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Women in the Songs of Bhupen Hazarika: A Brief Overview

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Abstract: Like any other literary genre, lyrical literature also has its own importance. The songs of Indian lyricist and musician Bhupen Hazarika have a universal appeal. Though Dr. Bhupen Hazarika composed most of his songs in the background of Assam, his songs were able to cross the geographical limit. Along with the other themes and subjects, women have a special place in the songs of Bhupen Hazarika. His songs depict women of different ethnic groups in Assam. He also highlights the inherent characteristics of women through his words. He has often personified his motherland Assam and nature in feminine form. He has also composed songs in which rivers are imagined and represented as women. In short, Bhupen Hazarika placed women in his songs from different perspectives. This discussion attempts to examine the place of women in Bhupen Hazarika's songs with the help of examples of his songs written in the Assamese language.

Keywords: Women, Assamese, Rural, Nature

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INTRODUCTION

Like other literary genres, lyrical literature is an important branch of literature. Assamese song literature possesses its own distinctive characteristics and historical continuity. From folk songs to contemporary compositions, Assamese songs have reflected the diverse realities of Assamese society and culture. Women and various aspects of their lives have also occupied a significant place in Assamese songs. This study attempts to examine how women are represented in the songs of Bhupen Hazarika, one of the greatest modern lyricists and composers.

METHODOLOGY

The study has primarily been prepared using the descriptive method. Wherever necessary, the analytical method has also been employed.

Significance of the Study:

Literature, in any form, serves as a document of the life of the people. Among the diverse genres of literature, songs occupy a distinctive position owing to their ability to reach society directly and establish an immediate connection with the masses. On the other hand, Bhupen Hazarika emerged as an epoch-making figure in the modern Assamese music, ushering in a new era in its development. Hence, the portrayal of women in the songs of this lyricist can provide significant insights into the status and positions of women in Assamese society. Examining how women occupy a central place in the songs of such a distinguished male lyricist is therefore highly relevant. From this perspective, the significance of the present study can be clearly understood.

Women in the songs of Bhupen Hazarika:

From the dream beauty daughter of the village in 'Gaonre Jiyori Xopun Xundari', to the sorrow – stricken Panei in 'Endhar Katir Nixa', from Radhika of the Janakpur tea garden, adorned with Radhachura flowers in 'Radhachurar Phul Guja', to the Gorkhali maiden searching for her lost cow in 'Phut Gadhulike Kapili Khutit' --- these diverse female figures find a resonant place in the lyrical universe of Bhupen Hazarika. Likewise, in his patriotic compositions, Assam and nature are envisioned in feminine form, reflecting both the lyricist's and society's perception of womanhood. Furthermore, Bhupen Hazarika's love songs offer insightful representations of feminine psychology, articulating the desires, emotions and aspirations of women.

Depiction of Women from Different Ethnic Groups in Bhupen Hazarika's songs:

In Bhupen Hazarika's songs, women from diverse backgrounds find representation, ranging from the traditional Assamese village maiden to the Marathi young women. Describing the beauty of the Assamese village women, Bhupen Hazarika wrote:

Gaonre jiwori xopun xundari

Gaonte xorog rosu moi

Matite xorog rosu moi

Devatai ro lagi sai.

.....

Dehar boron sompaphuliya

Sulir boron mur endharkolia

Khujot mloya boi.

Gaonre dhanonire moiei dawoni,

Mugare rihakhonir moiei buwoni...

The above song portrays the beauty, diligence, and self respect of a village maiden of Assam. The protagonist introduces herself as a daughter of the village and proudly declares that through their hard work, creativity and skills, she creates a paradise on this very earth. Her complexion is compared to the delicate *champa* flower, while her hair is described as dark as the night. The grace of her movements is so enhancing that it seems as if the gentle *Malaya* breeze flows with her steps.

The song further presents her as a symbol of rural Assamese life, deeply connected with the agriculture and traditional weaving. She is the harvester in the paddy fields and weaver of the treasured muga silk *riha* (a traditional Assamese attire of women). Thus she is not merely an embodiment of physical beauty but also a representation of the industriousness, creativity, and dignity of Assamese womanhood. Through this portrayal, the song offers a vivid picture of the beauty and productive life of the Assamese village women.

