

Echo of Poverty in the Songs of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika

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ABSTRACT: Dr. Bhupen Hazarika is one of the most renowned personalities in the Indian music. He was a multifaceted talent ranging across several arenas. He was an Indian playback singer who excelled in various roles such as a lyricist, composer, singer, music director, screenwriter, film director, actor, educator, writer, editor, social reformer and politician at the same time. His fame extended beyond the boundaries of the state of Assam and India, making a robust impact on the global stage. He is a bright star in the Assamese cultural world. Bhupen Hazarika composed and sang his songs for the poor and oppressed in his efforts to promote human love, equality and brotherhood. His songs appealed mostly to the downtrodden and deprived sections of society.

Every song of the artist is incomparable with his sweet combination of emotions and words and his unique skill in composing melodies and his own appeal. Dr. Hazarika's songs also reflect contemporary social life. He had a profound love for people and therefore he depicted all the pictures of happiness and sorrow, laughter and tears, hopes and despair through his songs. He is popularly known as 'Bard of Brahmaputra' and 'Sudhakantha'.

KEYWORD: Sudhakantha, poverty, exploitation, humanism, inequality, Social reform.

Purpose:

In our discussion *Echo of poverty in the songs of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika*, we will try to highlight the songs Dr. Bhupen Hazarika composed and sang that represent the poor and deprived section of the society.

Procedure:

In discussing this topic, priority will be given to the approaches and personal thoughts of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, selecting the following five songs of his as a main basis.

- i. 'Dola he Dola'
- ii. 'Sitore Semeka Rati'
- iii. 'Auto-Rickshaw Chalao Ami Duyu Bhai'
- iv. 'Moi Eti jajabor'
- v. 'O Mur Dharitri Aai, Soronote Diba Thai'

Discussion of the main topic:

One of the superb creations and heart-touching song of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika is ‘Dola he Dola’. This song beautifully expresses the hard struggle of the working marginalized class like fishermen, the stone-cutter, train-driver, rickshaw-puller, poor villagers etc. The song echoes the poor life of theirs:

“Dola hey dola, dola hey dola

Eka beka batere korhiao korhiao

Bor bor manuhor dola

Apon korilo bonuwar jibonok

Deha bhagorai tola

.....

.....

Juge juge japi diye metmora bojati

Kandho bhango-bhango kore(hey kore),

Bor bor manuhe dolat toponi jay

Amarhe gham bor sore, o sore”

In his songs, Dr. Hazarika has mainly focused on the conflicts of ordinary man. This song ‘dola hey dola’, (palanquin, o palanquin) portrays the tiresome and tedious lives of the palanquin carriers.

Dr. Hazarika could feel the pain of the ordinary people like palanquin carriers. They have embraced their lives as workers, but the well-to-do have been imposing the burden of labour on the common people since ages. They are in sweat and toil bearing the weight of the Raja-Maharaja and Jamindars in their cozy palanquins, but the aristocrat who sleep comfortably inside the palanquin have no regrets about the suffering and poverty of the ordinary working class.

The most poignant part of the song bears agony of a poor father (a palanquin carrier), who notices repeatedly the Raja sitting inside the palanquin in royal attire, but he could not provide even a shirt to his naked son during the Bihu festival. Although tears come flow, still he shall continue carrying the palanquin. Dr. Hazarika sings:

" dolar bhitorot tirbir korise

sohoki patore paag

ghone ghone dekhisu lonsor korise

sukula sonworor aag

morhe loratik aibar bihute

nidilo sutare sola

sokulu olaleo monti nebhango

korhiai loi jao dola.”

He composed the song having ‘dola’ (a palanquin) as a symbol of exploitation of the feudal era.

Today there is no feudal era and there is hardly any palanquin, but there are a number of exploiters in the society. Such an attitude is clearly reflected in the song.

