



Popularization of history among students: A teacher's perspective

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Abstract

Every nation takes pride in its own history which may be considered 'glorious' or 'ignominious' in our interpretation. No nation is ashamed of its own history, because history is a story of our struggle for existence. In our struggle sometimes we succeed and sometimes we fail. No nation has evolved without its own history. Everybody wants to seek ancient lineage. But unfortunately nobody wants to study history seriously as an academic discipline. That is the cause of problem in our education system. This paper wants to trace causes for unpopularity of history in schools and colleges in the state of Assam and suggest measures for amelioration of unpopularity of history as an academic discipline.

Keywords: nation, history, struggle, lineage, academic, education, college

Introduction

History is the writing about the events, processes, people, and group of people of the past. This is a relevant definition of history for our understanding of history today. The term 'history' is derived the Greek word 'istoria' which means an investigation or enquiry. Around two thousand five hundred years ago history evolved as a subject of knowledge. Herodotus of Greece is considered as the father of history. Couple of years ago history was very much popular among the students in Assam. A good number of students opted for history as a subject of study in schools and colleges. With the passage of time academic scenario changed a lot as far as history is concerned.

Nowadays history is a neglected subject in schools and colleges of Assam. Nobody bothers that history is one of the oldest subjects in the world of knowledge. History is a core subject and can be considered as mother of social sciences. Perhaps nowhere in the world history has lost its importance as the case is in Assam. It is said that it is one kind of conspiracy by some circles to sideline history from the school and college curricula for vested interest.

Why history is not popular?

Popularity or unpopularity does not determine the importance of a subject. This is a relative term which may vary place to place and time to time. In competitive examinations like Indian Administrative Service and Assam Civil Service history is given much weightage for its importance as a subject. However, it is a fact that at present history is not a popular subject among the students in schools and colleges of Assam as political science or education is. The scenario may be different in other states of India.

The following reasons are sorted out for history not being popular in schools and colleges of Assam:

1. History is unpopular among the students due to too much emphasis on historical dates and information. Majority of students detest memorization of historical dates.
2. There are different types of anomalies in the syllabi of schools and colleges.

3. There are no sufficient numbers of good/written text books of history available for the students in vernacular languages.
4. Problems in the question setting cause hardship to students.
5. There is a need to change the evaluation method of history.
6. History teaching is most of the time not interesting due to lack of involvement of the students in the class.
7. Students are unable to relate history with the present day problems.
8. Teachers do not use audio-visual aids frequently in teaching. In majority of schools ICT facilities are not available.
9. There is a misconception among the students about the subject as difficult and not-scoring.
10. Our perspective on value-based education changed drastically. We are now more inclined to subjects which have job prospects.
11. Use of history/education for political motive may lead to disavowal of some section of students.
12. Too much importance on job-oriented technical education makes an impact on subjects of traditional courses.
13. Lack of initiatives of the school/college authority is also responsible for unpopularity of history in educational institutions. The authority should take prompt initiative for provision of class room equipments like globes, historical maps, computer, projector, etc. Students should be sent to museums, historical sites, etc. on regular basis.
14. In spite of initiative on the part of the authority there may be lack of infrastructure in the class room of history due to shortage of fund.
15. Discouragement by peers or seniors in taking history as a subject of study due to lack of 'glamour'.

Popularization among the students

Unpopularity of history among the students may be a topic of important research for the state of Assam. For the nation and nationality historical consciousness is very important.

Forgetfulness of our own history may in the long run bring adverse consequences to the nation.

The following acts and measures may help in popularization of history:

1. History should be compulsorily inserted into syllabus as a compulsory subject in school.
2. Students should be sent to visit museums where historical materials are preserved.
3. Arrangements should be made to take the students regularly to nearby historical sites.
4. Use of audio-visual aids must be made in classrooms and showing of historical movie is necessary.
5. We have to encourage the students to read stories based on historical events.
6. The school or college authority has to make arrangements for compulsory training of teachers in history teaching. The government has also a role to play here.
7. Teachers should write articles about historical events in the newspaper and students are also to be encouraged to write.
8. We may publicise importance of history through talk show, lecture, debate, quiz, etc. in electronic media.
9. The concerned authority has to promptly remove the anomalies in the syllabi.
10. It is the need of the time to change the question pattern in history to make the subject scoring.
11. Proper evaluation of answer scripts of history should be done so that the subject can be made scoring and no injustice is done to the students of history in comparison with other subjects.
12. Governments can take some measures for popularization of history like award to historians for outstanding contributions and scholarships to meritorious students of history.
13. Experienced teachers and scholars should be given the responsibility for writing history books of school and college textbooks.
14. There should be at least one practical paper in the major course of undergraduate level. Project on local historical sites and events should be given to the students.
15. Hurdles in taking history as a subject of choice in Honours and Regular Course in undergraduate level are to be removed in all colleges. It is a fact that history is not included in different combinations of subjects in a good number of colleges though CBCS is introduced by the parent university. History is not introduced at all in a few colleges.
16. Adequate class room equipments should be provided at par with facilities provided in class rooms of other subjects.
17. Debates and extempore speech competitions on themes of history held on regular basis may make history popular among the students.
18. Bringing scholars of history from other institutions to give lectures in history classes will be effective.
19. Workshops and seminars on historical topics held frequently in schools and colleges will increase the interest of the students for history.
20. Teaching methods should be changed. Every effort should be made to make the subject interesting.

21. Though it is not possible in schools, but every college can establish a museum for popularization of history among the students and public.
22. The affiliating university has to make all efforts to study and eradicate problems faced by the colleges. A history forum under the initiative of the History Department of the affiliating university can be established to serve this purpose.

Assam Historical Society was established at Gauhati University in the 60s of the last century for the cause of study and research of history. But it did not survive to materialize its goals. There are a few institutions of repute in our state for the study and research of history, viz., Kamarupa Anusandhana Samiti (Assam Research Society), Department of Historical & Antiquarian Studies, Assam State Museum and Archaeology Department. All these have an important role to play for popularization of history among the students and public in our state.

Conclusion

There are so many hurdles against history. But the measures taken to eradicate these hurdles are not enough. So, the problems persist. Students are decreasing day by day in the classrooms of history at colleges. College teachers are at a loss what to do for enhancing the number of students in the classrooms of history.

Now it is time for self-analysis among the teachers of history, intelligentsia, and concerned persons of the state. Otherwise the 'end of history' will bring doom to the intellectual world of Assam. Sooner the better.

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