The song presents a comprehensive depiction of a traditional Assamese maiden, encompassing both the description of her beauty and the role in the daily sphere of work and responsibilities. Similarly, in the song '*Gaonore Rakhime Maan*' Hazarila makes a contextual reference to Assamese maidens through the line, '*O Ami gabharu dhuniya, cheg sai katime dhan,*' highlighting their beauty as well as their active participations in agrarian life.

In the songs '*Pitrigriha Tyagi Ai Mur, Patigrihe Jai, Duipaw Chole Jodi Ek Pichuwai*' composed for the film *Shakuntala* and '*Pratham Prahar Ratri Phuli Asil Champa*', Bhupen Hazarika poignantly portrays the emotional milieu of an Assamese maiden as she leaves her parental home and embarks upon her new life as a bride. These songs vividly capture the sentiments and cultural experiences associated with young women's transitions from her natal family to her marital household. The eloquence and expressive confidence of a rural maiden are vividly portrayed in Bhupen Hazarika's songs in the following manner:

*Chenai mur o
Gabhoru kalote ejoni asilu
Phulok nubulilu phul....
.....
Hashoti hashoti kor dekati
Hashoti rakhisu boi dekati
Hashoti pabi toi, muke napawo
.....
O, amake paboloi Gangasnan korgoi
Bidhatar dhorgoi bhori....*

The song expresses the self-respect, beauty, and confidence of a young maiden. The speaker recalls that in her youthful days she was charming and graceful girl

whose beauty was so exceptional that even flowers seemed inadequate as a comparison.

In the later lines of the song, she addressed a young man, saying that although he may enjoy her *hasoti* (a pouch filled with areca nuts), but attaining her love is not an easy matter. Through these words, she asserts her dignity, self-worth, and independence.

In the final lines, she remarks that anyone who wishes to win her must first purify himself through a sacred bath in the Ganga and seek the blessings of destiny. Symbolically, this suggests that she considers herself precious and not easily attainable. Overall, the song beautifully portrays a young women's pride in her beauty, her strong sense of self-respect, and her awareness of her own worth.

In Bhupen Hazarika's songs, the image is not limited to that of an Assamese maiden alone. In several songs such as '*Asom Deshar Bagisare Suwali*', '*Radhachurar Phul Guji*', '*Rum Jhum Nepur Bojai*', '*Jonokpuror Janokiye*', and '*Eti Koli Duti Paat Rotonpur Bagichat*', the tea garden girl also finds a significant place. In these songs, everything from the physical depiction of the tea tribe maiden to themes of love and sorrow is expressed, thereby presenting a full spectrum of lived experience and emotional world. The landscape of the garden maiden is vividly portrayed in his songs in the following manner:

*Harini jen choku duti
Michik machak hahe
Xaat xagoror dhout jen bhahe.
Kant lore sore kore
Duti rupor jhumka
Khuje proti kiba baje
Thunuk thunuk thunuka
Kihor bhoroht khupati tair khohe
.....
Kumol rongga uth duti
Chahor kuhipat...*

(Janakpuror Jonokiye Michik Machak Hahe)

In this song, the lyricist beautifully portrays the charm and beauty of a young tea tribe woman through vivid poetic imagery. Her eyes are compared of those of a deer, expressing innocence, grace, and attractiveness. Her gentle smile creates waves of emotions in her heart, much like the rolling waves of the seven seas.

The pair of silver earrings adorning her ears further enhances her beauty. As she walks, the sweet jingling sound of her ornaments accompanies her steps, adding elegance and liveliness to her movement. The loosened hair bun symbolizes the abundance of her youthful charm and natural grace.

The lyricist also compares her soft red lips to the tender tea buds, emphasizing their freshness, delicacy, and beauty. Through these images, the song presents an enchanting picture of a young woman whose beauty, elegance, and youthful radiance captivate the admirer's heart.

