



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## “Rhythmic Identity Of The Instrument Dhol: Its Uses In Bihu Naam & Dholia Oja Tradition Of Assam”

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**Abstract:** - Bihu is the pride of Assam as well as the soul of Assamese people. *Dhol* is the primary musical instrument in this Bihu. The mind and soul of Assamese people is thrilled by the booming sound of the *Dhol* and it has been playing significant role bearing its unique individual characteristics in the field of cultural harmony of various castes and tribes of Assam. It is akin to the Assamese people. It is a folk belief of the people of Assam that the promising youth full of creation should perform dances in the crop fields in order to pray for the increase of fertility of the soil of Mother Assam (*Aai Axomi*). The state Assam is considered as the mother by all the people in the state. The musical instruments play a significant role in this prayer and the dance performance. The identity of *Dhol* is being found distinctly in the ethnic groups of Assam, a field of harmony filled with different ethnicities and tribes. Some types of *Dhol* are – a) *Jay Dhol*, b) *Dhepa Dhol*, c) *Bor Dhol*, d) *Pati Dhol* etc. Moreover, the *Dhols* that have been prevailing among various tribes are being named with distinct names. (Duarah, 2009, pp. 72-74) In this research work it is being discussed about the origin and evolution of the folk Percussion instrument namely *Dhol*, its uses in the folk song *Bihu Naam* and the folk performing art form of Assam, i.e. *Dholia Oja*. This research paper is completed through descriptive and analytical methods with the help of primary and secondary sources and APA referencing style is followed.

The main objectives of this research work are: -

- To study the origin of the instrument *Dhol*
- To study the rhythmic pattern of the instrument *Dhol* which are used in *Bihu Naam*.
- To study the uses of the instrument *Dhol* in *Dholia Oja* tradition of Assam and its various Components.

**Index Terms:** - Percussion, Dhol, Bihu Naam, Instrument, Bihu.

### Literature review: -

- Duarah, D. (2009). ‘ASOMAR BADIYAJANTRA’. is presenting discussions about various musical instruments of Assam along with discussions on the origin of Oja Dhol and Bihu Dhol as well as on the malitas performed in the art form ‘Dholia Oja’.
- Tamuli, S. (2009). ‘DHULAT SAPOR MARI’ is discussing about the origin of *Dhol*, various parts of *Dhol*, the playing techniques of *bolas* of *Dhol* and playing techniques of some Khora Seo.
- Sarma, D. N. (2013). ‘BHARATAR UTTAR-PURBANCHAR PARIBESHYA KALA’. is discussing about introduction of musical instruments and put forwarding basic ideas about Dholia Oja.
- Oja, J. (1998). ‘ASAMAR DHOL BADIYA’. is discussing about the origin of *Dhol*, building or making process of *Dhol*, the characteristics of Oja *Dhol*, various repertoires performed in Dholia Oja such as malitas, lag, hat, etc.

5. Bora, P.(2022). '*MAHITA*'. is discussing about the playing technique of Dhol. This book can be considered as a guidebook for the new learner. In this book the author trying to mention the origin of the instrument dhol, various playing technique with Bihu Naam, various Parts of the instrument etc.

### 1.0 Introduction: -

According to Natyashastra the musical instruments are generally classified into four categories viz: *Tata Vadya*, *Avanaddha Vadya*, *Ghana Vadya* and *Sushira Vadya*. (Duarah, 2009, p. 30).

*Tata Vadya* means instruments with strings, *Avanaddha Vadya* means the instruments that are being made attaching a leather of a dead animal on top of a hollow frame made of wood, bell metal or other metals and being played by striking the leather with hand or sticks made of bamboo. *Ghana Vadya* means instruments that are being made of metals and *Sushira Vadya* means the instruments that are being played with the help of wind.

**Dhol** is a Folk Percussion Instrument (*Avanaddha Vadya*) of Assam. It is significantly near and dear to the Assamese rural masses and quite an antique musical instrument. The *Dhol* instrument that has been presently prevailing across Assam especially in the upper region of Assam is considered to be the *Oja Dhol* by the Ojas. The Bihuas named this as *Bihu Dhol*.

