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PRATIMA BARUA'S RECORDED BHAWAIYA SONG: A CATEGORIZATION OF FOLK LEGACY

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ABSTRACT

Pratima Barua Pandey is an unforgettable name in the world of Bhawaiya music. Although the legendary Pratima Barua grew up in a royal family, her mind was deeply attracted to the songs sung in the daily lives of rural people. Along with his studies, her dedicated musical practice, which included adopting the c heard in the voices of the local people, has given him the best position in the world today. The voices of some of the musical heroes who emerged from the common people of undivided North Bengal or the state of Kamtapur, such as Mahut, Gariyal, and Moishal, and their lifestyle, good relationships, socializing, and their ordinary life influenced the artist's mind. She recorded hundreds of Bhawaiya songs are still sung by people today. He became famous for singing in the Goalpara region, which is why many call her songs Goalparaiya songs. Even today, many young artists are firmly moving forward in their profession by recording her songs. Even today, several artists support their families by singing her recorded songs, which seems to have preserved the economic balance of the society. Her simple rhythmic songs, gentle voice, melodious melodies, and clear pronunciation have touched the hearts of people through their ears. Interpreting her songs can be briefly divided into some stages, which will emerge as a special topic in this article. In the future, this writing may become a document for the younger generation and may become a very necessary writing in the field of research.

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INTRODUCTION

Pratima Barua Pandey: Pratima Barua Pandey (1934-2002), one of the greatest folk artists that Assam has ever produced, is an interesting phenomenon. She not only helped the revival and consolidation of a folk form facing impending oblivion, but also became the subject of a vibrant contemporary folklore of the times. Her life reflects the various phases of the evolving Assamese identity, and how the folk acted as a syncretic energy in the understanding of the Assamese. Her songs, popularly known as the Goalparia Loka geets, are part of a cultural community, largely the Rajbanshis, who have been historically dispersed across a vast territory, including Assam, North Bengal, Bihar, southern Nepal, and even Bangladesh. When Pratima Barua picked up the songs, they were seemingly in their last phase of life in public memory, for the history of the land took a sharp turn, forcing the communities living in the periphery to abandon their cultural moorings and acquire new identities to conform to the altered geo-political legacy of the colonial times (PRODHANI, 2008).she was honoured with the Padma Shri in 1987, one of India's highest civilian awards, for her dedication to Indian folk music. Prior to that, in 1985, she received the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Award from India's National Academy for Music, Dance, and Drama, recognising her outstanding achievements in the field of folk music. Her life and work were also immortalised through the acclaimed documentary film "Bhal Pabo Najanilu", which won

the Golden Lotus (Swarna Kamal) for Best Non-Feature Film at the National Film Awards in 1989. In addition to national honours, she was also felicitated by various regional cultural bodies, including receiving the Assam Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for her lifelong dedication to Assam's traditional music forms. She received a prestigious D. Lit from North Bengal University in the year of 2000. In the undivided Goalpara district, folk songs and folk musical dramas were commonly referred to as "Deshi Gaan" (Sharma, 2004). In the 19th century, many traditions of Deshi, Bhawaiya, or Goalpariya songs began to fade away. However, with the rise of Pratima Barua, the legacy of Deshi Gaan became deeply and organically revived. The language, setting, melody, rhythm, and the natural beauty surrounding these songs captivated Pratima, who had a gifted voice and a deep connection with her cultural roots. It was largely due to Pratima Barua's talent and dedication that Goalpariya folk songs gained widespread recognition through platforms like gramophone records, radio, and Doordarshan (national television). She performed these songs in their authentic and unaltered form, always accompanied by traditional local musical instruments, thereby preserving the essence of the folk tradition. Pratima was a staunch opponent of the distortion of traditional lyrics and melodies; that's why Pratima Pandey is a remarkable figure in the music industry (Pathak, 2004).