In the songs, the love of a tea garden maiden is expressed in the following manner:

*Radhachurar phul guji Janakpuror Radhika
Chah bagisat jhumur nasi jugunok jase photika.
Xei photika prem photika
Bhejal tejal eku nai.....*

(Radhachurar Phul Guji)

The first two lines portray the image of a beautiful, lively, and cheerful young women namely Radhika. Adorned with Radhachura flowers, Radhika dances gracefully in the tea garden, spreading joy and vitality. Her beauty, charm, and vibrant dance captivate the heart of her beloved.

The last two lines symbolize the purity and sincerity of love. The word *photika* is used metaphorically to represent genuine affection. The lyricist suggests that this love is free from selfishness, pretence, or falseness: it is pure, honest, and heartfelt.

Overall, the song vividly portrays the beauty and liveliness of young women in the tea-tribe celebrates the innocence, purity and authenticity of true love.

Similarly, the pain and suffering of the simple and humble tea garden maiden is expressed in the following manner:

*Chardar bole kam kam
Babu bole dhorai aan
Chaheb bole- lib pither sam
O bideshi sam phaki diye anili Assam*

(Asom Deshar Bagichare Suwali)

This song reflects the lived experience of a tea garden girl, highlighting the reality of labor and exploitation from her perspective.

The lines show how the girl working in the tea plantation is constantly ordered and controlled by different authority figures. "*Chardar bole kam kam*" indicates the continuous pressure to labour. "*Babu bole dhari aan*" reflects strict supervision and control over the workers. "*Chaheb bole lib pither sam*" suggests the oppressive attitude of foreign owners.

From the girl's perspective, these are not just simple instructions but symbols of exploitation and humiliation. The last line suggests that outsiders lured

people to Assam with promises, but in reality, they were brought into a life of hard labor in tea gardens.

Overall, the song powerfully portrays the suffering, exploitation, and helplessness of tea garden workers through the eyes of a young girl.

In Bhupen Hazarika's songs, the Mising maiden from the banks of the Dichang River has also found a place of representation:

*Bulu o mising gabhoru
Ege mekhelate toi endhar xanili
O' Rihakhonit tamulikotar
Ronga tora basili
Dekatir xunor bahir xoite Gunggang bojali
Xoriyohor phul jen Ribi gasengkhoi toi
Bukute bandhili..*

(Bulu O' Mising Dekati...)

This song beautifully presents the beauty, cultural identity and traditional essence of a Mising girl in a poetic way.

At the beginning, the line *bulu O' misaing gabhoru, ege mekhelate toi endhar xanili* symbolically refers to the mysterious charm and graceful beauty of the girl in her traditional attire. It suggests that her dress adds a deep, enchanting elegance to her appearance.

The phrase *O' Rihakhonit tamulikotar Ronga tora basili* compares the red patterns of her traditional garment (*riha*) to shining stars, highlighting how her attire enhances her radiant beauty.

The mention of *Dekatir xunor bahir xoite Gunggang bojali* reflects the cultural music of the Mising community. The flute melody and the rhythmic sound of *gonggang* (a traditional drum-like instrument) together create an atmosphere of joy, love, and celebration.

In the last part of the song, the *Ribigaseng* (a traditional cloth element of Mising tribe) is compared to a mustard flower, symbolizing brightness, purity, and cultural pride that she carries close to her heart.

Overall, the song portrays not only the physical beauty of a Mising girl but also her deep connection with her culture, traditions, and musical heritage in a graceful and lyrical manner.

One of the significant communities of Assamese society is the Nepali. Traditionally engaged in cattle rearing, these Nepali or Gorkhali people generally inhabit the fertile riverside plains. In Bhupen Hazarika's songs, he artistically portrays the figure of a Nepali maiden, who searches for a lost cow along the banks of the Kapili River at twilight:

Phut gadhulite
Kapili khutit
Kun Gorkhali gabhorur gaijoni heral...

(Phut Gadhulite...)