“Dholeti Babore      Tiniti Anguli  
Majorti Anguli Lore /  
Jeteke Loribo      Purukhor Anguli  
Teteke Jeuti Sore ||” (Hossain, 2009, p. 80)

### 2.0 The Instrument Dhol and its use in *Dhulia Oja* Tradition: -

There have been some folk beliefs that have been prevailing orally in the rural masses of Assam about the types of musical instruments. The *Malitas* (ballad) about the birth of all of the musical instruments are being performed by the Ojas with the help of traditional *Badya Buloni* in the performance of *Dhulia Oja* prevailing traditionally in Assam. From the aspect of the size, the Bihu Dhol is considered as *Pati Dhol*.

#### The shape and parts of Dhol: -

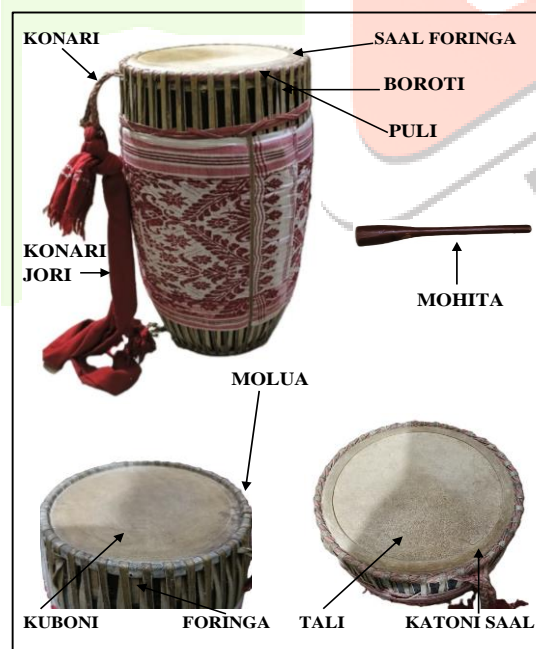


image 1 parts of the instrument dhol

The instrument *Dhol* is being called as *Deva Vadya* by the Assamese people. *Deva Vadya* means the instrument of the deities. It is considered by some people that the instruments that are being accompanied with the music which are being performed as a mean to pray and please the deities are *Deva Vadya*. According to some other, music provides relief to people as well as it creates an accessible way for the union of Aatma and Paramaatma. The music is incomplete without the accompaniment of the instruments. Therefore, the instruments are *Deva Vadya* which evoke the sensory perception in people and provide mental relief as well as inspire people to live. It is divinely bestowed.

Though the exact information about the origin and development of *Dhol*, the lifeline of Assam has not been found, yet it can be predicted from the malitas performed in the folk arts of Assam such as *Dhulia Oja* that *Dhol* has been prevailing in Assam since ancient times although the malitas created with the help of some imaginary stories could not be considered to be true.

“*Adi Xatya Juge Badya Voila Utapana*  
*Koilashara Mahadevar Dholara Janama*  
*Golokara Gutti Krishne Dile Brahmar Hatata*  
*Brahmai Arpila Gutti Rikhi Naradaka*  
*Xei Sama Gutti Niya Prithibit Posai*  
*Shekha Nikha Dui Pati Sama Futiya Ulai*  
*Anantara Athuta Phonae Atha Shipa*  
*Nababidha Bhaktiye Dal Dhore Samo Jupa*  
*Parikhode Pata Parvoti Bakoli Sal*  
*Bhaktir Purna Bajesam Janu Xarbakal*  
*Mohadhorme Axi Bhoila Samara Maje Xar*  
*Biswakormai Kati Ani Kandhot Lole Var*  
*Shukamal Barhoie Dhol Korile Gathan*  
*Anantar Lal Beej Sariti Barana*  
*La Hengul Neel Aru Barna Harital*  
*Ei Sari Dholata Khate Xarbakal*” (Bordoloi D. N., 2005, p. 37)

