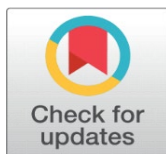
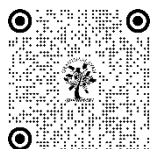


THE LANGUAGE CRISIS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY AND PERSPECTIVE OF LAKSHMINATH BEZBARUAH

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ABSTRACT

Lakshminath Bezbaruah (1868-1938) is a memorable name in the field of Assamese language, literature and culture. He was a poet, story writer, novelist, dramatist, lyricist, essayist, biographer, autobiographer, writer of humour, and folk culture. Although, Lakshminath Bezbaruah had lightened all the segments of Assamese Literature by his excellency, but his contribution to the field of short story writing is significant. Bezbaruah started writing short stories when Short story writing was not flourished properly in it's birthplace, the western nations itself. A new era was also started with his dramas, specially by his contribution to the Historical plays. It is his immense love towards his birthplace and mother tongue, the knowledge attained while studying in Kolkata about the western literature and the influence of the Thakur family are the main source of inspiration for him to write. Bezbaruah tried to restructure the Assamese society which was becoming lazy due to lack of intelligence exercise and materialistic attitude. By literature, he tried to aware the people of Assam. Bezbaruah has provided the Assamese literature a different form by his unique literary technique. His contribution to Assamese literature is multi dimensional. His immense love to his native land, sense of nationalism, social obligations, secularism, human values are his chief ornaments. Overcoming the narrowness of Assamese life, he always tried to represent Assamese literature in the global scenery for which he can be recognised as the pathfinder of modern Assamese literature. Lakshminath Bezbaruah was significantly famous among the writers who tried to give a new form to Assamese literature and culture by their works. Lakshminath Bezbaruah was not directly associated with any of the Indian national movement. He tried to restructure the Assamese literature and culture by studying it. He observed that to become a free nation one should be rich in language, culture and literature. Lakshminath Bezbaruah was one of the topmost intellect of the last decades of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth. His chief objective of life was development of Assamese language and literature. He profoundly believed that language is the ultimate way of developing his own land and culture. In his vision, Assamese is such a beautiful language that no one can find another language like it in the whole world. The conflicts faced by Assamese language can be seen from some of his works, essay, his debate with other intellectuals, his speech in his presidency of Assam Sahitya Sabha. This thesis paper doesn't include and discuss all the corners for the limited range. In the limit this thesis paper is prepared selecting the subject named "The Language Crisis of Nineteenth Century and Perspective of Lakshminath Bezbaruah". Lakshminath Bezbaruah had taken a middle path in the deterioration of the Assamese language. In one hand he condemned the Bengali officers and other hand the high ranked British officials for the deterioration of Assamese language. In this regard Bezbaruah's vision is different from his contemporary Hemchandra Gowsami, Padmanath Gohain boruwah.

Keywords: Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Nineteenth Century, intellectual.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Lakshminath Bezbaruah is a very familiar name and a famous personality in Assam. He is placed after Great Sankardeva in the Assamese society. He contributed highly to the Assamese literature, short story, poem, drama, novel, humour, criticism, journals, and many more by his deep study of more than five decades. In a time when Assamese society lacked self confidence and identity he pioneered the way with self confidence and respect. The ancestors of Bezbaruah were kind of royal doctors (Raj Baidya). Dinanath Bezbaruah, father of Lakshminath Bezbaruah also served as a Rajbaidya of the last Ahom King Purandar Singha. In the time of Lakshminath Bezbaruah the political plot of the nation had already changed for which Bezbaruah didn't get the chance to serve the royal palace. In that period of time Assamese language was infectious with various diseases which were tried to identify and cure by Bezbaruah. This effort was later proved to be very fruitful for Assamese society and for which he is considered the real captain of Assam. Considering his contribution to the Assamese society he was offered the president ship of the largest national institution, Assam Sahitya Sabha and also awarded with the title of Rasaraj and Sahityarathi. Assam came into the hand of British government by the Yandaboo Treaty signed between the Burmese king and East India company. These new rulers of Assam were capitalist. For imperialist rule and exploitation of the state, they also established and popularized modern administration, modern education, science, democracy, human rights, freedom of women. The Assamese people entered to the capitalist life after spending long years in a religious society. The external and internal changes in the Assamese society created a state of misbalance. One of the negative impact of it was the crisis of Assamese language. The British government made Bengali language official in education and administration from 1836 to 1873 for long 36 years. Replacement of mother tongue with a unfamiliar language as medium in education and administration, Assamese society faced a huge problem for which a gap was generated between common people and government administration. Assamese society faced a gap of development in field of education, science etc. Assamese language became a victim of the strong Bengali language. Assamese intellectuals of that era started revolting against it through their literary works, journals, speech etc. Hemchandra Goswami gave a speech in Kolkata in 1890, Padmanath Guhainbarua in his speech in Sivsagar in 1917, in 1935 Nilamani Phukan wrote in Newspaper Dainik Batori. Lakshminath Bezbaruah had taken a middle path. In one hand he condemned the Bengali officers and other hand the high ranked British officials for the deterioration of Assamese language. In this regard Bezbaruah's vision is different from his contemporary Hemchandra Goswami, Padmanath Gohiniboruah.