The above song reflects the soft glow of dusk, beside the banks of the Kapili River, a Gorkhali girl loses something very precious to her- her cow. For her, the cow is not just an animal; it represents her livelihood, her hope and an emotional companion in her everyday life.

Not merely this, but from the ‘ *Sillongore Monalisha Lyngdoh*’ to the ‘ *Kohimare Adhunika Dalimijoni*’, and extending even to the ‘ *Gauripuriya Gabhoru*’, Bhupen Hazarika’s songs have encompassed women across varied regions, elevating them into enduring subjects of his musical expression. Not only Assam or Northeast, Bhupen Hazarika transcended regional boundaries and in his songs, also articulated the emotional world of a Marathi women, capturing her inner sentiments with lyrical depth. In the song titled ‘*Godavari Noire Parore pora*’ performed by greatest Lata Mangeshkar, the Marathi maiden makes a poignant appearance in this manner:

Moi Marathi gaonore jiwori
(Mur) noyonot laaz bhora sawoni
(Pise) ron khetrote, ‘Puwada’ gaon
Anondote gau ‘Lawoni’
Xuruj uthar agote ‘Ubhi’
Gau probhuke xuwori
Axomot jiworiye jenekoi gai
Borgeet, Bihu, Husori.

(Godavari Noire Parore Pora)

This song expresses the identity of a Marathi village girl and beautifully highlights their culture. Her eyes carry a shy and modest gaze, reflecting the gentle and graceful nature of women in Marathi culture. However, along with this softness, her land also holds a strong tradition of valor and heroism, where the *Powada* songs narrate tales of bravery and battles. At the same time, the *Lavoni* songs express joy, celebration, and the vibrant culture of the community. In the later part, the lyricist mentions the *Ovi* sung at sunrise and shows reverence towards the village deity, then, draws a comparison with Assamese girls, who sing *Borgeet*, *Bihu* and *Husori* in their cultural and devotional life.

In essence, Bhupen Hazarika, through his songs has beautifully represented women from diverse ethnic communities, particularly the imagery young maidens, with remarkable sensitivity and artistic grace.

Depiction of Diverse Forms of Women in Bhupen Hazarika’s Songs:

In his songs, the various traditional and enduring forms of womanhood are beautifully

represented. The roles of women as lover, sister, wife and affectionate mother are vividly reflected in different compositions of Bhupen Hazarika. In one of his song titled ‘*Endhar Katir Nixate..*’ The sorrow of a bereaved mother who refrains from eating anything so that her child may not go hungry is poignantly expressed. The song is as follows:

Ratir puwatei
Khuji magi ani dim
Olop dharjya dhar
O’ basa, ajir nixatu tenei udong ghar.

.....
Paneye tetia punatik suma di
Tuponir geet ti gai
“ Amare moina xubo e
Xunali dhanoni dabo e
No-saulore chira bhaji dim
Bati hari bhari khabo
Oi basa, tuponi jaa”..

...
O’ mur bukure xun
Tur jibonor dukmukalite
Moronore muroti saa
Pitha pitha korisili o’ bukur xun
Nixoniu nidilu mur pojar joon...

This song expresses the deep affection, care, and comforting nature of a mother towards her child. In the beginning, the mother says that she will go out early in the morning to beg and bring food for her child. This shows that despite poverty and hardship, she does not want her child to remain hungry, highlighting her sacrifice and sense of responsibility. Her words ‘*olop dhojyo dhorsun*’ (be patient a little) in the song reflect how she tries to console and comfort the child even in times of hunger and suffering. The line ‘*aji nixatu tenei udong ghor*’ presents a picture of poverty and lack. Yet, the mother soothes the child with tender words. The imagery of kissing the child and singing a lullaby beautifully reflects a mother’s gentle affection and calm she tries to create even in hardship. In another lines of the song, the mother reassures the child of better times ahead.

The song expresses the sorrowful lament of a poor, helpless mother. He also incorporates a similar maternal theme in his song titled ‘*Ochara-wochori Duti Ghar*’

Pojatit punar tuponi nahe
Dukhuniye nisukoni gai lahe lahe.

