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President, PM condole death

NEW DELHI, Nov 5: President Pratibha Devisingh Patil has condoled the passing away of Dr Bhupen Hazarika.

In her condolence message the President said, “Dr Hazarika was a creative genius whose deep baritone voice was instantly recognised by poetry and music lovers across the nation. His use of folk music with a touch of the contemporary made his compositions unique in their own way. In his passing away, the nation has lost a music maestro and an artiste of exceptional ability.”

Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh has condoled the demise of the legendary composer and singer, even as Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi declared a state mourning besides proposing to set up an institute in his memory.

The Chief Minister, who was scheduled to leave for Mumbai to see the ailing singer was forced to cancel his trip at the last moment on health grounds. He described his inability to visit Mumbai as most unfortunate and said that he considered himself most unlucky.

Talking to newsmen, Gogoi promised State assistance, besides announcing State mourning and State funeral. He also assured that the request for conferring Bharat Ratna on Dr Hazarika would be pursued with the Central Government.

“Today is one of the saddest days, not only for Assam but for the music lovers of whole world. He was a very popular singer, artiste, music director, great actor and his contribution in various fields, including literature and culture, besides he is a great humanist. He had a big heart and he had always tried to promote brotherhood and friendship among the different community”.

“He was a man who was concerned for the poor, downtrodden and deprived sections and all along he fought atrocities. Here was a man, who was concerned for welfare of human being.

“We are going to declare state mourning and state funeral also. We are also going to have an institute in his memory. He himself was a great institution,” he said replying to questions.

About the proposal for conferring Bharat Ratna, the Chief Minister said he has written a letter and has already recommended his name for conferring the coveted national award. “I will pursue with Government of India to consider conferring Bharat Ratna to him,” he said, adding that the State has already conferred Asam Ratna to him.

The Chief Minister further said that no State has accorded such honour like Assam did, when it accorded him cabinet status.

Describing his death as most tragic and a great loss not only for Assam and the North-east but the entire country, Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Paban Singh Ghatowar extended his condolence to the singer’s family. Ghatowar, saying that Dr Hazrika’s death would leave a big void, said the singer was among few personalities in the country, whose endeavour to promote regional integrity and national unity through his works was almost unparalleled.

Courtesy: The Assam Tribune, Nov 6, 2011
Tributes paid to Dr Hazarika cutting across geographical and religious boundaries

Shraddhanjali to the legend

Tarun Gogoi

A pall of gloom descended on the people of Assam following the demise of Assam Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, a true son of the soil and a many-splendored artiste. With his passing away a golden chapter in the world of music has come to a close.

Dr Bhupen Hazarika was not only a music maestro of Assam or India but of the entire world. It was through music and songs that he conquered the hearts of millions across the globe. The doyen of music contributed immensely towards enriching the culture of Assam and the social life of the people of the state. Deeply immersed in art and culture throughout his life, Dr Hazarika not only enriched the social life of Assam but also brought the diverse cultures of different ethnic communities to the rest of the world. The contributions of Dr Hazarika in different spheres of life would remain as treasure trove of Assam for all times to come.

Dr Bhupen Hazarika considered music as a powerful medium for ushering in change in society. His avowed motto in life was to build a healthy and progressive society. He took up the cudgel against repression, injustice, discrimination, violence and exploitation. He was a true humanist. The doyen of music realized the pangs of the poor and needy, deprived and marginalized segments of society. He was in complete communion with the masses. That is why he was so close and dear to all of us. His songs and sadness of the masses, his songs and music touch the inner chords of our socio-cultural life. This is the very reason that he was highly honored by the people of Assam. Our people know to show their reverence to one who possesses the rare qualities of a real artiste and the homage that people of Assam paid to Dr Hazarika is a testimony to this.

I offer my thanks to the people of Assam for it. Dr Hazarika’s lyrics and music would continue to inspire and motivate the people of Assam for all time to come. Steeped in patriotism and national consciousness, Dr Bhupen Hazarika was an artiste of the masses with a large and open heart. A lyricist, a composer, actor, director and a writer all rolled into one, Dr Hazarika was an institution by himself. A cultural icon of Assam, Dr Hazarika would serve as a beacon light in the world of music. As a public representative, Dr Hazarika worked wholeheartedly and relentlessly for the welfare of the people. For the overall development of Assam, especially in the cultural firmament, Dr Hazarika raised various issues close to his heart in the Assam Legislative Assembly during his tenure as an MLA. Dr Hazarika always strove for upholding of human and democratic values.

I had a very close rapport with Dr Hazarika. Though we had difference in political ideology, I respect him from the core of my heart. A legend in his lifetime, Dr Hazarika’s soul-stirring renditions encompassed not only the colourful cultural mosaic of different ethnic communities in Assam or for that matter the North East region, but also the rest of the world. He was truly a world citizen who sang from the inner recesses of his heart spreading the messages of peace-unity-amity and progress. Not only Assam but the entire country adores the world renowned artiste. His death has created a void that can never be filled up. The Government of Assam will put all efforts to preserve Dr Hazarika’s works, ideas and memory and at the same time we hope that the people of Assam will come forward to offer their whole hearted support and cooperation in our endeavors. I appeal to the people of Assam to emulate the ideas of unity and harmony that Dr Hazarika preached through his creative works in building a developed and prosperous state.

On the sacred adya shraddha of the great artist of world standing, I pray to the Almighty to grant his soul eternal peace and I offer my heartfelt condolences to the members of the bereaved family.

Courtesy: The Sentinel, Nov 11, 2011
Bhupen was a Spiritual being:

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

NEW DELHI, Nov 9: Spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on Wednesday described legendary singer Bhupen Hazarika as “a deep spiritual being”. In a message mourning his death last Saturday, the Art of Living founder said: “Bhupen Hazarika was a legend in Indian music and a pride of our nation. He was not only a musician but a deep spiritual being. His valuable contribution in the field of music as well as in visualizing the art and culture of the northeast of India will always be remembered. He will continue to live among us in the form of his soulful compositions, which will stay on to touch the hearts of many.” (IANS)

Tribute to a Loved Genius

Dhiren Bezboruah

Bhupen Hazarika is no more. When I got the news about five minutes after he passed away, there was a sense of numbness that wouldn’t go away. One couldn’t talk of shock about something that had been dreaded for quite a few days. But all of us no longer have our Bhupenda anymore. It is as though every family in Assam has lost a dearly beloved elder. It is as though we must all be groping around for some time to find our souls again.

My first acquaintance with Bhupenda was as an admirer like millions of others. Where on earth do you come across such a musical genius? Where on earth do you encounter someone who is a poet, an accomplished composer and a singer who tugged at the heartstrings of everyone even when they could not understand a word of what he was singing? Where on earth do you find someone who combined in one god-given entity three different functions that contributed to great music? I always believed it was wrong to talk of him as just a lyricist. He was a poet who wept with everyone, rejoiced with everyone and sang the songs that they had in their hearts but did not know how to give expression to. Such was the power and appeal of his songs that he made a whole lot of people—even the unmusical ones—sing his songs. But what got across to you the very first time you met him was the warmth of his smile and the twinkle in his eyes. I could not have met him more than a dozen times or so, but I have always had a lot of affection from him. There were some not so visible bonds as well. We had both spent four years at the same university, though he had left six years before I got there. He happened to know my wife since her school days in Tezpur but better as someone who also learnt songs from Jyotiprasad Agarawalla himself. He had a bright academic career, getting his Masters degree at a very young age and then going on to Columbia University to do his Ph.D. in Mass Communication. During his recent visits to Guwahati, I met him a couple of times at his home because he had said, “Aahi thaakibason, Dhiren.” On my second visit I took my grandchildren along, and he was very kind to give my granddaughter his autograph. When I looked at his firm handwriting and the customary flourish, I felt he was going to be with us for some more years. However, we mere mortals can only hope. Destiny decides what is to be.

