

Brahmaputra in Assamese Folk Culture.

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Abstract: Culture is the life blood of a society. Culture goes on at a consistent pace crossing all limits and borders. The river is a wonderful creation of world nature. 'Brahmaputra' is one of the largest rivers in the world. This discussion paper attempts to discuss the impact of the river 'Brahmaputra' on folk culture which is an integral part of culture.

Keywords: Brahmaputra, Folk culture, Assamese

Introduction:

Culture is the beauty of the life of a nation, a society. Culture, like the continuous movement of rivers, goes on at a consistent pace crossing borders. Like the sun is reflected on the dew drops hanging from the grasses in the morning, in the same way the entire evolutionary journey of the mankind is reflected in culture.

The river is a wonderful creation of nature. 'Brahmaputra' is one of the largest rivers in the world. The river Brahmaputra has divided Assam into two parts and has joined the Bay of Bengal. Northeast Indian culture and civilization have been built on the banks of the Brahmaputra. The Brahmaputra has created a union of unity by coordinating different castes and tribes and has made Assamese culture an age-old and a beautiful one.

Study of the paper:

Assamese culture is incomplete without the river Brahmaputra. In Assamese culture, the river Brahmaputra has a wide range. That is why this research paper has selected some particular aspects from this very wide range which are being discussed here under the topic of 'Brahmaputra in Assamese folk culture'. Among the various sections of folk culture, the discussion paper has selected and discussed the aspects of 'Brahmaputra in Bihu Geet or Bihu songs', 'Brahmaputra in Lok Biswas or Folk beliefs' and 'Brahmaputra at the festivities or festivals'.

Methodology:

In order to complete this discussion paper, several books, research papers etc. have been collected and studied in line with the original proposed subject and after building a proper understanding of the subject matter, the progress in the work of the discussion paper was carried forward. Efforts are being made to present the issue in a narrative manner keeping in mind the issue of 'Brahmaputra in Assamese folk culture'.

Brahmaputra in Assamese folk culture:

“Brahmaputra Mahabahu Santanu Kulonandan

Amogha Garbhasambhritta Papang Lohitya me Hara”

(The mighty Brahmaputra keeps flowing in a quiet and peaceful manner, washing away sins within its wide arms)

The mighty, sin-washing Brahmaputra is an international river that crosses 2900 km route through three countries Tibet, India and Bangladesh. The Brahmaputra has been having a profound influence on the life and society of Assam from ancient Assam to the present day. On the banks of the Brahmaputra, castes and tribes like Aryan, Non-Aryan, Kiraat, Nishad etc. have come together to create the Brahmaputra civilization and culture. Among these castes, tribes and sub-tribes, the Brahmaputra came to be known as Lohitya, Luit, Barluit, Siroluit, Tilao, Laotu, Bulungboothur etc.

Under folk culture, Brahmaputra is essential and inseparable in all aspects of songs, idioms, riddles, folktales, festivities, fun and games, folk-beliefs, ethos etc. It is as if the source of all these creations goes back to the river. This river accepts the hills and the plains equally and that is why it has become a life-long companion of the self-composed tales of the people belonging to various tribes and sub-tribes.

Brahmaputra in Bihu geet:

Assamese folk songs are all self compositions. Since every day, every step of folk life is associated with the Brahmaputra, the river leads in all aspects of their conversation and creation.

The beauty of the Brahmaputra is manifested in Shakti Bihu geet-

Brahmaputra khani Sosakoi Suwani

Bheta Di Rakhuta Nai

(The Brahmaputra is really beautiful...no one to stop it.)

This huge and beautiful Luit (Brahmaputra) has no boundaries in Bihu geet. With a constant sense, Luit is seen flowing through the songs. Overwhelmed by the beauty and strength of the Brahmaputra, the emotions of young boys and girls arouse. Brahmaputra is a living witness to the love of young boys and girls. It is in the banks of this river where the four eyes meet and the young lovers express each other's feelings through Bihu geet-

"Luitor Suti Dokoi Dubile

Kachuti Suloki Gol

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Aji Juwarati Bihutolite

Senaire Kajiya Hol."

