

History of Assamese Modern Song: From Birth Cry to Jyotiprasad

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Abstract

The journey of the Assamese modern song starts after the advent of the Baptist missionaries. The prime intention of it was to propagate Christianity among the people of Assam. Music as a medium of propagation was common in the past. The creations of *Vaishnava* saints of Assam were examples of it. Though the songs could not influence much, they became the root of Assamese modern songs. *Rabindra Sangeet* influenced the Assamese nobility, and the Assamese language was thought of as not suitable for modern songs. Taking it as a challenge, some Assamese writers like Benudhar Rajkhowa, Satyanath Bora, Lakshiram Baruah, and Kirtinath Bardoloi started writing songs, and the first book of the Assamese song "*Geetawali*" was published in the year 1888. Assamese modern songs at that time could not detach themselves from Assamese plays. Later, the Assamese modern song, in its infant age, was nurtured by Ambikagiri Raychudhury, Umesh Chandra Chaudhury, Kamalananda Bhattacharya, etc. Later, Jyotiprasad Agarwala shaped Assamese modern songs based on Assamese folk music, Hindustani Classical Music, and Western music. This paper attempts to trace the journey of the Assamese modern song from its origin to the creation of Jyotiprasad Agarwala.

Keywords: modern song, folk song, Jyotiprasad.

The history of music in the geographical area of Assam goes on for a long time. From the writings of Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang, we learned that songs and dance were also practiced in the area during the reign of Kumar Bhaskar Barman. The traveller was entertained by singers and dancers for a month. The reign of Bhaskar Barman falls between 594 AD and 640 AD. The dancers associated with temples were mentioned in the copper plate inscriptions of Banamalaveva Barman (835–866 A.D.). The *Charyapadas*, written between the 9th and 11th centuries, was based on *ragas*, which shows the prevalence of *raga* music in Assam at that time. Birendra Nath Dutta writes,

"*Nepal Banga Orissa aru Asomor pandite nijaswa buli dabi kora ei Charyapada samuh uttar-pub Bharatar umoihatita aitiryar nidarshan*"¹.

(The *Charyapadas*, which scholars of Nepal, Bengal, Orissa, and Assam claim to be their own, are undoubtedly examples of the common heritage of Eastern India.)

Music was one of the mediums of propagating the teachings of *Neo-Vaishnava* saints of Assam. The creations of Srimanta Sankardeva, Sri Sri Madhavdeva and later *Vaishnava* saints took it as tools for preaching *Eksaran Namdharma* in Assam. Those creations were preserved and had been practiced in the premise of the *Satras* for a long time. So, they are known by both the names of *Sankari* and *Satriya*

¹ Birendranath Dutta, *Asamiya Sangitar Aithiya*, 3rd ed. (Jorhat: Asam Sahitya Sabha, n.d.), 6.

music. Like *Charyapadas*, the *Bargeets*, that composed by the saints and were based on *ragas*. But the *ragas* were not similar to the *ragas* of Hindustani Classical Music. Rudra Singha, the son of Ahom king Gadadhar Singha brought some musicians from Bengal and established them in Sibsagar. The *Oja-Pali*, also raga-oriented music, which is practiced outside the *Satras* in the areas of Darrang in Assam. Thus, different forms of music have been practiced in Assam for a long time.

We found many definitions for the word modern song. In the book '*Sangeetar Sabdakosh*', Bharat Bora writes,

*"Sangeetar kisu niti niyamok rehai di ji geet prasalan hoise seye adhunik geet"*² (modern songs are the songs which were composed with some concessions to the prescribed roles of music).

The history of the Assamese modern song is not so long. It takes us back to the compositions of the Baptist missionaries, who came to India and Assam to propagate Christianity among the local people. Tracing its origin Birendra Nath Dutta writes,

*"Missionarysokole Christian dharma prasalar orthe pachimiya dharar dharmiya sangeetar pabartan kore. English hymn ba psalm jatiya parthana geetar Aomiya anubad naiba sei arhit notunkoi Asomiya bhasat rachit geet Girjaomuhat dharmiya upalakshye goa hoboloi dhore. Sei somoyote 378 ta geetar eti sankalan Christiya prakashit hoisil"*³

(The Missionaries introduced Western religious music to spread Christianity. Assamese translations of English hymns psalms or newly composed songs in the Assamese language began to be sung in church on religious occasions. A collection of 378 hymns in Assamese was published at the same time.)