Recorded Songs: Dr. Bhupen Hazarika took the initiative to broadcast the songs of Pratima Barua in 1961 when they were members in the Programme Advisory Committee of All India Radio,

Guwahati. Purushottam Das, who later became an eminent cultural figure of Assam, decided to record her songs in the studios of All India Radio, Guwahati. For the people of Goalpara, it was strange to hear the voice of Pratima Barua on air singing the songs traditionally sung by ordinary farmers, maishals and mahouts (Baruah, n.d.). The list of several bhawaiya/goalparia songs that has found are below –

Afula kadamer tale 2. Amar gosai bine 3. Aji fande poriya 4. Are hater chena pather chena 5. Are o manuser deha 6. Are geile ki asiben 7. Aji aulailen mor 8. Aji champa nodir bagale 9. Aji koto asiben 10. Dhiko dhiko dhiko 11. Aji pran kande moisal 12. Aji nodi na jaiyo 13. Aji darao kala 14. Kadam talay bajay bashi 15. Aji poroshi aponar 16. Ai mor payeba ghugura 17. Ai mui bujinu 18. Are o mor bhaber deora 19. Are shuniya maynar bani 20. Ar bacha piya mor 21. Aji tui bondhu asibu 22. Are o mor kancha sona 23. Ujan khailek myagh meghali 24. Ekbar asiya sonar chan 25. Ekbar hari balo mon 26. Ore kala ghore roite 27. O jibon re 28. Oki kala re re kemon koriya 29. Kalare poth chhaira de 30. O pran kukila re 31. Ore diner shobha 32. Oki abo he 33. Oki bogila re, o bilai sarat koriya 34. O mor bhaber deora 35. O mor bondhudhon 36. Ore pranath aiso 37. Opare kamranga gach 38. Ore bheloya kandis kyane 39. Oki gariyal bhai 40. O mor sadhu re 41. Okalare kala chariya na 42. Tomra geile ki asiben 43. Koto pashan 44. Kalare chandan kather 45. Kolosir pani majiyat 46. Ki o mor moishal 47. Kala aar na bajan 48. Ki o bondhu kajol 49. Kiser mor radhon 50. Kiser mor ator 51. Ki bondhur barite 52. Kyane he radhe tor 53. Gongadhorer batay batay 54. Godadhorer pare pare re 55. Gosai bhab darabe 56. Golapir sitar sendur 57. Goyalini goyalini 58. Ghur ghur urani koitor 59. Chilmarir chikon chira 60. Choto elachi boro re 61. Jhiko jhiko kori re 62. Aji gao tolo gao tolo 63. Torsa nodir pare pare 64. Baromase tero ful fote 65. Dine dine khosiyaa poribe 66. Dukh sukh kopalero 67. Dudho mitha doiyoo 68. Dehotir majhi sollojon 69. Dhoulai more mai 70. Nodir parer kurua 71. Nodit fote nodiya hola 72. Nak dyangrar byata ta 73. Nidhua pathare bari 74. Pubali batase ore 75. Prem jane na rosik kala 76. Boro boro mach re bheloya 77. Borai barir 78. Bolodiyar asibar karone 79. Baij aichen dhebet dhebet 80. Boil mache kheil kore 81. Bapoi chengera re 82. Boitha maro boitha maro 83. Brikkho shimila re 84. Bhora dupur bela 85. Bheloyar mukhe dekhong 86. Bhal koria bajan re 87. Moner ayna khuliya dekhile 88. Mori he mori he 89. Mon mor kande re 90. Mor bhaujiye koy 91. Kiser mor randon 92. Rosiyay bosaiche fan 93. Radhar aoaser majhe 94. Lau khaoyar pare 95. Lal tiya tiya re 96. Sanjher bela sona bou 97. Sadher bhomra 98. Khirolo nodir pare pare 99. Hostir koinya 100. Sonar boron pakhi etc.

Categorization of Songs:

Pratima Barua Pande's song can be categorised into five parajayas –

Dehatatwa: Dehatatwa (also spelled Dehatattva, Bengali: দেহতত্ত্ব) is a philosophical and spiritual concept deeply rooted in the traditions. The term comes from two Sanskrit-derived words: "Deha" (দেহ) meaning "body" and "Tattwa" (তত্ত্ব) meaning "essence" or "philosophical principle". Dehatatwa refers to the belief that the human body is the primary site of spiritual realization. It emphasizes that the divine is not separate or distant but resides within the human body. Therefore, by understanding and experiencing the body deeply—through song, meditation, breathing, and inner awareness—one can attain union with the divine. Example of one song which is recorded by Pratima Barua Pande which comes under the Dehatatwa parjay is –

