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Bhupen Hazarika's Songs and His Ideological Vision for Social Transformation: an Overview from Historical Perspective

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Abstract:

Bhupen Hazarika, the leading cultural architect of modern Assam, was an institution in himself: singer, poet, lyricist, musician, and artist of the world. He gave a new light to the Assamese folklore by incorporating aspect into the Modern Assamese songs. He composed and sang many songs which are the reflection of Assamese society. Moreover, his creativity and vibrant consciousness awakened the general masses. Bhupen Hazarika was the true representative of the age for cultural awakening in the Assamese society. It may be noted that his songs revealed the revolutionary spirit, patriotism beauty, universal brotherhood, humanism, nationalism and social consciousness. His ideological tendencies oriented with his heart beating songs. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to analyze his ideology through his songs.

Keywords: Nationalism, patriotism, universal brotherhood, humanism.

1. Introduction

Some rational human personalities carry the struggle for transformation of existing hegemony of the society. For this purpose, they have taken the socio-cultural and political struggle with revolutionary approach. This kind of struggle can also be found in Assamese society. It may be noted that in the sixteenth century, Sankardeva and Madhavdeva were launched the socio-cultural struggle for formation of Assamese society. Moreover, this socio-cultural struggle made neo-renaissance in the Assamese society. Later on, towards the end of the twentieth century, some Assamese legends like Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Bishnuprasad Rabha, Bhupen Hazarika have continued this struggle for reconstruction of Assamese society. Amongst the great personalities, Bhupen Hazarika has been contributing a lot to socio-cultural formation of Assamese society. As we know that Bhupen Hazarika was a great musician, lyricist, film director, writer, politician, social reformer. Moreover, Bhupen Hazarika was a Renaissance man whose position as a great cultural visionary and humanist is perhaps unmatched. As a pioneer of cultural crusade and universal humanist, Bhupen Hazarika's cultural and musical engagements have not only inspired the cultural activists of the generations but almost all sections of the Assamese society even today. It may be noted that he is great people's singer. Bhupen Hazarika has sung and composed many number of musical songs such as "Manuhe Manuhor Babe", "Ami Axomia Nohou dukhia", "Sitare Semaka Rati", "Axom Amar Rupahi", "Buku Horn Kore". The co-ordination of different aspects like humanist, nationalist, revolutionary consciousness, patriotism, modernity and historical sense is seen in his music and songs. Bhupen Hazarika was not only a singer; he was a revolutionary person who has taken great efforts for making of the socio-cultural Renaissance. Moreover, he has opened to revolutionary options to fight out the evil, discrimination from the society through his heart-beating songs. Therefore, this paper is making an attempt to analyze ideological tendencies of Bhupen Hazarika through his musical songs and also analyze the historical background in which the songs were written.

2. Objective of the Paper

As we generally know that most of common people and intellectuals tend to project an image of Bhupen Hazarika as a cultural icon and musician but this research paper has an attempt to project Bupen Hazarika as a man of Renaissance. For this purpose, the paper is a humble attempt to reflect of the revolutionary, patriotic, nationalist, humanist and socio-cultural ideologies and activities of Bhupen Hazarika through analyzing his songs and musical activities. The paper is based on following objectives:

1. To study how the songs and musical works composed by Bhupen Hazarika influence on Assamese Society.
2. To find out the public deeds and ideological tendencies of Bhupen Hazarika through his songs.
3. To examine Bhupen Hazarika's humanist, nationalist and revolutionary sentiment through understanding with his songs.
4. To find out the historical situation in which the songs were composed.

3. Methodology of the Paper

The present paper is based on historical and analytical method. The data or facts have been collected from different sources. For this paper, the secondary source or data used which were collected from various books, journals, internet, newspapers etc.

4. Research Question of the Paper

In this paper, the following research question has been posed:

1. Was he a man of Renaissance?
2. Was he attempting to create humanist, nationalist and revolutionary consciousness through his songs.

5. Discussion

Bhupen Hazarika was a creative genius of Modern Assam. He was a great musician, playwright, poet and above all, he was a great artist. Moreover, many intellectuals tend to project Bhupen Hazarika as a man of Renaissance because he tried to his hands successfully in many fields with his different approaches. Bhupen Hazarika also tried to improve socio-cultural status of Assamese Society. For this reason, he was the true representative of the age of socio-cultural awakening in Assamese Society. It may be noted that he was an outstanding singer and musician and his vision and mission for socio-cultural transformation found deep expression in his songs. Undoubtedly, for Bhupen Hazarika, humanism and beauty constituted the core of his life concerns. His vision for culture linked with the humanism, oppression and subjection of the masses which is reflected in songs. It may be noted that Bhupen Hazarika has written and composed many number songs in different historical background and therefore, his songs represented the spirit of nationalism, humanism, non-violence principle, world peace and universal brotherhood, revolutionary thinking, patriotism, etc.

