



## Debunking the Spirit of the Colonial Hegemony through the Systematic Signification of the Assamese Language: An Alternative Search for the Identity of the North –East India

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**ABSTRACT:** The making of the Assamese as strong representation of the uniqueness of the cultural reality of the indigenous roots of the knowledge system which had been given a rude shock after the internal turmoil and crises faced by the political juncture of Assam since the second half of the eighteenth century and afterwards the powerful intervention of the colonial British rule transformed the whole ideas of the colonized about their original discourse of their knowledge system. With the consequent necessity of defining the ontology of the cultural features of the lost socio-political space, it was considered the essence of discovering or inventing the traditional sources of knowledge in a new way for the purpose of deliverance of an enlightened being that would be able to put a rational resistance against the otherness of the colonial ruling paradigm of knowledge. Among the methods of inversion in the realm of tradition, the modernity of language was the major catalyst in interpretation of the identity of the region in terms of its relation to the long wave of transition to hyper reality of modernism that actually entailed a search for indigenous knowledge system as well as determining the exact approach of linguistic normativity of the Assamese. There was the scientific grounding of the Assamese as the chief medium of communication with the cultural praxis of the discovered lineage which was corroborated with the grammatical and lexical construct of the living traditions of the Assamese society. There was the attempt of going to the core of the ancient paradigmatic sequences of the Assamese for conscious representation of the modernized identity in a form of conditioning the resistance to the colonial hegemony as well as organizing the signs of the Assamese for furthering the discursive practices of the language within the broad structural cognition of the political mobility of the ideas of a specific reality. The paper would give importance in analyzing the sources of signifying the time as understood to be vehicle of discovering the routes of tradition amidst the

rupture between the metanarrative of identity and the narration of the Assamese nationality for strengthening the construct of the north-east as historical deviation.

**Key words:** Assamese, representation, cultural, political, traditional, modernity, colonial, resistance, linguistic, signs.

### I. INTRODUCTION:

Is language the real phenomena of signifying the real base of the thought about the particular social environment where the persons have to make their own patterns of living? Modern scientific developments in respect of the thought of an individual and the determination of the specific characteristics of the social conditions of living has proved (Chase, 1959, p. vi) that the human consciousness around the status of the individuality and signification of the language are inseparable from each other in terms of deliverance of a cultural context full of possibilities of the future representation (Boroditsky, 2011). The formation of a language in a defined cultural situation means the existence of the political society where the role of the organized state system through certain stage of the functioning economy overwhelmingly supports in growth of a social sphere which determines the space of communications among the masses as a whole as well as contributing to the development of the intellectual exercises for strengthening the conscious rational human behaviour. When the historical generalization of the objectivity of individual welfare is pushed forward as the sign of a particular trajectory of structural conditioning of social welfare where the role of the individual being is strictly conformed to the routes of traditional knowledge system there the modern evolution of the language is nothing but the continuous forms of developing the culture of habitation with perfect socio-political practices. The forceful intervention of a highly developed political establishment like the British colonial



paradigm of state defined the identity of the ruled Assamese community where the construct of language was discovered in order to search out a whole narrative of language where the syntax of appropriation of the language was fully corroborated with the social construction of the time .

### 1.2 Language and the Colonial Power of Impositions:

The colonial manifestation of power was reflected in imposition of a foreign language upon the indigenous socio-political sphere which was thought to be passive and non productive cultural element in terms of influencing the means of communication between the thought of the Assamese individuality and its social environment . The consideration of the Bengalee as the best medium of communication for the dormant spirit of the Assamese with the colonial administration evolved through the long experience of the Bengalee under the colonial forms of power where the thought of the individual being and its rational socialization had been moulded through the discursive practices of the colonized cultural context that actually rendered in making of the colonial British rule as a form of enlightened intervening power. It was not the conspiracy of the Bengalee clerical superiority that made it possible in communicating with the British colonial realm of power about the inevitability of their language in the pre-existing social context of the Assamese .On the other hand , we could say that the decision taken by the colonial state to impose the Bengalee language upon the newly annexed territory had been influenced by the programme of creating a separate and enlightened discourse of language which would help in internalizing the colonial essence of power among the Assamese . It was the masterstroke of the colonial modernity that actually helped in stabilizing the domination of the colonial power over the political and cultural context of the annexed territory. The emphasis on turning the thought of the individual identity of the Assamese from its pre-existing notion of cultural hegemony of the previous power system to the new system of power in terms of locating the necessities of conformity to the thought of colonized mentality as provided through the social environment hegemonized by the colonial state had the space of the new juncture of cultural appropriation of the systemic transition to the colonized social mobility.

