

Tragic end, what next



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Bohag Bihu is the time for a national renewal for the state of Assam. Bohag is not just a season or a month for the Assamese but a crucial moment in the nation's life line. It is the time when the entire community takes a ritual bath to get rid of the shackles of sorrow. Since Bohag is the first month of the Assamese calendar the celebration of the same in the social space is independent and devoid of any discrimination. The people come together to take part in the electrified atmosphere created by the modern Assam.

The Assamese popular music stands as a unifying factor in the entire month. People wait for their turn to get a glimpse of their favourite singers who perform at a stretch in the entire month of Bohag and may be little more that I termed as the Bihu Marathon.

Now amidst all euphoria, suddenly once again the tickers of the regional news channels start blinking of a horrible road accident of another performing group led by an young Assamese singer Suman Mahanta and his team. This accident brought silence to the lives of 11 people. And with this, the statistics of Assam in terms of death in road accidents goes up once again.

Immediately after this incident the celebrity performers of Assam started giving their opinion either in social media or in electronic media that the idea of late night performance during the month need a serious introspection. This is not the first time that an accident of this sort happened and killed many upcoming cultural talents of Assam. May be this has become a routine incident in the last few years. And when an incident of this sort happens, usually a blame game starts in the media as well as in the various public forums. Who is to be blamed ? Is it a time to blame each other or should the people and the government bring out a mechanism to lower such kind of untoward incident in future.

This sort of road accidents and killing of many innocent lives brings out many questions to our mind :

- a. Is it a culture of modern Assamese society to enjoy outdoor Bihu programmes till the dawn ?
- b. Is there any respect shown to the singers and band members by the people except few famous names ?

- c. Does the management who invite the performers take care of their safety and comfort ?
- d. Does the management and the so called 'Bihu Committees' understand that a performer is a human and the same group need to perform somewhere else the next night ?
- e. Why can't a management who organises the Bihu programmes finish up a programme by 10pm at night ?
- f. What is happening on the part of Assam that the statistics of road accidents is alarmingly rising as compared to the entire country ?
- g. Does the highways have enough facilities to perform a crisis management in terms of emergency ?
- h.. Does the highways or the nearby hospitals have a full fledged trauma center ?
- i. Is there any highway protection force available at regular intervals to check the speed of the vehicles ?
- j. Is there any mechanism on the part of the administration to check the drunk drivers and their intake of alcohol while driving at night ?
- k. Does all the highways have signs and symbols to instruct curves ?
- l. How many highways in Assam write the warning in Indian languages apart from Kaziranga areas, so that the truck drivers understand the warnings ?

Hence the list of questions will be endless. But it should not be the prerogative to question the administration or the existing government always on such issues. The culture of the entire state requires serious interrogation. We cannot sing and dance at the cost of many lives every year losing our cultural human resources. Moreover the entire sociological imbalance among the rowdy audience compel the respected class of society to abstain from watching the usual Bihu programmes of today.

The easily available alcohol, timeless Bihu programmes,disrespect towards performers may be the subterranean cause towards such a menace.

Life in Assam is not easy. There are regular deaths due to the attacks by terrorist groups in various forms, ethnic conflicts, natural calamities and to add to that if the road accidents and such type of unnatural death starts at an alarming rate, we seriously need to join hands with the authorities to reduce this disaster. This incident of yesterday brought an end to the hope of many families. May be for many they were the sole bread earner. I am sad because the hope of this spring ended with a despair. Hope it won't continue in days to come.

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