

INFLUENCE OF PERSIAN ON ASSAMESE LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The language is an important means of communication. It is an important determinant of culture or rather, a reflex of culture.¹ Language presupposes both logically and factually the interaction among the people. Language and culture are like a fast flowing stream. As the fast flowing stream carries away all the necessities and unnecessary, lying on its banks, similarly a living language or a living culture takes in some position of other language and culture with whom it comes into the contacts. Thus with give and take attitude a rich living culture thrives and goes on forward to make it richer in culture.

The origin of Assamese language and culture lies mainly in the Indo- Aryan culture. The total outcome of modern Assamese language and culture lies in the Persian of the Indo-Aryan culture and the language and culture of indigenous people of Assam, and its neighbouring states. It has been further influenced by the language and culture of Shan (Tai Ahom) people. The linguistic devices assist the language meet the demands of culture and enable it to determine the course of the development of the vocabulary.

The impact of one language on a particular language spreads by two ways i.e. by the direct ways and by the indirect ways. The direct way is generally established through the contact of the two persons in a direct way while the indirect way is established through the language, literature and culture only. In the context of the impact of Persian on Assamese language and culture, both the ways have been found applicable although the latter way i.e. the indirect has been increasing more in recent times. Generally some words have been borrowed in a particular language in order to fulfill the necessity. On the contrary some words have been borrowed which are regarded as superior and well developed with literature for which the origin terms have been intentionally replaced by the new terms. For example in the Assamese language it uses „haqq“ instead of „Ucit“, „ayana“ instead of archi etc. From the linguistic point of view, the influence of Persian spreads on other Indian languages when it was the official or court language of those parts of the country where Muslim rule prevailed. To a large extent it became the intellectual lingua franca of those parts. Persian administrative and judicial terminologist, however took more lasting root in Indian languages even though in most cases, they became Indianised and took the form and accent of the language of their absorption.²

Keywords: Persian, Assamese, Language, Influence, Ahom.

Introduction

The impact of Persian on Indian life and literature is the story of a continuous mutual adjustment and give and take arising out of a meeting of two cultural groups, Hindu and Muslim, definite traits of their own. The differences of the two cultural groups, coming into contact with and influencing each other are particularly thrown into relief in their languages, which indicates the closest cultural relations between them. The extent of mutual influences shows that the linguistic amalgam is no doubt, the symbol of a cultural fusion.

There have been some forces at work in the field of Persian impact on other languages of India. Firstly the Persian language was used in nearly every department of government during the Muslim rule in India and as such the natives who aspired to rise had necessity to assimilate it as a matter of social honour. Secondly, those who had dealings with the court and administration had to submit to this same situation and hence used the legal and court terminology of the Persian language.

Thirdly, the Sufis who were accelerating the advance of the Persian influence, very often worked as explorers and pioneers in the cause of Sufistic concepts and consequently the impact of Persian naturally made it felt on the language of India and permanently enriched Indian literature.

The same picture is true to Assam regarding the impact of Persian on Assamese. Assam first came into contact with the Muslims in 1205-6 A.D. when Bakhtiyar Khiji, on his way to Tibet invaded Kamrupa.³ The conquests of the Mughals resulted in a rapid development of contact of Assam with the rest of the country. With the contacts of Muslims, the influence became more pronounced in such a way that the Persian ideas mingled with the Assamese thought to leave a permanent impression on the culture of Assam and as a result a large number of Perso-Arabic vocabularies entered into the Assamese language. It is to be mentioned that the Ahom rulers encouraged the study of Persian in Assam. It has been stated that the Ahom monarchs maintained in the Court a large number of Muhammadan officials who deciphered Persian correspondence, received from outside and drafted to foreign potentates. The Ahom kings felt necessity of improving the culture of Persian in their courts in order to continue the relations with the Muslim rulers. The Ahom ambassadors had to learn Persian for diplomatic services. They were attached to the numerous diplomatic embassies dispatched to northern India. They knew Persian because the knowledge of this language was indispensable for the proper execution of such missions. In the latter part of Ahom rule, Persian was regularly learnt and studied by Assamese gentry who aspired for higher posts. There were also many learned Hindus, accomplished in Persian, which helped them to obtain an easy Passport to different high posts especially in diplomatic services. A royal post of reader in Persian in almost every court of the Ahom Kings was created and recruitment was made with a person who could read and write the Persian language and therefore he was called by the Assamese as *Persi- Parhiya* (Persian reader) who was probably engaged in the teaching of Persian to other officials.