...

Likewise, the following song portrays a mother’s intense yearning for her child:

Xune jen xudhise okoni monere
Morom korajon nu Kun?
Bukur umere aaxar sawonire
Kionu bulise xun ?

A child is dearer to a mother than her own life. Hence, a mother waits until her child returns home to serve him a meal. The song mentioned below portrays the tender emotions of a mother- her endless waiting, care, and unconditional love for her- in a simple yet deeply touching way. This aspect of womanhood is depicted in the song of Bhupen Hazarika's 'Autorikcha chalaao'-

*Bol bhai bol
Bohu rati hol
Nai kunu passanger
Xemeka botor tur
Dekhu bor jaar
Rugia aaiye sage
Rokhi ase bahi loi
Dail bhat duiure amar.*

In the Indian cultural tradition, women are revered as the embodiment of Goddess Lakshmi, the symbol of prosperity and well-being. A household is often considered incomplete without her presence. For a man, a woman represents hope, inspiration, and the source of dreams and aspirations. This portrayal of womanhood, as perceived through the male gaze, is vividly reflected in the following song:

*Mure udong gharkhonir
Nangala khulise
Lakhimi ubhoti ahi
Nij hate xarisehi
mure bahi sutalkhani
O' phulale moroha pahi
...
Endharkoi akaxot
Akou jen dekhisu
Moromi junakore dhol
Herua lakhimik hatote pai jen
Xongxar xuwoni hol.*

The above song expresses how an empty and lifeless home is transformed into a vibrant and warm house with the arrival of a woman, symbolically referred to as *Lakhimi* (the goddess of prosperity). Earlier the house was deserted and dark, but with her return, the doors and gates are opened, the neglected courtyard is cared for again, and even withered flowers seem to bloom once more. In the sky, a gentle glow of love and hope appears like moonlight spreading anew.

The following song, expresses the deep sorrow, longing and love of a woman separated from her beloved. Even the joyous night of *Uruka* during the bihu festival, she is unhappy because her loved one is far away in a distant land. Her heart is filled with sadness as he had promised to write to her but has not sent any letter or message. She earnestly requests him to send at least one letter. Although she may not be able to meet him in person, she believes that his presence and affection will be felt through the words written in here:

*Ei bihur uruka nixa
Mur kolija porise kola
Sithi dim bulisithu nidila
Tumi pordeshi hola
.....
Mure xopot sithi ekhoni
Dibasun ohatu dakot
Tumak nepaleu tumake loge pam
Sithire akhoropr umot
Tumi kio nilikha hola
(Ei Bihur Uruka Nixa)*

The Assamese maiden, offering of betel nut in her hand, captivates the heart of the young boys. Bhupen Hazarika vividly portrays this charming aspect of Assamese village girl in one of his songs as follows. This song expresses the tender emotions of a young man deeply in love with a maiden. The betel nut given by his beloved has not only left its impression physically but has also stirred his heart and soul with feelings of love and affection. Her loving presence and enchanting gaze awaken new emotions within him.

*Kinu tamul dila Maijan
Gaate dharile dekhun Maijan
Buku romromai
Hiya chomchomai
Xei topot sawonite
Amar bukur puroni barhi golgoi*

The Assamese people are hardworking and laborious. Rongmon, who had gone out to catch fish braving countless storms, never returned home. Seeing this, his beloved Rohdoi was driven to madness. Indeed, the characters of Rongmon and Rohdoi serve as representative of the hardworking masses of Assamese society, embodying the struggles and realities of the toiling class. In portraying the joys and sorrows of ordinary people, Bhupen Hazarika has vividly depicted the beauty of love and emotional devotion towards a beloved through the character of Rohdoi. Through Rohdoi's lament in the following song, the uncertainty and precariousness of the fishermen's way of life have been poignantly articulated:

*Porohi puwate tulunga nawote
Rongmon masoloi gol,
Masoke mariboloi nallage jaboloi
Dhumuha ahibor hol.
Korobat kenebakoi ghariyale badhibo
Boi jabo tezore dhol,
Gadulire porote Borhocomputrar majote
Rongmon naikiya hol.
Hiyakhoni bhukuwai akaxoloi sai sai
Rohdoi bauli hol.
O' dhou jaa gusi nixake neusi
Rongmonok anibor hol.*

The relationship between a brother and a sister is deeply affectionate. This bond has also been beautifully

portrayed by Bhupen Hazarika in his songs. In the song titled '*Bhanti o bhanti*', he captures the emotional state of a sister when her brother speaks to her about marriage:

*Kokayek: Bhanti o' bhanti o' deka ejon palu
Ture karone salu...
Bhani: O' kokaideu mur senehor kokaideu
Kinu jogor logalu moi ghoror pora khediso
Joubon kalei kaal hol
Muk buja buli bhabiso*

The line "*Bhanti o' bhanti o' deka ejon palu Ture karone salu*" expresses the affectionate feelings of an elder brother towards his younger sister. He says that he has found a suitable young man and chosen him especially for his sister. Through these words, his deep love, care, and sense of responsibility for his sister are reflected.

Another such song is the one titled '*Susuk samak koi Dipalijoniye ki koi*' which similarly reflects these thematic and nuances in a lyrical and evocative manner.

Depiction of One's Nation and Nature in Feminine Form:

Even though Bhupen Hazarika spent more of his life outside Assam, he nurtured an immense and unwavering love for his own people and homeland. Consequently, a strong sense of national affection is vividly reflected in many of his songs. In this patriotic compositions as well, he accords a dignified and elevated position to womanhood, often personifying Assam as "*Asomi*". He refers to Assam as a mother figure, and several of his songs that embody this maternal personification are listed below:

1. *Romoke jomoke asil mur Asomi*
2. *Axom amar rupohi*
3. *Junakore rati Axomire mati*
4. *AAji aai Axomi*
5. *Mur mon babh Jodi aji sorai eti hoi... (mur dexkhon Jodi aai hoi jai)*
6. *Buku hom hom kore mur aai etc.*

Bhupen Hazarika has also referred to rivers as 'Mother'. In the following song, the rivers Ganga and Padma are imagined as loving mothers, by saying *Ganga mur maa, padmau mur maa* the lyricist expresses a deep emotional connection with these rivers.

*Ganga mur maa
Padmau mur maa
O' mur chakulure duti dhara
Meghna Yamuna.*

Similarly, The Kapili River is compared with a beautiful, lively young girl. The girl is described as radiant and vibrant, yet her true greatness is not easy to understand at first glance. Her inner beauty, personality, and depth are hidden behind her own outward charm. At the same

time, the song suggests that she is not restless or overly playful. Instead, she has a calm, composed, and gentle nature. Her true value lies beyond her external appearance and is found in her inner simplicity and purity. The song is as follows-

*Kapili Kapili rangdhali suwali
(Tur) Mohima bujake taan.
.....
Kopili Kopili gabharu suwali
Chanchala nai tur maan.*

Through such songs of Bhupen Hazarika, it is revealed that he held a highly respectful and elevated perception of women in his mind.

Women and Other Related Aspects in Bhupen Hazarika's Songs:

As a humanist lyricist, Bhupen Hazarika, while expressing his thoughts and emotions through songs, has employed various feminine motifs. He has also used different metaphors related to women in his compositions. Similarly, references to women's attire, ornaments and adornments have also found a place in his songs. Some such songs are as follows:

*Romoke jomoke asil mur Axomi
Xunor kopouphule pindhi
Xingkhap pindhi loi jetukar bulere
Haat rongosuwa kori...
Koloi gol rongsong kotnu Xingkhap
Golor Xilikhare moni.....*

This song expresses both the beauty of an Assamese maiden in her traditional attire and ornaments, and the sorrow over the fading of that cultural richness over time. In the first part, it describes the radiant beauty of the girl of Assam, adorned with traditional elements such as kopou(orchid) flowers, *Singkhap*, and her hands colored with *jetuka*(henna). This portrays a vivid and graceful picture of Assamese cultural identity.