With Nathan Brown and Miles Bronson, Nidhiram Farwel, who was newly converted to Christianity, was among the composers of those hymns. Most of the songs were mere translations of the hymns of Latin, Italian, and other Western languages. Thus western music enters Assam through the propagation of Christianity. Some of the indigenous tunes based on *ragas* were also used in it. As Christianity could not hold foot in this area, the influence of the songs also became minimal. Later an influence of Bengali music was witnessed on Assamese modern song. The Assamese language was thought of as not suitable for writing songs. After all a big dearth was seen at that time as far as Assamese modern song was concerned. Birendra Nath Dutta narrates the pathetic situation of Assamese modern song in that time as,

*"Rachana aru surar ei nabalandha ritik Asomiya nabyasikhit adori lole jodiu ei ritit Asomiya bhasat rachit geet sunar manashik drihata aru sahas teuloke gotabo pora nasil. Ane eti dharana prai badhhamul hoi porisil je Asomiya bhasa ei sangitik ritir babe upayukta madhyam hobo nuware"*⁴

(This newly discovered style of composition and melody was welcomed by the Assamese newly educated society but they did not have the mental strength to sing and listen to songs written in the Assamese language in this style. There was an almost deep-rooted belief that the Assamese language could not be the suitable medium for this musical style.)

Some Assamese litterateurs and musicians came out in that time of crisis and started writing and composing songs in the Assamese language. The persons that appeared in the dawn were Satyanath Bora, Lakshiram Baruah, Lakshminath Bezbarua etc. *"Ei Bijatariya Bengali Ramprasadi baithaki gaanar prabhavat kshoyishnuprai hoboloi dhara Asomiya geetat swakiyata pradanar babe Satyanath Boradevar anugami hisape sangitacharya Lakshiram Baruah, Umesh Chaudhury, Kamalananda*

² Bharat Bora, *Sangeetar Sabdakosh*, 1st ed. (Jorhat: Grantha Sanskriti, 2009), 8.

³ Dutta, *Asomiya Sangitar Aithiya*, 74.

⁴ Dutta, 17.

Bhattacharya, Kirtinath Bardoloi, Prafulla Baruah, Anandiram Das, Jyotiprasad Agarwala Pramishye geetkar sokole kora prasesta ullekhaniya”.

(In order to get rid of the Bengali influence, works of the followers of Satyanath Bora, like Lakshiram Baruah, Umesh Chaudhury, Kamalananda Bhattacharya, Kirtinath Bardoloi, Prafulla Baruah, Anandiram Das, Jyotiprasad Agarwala are worth mentioning.)

Mention may be made about the name of Satyanath Bora (1860-1925), who first tried to fill the gap through his book of songs named ‘*Geetawali*’. The book was composed of 28 songs. In the preface of the book the lyricists wrote,

*“Ajikali amar deshar manuhe geet gabo lagile bangala geet he gai. Asomiyat geet thokaheten Asomiya manuhe Bengali geetar prati iman priti nadekhualaheten. Etiar manuhar Bangala geetat rati bohise, Asomiya geet suniboloi ba gaboloi val napai. Tothapi ei geetkeita sahar uparat bhar di prakash korilu.”*⁵

(Nowadays, when people of Assam have to sing songs, they sing only Bengali songs. He also explains the reason for this. It happens for lack of an Assamese song. If there were Assamese songs, Assamese people would not show so much love to Bengali songs. Yet, I published these songs relying on courage).

Such a type of endeavour was not seen by any other contemporary Assamese litterateur of that time. Therefore, Atul Chandra Hazarika called Satyanath Bora as the father of Assamese modern song. Recognizing it he says,

*“Muthote Satyanath Bora dangoriyakei Adhunik Asomiya geetar jonmodata buli kobo pari aru geetawalikei ei jugar pon pratham geetar puthi akshya dibo pari.”*⁶

(In short, Satyanath Bora is the father of modern Assamese songs and the *Geetawali* is the first song in this era.)