Another heart-touching song by Dr. Hazarika that represents the poor and exploited section is '*Sitore Semeka Rati*'. His heart always cried for the poorest of the poor for their acute sufferings. He sings:

“Sitore semeka rati
Semeka sitore rati
Bastra bihin kuno khetiyokor
Bhagi pora pojatir
Tuh jui akurar
Umi umi joli thoka
Raktim jen ek uttap hou”

It is a remarkable song wherein Dr. Hazarika talks about the suppressed and deprived masses. The song is a vivid portrayal of the poor sections of the society. He loved and felt for the working people with all his heart. Every word, every line of the song paints a real picture of the lives of the farmers and how sad the way of life they live. The farmers have no clothes to wear in the dry winter night. He wants to be warmth emanating from husk-fire which takes away the coldness of the peasants shivering in their broken huts. He wants to give them security and inspiration to become strong. Dr. Hazarika revolts against the rulers and feudal for their autocratic nature.

Another remarkable song by Dr. Hazarika '*Auto-Rickshaw Chalao Ami Duyu Bhai*', written and composed by Dr Bhupen Hazarika, became enormously popular. The song bridges the gap between generations both young and old. This very song was sung by Dr Bhupen Hazarika himself along with his singer brother Jayanta Hazarika. The flawless vocals and harmonizing skills touches each and every heart sung by the singer brother duo.

Auto-Rickshaw Chalao Ami Duyu Bhai

Guwahati kori gulzar
BA fail moi
Soru bhai MA pass
Bankot bohutu dhar
Bankot bohutu dhar

.....

Bhaitir matho eti dosh ase

Jalukbari priyo tar

.....

Priya aji hobo passenger

Moi hudhilu

Tok bia koribo janu

Noholi je toi professor

.....

Mor preyosiye buje dada

Dignity of labour

Dignity of labour

Dr. Hazarika's songs are the source of encouragement in life that advocate the equality, free of hatred violence, racial discrimination etc. This song highlights the inspiration and motivation of the educated Assamese youths to take up all kinds of work irrespective of their academic achievements, and treat every worker with dignity and full of respect, irrespective of their caste, creed and religion.

"*Moi eti jajabor*" is an iconic song composed and sung by Dr. Hazarika. He depicts the life of nomad who has no address or any home of his own.

Moi eti jajabor

Moi eti jajabor

Dhorar Dihinge Dipange Lowro

Nibisari nija ghar

.....

Moi dekhiso onek gagan chumbi

Ottalika xari

Tar satei dekhiso kotona

Grihohin noro nari

.....

.....

This lyric delineates the miserable plight of the poor section, who does not possess a shelter or food to survive. This is a pure contrast between those suffering in the lap of poverty as well as the well to do. The speaker highlights a nomadic life who sees the difference of the two sections where one enjoys the paramount of life in their sky-kissing mansions, the other takes shelter under their shadow.

The song "*O Mur Dharitri Aai, Soronote Diba Thai*" describes the poignant plea of poor landless farmer to the mother earth for surviving them..

O Mur Dharitri Aai

Soronote Diba Thai

Xetiyokor

Nistar Nai

Mati Bine Oxohai

Doya Kora

Doyaxila Aai

.....

.....

Rod Borokhun Kati Kori

Gham Pelai Soh Kori

Tomar Bukut Son Sopau

Ane Niye Karhi

This song paints a vivid picture of poor life. It echoes poverty through the voice of a poor landless farmer pleading with Dharitri, the mother earth. The farmer without land symbolizes tremendous economic helplessness, as survival is not possible without land. Despite enduring harsh conditions in the sun and rain, the farmers are exploited with the fruits of their labor which is snatched away. The earth has been personified as a compassionate mother. The song criticizes the socio-economic conditions that strip dignity from those who feed the entire nation. It's not just a prayer to mother nature, but a cry against inequality and injustice.

Conclusion:

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika was a true humanist whose songs powerfully highlighted the harsh realities of poverty. His compositions serve as a living document of society, giving voice to the struggles of the poor and marginalized. Through vivid and realistic portrayals, he depicted the miserable plight of farmers and the despair of educated youths forced to drive auto-rickshaws due to unemployment. His songs capture the pain of a society. Deeply moving and socially conscious, his music not only touches heart's core, but also had the influence to awaken minds of people and challenge social inequality.

Notes & References:

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4. Hazarika, Surya (Edited) : Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Geet Samagrah.
5. Dutta, Namrata: Bhupen Da, Jyoti Prakashan.
6. Talukdar, Darshan (Collector): "Manuhe Manuhor Babe....."Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Geetor Sarai.