

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika: an overview on his songs especially in Films in North East India

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Abstract:

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, a musical maestro of Assamese culture and musical society. He contributed a large numbers of songs to the Assamese musical society. His songs depict every aspects of Assamese culture or society. He took music as weapon to reform society, to loud his voice against the evil spirit of society or the contemporary capitalists. In this paper I will discuss the songs that Bhupen Hazarika wrote for the films.

Keywords: *Indramaloti, Bimurto mur nishati, moi jetia ai jeevanor, Meri Dharam Meri Maa*

Introduction:

For the last seven decades or more, Dr Bhupen Hazarika offered great contribution to the field of Indian long song literatures. He observed his mother land Assam in addition to her forms, beauty, her history, the sorrows, agonies, progresses, love etc. and such other subject-matters with all seriousness and deep anxieties. So for round progress of Assam and the Assamese and their wellbeing, he offered cautions and advices. The extended form of love for his motherland, Assam is the form of love for India, which is national love. He heard every call of every moment. He also studied the change of political, social and cultural background of this country with this big country with deep attention division of the country, cast differences in-equality of social condition, economical instability, administrative flaws, security of the landless and so on, variety of problems made him anxious all the time. His love for the people of his country extended to assume the love for the people of the entire globe- that he dreamt of universal love. Amongst them the love for humanity of Dr. Hazarika found its expression in his song which made his songs greater. In addition to that, the evolutionary forms of love, of friendship, brotherhood, and sexual one expressed in his songs and made his songs more appealing. That is why, each of the frontier languages of India such as Assamese, Hindi, Maratha, Bengali, Oriya ,Punjabi, English etc. echoes the sensitive mind of the speaker in the lyrics and words of Dr. Hazarika thus surmounting the political, social and geographical barriers. Hazarika's songs were able to explore the global door in all respects pertaining to the interest of mankind.

Bhupen Hazarika, he sang his first song in the second Assamese film, Agarwalla's '*Indramalati*' in 1939. When he was 12 years old. The song was

Biswa Bijoyee Na Jowan

Biswa Bijoyee Na Jowan

.....

Hazarika's songs are heart touching, because they express patriotism, sadness, happiness and the expectations of all types of people in our society. We realize the beauty of the Assamese language through his lyrics and voice. He had magic in his voice that could attract all, regardless of age, status, caste, bring us together. He was truly god-gifted. Not any people get such a voice that can bring generations together.

He introduced Assamese folk songs to the whole of India and also the world. The contributions of Bhupen Hazarika through his inspirational songs will always remain incomparable and unforgettable. All his lyrics have a descriptive and unique meaning. Dr. Hazarika used the medium of music; cinema and the written word weave political ideology and ancient traditions into the fabric of popular culture. The inspiration behind a lot of his songs was his dream of a unified Assam. The freedom struggle of India inspired much of his work. He was greatly influenced by Bishnu Rabha and Jyotiprasad Agarwalla.

Dr Hazarika was regarded as one of the greatest living cultural communicators of South Asia. He was one of the India's oldest performing singers, who entertained music lovers globally for more than seven decades.

He wandered through all the hills, dales and plains of the north east, picking up traditional and tribal music in addition to his native Assamese, and interpreted them superbly to the rest of the country and to the whole world. He composed wrote and sang for many Hindi and Bengoli films. He described both the rivers Ganga and Padma as 'Amar Ma' (my mother) in one of his compositions, bridging both the Bengals. Each of his songs has a different kind of expression. Not only that with a single itself, his way of his rendering his voice was varied and was amazingly in sync with the corresponding lyrics that he had penned for that particular song. One example to cite would be '*Bimurta Mur Nishati.....*' one of his greatest creations wherein one can find out these variations easily. While rendering the part '*....Doroir Artonador Nodi....*' his voice was distinctly different '*Kampana Kator*' part. Again, while repeating the part, '*Komal aghat Prati aghat*' the variation in his rendering style got highlighted. The unique vocal expressions in his song, '*Moi jetia ei jibonor maya eri gusi Jam*' makes its extremely touching.