In the later part, the lyric ask where that entire color, the *Singkhap*, and the ornaments have gone. This reflects a sense of loss and concern about the disappearance of traditional beauty and cultural practices.

*Kanot lore sore kore
Duti rupor Jhumka...*

(Jonokpuror Janoki)

The above two lines of a song of Bhupen Hazarika portrays the beauty and charm of a young girl of the tea tribe. The pair of silver earrings she wears gently sway and jingle as she walks or moves. These earrings enhance her grace and attractiveness, making her appearance even more captivating. Through this imagery, the lyricist

beautifully expresses the maiden's liveliness, elegance, and enchanting beauty.

Xarodi rani tumar henu naam
.....
Xubhro nila uroni khoni
Kuwali xutare buwa
Patol Rihakhoni
Thor loga bilkhoni....

In this song, the autumn season (*Sharad Ritu*) is imagined as a beautiful queen. The lyricist describes the queen's enchanting beauty through the elements of nature. The white and blue expanse of sky is compared to her *uroni* (Veil), while the mist-covered landscape appears like a delicate *riha* woven with threads of fog. The dew covered wetlands, fields, and the surrounding scenery reflect the gentle, serene, and captivating charm of autumn. Through these vivid images, the song poetically expresses the purity, tranquility, and natural beauty of the autumn season.

Bulu o' mising gabharu
Ege mekhelate toi
Endhar xanili
O' Rihakhonit Tamulikotar
Rongatora basili
Dekatir xunor banhir xote Gunggang bojali
Xoriyohor phul hen Ribi Gaseng khoni toi
Bukute bandhili.....(Bulu O Mising Dekati)

This song praises the beauty and cultural charm of a Mising girl. Dressed in her traditional *Ribigaseng* adorned with bright red patterns, she appears graceful and enchanting. The music of the flute and *gonggang*(musical instrument) reflects the joy and traditions of her community, while her ornaments symbolize her pride in Mising culture and heritage.

Senehiu uti gol
Dugdugi bandhakot ase....(Luitor Paar Duti)

In this song, Hazarika mentioned about a traditional Assamese ornament namely *Dugdugi*. The singer mentions that with the departure of his beloved companion, he was also forced to pawn his cherished *dugdugi*, symbolizing the loss of love, joy and happiness from his life.

Xendur xendur phut tiye
Pat gabharur kopalote
.....
Kopah kopah mekhelai dhaki thuwa nokhere
Dhulit sobi aaki tai ki je xuwad pai

The above song portrays the beauty, innocence, and shy nature of a young village maiden (*Pat gabhoru*). Her peaceful forehead, soft attire, and the way she modestly hides her nails reflect her gentle and humble character. As she draws patterns in the dust with her nails, she finds

joy in her own world of dreams and imagination. This scene beautifully expresses the purity of her heart, her simplicity, and the sweet emotions of the youth.

O' bandhoi tator xalor xipini
O' bandhoi Radha ne o Rukmini
O bandhoi bijulire sawoni
Dekhi mon rai- jai kore....

O' bandhoi xun khotuwa Dhoolbiri
O bandhoi minkora Junbiri
O bandhoi jasiboje nuwaru
Mone mur keneba kore.

This song expresses a young man's deep admiration and emotional attraction toward a beautiful girl. The girl is described as a weaver at a traditional handloom. Her beauty is so striking that the speaker compares her to divine figures like Radha or Rukmini. Her eyes are described as lighting-like, and her glance makes his mind restless and emotionally unsettled.

In the second part of the song, her ornaments – told carved *Dhollbiri* and finely designed *Jonbiri* highlight her elegance and charm even more. However, the young man feels that she is beyond his reach, and he may not be able to attain her. This realization creates a sense of longing and emotional uneasiness in him.

Similarly, the social problem of dowry, which women often face, has also been reflected in one of Bhupen Hazarika's song;

Dhonor babei monor beha bepar hoi
Joutukoke xonggi buli akuwali loi.
(Tene) duti xorir eke holeu prantu nobhore
Mukha pindhi duuu thake duuuke bhulai
(Xeiyeye) durete thok khyati aru misa byeboxai.