Among the pioneers, Lakshiram Baruah (1865-1914) was one of the important musicians who emphasized creating an indigenous Assamese style. He was born in North Guwahati. He found a place to learn Indian Classical music when spent at Gauripur in the Dhubri District for his service. In the year 1909, he published a book of Assamese songs which consists of 422 songs. The musician turned half of the songs that he included in that book. He categorized the songs into seven groups. In the preface of the book Nagen Saikia wrote,

*“ Purani sangeet bhagat sannibista Ainaam, Biyanaam, Bhatima, Gunamala, adir bahire baki geetsamuhar pratyekar raga-ragini, taal, man, aru goar samai nirdesh kori goise. Nihsandeshe Sangeet-Kosh adhunik Asomiya sangeetar pratham laikhuti. Ei granthai amar adhunik geet aru geetkar duyuke prathishtha korile”*⁷

(There are many different types of songs in the old musical category, *Ainaam, Biyanaam, Bar Bhatima, Gunmala*, etc. There is no doubt that the ‘*Sangeet-Kosh*’ is the first milestone of Assamese music. This book has established both Assamese song and songwriters.)

Thus Lakshmiram Baruah gave social acceptance to the Assamese music. Describing the musical calibre of Lakshmiram Baruah, Anil Saikia says,

“Granthakhanat thoka geetkhani adhyayan kori teu raga aru taal nirdesh di sei samayar eta mahat karya sadhan korisil. Karan sei samayot Asomiya manuhe Asomiya bhasat geet rachana asombhov

⁵ Satyanath Bora, *Geetawali*, n.d., 2.

⁶ Atul Chandra Hazarika, *Manchalekha*, 2nd ed. (Layers Book Stall, 1995), 173.

⁷ Lakshmiram Baruah, *Sangeet Kosh*, 3rd ed. (Asam Sahitya Sabha, 2013).

*buli vabasil. Lakshiram Baruai asombhovak sambhab korai nohoi Asomiya bhasatu je uchcha srenir geet hobo pare tar praman korile*⁸

(Studying the songs of the book he gave instructions about *raga* and rhythm, which was a great work at that time. Because at that time Assamese people thought that it was impossible to compose songs in the Assamese language. Lakshiram Baruah not only made the impossible task possible but proved that high-quality songs can be composed in the Assamese language).

His son Prafulla Chandra Baruah recorded four songs at Kolkata in the year 1924 which was the first of that kind in the Assamese language. The lyricists of those songs were Umesh Chandra Chaudhury, Prasannalal Chaudhury, and Radhanath Phukan.

Lakshminath Bezbaruah, who served in almost all aspects of Assamese literature, wrote some songs in this period. Jyotiprasad Agarwala also used his songs in the movie '*Jaymoti*'. At the same time, some of his poems bear the characters of song. Describing about the musical elements of his songs Prasanna Kumar Nath writes,

*“Ei srenir geetar upori Bezbaruai ane kisuman kabita rachana korisil jiburir sabda sangathan bisesh chanda thoka aru sur logai goar upoogi”*⁹

(In addition to this category of songs, Bezbaruah wrote poems whose words have special rhythm and are suitable for singing.)

Some of the songs of Lakshminath Bezbaruah were published in the Assamese Magazine '*Bahi*'. The state anthem of Assam '*O mor apunar desh*' was also published in the 7th issue of the magazine in the year 1909. Besides, some songs were written by him for his plays. His songs were scattered in the two books of his poems '*Kadamkali*' and '*Padumkali*'.

Ambikagiri Raychaudhury was one of the musicians and lyricists who worked for the development of Assamese music. His musical journey especially with *Bargeet* was remarkable. More than sixty songs by the lyricist were published. Most of the songs were written in the first two decades of the last century. Some of the songs were tuned by him. His earlier songs related to many themes like love and spirituality. But the feelings of patriotism replaced them in the songs that he composed after 1920. Mentioned may be made about the song '*Aji bando ki chandere samagata birata*' which was composed as the opening song of the session of the Indian National Congress held at Pandu in the year 1926. There were also thirty songs that wrote by him for his three plays.

With more than two hundred songs, poet and lyricist Kamalananda Bhattacharya (1894-1951) contributed a lot to Assamese modern song in the early decades of the last century. His book of songs named '*Bauli*' was published in the year 1928. Total four numbers of songs, including the song '*Bilat tirebirai padumar pahimoi*' were recorded by the Sanola company of Kolkata in the year 1935. One among the four Assamese songs recorded in gramophone by Pafulla Chandra Baruah was written by Umesh Chandra Chaudhury. The song was '*Asoma niropama janani*'. The lyricist also wrote two of the four songs that were prepared as the chorus for the Pandu session of the Indian National Congress.

