



# PRATIMA BARUA PANDEY: THE QUEEN MOTHER OF GOALPARIYA FOLK SONGS

Dr. Chan Miah Ahmed  
Asstt. Professor  
Deptt. of History  
Fakiragram College

## Abstract

Pratima Barua Pandey earned her name and fame as Indian folk singer. She was born in the royal family of Gauripur in Western Assam a national awardee popularly known for her Goalpariya folk songs ‘*Hastir Kanya*’ and ‘*Mur Mahut Bandhu Re*’. She also learnt Rabindrasangeet at school life without any formal teaching in music except the encouraging words from her father Prakritish Chandra Barua (Lalji). The Goalpariya folk songs are originated in the lower part of Assam also known as Koch Rajbongshi or Kamatapuri or Deshi songs. In 1956 Bhupen Hazarika recognized these Koch Rajbongshi or Kamatapuri or Deshi songs as Goalpariya Folk Songs. A documentary film was made on her life and works by famous film maker Prabin Hazarika titled *Hastir Kanya* which won National Film Award for Best Biographical Film in 1997 earned great appreciation and created waves at the South Asian Film Festival in 1998. Pratima Barua Pandey sacrificed her aristocratic life of Gauripur Royal Family and dedicated her whole life to make Goalpariya folk songs popular in Assam as well as other part of India.

Key Words: Pratima Barua Pandey, Goalpariya, folk songs, Hastir Kanya, Koch Rajbongshi, Gauripur.

## **Introduction:**

Whenever we talk about Goalpariya folk songs, one name comes to our mind and that is Pratima Barua Pandey who dedicated her whole life to make Goalpariya folk songs popular not only among the people of Assam but in other part of India also. It was only because of her endless effort the native songs of undivided Goalpara district were popularly known as Goalpariya folk songs. Pratima Barua Pandey introduced Goalpariya folklore in national and international level. For this noble works, Pratima Barua Pandey was popularly known as the queen mother of Goalpariya folk songs. She belonged to Gauripur Raj Family of Western Assam which had made remarkable contributions to the socio-cultural life of the people of Assam.

**Methodology:**

This article based on secondary sources mostly from books and articles related to the life and works of Pratima Barua Pandey. This study followed analytical method of research where various books, journals, reports and correspondences have been used as important source material while preparing this article.

**Objectives:**

The main objectives of this article are to focus on life and works of Pratima Barua Pandey who dedicated her whole life to give the Goalparoya folk songs an identity in Assam as well as in other part of India. In this article an attempt has been made to highlight her songs based on the themes of communal amity, universal justice and empathy.

**The Gauripur Raj Family:**

The Gauripur Raj Family Raj family popularly known as the Barua family is a prominent royal family in lower Assam has a legacy of Gauripur Raj Estate, birthplace of Pramathesh Chandra Barua and Pratima Barua Pandey. The Gauripur Raj family is known for its contributions to art and culture. This Raj family produced first actor of the Play *Devdas* on screen and a celebrated folk singer. The most notable individuals of this family were Pramathesh Chandra Barua, Pratima Barua Pandey and Parboti Barua. Pramathesh Chandra Barua was an actor, director and screenwriter of Indian films in the pre-independence era. He was the first director of Assamese Cinema and produced several Assamese and Hindi films. The Gauripur Raj family had a reputation as famous cultural family in Assam. Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua was the Last Zaminder of the Gauripur Raj Estate. This Raj family has a history of Durga Puja dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and built the famous Matiabagh Palace (Hawakhana) on the Matiabag Hill near 31 National Highway which has been now converted into a museum by the Government of Assam.

**Sangitanusthan at Raj Family:**

The arrangement of Sangitanusthan was a common culture of Gauripur Raj family. All members of Gauripur Raj Family were taught songs and dances in childhood. Pratima Barua Pandey was not exceptional of this culture. Her aunt Niharbala Barua encouraged her to learn songs and dances. When Pratima Barua was in Childhood, Niharbala Barua and Jolil Uddin, a famous musician and the most faithful person of the Gauripur Raj Family and other sisters of Pratima Barua Pandey arranged a 'Zalsa' (Sangitanusthan) at the Rajbari. Pratima Barua participated in it with them and sang a song – *Ghur Ghur Uroni Koitor Uria Pore Chaale, Macca Madinat Baniyai Bashaise Dokan, Necklesh Goraiya De*. This was the first song sung by Pratima Barua Pandey. She also learnt some Biyageet of the Muslim society .

