although the performing art forms of India are born out of a religious urge nevertheless the social context of these art forms cannot be ignored as the performing arts certainly emerged out of men and society. Writers like John Blacking and Joann W. Kealiinohomoku hold that " the forms and meaning of the performing arts cannot be understood without referring to their social context and functions."¹ The meaning of music and dance therefore is illuminated by their social context and functions.

Man makes music and dance as a patterned event in a system of social interaction. According to Levi-Strauss the creation of music can be described as a sharing of inner feeling in a social context through extensions of body movement, in which certain species - specific capabilities are modified and extended through social and cultural experience.² The music is basically created for the man by the man. The man is a social being and hence, music may be called a social phenomenon. " The analysis of man as music-maker, says John Blacking, " can tell us about the structures of the body and the mind, and of bodies and minds

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¹. John Blacking & Joann W. Kealiinohomoku(ed): The performing Arts, Intro, p.XIV.
². Levi-Strauss: The Raw and the Cooked, p.18
In social interaction; it can perhaps reveal the process by which feelings are crystallized in conceptual thought and cultural forms, and so provide the key to further progress in the science of man.\textsuperscript{3}

John Blacking mentions both the social and the ritual functions of music.\textsuperscript{4} Thus, the functions of ojāpāli music may be categorized into (a) ritual and (b) social. The ritual functions of the ojāpāli have already been discussed.\textsuperscript{5} The social functions of the ojāpāli art form are no doubt multidimensional. Alan Dundes, William R. Bascom and S.L. Srivastava\textsuperscript{6} mention different social functions of folklore in the different contexts of their discussions. These enumerations mentioned by them may aptly be employed in the ojāpāli context, since the ojāpāli is nothing but functional folklore.

**Sociological functions:** According to William R. Bascom the first function of folklore is the sociological function, i.e.,

\textsuperscript{3} John Blacking: \textit{op.cit.}, p.14
\textsuperscript{4} John Blacking: \textit{How musical is Man?} pp.38, 37
\textsuperscript{5} Kindly see chapter V.
\textsuperscript{6} Alan Dundes (ed): \textit{The study of Folklore}, pp.277-97
William R. Bascom: \textit{Contributions to Folkloristics}, pp.40-64
S.L. Srivastava: \textit{Folk Culture and Oral Tradition}, pp.275-86
\textsuperscript{7} William R. Bascom: \textit{op.cit.}, p.42

\underline{\textbf{Four Functions of Folklore}} (The study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes)
the social context of folklore. In the same light we may discuss the social context of the ojāpāli institution, "its place in the daily round of life of those who sing it."\(^8\) It is not a 'problem' in the strict sense, but rather a series of related facts which must be recorded along with the texts.\(^9\) If the problems of the relation between ojāpāli and culture or the functions of ojāpāli, or even the creative role of the oja are to be analysed, viz:

(a) when and where the different forms are narrated the themes, (b) who tells them, whether or not they are privately owned, and who composes the audience, (c) dramatic devices employed by the narrator, such as gestures, facial expressions etc., (d) audience participation in the form of laughter, assent or other responses, running criticism or encouragement of the narrator, singing or dancing or acting, (e) attitude of the audience towards these categories.\(^10\) All these testify the social context of the ojāpāli and "its setting in actual life."\(^11\)

The ojāpāli sings different myths and explains them dramatically in prose. The myths have social context or function. In the words of Malinowski: "The limitation of the study of myth to the mere examination of texts has been fatal to a proper understanding of its nature. The forms of myth which

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come to us from classical antiquity and from the ancient sacred books of the East and other similar sources have come down to us without the context of living faith without the possibility of obtaining comments from true believers, without the concomitant knowledge of their social organisation, their practised morals and their popular customs - at least without the full information which the modern field-worker can easily obtain... "12

The text, no doubt, is extremely important but it is also correct that without the context the text remains lifeless. "As we have seen, the interest of the story is vastly enhanced and it is given its proper character by the manner in which it is told. The whole nature of the performance, the voice ..., the stimulus and the response of the audience mean as much to the natives as the text; and the sociologist should take his cue from the natives. The performance, again, has to be placed in its proper time setting - the hour of the day, and the season, with the background of the sprouting gardens awaiting future work ... "13 Here we must bear in mind the sociological context of private ownership, the social function and the cultural role14

