CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters we have discussed at length matters related to the art form of ojapali. The ojapali is one of the most popular and stylistic and ritualistic art forms of Assam. It has close relation with the pan-Indian tradition of Kathakata. Secondly, it is based on the traditions of performing maréi arts of India. The ojapali music particularly the biyañgowa form and the sukuñāi-ojapali of Darrang and the sattriyā ojapali is nearer to the classical or maréi music of India. Similarly the dance movements of the ojapali are also nearer to the classical dance. Observes K. Vatsyayana: "The dances of the oja bear many resemblances to the classical dance of India, the accompanying music is also close to the classical rāgas."¹

The rāgas used by the ojapali particularly the biyañgowa variety and the sattriyā form have got similarities with the ragas of maréi-sangita of India can be best proved by suitable example. A.C. Hazarika a major writer and poet and an ex-president of the Asam Sahitya Sabha writes in the preface of

1. K. Vatsyayana: Traditions of Indian Folk Dance, p.120
N.C. Sarma's book entitled *Asamiya Loka Samskritir Abhasa*:

"The Assam music conference was held at Gauhati in 1953. In that conference late Dhaturam Sarma a reputed ojā of the biyāh-gowā-form sang a song in the Saranga-rāga. Sri Pattavardāhana an eminent scholar of Indian classical music, was the chief guest of the conference. Hearing the song of late Dhaturam Sarma ojā, Pattavardāhana passed this comment: 'This is, no doubt, only the exact form of the Saranga-rāga.'

So, it can be said that the ojāpāli music may claim its unique position in the Indian mārgī sāṅgīta. Secondly, the ojāpāli music may be regarded as an independent school of music like the different schools of Indian music and dance, such as (i) Bharata-Nātya, (ii) Kathākali, (iii) Kathak and (iv) Manipuri. But till now the ojāpāli music has not been able to earn all-India recognition as a distinctive school of classical music. "If by the term classical Indian dance we mean dances based on authoritative treatises like Bharata's Nātya-Sastra and Nandikesvara's Abhinava-darpana, there would be more than at least ten such different schools of dances still lying obscure in different parts of India. Some forms like Odissi"
of Orissa, Kuchipudi of Andhra Pradesh, Ojapali and Sattriya of Assam present themselves forward for recognition."

To know about the full and complete history of Indian music and dance the study of the Ojapali music and dance is inevitable. Observes V. Raghavan: 'Though there are these above-mentioned four forms of the classical art of India, their underlying unity should be clear to any student of the history of Indian dance. There is, therefore, a great need to day to correlate the study of all these forms. The rich tradition of the classical dance of India is not completely represented in any one of these forms; as some aspects have become attenuated in one school, but live in another, a correlated study of all the schools alone would help the complete reconstruction of this art. Recently the work of scholars from Assam like M. Neog have opened our eyes to valuable survivals there, which disclose also surprising affinities with forms and modes prevalent in the south.'

The far-reaching impact of the Ojapali art is easily discernible in the subsequent art forms, particularly the neo-Vaisnava arts. The great saint Sankaradeva in propagating his new faith utilized the Ojapali art form. Sankaradeva may rightly be called the father of the Assamese drama and abhinaya. But in the context of abhinaya, Sankaradeva was

4. M. Neog: Tradition and Style, p.28
5. V. Raghavan: Presidential Address to the Fine Arts-section of the Delhi(XIXth)Session.
heavily influenced by the ojāpāli.

Secondly, the ojāpāli music and dance was the forerunner of the neo-Vaisnava music and dance of Assam. From the points of form and content as well as style of the neo-Vaisnava music and dance, it can be assumed that these were heavily influenced by the ojāpāli music and dance.

The Khuliya-bhāuriya a very popular and living semi-dramatic performing art form prevalent in the modern district of Darrang and the eastern part of the old district of Kamrup. The form and content as well as style of the Khuliya-bhāuriya do not show similarity with that of the Ankiya-nāta of Saṅkara-deva. The Khuliya-bhāuriya seems to be a dramatic representation of the biyāh-gowa ojāpāli form.

The marriage songs current in the district of Darrang and the eastern part of the district of Kamrup seems to have been influenced by the tunes of the ojāpāli. The marriage songs prevalent in the locality mentioned above are known as pada. The term pada comes from the word pada used constantly in the ojāpāli performances. The old districts of Kamrup and Goalpara are very rich in folk songs which are called (i) Kamarpī loka-gītā and (ii) Goalparīya loka-gītā. Such type of devotional and sentimental folk songs are not found in the district of Darrang. The ojāpāli songs replace all other songs to a great

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6. cf. gītā or gīda in the middle and the western Kamrup and Goalpara, nāma in upper Assam.
extent. If there is any folk-song it is invariably based on the ojapali-songs.

The ojapali art form particularly the suknani ojapali form is not confined to the Hindus only but it is still very much popular among the Muslims. Even the songs of the suknani ojapali are sung today by the Muslim singers in some locality. A few years ago there were Muslim ojapalis. Not only in Assam but in Bengal also there were Muslim singers of the Manasa-songs. "In Eastern Bengal and Assam down to the first quarter of the present century there were professional Muslim singers who sang in honour of Manasa."

The far-reaching impact of the songs (the rāgas) of both the biyāh-gowa-ojapali and the suknani-ojapali may be realized in the context of the chiya-gīta. The chiya-gīta, according to N.C. Sarma is a kind of devotional song developed under the Islamic atmosphere, due to the impact of the rāga or dhēka of both the biyāh-gowa ojapali and the suknani-ojapali.

The ojapali, no doubt, is a traditional art form. But it is also correct that tradition involves both the process and

8. N.C. Sarma: Darrangi Saṁskṛti (Navadūta) 1st year, 10th Issue, June/85, ed. U. Sarma) p.27
the product, and it is also correct that tradition is not a blind adherence to the past. So, the *ojāvali* art form could not escape from the hands of innovation. "Originally its medium was surely Sanskrit. The Assamese language replaced it. The *tauryyataikayantra* or *mudrā* and the *māloī* songs entered into the art form. Many other songs such as the *juna* song, songs of Rādhā-kṛṣṇa, Kabirā-songs etc. could manage to get place in the *ojāvali*. Above all, many Islamic songs are also imported. Even in many places, obvious innovations have been creeping into the process of the art form in respect of dress and ornaments and *rāga-tāla* and contents and form.

Changes are also apparent in respect of places of demonstration ... Innovation, no doubt, is essential for a living tradition, but undue pressure of innovation may push it back to the mouth of extinction. So tradition and innovation may go side by side in the *ojāvali* context if the quantum of the innovation not exceeds the limit." 9 The *ojāvali* music is invariably a cultural phenomenon and a social fact. So, it would be logical if we cast our eyes on the sociological aspect of the art form. As a social and cultural phenomenon it has had considerable influence on man and society.