Mitradev Mahanta used to write some Assamese songs during that period. Later a book consisting of one hundred songs was published in the year 1958 with the title '*Geeti Samadal*'. In the preface of the book Padmadhar Chaliha writes,

⁸ Anil Saikia, "Asomot Adhunik Geet Charchar Patabhumi," *Satsari*, June 2019.

⁹ Prasanna Kumar Nath, *Adhunik Asomia Geet Parichay Aru Paryalochana*, 1st Jyoti Prakashan (Guwahati: Jyoti Prakashan, 2022), 6.

“Asomiya bhasat suwala manograhi hridayaparshi geet rachana sambhavpar ei kotha ji sokol desh-hitaishi aru sahityasebi loke pratipanna kori dekhual seikalar vitarat suhridbar Mitraddev Mahantadeve agsarir thai pabor jogyata arjan korise buli nisandhahe kobo pari.”¹⁰

(There is no doubt that Mitraddev Mahanta deserves a leading place among the patriots and literary men who have proved that song writing is possible in the Assamese language).

His most admired song ‘Chira senehi mor bhasa janani’ was written in the year 1926 for the session of ‘Asom Sahitya sabha’ and the song became the opening song of the session of the same organization. The songs of Padmadhar Chaliha inspired the volunteers of the freedom struggle of Assam. Benudhar Sharma writes describing the influence of the songs as,

“Sei geetbilak iman sarbarahi hoisil je dibarur pora Goalparaloike parbate-pasande, pothare somare, sabhai samitiye bhabana samadole huchari mejiye tar dhwanithe mukharita hoisil.”

(The songs were so popular that from Dibrugarh to Goalpara, in mountain, in fields, in meetings, in discussions, and dances his music was heard.”

This path was followed by lyricists and musicians like Kirtinath Sarma Bardoloi, Ambikagiri Raychaudhury, Umesh Chandra Chaudhury, and others. Indira Miri wrote about Kirtinath Bardoloi as “Tekhetak sarkare geetar madhamere Asomiya jatir chetana jagai tuliboloi nijukti disil. Tekhete nan a geet rachi suwalakoi sur di geetar madhayamere jatir chetana udbudha karisil”¹¹

(The government appointed him to awaken the national consciousness of the Assamese people through songs. He composed various songs and inspired the consciousness through the songs.)

Following the way some composers emphasized composing the Assamese songs on the pillar of Assamese musical heritage. Conventional tunes of the folk songs were the foundation of it. Prasanna Kumar Nath writes,

“Adhunik Asomiya geetisahityar gati-pragatir kshetrat Asomor prachin sangitik aitiryak obohela kori adhunik Asomiya sangeet je samridhwa hobo nuare take keibajonu Asomiya sangeet sadhake anudhaban koribo parisil. Eisakalar vitarat Kirtinath Bardoloi, Anandiram Das, Jyotiprasad Agarwala Anyatam. Euloke adhunik Asomiya geeti Sahityak samridhya koribor babe Asomor jautijugia loksangeet aru Srimant Sankardev pabartit Vaishnav sangeet padhhatik Adharsila hisape graham korisil.”¹²

(Modern Assamese music will not be enriched by neglecting the ancient musical tradition of Assam. Kirtinath Bardoloi, Anandiram Das, and Jyotiprasad Agarwala, are among the believers in the point. They adopted the ancient folk music of Assam and the Vaishnava musical system of Srimanta Sankardeva for their lyrical and literary enrichment.)

A new addition to Assamese music was *Bangeet*. Anandiram Das (1909-1969) was the person behind the creation of *Bangeet*. The name *Bangeet* (songs of the forest) was also given by him. About naming them as *Bangeet* Anandiram Das writes

“Achale ei sabdatu ei abhajanei gitisahityalai anilu. Janei nahai Bihu bulilei bhadra manuhe nak kochai. Athas Bihugeetar sur bur iman manomoha je ei geetbure mok pagal kare. Tetiya bhabilu Bihugeetar surbur lai kibaeta kariba nuarine. Tar falswarope jonmohal Bangeetar. Bihusur aru an

¹⁰ Mitraddev Mahanta, *Geeti Samadal* (Guwahati: Lawyers Book Stall, 1958).