### 1.3 Making of the Assamese Language as the Major Issue of Struggle:

The concentration of the cultural reflections of the past and the present through the mediation of the colonial realm of the

discourse of power which in a great way mobilized the support of the native elites towards it rule as well as in systemic disciplining of the masses for expropriation of the resources of the colonized territory . When the search for an alternative discourse of culture was invented by the colonized Assamese gentlemen it was both the will for signification of the language as well as in discovering the means of an identity based on rethinking of the thought about the individual positions in the political context of power and the relative congruence of the social environment . So, the emphasis on the relocation of the Assamese as not only the language of distinctive social identity but also as the major vehicle of accentuating the thought of its own cultural domain that would accustom to the logic of colonial ideology of the state apparatus more proficiently in comparison to its presupposed antagonistic socio-cultural determinant like the Bengalees. The methods applied for completion of that task were particularly in rationalization as well as generalization of the history of the Assamese nationality since its ancient period in order to situate the conditions of its existence for the objective of construction of the rational justification of the thought of identifying its indigenous cultural goods first and then mobilization of the spirit of the advanced logic of knowledge as monopolized through the colonial state .

The efforts of the American Baptist missionaries which was well supported by the Assamese gentlemen in forming a separate science of the Assamese language with full credentials to represent its cultural and social ambience of the locals was itself the product of the colonial modernity which emphasized the decentralization of the thought of the political cum social disciplining of the masses for stabilizing the essence of the colonial rule in Assam. But the great effects of the intellectual enlightening of the public sphere of the Assam through the linguistic rationality of the Assamese eventually helped in determining the specific characteristics of the culture and society of the people of this region as a whole in difference to the cultural approximations of the Bengalee . There had been a programmatic development of consciousness about the autonomy of the language by signifying its popular renderings and thereafter the methods of scientific analysis of its originals from its grammatical connotation to its long lineage with a strong relationship with the mainstream Indian context of culture had been utilized in order to categorize the identity of the



Assamese altogether a complete reversal of what had been considered by the colonial ruling apparatus as the derivative forms of the Bengalee language with no linguistic sequences of its own.

Why there was the increasing thrust on re-establishing the domain of the autonomy of the Assamese over the existing medium of the Bengalee was thought as an imperative distinction? The answer was quite simple in terms of its relative importance as language of indigenous social authority that would capable enough of leading the struggle for continuous exercises of the historical authenticity of its reason of representation of the unrepresented. The Assamese gentleman and a conscious reader of the history of the region, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan for the first time made an conscientious appeal in contrast to the great rhetoric of the colonially mastered narration of the Bengalee as the inevitable medium of coming into the terms of the colonial administration. Anandaram's plea for the replacing the power of the Bengali by the Assamese with the logical explanation of the essence of the Assamese language in his English pamphlet 'A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language and on Vernacular Education in Assam' published in 1855 was one of the first instances of the nationalism based on linguistic demand and his study in Hindu College since 1841-1844 under the guidance of such teachers such as Ram Chandra Mitra prepared him for a new journey in his homeland (Guha, 2015, pp. 254-255). The conscious representation made by Anandaram emphatically proved one point very clear that the position of the Assamese language had the strength enough of representing the thoughts of its regional idioms of culture and society bereft of the impacts of the Bengalee cultural complex represented through the language of the Bengalee which was utilized in the interests of the to conquer the vacuum of the social sphere of the Assamese public. Since the early decade of the first half of the nineteenth century, when there was a rigorous search for a public sphere in image of the bourgeois cultural practices it had been felt by the representatives of the newly educated in western medium of thought that in order to replenish the lost heritage of its hegemony over the identity of the region, it would be essential first to define the originality of the Assamese language (Mills, 1984, pp. 93-94). For the growth and development of the culture and politics of the Assamese people, the necessity of positioning the philosophy of autonomous characteristics of the Assamese both in terms of writing and its popular narrative had been

emphasized as sine qua non to the perfection in modern implications of the cultural norms of knowledge about the art of adaptation to the aspects of post-enlightenment. The role of the first Assamese journal Arunodoi (1846) with the able leadership of Nathan Brown, Oliver Cutter or Miles Bronson lied in respect of defining the dream of a separate rationality of the Assamese language that was long prevalent among the common masses of the ruling realm centered around the Sibsagar district first and in popularization of the modern thoughts in vernacular mother tongue it was felt quite necessary to give importance only in common language of the masses that would help in spreading of the western medium of religion as well as in preparation of the class of intelligentsia that would act as the catalyst in expansion of the hold of the colonial state over the people of Assam.