There is never going to be another musician like Bhupenda—not in Assam, not in India and not in the world. But the bottom line is that he was such a warm, compassionate, kind and caring person. That is how even those who did not know about his songs are going to remember him—as an incomparable human being. No matter how well-beloved someone is, there is finally a day to say goodbye. The last bit of your journey on your dear earth must have been painful and tiring. You needed your sleep perhaps. On this farewell day, Bhupenda, I pray with everyone else here for the eternal peace of your beloved soul.

Courtesy: The Sentinel, Nov 6, 2011.
Mumbai, Nov 8: Mourning the death of Bhupen Hazarika, Lata Mangeshkar says there won’t be another one like him and that she not only fell in love with his music but enjoyed his company as he was always full of life and joy. “I sang for him way back in the 1950s in Assamese. I was scared of getting the pronunciation wrong. But he was confident. And I was game since I love singing in various languages. And the song was so lovely Jo na kare rati. I fell in love with Bhupenda’s music,” she said. “Our association began from there, and continued through decades. He became close to my entire family specially my youngest sister Usha who sang innumerable Assamese songs for him,” she added.

Lata remembers staying at his home in Kolkata and says he was a good host. “I had gone for the recording of some Bengali songs for Bhupenda in Kolkata. I stayed with him and his wife (Priyamvada Patel) in their home. They made me so comfortable. There’re very few people in my life I felt so relaxed with. Bhupenda was always full of life and joy, so much so that I hated the thought of him being ill,” she added. “Two years ago he came home. I was dismayed by the change in his health. Seeing him so frail, I was depressed. From then onwards I didn’t have the heart to meet him. I was supposed to record a song with him, I chickened out.” I am frightened of seeing loved ones in pain. When my mother fell ill, I had to be dragged by the rest of the family to see her. But I kept abreast of his health through my sister Usha who was on the SMS with Kalpana Lajmi (Hazarika’s companion). I got to know of his hospitalization. He was really in pain. “When I heard of his illness, I rang him up in the hospital. Kalpana put the phone to his ear. I believe Bhupenda responded to my voice. They even played my songs for him in the hospital. I know he was very fond of me and my singing. And I of him. Three days ago, a journalist came to me saying Bhupenda was very critical. I recorded my get-well message for him. Then, it was over,” said Lata. The legendary singer is all praise for Kalpana for looking after the late singer so well. “The way Kalpana put her entire life on the shelf to look after him till the end is exemplary. She made sure he was in the best hospital and got the best treatment. Such dedication is rare in today’s world,” said Lata. “My most popular song for Bhupenda in Hindi was Dil hoom hoom kare. The composition was very special. Bhupenda sang the song originally in Assamese. Today, I smile as I remember how entertaining he was in person. I enjoyed his company. And I enjoyed singing his songs. There will never be another Bhupen Hazarika,” she added. (IANS)

Courtesy: The Sentinel, November 9, 2011
GUWAHATI, Nov 6: She is among those who knew Bhupen Hazarika for the longest period, having the rare privilege of singing some of his first compositions. Today, Sudakshina Sarma (known as Queen to many), grieves for her eldest brother, and recalls her ties with him with tender emotions.

In an exclusive interview to The Assam Tribune, Sarma, who herself is a singer of repute spoke on a range of subjects, including Hazarika’s period of struggle, his emergence as a singer, and separation with his wife Priyamvada M Patel. ‘Dada was simple and soft hearted, bereft of any complication, a quality that endeared him to all those around him,’ she said. It was something that family members knew well. He would offer meal to a visitor who would turn up at odd hours and not let someone wake up a servant in the middle of the night.

Sarma remembers that in Guwahati her brother had a lot of support from his maternal side. The culturally accomplished family in Bharalumukh had a number of superb musicians from whom Hazarika picked up the basics of music.

‘The melody he inherited was from my mother, Santipriya, although father was well acquainted with the Kirtan and other holy verses,’ she remarked.

In Tezpur, the Hazarika home played host to several literary and cultural figures, among whom were Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Bishnu Prasad Rava, and Phani Sarma. They all doted on young Buper, known as Bormoina to his family. According to Sarma, it was Tezpur that saw her brother realise his talents.

Recalling the gifts of her older sibling, Sarma said that he could compose a song within a short span of time without compromising on the quality. ‘When Gandhiji passed away, he was asked to write a lyric within a night to be recorded and the next night by All India Radio Calcutta…and he did just that’.

Bhupen Hazarika returned from the US with his wife and son to Guwahati in 1953, and his wife Priyamvada impressed her new family with her grace and restraint. ‘Bou was everything that an ideal Indian woman could be, full of love and concern for people around her’, Sarma noted. “At times she had difficulty adjusting to the local food habits, but she would not complain. A Gujarati family, the Champaklals, came to know that Bou had roots in their state, and invited us to their place at Fancy Bazar.” It became a routine for the two young women to visit their place every Sunday.

However, Hazarika’s stay in Guwahati was one of immense struggle. Culturally, he came to develop close ties with many artistes of eminence, but at the same time the financial burden was acutely felt. The last straw came with a deduction in salary while working at the Gauhati University.

Hazarika left for Calcutta, and in due course of time the rift with Priyamvada widened. An earlier romantic interest in Hazarika's life could have led to the final split that led his wife to depart from Guwahati.

However, the young mother still retained a lot of regard for the Hazarika family. ‘Many things have been said about the separation, but the fact is Priyam Bou stood by us during our trials and tribulations…I saw how she cared for people in crisis’, Sarma stated.

She recalled that Priyamvada had once said, ‘I have spent twelve years with Bherent…i cannot forget his eyes, and I see him as a child. If I had this feeling during our marriage, we would not have drifted apart’.Priyamvada had called the ailing maestro some time back, Sarma mentioned, and added ‘Perhaps Dada was waiting for that call’.

Courtesy: The Assam Tribune, Nov 7, 2011
Tributes paid to Dr Hazarika cutting across geographical and religious boundaries

End of a Glorious Era

Staff Reporter
GUWAHATI, Nov 5: The death of Dr Hazarika cast a pall of gloom in the State, with condolence messages pouring in from all quarters. Asam Sahitya Sabha president Rong Bong Terang termed Dr Hazarika’s death as an irreparable loss and said that the maestro took the State’s music to new heights during the several decades of his illustrious career.

“I am not finding adequate words to condole his death…it is an irreparable loss for our national life. He was an artiste who identified himself with the masses, reflecting their wishes and aspirations, and pleasures and pains… his creations will stand the test of time and continue to entertain and inspire generations,” Terang said.

Describing Dr Hazarika’s contribution to the world of Assamese music and culture as second to none, music director Ramen Baruah said that the stature and position attained by Dr Hazarika reflected his incomparable contributions.

“He was a colossus in the arena of music but was also a multifaceted personality. He is the only Assamese to be honoured with the Dada Saheb Falke award and also the lone Assamese to head the Sangeet Natak Akademi,” he said. “I had a close association with him and used to accompany him on tours on many occasions,” Baruah added.

