

An overview of impact of modern technology on Assamese culture, language and literature

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Abstract

It is an acknowledged and well known fact that Modern technology has a direct interference in every walk of human life in today's world. Owing to the landmark developments that modern technology has achieved in recent decades, these technological revolutions have left their mark on almost everything, including language and literature. The recent scientific-technological revolutions of human civilization have had a significant impact on Assamese language and literature as well.

In this paper, I will try to discuss how the modern technology has affected Assamese culture, language and literature in both negatively and positively on one hand, while on the other I would like to address its impact on literary forms of this rich language.

Key words:- Assamese language, medium, education, mother tongue, regional language, Corresponding author: anurupa.chutia21@gmail.com

1.0 Introduction:-

Assam is one of the Eight Sister states of northeastern India. Known for its rich culture and diverse population, the culture of Assam is a fusion of Indo Burmese, Mongolian and Aryan influences. This beautiful land, known as the 'land of red rivers and blue hills' is a little paradise with untouched natural landscapes worth to be traversed for its pristine beauty. The people of the state are collectively called Axomiyas and the language Axomiya (Assamese) which is also the most widely spoken official state language.

No doubt, Assam is the meeting ground of diverse cultures. The people of the enchanting state of Assam are an intermixture of various racial stocks such as Mongoloid, Indo-Burmese, Indo-Iranian and Aryan. The Assamese culture is a rich and exotic tapestry of all these races evolved through a long assimilative process. The natives of the state of Assam are known as "Asomiya" (Assamese), which is also the state language of Assam.

Gamosa is an indispensable part of almost all socio-religious ceremonies in Assam. It is derived from the Kamrupi word 'Gaamasa' (gaama+chadar) which was used to cover the Bhagavad Purana at the altar. It is considered as an act of purification and used to clean the body after bath. It looks like a white rectangular piece of cloth along with a red border on three sides and woven motifs on the fourth. Assamese men wear the dhoti-gamosa which is their traditional dress. Bihu dancers wrap it around the head, and it is often used to cover the altar at the prayer hall or the scriptures. The other things like Tamul paan and Xorai also important symbols. The former is considered as offers of devotion whereas the latter is a bell used for container medium.

A majority of the Assamese is the Vaishnavas (a sect of Hinduism). The Vaishnavas do not believe in idol worshiping and perform Namkirtana where the glory of Lord Vishnu is recited. The two important cultural and religious institutions that influence the cultural fabric of Assam: the Satras, the site of religious and cultural practice which have been in existence for over 400 years and the Naamghar, the house of prayers. Villagers generally associate on the basis of membership of a local center of devotional worship called "Naamghar". Villages are usually made up of families from a number of distinct castes. In Assam, the caste system, although it exists, is not as prominent as in other parts of India. Other religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam etc. are also practiced in Assam.

2.0 Purpose of research:-

The aim of this paper is to present a picture of Impact of modern technology on Assamese culture, language and literature. In this paper we are analyzing the data of past and present condition of Assamese culture, language and literature in various academic field of Assam. In the research methods mainly used in this study are analytical and descriptive methods. The necessary materials are collected from library and used with proper observation and analysis to justify the proposed ideas.

3.0 An Overview of Assamese Culture ,Literature and Language

The state has a large number of tribes, each unique in its tradition, culture, dress and exotic way of life. Diverse tribes like Bodo, Kachari, Karbi, Miri, Mishimi, Rabha, etc co-exist in Assam, most tribes have their own languages though Assamese is the principal language of the state.

The national festival of Assam is the Bihu which is celebrated in three parts during a year with great pomp and grandeur by all Assamese, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Bengali-speaking Hindus and Muslims represent the largest minorities, followed by Nepalis and populations from neighboring regions of India. The most important social and cultural celebrations are the three Bihu festivals observed with great enthusiasm irrespective of caste, creed and religious affinity. From time immemorial, the people of Assam have traditionally been craftsmen. Artists, sculptors, masons, weavers, spinners, potters, goldsmiths, artisans of ivory, wood, bamboo, cane and hide have flourished in Assam from ancient times.

