

“Portrait of Ojapali: A Tradition keeping Mythologies alive”

Chinmoyee Das

Post Graduation, Journalism & Mass Communication, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West-Bengal, India

ABSTRACT

The use of folklore or traditional media in conveying messages takes place at different media stages. The traditional media method, in its various structures, serves as alternatives to the traditional way of entertainment and the interaction of society. As a grassroots specialty, it has a place among the delegates. "Ojapali" (ওজাপালি) has been perhaps the most well-known type of folk tradition of Assam since the ancient period. Ojapali is a traditional media depicted in a semi-emotional hierarchy that is fully associated with the pre-Indian "Kathakata" (কটকথা) custom. It contacts the strict, social, and social sides of the individuals. The aim and the objective of the study are to understand the "Ojapali" and some more about their culture. The main focus of the examination is to grasp the "Ojapali" some more about them. The Methodology used in this study is an interview and observation for the collection of primary data. Assam or old "Kamrupa" (কামৰূপ) Kingdom of "Pragjyotishpur" (প্ৰাগজ্যোতিষপুৰ) has differently been depicted as a place that is known for dance and music and it is obvious from different sources.

(Keywords: Assam, Culture, Ojapali, Folk, Folklore, Traditional media)

INTRODUCTION

Assam is a northeastern state of India with incredible cultural heritage and beautiful landscapes. There is a lot of culture and much folk tradition alive for many years. The land northeast surrounded by Myanmar, Thailand, China, and Bhutan. Therefore, the culture of this region has a distinguishing form. The history of folk culture of this part of India has a long period. Ojapali (ওজাপালি) is a thousand years old folk tradition.

It is nearly thousands of old the history of Ojapali (ওজাপালি). Ojapali is a socio-religious type of folk dance drama music in Assam. From the very beginning when Assam is known as the ancient Kamrup Kingdom, the land is famous for dance music. In folk culture; people have to express their feelings and their thinking through musical body movement and theatricality of the situation. There are verbal and nonverbal types of communicative processes in a folk tradition like stories, poems, rhymes, drama, music, dance, etc. There are various types of folk tradition in Assam including Bihu (বিহু), Ali-Aai-Ligang (আলি.আই-লিগাং), Deo-Dhoni (দেওধনী), Bagurumba (বাগৰুম্বা), Jhumar (ঝুম্বা), Ojapali, Dhuliya (ঢুলীয়া), etc. Ojapali is a traditional dance-drama-music of Assam. It is basically based on classical Indian music. Ojapali helps to showcase and addressing areas of custom and social legacy of Assam. The stories of Ramayana, Mahabharata and the stories from the Padma Purana (পদ্ম পুৰাণ) especially about the Mansa Devi are mostly highlighted in the melodic song and drama of Ojapali.

AIM & OBJECTIVES

The aim and the objective of the study are to know more about the Ojapali (ওজাপালি) culture of Assam and to understand something new about their custom. The focus of the examination is to grasp the life of Ojapali and further understanding their way of tradition and traditional history.

METHODOLOGY

For conducting the inquiry, tools of analysis like participant observations and interviews were used for the collection of data. For primary data; observation and the interview have been conducted. In addition, interacting with several Ojapali groups collected applicable information about this. And, Secondary data had been collected from library search, and Books.

FINDINGS

Ojapali is known as advanced from the customs of “Kathakata” (কটকথা) and is held in the gathering of the people. It’s viewed as one of the established cultural activities of Assam under the patronization of the Darangi King Dharmanarayana. The collection of this Ojapali comprises Music, act, tunes, story, and performance, and so on a Member of the gathering comprised of Oja (ওজা), which leads the Ojapali and four or five Pali (পালি). Pali does the performance with a cadence and playing the cymbals. There is a large belief that Shankaradeva was inspired by Ojapali to make Bhaona or Ankiya Nat. Additionally, it likewise makes Shankaradeva's own Sattriya Ojapali. The most part of Darangi Ojapali or Suknanni Oja songs is composed by Sukabi Narayanadeva from Padma Purana. "The Padma Purana" portrays the historical backdrop of the snake goddess Devi Manasha. Today Ojapali has a rare profile in Darrang, Mangaldoi, Sipajhar, some different parts of the Tezpur and Udalguri region. Ojapali can be categorized into three, contingent upon the event and style of the performance:

- (1) Ramayani Ojapali (ৰামায়ণী ওজাপালি)
- (2) Sukananni Ojapali (সুকন্নানী ওজাপালি)
- (3) Maroi gowa Ojapali or Biyah gowa Ojapali. (মোৰৈ গোৱা ওজাপালি)

In view of the subjects and performing style of Ojapali’s music, this can be characterized in two heads.