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12. B. Malinowski: Myth in primitive Psychology, p. 18
of the ojāpālī. "The stories live in native life and not on paper, and when a scholar jots them down without being able to evoke the atmosphere in which they flourish he has given us but a mutilated bit of reality." 15

The ojāpālī institution may be termed as a mirror of culture, since it "may mirror the familiar details of culture and incorporate common situations from everyday life." 16

Validation of culture:

The second function of the ojāpālī may be said to be the validation of culture in justifying its rituals and institutions to those who perform and observe them. 17 The ojāpālī art form by singing different myths tries to safeguard and to enforce morality, it asserts the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Thus, the ojāpālī strengthens tradition and endows "it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events." 18

Education:

A third function of the ojāpālī art form is that which it plays in edification and education, particularly, but not

15. B. Malinowski: op. cit. p. 24
17. W. R. Bascom: op. cit., p. 57; p. 292
18. B. Malinowski: op. cit. pp. 91-92
exclusively, in non-literate societies. The ojāpāli imparts moral and ethical education amongst the rural masses. The village-folk do not know how to read and write but they are very often well-versed in the different episodes of the Rāmāvāna and the Mahābhārata as well as the Purāṇas. The Kathāguru-carita states that saint-poet Madhavadeva (16th C) taught the entire Assamese version of the Book X of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa to one Laksmaṇa ojā without the help of even a slate and a pencil and thus made him 'baro cakravarti ojā', i.e.; the Sovereign ojā.  

The ojāpāli seems to have been imparting moral education to the masses and hence it has been known as Vīveki-Paraś, i.e. knowledge through conscience. Not only the ojā and the pālis but also all the folk artists of all the performing art forms of India had never been mere entertainers. "They were schools of justice, discussion centre --- as well." 

The ojāpāli very often takes the help of riddles to expound the themes of the Epics and the Purāṇas which "serve as a didactic device to sharpen the wits" of the audience. The proverbs and the aphorisms used by the ojāpāli work as an effective "means of amusement, in educating the young, to sanction institutionalized behavior, as a method of gaining favor in court, in performing religious rituals and association ceremonies, and to give point

21. Rogers, Everett M. & Shoemaker P.Floyd: Communication of Innovation: a Crosscultural Approach, p.84
22. W.R.Gascom: op.cit., p.59
and color to ordinary conversion." The rural-folk are imparted the distilled wisdom of past generations through proverbs by the ojāpālī performances. In the same way, the aphorisms also impart knowledge to the non-elite rural folk which are nothing but "the compression of a mass of thought into a single saying".24

The ojāpālī sings many myths and legends which contain "detailed descriptions of sacred ritual, the codified belief or dogma of the religious system, accounts of tribal or clan origins, movements and conflicts".25

The vast majority of the people of our country are mainly of peasants and they have remained illiterate. For education or the sharing of knowledge and experiences the masses, particularly of lower Assam, have had to depend on an agency like the ojāpālī art form. Hence it has been said that the Assamese people may be illiterate but they are never uncultured.

The ojāpālī very frequently gives information regarding agriculture. As for example we may mention about the song related to the origin of jute which is sung by the sukāni variety of ojāpālī.26

Lastly, as opposed to practical instruction in productive technique, the ojāpālī acts as the Principal feature in the

23. Alam Dundes (ed): The study of Folklore, p.299
24. P. Goswami: Folk-Literature of Assam, p.76
25. W. R. Bascom: op.cit., p.59
26. Informant: Sri Praneswar Rabha, Darranggiri, data collected on 21.10.83
general education of the child in non-literate societies. And thus, the ojapali plays an important part in the eradication of mass illiteracy to some extent.