One of the striking features of Bhupenda's songs is the sweet pronunciation of the difficult words used in the lyrics. Examples are '*Bristirna Parore Asankhya Jonore, Bimurto Mur Nishati, Moi Jetia ei Jibonor*' and '*Natun Nimati, Niyorore Nisha*' etc. The magic and ingenuity of Bhupen Hazarika's compositions has touched many a souls.

It is with his matchless genius that Bhupenda infused so much life in poetry that they are transformed into immortal songs which have become to constant companion of his countless fans, and of course, detractors like. His songs effortlessly caught the many moods of different seasons ranging from Spring to Autumn, from the agony to a poor farmer without sufficient to a cloth to cover himself in a chilly winter night to the inviting smell of paramour's escapade, from the festivities of Bohag to the havoc created by the mighty Brahmaputra going berserk during the monsoon.

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, the soul of Assam, through his haunting, lilting, often joyous melodies, some having cerebral and philosophic depth that transcend the bounds of sheer entertainment, he has mingled with the heartbeats not only of the north east but the nation as well.

The first song created by Dr. Bhupen Hazarika

*Kushumbaro putra shri Sankor gurue dhorisil namore taan
 Namore surote anandot nasisil pobitro bordua than
 Mur goru oi pobitro bordua than
 Akhekh jatona bhunjila Sri Sankor dhoromor namote tumi
 Hokolu dukholoi pithi dila guru, dhonya asom bhumi
 Mur goru oi dhonya asom bhumi
 Namghor hazila, raijok thapila ekotar asonot ani
 Bhaona hunote borgeet huwaga prosarila debobani*

Mur goru oi prosarila debobani
Etupi dutupi sokulu hore mur dukhuni soronok pai
Asomor akakhot dukhor rul uthise aji Shri sankor nai
mur guru oi, aji Shri sankor nai (Tezpur ,1937)

As a Humanist Singer

The best example of the humanistic ideals that imbue his works is ‘*Manuhe Manuhor Babe*’

(For man), composed in 1964. Srimanta Sankardeva brought value, equality and a touch of the divine into the lives of ordinary people; Lachit Borphukan embodied the spirit of valour and determination to fight for our country, Lakhminath Bezbarooa brought music to the language and restored it to the vibrancy; Rupkonwar Jyotiprasad Agarwalla and Kalaguru Bishnurabha brought energy and humanity while Gopinath Bordoloi fought for unity and Assam’s survival as well as her role in free India.

Bhupen Hazarika was at the confluence of these great streams, bringing them together in his unique way, spanning five centuries in a lifetime, endowing humanity and equality as his principles and symbols.

Music unites hearts and minds. Bhupenda did just that----- spreading his message of love, peace and harmony and universal brotherhood across the horizons of our minds. He wrote and sang songs covering every aspect of human life. His songs have therapeutic impact upon life of people and social fabric of the cross-section society. He was a versatile genius.

A humanist to the core, Dr. Hazarika observed life and a broad current of humanism runs through his songs and works. The plight of the oppressed often figured prominently in his works, as he made a strong pitch for upholding human dignity in unequivocal terms. The state today lost a great singer and a noble soul but his songs will stand the test of time and continue to inspire generations of musicians.

His humanistic bent of mind ensured that his singing had always been of universal joys and sorrows, of loving, of peace and brotherhood. He was the mouthpiece of downtrodden and underprivileged people and all his writings and songs tried to highlight the problems of the masses. His songs created the bondage the synthesis between Borak and Brahmaputra Valley which has crashed all barriers of caste and religion.

Bhupenda’s songs and films on the North East of India

Comprising of the present day Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim, the North East of India is a geographical unit. It presents a mixed and varied population of diverse ethnic groups and linguistic families. Dr. Bhupen Hazarika covers almost all the people of the NE Region of India in his songs.