Eminent singer Khagen Mahanta was of the view that Dr Hazarika’s death brought down the curtains on an era and rendered the State’s musical arena rudderless.

“Dr Hazarika who was a pioneer on many fronts was also the able successor of Jyotiprasad Agarwala and Bishnu Rabha…his death has created a huge void but we must resolve to carry forward his legacy by following the path shown by the maestro,” he said.

Litterateur, folklorist, musician and former Asam Sahitya Sabha president Prof Birendranath Dutta said that “it is the passing away of the uncrowned emperor of the musical arena. Would the void so created be ever filled? It is even difficult to imagine…it is indeed rare for a person to become a legend in his life time and earn love, affection and respect from people of all backgrounds,” Prof Datta said.

With poet Navakanta Baruah
Critic and author Dr Hiren Gohain, while terming Dr Hazarika's death as a great loss, said that it would take generations before one could come across another Bhupen Hazarika. "It is a great loss to Assam and also to the musical scenario of India. He was a genius – a versatile artiste – and highly original. It will be generations before we come to another Bhupen Hazarika," he added.

Litterateur and former president of Asam Sahitya Sabha, Dr Lakshmi Nandan Bora said that an era ended with Dr Hazarika's death. "Endowed with extraordinary and multifaceted talent, Dr Hazarika gave an altogether new dimension to Assamese music and created a highly original and innovative trend. Apart from the striking appeal that his compositions make to the listener's heart, they also stand out as highly reflective of the region's multi-hued social and cultural spectrum. It would not be an exaggeration to say that after Srimanta Sankardev, we have not come across a talent like Dr Hazarika," he said.

Playwright Arun Sharma said that with Dr Hazarika's death "we have reached the last stage of the State's most significant and golden chapter concerning its cultural history and national life." Recollecting his close association with the maestro as a colleague in Akashvani (All India Radio) Guwahati, Sharma said that the latter's mind and soul was intertwined with Akashvani and through it the maestro gave the people of Assam some his best compositions.

"Dr Hazarika's music did not have any parallel, and his mark on Assam's music is indelible. Today we have lost his physical body but he will continue to live in the people's hearts through his matchless compositions," he added.

Singer Zubeen Garg said, "Bhupen Mama's death could be termed as the end of an era. His genius is unparalleled. The void left by his death will never be filled." He also recollected his association with the maestro and added, "I was very close to him and we struck a great rapport. His contributions spanned several decades and for the Indian music industry, it is the end of a century. His creations would continue to inspire generations to come and there is no doubt about it," Zubeen told The Assam Tribune over phone from Kolkata.

Author Harekrishna Deka said that today was a day of grief for Assam as it lost an extraordinary genius — a music maestro who left an indelible imprint on the State's music and culture. "A musical genius of the highest order, Dr Hazarika belonged to the uppermost echelons of the country's modern musical camp," he said.

Teatre personality Kulada Kumar Bhattacharya said that Dr Hazarika’s physical presence could be no more but the legend would continue to live in the minds of the people. "Some people never die. Dr Bhupen Hazarika would live forever in Assam's heart. I have had a close association with him from 1954 to 1975. He was one such person who can be called a true genius. Moreover, he was a perennial source of inspiration to younger artistes. It would take a long time for another person of similar talents to emerge," he said.

Singer and musician Anjanjyoti Choudhury, who knew Dr Hazarika since his childhood and got Dr Hazarika to sing two of his songs, said that the loss is irreparable and the Assamese society will require several centuries to produce a talent like him.

Former president of Asom Sattra Mahasabha Bhadra Krishna Goswami said that Dr Hazarika’s death was an irreparable loss for the State’s national life. "He strode the State’s musical world like a colossus, making stellar contributions. His death is irreparable," he said.

Assam Governor Janaki Ballav Patnaik, in his condolence message, said, "I am deeply shocked at the demise of Dr Hazarika, one of the greatest music maestros of our country and one of the most renowned sons of Assam. A multifaceted genius, he was a legendary musician, singer and lyricist, actor, director, poet, writer and journalist of the highest order. He was the pioneer of Assam's film industry in the North-east. His demise is an irreparable loss to the people of our country. At this hour of grief of our people, I pray to the Almighty for peace of the departed soul. May God give his family the strength to bear this tragic loss."

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), Assam Tribune Employees' Union, Gauhati University, Save Guwahati Build Guwahati, Jyotirupa, RG Barua Smriti Raksha Samiti, Kamrupa Anusandhan Samiti, Sabita Sabha, Assam Assembly Speaker Pranab Gogoi, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Bhubaneswar Kalita, Member of Parliament Kumar Dipak Das, Asom Gana Parishad, Bharatiya Janata Party, CPI (M), Jyotiprasad Agarwala Smriti Raksha Samiti, Anirban Goshti, Assam Chamber of Commerce, All Assam Scheduled Caste Students' Union, United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), Pragati Silpi Sangha, Ban Theatre (Tezour), Sonitpur Journalists’ Union, Tezpur Press Club, (M), Students Federation of India, Indian Democratic Youth Federation, All Assam Gorkha Students’ Union and voluntary social organization Brothers have condoled the death of Dr Hazarika.

COURTESY: The Assam Tribune, Nov 6, 2011
This singer has a river in him. A river of Sa-Re-Ga-Ma-Pa-Dha-Ni-Sa
Sa: The river was born right at Sadiya. Sadiya is where the rivers Dihang, Dibang and Lohit merge as the mighty Luit. Sadiya is where the sight of Himalayan mountains surround you.
No wonder, the singer has the currents of the river in his voice. And breeze from mountains in his tunes.
Re: The Brahmaputra at Guwahati lends him the second note. Its inspired ambience steadies his Rishava.
Ga: The tutelage of Jyotiprasad Aagarwala and Bishnuprasad Rabha provides him the next arohan*.
Gently it lifts him to the cloud of Gandhara.
Ma: Benares allows him meandering to the "Ma" of Indian classical music. Its tradition of innovations carves in him an overflowing tributary.
Pa: Next is his stint at Columbia University. It brings him face to face with the legend that was Paul Robeson. Robeson kindles in him the old fire. The fire of concern for humanity.
Dha: The musician now returns home with a thundering "Dha". Those were his heydays with IPTA. Literally he storms into our hearts with his songs and films.
Ni: In clear note of Ni, he raises his voice against all injustices.
Sa: The search for higher octaves of life and love now begins in right earnest.
And with what result!
The result is a soulful weaver whose words grow from the soil. Like a herb. Like a banana tree. Or like a betelnut tree. Yet at times the lyrics would frame the eternal. The eternal truths!
The result is an amazing singer who fetches his melodies from the breezes of our land. From the currents of our rivers. From all that is Assam. Yet at time the muse in him brings tidings from far-off lands. Like the monsoon winds carrying the waters of distant seas!
The result is an adored singer whose voice emerges from our hearts. Like a dotara *. Like a gagana**. Like an overwhelming orchestra. And he leads you, through his performances, from the humdrum to the sublime.
The result is a singer who has a notion in wait for his words. His melodies. His Songs.
The result is an icon who united all our ethnic diversities.
The result is a singer whose songs do shine like a lighthouse when our boats flounder.
And who could be this singer?
The answer is clean. In fact, it is blowing in the wind.
For this is what Dr Bhupen Hazarika is! Our dear Bhupenda is!
+ascension *a stringed indigenous musical instrument **another indigenous musical instrument played by mouth

Adieu, wondrous Jajabor!