Recreation or Amusement:

The fourth function of the ojapali is that it plays in recreation or amusement, particularly in the non-elite societies. The rural folk are mostly busy with different affairs such as domestic, agricultural and such other works related to cultivation. Above all, they have to struggle continuously for their subsistence against intense heat, storm, flood and drought. In fact, they have to lead a very hard life. Like the urban elite the non-elite rural folk did not have scope for recreation or amusement like the movie or television or regular theatrical performances. The ojanali performance served them as nrtya-natya, gita and abhinaya." When there was no regular drama in the country the performances of ojapali provided to common people with edification and amusement."27 Unable to read and write the rural folk both men and women as well as children use to enjoy the ojapali performance forgetting all the woe-and suffering of the poverty stricken life. The story sung by both the oja and the palis, riddles and proverbs and aphorisms used by the dainapali and incidents unfolded by both the oja.

27. M. Neog : Tradition and Style, p. 34
and the dāināpāli and abhinava they performed are endless sources of humour and amusement to the unsophisticated rural people. The ojāpālis particularly the biyāh-gowa-ojāpālis recite the riddles attributed to one KaviKāṅkāna (17th C) in the midst of their performance with a view to providing satire and humour to the audience. The ojāpāli opens thus:

"Having no mouth it fills its paunch,
Bearing a man's head it sleeps sound,
This Puzzle KaviKāṅkāna poses,
Let alone the fool, even the scholar is befogged."

--- The pillow

Another riddle of the same poet and used by the ojāpāli may be cited below:

"There is a woman having five sons,
None of whom is Yuñhīṣṭhira, none Bhīma, nor Arjuna;
Neither one of them is Nakula nor Sahadeva
Accomplished as warriors equalled by none
Whenever the five brothers go to the battle,
They always fight from their mother's lap,"

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28. Quoted from P. Goswami's Folk-literature of Assam, p.33
Four of them together, one alone,
Can any scholar say who they are? \(^{29}\)

The daināpala is also a source of amusing tales who
gives all the elements of recreation in the midst of serious
and tragic events narrated by the oḷā. For example, we can
mention one such story which is known as the kathā-gutiya
carei aru hāthi, i.e., the wren and the elephant. It describes
how a wren killed an elephant. The story goes thus:

A wren had its small nest on a ridge of the side of a
river. An elephant also lived near by. One day the elephant
destroyed the nest of the wren, along with the eggs and the
birdies. The bird was very unhappy. The bird made up its mind
to take revenge on the elephant. Then the wren met a wood-pecker
to help her in killing the elephant. The wren advised the wood­
pecker to make a hole on the head of the elephant. The wood­
pecker did accordingly. Then, the wren requested a fly to
lay eggs in the hole made by the wood-pecker. The fly also
did accordingly. After three days the hole began to rot.

29. .grp/e kab bill na r n ama nput a pañc ajan/    
nohe yuddhisthira-bhima nohanta arjuna//    
na kula nu b ike nub ike sahadeva//    
samare b i sāla y ā ka sama nub ikeva//    
yati ksane samareka ca le pañc a bhāi/    
mātrra kolāta basi jhujhanta sadāi //    
ca rījana e ka ekalā ekajana /    
ka hio pandita save el pañca kona//

B.M.Goswami(ed): Kavi Kañkānara sāthara, p.6
The injury festered and infected the brain of the elephant. The wren then requested a frog to make water in the injured portion of the elephant. The frog did so. It made the injury more serious. At last, due to severe pain the elephant had to breathe his last.  

With the singing of the following riddle the ojāpāli generally comes to an end of Kavikankana:

'Though three-eyed it is not Sulapani,
Nor the king of birds though dwelling in trees
Holding water it is not the cloud's son,
And it is not Rāmacandra though clad in bark.'

The coconut.  

Social control:

William R. Bascom mentions that folklore fulfills the important but often over-looked function of maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of 'behavior' "More than simply serving to validate or justify institutions, beliefs and attitudes, some forms of folklore are important as means of applying social pressure and exercising social control." This function may also be aptly applied in respect of the ojāpāli institution, since the ojāpāli also acts as a vehicle of social protest and social pressure as well as social approval and disapproval.

30. Informant: Haliram oja, Titkuchi, Kamrup, data collected on 2.1.76
31. Quoted from P. Goswami's Folk-Literature of Assam, p.83
32. W.R. Bascom; op.cit., p.59
33. Ibid.
The ojāpāli seems to be highly effective in exercising social control among the rural folk. It tries to control the behaviour of the people by reciting the actions of right and wrong. The theme of the conversation between the ojā and the daināpāli generally is the victory of virtue and the fall of vice. The myths and episodes of the Epic and the Purāṇas display that even the mightiest person has to suffer the ill consequence of sinful acts. Observe sister Nivedita and Amanda K. Coomaraswamy: "In India mythology is not a mere subject of antiquarian research and disquisition; here it still permeates the whole life of the people as a controlling influence".  

