CHAPTER-4

Bhupen Hazarika: A Journalist

Bhupen Hazarika said, “I am doing journalism through music, actually. If you look at my songs- all that I have written since I was 13 years old—you will find the conflicts of each period of time I have written those songs in. I have always written and sung songs on problematic themes — whether it has to do with life, society or love”. (The Sentinel, 15th September, 1999)

Indeed, like a true journalist, Bhupen Hazarika reports the social, political, economic and cultural happenings of his time through his songs. The spirit of a journalist is always at work in his songs. He wrote songs which record almost all the socio-political incidents and situations of his time. For example, reference can be made to his songs Teraxa Sowannar Māghare Māhate, Mahāmānabar Tyāg Aganiye Nāxiba (Both written on the death of Mahatma Gandhi), Juie Porā Tirāxir Nirbāsani Basar (On the burning period of 1938’s election in Assam), Nāi Nāi Nāi Heno Āmār Āpon Shastri (on the death of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1966), Jai Jai Nabjata Bangladesh (on the independence of Bangladesh) Naba Man Puruxar Nopowār Prakāxak (On the police atrocities during 1979’s Assam Movement) and so on. Hazarika also reports the pain, miseries and exploitation of the poor marginalized class in his song like Endhār Kātir Nixāte, Dolā He Dolā, He Dolā, He Dolā, the caste discrimination in society in songs like Juwati Anamika Goswami, E Bijuli Nāche Chikmik. The journalistic approach to represent the realities, to create public awareness and at the same time be responsible towards society is also evident in his cinemas and documentaries. How Hazarika’s celluloid works inform the people about the real issues of life, society and culture has been discussed in the previous chapter (Bhupen Hazarika: A Film-Maker). In fact, Bhupen Hazarika wanted to be a journalist first: “I wanted to be
a journalist, I wanted a degree in Law and a Master in Political Science so that I could later became a journalist. But my father had economic problem”, said Bhupen Hazarika. *(Hazarika, Surjya[ed]: 2008:1986)*

However, Bhupen Hazarika’s career of pure journalism began as early as in 1949. When Bhupen Hazarika was studying in Colombia University, Newyork, The Indian Students’ Association of America used to publish a magazine named *New India*. Some renowned Indians like Jaiprakash Narayan, Bhim Rao Ambedkar were the editors of it. *(Raichoudhury, Bhupendra: 2011:80)*. In 1949 Bhupen Hazarika became the editor of that magazine. *(Hazarika, Surjya[ed]:2008:514)*

Hazarika wrote an editorial *Meaning for Million* for the magazine. The editorial was reprinted in the Sunday issue of *The Assam Tribune* on 10th February, 1952. The writing focuses on the importance of mass media in educating people. It is a very thoughtful and analytical discussion on how mass media can play a significant role in spreading education among common people. The fertility of his thought can be gauged in the following extracts from the article—

* “One of the greatest roles of education is to facilitate free flow ideas and meanings within the community, as that all members can think of its betterment”

* “New India has a duty to bring to the understanding of the rural adult that he is a living member of the community.”

* “Adult education should continually point not only towards active civic duty but also towards his civic rights, snatched away by vested interests of his own society”.

* “The existing system of education - a remnant of the British-imposed one – makes a sad commentary on the heart of free India. It has very little relationship with the hopes, aspirations and needs of the people”

* “If India’s teeming millions are to learn and relearn while they work and rest, progressive theory of ‘Education for life’ must be practiced under a truly democratic administration.”
*“In a static state, educations may be only for preservation of reaction and not a step forward.”*(The Assam Tribune, Sunday, February 10, 1952: Reprinted from “New India”, New York)

All these reflect the depth and breadth of his thought. He identifies education for the common people as a door to a better life of dignity and knowledge.

Being equipped with the experience of editorial task of New India and his Ph.D. work *Role of Mass Communication in India’s Adult Education*, Bhupen Hazarika returned home in 1952. However, he shifted to Kolkata in 1995, after leaving his job of a teacher in Gauhati University. In the 60s Bhupen Hazarika had a tough time in Kolkata. His financial condition deteriorated to the worse. Till then he did not take money for singing nor did he do any function. *(Ibid:169, 1929, 1958)*.

During the period of his struggle for settling down in Kolkata, Hazarika got a proposal from Padma Barkataki for taking the responsibility of the art section of the magazine *Amar Pratinidhi*. That section was named *Xilpir Prithibi*, where news relating to art, culture and cinema were published. Mr. Arun Purkayastha was the publisher of the magazine. And it was published in 1960. In the first two edition of *Amar Pratinidhi* Bhupen Hazarika did not write. He started writing from its third edition.