(Jibon Jura Khyatiye Jodi)

This song highlights how greed for money and the dowry system can destroy genuine human relationship. It says that for the sake of money, people may even sell their emotions and moral values. When dowry becomes the basis of a relationship, marriage turns into a mere arrangement where two people may live together physically, but there is no emotional or spiritual connection between them.

Even though two bodies share the same space, their hearts remain empty and disconnected. They wear masks and deceive each other, hiding their true feelings, so the relationship becomes artificial and false. In the end, the song suggests that such relationships built on money, pretence and a false prestige are hollow, temporary and meaningless.

Similarly, Bhupen Hazarika has artistically evoked multiple dimensions of women's lived

experiences across his musical oeuvre. In his two autobiographical compositions, ' *Shoishavate Dhemalite*' and ' *Moi jetia ei jibonor maya eri gusi jam*', one may perceive subtle reflections of his sensibility and inner disposition towards women as encountered within the contours of his own life.

Bhupen Hazarika's lyrical universe is also enriched by the presence of numerous female figures drawn from mythology, history, and folklore. Among them are *Shakuntala* (*Pratham Prahar Ratri Phuli Asil Champa*), *Mamtaj* (*Kopi Uthe Kio Tajmahal*), *Chitrlekha* (*Chitrlekha Chitrlekha Chitra Ekhn Akana*), *Mulagabharu*, *Tejimola*(*Rod Puwabor Karone Matibanu Kak*), *Usha*(*Akaxi Janere*), *Sita*(*Godavari Noire Parore Pora*), *Panei*(*Bulu o' mising dekati*) etc.

In this manner, women find manifold representation across the vast and variegated corpus of Bhupen Hazarika's creative works. Beyond their thematic presence, Hazarika also draws extensively upon feminine beauty and physical grace as powerful poetic images, enriching the aesthetic texture of his songs. Such imagery serves not merely as ornamentation but as a means of imparting lyrical depth and symbolic resonance to his artistic expression. For example: in the song " *Axom Amar Rupahi*" (Our beautiful Assam) the evocative image of " *Xorot nixa torare xojai aaire kesh*" (the autumn night adorning the mother's hair with stars) transforms the landscape of Assam into a graceful feminine figure. Likewise, the metaphor of " *Ekhoni Nila Chador*" (A blue veil) employed in " *Bimurto Mur Nixati Jen*" (My night as if abstract) draws upon the imagery of feminine attire to create a delicate and aesthetically charged poetic atmosphere. Through such metaphors and symbols, Hazarika demonstrates his remarkable ability to fuse the feminine imagination with the natural and emotional words, thereby endowing his lyrics with enduring artistic appeal.

CONCLUSION

The presence of women in Bhupen Hazarika's songs is itself, a vast subject. However, within the scope

of this brief study, an attempt has been made to examine the position and representation of women in his songs. Based on the discussion, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. Bhupen Hazarika's songs portray women belonging to various ethnic and cultural communities. In representing women from different groups, he has incorporated distinctive elements such as their attire, hairstyles, ornaments, and other cultural markers.
2. Women appear in diverse roles throughout Bhupen Hazarika's songs, including those of the mother, sister, beloved, and wife.
3. Bhupen Hazarika has often personified Assam and nature in feminine form. He has also composed songs in which rivers are imagined and represented as women.
4. The beauty, adornment, and graceful presence of women have been celebrated in many of his songs.
5. Some of his songs reflect the place and influence of women in his own life.
6. Reference to historical, mythological, and legendary female figures such as Shakuntala, Sita, Tejimola, Usha, Chitrlekha and Mamtaj also find expression in several of Hazarika's songs.

This study demonstrates that women occupy a significant and multifaceted place in Bhupen Hazarika's musical oeuvre, where they are represented not only as individuals but also as cultural symbols, embodiments of nature, and carriers of social and emotional values.

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