

The Mahut Songs of Golapara and Role of Hastir Kanya Pratima Pandey Baruah in their Cultural Restoration

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ABSTRACT

Goalporiya folk songs, locally known as Goalporiya Loka Geet, are part of a cultural community of Assam (a North Eastern state of the Indian subcontinent). The Rajbangsis have largely been historically dispersed around a vast territory including Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Southern Nepal and even Bangladesh. It refers to the lyrical songs of Golapara that are not associated with religion or rituals. There are various subgenres of this music that differ in the musical mood and themes, of which the bhawaiya and the chatka are principal forms, beside moishali and maut songs. It was Pratima Pandey Baruah, princess of the royal family of Gauripur and known as ‘Hastir Kanya or the Daughter of the Elephant’, who picked up the songs from a dying stage, when the history of the state took a sharp turn due to existing socio-political conditions. From a status of royalty to a vagabond, her cultural journey for revival of these folksongs, especially those of elephant catchers and attendants, is not only interesting but at the same times a vivid documentation of the changing cultural and political scenario of this traditional form. Through this paper an attempt will be made to conduct a holistic study of the Goalporiya folk songs of the elephant catchers and attendants along with the role of Hastir Kanya Pratima Pandey Baruah in their revival.

Keywords: *Mahut (elephant attendants) song, Goalporiya folk songs, Hastir Kanya, cultural revival*

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