As a singer and musician, Bhupen Hazarika's perception of life and romantic and full of hope for human world. Therefore, we must remember that Bhupen Hazarika was, first and foremost, a singer with a singer's vision for the human world. It may be noted that Bhupen Hazarika's vision for social transformation of human societies was shaped through real life interactions with the people. His observations of rural Assamese society and his contact with social hegemony and tradition reflected through his songs. Moreover, his social consciousness in songs is the reflection of the contemporary social life of Assamese society.¹ It is to be noted that he has never been singing his songs in isolation of contemporary socio-cultural, economic and political aspect of society. He became aware with several of the socio-religious custom and tradition of our society. Bhupen Hazarika is a great humanist of social consciousness which is reflected in his songs. The people of Assam used his songs as weapon for challenging of the age old socio-religious customs and tradition. Moreover, Bhupen Hazarika had challenged the age old caste system through one of his song "Jubati Anamika (youngest Anamika)". The lines of the song are as follows:

"Jubati Anamika Guswami
Aru Jubak Prasanta Dase
Biyat henu kisu badha pale
Ram badha pale"ⁱⁱ

Through his song, Bhupen Hazarika tried to challenge social discrimination in the of caste system. In this song, the high caste girl Anamika Guswami 's marriage with Prasanta Das, a lower caste boy is a challenged towards age old caste system which made influenced on the entire part of India. Moreover, Bhupen Hazarika's songs also remarked as rebel against social authority and evil tradition of the society. It may be noted that he had raised his voice against the prevailing customs, of the foolishness of narrow minded people through his song –"Duk Duk Duk dambaru (Tom Tom Tom Tom dambaru)".

Moreover, Bhupen Hazarika has never a singing his musical songs in isolation of contemporary socio-political and cultural atmosphere. In fact, he was concerned with a social consciousness and his songs become the mirror of contemporary society. It may be note that Bhupen Hazarika has deeply influenced by Sankardeva who was a great socio-religious reformer of the Assamese Society. He felt to need the unity and universal brotherhood philosophy of Sankardeva for reconstruction of the present Assamese society. His conscious for society is revealed his famous song," Agni jugar Firingati Moi ".

The song is as follows:

"Agni jugar Firingati Moi
Natun Axom Garhim
Xarba harar Xarbaswa punar Phiri Anim
Natun Axom Garhim."ⁱⁱⁱ

It may be noted that his songs like ModaroreFul Henu (They say of the Moder blossom), Ato-rikshaw, Buko home homai, Nai Voi Nai, Nelage samaj Nelage Samaj etc. are the reflection of socio-cultural, religious dogmas and tradition of contemporary society.

It may be noted that Bhupen Hazarika was multi-dimensional personality with revolutionary thinking. He believed that the social transformation of human society depends on revolutionary thinking and practice. His revolutionary approaches are found on the issue of socio-cultural and political responsibilities. His revolutionary mind is reflected in his many songs. Bhupen Hazarika was singing the famous song "Luitporia Tejal Deka (fresh Youth of the bank of Luit)"with his revolutionary mind. Also in his famous song "patridhani honu moi", the revolutionary spirit is revealed through heart beating voice of Bhupen Hazarika. The song composed in 1980 when the Assom andolan was spread throughout the countryside. The song is as follows:

Raij aaji Bhaoriya
Deshei Natghar
Kone ki Bhau loba, aaha
Homai je takor."ⁱⁱⁱ

This song become very popular even today amongst the Assames youth. The revolutionary inspiration is infused among the Assamese youth by this song. Also his another song "Ami Asomiya nohou dukhia" is the reflection of his revolutionary thinking. The song is as follows:

"Ami Asomia nohou dukhia

Bulile santona loville nohabo

Aji Asomiya

Nijok nichinila

Asom rosatole jabo “ iv

This song is written in 1960 but during the days of Assam Andolan in 1979. This song became very popular throughout the entire part of Assam. Through this song, we are awaking about our duties and responsibilities for the society. It is to be noted that his song “Agni Jugar Firrigoti moi (of the fiery age I’m a Spark) infused revolutionary spirit among the Assamese. Also his songs like Bistirno Parore (In the wide expanse), Luitor bolia ban (O the mad torrents of the Luit), Tumi nutun Purush (You are the new youth) are the reflection of revolutionary spirit. No doubt, Bhupen Hazarika called the people as the real fighter in terms of the conflict between light and darkness. As a lifelong revolutionary he had played a vital role in movement to bring in social transformation which is reflected by his revolutionary songs. From the study such songs, we can say that he tried to bring a cultural revolution in Assam.