Weaving is one traditional craft that every Assamese woman takes pride in. The Assamese women produce silk and cotton clothes of exquisite designs in their looms. Assam is renowned for its exquisite silks namely Eri, Pat and the world famous Muga silk. Gandhiji complimented the Assamese weavers as artists who could weave dreams in their looms.

The Gamocha is one of the most easily recognizable cultural symbols of the Assamese people besides the tamol-paan (areca nut & betel leaf) which is an integral part of almost all socio-religious ceremonies.

The Gamocha, a white rectangular piece of cotton hand woven cloth with primarily a red border on three sides and red woven motifs on the fourth (in addition to red, other colors are also used) is put to many uses. It is used as a towel, as a waistcloth or a loincloth; a Bihu dancer wraps it around the head in a knot, it is also hung around the neck at the prayer hall and thrown over the shoulder to signify social status or respect. Gamochas, also known as bihuwaans, are offered during Bihu as a token of love. Significantly the gamocha is used equally by all, irrespective of religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Bihu is the most popular folk dance of Assam. Bihu dances are performed by young boys and girls during the Bihu festivities which represent youthful passion, reproductive urge, and joy. It is characterized by brisk dance steps, and rapid hand movement. Dancers wear traditionally colorful Assamese clothing. The dances are accompanied by musical instruments like dhol(dholak), penpa, gagana, banhi(flute) etc. Though the origins of the Bihu dance is unknown, the first official endorsement is cited to be when Ahom king Rudra Singha invited Bihu dancers to perform at the Ranghar fields sometime around 1694 on the occasion of Rongali Bihu.

Satriya Nritya is the classical dance form of Assam which represents the Satriya culture, the basis of the religious and cultural fabric of Assam. It is one among eight principal classical Indian dance traditions. Whereas some of the other traditions have been revived in the recent past, Satriya has remained a living tradition since its creation by the founder of Vaishnavism in Assam, the great saint Srimanta Sankardeva, in 15th century Assam. The core of Satriya Nritya has usually been mythological stories. This was an artistic way of presenting mythological teachings to the people in an accessible, immediate, and enjoyable manner.

It's been more than two thousand years that various traditional crafts have emerged in Assam. The traditional crafts like pottery and terracotta work, brass craft, jewellery making, musical instruments making, cane and bamboo craft, silk and cotton weaving, and Woodcraft are a major source of employment for the people of Assam.

Bhor Tal Nritya is an extension of Sankari culture. Six to ten dancers equipped with cymbals perform this dance to the first bit of "Thiya Nom" and produces a good number of attractive formations displaying the cymbals. The dance can be seen during festive occasions in and around Barpeta and Guwahati.

In the passage of more than a hundred years of their settlement in Assam, the tea tribes have developed a synthesized form of dance called "Chah Baganar Jumur Nach". This is a beautiful dance to watch. A visitor to any tea gardens can easily see this dance. The tea tribes have a synthesized form of dance called "Jhumur Nach", performed by girls and boys together, or, sometimes by the girls alone, with the precision of footwork while clasping tightly. Weaving is the most ancient of all the practices where even now women take pride in the possession and occupation in the handloom industry. Gandhiji lauded the Assamese weavers as artists who could weave dreams in their looms. Bodo community has many folk dances to boast. Among them, the best and the most attractive is the Bagurumba dance. This is mainly a formation dance with slow steps and outstretched hands. About a

score of girls dressed in most colorful attire performs this dance to the accompany- the merit of Bodo traditional musical instruments. A tourist in Assam can see this dance in the Bodo inhabited areas of Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Darrang and Sonitpur districts. It is the usually practiced during Bwisagu, a festival of the Bodos in the Bishuba Sankranti or Mid-April. The Bagurumba dance is also called "butterfly dance" because of this attractive folk dance of the Bodo tribe of Assam, resembles the movement of birds and butterflies. Then young people reverentially bow down to their parents and elders.