The Dhulia Ojas perform the malitas describing the origin of *Dhol* as well as describing about the different Dhulias that performed *Dhol* on different places in different times in the performance of Oja. As the malitas mentioned above have been prevailed orally among the Ojas, there have been some distinctions that could be seen in case of the imaginary stories. The form of the stories are distinct from place to place, yet there is no distinction in the performance of the stories. The division of ages of *Dhol*-

“*Xatya Juge Patisile Hara Gouri Bibah*  
*Tetiya Bojai Dhol Anadi Dhulia*  
*Treta Juge Patisile Sriram Chandrar Bibah*  
*Tetiya Bojai Dhol Binandi Dhulia*  
*Dwaparata Patisile Rukminira Bibah*  
*Tetiya Bojai Dhol Nandi Dhulia*  
*Kalita Xudhan Dholiar Honte Shikhya Pai*  
*Akhayanka Dhulia Voila Lekha Jukha Nai*”  
 (Collection from Guru Ranjit Oja)

From the above malita, it can be assumed that a primary stage for the performance of Dhulia Oja is a wedding house. In the past time, *Dhol* was being performed in the vibrant mood of the wedding ceremony, in the way or the corridor for the travel of Ahom Kings and the royal officers and in various auspicious ceremonies. In the present time, the performance of *Oja Dhol* in a wedding house is seen to be decreasing. It is a rule to perform the *Solona* before the beginning of the playing of *Dhol* or *Dhulia Hat* in a wedding house or other places. This performance of *Solona Sapar* or *Solona Bajana* is somewhat similar to the *Purvaranga* performed before the actual performance of *Bhaona* i.e. *Bor Dhemali* or *Horu Dhemali* of Gayan bayan. (Duarah, 2009, p. 78).

Another primary Bajana that is being performed by the Ojas in a wedding house is ‘Pani tula Seu and Dula Dhora Seo’. Moreover, Ragar of *Dhol*, Susoni, Sapar, Guru Bandana, Khorsona, Malita, Hat, Lag, Buloni, Ghat etc. are being performed.

The author Joy Oja, in his book “ASAMAR DHOL BADYA” discusses the origin and method of manufacture of the instrument dhol as well as the above mentioned Bajana. i.e. *Solona Bajana*, *Malita*, *Panitula Sao*, *Hat* etc.

The starting *Malita* of Dholia Oja: -

“Jaya Namu Narayana Adi Niranjana,  
Ananta Shjyata Pravu Karila Shayana  
Shayana Koriya Pase Jagiya Bohiya,  
Niswakha Karante Sari Beda Baja Voila”  
(Collection from *Guru Sandeswar Oja*)

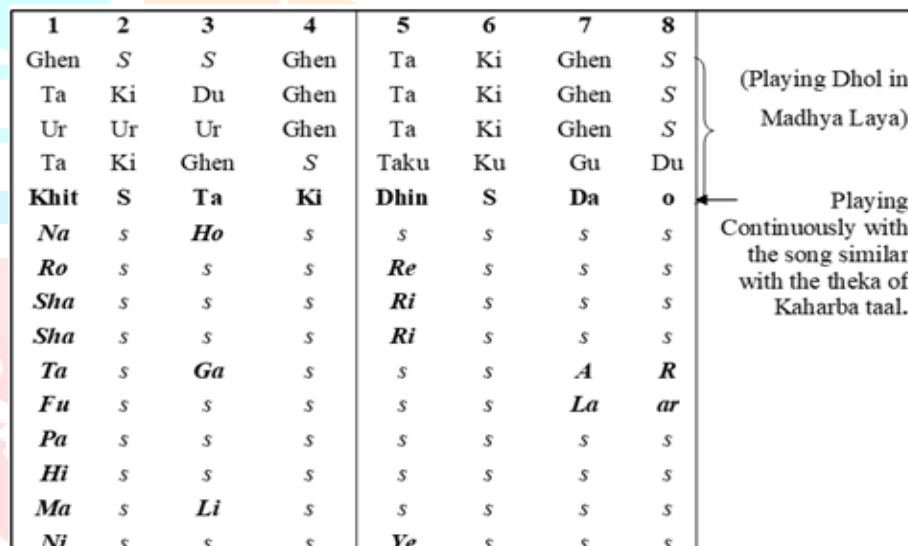
As soon as the singing of the *Malita* is completed, *Guru Ghat* is being played by singing: -