Dr Amarjyoti Choudhury

Dr Bhupen Hazarika being conferred the ‘Asom Ratna’ award by Assam CM Tarun Gogoi in 2008
November 14: In Assam, there is every likelihood that among the first sounds a baby would hear immediately after birth would be a Bhupen Hazarika song. Sounds like an exaggeration, but ask any Assamese you know, and you will be told that it's a fact. I first met the legend when I was around ten, but much before that I knew that Bhupen Hazarika is almost a god for us. His uniquely deep baritone voice, and his easy-on-the-ear compositions that quite often culled out finer nuances of classical ragas and the huge variety of folk music of North-East India, were already deeply ingrained in my subconscious by then. It was much later that his lyrics – the meaning of the words and the mood they created – could mean anything to me.

In those days of no television in the late 1970s, we knew him from his photographs in newspapers and magazines, everyone of them with the Nepali cap on his head, reportedly presented to him by the King of Nepal. And of course, from his voice that almost every day wafted in from the local All India Radio station. So, there was no scope for confusion when I saw him, sitting in the living room of our neighbour Nirode Chaudhury, one of the greatest Assamese writers ever whose short story had a couple of years before had been converted in the classic Assamese film “Chameli Memsab” (which got Hazarika the best music director’s honour at the National Film Awards in 1975).

The first thing I noticed about the man, who much before that, by the time he was in his mid 20s, had become a hugely popular man in Assam, was his twinkling, smiling eyes. When Chaudhury, whom I used to fondly call “mama”, introduced me to Hazarika, he left whatever he was discussing and started talking to me. And it went on for quite some time. Later, I learnt that he was not just being playful with a kid. That was the way he was – he would have time for every person who would approach him for a chit chat. Till the time his health having major problems after he suffered a stroke while performing live on a stage in a Guwahati locality in 2006 during the Rongali Bihu (Assamese new year) celebrations, this trait of his never changed.

The fact that Hazarika, who was encouraged as a child (he wrote his first song as a seven-year old, with deeply-meaningful lyrics yearning for the rebirth of the 15th century social reformer Saint Srimanta Sankardev to cure the society of its ills) by cultural icon Jyotiprasad Agarwalla to hone his skills was a major reason why he became the cultural activist that he was all through his lifetime.

A born humanist, his most iconic songs have been about the loss of innocence in the mankind. Through songs like “Bistirna Parore” (later translated into Bengali and Hindi – “Ganga Boicho Keno”/”Ganga Behti Ho Kyon”), in which he blasted his favourite river Brahmaputra for being flowing silently despite all the inhumanity on its banks, or “Manuhe Manuhor Baabe”, which spoke about the need to be...
compassionate to each other, he constantly pushed for the message of universal brotherhood, like his inspiration and friend, civil rights activist and singer Paul Robson of the US. Unfortunately, much of Hazarika’s genius – he was not only a composer-lyricist-singer-filmmaker but also a journalist-author-painter-politician (having served one term in the Assam Assembly as an independent legislator in the late 1960s and making a failed bid as a BJP candidate to enter the Lok Sabha much later) and much more – remains unknown outside North-East India and Bengal / Bangladesh because most of his lyrics, because of their cultural rootedness, a fact that Gulzar spoke about while introducing Hazarika’s Hindi album “Main Aur Mera Saaya”.

In his later life, he was deeply concerned about the atmosphere of social unrest in Assam – he more than once told me that he wished people would understand and use the “power of the Gaan” (songs) than that of the “power of the gun” to resolve problems of the society. In fact, if one dream of his that remained unfulfilled was his plan to make a feature film that would speak about the need to forsake the path of violence in the society.

An edited version of this was published in the Outlook Magazine, issue dated 14th Nov, 2011

Receiving best music director award for his film ‘Chameli Memsahab’.

Tributes paid to Dr Hazarika cutting across geographical and religious boundaries

Special issue of Ishani on Dr Bhupen Hazarika

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Bhupen Hazarika has crossed the river. Even Mahabahu Brahmaputra cannot catch his current tonight. This evening has turned spare, empty. It does not matter where we are — in Guwahati, Shillong, Calcutta, Dibrugarh, Itanagar, Dhaka, London, New Jersey or Delhi — the songs do not go away, do they? More than a million people are expected to mourn him on the streets. We will finally let him go, tomorrow. There are earthen lamps lit outside homes. It is as if the very river has disappeared overnight. When the history books are written, we will know more about this man’s significance. How a single man strode the entire cultural landscape of a region and defined it. He became the voice of a beleaguered Assam. As a writer, filmmaker, lyricist, cultural voice and even, for a brief while, a political leader, Bhupendawas the last of the renaissance kind. Political scientist Sanjib Baruah once wrote that a narrative of Bhupen Hazarika’s songs could provide a window to understanding the complex socio-politics of Assam itself. Bhupendawas like one of those 19th century giants, an artiste so emblematic of his culture that he could command respect, love, adoration with a single song, a public word, a single wink of a twinkling eye. The tradition of the prophetic bard goes back further — to Homer, the public word, a single wink of a twinkling eye. The tradition of the prophetic bard goes back further — to Homer, the oral balladeers, the wandering minstrel, singing the soul of the prophetic bard goes back further — to Homer, the eternal romantic, this vision of recognising a common humanity is as real as blood, not an abstract transcendent notion. The warmth of humanity flowing from his songs is the folk spirit that sustains all of us, like the river itself, whose currents we listen to in tonight’s darkness. The brief interlude in politics was just another footnote. He was already a man of the people, a living example of Shelley’s “unacknowledged legislator of the world”. The last time I saw him — at the Siri Fort auditorium in Delhi — he was 78. All of us, young and old, father and kid, mother and lover, we clapped and danced, and we forgot time. We were with him and he was with us. Wasn’t he endless, like the Brahmaputra itself? As he sang, life’s heavy knocks faded away. No more cruelty, despair, anger or hatred. Bhupen showed us how to get away. Then the lights came on, people made their way out, cars zoomed by and we walked the hard streets as the roar of time and the city hit back at us. But for three hours, he brought back feeling. It’s the feeling I remember tonight. What else can one ask for? That baritone hummed deep, with a spirited, if unhurried, immediacy. The enduring image of the artiste at his job — hands on the harmonium, a beret on the head, one leg lazily atop a makeshift bench on the stage and another firmly balanced on the floor, responding to his fellow artiestes who smile with him and then going back to the audience, singing and having all the fun in the world. Tonight, the tears flow incessantly — just as his passion for song and life lives forever. The songs are always company. Bhupenda remains alive and I can see him waving across, his Nepali cap in place, as he moves out quietly. I can see no more.

**Flow on, Great River**

Amlanjyoti Goswami

**Special issue of Ishani on Dr Bhupen Hazarika**
What death signifies can be understood merely by pondering on what Thomas Carlyle had written: “When the oak is felled the whole forest echoes with its fall, but a hundred acorns are sown in silence by an unnoticed breeze”. Today an absolute silence prevades in Assam; but it is a silence more musical than any song that anyone has ever heard. Farewell, Prince of Melody. May your eternal journey be one grand sweet song!

