

ASSAMESE FOLK LITERATURE IN COTEXT TO GLOBALISATION

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Abstract: *Though the term Globalisation, known as Biswayan or Golakikaran in Assamese is a widely discussed and heated topic of today's time, it is not a new subject as the concept began with the origination of human civilisation. Globalisation is the most discussed topic in the modern world. This is a process that turns the whole world into one neighbourhood. This concept was born during seventies or eighties of seventeenth century Europe and gradually spread all over the world. Earlier the concept of globalisation was related only to economy, but later on it included language-literature-culture, politics and various other fields as well. The rapid growth of science and technology has made the concept of globalisation more prevalent and acceptable. Like many countries, influence of globalization is seen in Assam as well. Impact of globalisation is inevitable in Assamese folk literature as well. In this paper effort has been made to discuss about how the folktales, one of the most important parts of Assamese folk literature is getting influenced by globalisation. Analytical and comparative systems are followed while preparing this paper. The subject of the study covers an elaborate range. Considering the ease of discussion and for systematic study only the 'folktales' has been taken for discussion. Resources for this paper have been taken from secondary sources. The written version of 'Burhi Aair Xadhu', folktales compiled by Laksmi Nath Bezbaruah has been taken for reference.*

Key Words: *Globalization, Folktales, stories, storyteller, listener.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

Globalisation is the most discussed topic in the modern world. This is a process that turns the whole world into one neighbourhood. This concept was born during seventies or eighties of seventeenth century Europe and gradually spread all over the world. Earlier the concept of globalisation was related only to economy, but later on it included language-literature-culture, politics and various other fields as well. The rapid growth of science and technology has made the concept of globalisation more prevalent and acceptable. Like many countries, influence of globalization is seen in Assam as well. As the capitalist free economy has been influencing everything, changes in the traditional social lifestyle of Assam are also seen on everyday basis. Since the standard or the identity of a country is inculcated in its folk literature, globalisation straightaway affects the folk literature and culture. It is not easy to bring changes in the way of people's thinking until the changes take place in their culture. Impact of globalisation is inevitable in Assamese folk literature as well. In this paper effort has been made to discuss about how the folktales, one of the most important parts of Assamese folk literature is getting influenced by globalisation.

1.1 Aspect

Aspects of the study under the title 'Assamese folk literature in context to globalisation' are:-

- To discuss about the influence of globalisation on folktales, one of the most important parts of folk literature.
- To discover the changes those have taken place in Assamese folktales in context to globalisation.
- To understand how the changes in folktales those have taken place in context to globalisation has influenced people's mind and the society.
- In terms of globalisation to find out the exact position where the folktales stand in the current scenario.

1.2 Methodology

Analytical and comparative systems are followed while preparing this paper.

1.3 Area of study

The subject of the study covers an elaborate range. Considering the ease of discussion and for systematic study only the 'folktales' has been taken for discussion.

1.4 Resources

Resources for this paper have been taken from secondary sources. The written version of 'Burhi Aair Xadhu', folktales compiled by Laksmi Nath Bezbaruah has been taken for reference.

2. Globalisation: A brief intro:

Though the term Globalization, known as *Biswayan* or *Golakikaran* in Assamese is a widely discussed and heated topic of today's time, it is not a new subject as the concept began with the origination of human civilisation. Ancient people moved from one place of the world to another in search of their basic necessities like food, clothes and shelter and it resulted in exchanges in terms of geography, economy and commerce. Such connections created friendly bonds and helped them to stand in an equivalent position. Later on, with the development of civilisation, commercial coordination among various countries took place and the capitalist countries became active participants in such commercial expansions. The concept of globalisation was born during seventies or eighties of seventeenth century Europe and gradually spread all over the world.¹ The rapid growth of science and technology, incredible development of connectivity etc. has brought the whole world so close that similar characteristics have started overpowering the politics, economy and culture all over the world. Identity of a particular nation, geographical borders, existence and ideology of a particular financial institution etc. are seemed to be fading away and a global integrated system is been formed.² In a broader way, globalisation is an imperialistic philosophy accepted by the imperialist countries to fulfil their aspirations. In reality globalisation has turned the whole world to a global village and created a huge market where the colonial countries are playing the role of sellers.

The purpose of globalisation is to make the whole world accessible. Factors like rapid growth of science and technology, urbanised civilisation, unprecedented support from the mass media, direct participation of general public in national ideologies and tasks etc. has brought a symmetrical approach in people's lifestyle and way of thinking which in context to globalisation fetching a revolutionary change to the entire world. Globalisation is a process related to certain special aspects. It has created a marketplace. To increase the demand of the market it became dependent on advertisement. Television, radio etc. became the medium to broadcast the advertisements. Globalisation became the new world-formula patronising privatisation, liberalism etc. It made people from all over the world closer, but in a way diluting their own values and individualism.