“Anande Nande Poroma Nande  
Chitte Govinde Jay Jay Ram”  
(Collection from *Guru Ranjit Oja*)

One of the attractive features of Dholia Oja tradition is that any word that is spoken or any song that is being sung by the Oja is being played as it is on *Dhol*.

A beautiful *Mitha lag* of Dholia Hat: -

“Nahorore Shari Shari  
Tagar Fular Pahi  
Maliniye Mala Gathe  
Fulanite Bohi”  
(Collection from *Guru Ranjit Oja*)



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Ghen	S	S	Ghen	Ta	Ki	Ghen	S	(Playing Dhol in Madhya Laya)
Ta	Ki	Du	Ghen	Ta	Ki	Ghen	S	
Ur	Ur	Ur	Ghen	Ta	Ki	Ghen	S	
Ta	Ki	Ghen	S	Taku	Ku	Gu	Du	
<b>Khit</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>Ta</b>	<b>Ki</b>	<b>Dhin</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>Da</b>	<b>o</b>	Playing Continuously with the song similar with the theka of Kaharba taal.
<i>Na</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>Ho</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Ro</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>Re</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Sha</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>Ri</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Sha</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>Ri</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Ta</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>Ga</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>R</i>	
<i>Fu</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>La</i>	<i>ar</i>	
<i>Pa</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Hi</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Ma</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Ni</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>Ye</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Ma</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>La</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Ga</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>The</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Fu</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>La</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Ni</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>Te</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Bo</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>Hi</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	

Figure 1 Notation of the above song

The Dholia Oja tradition, known as a folk performing arts of Assam could gain public appreciation as well as could conquer the world too now a days. The number of primary Hats in Dholia Oja is twenty-four. These twenty-four hats are considered by the Ojas as *Cho Onra Vadya*. (6x4= 24) (*Onra* Means An aggregate of four) (*Cho* means Six)

The twenty-four hats used in Oja *Dhol* are as follows: *Ghin khita*, *Likhir khita*, *Tikhir khita*, *Dholia bota*, *Kopah dhuna*, *Teltupi*, *Telengona*, *Luhuribota*, *Dambaru*, *Kurha pakhi*, *Tokari*, *Dhubai lati*, *Negera*, *Tongloti*, *Maahdola*, *Ghnehutona*, *Dhulokor jonmo*, *Tabala hat*, *Ouw bagara*, *Raaj buloni*, *Charai buloni*, *Matsya buloni*, *Meghe goja* and *Pitol khunda* etc. Before playing the Hat, the performance is initiated by playing palas of *Manoni Hat*.

An example the Palas of *Manoni Hat*: -

“Ghin Ghoma Ghoma, Khit Ghoma Ghoma, Ghegheri Ghoma”  
 “Ethuki Tamul Choidhya Gusi Pan  
 Raijar Majot Dhoru Jau Maan”  
 (Collection from *Guru Sandeswar Oja*)

The performance is initiated with this. Manoni Hat is also considered as a primary hat by some Ojas from a few places. There are various numbers of other *Bulonis* that have been prevailing among the Ojas apart from these twenty-four bulonis.

The other Hat or bulonis are performed by the Ojas with an intension to make the performance interesting and attractive by creating them on their own on the basis of social, political or other aspects with a comical touch.

