

The Nishi: Their Community and Language

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Abstract:

The Nishi's Community, they are the native in with their nature, behavior and their attitude towards the guest specially the Assamese people. They are very kind hearted and affectionate towards the guest and other new comers. Nishi people live in different districts in Arunachal Pradesh. Nishi language belongs to Tibeto Burman language family. The following paper looks onto the attributions of the following community on their lingua franca.

Key Words: Nishi, language, lingua franca

Introduction

Arunachal Pradesh is a beautiful state of India. It is a land of lush green forests, deep river valleys and plateaus. It is on the North of Assam and the people living in Arunachal are having a relation with the people of Assam since time immemorial. There are different tribes speaking different dialects, having different culture. Some of the tribes live in remote areas. Prior to 1947 Arunachal was a land locked region. The aboriginal people were away from civilized people. Not much studies were made about the different dialect parts of Arunachal Pradesh Village Papumpare, Lower Subansiri and East Kameng. The Nishi people are considered as a major tribe while Apatani will come to the second position in these three districts. According to the Government records the total Nishi population of these three districts is 1,39,586.

The Nishi people possess some oral literature which finds expression in mythology, songs, ballads, folklore, proverbs etc. They do not have written literature and all these lore's are composed orally and committed to memory and passed on to next generation. The spoken form is still a living medium of expression of this area in their day to day life. The people who speak this language identify themselves as Nishi meaning "men of highland" or "men who live in the highland". The word 'Nishi' varies from different points of view, i.e.

i) The various authors in recent publications have mentioned the tribe of our present study as Nishi, Nissi, Nishing and Nishi Bangni. The local people of Northern Assam call them as 'Dafalas' which literally means barbarians. Perhaps they were so called because of their frequent invasion in the areas inhabited by local people of Assam during the period of Ahom rules. The term has completely discarded by Nishi as it is derogatory and insisted on being called – 'Nishi' a term said to be a native of tribe.

ii) Grierson's view also deserves mention.

"The Dafalas of Lakhimpur call themselves Nyising (sing means "men"). Mr. Robinson states that the dafalas call themselves Bangni."

The basic culture life of the Nishis depends on Agriculture and they are followers of 'Doni polo' a Magico religion cult'. The cultural life of the Nishi is mainly based on Agricultural activities. The Nishi people are much advanced in cultural and socio economic activities compared to other tribes of Arunachal. The Nishis racially belongs to the Indo Mongoloid stock of people. Culturally they have their own colorful customs and traditions. Nishi culture is a part and parcel of Indo Mongoloid culture, of which the prominent characteristics are- Dormitory systems, shifting cultivation, habit of betel chewing, lovers of music and dance, patrilineal and polygamous, believe in spirits both benevolent and Malevolent, the form of religion of Doni plo a magic socio cult

Methodology- The researcher has used both descriptive and analytical method in the paper

The Nishi Language

Phonology:

Vowel:

In Nishi language, there are in total seven phonemes, such as /a, e, I, o, u/. The two vowels /u/ and /e/ are central vowels like /a/. Each vowels phonemes are lengthening in a significant feature i.e. tonal variation of the Nishi language. All these vowels occur in all positions i.e. initially, medially and finally in Nishi words.

There are some vowel clusters in the Nishi languages. On the sequence of two vowels being the second one a high vowel then these two vowels form a cluster i.e. diphthongs in Nishi are twenty three in tonal. It is rare feature in the Nishi language i.e. only two trip thongs are found in there. These are /ieu/: yieur 'invent', /oiu/ : choium 'Bread'.

Consonant:

There are nineteen district consonant phonemes in the Nishi language. Which are /k, kh, g, n,c, ch, j, n, . The consonants show ten stops four nasals, one fricative, one lateral, one trill, one spirant and one semi vowel. The stop show the contrast as voiced, voiceless, aspirated and unaspirated. The nasals the lateral and the trill are all voiced while spirant is also unvoiced.

In the Nishi language all consonants are used in forming clusters, which are found finally expecting the phoneme /n/. Initially cluster is not found in this language.

Morphology:

In Nishi language a word is made up one or more syllables. A syllable consists of one or more speech sounds. If a syllable consists of just one essential sound of a language it will be a vowel and the rest consonants. The maximum number of syllables in a illustrated below and in the examples syllabic division is shown with hyphen-

e 'stool'
o ch 'breast'
ar be ra 'very rough'

Number:

Plural is not strictly a grammatical feature of the Nishi language. Like other language the Nishi language posses only singular and plural numbers. Form singular, plural is formed by using some

suffixes. The common plural suffixes in this language are- *tulu*, *ata*, *atago*, *molon* etc. for example

tulu ‘many’ *peta* ‘bird’ *peta tulu* ‘birds’
molon ‘many’ *nam* ‘house’ *nam molon* ‘many house.

Gender:

There is no grammatical gender in Nishi language. It is determined on the natural sex and therefore, only the animate objects are distinguished especially by different word frequently use in case of human being: e.g.

Masculine	Feminine
Ab ‘father’	an ‘mother’
Ko ‘son’	nem ko ‘daughter’

In the Nishi language use of one common gender besides masculine and feminine is observed in case of words indicating animals, birds, and insects etc. i.e. living objects other than human beings. This is peculiar character of this language.

Like other language the Nishi language possesses seven cases and such case relationship are expresses by using some suffixes called case suffixes.

Pronoun:

In Nishi language, pronouns may be divided as honorific and non honorific in respect of personal and demonstrative contexts. Honorific forms of primary bases. To indicate more honorific i.e. honorific superior sense pronouns are distinguished by adding suffix with verb in sentence.

Adjective:

Adjectives distinguish the quality and quantity of a noun or the object it specify in the Nishi language. When it is used in order to qualify a noun, the objective takes the form of relative participles, then it takes the suffix ‘*bo*’ of course there are some exceptions also in using this suffix as sometimes it remains absent. Adjectives sometimes follow the qualifying nouns.

For example : *hemp* ‘happy’, *alma* ‘bad’, *ab* ‘good’, *keya* ‘black’, *pulu* ‘white’ etc.

The numeral bases in the Nishi language consist of two elements, such as (a) numeral classifiers
 b) numeral quantifiers.

Verb System:

The verb system in Nishi language like other Tibeto Burman languages is very simple. In Nishi language, verb never distinguishes number and person. The some form serves all three persons in both singular and plural numbers.

For example :

Singular

- 1st to deden/dun 'I eat'
 2nd no deden/dun 'you eat'
 3rd mu deden/dun 'he/she/it eat'

Plural

- 1st mulle deden/dun 'we eat'
 2nd mulle deden/dun 'you eat'
 3rd bulle deden/dun 'they eat'

The verbs in the Nishi language show three principal tense like other languages. They are Present tense, Past tense and Future tense.

The present tense has three varieties i.e. indefinite, continuous and perfect continuous. But the past gave only two varieties i.e. indefinite and continuous. All these are indicated by different suffixes added to the verbal roots. Structurally a verb appears as verbal root + tense suffix as {de} 'to eat' + {-den} 'indefinite tense suffix' {doden} 'eat' where subject indicating 1st / 2nd / 3rd person is absent i.e. also understood.

Findings:

- The Nishi people live in Arunachal Pradesh. The Nishi racially belongs to Indo Mongoloid stock of people. They have wealthy oral literature.
- The Nishi people talk Nishi language. The language belongs to Tibeto Burman language family.
- In Nishi language, there are seven vowels and nineteen consonants.

Reference:

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