¹¹ Indira Miri, *Indira Miris Moi Aru NEFA*, 1st ed. (Guwahati: Assam Book Trust, 2003), 108.

¹² Nath, *Adhunik Asomia Geet Parichay Aru Paryalochana*, 22.

thaloa surar sanmrishranat sristi hal iyar kalebar, aru lagate nijeu awashyakbodhe alap jog biyog kari surar swavabik gati thik rakhibalai aru tar nam dilu Bangeet.”¹³

(It was me who brought the word to lyric literature. *Bihu* song makes the nose growl in polite society. Notwithstanding, *Bihu* songs are so mesmerizing that it makes me passionate. Then, I thought to do something with the tunes of those. As a result, *Bangeet* was born. With the blending of *Bihu* and other local tunes, I made this genre and maintained the balance by adding and rejecting some parts of them. I gave it its name as *Bangeet*).

Some of his songs were scattered in the magazine ‘*Surabhi*’. The first book of his songs ‘*Birahi*’ was published in the year 1937. His next book of songs was ‘*Sur Nijara*’. The lyricists wrote more than one thousand songs. Singer Baloram Das recorded some *Bangeets* in the 1940s at Kolkata which were well-liked by the listeners.

Bangeet and *Bihu*'s song expresses the same feeling. But they are different as far as musical character is concerned. *Bangeets* are a kind of Assamese modern song based on *Bihu* and other local tunes. *Bangeets* were written in simple language. The theme of these songs belongs to folk life.

On the other hand Jyotiprasad Agarwala in his Article ‘*Bartamaan Asamiya Sangeet- Kamrupee Sangitar Dhara*’ wrote,

“*Sonit Konwari prakashar pizar parai asamiya jatiya surar falalai asamiya sikhyit samajar man dhal khai aru tetiar parai sei sangitar uparate veti kari –ata natun sangitar dhara pabartit hai aru aji bis basare si eta gah labalai bat laise. Sei tetiar para ei likhake asamiya sangitar eta sukiya dhara pabartan aru pratishtha r babe sesta aru sarsa kari ahisu. Aru ei dhara Kamrupee sangit akhyare ata Bharatiya Hindu sangitar bibhag rupe thiya karibar karane sei batedi baat bulisu*”¹⁴

(Since the publication of ‘*Sonit Konwari*’, the Assamese educated community has been inclined towards Assamese music. Since then a new genre of Assamese music has been introduced. Based on that music it is gaining momentum today . From that time we have been trying to establish and develop a unique genre of Assamese music. Named it *Kamrupee* music, I am trying to establish this new trend as a different part of Hindu music.)

By the touch of Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Assamese modern songs became lively. The characters that bore by his songs became the characters of the modern Assamese song. The new style manifested from his first play ‘*Sonit Konwari*’. Kirti Kamal Bhuyan says,

“*Chemoniya boyosote Rachana kora ‘Sonit Konwari’ naat jidore teur natyaprabeshar setuswarupe cihnita hol, thik seidorei sei natei Asomiya geet aru sangeetar prakitarthat adhunikadhunik rupantararu setu swarupe janajaat hol. Pitakar mukhot suna Asomiya tholuwa surar jadut Biyakul hoa Jyotiprasade Asomiya sangeetar vetitu bisari pale.*”¹⁵

(His play ‘*Sonit Konwari*’, written at a young age marked his theatrical entry. It is in that play that modern Assamese songs and music were born. Assamese songs, which he listened to from his father astonished Jyotiprasad and here he discovered the foundation of Assamese music).

So it can be said that Assamese folk music made the ground for the development of Assamese modern songs. The song ‘*Gose gose pati dile*’ was a milestone in this way. According to Prahlad Kumar Baruah,

¹³ Anandiram Dasar *Geet*, 1st ed. (Guwahati: Satish Bhattacharya, 1988), 10.

¹⁴ Jyotiprasad *Rachanawali*, (edited and revised by Sumanta Chaliha, 9th ed. (Publication Board Assam, n.d.), 524.