Till then, Hazarika was not much busy in writing prose. And he took prose writing as a challenge and came up developing his own unique style. On his newly developed prose style he said “I have started regularly the practice of my norms breaking prose ever since I took the responsibility of the section called *Xilpir Prithibi* of *Amar Pratinidhi*”. He also added that he never thought whether his prose writings had any literary value or not. He never bothered about that. That was not his primary purpose. His primary purpose was to express only. Through his prose he wanted to converse with his readers. He wanted his ‘I’ to become ‘You’. His prose style breaks free of the normal rules of grammar. But this is not intentional, but spontaneous. He loves to express complex issues through simple sentences and words. *(Hazarika, Bhupen: 2011: 196,197)*.
The Xilpir Prithibi section of Amār Pratinidhi was a specimen of his mass communication education. He wrote in a way as if he were talking to the readers. Bhupen Hazarika’s this method of reporting will always remain unique. His editorial with the heading Pujar Sithi (Hazarika, Surjya[ed]: 2008:24) is one of the examples of his conversational style. Here, he takes the readers into confidence straightway by addressing him/her as ‘Priya Bandhu’ (i.e. dear friend). And he initiates the conversational tone by his first sentences, “It has been long since I haven’t talked with you to my heart’s content”. And he provokes the thought of the readers all through the writing by raising different questions relating to the moral degradation of society, social injustice and exploitation. Besides, Hazarika is very natural with his expression, and at times, sounds very impulsive too. His editorials are generally marked with a very abrupt and startling beginning. He does not take a roundabout way to come to the point. He gives vent to his intense thought in a very rapid and impetuous manner. The use of short sentences comes down heavily on the readers arresting their interest from the beginning till the end of the writing. The followings are a few extracts from some of his editorials, taken from Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Rasanawali (Hazarika, Surjya[ed]: 2008) which exemplify this aspect of his prose style—


ii. “I am talking about Jyoti-Buddha fight. It is about the fight between chief minister Jyoti Basu and Deputy Chief Minister Buddha Dev Bhattacharyya. It does not seem to be a fight”.----Pratidhwani, April 1992(Rasanawali: P 222)

iii. “Hey, why don’t you look at ground? It’s raining? Now why are you talking about wind? Has God not given crops for the cloudy weather? Why don’t you look at the sky? Winter has become long? Has God not given the weaving works for the winter seasons?”---- Xundarar Nadiganta)(Rasanawali: P 116)
Such is the compactness and rapidity of his expression. Beneath this lies the force and intensity of his thought and feelings. He holds the readers very close to his thought and leaves them with issues to reflect upon. In many of his editorials his final questions like “Is this right justified? What do you say?” -- Ananda-Xangbad: 1st year/2nd-3rd Edition: 1974 (Rasanwali: P169); “Whom to blame?” -- Rupakar: March, 1975 (Rasanawali P175). “Does the acting look realistic? Have you seen in the movies in which direction today our country is moving? Has the story of the movie touched upon a today’s burning problem of India?” -- Rupakar: 2nd year/6th edition: September 1977 (Rasanawali P200), “Can there be a movement of thoughtful movie in super eight in Assam? It would be perhaps good if the young directors of film societies think about it”- Amar Pratinidhi (Rasanawali P211), always invites the readers to think and draw out their own opinions and conclusions. Thus, Hazarika involves the readers with the issues in discussion and makes them active participators.

In May 1965, Bhupen Hazarika took over the charge of the editor of Amar Pratinidhi. This major responsibility of the magazine came to Hazarika quite unexpectedly when the earlier editor Padma Borkatoki came to Assam resigning from the post of the editor. This responsibility was indispensable for Hazarika, as he sincerely wanted to expand the life span of this Assamese magazine and to give it a new life by curing it of its ‘old disease’ (if any). (Hazarika, Bhupen: 2011: 229)

In this endeavour of his, he involved many eminent writers and authors like Hem Baruah, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharjyya, Sayed Abdul Malik, Dr. Prafulla Dutta Goswami, Dr. Kanak Mahanta, Dr. Lalit Bora, Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia, Nirod Choudhury, Dr. Nirmal Prabha Bordoloi, Arati Das Boiragi, Bimal Nath, Minati Hazarika, Apurba Das, Ranjan Bora, Rabin Choudhury, Bhaba Dutta, Apurba Thakur, Towfik Baruah etc. As an editor, Hazarika wished to make Amar Pratinidhi a representative of the souls of its so many readers. (Ibid: 230)