Like many other countries, in India too, the term globalisation has become popular only since last twenty years or so. Just like the other parts of India, the global commercial principle has brought astonishing changes to social structure, language, literature and culture in Assam as well. In this paper it is been tried to understand how the Assamese folk literature, especially the folktales are getting influenced by globalisation.

3. Folktales:

Folktales are oral literature. These are imaginary stories filled with morals, entertaining elements and paranormal narratives passed down through generations. These tales were told to children to calm them down, to entertain them or to teach them something as they lead to a particular moral lesson. Morals are inseparable from folktales. According to 'Hemkosh', folktale or *xadhukotha* is a moral tale either true or imaginary, told by wise people. According to Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Assamese people have always been considering the folktales or *xadhukotha* as honest advice by the wise people.

3.1 Characteristics of folktales and its impact on the society

Folktales are not simply stories; they have prominent influence over individual and the social lives.

- **Gives moral lessons:** At most times folktales are used to teach people something as they lead to a particular moral lesson. This is a necessary subject as it can give moral lessons related to distinction between rights or wrong, good or evil, excellence or flaw, dutifulness and many more.
- **Teaches about social values:** Folktales teach about the social values through the narrations like how a guilty on finding his fault gets punished by the society or gets a chance for redemption (e.g. Mekurir Jiyekor Xadhu, Bagh aru Kekura); how the opinions or demands of senior people are obeyed by the juniors (e.g. Tawoiyekor Xadhu); how the weaker section of the society gets betrayed by the opportunists (e.g. Dhorakauri aru Tiposi Sorai, Tejimolar Xadhu, Bandor aru Xiyal, Budhiyok Xiyal) etc.
- **Teaches about cultural lives:** Various traditional customs, folk rituals, functions and behaviours including the ones which are not commonly practiced now a days could be found in the folktales. Scenes like Assamese men ploughing in the paddy fields, having delicacies like *Poita bhat* (boiled rice soaked overnight) and roasted fish (e.g. Tula aru Teja), weaving clothes (*bihuwan*) at the loom and gifting it to the loved ones on the very first day of the Bihu festival (e.g. Silonir Jiyekor Xadhu, Kota Jua Nak Kharoni Di Dhak), storing clothes in the traditional luggage box called *pera* (e.g. Tejimolar Xadhu) and also the pictures of traditional functions like Bihu festival, na-khua (ceremonial eating of the first harvest), marriages, going outs for collective hunting or fishing etc. are beautifully portrayed in the folktales of Assam. The huge shrine of Assamese cultural life is stored in the folktales.

- **Entertains:** The folktales work as a physical and mental refresher to the common people otherwise busy with daily chores by providing them some food for thought and amusement. Though moral is the focal point of a folktale, the storyteller makes it entertaining with his striking way of narrating the scenes so that the characters of the tale and their actions can give people a dose of amusement and teach them something at the same time.

4. Changes in the folktales – the globalisation effect :

Currently the folktales are getting influenced by globalisation. Here it is discussed in a systematic way –