**Early Life of Pratima Barua Pandey:**

Pratima Barua Pandey started her student life at Gokhle Memorial Girls' School in Calcutta. She studied there for some time and came back to Gauripur and got admitted in Gauripur Girls' School. She was very much attracted by songs and music than other subjects. Although she learnt Rabindra Sangeet at school, but she never took any formal training or teaching in music. In her school life Pratima Barua always came out first in music competition and got many prizes. She passed the Matriculation Examination in 1953 under Guwahati University. After passing Matriculation Examination Pratima Barua got admitted in South Calcutta Girls' College. She studied there for two years but did not appear at the Pre-University final

Examination. As she was very much attracted by Goalpariya Lakogeet and music, she left her study incomplete and dedicated her life for Goalpariya folk songs. Pratima Barua's father Prakritish Chandra Barua was popularly known as Lalji and he liked elephant hunting. He took her with him when he went for elephant hunting at Kachugaon, Raimona, Jonali, Runukhata, Garobandha and other places and learnt some native songs from a 'Fandi Mahoot' (Elephant Catcher). On September 16, 1969 Pratima Barua was married to Prof. Ganga Sankar Pandey of Gauripur P.B. College. After marriage she assumed her husband's title 'Pandey'.

## **Bhupen Hazarika recognised Pratima Barua's songs as Goalpariya Folk Songs:**

The most crucial point in her life came when in 1955 Bhupen Hazarika and his wife Priyam Hazarika came to Gauripur and became guests of the Raj family. Pratima Barua's father Prakritish Chandra Barua arranged a *Zalsa* in their honour. In this *Zalsa* Pratima Barua sang some native songs which she learnt from the Fandi Mahoot. The shy young Pratima Barua, though tongue-tied with fear, let her voice and the lyrics of the lokageet in Goalpariya dialect flow in tune with the strings and rhythms of the Dhol, Junuka, Dotara, Darinda, Dhuluki and Bashi which are musical instruments in Goalpariya culture. Bhupen Hazarika was highly impressed by these native songs and predicted that this voice would definitely take Goalpariya lokageet to a position of great heights. In 1956 Bhupen Hazarika recognized these native songs as Goalpariya Folk Songs. Indeed Bhupen Hazarika first presented Goalpariya folk songs in his film *Era Batur Sur*. He got recorded these Goalpariya folk songs by Pratima Barua for his film '*Era Batur Sur*' in Calcutta. Besides the mahout songs Pratima Barua also used to sing the evergreen hit song *We Are In The Same Boat Brother*. The Mahout who catches elephant used to sing a form of song which Pratima Barua refined and polished to give the form of Goalpariya lokageet. This can be found in her song "*O Mor Mahout Bandhu Re*". She also gave her tune in the songs of the film '*Mahout Bandhu Re*', '*Palasar Rang*', '*Gazamukta*', etc. By singing songs in these films Pratima Barua became a famous singer of Goalpariya folk songs.

## **Important Events of Pratima Barua Pandey's Life:**

Pratima Barua Pandey was invited in many Cultural Shows and Musical Nights and received much appreciation from the audience. From 1957 to 2002 Pratima Barua Pandey presented Goalpariya folk songs in many places of the country namely West Bengal, Bihar, Kashmir, Simla, Rajasthan, Goa, Lucknow, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Tripura, Manipur etc. Besides Goalpariya folk songs she also sang a large number of Bengali, Assamese, Hindi and English songs. Once she said, "*I believe, I have the folk songs of Goalpara. Till my end I'll sing these songs.*" In many of her songs we find a feelings of the place and its people of the Char areas of lower Assam. Some important events of her artistic life were:

1. In 1962 Pratima Barua Pandey was invited by the Commissioner of All India Radio, Guwahati Centre for recording Goalpariya Lakogeet for the first time. Her first recorded song was – '*Ekbar Hari Balo Mon Rosona, Manov Dehor Goirob Koirona*'.
2. On January 26, 1966 Pratima Barua Pandey presented Goalpariya folklore in Delhi.
3. In 1970 she participated in a Grand Musical Night arranged at Eden Garden in Calcutta.
5. In 1975 Calcutta Radio Centre invited Pratima Barua Pandey for broadcasting her songs.
6. In 1977 Pratima Barua participated in Assam Sahitya Sabha Abhayapuri Session for presenting Goalparia folklore.
7. In 1980 she went to Madhya Pradesh, Chennai, Goa, Jammu, Mumbai and Uttar Pradesh for singing Goalpariya folk songs and received much appreciation from the audience.

8. From 1978 to 1988 she was invited four times every year by the All India Radio, Guwahati Centre for recording her songs. Each time she had to sing 4 to 5 songs which had been recorded and broadcasted from there.