Dine dine khosiyaa poribe rongilaa daalaaner maati
goshaiji kon range ||
bandichen ghor michhaa michhaai dwando baaje
goshaiji kon range ||
haarero gharkhaani chaamero chhaauni bonde bonde taar joraa
aar taari tole moyuraa moyuri shunne oraay taaraa
goshaiji kon range ||
baalyanaa kaal gelo haasite khelite joibon kaal gelo range
aar briddho naa kaal gelo bhaabite chintite guru bhajibo kon kale
gosaaiji kon range ||

Everything in this world eventually comes to an end. Just like a newly constructed building appears vibrant and colorful in its early days, but over time it begins to fade, lose its charm, and ultimately crumbles—so too is the journey of human life. Life has a beginning and an inevitable end, and it is generally divided into three stages:

Childhood – This is the stage of innocence. A child spends most of their time playing, laughing, and living freely, untouched by material concerns or worldly responsibilities.

Youth – Often considered the most vibrant and dynamic phase of life, youth is full of energy, passion, and exploration. It is a time of growth, dreams, and self-discovery.

Old Age – This is the final phase, often referred to as the sunset stage of life. It is marked by retirement, reflection, and a shift toward inner peace, spiritual thought, and a slower pace of living.

Thus, human life, much like everything else in this world, follows a natural cycle—from beginning to end.

Piriti or Love: The song that narrates the love; those songs belong to the piriti parjay. There are many bhawaiya songs which narrates the love for moishal, mahut etc. One example of Pratima Barua Pande's love song is –

Aare geile ki asiben, mor maahut bondhu re
hostir noraan hostir charaan, hostir golaay dori
o re sotyo koriyaa konre maahut konbaa
o dyaashe baari re
hostire noraan hostire choraan, hostir paaye beri
o re sotyo koriyaa koilaam kothaa gouripure baari re
khaato khuto maahut re tor gaale chaapo daari
o re sotyo koriyaa konre maahut ghore koyjon naari re
hostire noraan hostire choraan, champaa nodir paare
o re sotyo koriyaa koilaam tomaak biyaa naai hoy morere ||

The love of a woman for a mahut (keeper and driver of an elephant). The woman was aware that the mahouts never stayed in one place for long and would soon move on to another village. That's why, at the very beginning of the song, she asks him, "If you leave, will you come back?" She expresses her feelings, saying that although he has been in the village for quite some time, she still doesn't know much about him. Curious, she asks where he lives. The mahout replies that his home is in Gauripur, located in the Cooch Behar district. The woman then says she knows he takes the elephants to graze along the banks of the Champa River near the Chikna hills, tying chains to their legs. She compliments him, saying he is strong, handsome, and bearded, but also presses him for the truth—how many women is he involved with? In other words, she wants to know whether he is married. The mahout assures her that he is not married and insists that he is telling the truth.

Krishnakendrik or Lord Krishna: The parjays based upon the Lord Krishna. In this region, the lady dreamed and compared their hero to lord Krishna. In the people of North Bengal, Lower Assam especially among the indigenous communities, there is a deep-rooted belief of seeing "Shyam" — that is, Krishna — in every beloved figure. Women, in particular, often visualize their beloved in the divine form of Krishna, whether directly or symbolically. There is an example of Krishnakendrik song –

Mori he mori he mori he Shaam
Shoyone shopone tomar naam.
Borair barir chhaanchi re paan
Paisa diya Shaam kiniya aan,
Ore ano re guya-paan kator-e khai
Hasi mone Shaam choliya jai.

Aguner chhole mui bayra jang
Tabuo Shaam tor dekha na paang.
Ore ekdin dekhichong shopone
Mori he Shaam shei badoname.

Baap mao mor durachaar
 Ar becheya khaichhe mok durantar
 Sey-o ba deshe sokole por
 Diboshe dekhang mui ondhokar.