1. Epic-based Ojapali
2. Non-epic-based Ojapali.

Epic-based Ojapali can be seeing into seven sub-types-

- 1) Biya-gowa Ojapali or Biyaha Ojapali or Sabha-gowa Ojapali or Vyasa Ojapali (বিয়াহৰ ওজাপালি)
- 2) Ramayana Ojapali. (ৰামায়ণী ওজাপালি)
- 3) Bhauria or Bhaura or Bhaira Ojapali (ভাওৰা ওজাপালি)
- 4) Durgavari Ojapali. (দুৰ্গাবৰী ওজাপালি)
- 5) Sattriya Ojapali. (সত্ৰীয়া ওজাপালি)
- 6) Pancali Ojapali. (পাঞ্চালী ওজাপালি)
- 7) Duluri Ojapali. (দুলুৰী ওজাপালি)

And the Non-epic based Ojapali’s are

1. Sukanni Ojapali or Rang-gowa Ojapali (সুকন্নানী ওজাপালি)
2. Bisahari Gaan (বিষহৰী গান)
3. Mare Pujar Gaan or Mare Gaan (মোৰে পূজাৰ গান)
4. Padma Puranar Gaan (পদ্মপুৰাণৰ গান)
5. Tukuria Ojapali (টুকুৰীয়া ওজাপালি)

A group of Oja-pali comprises of one Oja and four to six palis. The dresses and ensembles bear importance. The Oja wear a special kind of white turban. He puts on anklets and Gamkharu (‘গামখাৰু’ is a traditional Assamese hand ornament) in hands, accessory and rings on his fingers and put wood kohl on his brow. The Palis too put on simple cotton wear. They likewise wear a

turban of the white sheet over their heads.



(A group of Satriya Ojapali. In the photo the performer on the left-side is Oja and others are Pali. Satriya Ojapali is designed by Mahapurush Shankardeva. Photo source- nroer.gov.in)

Assamese culture and tradition were enhanced with lots of social-economic components. These prior days are delivered with the people's show custom. These people's dramatizations are Dhulia, Puppetry, Pochoti, Kushan Gaan, and so forth. It comprises Geet (song), Nritya (dance), and Abhinay (drama). Consequently, it satisfies the need of – Geet and Nritya. On the other hand, it involves narrating a story or storytelling for certain motions. Later, it is used as innovative in Ojapali. Art expression is mostly dependent on the themes of Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas. Ojapali as a social convention stays within people's minds. And it is kept alive orally over many years.

The Ojapali supports the customary music of India. It isn't perceived as an autonomous school of music till now, still, it is based on the Natya-Sastra (नाट्य शास्त्र). The modernization of urbanization is the most perilous foe of custom. Because of the attack of innovation, the custom is slowly enduring. The Ojapali is a powerful custom still it is influenced somewhat by modernization. Despite that, it is still a living and engaging art while many folk arts are now dead.

Ojapali is a very significant folk art from Assam. Ojapali is similar to the tradition of "Katakata" of Ancient India where a group of artists performs some mythological stories of Purana as a dance drama music form, in front of people. And Ojapali folk art form also one such art form. The Suknanni Ojapali circles believe that their craft was from the outset welcomed on earth by Arjuna in the job of Brihannala from ' Indra's paradise. The word "Oja" has come out of the Sanskrit word "Upadhyaya" (उपाध्याय). The term Oja may be characterized like -

- a. Oja an educator,
- b. A talented person and expert artist,
- c. The head man of a group of artists or reciter,
- d. Specialists talented in appeal, spell, witchcraft, and so forth.