On and from Arunachal Pradesh

Dr Bhupen Hazarika was an adventurous visitor to the NEFA and whole North East for the common cause. He visited Changlang Vand Khonsa during the 70’s decade. During the shooting the Hindi film ‘*Ye Gulista Hamara*’ directed by Atmaram, Bhupen Hazarika accompanied unit the camped at Ledo, Margherita and Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. During that period he composed the song ‘*Tirap Simantor Ropor Nai Anta.*’

He also visited Siang district of Arunachal. In along ha sang the song ‘*Siangore Galong, Luitore Khamti, Tiraporey Wangchuye Mok Kiya Matise.*’ Dr. Hazarika made a number of Films on Arunachal Pradesh of which the people can feel proud. He had immense love for the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

Bhupen Hazarika had produced, directed, and composed the music for the state's first Hindi feature film in colour '*Meri Maa Meri Dharam*' in 1977.

On this film the comments, as Dr. Hazarika noted himself, were from STATESMAN- The tragedy that brings repentance is a melodramatic variation but that does not detract from the faithfulness with which the director depicts a growingly depicts a growingly conscious tribal community trying to join the main stream of national life.

CINE ADVANCE- A colour Hindi Film from Arunachal Pradesh *Meri Dharam Meri Maa* was applauded by the large audience (At lighthouse, Calcutta) for its patriotic theme and lyrical beauty, based on the life, culture and problems of the tribal's of the state..... Hazarika deserves kudos for his lyrical treatment throughout the film. The technical qualities including the colour photography are of high order..... The music wizard himself has scored the music and also sings a few wonderful songs, Rumu Guha Thakurtya and Bose also sing for the film, the group acting deserves mention specially the acting of Tata, Tayung, Asangla and Taba.

ECONOMIC TIMES (Times of Indian Group) A Film with memorable qualitative

SCREEN, BOMBAY Few people are closer to the tribal's of the hilly regions of Eastern India, their cultural patterns and their ways of life than.... Dr. Bhupen Hazarika... so there is small wonder that when the young state of Arunachal Pradesh decided to make its first full length feature film and that too in Hindi, the assignment, which could be called an important landmark in the cultural development of the people of the state was offered to Hazarika'.....The young author (Tata) did not rule out essential progress like education, health and hygiene. He abhorred the imposition of alien culture resulting in losing one's cultural moorings and identity.

..... The film shot in ORWO colour presents vividly the scenic beauty of Arunachal and gives an insight into the ways of life of the various tribes embellished it with musical score drawn almost entirely from local tribe music.....'

He also directed a colour documentary for the Arunachal Pradesh Government on tribal folk songs and dances entitled 'For whom the Sun shines' in 1974.

In 1977, the state government had awarded him a gold medal for his outstanding contribution towards tribal welfare, and uplift of tribal culture through cinema and music.

His songs like the *Siangor Galong* (1961) and *Tirap Simantor*' 1966), *Lohitore Khamti*, *Tirapore Wangchu*, *Apatoni Bhoniti Mok kiya Maatise*, and above all most popular and celebrated song '*Suraj ka kiron*' '*Sirij Ka Bhusan Probhat Surya Sumvit Desh Hamara Arunachal*' are wonderful musical works of the legend that created an emotional bridge between the tribes of Arunachal and the people of Assam. This popular song '*Sirij Ka Bhusan Probhat Surya Sumvit Desh Hamara Arunachal*' has been translated in all major dialects of Arunachal and can be hailed as the state song of Arunachal. An Arunachali namely Gijum Tali pays tribute to Bhupenda with the words that 'Though he is no more with us, his songs will linger for years to come and he will live in the hearts of Arunachalees. As Arunachalees, we cannot for his immense contributions as pioneer of music and film development in our state. It is ironical that we have not been able to recognize him in a befitting manner as the best interpreter of folk music of Eastern India particularly of Arunachal in the map of world for music. His demise signals an end of a musical era and at this hour of music; Arunachalies have only tears to wet his coffin and prayers to give peace, tranquility and solace to his departed soul and bereaved family members.

