Goswami, N.M. Op.cit., p. 268
Abhinaya aspect of the Ojapali Art form:

Dance is an important facet of abhinaya. Indian dance involves both nṛtta, nṛtya and nāṭya. The nṛtta suggests the rhythmic movements of body for its own sake, but it cannot express bhāva, i.e., state by means of abhinaya. On the other hand, the nṛtya can suggest rasa as well as bhāva (i.e., state). The nāṭya or nāṭaka indicates some traditional story context itself.

Dance without having these elements never be completed. Rightly does observe S. Sharma: "This shows that the dance has a certain theme and purpose which it tries to reveal through movements and expressions. More movements of the body have no significance, however rhythmic and balanced poses may be. Like the musical notes the movements themselves become potential and dynamic to express the theme of the dance. But yet music forms an important elements in the dance. The purport of the theme is provided by the word-body of the song to which the dance corresponds".

154 Abhinayadarpana, S.N. 16
155 Ibid., S.N. 15
156 Sharma, S.: "The Aesthetic of Indian Music and Dance" in Readings on Music and Dance, p. 34
The ojāpāli dances are always wedded to songs which are performed to the rhythms of the cymbals or the cymbals and the drums. Secondly, the ojāpāli dances express both the situation and the emotion as well as the state (bhāva). The essence of the ojāpāli dance is always combined to the movement, the beatings of the cymbals and the pervading and persistent rhythm of the ojā anklets (particularly in the niyāh-gowā-ojāpāli form). In fact, the ojāpāli dance visualizes the songs sung by the ojā and the pālis.

The niyāh-gowā-ojāpāli performs five kinds of dances. In the context of the ojāpāli music dances, are popularly known as pāk and ghūrāna and nāc, e.g.; (i) mayura nāc, i.e., peacock dance, (ii) hamsini nāc, i.e., goose dance, (iii) dhupuni nāc, i.e., waitail nāc, (iv) natuwa nāc, i.e., actor’s dance and (v) pūruwa-ghūrani nāc, i.e., pigeon’s turning dance.157

The sattryā ojāpāli dances are based on bhāvas, i.e., states of the theme they sing. As for example, if the ojāpāli troupe sings the theme of kāliyadāmara, the

157 Sastri, M.: Cit., p.83
Sarma, M.C.: Cit., pp.34-35
ojā exhibits dance-movements of lord kṛṣṇa or ṣattraṇa and the pāḷīs follows him. The term pāk, i.e., turning movement is used in lieu of the word nrtya, by the active bearers of the sattraṇa form of ojāpali, e.g., cakowā-pāk etc.

The sukāṇā ojāpali also performs different dances. The sukāṇā ojāpali circle also uses the terms like ghūran and nāca instead of the word nrtya, e.g.; (i) mayūra or mairā-nācan, i.e., peacock-dance; (ii) parowā ghūranā, i.e., pigeon's turning dance, (iii) rupāḥi-nācan, (iv) kharkā-nācan or kanniḥi nācan, (v) betā nācan, i.e., frog's dance, (vi) lochārī nācan, (vii) ughā ghūran i.e., reel's dance, and so forth.

Māra-jān also performs different dance-movements in accordance with bhāvās of the theme they sing. uṣahari jān and the tukuriṇā forms of ojāpali do not perform any dance-movement as these forms of ojāpali perform their performances only in sitting position.

Gati (gait):

The term gati is not used in the ojāpali dance, but the words like bulani, bulān, caḷanā, khoj, i.e., feet movements are current among the active bearers of the
The Ojapali art form. These terms can convey the sense of gati. The bijyā-gowā-ojapali dance employs the following gatis, e.g.: (i) hansini, i.e., goose-step, (ii) mairi, i.e., peacock step, (iii) mryga, i.e., deer step, (iv) gaja, i.e., elephant-step, and (v) sarpila, i.e., snake-step. 158

The uses of gati in the sattrīyā and sūkhnād forms of ojapali cannot be ruled out.

Asana:

The tradition of asana, i.e., glance, is also prevalent in the ojapali art form. Terms like cakhū and caku, i.e., eye, and cāwan, i.e., glance, are used instead of the term asana. The bijyā-gowā-ojapali employs various asanas, e.g.: neula cāwan, i.e., mongoose-glance, (ii) bagulā-cāwan, i.e., paddy-bird glance, (iii) madan caku, i.e., cupid's glance and so on. 159

The tradition of asana is also found in the sattrīyā and the sūkhnād forms of ojapali.

**Mudrā:**

Mudrā, i.e., hand-pose, is an important aspect of the ojāpāli dance. The word mudrā or mocan is used instead of mudrā in the Biyah-gowa and the sūkndri forms of ojāpāli. Hasta or hāt, i.e., hand, is used as a synonym of mudrā.

The Bhāira form of ojāpāli gives special emphasis on the dramatic performance, i.e., abhinaya. Both the ojā and the dāināpāli, i.e., bhāira, perform the dramatic performance keeping an eye on the theme they sung. Narāgan also gives stress on the dramatic performances. A few actors excluding the pālis along with the dedhanis play different roles according to the sequence of the theme.