2010, Nijarapar, Guwahati. Leisurely, he looked at himself in the mirror, smiled and thought, at eighty-five, not bad at all; handsome is as handsome does. A warm glow surged through him as he recalled Shakespeare’s 30th sonnet. “When to the sessions of sweet silence thought. I summon up remembrance of things past.” Dreamily he allowed his mind to drift, to the sparkling blue river, the lush green fields, the dark deep woods, the early birds nesting and the fishing days of his childhood. In youth all doors open outwards, in old age they all open inwards—those wonderful lines of Henry Wordsworth Longfellow silently touched a chord in his heart.

Tezpur, memories, vivid. The echo of the rudimentary lessons in music, from Jyotiprasad Agarwala and Bishnuprasad Rabha, interwoven with, the ‘kabuliwala’, an Afghan from Kabul, who taught him a song with a message that still rang true; music has no frontiers. The first note of his first love, music, was kindled.

Sadiya, 1926, the place of his first awakening, blank. Guwahati scattered, images creeping in—father, mother, grandfather and grandmother, whispering, Anath. Anath, her son, a gifted musician, snatched by the cruel hand of fate in the prime of his life. Undeterred, she had intuitively believed that he would be reborn in the womb of her daughter, Shantipriya. When he, Bhupen, was born, she nostalgically called him, Anath. Dhubri, hazy, clearing, as he zoomed in through the lens of the camera of Pramathesh Barua and his second love, cinematography was born.

Calcutta. A ten year old, recording his first song, at Aurora Studio. The legend on the album read: Youngest of His Masters Voice of Indian Record Sangeet: a remuneration of rupees five and he never looked back; singer, composer, editor and director—true professional.

Fugit irreparable tempui (time waits for none). Time flies. Intermediate (Arts), Cotton College, Guwahati, Bachelor and Master of Arts, Benares Hindu University, a scholarship followed by a degree in Mass Communication from the Ivy League University of Columbia, USA coupled with an association with a master a musician, Paul Robeson and finally the icing on the cake, Priyam, Priyambada Patell! Romance, bethrothal, marriage, a son, Tez. The odyssey began. He was ready to traverse the tumultuous ocean with the first four lines composed in mid-Atlantic on the ocean liner, Queen Elizabeth: Sagar sangamat katana saturilo tothapito hoa nai klanta... though I have swum many a time in the water where the seas meet I am yet to be weary. Music and music alone would be his idiom.

Guwahati, a secure university lectureship in a malicious education environment, penury, with Lady Luck playing, truant; a transgression, prompting, ‘Lady Love’ Priyam to bid adieu, reminding him of Shelly’s Adonais: “She faded, like a cloud which had out wept its rain.” His boat turned turtle. One word, uncertainty, now loomed on the horizon. He welcomed it, for he had always believed, uncertainty was the energy of life. It kept ennui at bay and sparked creativity.

Next port of call, Kolkata. The city with its teeming boisterous multitudeness, provided the perfect sanctuary. The Indian Peoples’ Theatre Movement, a group welcomed him to join in their endeavour to transform society through the medium of art. Alas, like all good things in life the crusade lost momentum, succumbing to the glitter and glamour of a tinsel town, Bombay. The bohemian in him rebelled and spurred him on to row life’s boat alone. He soon carved a niche in Bengal and Bombay. In Assam, his beloved motherland, with his musically dexterous brother, Jayanta, the duo touched, practically every aspect of the cultural boulevard. He was an artist and despite the awards and rewards, an artist he would remain, remembering, what, Paul Robeson had ingrained into his soul: “The famous have a responsibility to fight for justice
and peace”; spontaneously he recalled Robert Frost: “A poem begins with a lump in his throat, a homesickness or a lovesickness. It is a reaching out towards expression, an effort to find fulfillment. A complete poem is one where an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words...

Now, what was his identity, he mused? How will he introduce himself to the world, his agonized mind queried? As, ‘Anath’ from Sadiya, Guwahati, Tezpur, Dhubri, Bengal, Bombay, Kabul, the USA the barluit Brahmaputra or as ‘Anath’ and the continuum of the theory of the transmigration of the soul? Well, he murmured, let’s find out and put the thoughts into words.

Now what is a word? he remembered the scriptures, Christ as the logos: “In the beginning was the word and the world was with God, and the word was God.” He, a mere mortal, could not be God. So, who was he? Who am I?

“Who am I? what is my raga raga without my ragini! Praying open the visage of an crumbling brick at Rangghar I discover the bones of my grandfather Etherized history of the Tungkhunga’s erased Gadadhar’s Dalimi exiled. Who will tell me ho I am? Kumar Bhaskarabarama Sankardev Madhavdev Surya Kumar Bhuyan have bid adieu to their temporal bonds. Unfamiliar has become the eventual king: metamorphosed into a frigid date. 1826. My anguished heart thobs. Who am I, who am I? Prodigious tempest, profound tempest. The national milieu with my feet have I carved; seeking, searching, still seeking. My heart has been bruised, on occasions bled; Rangghar has battered me. Yet I muse Who I am? Four score years late I rummage within the time-worn tin box for my horoscope. My forefathers were wool-gathering; thus bequeathing to their grandchildren a restless hunt for the elusive chimera. Highways have come up ubiquitously. Will the melody from the path I had permeated lie barren. How assiduously I had laboured to construe the negative pregnant at the Poona Film Institute; alas! it was aborted and consigned to the conflagration. Frere Jyoti’s baptism is at stake. Some have quizzed Bishnu Rabha Bodo or non-Assamese? Who is comrade Bishnu? A fairy-tale; fashioned out of the romance of the magic redearth blood and rebellion. Who will I ask who am I? I have no parent to torment. Who will tell me ho I am? What is my raga raga without my ragini!”

 Courtesy: The Sentinel, Nov 6, 2011

With former President APJ Abdul Kalam.
outside world through my songs," Hazarika said.

He began singing when he was just 10 years old and churned out hits after hits numbering more than 1,500 songs until his health failed about two years ago. At 13, he sang about building a new Assam and a new India - the lyrics were his own, very powerful and contemporary.

A singer, lyricist, actor, and a filmmaker, Hazarika was born in 1926 in one of Assam's remotest corners - Sadiya in the eastern district of Tinsukia. He grew up in the northern town of Tezpur and later went to Banaras Hindu University and completed his graduation and post-graduation in Political Science.

He studied with an aim to pursue a career as a lawyer in Assam, but destiny made him a mass-based singer.

In 1948, Hazarika went to the US on a scholarship to study Mass Communication at Columbia University, New York. It was there that he got soaked in American folk music and later on that influenced him to bring in the folk elements in his songs - although he mostly sang the folk tunes of Assam.

Always adorned with the trademark Nepali cap, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award winner's passion for music was unrelenting.

Hazarika had composed soulful music for films like “Rudaali”, “Saaz” and “Gajagamini”. Not just singing, Hazarika dabbled in politics as well - his remarkable popularity brought him to the Assam Legislative Assembly as an Independent member in 1967, where he was solely responsible for installing the first state owned film studio of its kind ever in Guwahati, the Jyoti Chitraban.

He again tried his hand in politics - this time as a Bharatiya Janata Party candidate for the
Guwahati Lok Sabha seat in 2004. He was, however, unsuccessful and lost the election.

Hazarika’s personal life is as chequered as his professional life. For close to 40 years, Hazarika had been in a live in relationship with filmmaker Kalpana Lajmi.

Kalpana Lajmi was just 17 when she fell in love with Hazarika who was 45 at that time.

