

DR BHUPEN HAZARIKA'S SONGS: A MIRROR OF HUMANISTIC VALUES

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Abstract

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika's oeuvre is a testament to the transformative power of music, echoing the hopes, struggles, and aspirations of humanity across generations. His songs have bridged cultural divides, speaking to the hearts of people from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations. This study delves into the rich tapestry of humanistic values woven into Dr. Hazarika's music, examining the ways in which his lyrics and melodies embody the principles of compassion, empathy, and social justice. Through an in-depth analysis of select compositions, this research highlights the enduring impact of Dr. Hazarika's music as a catalyst for social change, promoting universal values of love, unity, and understanding. By exploring the humanistic essence of Dr. Hazarika's songs, this paper celebrates his legacy as a visionary artist and a champion of humanism.

Keywords

Compassion, humanism, music

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Introduction

The term 'humanism' hinges on love of humanity. The ideal of humanism is love towards human beings. Humanism recognizes the dignity of man. It spreads the message of universal brotherhood. In this sense, humanism, like a bridge, builds the relationship between the individual and society. There is a close connection between human beings and society, a result of humanism. Humanism tries to enrich man's goals and values. The key idea behind humanism is a welfare society as humanism inclines towards the peace and progress of individuals and society too. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that Dr. Bhupen Hazarika (hereafter Dr. Hazarika), the great bard, is not only a singer and an artist but also a humanitarian to a great extent. Dr. Hazarika is one who realizes the sorrows and feelings of the common people of North North-Eastern region in particular and India in general. Although he is popularly known worldwide as a singer, he traveled extensively and realized that social humanistic ideas are essential for the welfare of future human society. As a singer, Dr. Hazarika is famous in the world of music and culture. It is worth noting that Dr. Bhupen Hazarika received the Bharat Ratna, and his contribution to Assamese art and culture is truly praiseworthy. Dr. Hazarika's songs, on one hand, discard violence and oppression, and on the other hand, call for patriotism, love, brotherhood, and harmony. Thus, his songs spread a message of mankind throughout the world. There is no doubt that Dr. Hazarika is a leading campaigner of humanism in the present-day world.

Objectives:

This paper aims to:

- Explore the concept of Humanism in the context of Dr. Hazarika's philosophy
- Examine the reasons behind Dr. Hazarika's advocacy for humanism
- Analyze Dr. Hazarika's role as a prominent proponent of humanism and his contributions to the field

Methodology:

This study employs a descriptive-evaluative approach, drawing on data from diverse sources including books, journals, magazines, newspapers, articles, and the lyrics of Dr. Hazarika's songs.

Discussion and findings:

Humanism is rooted in humanity. It is a philosophy that prioritizes human values, focusing on the individual and collective well-being of people. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, notable writers such as Thomas Mann, Jean-Paul Sartre, Kurt Vonnegut, Umberto Eco, and Salman Rushdie have explored humanism,

presented modern perspectives and identified themselves as humanists of their time.¹ Humanism emphasizes the supreme value of humanity, generally referring to a sense of compassion and empathy towards all people. It's an ethical value prioritizing human well-being, making it a term centered on humanity. The word "humanism" originates from the Latin words "Humus" (Earth) and "Humanus" (Human), highlighting rational beings on Earth. Humanism promotes welfare and equality, recognizing no distinctions based on gender, caste, creed, or economic status. This philosophy has roots in ancient Indian thought, evident in concepts like the union of the self in the Bhagavad Gita, and ideas of soul and life after death in Buddhism. Buddhism and Jainism emphasize human and social values, faith, benevolence, and kindness, aligning with humanistic principles. Marxism, existentialism, and pragmatism also incorporate elements of humanism. The term "humanism" emerged in the 19th century, but its spirit has evolved significantly over time, shaping modern values and perspectives.

Dr. Hazarika worked tirelessly to eradicate anti-social elements like superstition, casteism, and oppression of the poor by the rich from society. He envisioned a society where everyone is considered equal, without social differences. Through his songs and lyrics, Dr. Bhupen Hazarika aimed to portray an Assamese society with a revolutionary attitude.