¹⁵ Kirti Kamal Bhuyan, *Asomiya Adhunik Geetor Bikashat Akashvanir Bhumika*, 1st ed. (Guwahati: Publication Board, Assam, 2018), 28.

“*Sonit Konwari natakar geetsamuh jidore notun sur baichitrare Asomiya geetar itihasad mailor khuti , saidore na-purani, pub pachimar bibhinna surar mishran baishastar babe ‘gose gose pati dille phulore sarai’ pratham geet tu Asomiya sangeetaru alorankari geet.*”¹⁶

(The songs of the play ‘*Sonit Kunwari*’ are milestones in the history of Assamese songs in terms of new tunes, and mixed features of new, old, east, and west tunes. The song ‘*Gose gose pati dile*’ is and sensation to Assamese modern song.)

It is said earlier that the tunes of Jyotiprasad follow the note pattern of Assamese folk songs. The tunes of *Ainaam*, *Dhainaam*, and *Biyanaam* influenced his creations. Most of the Assamese folk songs are composed of five notes. Musician Birendranath Phukan writes after analyzing about the use of the notes in the tunes of Jyotiprasad's songs as, “*Jyotiprasadeu teur sarahbhag rachanate ei swarsamuh byobahar korisil. Sur sristit bibhinna chanda aru swarbinyas prayog korileu Jyotiprasadar praibilak geetare sesharphale sa-re ga , sa re ga, re ga sa, dha sa re ga, sa re sa re ga, -sa, adi swarbinyash prayog lakshya koribo lagiya. Thaluwa surar sap dibor udyeshei enedharanar swarabinyash prayog korisil sei kotha sahajei anuman koribo pari. Koa bahulya ene swar sanjojanai teur geetbilak eta bisesh thasat parh di tulat sahai korisil. Ei surar dhek bad hang tu Jyotiprasadar nijar*”¹⁷

(Jyotiprasad also used those notes in most of his creations. Although various rhythm and note patterns were used by him in the initial part in the end of the song use of the pattern like *sa-re ga, sa re ga, re ga sa, dha sa re ga, sa re sa re ga, -sa* is noticeable. It can be understood easily that in order to give an impression of the local tune he did it. That style of music belongs to Jyotiprasad.)

Sometimes the influence of *Bargeet* is also seen in his creations. Prasanta Kumar Bora mentions, “*Mahapurush Sankardevar ‘Suna suna re surabairi pramana’ geettir arhit rachana rocha ‘Luitar parare ami deka lora’ geetti ajiu sokolue mukhe mukhe*”¹⁸

(His song ‘*Luitar parore ami deka lora*’ that composed following the *Bargeet* of Sankardeva ‘*Suna suna resura*’ became very popular.)

Thus it can be said that the music produced in this area became the skeleton of the modern songs of Jyotiprasad. At the same time influence of *Hindustani Raaga* like *Bhupali* and *Durga* is seen in his creations. As for example the song ‘*Aag barit phulile*’ is based on *Bhupali raaga*. Blending of the note pattern of *raga Durga* and the local tune is seen in the song ‘*Luitar parore ami deka lora*’. Dilip Sarma writes on the song,

‘*Gose gose pati dile*’ as “*Geettir arambhanite Durga ragaar bahireu tholuwa geetar sur aru ‘phulore sarair seshar saritut pachmiya surar sparsha ase. Kintu sakalu surei mili goi seshat Jyotiprasadar sur hoise*”¹⁹

(Besides the tune of *raga Durga*, there is a touch of western music in the beginning of the song. But in the end accumulating all the tunes forms the tune of Jyotiprasad).

The advent of recording technology gave a momentum in the development of Assamese modern song. First Assamese recorded song came in 1924. Prafulla Chandra Baruah and Umesh Chandra Mukherjee recorded Assamese songs separately in the same year. Umesh Chandra Mukherjee, a doctor by profession was the first singer that recorded Assamese song. But the record came to the listeners lately.

¹⁶ Prahlad Kumar Baruah, *Jyoti Manisha*, 5th ed. (Banalata, 2015), 225.

¹⁷ Surkaar Jyotiprasad, article by Birendra Kumar Phukan in the book *Ruptirtha (ed) Prasanta Kumar Bora* (All Assam Students’ Union, n.d.).

¹⁸ *Ruptirtha (ed) Prasanta Kumar Bora*, 97.