When Bhupen Hazarika became the editor he added some new sections to Āmār Pratinidhi. One of them was Arthasastrir Sara where objective analysis and discussions on the contemporary socio-economic issues were carried on. At times, the subject matter
of *Arthasastri* also raised controversies where noted renowned intellectual like Hiren Gohain took part. (*Bora, Dr. Lakhinandana* [ed.], 2012: An Article by Dr. Pramananda Majumdar: 74)

Hazarika made *Amar Pratinidhi* a stage for bringing back the past artists and cultural icons again among the people. He always tried to present the cultural icons of Assam like Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Bishnu Prasad Rabha, Phani Sharma, and Parwatiprasad Barua through the magazine. His effort was to show the relevance of thee great figures in the contemporary society. He published a special Jyotiprasad issue of the magazine. Here Hazarika included many unpublished matter of Jyotiprasad relating to the making of the first movie *Joimati*. In addition to that he also published some important special issues like on Gandhi, Bishnu Rabha, International short stories etc.

In the editorials and writings in *Amar Pratinidhi* Bhupen Hazarika also emerged as a man with deep socio-political understanding and as one having the sense of greater social responsibility. All his writings are marked by their disinterested arguments and objective analysis. His editorials include discussion on different current and contemporary issues of Assam like on Assam’s Federal Structure (*Āmār Pratinidhi*: 7th year: 6th edition: Oct, 1965); on the responsibility of the opposition party in Assam (*Āmār Pratinidhi*: 7th year: 7th edition: March, 1976); on the fight against corruption and exploitation (*Amar Pratinidhi*: 7th year/11th edition: July; 1967)

However, his reaction and response is not restricted to Assam only. The way his songs go beyond the boundaries of the state in their concern for humanity and society, his journalistic writings also encompass the national and international issues. Examples are his articles like ‘*Dhaka, Lahor, Assam*’ (*Āmār Pratinidhi*: 12th Year: 4th edition: Dec. 1971) ‘*Maha Chinar Bhitare –Bhitare*’ (*The Inside story of China*) (*Amar Pratinidhi*: 14th Year: 2nd edition: Oct. 1973) and ‘*Maha Chinat Asalate Ki Hoise?’ (*Actually, what is happening in Great China?*) (*Amar Pratinidhi*: 17th Year: 1st edition: Nov. 1976). These rewritings show Hazarika’s international awareness and his insight into the significance of international relation. As an Indian he knows how his
neighbouring countries can affect him. Their socio-political scenarios are closely observed by him, and he realizes the importance of them in the Indian context. This is amply reflected in his above mentioned writings. In his already mentioned article ‘Maha Chinat Asalate Ki Hoise?’ he has made an objective analysis of the socio-political scene of post Mao Che Tung China and stressed upon India’s willingness for friendly relation with it. Hazarika says “Extending our hands of friendship we are waiting eagerly towards the positive side of Indo-China relation” (Hazarika, Surjya[ed]: 2008: 413).

Hazarika, through his editorial also condemns the Americans atrocities, on Vietnam. He criticizes the double standard of the Americans in their policy in Vietnam. However, he appeals to all the concerned to settle the crisis there through humanism, love and negotiation. All should come forward abjuring all arrogance and ego to reach the point of an amicable solution. (Āmār Pratinidhi: 5th year: 10th Issue: June, 1965)

Again, in his writing Markin Ganatantrar Keron, (The flaws in American democracy) he very touchingly writes about the racial discrimination in America. He presents the injustices and sufferings of the Negro slaves there. He raises the question why the Negro slaves are not still free even after they were freed in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln through Emancipation Proclamation; why there are separate buses, movie halls, schools, graveyards for them. He adds that it is really a matter of great pain and shock that they are not given the right to vote. But, Hazarika is hopeful that the Negros will not sit idle. They now realize what they want and how they can contribute to make America for all the people (Natun Asomiya: 25th June, 1953).