The Ahom rulers also provided their Muslim subjects with Islamic education in their religious centres. According to J.P. Wade the author of the book "Studies in History of Culture" there were ten to twelve houses of instructions for Muslim children at Gauhati and more than twenty at Rangpur then capital of Assam.⁴ Mention has also been made that a great scholar named Muhammad Ali, having high proficiency in Arabic and Persian vocabularies was appointed as the tutor to the children of Nawab Mansoor Khan, the Mughal Faujadar of Gauhati from 1679 A.D. to 1682 A.D.

The Ahom rulers of Assam profited a great deal from their contact with the Mughals particularly in upgrading their military knowledge and their methods of administration to Indian standards and therefore, the Mughal administrative and military terminologies became an integral part of the Assamese language. According to Surya Kumar Bhuya, the *Burranchi* compiled by Paramananda Bairagi of Gokulpur during the regime of the Assamese King Udayaditya Singha (1672-1673) A.D. is in Assamese but with a large admixture of Perso-Arabic words like *zobeh*, *gor*, *takht*, *farman* etc.⁵

There are some factors which played the major role in promoting the growth of Perso-Arabic elements into Assamese as follows:

1. The gradual rise of the number of Muslim population in Assam.
2. The visit of Assamese pilgrims to northern India.
3. The conflicts and the diplomatic relations of the Assamese Kings and the Muslim rulers.
4. Composition of the religious songs like *Zikir* and *Zaris* by the Assamese Muslims.
5. Cultural exchanges held during the later Ahom rule.⁶

Being a living and growing language, apart from Sanskrit, it has borrowed a large number of Arabic and Persian words. *نفر* (*nafar*) was the first Persian word used in Assamese literature by Hema Saraswati in his book "*Prhld Carit*" in the beginning of 13th century who was a court poet of Kamata king Durlabh Narayan. Sankardeva and Madhavadeva, the Gurus of Neo-Vaishnavite cult of Assam, used Persian and Arabic words like *farman*, *duniya*, *haram*, *sahib*, *zanjir* (فرمان),

(زنجير صاحب، حرام، دنيا،), etc. in the writings of their devotional songs “Bargeet”. Regarding the impact of Persian on Assamese language, it can be stated that there are many suffixes and prefixes being used freely by the Assamese speakers. Example may be given as follows :

Sutkhor, gajkhor, nisakhor, ghoskhor, haramkhor, dagabaz ,phakibaz, randibaz, zamidar, pattadar, dildar, mouzadar, dadagiri, gundagiri, phuldani, pikdani, pheriwala, thelawala etc.

Prefixes :

Komzor, komkhorac, darkar, dardam, badnam, badhazam, beiman, behisab, bedakhal, garpatta, garmil, harruz, harkisim etc.

A large number of Persian loan words have been found in Assamese language, which have occupied an important position in Assamese although they have been changed phonetically and moulded grammatically. Dr S. K. Chatterjee, the author of the “ Origin and Development of the Bengali Language” has made an attempt to explain such changes as follows :

Religious:

The Muslims have been using all the religious terms relating to prayers, religious ceremonies and ideologies which have been borrowed from Persian and Arabic . **For example :**

Awliya, dua, haj, kalima, mazar, maulabi, masjid, nabi, nikah, rauza, rasul, sayyed, sheikh, azan, oli, dargah, imam, khairat, mazhab, roza, namaz etc.

Administrative :

As Persian was the court language during the seventeenth century in India, a large number Perso- Arabic words are found in Assamese language.

For example :

Barud, habildar, golandaj, sipahi, ain, amanat, kaziya, greptar, sakari, chaprasi, bahal, mazuri, parwana etc.

In the field of judicial, a large number of Persian words have been found in Assamese language which have got an important position amongst the Assamese people.

For example:

Amanat, adalat, jera, kharij, mukaddaama, jamin, phauzdari, khanatalach, jabanbandi, ejahar, arji, phaysala, jorimona, bajeyapt etc.

Executive :

Innumerable Persian terms are commonly used in Assam in the field of executive such as dalil, haqq, manjur, hisab, miyad, rachid, tadarak, kaida, khuni, najarbandi, jabardasti etc.

Revenue :

In the field of revenue, a large number of Persian words are commonly used in Assamese.

For example :

Abkari, bandobast, mal, jama, tahbil, nazir, baki, jarip, ejmali, kisti, elaka, dakhal, kharij, ektiyar etc. A large number of Perso- Arabic words are found in the Assamese in the field of learning and education.

For example :

Kalam, kitap, kagaz, siyahi, duat, jild, haraf, khabar, lefafa, mohar etc.

In the field of culture, a large number of Perso-Arabic words are being used in Assamese language. For example the following words are found in the name of cloth.