(Here, the singer is expressing his sorrow after having a clash with his beloved...the sorrow is compared to that of a waist-cloth(Kachuti) getting undressed in the strong currents of the river.)

Sometimes, in search of a girlfriend, the love-loving man leaves his house and family and travels across the Luit, Dikhou, and take rest in Kaliabor which is reflected in the song -

"Luit Par Holu Dikhou Par Holu

Jiralu Kaliaborot

Tumak Bisari Eru Ghare-Bari

Nethaku Dibrugarhrt."

(I have crossed the Luit and the Dikhou...have rested in Kalibor. I have left my home and family in search of you. Can't stay in Dibrugarh anymore)

In the same way, the river Brahmaputra has found a place for itself in other Bihu songs as well.

Brahmaputra in popular belief:

There is a growing public popular or folk belief among the Assamese people around the river Brahmaputra. For most people, it is not just a river, it is considered a deity. To cross the Brahmaputra, one should board a boat or a ship and some coins as offerings or tamul-paan(areca nut and betel leaves) to the river. Even if the traveller crosses the Brahmaputra over a bridge, this ritual should be performed. Apart from this, some other people associated with this river believe that one should not cross the Brahmaputra if the person is menstruating¹.

Bathing in the Brahmaputra during Ashokastami held in the Assamese month of Chatt (December-January) frees sin. The soul of the deceased is eternally liberated when the ashes of the deceased are thrown into the Brahmaputra on Ashokastami day. There is a belief that on Ashokastami day, the river Ganga comes and meets Brahmaputra and as a result bathing in Brahmaputra on that day makes it equally virtuous to bathe in Ganga.

Brahmaputra at the festivals and ceremonies:

Festivals and ceremonies are seen being built around the Brahmaputra. Ashokastami is one such event. It looks like a fasting rite but it can actually be put on the line with the ceremonies. On this occasion, markets, fairs, fun and games etc. are held on the banks of the Brahmaputra. In addition, to remove dangers from the village like bad omen, trouble, diseases etc., a raft made out of banana stem is thrown into the stream of Brahmaputra by worshipping goddess Manasa with various offerings. This festival is also held in other rivers and tributaries of Assam. The water of the Brahmaputra is essential in weddings, prayers and other such auspicious ceremonies. Therefore, the water of the Brahmaputra or any of its tributaries is drawn from in a ceremonial way during weddings, prayers and auspicious ceremonies. It is worth noting that a festival called 'Namami

Brahmaputra' was held recently with the main focus on Brahmaputra. It was celebrated in the month April, 2017 for the first time.

Conclusion:

Jilikabo Luitore paar
Andharor bheta bhang
Pragjyotish't boi
Jeuti nijorare dhar

(The banks of the Luit will be lighted...As its current flows through the dark in Pragjyotish...)

Hazarikadeva's lyrics also want to prove that if the Assamese society and public moves forward on the path of development through the obstacles and hurdles, it would be like enlightening the banks of the Luit. That is, public life and Brahmaputra have an intimate relationship which is why the river Brahmaputra takes over in the folk culture of the Assamese people. It is like the river Brahmaputra is a life-giver and a huge support system for the people of this state. As a result, a great sense of trust among the people about the river started to develop and this led to creation of the various festivals and ceremonies.

To sum up, no one can deny that Assamese civilization has been built and rebuilt over the ages with the unlimited contribution of the Nadaraj Brahmaputra. Lastly, here are a few lines addressing the mighty Brahmaputra: "He siroprobahini dharani xujol kori boi jua enedore aru gaai jua prohorir dore deshor sanjivani mantra (Oh ever-flowing, light bringer Brahmaputra! Keep on flowing the same way, ever protecting and guiding this nation)".

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