When the music maestro turned 80, he offered to marry her, but Lajmi turned down the offer saying the ‘wife’ tag was unnecessary to their relationship.

‘Bhupso (Kalpana endearingly addressed Hazarika as Bhuspo) did offer to marry me when he was around 80, but I said no,’ Lajmi, told this writer in an interview.

“May be he wanted to give me the status of wife, but I was not interested. For me, the relationship, the trust and the respect that we share with each other are more important than marriage.”


“We lived together for the past more than 40 years, although my mother never accepted the relationship, nor did Bhupso’s family members, barring Manisha (Bhupen’s younger brother Jayanta’s wife).”

In Lajmi’s own words, Bhupen Hazarika had always been the darling of many beautiful women.

“Bhupso had a lot of beautiful women in his life,” Lajmi said. Hazarika’s estranged wife Priyam is settled in Canada and their son Tej is settled in the US.


So was Lajmi able to make a difference in Hazarika’s life and career?

“I think I’m 95 percent responsible for Bhuspo’s career flight. He was an intoxicant (alcoholic) and I helped him get rid of that habit.”

She devoted her entire time and energy nursing him ever since he became bedridden some three years ago.

In addition to his native Assamese, Hazarika composed, wrote and sang for numerous Bengali and Hindi films from 1930s to the 1990s besides other songs. He was also one of the leading author-poets of Assam with more than 1,000 lyrics and several books including short stories, essays, travelogues, poems and children’s rhymes.

Last year, Hazarika featured in his first music video – ‘Our Northeast, Our Star’ with music and lyrics by 3 Idiots duo Shantanu Moitra and Swanand Kirkire. He also lent his voice to this year’s film Gandhi to Hitler, where he sang Mahatma Gandhi’s favourite bhajan ‘Vaishnav Jan’

He came to Mumbai to work in the Indian People’s Theatre Movement (IPTA) with Salil Chowdhury, Balraj Sahni and other Marxist intellectuals.

He soon made the city his second home. “The generous city and its people have welcomed me, accepted me, and given me my second home since so many years. I admire its people for its willingness to allow people from the rest of India to earn a living and prosper, irrespective of caste, creed or colour,” he once said about his life in Mumbai.

He received the National Award for Best Music Director in 1976 for Chameli Memsaab and President’s medal for his films Shakuntala (1960), Pratidhwani (1964) and Lotighoti (1967). He was a member of the Assam Legislative Assembly from 1967-72 and was awarded the Padmashri in 1977 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1987. He was the chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi from 1999-2004.

He was also a member of Assam Film Development Council and the Central Board of Film Certification. In 2003, he was appointed as a member of the Prasar Bharati Board.

Hazarika might have passed away - but his soulful music coupled with his powerful lyrics would continue to entertain and capture the imagination of generations to come.

**Courtesy: PTI and UNI**

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**Tributes paid to Dr Hazarika cutting across geographical and religious boundaries**

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Hazarika might have passed away - but his soulful music coupled with his powerful lyrics would continue to entertain and capture the imagination of generations to come.

**Courtesy: PTI and UNI**
GUWAHATI, Nov 14: On behalf of the Nagaland government, Chief Minister Nephiu Rio today offered his condolences to the family of late Bhupenda and the people of Assam on the demise of the legendary singer. In a message released to the bard’s family from the Chief Minister’s secretariat, Rio said, “Dr Hazarika belonged not only to Assam and the rest of the Northeast but to the whole country and in fact, to the entire world. His versatile qualities as a lyricist and singer are without any parallel as the unity of the region always found utmost importance and significance in his thoughts.” Saying that the bard’s stage performances would continue to touch listeners in the years to come, Rio further said that in has death the country has lost one of the greatest musicians and poetic champions of our era.

Courtesy: The Assam Tribune, Nov 9

GUWAHATI, Nov 10: The Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigme Yoser Thinley, has condoled the demise of music legend Bhupen Hazarika. In a condolence message sent to Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, the Bhutan leader said, “It is with great sorrow and a sense of deep loss that we in Bhutan received the news of the passing away of Bhupen Hazarika. Although he is no longer with us, Hazarika’s contribution to mankind will be remembered by people beyond the confines of the South Asian region. His poems, songs and musical compositions will continue to inspire and foster friendship and goodwill among people transcending national boundaries. We join the family of the bereaved in offering our condolences and prayers to the departed soul. We pray for his soul to rest in peace.”

Courtesy: The Assam Tribune, Nov 9, 2011
Guwahati, Nov. 6: It will be the saddest Id-ul-zoha in Assam tomorrow. Bhupen Hazarika will return from Mumbai after five months but in a hearse. The man who sang immortal qawalis and made Id a festival of not only Muslims but also of the entire Assamese community will no longer be heard.

“\textit{Aji Eidor ei mehfilot, Nafrator sin sab nai, Prane prane khushir toofan, Minnator jabab nai, Aji Eidor ei mehfilot} (In today’s Id’s party, there is no sign of hatred, there is a storm of happiness in every heart, the unity is unique in today’s Id’s party)” Hazarika had sung in 1984.

\textit{Ramzanor roza gol ulal Eidor jun, Senehore mehfilote bohe aji kon?, Aji Eid majlisote eke loge bohise, Aji Eid majlisote Rohim chachau bohise, Aji Eid majlisote Sri Ram kumaro bohise} (Ramzan is over and Id’s moon has been sighted, who will be in the favourite Id party today? All are sitting together in Id party, Rahim uncle is also sitting in the Id party, Ram Kumar is also there), is a Hazarika song from a 1966 film, \textit{Lati-Ghati}.

Most Assamese Muslims would listen to both songs.

Silence observed in memory of Dr Bhupen Hazarika, after namaz of Id-ul-zoha.
On both Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-zoha. Tomorrow, several mosques and idghahs across the state will hold special prayers for eternal peace of the bard’s soul. Anowar Hussain, imam of 338-year-old Burah Jame Masjid in the city told The Telegraph that Hazarika was a great soul and everyone, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, is grieving deeply. He said it is “our misfortune that the singer’s body will arrive on the day of Id-ul-zoha.”

“We will pray for the singer tomorrow,” Hussain said. “I will personally request all to pray for him and try to highlight Hazarika’s contribution to the society before the devotees,” said Hussain, after a meeting of the Burah Jame Masjid Management Committee this evening.

Mujibur Rahman, secretary of Pub Guwahati Iddgah Committee said every Muslim in the state would miss Bhopenda on Id.

“At the end of Id namaz tomorrow we will pray for Bhopenda. May his soul rest in eternal peace,” he said. Nurul Haque, who was the lyricist of Aji Eidor ei mehfilot, sobbed when this correspondent called him to remind about the popular qawali.

“Persons like Bhopenda are not born on this earth again and again. I will specially pray before Allah tomorrow so that his soul rests in jannat (paradise),” 74-year-old Haque said over phone from his Jorhat residence.

Syed Eske Alam, chairperson of Haji Musafir Khana Trust Board, said from Tezpur that Hazarika’s death was an irreparable loss. He epitomised the symbol of unity and brotherhood, he said.

“I will pray for him tomorrow. We miss the singer very much in tomorrow’s Id,” Alam said.

Ilias Ali, head of the emergency medicine and trauma centre, Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, said Hazarika was not only a singer but also a social messenger.

He said the singer tried to build an Assam devoid of clash and religious intolerance.