In this song women dream of Krishna at night, and in their waking moments, they look for ways to catch a glimpse of him — even under the pretext of fetching fire from outside, just to see him once. Though all of this happens in dreams, the subconscious mind becomes so entangled with the thought of “Shyam” that it ends up calling out his name — “Shyam, Shyam” — in sleep. This often leads to embarrassment and shame, as if their secret desire has been exposed. Before marriage, the parents assure the girl that her in-laws will be her own people. But for a young, newly married woman, the reality feels quite different. In this new household, she cannot find her childhood companion or her beloved playmate — everyone here is a stranger. That’s why, even in daylight, she feels surrounded by darkness.

Manashikkha: in the context of songs, typically refers to compositions connected to mental or spiritual practices, especially within the framework of Hinduism. It can also be used as a name or appear as part of a song title.

Ekbaar horibolo man rasona
 Manob deher gourab koirona

Manob deho matirore bhando
 Bhangile hobe khondore khondo
 Bhangile dehaa jora nibena
 Ekbar horibolo man barebar
 Bela dubile hobere andhokar

Bela dubile hobere rati
 Songe nai mor songer sathi
 Ei bhabo nodi kemone hobo paar
 Ekbar horibolo man barebar
 Bela dubile hobere andhokar

Taka poisha bhita bari
 Jibon gele shob robere pori
 Songer sathi keu tor hobena
 Ekbaar horibolo mon rasona
 Manob deher gourab koirona

The underlying theme of the song Manshiksha is that the fastest thing in human life is the 'mind'. None of us can understand when or where this independent mind will go, so in order to control this mind and increase concentration on some subject, we have to take refuge in a Guru. That Guru can sometimes be our own Guru or we can take some lessons from some other Guru. Guru teaches our mind to find the right path and this is the Mind Shiksha. This song says that there is no need to be proud or arrogant about the beauty of the human body. No matter how beautiful the body is, once it is broken, it cannot be repaired. Just like a clay pot, once it is broken, it cannot be repaired. Similarly, it is said that the mind should be taught that just as the evening sets in at the end of the day, so too does the end of human life come when darkness descends. If we can learn from the Guru in advance, we can understand how to cross this life or this world. Another thing is said that man earns money for his own happiness, but after a time he has to leave everything in the world for others. Man cannot take anything for himself. Therefore, this teaching from the Guru will make the path of man easy, in which both inner thoughts and outer thoughts will follow the same path and through the Guru's teaching he will attain eternal life.

Folk Legacy: Most of the songs sung by Pratima Barua Pandey were inherited as part of a rich oral tradition. These folk songs have been passed down through generations, just as an elephant mahout once sang them, his descendants too tried to sing those songs in the same manner.

Sometimes the songs retained their original form, while at other times they changed slightly through variations in vocal style, individual characteristics, or simply with time. There were occasions when a buffalo herder (moishal) sang a song, and a traveler riding in the cart drawn by the buffalo might have unknowingly learned it. That traveler, with an untrained or immature voice, sang the song in a simpler, more innocent way. Later, when a seasoned singer recorded the same song under a commercial record label, it might have taken on yet another form—sometimes preserving the original essence, and at other times, showing noticeable changes. In this way, these songs have flowed down through generations as part of a living oral heritage. Pratima Barua herself inherited these songs and carried them forward. Her successors—some by imitation, others by inspiration—continue to keep these songs alive, striving to make them relevant to the present-day context. With time, changes have occurred—not only in society and people’s lives, but also in nature and natural resources. Consequently, the themes of these songs have gradually evolved. Since these folk songs are deeply rooted in nature, everyday life, and human experience, they remain dynamic, ever-changing—just like life, nature, and time itself. Yet, in their fluidity and transformation, they remain timeless and ever-new.

CONCLUSIONS

In the social life of Bhavaiya songs, Pratima Barua is a heartbeat, a time and a trend. Her simple and fluent singing attracts people from all walks of life, extraordinary and ordinary. Extraordinary people think far-reaching thoughts about her. Ordinary people see a ray of hope to present themselves as artists in social life by singing her songs. Therefore, the diversity of her songs is appreciated all over the world today. Just as the songs passed down from generation to generation have created uniqueness in her voice, she has also made a sincere effort to pass it on to the next generation. Even today, many artists buy their daily bread by singing her songs. Even today, countless artists earn their livelihood by singing her songs. Her music continues to help people find comfort in difficult times. Through her songs, many still glimpse hope for a better future. They offer not only spiritual insight but also inspire fresh ideas that can uplift society.

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