- **Lack of storyteller:** Storyteller is an important part of folktales who takes the stories forward. Earlier in the Assamese households, the grandparents were seen telling stories to their grandchildren sitting on under the moonlight or near the fireplace as the season permits. But now with rapid urbanisation and the growth of nuclear families such environment of storytelling has almost disappeared.
- **Paucity of interest by the listener:** Listeners are inseparable part of folktales. They are not just silent facets but active participants for whom the whole process of storytelling becomes lively and effective. In present time such listeners are hardly found. A listener has to show more interest than the storyteller and get engrossed with it. But people today are fully occupied with their other personal hobbies that they seldom have any time to spare for folktales.
- **Environment:** A certain kind of environment is also needed for folktales. Mostly the free times, the rainy days, bright nights under the moonlight, winter nights near the fireplace, while going to sleep at nights, while the fathers of grandfathers were taking out the weeds from the kitchen garden or crafting various tools from bamboo or cane etc. were ideal time for storytelling. But such situations are not easily found in the urbanised lifestyle. Extremely busy schedules and mechanical urban lifestyle have taken away the atmosphere of storytelling or listening to stories from people's lives.
- **Busyness:** Globalisation makes people competitive and it is seen that parents are becoming extremely conscious to make their children competitive from a very tender age. Along with academics parents are also engaging their children in various extracurricular activities which resulted in a hectic and mechanical lifestyle for both the parents and the children. The activities they have got engaged with for physical, mental and intellectual development have taken away their time to tell or listen to the tales. Even when some of them find interest in folktales, the academic busyness does not allow them to spare time for it.
- **Changes in preferences:** Globalisation has brought changes in people's choice and preferences. Incredible discoveries of science and technology have influenced human mindset and behaviour. People immediately become dependent on the commodities, especially products related to luxury and entertainment which are now easily available due to globalisation. Too much dependency on machines has isolated human beings from their own thinking which is directly affecting the traditional folktales as well. Today's children are more involved in watching cartoons, video games and comics. Parents are also not different. They too prefer providing video games, cartoons etc. to their children which are easily available rather than creating a proper atmosphere where one can tell stories and children enjoy listening to it. On the process of making oneself a modern citizen such an environment is getting created that folktales or *xadhukotha* is automatically moving towards its final stage.
- **Generation gap:** Folktales are the creations of traditional society and a portrait of the folk lives and its way of thinking. Influenced by globalisation, the new generation is now accustomed to the modern tools and choices and cannot relate to folktales that deal with the subjects of cosmic society. They see a huge gap between the present society and the tales. The previous generations who brought up listening to the folktales were remained influenced by the characters of the tales in their entire lives. They carried the stories and characters along with them with their own imagination. But the new generation does not get satisfied only by hearing a story, they want visuals. For the lack of visual depictions the folktales fail to attract this generation. How this negligence towards folktales has changed the mental and social upbringing of children is discussed below –
 - ❖ **Children are getting more offensive:** As the folktales are disappearing due to globalisation the society is witnessing its negative impact on certain areas. The main characteristic of a folktale is its moral. The teachings it provide regarding right or wrong, good or evil etc. facilitate in the development of a society. The new generation children are being deprived of such moral values as the environment of telling and listening to folktales is almost nowhere to be found. Most of the time they are seemed to be engaged with cheap films for momentary pleasure or entertainment, sometimes they are getting so involved into the characters of colourful video games that they are becoming antisocial. Number of Juvenile crime is increasing day by day. Criminal instincts like jealousy with friends, violence, loot, rape etc. are getting into children's mentality. A part of them are getting addicted to toxic drugs. Globalisation has been providing everything for entertainment of the children but it is pathetically failing in building their characters.

- ❖ **Threat to the cultural field:** The folktales cover everything related to the culture of a society. As the folktales are disappearing due to globalisation various cultural elements, such as, cultural resources, rituals and customs, delicacies, folk languages, tools, costumes etc. are gradually becoming unfamiliar to the new generation. Colourful and easily accessible things are replacing the traditional ones. Standard of a community is dependent on its culture and folktales preserve the cultural elements. Diminishing of folktales consequently has made people unaware about their internal and external cultural prosperity and hence it is becoming a threat to the culture of Assam.
- ❖ **Suppression of social values:** Folktales teach an individual about his duties needed to be performed as a social being. Respect to elders and parent, affection towards siblings and younger people etc. are easily found in the folktales. Currently globalisation has changed the genuine values of human minds and people are getting more focussed about their own profit and relationships are taking backseats.
- ❖ **Restricting the creative talents:** There is abundant of scope for creativity in folktales and hence only the theme of the stories remains same all over the world but the characters, actions and their dialogues differ as per the imagination of storytellers who make it appealing according to their respective atmosphere, listeners' age and their interest. It develops the storytellers' creativity as well since more appealing the presentation is more powerful the tale would become. Widespread imagination, creation of exciting scenes, thrilling narration, minute and sharp observation of emotions can help both the teller and listener to grow as a creative being. Such an environment of creative brainstorming also seems to be evaporating due to Globalization.

5. Conclusion:

After the discussion on the topic 'Assamese folk literature in context to globalisation' the conclusion we found are –

- Assamese folk literature is getting influenced by globalisation. In this paper the folktales were taken as the focal point of discussion.
- Changes the folktales have been through due to globalisation - lack of storyteller, paucity of interest by the listener, lack of proper environment, changes in people's preferences, extremely busy schedules, generation gap etc.
- Folktales play a crucial role in building up the individual and social value systems. Globalisation has become a threat to various factors related to individual, social and cultural lives.
- Diminishing of folktales has influenced the mental health of the new generation as numerous children are seemed to be affected by toxic drugs and getting involved in various anti-social trades like violence, sexual offences etc.

It is an ethical duty of the new generation to accumulate the folktales and present and establish the moral values of it in international context.

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