Dr. Hazarika was deeply disturbed by anti-social activities like religious commercialization, injustice, corruption, and exploitation. He envisioned a society where everyone is equal and enjoys equal rights. Dr. Hazarika drew inspiration from revered figures like Mahapurusa Sri Manta Sankar Dev, Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla, and Bishnu Rabha. Like these great saints, he recognized that materialistic pursuits had eroded social justice. He tirelessly worked to uplift the marginalized, protesting the oppression of British colonialism and the plight of laborers and workers. As an artist and writer, Dr. Hazarika expressed his emotions through revolutionary songs, aiming to transform society. Some of his notable works include:

"Agni Zugar Fringati Moi

Notun Bharat Gahrin

SarbaHararSarbaswa

Punar Ghurai Anim

Notun Bharat Gahrin

Nara-kankalar Astro Xaji

XoshonkarikBadhim

SarbahararSarbaswa

Punar FiraiAnim

Notun Bharat Gahrim”²

(I am the flame of the fire age and do establish a new India).

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika aimed to eliminate exploitation from society, urging people to bravely combat social evils through his songs. He was aware of religious conflicts and infused his work with revolutionary, humanistic, and socially just themes. Dr. Hazarika’s songs addressed society as a whole, realistically portraying both the affluent and the underprivileged. He highlighted the struggles of the poor and marginalized, who often served as servants to the wealthy. Moved by their hardships, he wrote poignant songs, such as:

“Heidola Heidola

Eka-bekabaterekahriaukahriau

Bar barmanuhardola

Hei eidola”³

(We, the weak, are bound to carry the load of the rich, ignoring our sorrows, pains, and weariness. We toil, carrying the load of the Maharajas).

Furthermore, Dr. Hazarika was deeply aware of the struggles of the poor in society, understanding how they struggled to make ends meet and provide for their families. Despite their desire for happiness and prosperity, they were often exploited by the wealthy for their own gain. Dr. Hazarika’s lyrics consistently advocated for the upliftment of the downtrodden, inspiring them to live with dignity and respect. His famous phrase, “We are in the same boat, brother,” reflects his inclusive and compassionate outlook, recognizing no boundaries between rich and poor. Through his work, Dr. Hazarika sought to establish social justice and equality, addressing the widespread manipulation and exploitation that exists globally. His message resonates universally, making his songs popular worldwide. Dr. Bhupen Hazarika’s creations appeal to people everywhere, urging them to recognize their shared humanity. He envisioned a society built on love, compassion, and mutual respect, where individuals prioritize the well-being of others. One of his notable songs embodies this spirit:

“Manuhe manuhar babe

Jodihe akano nebbie

Akanixahanubhutire

Bhabibokunenukuwa, samaniya”⁴

(If human beings don’t think of their fellow men and women, then who will care for each other?)

Dr. Hazarika’s songs and lyrics are a humanitarian call to action, emphasizing

integration and unity. His works are characterized by an absence of sorrow and unhappiness, instead promoting a universal message of hope and joy. His humanism transcends negativity, aiming to connect people across tribes, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds. Dr. Hazarika's primary goal was to eradicate hatred and violence, fostering a society built on humanity, compassion, and brotherhood. He is aptly regarded as an exceptional artist, singer, and philanthropist, advocating equality and uplifting the marginalized. His songs are a beacon of hope for those in darkness, yearning for light. One of his notable songs exemplifies this spirit:

*“Natunpurush, natunpurush
Tumitonohowabhirukapurush
Hate kame ajjodinuwapurush
Kaliloihobatumipuronipurush”⁵*

(You, the new generation, are not cowards. If you don't step out of the darkness, you'll be the old generation. So, come out with a new face.)

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika takes pride in Assam, loving his motherland and desiring its prosperity. Humanitarians like him – poets, artists, and singers – nurture human love and integrity globally, seeking to build a society rooted in humanity and love. Through his songs, Dr. Hazarika spreads personal love and humanity, instilling confidence in the marginalized. His social consciousness and humanitarian efforts are remarkably comprehensive, as reflected in this song:

*“Morgaanhokbohuasthahinatarbiparite
Ekgabhirasthargaan
Morgaanhok
Kalpana-bilaxarbiparite
Eksatyapraxhastirdhyan”⁶*

(I want my songs to become songs of belief and confidence.)