2. OBJECTIVE AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

The objective of this research is to reflect the vision of Lakshminath Bezbaruah in the crisis of Assamese language in the nineteenth century.

In preparing this research paper, descriptive and analytical techniques has been followed.

3. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

In this discussion all the concerned area of the vision of Lakshminath Bezbaruah in the crisis of Assamese language has not been covered. This paper is prepared in the limited range.

4. DISCUSSION OF TOPIC

After annexation of this territory by the British government in 1826, Assamese language was prevalent in the office courts to a decade. In 1836, the influence of the Bengali bureaucrats, the British government forced the Bengali language as the official language upon the Assamese people, for which Bengali was started to prevail the office and courts. In 1837 a law was enacted in every state for adoption of official language for smooth functioning of administration. But Assam was positioned out of this law. In 1858 a new law came into force to provide education in mother tongue in the country. Again Assam remained untouched by the law. Fortunately the Christian Missionaries came to Assam from America to promote Christian religion. They fought for imposition of Bengali language upon the Assamese. They underlined all the faults of the British government in every step. Nathan Brown, Miles Bronson, O T Cutter are some of the active Baptist missionaries for which effort Assamese regained its recognition in 1873. In this fight, the Christian Missionaries were supported by Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Hemchandra Baruah, and some other patriot from Assam. From 1836 to 1873 Bengali remains the official language of Assam for which the Assamese language faced a high damage, and went back to five decades earlier. Although after 1873 Assamese was not free from the danger. The conspiracy against Assamese language was still went on. The Bengalis started popularizing that Assamese language is the part of Bengali language and

the rural version of it. Lakshminath Bezbaruah had taken the responsibility to oppose this rumour against Assamese language.

For the disaster of Assamese language there were some literary intellect who gave opinion totally in the opposite direction. Heramba kanta Borpujari, Anil Rai choudhary, Hemanga Biswas, Amlendu Guh, Maheswar Neog, Hiren Gohain, Ranjit Kumar Deb Goswami, Shivanath Barman, Prasenjit Choudhary, Paramananda Majumder were among them. They had not given the same view in this regard. According to this group, to full fill their Imperialist, administrative and political agenda the British decided to make prevalence of Bengali language. The Bengali Bureaucrats were obviously happy with the decision of introducing Bengali language in Assam and they also provided advice in this subject but they did not get the chance to form laws and regulations. To oppose the decision of British government and to prove that Assamese is not a sub part of Bengali language but a independent language he published an article in his Journal Jonaki as 'Asomia Bhasha'. This article reflected the immense love of Bezbaruah to his native land and language, knowledge about language, knowledge about other languages of the world, knowledge of grammer in a language, the history of Assamese language, importance of mother tongue in education etc.

The Bengalis invited the Assamese people to accept the Bengali language leaving their own language. Seeing some similarities between language of Bengali and Assamese in books and newspapers they thought Assamese is a part of Bengali language. They demand it because of the similarity between the alphabet of both the languages. Lakshminath Bezbaruah criticized the mentality of Bengali people and stated that Assamese language is not a useless language. Bezbaruah was clearly aware of that fact that Bengalis only shows them to be the well wishers of Assamese people but internally they always opposed us. Compared to Padmanath Guhainbarua and Hemchandra Goswami his connection and worshipping of British was less. In some areas he criticised the British lightly. "Anglo-Indian" is best example for it. This article was published in Padmanath Gohainbaruah's 'Usha' magazine for which disagreement between both had been started and Bezbaruah decided to edit his own journal, Bahi. In the question of degradation of Assamese language, he was able to answer openly and got the courage to criticize the Bengali bureaucrats and British Government. Bezbaruah was a free businessman. So it was not necessary for him to show his devotion to the rulers like Hemchandra Goswami and Padmanath Guhainbarua. Like his contemporary writers, he also blamed the Bengali bureaucrats for deterioration of Assamese language in his presidency of Assam Sahitya Sabha.

5. CONCLUSION

Lakshminath Bezbaruah had taken a middle path in the deterioration of the Assamese language. In one hand he condemned the Bengali officers and other hand the high ranked British officials for the deterioration of Assamese language. In this regard Bezbaruah's vision is different from his contemporary Hemchandra Goswami, Padmanath Gohainbaruah.

Lakshminath Bezbaruah was ultimately in favour of the rules of imperialist British empire. He was convinced that British rules devoted their work for the wellbeing of Indian and Assamese people. He was never involved with any anti British political agenda in his life.

The position of Lakshminath Bezbaruah is not clear in identifying who is to blame majorly for the deterioration of Assamese language. But in that period of time he was able to speak against the Bengali Bureaucrats and imperialist which itself was a big step and contribution to the Assamese society

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None

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