Bhupen Hazarika’s journalistic endeavour is not restricted to the socio-political or economic issues only. In his writing he also presents those great personalities of Assam, India and world whose life and works have influenced the society and the people in a significant way. Hazarika remembers Mahatma Gandhi in his 100th birth anniversary. In his article Prithibit Xamai Stabdha Hol (The time of the world stop) he writes “Among us who does not completely believe in Gandhism as a way for resolving the problems of human society, even they also believe in it that this century has given birth to a new
Jesus in the world of human thought, and he is Gandhi” (Amar Pratinidhi: 9th year: 5th issue: January, 1969). He further says that Gandhi was a spiritual warrior against exploitation, colonialism and imperialism. And he laments on the fact that the society and the Government get deviated from the ways Gandhi laid—“Twenty years ago Nathuram kills Gandhi. Gradually during the last twenty years Gandhism has been successfully killed bit by bit—by whom? They are the so called Gandhian Congress Government”. Hazarika here identifies Gandhi and his ideals as a weapon to fight off all the evils of society and governance. He reasserts what Gandhi says “If we want justice, we need to give justice.” (Ibid)

Hazarika also writes on Lenin, the founder of socialism in the world, in his editorial He Lenin, Tomaloi Pranam (Lenin, Salute to You) (Amar Pratinidhi: 10th Year: 11th Issue: July, 1970). Here he salutes Lenin and juxtaposes him with Gandhi. By making a comparison of the two he says that Gandhi’s struggle is a long river, and Lenin’s one is the blast of a volcano. And this blast has shaken the world. He acknowledges Lenin’s influence over people of India. He says India will always respect Lenin as it is the country where the farmers are exploited, where one community carry on exploitation on the other’s language, religion and economy. Lenin wanted spontaneous union of the community. And the basis of this union will be complete trust, not the use of strength and power of the one over the other. Thus Hazarika indicates the contemporary significance of Lenin in India.

As a journalist Bhupen Hazarika pays tribute to many great people from diversified field. They are the people ranging from social reformer like Sankardeva to famous painter Picasso and M. F. Hussain, from pioneering cultural and social icons like Jyotiprasad and Bishnu Rabha to the great personalities of literature like Charles Dickens and John Steinback, from famous cinema actor like Marilyn Monroe and Balraj Sahani to great thinkers like Bertrand Russell and Ibsen. In his article Mahapurus Sree Sree Sankardeva (Amar Pratinidhi: 15th year: 1st-2nd issue: Nov, Dec, 1974). Hazarika talks about Sankardeva’s contribution towards establishing peace and harmony in Assamese society. Because of Sankardeva’s social Education he says, there is no
conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims in Assam even today. Sankardeva remains acceptable for the modern generation for his universal humanism, economic reformation, and sense of equality among people, scientific analysis and explanation of philosophy.

Hazarika writes about Picasso in his article *Priya Picassok Log Palo* (I have met favorite Picasso) (*Xadin, 1st March, 2000*) Here, he answers the questions “Who is Picasso?, Where was he born?, Since when has he been drawing?” Hazarika gives a chronological account of Picasso’s life from his birth to his demise and of his development as a world famous painter over the ages. This article serves as an introduction to Picasso’s life and works for the people of Assam. Again in his another article *Hussain: Lalitkala-Kabita* (Hussain: Fine Arts-Poem). Hazarika pays tribute to great Indian painter M.F. Hussain. In his writing he shows how Hussain struggled hard to place himself among the great painter of the world. (*Hazarika, Surjya [ed]:2008:955*)

Bhupen Hazarika remembers Bertrand Russell on his death in his editorial of *Amar Pratinidhi*: 10th year: 7th issue: March, 1970. Lamenting the demise of Russell, he says “The Human race has lost a humanistic storm for whole life”. This reflects Hazarika’s proximity to the world’s intellectual and social life. Another article of him *Ibseniyā Chetanār Samikhyā* (An assessment of Ibsen’s Consciousness) (*Amar Pratinidhi*: 12th year: 2nd issue: October, 1971) is an appreciation of the life and contribution of Henrik Ibsen, the great dramatist of Norway. In his plays, Ibsen, Hazarika says, shakes the set conventions and norms of the society with the presentation the social issues like rights and emancipation of woman, the bindings of marriage and family, the rights of the children etc. He concludes with the hope that the ways of Ibsen will inspire and guide the world of Assamese drama towards being socially more significant. All these show Hazarika’s deep understanding of the world’s leading personalities and his intellectual and philosophical affinity with them.