### **1.5 Signifying the Domain of the Struggle through the Discourse of Language:**

The forceful attempt of the Christian missionaries and the systematic rendering of the originality of the Assamese provided in the memorandum submitted by Anandaram to the Judge of the Sadar Diwani Adalat of Calcutta, A.J.M. Mills in 1853 emphatically proved that the British colonial representatives had misjudged the situation and for transference of the western system of education and its philosophy of educating the masses in learning about the science and morality of the masses under a great hegemonic power system, it would be highly necessary in giving priority to the indigenous cultural norms transmitted through the Assamese language proper. There was the emphasis on specific features of the Assamese which had been considered to be transparent enough of signifying the basic contents of the language spoken and written where the essence of cultural transfusion was thought to be possible in the mediation between the indigenous practices of the language and the modernist approach of the language in its power of writing. The beginning of the new aura of writing in the popular medium of the language through referring its exercises only in modern medium of communications and at the same time efforts were made to define its historicity for objective assessment of the current evaluation of its rational justification as the major form of identifying the latent spirit of the masses with the rising potentialities of the colonial modernity. There was the great attempt of defining the spirit of the masses with the power of the language which was brought out into the



discursive practices of writing for giving a good counter point to the domain of culture hitherto occupied by the Bengalee language since 1830s and at the same moment there was clear message given to the colonial state that in respect of communication with the thoughts of the living environment there would be no compromise except in veneration for the autonomy of the indigenous culture of the language . Thus, the imposition of the foreign language created a scenario of unfamiliar social perspective where they had not found any relative similarity in representation of the interests of the masses before the colonial state , The mentality of the modern educated Assamese thus struggled for a cause that would ensure the demarcation of a space where the interests of the social environment and the characteristics of representing the thought of identification with the values of the productive base of society could be fully secured .

**1.6 Effects of the Struggle Upon the Political Space of the Time:** The struggle for the re-introduction of the Assamese as the chief medium of making transition in the world of modern social and other material aspects ,the barren cult of the Assamese language before the dominance of the Bengalee which was thought to be unrepresentative in defining the solid interests of the Assamese cause had the significant appeal to the section of the colonial administrators as well as to the educated Assamese masses, The issue for language controversy was the first attempt in searching for a strong identity of the Assamese at the backdrop of the expansion of the colonial hegemony over the organic base of the consciousness of the people of Assam . Through the articulation of the disarticulated mechanism of the social environment based around the searching for an autonomy of the language of Assam, it was the first political attempt of ordering a socio-political base where if any kind of cultural or social transition had been stressed upon the essence of strength of the Assamese identity, then there would be the emphasis first on powerful exercises of the linguistic originality of the Assamese at large. So, the denial or defying the presence of the Bengalee was taken up not because of the enmity towards the specificity of that language but there was the impossible context of transference of the modern ideas of development to the build up of the infrastructure for signification of a separate identity of its own where the perfect lineage with the past and the present had the potential recuperation for a signified future .

There is the undeniable fact of language and its signs of articulation of the fact of the time and space in order to unearth the capabilities of the people those are conscious enough of representing the interests of a specific group of people or a community has the possible orientation only when the social reality is influenced by a superior cultural stage of transition .The meaning of a language is refurbished and makes fit of representation when it comes across a space of transition to a different location of culture and which is paused to challenge the pre-existing features of the time for a total social and political territoriality. The thought of the uniqueness of the Assamese in its linguistic capacity to represent the cause of the Assamese mentality had arrived as a point of departure from all distinctions of the earlier familiarization of the identity of the language hidden in the wrap of history . The moment of arrival had been reached through the distinctive approach of articulating the genuine foundation and its long journey towards the construct of a language proper where the greater significance had been laid upon the capacity of the culture sovereigns of the living Assamese mind to make a strong contact with the powerful norms of the western civilization unleashed through the colonial state and its ideological imperatives.

## II. CONCLUSION:

Since the second half of the nineteenth century ,the ideology of identifying the cause of the Assamese culture and society through the efforts of strengthening the base of the Assamese language and its infrastructure had been made by the great enthusiasts of literary representation in the greater way of establishing the contact with the waves of the strong forces of the colonial modernity that was engulfing the space of the colonized society. The efforts made by the colonized Assamese gentlemen but with the consciousness about the necessity of bringing social progress through the means of modern communication in terms of leverage to the scientific knowledge system with the potentialities of the western norms of civilization resulted in efficient mobilization of the spirit of the identity of the Assamese based on the conditions of the language . Thus, a huge jump was made in possibilities of realizing the objectives of a modern nationality where the autonomy in respect of using the culture and the paradigm of linguistic implications would define a new territory of conscious representation of its interests within the committee of the progressive social units of India.



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