Episodes sung by the ojāpāli from the Assamese versions of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata as well as the different Purāṇas and from the Vadha-kavyas of Rāmasarasvati (16th C) described the consequences of sinful acts done by the demons and giants as well as devils. As for instance, the ojāpālis narrate the terrific catastrophe met by the demon king Rāvana for kidnapping Sītā, the victory of the five pāndavas over the Kauravas and many such themes influence the rural folk so much that they fear to do sinful deeds in their personal lives also. The songs pertaining to the story of killing demons like Jāṅghasura and Vakāsura as well as Khatāsura and Baghāsura and so on, 

33(a) cf. W. R. Barcom: Folklore and Anthropology (Journal of American Folklore) Vol. 66, 1953, p. 290
34. Sister Nivedita & Amanda K. Coomaraswamy: Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists, p. 4
make people aware of the inevitable catastrophe of a sinner's life and attract them towards divinity and thereby they may be able to feel that there is God, the ultimate reality and the perceiver of all deeds.

Sometimes the ojas themselves compose songs with a view to controlling the contemporary society. The Belga-purana is one of the such songs. It is generally sung by the bhairaojapali and is predominantly a social satire of a crude nature. It shows the tragedy that over-takes one of the two brothers after their separation. The aim of this satire is no doubt social control.

Proverbs used by the ojapali are very effective instruments of social control. According to W.R.Bascom proverbs are highly effective in exercising social control. Because they express the morals or ethics of the group, they are convenient standards for appraising behavior in terms of the approval norms. Because they are pungently, wittily and sententiously stated, they are ideally suited for commenting on the behavior of others.37

Social Protest:

Another function of the ojapali art form is social protest. The ojapali institution by its songs and proverbs makes complaint

35. Supra, Chapter III
36. William R. Bascom: Contributions to Folkloristics, p.61
37. Ibid.
directly against social injustice, exploitation and oppression of the ruling agency. The observation made by Betty Wang in connection with the function of folklore may be applied in the function of ojāpāli. She observes: "One of the most important functions of folklore is its service as a vehicle for social protest. Wherever there is injustice and oppression one can be sure that the victims will find some solace in folklore. Through jokes, songs and proverbs, the anger of the folk is vent upon the often frighteningly unassailable individual or institution." 38

In the same way, the ojāpāli art form is working as a vehicle for social protest. Both the ojā and the daināpāli as well as the pālis through their jokes, songs and proverbs try to protest against the social injustice. The songs of protest are usually composed by the daināpāli orally and the same are sung by him while the ojā takes rest for a while. A good number of such songs based on the Present Assam movement on the foreigners issue have been collected. These songs are composed in the style of the chatihā. e.g.;

Dihā: The Assam students union has risen,
The people's movement has wakened
Assam has been over populated by foreigners.

38. Betty Wang: Folksongs as Regulators of Politics (The study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes) p. 308
The motherland Assam has given a call
students of Assam have risen
ka says: "we shall protest Assam";
Kha says: "O foreigners this time".
Ga says: "think seriously"
Gha says: "why forget your home-land?"
Na says: "promise boldly".
Ca says: "press upon the government",
Cha says: "test the courage of the students",
Ja says: "keep the prestige of the motherland"
Gha says: "whoever helps the foreigners"
Na says: "know them as enemies"
Ta says: "money is taken to keep the names of foreigners in the voter lists"
thaa says: "thus own fathers and brothers are cheated"

*** *** ***
Pa says: "come and join in the picketings"
Pha says: "you will get good results at the end"

*** *** ***
Ha says: "I am a son of the mother land Assam"
Ksa says: "please forgive me for all the commissions and commissions." 39

39. Dihā: chātra santha jārīche

gana samgrama caliche
asamat bideñī loka bhari pariche /
contd...
Going further back we can find that the *jāpālis* songs played a very important role in lodging a strong protest.