Bhupen Hazarika was also the editors of two other Assamese magazines. They were *Goti* and *Bindu*. *Goti* was published in 1957. It was the first art journal in
Assamese language. And it was the first Assamese magazine in editorship of Bhupen Hazarika (Parashar, Anubhab and Goswami Samiron[edit]: An article by Nath, Rotimohan : 2011: 200). In 1970, when Hazarika was continuing his editorial task of Amar Pratinidhi he became the editor of Bindu. Bindu was the first mini magazine in Assamese. In the later period, Hazarika again edited another Assamese magazine Pratidhwani. In 1983 the magazine was published by Bani Mandir, a leading publishing house. In 1990, when the magazine was stopped Bhupen Hazarika also wound up his editorial responsibilities. However, he still kept writing in different newspapers and magazines. (Parasar, Anubahab and Goswami Samiran[edit]: An article by Nath, Ratimohan: 2011: 203)

Goti was an art journal. It was the result of his long standing wish. In the first edition of Goti Hazarika wrote that a dream had been realized with the publication of Goti. Since the day he was the editor of New India in New York he had been planning to serve the Assamese language and culture through a magazine. Again he called that the objective of Goti was to show respect to the old cultural heritage of Assam, to analyze the cultural properties and present them before the people, to indicate the bases of the old on which new creativity can take place and to analyze and give exposure to post-war development of Assamese literature, music, dance, drama, painting and film. Further, he said, that Goti would introduce the different fine arts movements in the different parts of the world to the connoisseurs of art in Assam. Besides, the magazine would also give space to the translated literary works in different language of the world. He asserted that Goti was a cultural, magazine, not a political one. The politics in Goti is humanism (Goti: 1st year: 1st Edition: 1957).

Some editorials of Hazarika in Goti are Amar Bukur Duaxar (A few lines of words from our heart) Mukhya Mantriloi Mukali Sithi (An open letter to the Chief- Minister), Mejir Juir Um Lowar Pasat (After taking warmth of the fire of ‘Meji’), Modern Art etc. Through his editorial Hazarika wrote to then Assam’s Chief Minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha requesting him to set up a film studio in Assam so that the artists of the state can shoot films at low cost. However, he did not end in requesting only. He very much
unequivocally, suggested the chief Minister on this matter. Very bluntly he even instructed the Government to buy some tools and instruments and appoint some technicians during transitional period before setting up the studio. He wrote, “Before the setting up the studio, for the transition period the Government buy the following items (the detail is not given) immediately—

1. One battery 35mm sound recorder
2. One silent and synchronized sound 33mm movie camera(battery)
3. One truck (covered)
4. Some reflectors.
5. One generator

Appoint the following technicians---
1. One sound engineer
2. One asst. sound engineer
3. One camera man
4. One asst. camera man
5. One microphone boom man
6. One driver
7. One skilled labour

See that these instruments do not fall in the hands of the corrupted people. For doing this Government will have to pay only one lakh twenty five thousand” (Goti: winter Issue: 1959). Such journalistic conviction and clarity of opinion marked in all the editorials and articles of Bhupen Hazarika.

Again in his article Modern Art Hazarika tries to present the essence of Modern art. He writes, “The age of modern Art in the world of painting has started from the day the artist, during the time of drawing, got more inclined towards the psychological reality than visible reality. Europe, during the middle part of the last century, is its birth place. This age gets deviated from the trends of Renaissance painting. This age wants to
create new realism in the realm of painting by making objective changes and alterations...in this expression there is more influence of the subconscious mind than the conscious one” (Goti: Autumnal Issue, 1958)

Goti also published two very important articles--one is Xangit Abritir Sringkhalabadhata by Ravisankar and the other Bolsabi Nirman Bulile Mai ki Buju by Satyajit Ray. Both the articles reflect the taste of Hazarika as an editor. Goti tried to come close to the readers through question answers section. Reference can also be made to Goti’s special Kapauphool issue. Here he writes about his duty and purpose as an editor. He says that his purpose is not to instruct the readers but to provoke them to think:

“Ei Sankya ‘Gotir’ Xampadakiyat Ami ‘Ethics’ Ba Ki Kariba Lagiba, Xeibidhar Mahabani Nidio. Jiban Xilpi Gandhie Koisil ‘Mor Jibanei Mor Bani. Gatir Ei Xangkhya Pratham Betupatar Para Xekh Betupataloike Pratyek Barga Inchiei Siyarak Mor Gatowei Mor Bani - Aponasawe Ki Kariba Xundar Jagatat, Xeito Aponaxabei Bhabi Lauk. Mor kam matho bhabibaloi ‘Provoke’ karake. Moi Xamarthya Anuxare Ji Paro Karhiyao” (Goti: Kapauphool Issue: April, 1964) (i.e. in the editorial of this issue of Goti we will not deliver the great speech about any ethics what we are supposed to do. The artist of life Gandhi the life artist, said ‘My life is my message’. In this issue the cover page from the first one the last must say aloud, ‘My Body is my message’. You think on your own what you will do in this beautiful world. My work is to provoke you to think. I will carry according to my capacity).