Parda, burka, salowar, lungi, chador, kamiz, paijama, rumal, tosak etc.

In the name of food, the following words are being used in the Assamese language.

For example:

Qorma, nashta, kofta, kabab, pollao, biriyani, gust, qima, charbi etc.

In the field of Music, a large number of Persian words are being used in the Assamese language.

For example:

Ustad, tarana, kheyal, setar, sarod, shenai, tabla, ghazal, kawali, negera,etc.

The Assamese people have general likeness for various kinds of fruits, mainly introduced by the Mughal of the Indians.

For example :

Angur, anar, badam, kismis, peshta, seb, tarbuz, kharbuz etc.

Professions :

The Ahom kings maintained in their court a good number of Muslim officials and utilized their talents according to the need of the various departments. Therefore a large number of Perso- Arabic words are found in Assamese in this field.

For example:

Dukandar, hakim, mazdur, dalal, darzi, kasai, chikari, karbar, rozgar, karigar, pesha, karkhana, munafa, loss etc.

Impact of persian on Assamese proverbs, formatives and adjectives.

Conclasion

Proverb basically a sentence which expresses a moral lesson. It expresses a certain meaning with the admixture of some words. It is a fact that the influence of Persian on Assamese is not confined to words only but with many proverbs. With the admixture of some words many proverbs have been formed in Assamese. These proverbs are very common in Assamese language. These proverbs consist of different Persian vocables have become familiar in Assamese in the field of both in writing and in conversations. On account of the deep rooted entrance of Persian vocabularies into Assamese Proverbs, the common people do not think of their origin and considered their words as the part of the Assamese language. It may be mentioned that this admixture can not be distinguished easily in Assamese despite the origin of Persian. A large number of such proverbs have been found in Assamese.

These proverbs have become familiar in Assamese in the field of both writing and conversation. A few examples of certain proverbs and sayings in Assamese language with the influence of Persian vocabularies have mentioned as follows:

Jur jar muluk tar (Might is right)

Here jur and muluk are Persian.

Sabure mewa phale (Patience brings result)

Here „sabur“ and mewa are Persian.

Adab kaida (elegance and manner)

Here „adab“ and kaida „are Persian.

Lai laskar (Soldiers)

Here „laskar“ is Persian.

Khana talach kara (house search)

Here „khanah“ & „talach“are Persian.

Kaid kara (to make captive)

The word „kaid“ is Persian.

Ruji rujgar (livelihood)

Here „ruji“) and „ruzgar“ are Persian.

Khatam kara (to finish)

The word „khatam“ is Persian.

Barbad hua (spoiled)

Here „barbad“ is Persian.

Ga khalach kara (to make free)

Here „khalach“ is Persian.

Nam kharij kara (omission)

Here „nam“ and „kharij“are Persian.

Hukum jari kara (to proclaim order)

Here the word „hukum“ is Persian

Najar diya (to take care)

Here „najar“ is Persian.s

Kabul kara (to accept)

Here the word „kabul“ is Persian.

Jur julum (oppression)

Here „jur“ and „julum“ are Persian.

Hak halal (lawful)

Here „haq“ and „halal“ are Persian.

Tajjup hua (to become strange)

Here „tajjup“ (is Persian.

Kham kheyali (absent minded)

Here the word „kheyali“ is Persian.

Badnami hua (to attain illfame)

The word „badnami“ is Persian.

Machgul kara (deeply engaged)

The word „ machgul“ is Persian.

Dastur mat (according to rules) ⁷

Here the word „dastur“ is Persian.

Similarly impact of Persian on Assamese formatives has been found. Some Persian Suffixes, Prefixes have been used in Assamese language in order to form new words.

For example :

gola + andaz golandaj meaning „a gunner“.

Here suffix „andaz“ is from Persian „andakhtan“ meaning „to throw“

Zulum +baz julumbaj meaning „oppressor“

Here suffix „ baz“ is from Persian „bakhtan“ meaning „play“.

In the context of Prefixes :

Haramkhur meaning „ ungrateful“.

Here prefix „khur“ is from Persian „khurdan“

Daftarkhana meaning „ an office“

Here prefix „khana“ is from Persian „khanah“ meaning „ a house“.

Chokidar meaning „gate keeper“

Jordar meaning „ powerful“ .

In both places prefix „dar“ is from Persian „dastan“ meaning „to keep“ . ⁸

In the field of adjective We have found influence of Persian in Assamese language. For example:

Badnam (notorious), bekar(useless), hoshiyar (clever), bahadur (brave) etc.

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