**Pada:**

jāgā jāgā bulī āt asāmi dāka dīlā /  
asamāra chātra-chātri jāgīyā uthīlā //  
kai bole karīm āmi asāmi ka uddhāra /  
khāi bole bidesī eibāra //  
gai bole gābhīra kari cintā kari cova /  
ghai bole gharakhan kene bhūli yova //  

*  

Informer: Tarini Kanta Rajbangshi, Makhibaha,  
data collected on 13.4.84
against the British rule in the awake of the Non-co-operation movement of India, 1930. One of the such songs has given below as specimen:

dihā : Svarāja lau bola Vande mātaram //
pada : kai bole kaṅgrech kamiti thāne thāne //

khai bole khaddara lovā svarājara kārane //
gai bole gujarāṭat gāndhi avatāra /
ghai bole ghare ghare phure bhalaṇṭiyāra//
 naï bole ṭenā kathā nakaya bhalaṇṭiyāre /
cai bole calā sabe phāṭaka ḍhātibāre //
chhai bole chātā erā bidesa taḷiyāri /

jai bole jāpī lovā nīje yatna kari //

jhāi bole jhut-jaṅjāla nakaribā āge /

 naï bole niyama karā bilāṭi nālāge //

tai bole ṭupī pindhi bhalaṇṭiyāra phure /

thai bole thāṭtā-bidrūpa dusta loke kare //

dai bole dānara loka phāṭakata yāya /

ghai bole dhāk-dholere āga barhāi thaya //

naï bole nāḍāla neribā sāḍhā jana /

tai bole tīṛtyo karā nankopāracaṇa //

thai bole thāṁthiti eri bhalaṇṭiyār phure /
dai bole dokāh-bazar-bāt bandha kare //
dhai bole dharā sabe manoyoga kari /
nai bole inrājaka nedibāhā eri //
pai bole pābā svarāj manata āsā karā /
phae bole phāndata pariche inrāja bapura //
bai bole bāda-bibāda hal gurutara /
bhai bole bhāratabāsi aru inrājara //
mai bole mil hau kichu dei buli sunu /
yai bole yi hauka eneka nāmānu //
rai bole rajā hai āmaka kare atyācāra /
lai bole landana-bāsi ki mitra āmāra //
vai bole thāne - thāne beṅka pāti dilā /
śāi bole śanta howā buli bhurkei thalā //
sāi bole ei biṣa āge acho khāi /
sāi bole sarvanāśe inrājaka iba kārā pāi //
hai bole haratāl karā nakaribā bhaya /
ksāi bole khamā karā - niscaya bijaya //
shimāra mantra govā hāte karā kama /
ādhārata svādhina haba bolā rāma rāma //
Svarāj lau bola vande mataram //40

40. Quoted from P. Goswami's Jāpānar Janakrsti aru anvyanya
Racabā, pp.53 - 54
Original informant: Late Phātik Ch. Kalita oja, Hazarikapara, Darrang.
Another song of similar form and content has been collected
from Sri Soneswar Barman, oja, Makhibaha, Kamrup, on 22.5.83
Dibha : Proclaim Vande-mātaram
And enjoy the freedom of the land.

Pada : ka says "form congress committees in the different places".

kha says "wear khadi for the cause of freedom".
ga says "Gandhi is incarnated in Gujarat".
gha says "the volunteers are moving from house to house."
ña says "the volunteers do not say any harsh words."
ca says "go and get yourself into the jail".
cha says "leave the foreign umbrella".
ja says "use the local jāpī in stead of the umbrella".
jha says "don't make any disturbance".
ña says "we don't want British rulers".
ta says "the volunteers move wearing gandhi-caps".
tha says "the naughty people taunt the volunteers."
da says "the honest are imprisoned by the British rulers".
dha says "they should bid adieu with the beating of drums and cymbals".
ña says "don't leave plough at any cost".
ta says "even the women participated in the non-co-operation movement."
tha says "volunteers are moving from here and there".
da says "they close the shops and markets perforce".
dha says "participate in the movement with devotion".
ña says "don't leave the British people".
pa says "be optimist, you will surely win freedom.
pha says "the British people are fallen in the net."
ba says "the quarrel appears to be very serious."  
bha says "between the British and the Indians".  
ma says "something is to be going on".  
"ya says "we are not in a position to agree with the  
propose of the British rulers".  
ra says "being the rulers of us the British oppress us".  
la says "the dwellers of London are no more our friends."  
wai says "banks have been established at various places".  
śa says "the British people play fast and loose with  
the Indians."  
śa says "we know it well."  
sa says "now the British people are in danger".  
ha says "make the hartals a success".  
kṣa says "forgive me, don't fear, victory is thine".  
sing the songs of non-violence,  
And do your duties,  
India will win freedom,  
Sing Vande mataram.