A palas of *Telatupi Hat*: -

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Ghen	Gheni	Luku	Gheni	Luku	Gheni	Luku	Gudu	Gheni	Luku	Ghen	ss
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
		Ghen	Dao	Ghen	ss	Ghen	Das	Ghen	ss		
		Ghen	Dao	Gheni	Likhi	Tela	Tupi	Da	O		
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
			Di	Da	O	Tela	Tupi	Da	O		

figure 3 palas of telatupi hat

*Khorsona*: -

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gheni	Likhi	Taku	Gudu	Gheni	Likhi	Taku	Gudu
Ghen	Gur Gur	Ghen	Gur Gur	Ghen	Taghen	Niti	Khiti
Taki	Dughen	Niti	Khiti	Thak	Righen	Taki	Ghen
Taki	Dughen	Taki	Ghen	Taki	Ghen	Taku	Gudu
Gheni	Likhi	Dao	Dao	Khiti	Likhi	Dao	Dao
Dugrur	Rikhi	Dao	Dao	Khiti	Likhi	Dao	Dao
Dugrur	Rikhi	Rikhi	Dao	Dugrur	Rikhi	Dao	Dao
Dugrur	Rikhi	Rikhi	Dao	Dugrur	Rikhi	Dao	ss
Takhi	titi	Ghikhi	Titi	Khiti	Taghen	Niti	Khiti
Ghen	Ghena	Khiti	Ghen	Dighen	Dao	Gheni	Likhi
Dao	ss	Ghen	Dao	Ghena	Ghen	ss	Taghen

figure 2 khorsona



### 3.0 The Instrument *Dhol* and its use in Bihu Naam: -

Bihu Nam is an inseparable part of the Assamese Socio-cultural life and is admired as one of the most invaluable resources of the region's folklore and Culture. These songs are intrinsically associated with the Bihu festival, which is centered on the fertility beliefs of the agricultural society of Assam. It is a means of harmonizing Assamese society and culture. (Hossain, 2009, p. 1)

Bihu Naam is associated with the beauty of nature, the journey of human life, thoughts, consciousness, happiness and sorrow, joy, love, hope and trust. They often highlight the romantic expressions of youth, while at the same time embodying the collective imagination and aesthetic sensibilities of the community.

Although some scholars mentioned Bihu Naam as Bihu Geet, commonly they are known as Bihu Naam. The term 'Naam' represents the song'.

The term 'Naam' is a common word that has been used orally from generation to generation among the rural illiterate people of Assam since ancient times. The word 'illiterate people' used in the above sentence does not refer to a lack of creativity or refinement in the people. Rather, it refers to individuals who, despite limited access to formal education are humorous, have aesthetic sensitivity, have a strong memory, and are rich in rhyming verbal language and immense creative potentiality.

Various repertoires of Bihu Naam as: -

- a) Husori
- b) Jujona
- c) Jaat Naam
- d) Jura Naam
- e) Fokora
- f) Thela Naam
- g) Jungal Naam, etc.

The primary Percussion instrument of the Bihu Naam and Bihu Dance is Dhol. Other Instruments which are associated with the Bihu Festival are Pepa (Sushir Vadya), Gagana (Sushir Vadya), Shutuli (Sushir Vadya), Toka (Ghana Vadya), Taal (Ghana Vadya) and **Been** (Tata Vadya).

The author Jaykanta Gandhiya in his book "Bihu Bidhi aru Byadhi" discusses various theoretical and practical aspects of Bihu Naam in detail.

The Rhythmic identity of Bihu Naam is Very unique. For the convenience of discussion, the different rhythms of Bihu Naam and the different mathematical beauties of those rhythms are discussed below: -

#### 1. Kaharba Taal: -

(Bordoloi P. , 2014)

(Matra: 8, Bibhag: 2)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Dha</b>	<b>Ge</b>	<b>Na</b>	<b>Ti</b>	<b>Na</b>	<b>Ka</b>	<b>Dhi</b>	<b>Na</b>
<i>X</i>				<i>O</i>			

figure 4 theka of kaharba taal

**BiHu Dhol: -****No. 1**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ghre	Ghre	Ni	Thak	-	Ti	Tha	Ak
X				O			
Ta	Khi	Ti	Thak	-	Ti	Tha	Ak
X				O			

figure 5 some bols playing in dhol of kaharba chanda

**No. 2**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Tal	Pisi	Miri	Dao	Dhil	Pisa	Miri	Dao
X				0			

figure 6 some bols playing in dhol of kaharba chanda (druta laya)