Painting is another ancient form which has been known since the time of Chinese traveler Xuanzang (7th century CE). Most of the manuscripts from the Middle Ages have excellent examples of traditional paintings. They have been influenced by the concept and designs in the medieval works such as the Chitra Bhagawata. There is a Department of Fine Arts in Assam, called University Silchar, which is a central government organization which focuses on the art and craft of north east India with a particular reference to Assam.

Language is constantly evolving, but technology is probably increasing the rate of evolution. The ability to communicate and travel (thanks to technology) connects more people with different languages, and certain aspects of technology (cell phones with text messages and emojis) are changing the way people speak and write.

In economics, a technological change is an increase in the efficiency of a product or process that results in an increase in production, without an increase in inputs. In other words, someone invents or improves a product or process, which is then used to earn a greater reward for the same amount of work.

Development of Assamese Poetry occurred as result of the various changes that happened in Assam. In Assamese, as in other languages, poetry was the earliest medium of expression. No wonder, therefore, that the new spirit of romanticism also found its earliest articulation in verse. The developed Assamese poetry cradled on the wheels of modernity breeding the postcolonial hangovers and the maroons of individualistic strains.

When Modernity arrived as a postcolonial intervention in the tradition bound Assamese society in the wake of the British occupation of Assam in the nineteenth century, it found an intellectual vacuum to fill in. Before the British came, the society itself was in disarray following the decline of the six hundred year Ahom rule and the oppressive invasion of the Burmese. The literature was in a moribund state slowly declining after reaching a great height during the neo-Vaishnavite period in the sixteenth century. Modernity, which was the manifestation of the western rational thought that saw great industrial progress, found this vacuum well-suited to bring in new impulses.

But there was still an unbroken continuity of lyric impulse in our folk life and its feeding fount was nature. Though rational thought became the guiding light in matters of societal progress, it was romanticism with the foregrounding of imagination that attracted the Assamese poetic mind. Romantic impulses blended creatively there with the pre-existing lyric sediments giving form to the new Assamese literature. By the forties of the 20th century however, perceptions of the new poets started changing.

The Second World War impacted the world in a decisive way. Market centers started developing into urban conglomerations causing movements of people from the villages to such centers, illicit trading of goods became a new phenomenon and even flesh trade proliferated. Besides, the gap between the comparatively well-to-do and the poor became more pronounced and overall, a harsh social reality impacted the tranquil life of a society that was comfortably adjusting its life to the changes brought about by a slow-paced modernity. After India's independence, the problem arising out of the issue of the state's official language, the gaps occurring between social expectations and the slow pace of economic development, the rise of unemployment accentuated by the failure of the economy to create proper job opportunities for a growing educated population that harboured middle class dreams of upward mobility etc. created a sense of modern uncertainty in the society. An awareness of social class division also came to the fore. In this scenario, a new poetry had to spring up, particularly since romantic poetry lost its vigour and expressiveness through repetitions of themes and diction and soporific rhyme schema. The principal practitioners of this kind of poetry also started becoming silent, some of them being snatched away by death and the others bewildered by the uncertain changes taking place around them.

Conclusion:-

After analyzing the data we can conclude as follows:

As far as Assamese Literature are came to light and their are widespread use of Assamese literature, in the form of print media, electronic media are available. Every newspaper, magazines, journals available in the form of Monthly, fortnightly, annually magazines came to light and they have huge numbers of readers as well. Means Assamis people are very much dedicated to sustain their culture in the form of literature and all. Government of Assam is also providing a key role for implementing Modern technology and tools to maintain harmony, culture and historical aspects in the form of data base, books and all. But still lots of work has to do in the lower middle section, though the number has decreased over the years but still many students still go for study in the medium of Assamese. Above aspects show us that Assamese language might have faced many challenges but it still possesses its sanctity and authenticity for Assamese people. Government should aid funds for translation work in Assamese for enriching the literary legacy.

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