Again Xarat(Autumnal) issue of Goti published Bhupen Hazarika’s Assamese translation of a dramatic scene from his wife’s original English work. The translated version of the work is entitled Axamir Upalabddhi (Hazarika, Surjya: 2008:58). The page of Goti was further adorned with the writing of Mulkraj Anand, the poems of the Noble laureate Greek poet George Seferis, of Vivekananda Mukhapadhyi, the writing of Satjit Rai, Vsevolod Pudavkin etc. It also featured short stories by Nirod Choudhury and Phula Talukdar, the letter of Jyotiprasad, the news related to film making in Russia and about the famous film director Earnest Pintoff.
With the publication of the first Assamese mini magazine *Bindu*, Bhupen Hazarika added a new chapter in the history of Assamese periodicals. It was a monthly magazine. And the size was 6cm × 7 cm. However; *Bindu* did not run even one year. Hazarika’s writings in *Bindu* are the examples of his terse style. In one of his editorials Hazarika said, “Let’s see, whether the literary personalities of Assam can draw the *Mahabharata* in a dew-drop or not. It’s a challenge”. (*Raichoudhury, Bhupendra: 2011: 85*). Many renowned poets and authors’ writings were published in *Bindu*. A few examples are Syed Abdul Malik’s ‘Mini Poem’ *Kalijar Ali*, Nitya Dutta’s *Hahise* and Annada Sankar Rai’s *Saraswati*. However, the practice of writing with limited words did not flourish much in Assamese language. But, there is no doubt, that through *Bindu*, Hazarika shows the potentiality of a terse and compact style of linguistics expression. (*Ibid: 85*)

Hazarika’s editorials in *Pratidhwani* also reflect the fecundity of his thought, positivity of his approach. His editorials like *Axomiya Bolsabir Panchansbasariya Jayanti* (the 50th Anniversary of Assamese Cinema), *Axamar Patabhumi Hindi Sabi* (The Hindi Movie in the backdrop of Assam) *Dui Mahar Juj: Dui Mantrir Juj* (The fight between two buffaloes: the fight between two Ministers), *Axomaloi Mor Manat Pare* (I remember Assam), *Abhinai Kara Nai* (I am nor acting), *Xantir Kapau Bisari* (In search of the Dove of peace), *Nirabasan: Neta-Abhineta* (Election: Leaders-Actors) , *Tathapi Xarat Ahe* (Still Autumn Comes), *Suktir Pasatei Mukuti Ne?* “(Is freedom after Accord?)”

Here also Hazarika emerges as an earnest socially conscious journalist. He always feels that he has his say on the socio-political issues around. He is never aloof from his society and its changing political scenes. This is proved in his editorial *Suktir Pasatei Mukti?* in this article Hazarika discusses the issues arising out of the Assam accord in 1985. He in his writing tries to give direction to the general people’s perception on the whole matter. He writes “Legal Assamese and the new comers should be together …for how many days should they keep fighting? They should build a power where there will be development for all”. (*Pratidhwani: Autumnal Issue: 1985*)
Thus, Hazarika’s journalism comes to the fore at the hour of social crisis and takes all initiatives to guide the people towards unity, brotherhood and prosperity.

The central point of Bhupen Hazarika’s editorial is Assam, the hopes and aspirations of Assamese people and their feeling of intimidation to its identity and existence from the outside world. In one of his songs he presented his “Axamiya-Darxan” (i.e. Assamese Philosophy)

“Āmi Axamiyā Nahau Dukhiyā Buli
Xāntana Labhile Nahaba
Ājir Axamiyāī Nijak Nisinile
Axam Raxātale Jaba
Nān Jāti Upajāti
Rahaniyā Kristi
Ākowāli Loi Hoisil Sristi
Ei Mor Axom Dexkh
Bibhed Parihari
Nij Hāte Shram Kari
Dexkhak Nagarhile
Ei Dexkh Hoba Nihxekh……..”