“His songs on Id are hugely popular. I personally used to listen to these songs. Every song of Hazarika had a social message. The Muslim community will miss him tomorrow on Id. I will pray for his soul,” Ali said.

Courtesy: The Telegraph, Nov 7

**Bhupen aura touches prisoners**

**WASIM RAHMAN**

Jorhat, Nov. 9: Grief hung heavy on Central Jail Jorhat. They did not weep in public like the thousands paying tribute to Bhopen Hazarika in Guwahati. Locked inside their cells, the inmates had no chance of getting anywhere near the maestro. But they mourned, silently, losing appetite and desire to go about their daily chores. So “depressed” were the 500-odd inmates, including 19 women, that the authorities decided to suspend the daily routine and allow them to watch the goings-on on television for the past two days. The jail authorities also took this opportunity to drill in some values at this moment of tenderness.

“We are telling the inmates how good work of a person is recognised and rewarded by society,” jailer Brojen Das told The Telegraph here today. “We asked them (the inmates) to forget their past and be inspired by the maestro.”

The inmates sat glued to the 12 television sets across the cells, watching the singer’s body being brought to Assam, taken to his home in Nizarpur, then to Judges Field and the ocean of humanity that gathered to see him one last time. So moved were the prisoners that they had to be called repeatedly for their meals. Many even stayed up late in the night to watch the proceedings.

A condolence meeting was organised inside the prison on Sunday, with all staff and inmates observing a two-minute silence in memory of the departed soul. Though Sunday is a working day for convicts, when they earn points to qualify for reduction of their sentence, many preferred to keep track of the funeral procession in Guwahati. They even let go of their day’s remuneration, which is around Rs 55. The authorities, hence, decided to suspend the regular routine of the inmates on Monday and Tuesday and allowed them to watch people paying their last respects to Hazarika. The inmates have been asked to write down their feelings on the demise of Hazarika if they wished to do so.

The jail is also planning to bring out a wall magazine with write-ups or poems by the inmates. Following a request of the inmates, earthen lamps have been lit in front of their cells in evenings for the past three days as a mark of respect to Hazarika. There are also requests for a cultural programme in memory of the legend inside the jail for which permission will be taken from higher authorities.
By our Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, Nov 7: Two respected newspapers of the United State and the United Kingdom — The Washington Post and The Guardian — have carried the news of Bhupen Hazarika’s demise in their publications. Referring to the balladeer as one of the most important cultural figures of North-east India, the UK-based Guardian in its report, said that late Bhupen Hazarika used music, cinema and the written word to stitch political ideology and ancient traditions into the fabric of popular culture. Meanwhile, in its long obituary, The Daily Star of Bangladesh remembers his fondly and said that Hazarika shared a special relationship with Bangladesh. “The Bard of Brahmaputra, he penned a song on the liberation war, Joi Joi Naba Jata Bangladesh (hail the newborn Bangladesh), which is a stirring marching tune and which was on every Bengali’s lips during the war days and became a virtual anthem at the time,” the report stated.

**Courtesy: The Sentinel, Nov 8, 2011**

**Foreign Media on Bhupen da**

**Foreign Media Continues to Harp on Bhupenda**

By our Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, Nov 8: The foreign media continued to pay rich tributes to Bhupen Hazarika. Pakistani newspaper The Dawn, in its report, referred to him as one of the greatest contemporary musicians of Southeast Asia. US-based Assamese journalist Sanghamitra Kalita, in a beautiful obituary in The New York Times, said that “translation do not do his lyrics justice but a song like Aami Axomiya Nohoi Dukhuiya helps us stand a little bit taller”. She further stated, “As a child, my interpretation of many of Bhupen Hazarika’s songs were literal: about nature, rainfall, our mighty Brahmaputra. As an adult, I hear them anew with strains and themes of revolution, suffering, longing, the search for love, the endless hunt for home. Rooted perhaps in our ‘remote’ Northeast, they remain universal”.

**Courtesy: The Sentinel, Nov 9, 2011**
By our Staff Reporter
GUWAHATI, Nov 9: To keep alive the memories of late music maestro Dr Bhupen Hazarika forever, the Government of Assam has taken steps to preserve the foot and hand imprints of Dr Hazarika, who was cremated here today.

The foot and hand imprints of Dr Hazarika were taken by forensic experts of the State after his body was taken out of the air-conditioned, glass coffin at the Judges Field before being brought to the funeral spot at Gauhati University.

The imprints were taken on specially treated cement and mud solution and will be recreated on plaster of paris by the experts.

RN Khound, Director of the State Forensic Department, led the team of experts who took the imprints this morning. Biren Singha, a renowned sculpture artist, also separately took the imprints of late Dr Hazarika.

The State Government has arranged for the preservation of the foot and hand imprints of the great artiste. Sources at the State Forensic Department said that the foot and hand imprints of Dr Hazarika would be handed over to Dispur after due processing. Other reports suggest that foot imprints were also taken on two white pieces of cloth just before the body was set on the funeral pyre. Padma Bhusan and Dada Saheb Phalke awardee Dr Hazarika had died of multiple organ failure at the Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani hospital in Mumbai on Saturday. He was 85.

Courtesy: The Sentinel, Nov 10, 2011
GUWAHATI: Assam's premiere cultural centre, Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra, is all set to immortalize legendary singer Bhupen Hazarika's last journey. The unique tribute will be in the form of a cubicle within the Bhupen Hazarika Museum situated on the premises of the Kalakshetra. The musical doyen's pacemaker, the clothes he was wearing at the time of his demise, his iconic traditional 'Bhadgaunlay' topi, also known as the Gorkha cap, which adored his head almost throughout his life and went on to become his unique style statement, and even the coffin in which he undertook his last journey to his homeland will be showcased in a special corner at the museum, thus giving visitors an opportunity to ponder on Bhupenda's tryst with death. These items will add value to the repertoire of objects belonging to the musical great that already find pride of place in the museum. “We wanted to showcase the items from his last journey and for this we wrote a letter to his son, Tej Hazarika. Later, we had a discussion with him and explained what items were necessary for the museum,” said Sarodi Saikia, secretary, Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra. Except for the coffin, the other three items were handed over to the Kalakshetra on Tuesday by Tej, who was accompanied by Bhupenda's brothers - Bolen, Samar and Anil Hazarika. “Bhupenda’s son came here and spent some time at the museum; he was overwhelmed by emotions when he saw his father’s personal belongings displayed at the museum. Later, he planted white and red sandalwood saplings at Dibya Udyan as the singer loved nature and had a special affinity towards it,” said Saikia.

“The saplings have been christened Bhupendra Brikhya and the surrounding saplings are called Asomor Sandhan (Assam’s precious cultural family). Apart from these items, we are also planning to put on display the hundreds and thousands of condolence messages that have poured in from all over the world, and we are in touch with Bhupenda's sister-in-law, Manisha Hazarika, who has assured to help us,” he added. The Kalakshetra is also planning to introduce a light-and-sound show featuring the singer's compositions. “It is also in the pipeline to introduce a light-and-sound show in which there will be academic sessions as well as poetry and prose recitals. The vice-chairman of the Kalakshetra has written a letter to Bhupenda’s family members and they have expressed interest in the initiative. Also, the singer's long-time companion, film director Kalpana Lajmi, has some brilliant plans and her enthusiasm was clearly visible when she personally helped in placing Bhupenda’s items at the museum before its inauguration in January this year,” said Saikia.