Influenced by the unspoiled nature of Arunachal Pradesh (then NEFA) and its rich culture, Hazarika translated his feelings in most of his early songs- *Hamara Arunachal, Budha Luit', Tirap Simanta rupor nai Anta, man Khyane Khyane Binay, Asom amar rupohi Gunaru nai sesh bharatore Purba Dikhot Surya Utha Desh, Siangore Galon Luitore Khamti and Kata Juanor Mrityu Hol*) referring to 1962 Chinese Aggression'). During the period of staying in Assam he witnessed the 1962 Chinese Aggression, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru bade farewell to NEFA and Tezpur. At this situation, the Prime Minister of this sub-continent Nehru finding no alternative to save Assam helplessly left Assam and the North-East to China for occupation and prepared himself to drive away the Chinese throwing pebbles at them. Through all India radio, he stated like this "My heart bleeds for the people of Assam." Dr. Hazarika had visited Bomdila and Tawang to see the Chinese cruelty on Indian soldiers. During the fearful aggression Dr Hazarika presented himself there as one of the members of the Central board of defense and eastern India motion pictures Association to have shooting of a documentary pictures in order to strength the people's mind of that particular area. That invasion was so cruel and unkind that showing thumb to the conditions of Geneva convocation instead of respectful burial of killed Indian soldiers the China burnt their faces pouring petrol in order to deface them. Seeing the dead soldiers lying in the warfield Dr. Hazarika was greatly shocked with grief. He saluted the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the great cause of the motherland with the song-

*'koto Juwanor Mrityu hol
Kar jivan Jauban Gol
Hei mrityu apaorajeya'*

In 1977 Arunachal Pradesh Government had awarded him a gold medal for his outstanding contribution to tribal welfare and uplift of tribal culture through cinema and music. Sahitya Akademy awardee and President of Arunachal Pradesh literary Society (APLS) Yes he Dorjee Thongchi, on behalf of the state's people, urged Assam Government to immerse Hazarika's ashes in Siang, Subansiri, Kameng, Lohit, Dibang rivers on which the music icon composed various famous songs.

The legend was deeply influenced by the land, environment and people of Arunachal Pradesh and set his foot on Arunachal soil in the early seventies to write and compose masterpieces with social and cultural consciousness and won the heart of the tribal people here.

He used to say 'I have never composed any song without any meaning'. If his song '*O Bideshi Bandhu Durbhogia*' makes him the cultural Ambassador, '*Manuhe Manuhor Babe*' translated into foreign languages is an effort on social reconstruction. '*Biswa Bijoyee Na-Jowan*', which he sang as a child prodigy to '*Koto Juwanor Mrityu Hol*' he composed and sang after Indo-China war of 1962, filled everyone with the fire of patriotism.

On and from Meghalaya and Nagaland

Through his ballads he drew the sketch of a 'Santhal' damsel walking with all the vibrations of her beauty along the Rupsi River. He created the beauty of Kanchi, the Gurkhali damsel, searching for her favorite cow along the banks of Kapili stream in the magical moments of colour splashed sunset. He narrated the feelings of his areal sojourn from Guwahati to Tezpur and the memory of the Dalimi, the Naga Girl from Kohima, who travelled with him by train symbolizing a strong bondage between the hills and the valleys of the North East India through his songs.

On and from Tripura

In memory of legendary singer composer Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, Patricia Mukhim writes- ‘.....Bhupen Hazarika made the film Pratidhwani based on the Khasi legend of U Manik Raitong. I watched that movie and identified with it because it was the first time I saw someone saw in our traditional costume in the big screen. Only Bhupenda could have succeeded in shamelessly fusing Khasi legend in the Assamese Script with his imitable style and format. In his conversation with me at the time Bhupen Hazarika expressed a desire that we should be making more Khasi films. He even offered to help us with script writing and providing other support including writing the songs for us if we could team up with him. Bhupenda has captured the beauty of the Khasi hills and their winsome belles in some of his songs. It was evident that he was in love with the place.’

Conclusion:

The demise of Bhupen Hazarika, cultural icon, is a great loss not only for Assam but also for the entire country, Amor Ghosh, a member of TAA said on the death of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika. ‘I admire him for his passion as he used to sing for social causes’, Ghosh who did not meet the legendary figure but listened to his songs extensively, said.

‘The most important part of his songs was the appeal for social cause which is absent in today’s songs’ he said adding the TAA members will meet soon to decide on the best possible way to pay respect to Bhupen Hazarika. Certainly, TAA will organize a musical show highlighting his creations, Ghosh added.

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