This song was an editorial of Amar Pratinidhi. It was published in the editorial column in the May, 1968 issue. (Bora, Dr. Lakhirandand[edt]: An article by Majumdar, Dr. Paramananda: Feb, 2012: 76) Hazarika is concerned about the identity crisis that the Assamese people might face because of their aversion towards labour and work. He urges the people to come out of their self contention and work to uplift the Assamese society and people.

He advocates Assamese spirit of regionalism against central governments negative attitude towards it. He writes—“If someone loves his own state, own town, own village in a bit special way—(and if such thought is not negative) the argument to describe it as a crime has some flaws in itself only. We call it chauvinism… It (regionalism) is a positive way. It is a way to progress. This way becomes more developed – if it is truly
democratic, if it is truly socialistic, if it is secular and if it is the thought which respects
the political personality, economic entity, the sweet smell of cultural uniqueness of that
special region. When I say I love mother, does it mean that I hate others mother?... it can
of course, be argued that the development of the region of Assam can be brought upon
with the support and care of the working class and the intellectuals from the people of
Assam comprising of many religions, many languages, many communities (Still keeping
the philosophy of universal love intact). When will the lords of Delhi stop blaming
Assam as parochial whenever it asks for what it rightly deserves?... the situation will go
out of control if the thirteen laces of Assamese unemployed youth take ‘Gun’ instars of
‘Gaan’(Song) in their hands. If the expressions of the pain of the deprived regions of
India do not reach someone’s ear, this expression will not care. There must be problem
in that ear. Treatment? The treatment is the courage and bold expression of the working
people of Assam” (Agradoot: 8 Sept, 1971). This piece of writing shows his philosophy
of regionalism. He asserts his love for Assam, his native land. But this love is not
jingoism. His concern for Assam is not a result of any antagonistic feeling or negative
attitude towards others. Here, he, while demanding more attention and care for Assam,
doesn’t forget to refer to the other regions of India which are suffering because of not
getting enough response from the central government. That makes his writing more
objective and his thought more universal.

The burning issues of Assam always find focal place in Hazarika’s writings. In his
Operation 1971, an article published in Amar Pratinidhi (12th issue 1971) he presents
the problems and resentment arising out of foreigner’s immigration to Assam. The
following extracts from his writing will show Hazarika’s deep concern over the issue—

“It has been announced in Assam Government Gazette or ‘Axom Raj Patra’ (24
June, 1971 General Issue) that many upper grade employee will be appointed. The name
of the post will be Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Asst. Relief and Rehabilitation
Officer…Their work will be to set transit camp for the refugees from Bangladesh…
The Impact on Assam’s Economy

While analyzing it is seen that lacs of refugees has been coming from ‘Purba Banga’ crossing the border since 1947—they contribute towards shaking the base of Assam’s polity and economy—they settle here altogether as citizens of Assam. Some of them have become cabinet minister also...

The situation has been further worsening by one economic fact. Assam’s khadi production decreased and per capita income has declined........ This problem has touched the spinal cord of the Assamese people. Hence this writer has analyzed the whole matter, as he cannot keep quite – so that people discuss about the problem in a serious way” (Hazarika, Surjya[ed]: 2008:3490.)