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika's humanism stems from love and confidence, emphasizing universal acceptance. He envisioned a humanity free from corruption, exploitation, and societal evils. His feelings of humanity are universally applicable, transcending geographical boundaries, as beautifully conveyed in this song:

*“Multitemporal Mississippi hoi Bholgarroopchalo
AtowarporaAstriya hoi Paris sawatilolu
MoiIllorarparapurairahanChikagolekahriyalo
GalibarshwerDushwberminaratsunapalo
Bare baredekhobatormanuhoaponhoiche bor”⁷*

(I've traveled from the Luit to the Mississippi, seen the beauty of the Volga. I've embraced Paris, Chicago. All the people I met were dear to me.)

Dr. Hazarika is undoubtedly a genius, not just of Assam, but of the world. He's a talented musician, poet, and playwright who embodies humanism in its truest sense. He's renowned for his timeless songs that promote universal justice, peace, harmony, and humanity. His outlook on life is optimistic and hopeful. He'll be remembered as a singer and artist who tirelessly worked to unite people through humanity. Dr. Hazarika is a great humanist and an inspiration to humanity. His songs and lyrics serve as powerful tools to challenge outdated socio-religious customs and superstitions. By speaking out against social discrimination and casteism, he's a true rebel against social evils.

Dr. Hazarika's multifaceted personality has the power to spark revolutionary change in society. One notable example is a song he composed during the Assam agitation of 1980:

*"Raijajibhaoria
Dexeinatghar
Kone ki bhauloba aha
Samay je takar"*⁸

(This song became an anthem for the new generation, inspiring them to revolt.)

Dr. Hazarika envisioned a society where diverse communities coexist with love, compassion, and brotherhood, making him a champion of humanity. He denounces social evils, advocating for a humanity that transcends inhumanity. Through his travels, he witnessed the struggles of the poor and the stark contrast between the affluent and the marginalized. Dr. Hazarika aspired for a world without class distinctions or discrimination, where everyone can live with dignity. One of his poignant songs reflects this vision:

*"Moidekhisuanekgagansumbiattalikarxari
Tar chateidekhisu katana grihahinnar-nari
Moidekhisukichughararsamukhbagisare ache bhori
Arudekhisumarahaphulorpaporiakalatepora xori"*⁹

(I've seen many high buildings and homeless people wandering around.)

Dr. Hazarika was aware that over seventy percent of the country's population lived below the poverty line, lacking homes and livelihoods. He felt a deep sense of helplessness, unable to do more than express his emotions through his enduring songs and lyrics. He was particularly moved by the plight of the homeless, wanting

to share what he had with them. The struggles of those wandering in the winter deeply pained him, and he voiced his anguish thus:

*“Xitarexemekarati
Xitarexemekarati
Xemekaxitarerati
Xitarexemekarati
Bastrobihinkonokhetiyakar
Bhagiparapajatir
Fujikura
Umiumijolithoka
Raktimjenetiuttap hou”¹⁰*

(I want to be the light for the poor farmers in the cold night)

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that Dr. Bhupen Hazarika’s multifaceted personality, encompassing his roles as a singer, songwriter, poet, and social reformer, has left an indelible mark on the world. His songs, imbued with humanism, unity, and brotherhood, continue to inspire and uplift people across cultures and borders. Dr. Hazarika’s philosophy, akin to that of Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda, emphasizes the importance of love, compassion, and social justice, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. His works, replete with messages of hope, equality, and freedom, serve as a beacon for a world plagued by social evils like exploitation, corruption, and inequality. Though he may not be physically present, his legacy lives on through his timeless songs, poems, and literary works, which will continue to resonate with people of all ages, inspiring a more harmonious and prosperous world. Thus, in a nutshell, it can be said that Dr. Hazarika’s humanistic ideals, emphasizing the inherent worth and dignity of every individual will forever remain a guiding light, illuminating the path towards a brighter future for all.

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