Also Bhupen Hazarika had a clear vision about nationalism. His idea of revolution and his artistic perspective also lay as the basic of his understandings of the concepts of nationalism. First of all, he was a true believer in tradition and past heritage of Assam as well as India. He also felt Assamese nationalism into his broader humanistic and artistic arena. Bhupen Hazarika’s nationalistic approach is clearly reflected by his songs. However, nationalistic sense of unity is revealed in Bhupen Hazarika’s famous song “pahar-Bhoiramor Sangamsthal (in the confluence of the hills and dales) “. Through this song, it is reflected that Assamese community is an outcome result of the different migrants from the rest of India and the different indigenous tribal groups. So he had always spoken in favour of unity and brotherhood between the hills and the dales.

Bhupen Hazarika was a true humanist. He believed that only humanist approach could change in the world. He had a deep consciousness about human world. He is a singer of the common people. Bhupen Hazarika was not only an artist of beauty but also a singer of humanism. He moved away from just pure art towards the light of human life. He believed that to establish peace and universal brotherhood in this world, humanism was necessary amongst the human world. Moreover, Bhupen Hazarika talks about humanism in many of his songs. For example, in his song” Manuhe Manuhor babe “he sang:

Manuhe Manuhor Babe

Jadihe okano Nabhabe

Okani Sahanubhure

Vabibo konenu kuwa? samaniya?” v

This famous song was composing during the days of Language Agitation. The song is inspiring the Assamese people and infused sense of unity amongst the different communities of Assam. It may be noted that his humanist thinking is revealed in his many songs like “Moi ati jajabor “, “Jadi Jivane Kande”, “Bhoor Barikha Bane “, etc. For Bhupen Hazarika, humanism is about thinking for the welfare of human society and help man to develop to a better human being. It is to be noted that Bhupen Hazarika was an ardent propagator of humanism.

Then, most important aspect is that many number of Bhupen Hazarika’s songs are the reflection of patriotism. Amongst his songs, “Buku Hom Hom kore “may be mentionable. This song was composing during the Chinese invasion of 1962 in Assam . The common masses vigorously inspired through this song. His patriotism is revealed in his songs such as “Asom Amar Rupahi”, “Tumiye Mur”, Jilikabo Luitore Par”, “Kohimare Aadhunika Dalimi”, “Majuli Rohdoi”, “Mising Dekati”, “Luitor Par Duti”.

It may be noted that historical sense is revealed many number of Bhupen Hazarika’s songs. In the famous Assamese film “Maniram Dewan (1963)”, Bhupen Hazarika is singing one of song “Kalonjaya Maniram”. The song is as follows:

“Kalonjaya mritunjaya kalonjaya Maniram

Ture mritu aaji

Ghare ghare kore

Mukti jujjaru aahban”vi

This song is revealed the historical character of Maniram Dewan who revolted against the British colonial hegemony. As a renaissance person, Bhupen Hazarika has become concern about Assamese culture and Assamese Heritage. He also gave more importance towards Indian culture and civilization. Thus, historical sense is reflected in Bhupen Hazarika’s songs.

7. Conclusion

The research paper revealed that Bhupen Hazarika was a creative giant. He was a musician, singer, politician and above all, a great artist. His ideology was present in his songs. In his long life, he composed and sang many number of songs in which his ideology is reflected. Bhupen Hazarika tried to infuse revolutionary spirit and nationalism among the masses during the Assam Andolan and the Language movement in Assam. He also infused patriotism when the Chinese invaded India in 1962. The study is also revealed that Bhupen Hazarika was a true humanist. He raised his voice against the racial discrimination in USA. He supported to Poul Robson. His humanist ideology is revealed through his songs. In conclusion, we can say that Bhupen Hazarika is a Renaissance person whose ideological tendencies associated with his socio-cultural and political activities.

8. References

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- ii. Ibid, p. 85
- iii. Ibid, p. 298
- iv. Ibid, p. 52
- v. Ibid, p. 199
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- vii. Ibid, p. 326