Again in his editorial Bhotadhikar Arjan Karahe Prasna: Karhi Lowa Nahai, Bhupen Hazarika has identified the foreigners immigration problem of Assam as a national problem. He has said that it is a problem of the whole of India. It has been agreed upon by centre and the seven states of Assam. The Bengali speaking people of Assam also declared it as a unanimous resolution. Franchise is to be earned, not to be snatched illegally (Amar Pratinidhi: 10th year: 10th Issue: Nov. 1979). But Bhupen Hazarika always feels that Assam and its problems are not getting enough attention at the all India level. He writes that until and unless all India and regional political parties recognize Assam’s problem as national problem and come out of the narrow spheres of their party politics, the problem of Assam will not be solved. Delhi should take serious note of the illegal immigration to Assam (Amar Pratinidhi: 20th year: 3rd issue: March, 1983).In his many other articles like Manat Jui Lagile Dekha Tan (Amar Pratinidhi: 20th year: 2nd issue: Feb, 1980), Kendra Banam Axamar Andolan (Amar Pratinidhi: 20th year; 5th Issue: May, 1980), Kendrar Rajnoitik Pakha Khel (Amar Pratinidhi: 20th year: 5th Issue: May, 1980) etc. Bhupen Hazarika was constantly obsessed with the social scenes and situations of Assam during the burning days of 1980 Assam Illegal Foreigners Deportation movement. As a true journalist, he has analyzed the crux of the problem and reflected the general people’s sentiment on the whole issue. He writes that the Assamese people have been fighting in every step to get even the minimum of their
dues since the days of Yandaboo Treaty (It is treaty signed between the Burmese Army and the East India Company. By this treaty the rule of Assam had been handed over to the East India Company). And even after 1947, the people of Assam had to take path of movement for their every demand, whether it is political or economics. The poisonous thorn is still hunting the heart of Assam (Pratidhwani: Rongali Bihu Issue: 1984). In all the writings discussed so far it is evident that Hazarika believed that there was some genuine cause for the people’s resentment and agitation. He could perceive the threat to the ethnic identity of the people, the socio-economic and political crisis arising out of the illegal immigration to Assam, and the central Government’s apathy towards the whole issue. In his article Asal Xangramar Arambha Etiyahe Hoise, he as an ordinary citizen, feels the need for a regional political party. He says that there should be a party representing the wishes of all the peoples of Assam, ensuring their security and socio-economic development. Such party should have been formed much before. He asserts “The new generation can build a democratic and secular power in the ground of Assam…In parliamentary democracy fight should be put up with a new political force…if a political power which is enrooted in Assam is formed no Mahabharata would be wrong…Assam is not an unnecessary part of India -It is a great part of Mahabharata. According to me - the real struggle starts now. Now only I am convinced that Assam’s future is bright” (Axaom Bani: 13th Jan, 1984)

In the issue of Language, and Assam’s rights to its resources Bhupen Hazarika has written many editorials. In his editorial Tel Kharua Tez Paniya (Amar Pratinidhi: 15th year: 5th issue: March, 1975) he gave vent to his anger against the central Government and asserted Assam’s right to its own crude oil. He wrote: “The decision to pipe Assam’s crude oil to Haldia has hurt the hopes of the people of Assam…There is enough crude oil in Assam. And it can be refined in Assam only by expanding its refining arrangements. This is the comment of the Russians, not ours…. In the underground of Assam 58% of Indians total crude oil is stored. In this fact, there is nothing ‘Provincial’ and parochial. Now the point is: if the unemployment problem of the eastern India is to be solved to some extent, what would have been so seriously
wrong if a refinery is set up in the home for the crude oil of the home only? While working we would have worked together as Indian…Assam’s ‘New Generation’ is silent! Strange! Oil, Oil and Oil”.

In the issue of language Bhupen Hazarika keeps a clear and democratic attitude (Bora, Dr. Lakhinandan[edit]: An article by Majumdar, Dr. Paramananda : Feb: 2012: 77). In his editorial Eibarar Xahitya Xabha very clearly he stated----

“If unity is necessary in east India, then any organization (Be it cultural or Political) should keep the primary motto that-Assam is not for Assamese only, Assam is for everyone who lives in Assam. And the link is Assamese Language and secular socialist economics development should take place for all.

We believe that it is the holy duty of all non-Assamese to learn the Assamese language as a link-language while keeping the respect for their own languages intact. The Assamese people also should see the matter positively by respecting others language”. (Amar Pratinidhi: 10th year: 7th Issue: March, 1970)

Here he also accepts that Assam is a land of many peoples. Because of Assam’s rich natural resources and agricultural prospects many people from outside always keep coming to it. And if Assam is their own land they should learn the Assamese language. Then only the Assamese people will not treat them as alien. There is also some problem with the Assamese people also, he further adds. It is a bitter truth that they fail to embrace the large society of the tea-labour community as their own. The Assamese people still call them ‘Bengali’, even if they have become whole-heartedly Assamese. The dialects of the tribes of the plains are not recognized as the right materials for research.

Thus, it has been observed that Bhupen Hazarika maintains a very clear and impartial attitude towards the presentations and resolutions of the issue concerning the socio-political life of Assam. As a journalist he successfully records the series of scenes and situation before him, and, in a quite disinterested manner he analyses them towards finding a solution or settlement. His fair sense of journalistic responsibility always makes him just and constructive in his columns. His writings replete with his spirit of
Assamese nationalism can no way separate him from his identity as an Indian. What he says is practical and positive and accommodates the interest and wishes of all the people in general. And it makes him acceptable to a larger people. His acceptability and relevance is further increased by his promptness of response and reaction towards the happenings of his time. However, he doesn’t stop in recording or responding. He moves further to guide the people out of the conflicts and problems by showing some solutions and way out. And this makes him stand out of the many of his contemporaries.