*Courtesy: TNN, Nov 23, 2011*
GU to Preserve Bhupenda’s Works

By our Staff Reporter

Guwahati, Nov 11: In a bid to preserve Bhuben Hazarika’s work, Gauhati University (GU) is planning to undertake certain projects. Speaking to ‘The Sentinel’ regarding the plan, Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University, Dr Okhil Kumar Medhi said “We are planning to introduce a diploma course in music on Bhupenda’s sangeet.”  “More over in collaboration with National School of Drama, Delhi, we are planning to introduce diploma course on drama, which will include Ankiya Bhaona, an significant drama form created by Srimata Shankardeva, and based on works of Jyotiprasad Agarwalla.” He said. Medhi also added : “We are planning to construct an auditorium which will be named after the maestro, a digital library and a museum will also be established to preserve the works of the singing bard in electronic format.”

Courtesy: The Telegraph, Nov 8

A GU Chair for Bhupenda

Eminent public activist Deven Dutta had a point when he said that there would be no meaning at all in conferring Bharat Ratna to cultural icon Dr Bhuben Hazarika posthumously because when he was alive, the award was not let to come his way though he was such a deserving candidate, and now that he is no more, the award will be yet another meaningless ritual. The fact of the matter is that the legend is beyond such awards, such rituals, such pomposity, such show business. The bard was, and will remain, an institution inspiring millions across the world, not just in Assam or the rest of the Northeast or the country. And when an individual becomes an institution, awards turn hollow; they, indeed, become insulting. We do not want this great soul to be treated so. But there are other ways of honouring him. Hence the following Sentinel proposal.

The first university of the Northeast, Gauhati University (GU), should now rise to the occasion, at the right time in history, by introducing a Chair called the Bhuben Hazarika Chair to be adorned by a Professor having mastery over interdisciplinary studies across the realm of Humanities. It does not necessarily have to be a Chair with absolute command over musicology — or, for that matter, even the cultural domain. For, our Bhubenda was an epitome of versatility. He was what not? As DN Bezboruah, our founder editor, in his tribute to the genius on the front page of this daily on Sunday, wrote: “Where on earth do you encounter someone who is a poet, an accomplished composer and a singer who tugged at the heartstrings of everyone even when they could not understand a word of what he was singing?” It is precisely for the fact that Bhubenda was a poet in the first place that we deem it imperative for GU to institute a radical Chair in his name. And since a poet knows no boundaries, no man-made barriers, no confines, since he is a free spirit flowing with life and adding to its vivaciousness in so many ways, since his poetry is a reflection of the society we live in and help shape in our own ways, and since he becomes part of a history of a different hue, any Chair in the name of such person must be interdisciplinary. The proposed Bhuben Hazarika Chair must, therefore, be a source of attraction not just for students and researchers of music, but also for students and researchers of literature, political science, sociology, history and philosophy. There should be no fetters at all about this Chair — it must be free, as Bhubenda was, as a poet. Such interdisciplinary studies and research, mind you, are a common feature in the world’s best universities like Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge and Princeton. Such pursuits make a radical contribution to the trajectory of human knowledge and civilization. The legacy of Bhubenda deserves such contribution. Let the GU authorities ponder over the matter. Let the university evolve thus. And let it contribute to knowledge generation thus. Our Bhubenda will then be smiling in the Heaven, singing anew. And yes, every student of music, literature, political science, sociology, history and philosophy in Assam must strive to take forward the works of Bhubenda to a new level and make it an intellectually exciting arena for the rest of the world to work on and contribute to human civilization thus. May that soul smile, sing and celebrate forever!

Courtesy: The Telegraph, Nov 8
Jorhat, Nov. 11: The man who wore many hats — singer, composer, filmmaker — today had the cap that he donned for nearly half a century named after him. The Gorkha topi, which had almost become synonymous with Bhupen Hazarika, has a new name. The All Assam Gorkha Students’ Union has appealed to the Gorkha community to call the black embossed spotted vadgawley Gorkha topi worn by the balladeer as Bhopenda Gorkha Topi. The legend’s biographer, Suriya Hazarika, said the legend had been wearing the cap since 1965 and the khukuri pin that adorned it was a gift from his friends and admirers in Nepal. Nanda Kirati Dewan, publicity secretary of the students’ union, today appealed to the Gorkha population across the globe to replace the word “vadgawley” with “Bhopenda” and call it the Bhopenda Gorkha Topi henceforth as a tribute to the singer. Hazarika adored the Gorkhas and their tradition and had sung the song “Phut godhulite Kopili khutit kon Gorkhali gabhorure gajoni heral” after watching a Gorkha damsyl fetching water in clay pots on the bank of Kopili river. For the man who loved the waters and invoked rivers and seas across the globe in his songs, it was only befitting that he should also have a boat named after him. A passenger boat, which was added to the Majuli-Jorhat ferry service today, was named after Hazarika. The boat, to be called MB (Mar Boat) Sudhakantha Dr Bhopen Hazarika, will run regularly between Neemati and Kamalabari ghats. The Rs 28-lakh vessel was used today to immerse the ashes of the bard in the river on the outskirts of Jorhat after a procession was taken out from Court Field to Neematighat. Jorhat deputy commissioner R.C. Jain confirmed that the district administration has decided to name the new passenger boat belonging to the inland water transport department after the maestro. “Hazarika has a deep bond with the Brahmaputra and also with Majuli, where he was first addressed as Sudhakantha,” Jain said. A procession of over 1,000 people reached Neematighat around 10am, with the urn carrying the ashes of the legend. A police contingent lowered their guns and offered salute, following which the ashes were immersed in the Brahmaputra. The xatradhikar (head priest) of Auniati xatra, one of the oldest and largest of Majuli’s xatras, welcomed the decision to name the boat in memory of the legend. In Silchar, a local organisation called Dalit Sena has decided to set up a stone and marble statue of Hazarika. The organisation’s president, Rupesh Chandra Das, said land for the statue would be bought soon in Silchar.

Courtesy: The Telegraph, Nov 12

Bhupen with his Trademark Cap

Gorkha cap gets ‘Bhupenda’ in its name- The headgear that was Hazarika’s companion for the past 46 years is named after him. – WASIM RAHMAN

Tributes paid to Dr Hazarika cutting across geographical and religious boundaries
Guwahati: Legendary singer-composer Bhupen Hazarika’s funeral has created a world record with the highest number of people paying tributes to him over two days though Michael Jackson memorial service holds record as the most watched funeral on television.

According to Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia, more than five lakh people attended the funeral of ‘The Bard of the Brahmaputra’ and 30 lakh people watched it on television. Hazarika died on November five in Mumbai and his body lay in state at the historic Judges Field for two days from the night of November seven for people to pay their homage before cremation on November nine. The Wikipedia has a list of notable funerals representing historical funerals, based on both the number of attendants and estimated television audience.

The Michael Jackson memorial service on July 7, 2009, holds a record as the most watched funeral ever with 2.5 to 3 billion viewing it the world over. More than two lakh people paid tributes to Princess Diana of Wales in September 1997 in London and Althorp, United Kingdom while 2.5 billion viewed it on television.

The list includes, among others, the funerals of Elvis Presley, Pope John Paul II, Martin Luther King Jr, Joseph Stalin, Joseph Tito, John Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah Montazeri, Benigno Aquino, C R Annadurai and Aryton Senna.

Courtesy: Zee News.com, Tuesday, Nov 15, 2011