¹⁹ Surkaar Jyotiprasad, article by Birendra Kumar Phukan in the book *Jyotiprasadar sur*, article by Dilip Sarma in the book *Ruptirtha (ed) Prasanta Kumar Bora*, 86.

“Amar record uluar keibasarmen purbe Dibrugarh nibasi umesh Chandra banerjee namar agaraki bisishtha sangitagyai asamiya geetar record kore jadiu asudhwa uchcharan aru upajukta nuhu hetu sei record parikshyamulak abasthyatei pari thakil.”²⁰

(A few days before our record had released a prominent musician named Umesh Chandra Mukherjee, a resident of Dibrugarh Recorded a song, although the record remained in an experimental state due to inaccurate pronunciation and inappropriateness).

The songs gave the listeners a new experience. The songs of Jyotiprasad that he composed for his films are among the few Assamese songs that came to the listeners in recorded form. But the gramophone record of the film ‘Manomoti’(1941) was the first as far as film songs are concerned released commercially.

After those events, Assamese people got the experience of listening to Assamese songs through radio, in the year 1943. Assamese songs were broadcast for ten minutes from All India Radio, Kolkata. Kirti Kamal Bhuyan wrote,

“Ukta anusthanar Itihase amak koi je anatarjoge pratham Asomiya adhunik geet prachar hoi 1943 sanar saat July tarikhe. Smartabya je ei geet duti kintu kunu Asomiya silpiye goa nasil. Gaisil Kolkatar egaraki Bengali silpiyehe. Tair naam asil Bela.”²¹

(The history of the program tells us that the first Assamese modern song was broadcast on the radio on the 7th of July, 1943. It should be mentioned that those two Assamese songs were not sung by any Assamese artist on the radio. It was sung by a Bengali singer. Her name was Bela.)

Most of the songs of that period could not be preserved. It may be said that radio has an important role in creating the model of future Assamese modern songs.

The role of instruments is important in modern songs. Singer and composer Ramen Baruah credited Jayanta Hazarika for coining the term Assamese modern song. In an article that published in the Assamese magazine *Saregama* he wrote,

‘Asomiya Adhunik Geet’ was coined by Jayanta Hazarika. “Amar sangeetat byobohar huatu badei sudur Russia r sangeet badyo dumbau si bojaisil. ‘Asomiya Adhunik Geet’ Bola abhidhatu tar sristi. Asol Adhunik geetar srasta bulile moi Jayantar kothai swikar korim.”²²

(Apart from playing Indian instruments, he played the Russian drum ‘Drumba’. The term ‘Assamese Modern Song’ is his creation. I would agree with Jayanta, as the creator of modern Assamese songs.)

Thus the role of Jyotiprasad Agarwala was crucial in shaping the form of Assamese modern song. Saying about his style of composition Jyotiprasad wrote,

“Bangeet, Bihugeet, Bargeet, Naam ityadiburar pora prerona loi etialoike ami ji natun sur Asomiya surbur rachana kori ahisu-seibur bisleshan kori dekhisu je eta natun Asomiya raage rup loise. Ei bharatiya sangeetatu eta natun raag rupe pariganita hobo lagibo.”²³

(Thus, taking inspiration from *Bangeet, Bihugeet, Bargeet, Naam*, I have been composing a new Assamese tune. After analyzing them I found that a new raga is formed. It must be recognized as a new raga in Indian music.) The new *Kamrupee raaga* that he pointed out is

Vadi-Sa, Samvadi-Ga

Aroha- Sa Re Ga Pa Dha Sa

²⁰ Sekharjyoti Bhuyan, “Flashback,” *Roopkar*, 1881.

²¹ Bhuyan, *Asomiya Adhunik Geetar Bikashat Akashvanir Bhumika*, 36.

²² Ramen Baruah, “Mor Smritir Gungunoni,” *Saregama*, n.d., 10.

²³ *Jyotiprasad Rachanawali*, (edited and revised by Sumanta Chaliha, 528.

Avaroha- Sa Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Re Sa

He became the idle of later contributors to Assamese modern songs like Bhupen Hazarika. Bhupen Hazarika with Purusuttam Das and Kamal Narayan Chaudhury endeavoured for the development of Assamese music, both folk and modern through the platform of All India Radio, Guwahati after its establishment in the year 1948.