In response to M.K. Gandhi's call to the Indians to  
fight against the foreign domination of the British people the  
ōjāpālis worked with such type of songs and made attempt to  
present a wider view of the freedom-movement of India among  
the rural folk irrespective of caste and creed.  

The ōjāpāli institution is always trying to raise the  
people's voice against the rulers through their performances.
Propaganda Media:

Folklore particularly the functional folklore such as the ojāpāli art is one of the most powerful propaganda media to direct the attention of the people towards a particular programme.

Functional folklore has been adopted as a propaganda vehicle in the different countries also. Writes R.M. Dorson: "Folklore is one of the most powerful propaganda weapons of the Soviet Union as it was of the Third Reich". Further he writes "In attempting to control and channel the ideas of their own populations, and those of other countries, the fascist and communist states have found in folklore a most effective propaganda medium ... Communist China is employing folklore in its anti-western indoctrination".41

In India also different performing art forms have been employed as propaganda media. The ojāpāli is one of the most popular art forms of Assam particularly in lower Assam. Like other art forms, the ojāpāli also acts as "the forum for didactic messages and morality that transcends age and time."42 So, it is easier to employ as a successful media of propaganda. Even Saṅkaradeva (16th C) took help of the ojāpāli to preach his new doctrine among the masses. The state Government of Assam

42. Quoted from Shyam Parmar's Traditional Folk media in India, p. 16
makes good use of the ojāpāli as a propaganda vehicle in the context of family planning and social forestry as well as the 20-point programme and grow-more-food and expansion of poultry farms etc. Not only the ojāpāli but also the bhajana was also adapted to village development propaganda. Writes John J. Gumperz: "In at least one instance the Bhajana party technique was adapted to village development propaganda. A traditional Arya Samāja singer was employed by the Community Development Block. He collected a group of followers and lectured and sang about village uplift, using the Bhajana-rāga for songs about public health, the Japanese method for rice cultivation etc. His activities have been regularly effective ...."43

When asked how much the family planning welfare Dept. has been benefited by the ojāpāli art form an officer of the same Dept. of the All-India Radio, Guwahati said: "It (the ojāpāli) is a very popular audio-visual art form mostly current in the districts of Darrang, old Kamrup and old Goalpara. We find that, it is an effective vehicle to carry the message of family welfare Programme to far flung areas of the villages. The rural listeners very frequently request us to broadcast this programme. It proves its popularity".

The song goes thus:

Diha : a ki bhanî bhāi,
sūna mora dukhar bilāi //

Pada : biadiya mora post opic atimanohara/

kāmarūpa jilā mora, baragāota ghara //

bhāī-bhānī sātajānī āmāra pitā-mātā nāi/

ūnaisā bachara bayasata mora biyā haya /

biyā yowāra ebachara yeve gata hailā /

bhāgāvānara kṛpāta mora lārā etā bhailā //

āji-kāli kari yeve gailā kaṭadina /

lārā hāla tiniṭi mora chowālī chayajana //

ata anantare mora durgati ghāṭila/

bhāihaṭe laγalāγi beleg kari dīlā //

kheti kara māti mai eka bigā pāilo/

aranara(annara) dukhat mai taḥāke bechilo /

* * *

mānār dukhe peṭara bhokhe bajāralai galo/

panthata yāhante ghāṭala bokarāka lāga pāilo //

ghāṭālara āgata mai kailo dukhar kathā/

ghaṭāle bole dādā mora sei avasthā //

lārā-chowālī eγhārājana mora māti nāi /

bhārā gharata rai ācho hājirā kari khāi /
Dihā: O my brothers, O my sisters,  
Listen to my sad plight.