9. In 1988 Pratima Barua Pandey had been upgraded from Grade 'B' artist to Grade 'A' artist by the judges of the Selection Committee of All India Radio Commission, Guwahati Centre.

### Some Popular Songs of Pratima Barua Pandey:

\*\*\*\*From 1962 to 1988 a large number of her songs were recorded and these were 320 in number. These recorded songs were regularly relayed from Delhi, Simla, Siliguri, Tezpur, Silchar, Karsian, Gangtok, Dibrugarh, Imphal, Agartola, Madhy Pradesh, Goa and Tamil Nadu All India Radio Centre. Some of the popular recorded songs of Pratima Barua Pandey are:

- 1) 'Tomra Gaile Ki Ashiben Mor Mahoot Bandhu Re'
- 2) 'Deene Deene... Khoshia Poreebe Rangila Dalaner Mati Re Shaizi Kon Ronga'
- 3) Bathan Saro Bathan Saro Re..... Moishal Ghuriya Aaiso Bari  
Juba Nari Ghare Thuiya Kai Kore Chakuri Moishal Re...
4. Baro Mashe Tero Phool Phote, Basori Phote Golap Shoi Nazaio Jomuner Jole....
5. Baniz Baniz Koren Mor Poranshadhu O..... Shadhu Banizer Ki Ba Reeti.....
6. Hosteer Kanya Hosteer Kanya Bamunero Nari..... Mathaye Niya Tam Kolosi O.... O Ki Haate Sonar  
Churi Shokio.....
7. Aaji Danrao Kala.....
8. Ek Bar Hari Balo Mon Rosona Manav Dehor Gaurob Koirona....
9. Kamala Sundari Nache....
10. Matir Pinjira....
11. O Shyam Kaliya Re.....

By singing these songs Pratima Barua Pandey became much popular among the People of Assam. Pratima Barua Pandey used to sing the evergreen hit song "we are the same boat brother" in stage shows

### Awards and Recognition:

The Queen – Mother of Goalpariya folk songs, Pratima Barua Pandey received many awards and rewards in her life for her great contribution towards cultural life of undivided Goalpara District. The important awards received by her were:

1. The Assam Silpi Divas Award in 1997.
2. Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 1988.
3. Padmasri Award in 1991 by R. Venkataraman, the then President of India.
4. She was also bestowed with Grand reception by Abbas Uddin Smaran Somiti in 1993.
5. Pratima Barua Pandey was offered D.Litt degree by North Bengal University, Siliguri in 2001.
6. She received awards from various organisations and institutions such as Joymoti Award, Bishnu Rava Award. Award from Rabindra Bharoti University, etc.

### Hastir Kanya a Documentary Film:

The famous film producer Prabin Hazarika made a documentary film on Pratima Barua Pandey's life known as 'Hastir Kanya'. This documentary film received National Award in 1997 as the best biographical documentary film. 'Hastir Kanya' earned great appreciation and creates waves at the South Asian film festival in 1988. Film maker Bobby Sarma Barua started filming full-length feature film based on Pratima Barua's life in 2015 titled "Sonar Baron Pakhi".

Pratima Barua Pandey died on 27 December, 2002 at G.N.R.C. leaving two daughters – Amrita Pandey and Aloka Pandey. Her younger daughter Aloka Pandey is also an Artist of Goalpariya folk songs.

### Conclusion:

Pratima Barua Pandey was a woman of noble heart. Though she was born in a Raj Family, she was very much simple in dresses, talks and behavior. 'Simple living high thinking' was the philosophy of her life. She loved all classes of people

irrespective of caste, creed and religion equally. She considered the servants and servant girls who worked at their home as their family member and showed great sympathy to them. She was so much helpful to the poor.

To conclude , it goes without saying that her contribution to Goalpariya folk songs has no parallel. She could please thousands of hearts by her melodious and immortal songs. She was the only person who could introduce Goalpariya folklore in national and international level. For this noble work PratimaBarua Pandey will ever remain alive in the heart of the people of Assam. Hence ,it has been rightly said that PratimaBarua Pandey was the Queen-Mother of Goalpariya folk songs.

#### References:

1. SimalChakrabarty, MahootBandhu Re, GayanBichitraPrakasani, Agartala,2005.
2. SantonuKaushikBarua, Assam Abhidhan, BanalotaPrakasan, Panbazar, Guahati, 2002.
3. Schuman Sandy,” We’re in the Same Boat Brother, Retrieved 5 February,2019.
4. JyotirmoiPradhani, Life as lore: the art and time of PratimaBarua Pandey.
5. “Padma Awards,”Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India,2015.
6. The Times of India,27 December,2002.
7. The Telegraph, India, December 28, 2002.