**2. Khemta Taal: -***(Matra: 12, Bibhag: 4)*

1	2	3	4	5	6
Dha	Te	Te	Na	Te	Te
X			2		
7	8	9	10	11	12
Ta	Te	Te	Na	Dhi	Na
O			3		

figure 7 theka of khemta taal

**BiHu Dhol: -**

BiHu performers demonstrate the rhythm of Khemta in three distinct styles through the playing of the instrument Taal and hand clapping. These styles are illustrated with the help of three models. Among them, the use of the taal instrument, when played along with the Dhol, closely resembles the pattern shown in Model No. 3.

**No. 1**

Tik 1	Tik -	Dhin -	Dhin 2	Da -	- Au -	Model 1
Tik 3	Tik -	Dhin -	Dhin 4	Da -	- Au -	
Tik 1	Tik 2	Dhin 3	Dhin 4	Da 5	- Au 6	Model 2
Tik 1	Tik 2	Dhin 3	Dhin 4	Da 5	- Au 6	
Tik 1	Tik 1	Dhin 2	Dhin 1	Da 1	- Au 2	Model 3
Tik 1	Tik 1	Dhin 2	Dhin 1	Da 1	- Au 2	

figure 8 some bols playing in dhol of kahemta chanda

**No. 2**

1 Khiti	2 Ghe	3 Na	4 Khiti	5 Ghe	6 Na
7 Khiti	8 Ghe	9 Na	10 Ghen	11 Ta	12 Ak

figure 9 some bols playing in dhol of kahemta chanda madhya laya

**No.3**

1 Ghen	2 Ghe	3 Na	4 Khit	5 Ta	6 Ak
7 Khiti	8 Ghe	9 Na	10 Khit	11 Ta	12 Ak
1 Khit	2 Ta	3 Ku	4 Ghen	5 Ghe	6 Na
7 Ghen	8 s	9 s	10 s	11 s	12 s

figure 10 some bols playing in dhol of kahemta chanda (bhangoni)

**3. Bijoy or Bikham Taal:** - (Total Matra: -10, Bibhag: -4, The total Matras of 1<sup>st</sup> Bibhag is three, two Matras in 2<sup>nd</sup> Bibhag, three Matras in 3<sup>rd</sup> Bibhag and two Matras in 4<sup>th</sup> Bibhag.)

This tala has been prevailing through oral transmission in Assamese music. Although detailed references to it are not widely available in classical musical texts, it is found in the book *Taal Manikut* authored by Mr. Paban Bordoloi. According to him, the tala is commonly practiced in the folk and traditional music system of North-East India, with its use being particularly significant in the Assamese folk and traditional music System. (Bordoloi P. , 2014)

Some practitioners of Indian music identify this tala as Bikham Taal, as its matras are based on the *Bikham Matrik taal*. A large number of Assamese folk and traditional songs, such as Bargeet, Zikir-Jari, Kamrupi Lokageet, and Bihu Naam are often performed using this tala with their own characteristics.



The manner in which Bikham Taal is executed on Bihu Dhol in Bihu Naam is presented below: -

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Dha	Dhi	-	Na	-	Dha	Ti	-	Na	-
X					O				

figure 11 theka of bikham taal

**Bihu Dhol: -**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ghen	Ghen	-	Ghe	Na	Ghen	Khit	-	Tak	-
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Ghen	Ghen	-	Ghe	Na	Ghen	-	-	-	-

figure 12 some bols playing in dhol of bikham chanda

#### 4.0 Conclusion: -

With the booming sound of the *Dhol*, the nature changes its colour, the trees wear new attire. The sound of *Dhol* played by a young boy along with the arrival of spring excites a blooming young girl in the village. In simple word, Bihu will exist till the Assamese remains and the existence of the Assamese community will stay intact if the Bihu exists.

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