Pada: Bāikātā is my post office so sweet to say,  
Kamarup is my district and my home is at Bargāon village  
We have seven brothers and sisters  
We have lost our parents in our childhood.

44. Informant: Sri B. Sarma, All-India Radio, Gauhati. Data collected on 2-11-83. The song is composed by Sri Rajani Sarma, Bīgāmā, Bargāon, Kamarup and broadcast through All India Radio, Gauhati.
And I married when only nineteen years old.
One year has elapsed, I have a son now,
To-day and tomorrow as we counted days are gone by.
After a few years we have three sons and six girls.
I could not provide food to my family.
I am driven out from my original home by my brothers.

With a heavy heart and empty stomach
I have gone to the village market.
on the way, I meet one Ghatal.
I tell everything to him,
Then he says to me: "O brother this was my condition too".

The only ground of our misery is that we have not taken
any measure of birth control.

If you look for happy life
you must go to the health centre
And adopt sterilization.
There is no pain in the sterilization operation.
In return, the Government also gives you two
hundred rupees in cash as a reward.

Listening to the President I become happy
I proceed towards the health centre
And do according to the advice of the doctor.
Performing art forms have played important role in the field of communication. These are surely indigenous modes and have served the society as instruments of communication for ages. \(^{45}\) Writes Shyam Paramar: "Any communication network, unfamiliar to the masses, which does not function close to their culture predispositions and institutional values, will have little impact and significance. Studies have stressed that no mass media can exist in the cultural vacuum. After all, communication is fully realized when it passes through the attitudes and behavioural patterns of the people. It is shaped by cultural heritage and by common ties of existence of the people." \(^{46}\) Hence, it is said that mass communication of India depends largely on the traditional art forms. In the rapidly changing technological age there is every scope for greater need to draw attention to the traditional art form for communicating development messages and also to enrich the content of mass media. \(^{47}\) Further it may be mentioned that no communication strategy would be completed unless and until it is included in the traditional art forms.

The *ojāpāli* art form serves the function of communication media for knowledge and beliefs. The *oja* and the *pālis* in the midst of their performances give some information about the new rules enforced in connection with land, revenue system and social

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45. *Shyam Parmar, op.cit.*, p.7
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., p.121
legislation, political as well as economical problems to the masses. In the same way, the rural folk get knowledge regarding the improved methods of agriculture and so on. Besides the non-elite rural people are provided with moral, philosophical and historical knowledge by the ojāpāli. Moreover the ojāpāli imparts to them knowledge regarding wisdom, conscience and truthfulness.48

The ojāpāli narrates myths with provide the charisma, power and deeds of mythological heroes to the non-elite rural people. The myth provides them with the knowledge about culture and civilization values and beliefs, norms and behaviour etc. current in their social structure in remote past.49 The stories sung by ojāpāli from the Epics and the Purāṇas replete with super knowledge and provide the knowledge of the culture and civilization of the time of yore. In the same manner, proverbs used by the ojāpāli surely play an important role in serving the function of communication of knowledge.

Socialization:

"The process by means of which an individual is integrated into his society is called socialization."50 The ojāpāli art form sings and recites stories of ideal men and women to the rural people. The youth in particular get amusement and on the other hand unconsciously their mind absorbs the influential

50. M.J. Herkovits: Cultural Anthropology, p. 325
elements of tales, which through their fancy become the part and parcel of their personality structure. Songs describing the way to adjust in the society, are the best aid in socialising the people. Through the episodes of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as well as the Purana the ojapali tries to convey the feelings and sentiment of our ancestors, their ideals and philosophy and their different activities their achievements and their moral and discipline no doubt act as an endless process of socialisation.

Social cohesion:

Folklore's function in integrating society and maintaining social cohesion cannot be ignored. Performing art form like ojapali's contributions towards the enriching of social cohesion and social integration cannot be ruled out. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata as well as the Puranas have been serving as instruments of national cohesion. The ojapali is based on the epics and Puranas. Hence, in the true sense, the art form ojapali plays an important role in respect of social cohesion or unification or assimilation among the different ethnic-groups of Assam.

51. S.L. Srivastava, op.cit., p.278