The word "Pali" may come from Sanskrit words like "Palita" (पलीता) or then again "Pali" (पाली). Assamese word "Pali" conveys the accompanying implications "Palis" are of two kinds

(1) Dainapali. (Dakshin + Pali) supposed in light of the fact that they stay right-hand side of the Oja

(2) General or assisting Palis. The Ojapali sings the epic, fanciful stories in the section keeping in time ragas, talas, mudras. They take a dramatic discussion with the Dainapali and the pali relate the significance of the section to the crowd. The “Dainapali” also appears to add comedy to the audience.

The Bivahar Ojapali of Darrang says that Biyahar Ojapali was from heaven got by “Parijat” in the dream. When she was working with weaving at her home, she heard some music tunes and beats that came from paradise. She left away from her loom and gone to paradise and begun to move and sing in the song. It is said that she got all the fundamental dresses also, instruments in her fantasy. Later on, she showed the specialty of dance and melody to her followers. The belief goes that “Vyasa-Kalai” was the father of the Biyahar-Ojapali.

The Natya-Sastra legitimizes that the convention of Sangeet and Nritya just as all Vadya has been current in Pragjyotish since the first century. Also, the antiquated Hindu lords of Assam were supporters of Sangeet. References are found in the copper script about the affection of sangeet, Nritya, etc. Also, Kamrup king Kumar Bhaskar Barman was a great follower of classical music, thus he entertains the Chinese traveler Hiuen Siang with music and dance for one month.

Some of the Ojapali songs are taken from the part of the stories of the Puranas or Samaveda. They also recite some sloka and narrate the moral behind the sloka. The style of Samaveda’s slokas recitation and the epic recitation has numerous similitudes with the style of Ojapali, as such the Samaveda recitation and the epic recitation might be known as a proto-structure. There are various similarities with Ojapali to other performing folk in various places of India. This is

- “Daskathia” and “Palagana” of Orissa,
- “Pancali-gana” of West Bengal,
- “Pawada” of Maharastra,
- “Alha”, “Bharathari” and “Ahir” of Uttar Pradesh,
- “Bhand pathar” of Jammu and Kashmir, Panjab
- “Yaksagana” of Karnataka,
- “Kuttu” or ‘Chakyar Koothu” of Kerala,
- “Punaram” of Madhya Pradesh.

DISCUSSION

Ojapali is not only a cultural heritage. It also helps to the upliftment of the socio-religious beliefs. The culture is always a treasure of resourceful elements and the cultural-communication. Folk works always meant to be playing an effective role in Communication. It doesn't contain a particular time but also carries and transfers information from generation to generation for many years. It mainly works as face-to-face communication, which is very easy to teach social values, customs, and moral lessons. Also, a good point is, anyone can understand the Ojapali completely just because it used the local language. Also, it's understandable by the blind and deaf people through dance, song, and drama. Therefore, for the rural communities, it's still very effective. They not only entertain people but also give meaningful lessons about our mythology and ancient heritage.

Musical instruments such as drums, cymbals, flute, bells, etc. are used in Ojapali. The Oja and pali mostly use the Suddha or white dress. Performing Ojapali has assumed a significant part in the field of communication. These are doubtlessly native modes and have served society as instruments of communication for ages. Consequently, it is said that mass communication in India relies to a great extent upon conventional folk art and folk media. In a rapidly changing innovation era, each extension is needed to notice customary folklore to send reform messages and to pay attention to popular folklore to enhance the substance of widespread communication.

CONCLUSION

All folk arts provide an incredible communication tool for sharing various materials and information. Oja and Palis not only shared mythological stories among the people. They also give some data regarding the land, love, socio-political issues to the masses. Similarly, the rustic society gets information with respect to the improved strategies for horticulture, etc. Ojapali gives philosophical and authentic knowledge to society. The Ojapali describes fantasies by giving the appeal, force, and deeds of legendary saints to the individuals. The stories furnish them with information about culture and progress esteem and convictions, and so on. Also, it gives the idea of the way of life and development of the bygone age. In a similar way, precepts utilized by the Ojapali most likely assume a significant part in serving the capacity of communicating. Performing folk art like Ojapali is really important towards the improvement of social attachment and the mass connection.

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