

Importance of Devananda Bharali's Language discussions in the history of Assamese Language Studies

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Abstract:

Devananda Bharali evoked a great change in the Assamese language studies during the time when other linguists were busy at grammar making. Bharali wrote new types of grammar than other types of grammar which were being written till the first of twenty century. He wrote a book titled 'Asomia Bhashar Moulik Bichar' (1912). In this book he did not follow the model of grammar, he discussed philologically as the later stage of grammar-dictionary. When Bharali made discussions philologically about the Assamese language at that time not only in Assam but also whole over India no discussions were made systematically in philological perspective. At that time Bharali gave surprise to the literal society by making a philological book in the Assamese language. By this he was able to open many ways in the scientific research of the Assamese language. Thus Bharali moved forward a step to philological studies from the history of traditional Assamese language study. He made a foundation of philological studies in the history of the Assamese language discussion. So, in this prospect the above topic has been chosen.

Key Word: *philology, Linguistics, Assamese Language Studies, grammar-dictionary etc.*

0.0 Introduction:

Each tribe or community has their own language; likewise the tribe Assamese, from north-east India has also its own language or cultural heritage. The history of cultural and literary studies of the Assamese tribe is very ancient or it has a healthy tradition in cultural and literary discussions. But the history of language discussions is modern than the literature. It can be said that the history of language study was begun at Assam through Bor Amra by Tengai Pandit and Loti Ambra by Ramakanta Malaighoria in 1975. But basically the history of the Assamese language was begun during the last of 40's in nineteenth century. The British officers and the American Baptists Missionaries started the language studies at Assam in nineteenth century. They were the first people who were created the environment of language studies at Assam. William Robinson was the pathfinder in creating this environment. He wrote the first Assamese Grammar 'A Grammar of the Assamese language in English by taking a model of Latin Grammar. In later years-Nathan Brown, Miles Bronson, B.L Kattar, Oliver T. Kattar also took the responsibilities in the writing of Grammar, dictionary etc. Anandoram Dhekial Phukan, Jaduram Deka Baruah followed the way that the missionaries had shown. And they made the language discussions more powerful. Thus the tradition of the Assamese language study was unhindered through making of grammar, dictionary and school books till nineteenth century.

Devananda Bharali evoked a great change in language studies during the time when other linguists were busy at grammar making. Bharali wrote new types of grammar than other types of grammar which were being written till the first of twenty century. He wrote a book titled 'Asomia Bhashar Moulik Bichar' (1912). In this book he did not follow the model of grammar, he discussed philologically as the later stage of grammar-dictionary. When Bharali made discussions philologically about the Assamese language at that time not only in Assam but also whole over India no discussions were made systematically in philological perspective.

At that time Bharali gave surprise to the literal society by making a philological book in the Assamese language. By this he was able to open many ways in the scientific research of the Assamese language. He was also able to establish the uniqueness or originality of the Assamese language. Thus Bharali moved forward a step to philological studies from the history of traditional Assamese language study. He made a foundation of philological studies in the history of the Assamese language discussion. So, in this prospect the above topic has been chosen.

0.1 Objectives of the study-

- The contemporary and earlier linguists of Devananda Bharali's were busy only in the making of grammar and dictionary. At that time he was started the philological studies of the Assamese language. So, in this prospect, the topic has an importance to inculcate his studies through historical perspective.
- To discuss the various aspects which were reflected in Bharali's language discussions and to discuss how these aspects opened many ways in scientific studies.

0.2 **Sphere of study:** In this paper how Bharali contributed many new ideas in the history of Assamese language studies will be discussed and this paper will be limited only in the discussions of Bharali's importance in the history of the Assamese language study.

0.3 **Methods of Study:** In this paper historical and analytical methods will be chosen.

0.4 **Source of Data:** The important data have been collected from secondary sources. These are collected from various books, magazines, journals thesis etc.

1.0 Importance of Bharali's Language discussions in the history of Assamese Language discussions:

The 20's of twenty century is a memorable decade in the history of Assamese language studies. During this period Devanada Bharali studied on the Assamese language from the point of view of western philological perspective and he peeled up from the traditional grammar-dictionary studies. If we move before Devananda Bharali's writings then we will see many writings excluding the two dictionaries written by Tengai Pandit and Ramakanta Molaighoria in 1795. These books are- *Axomia Xabdakox* (1810) by Rushinath Kamrupi, *Bangla –Axomia Adbhidhan* (1839) by Jaduram Deka Baruah, *A Grammar of the Assamese Language* (1839) by William Rabinson, *Grammatical notices of the Assamese Language* (1848) by Nathan Brown, *English and Assamese Vocabulary and English and Assamese Phrases* (1841) by Heriet B. L. Kattar, *Axomia Bhaxar Byakran* (1859), *Hemkox* (1900) by Hemchandra Boruah, *Asomia aru Ingraji Abhidhan* (1867) by Miles Bronson, *Manual of the Bengali Language* (1895) by G. F. Nikol, *Axomia Lorar Byakron* (1873) by Tarkalankar, *Lorabodh Byakran* (1884) by Dharmeswar Goshwami, *Axubod Byakran* (1887) by Narayan Sharma BidyaBhushan, *Porhahalir Axomia Byakron* (1895) by Shivanath Bhattacharya, *Axomia Byakran* (1910) by Loknath Sharma, *Linguistic survey of India* by G.A Grierson etc. All these books are based on grammars and dictionaries. In one words we can say that the linguistic study was limited within the boundary of dictionary and grammar making until the early years of twenty century. During this environment Devananda Bharali created the philological study of the Assamese language through the book *Axomia Bhaxar Moulik Bichar* (1912). This book led a new trend in the Assamese language study. There were no any philological approaches that were found in the book written by the earlier linguists of Bharali.

Thus 'Bharali at first tried to attempt the study of Assamese grammar from another point of view where the other contemporary linguists of Bharali were busy at grammar-dictionary studies' (Goswami: 2008: 208). Though this book was not written with grammatical model, we found many fundamental concepts in the structure of the Assamese language (Sharma¹:2009:51). In this book Bharali investigated the sources of the Assamese language and like other grammarians he did not make any grammars, he studied the origin and development of the Assamese language (Gogoi: 2007:95).

Golok Chandra Goswami commented on Bharali's language studies- 'Basically I want to know, a long years ago, when no research had been adopted widely in the origin of our languages, in such a period how he having only a Bachelor degree was inspired and moved forward in the archaeological studies'?...It is notable that at that time the higher rank officers were appointed at the academic affairs

and they also established their seats in the fields of language-literature, art-culture etc. By keeping such a tradition the administrative officers were also inspired by the British to perform their skills and qualities (Bharali: 1993:09). Under the British Empire some administrative officers contributed within their busy schedules in various fields of Assamese language, art and culture. Devananda Bharali was one of them (Deka: 2017:120). Bharali was a Sub Deputy Collector by profession. But he had boundless inquisitiveness for knowledge. So when he got a little time after his retirement he used to investigate or study about the origin of the Assamese language. The earlier linguists of Bharali's like- Kaliram Medhi, Kanaklal Baruah and more were never hanker after any award or prize. Such enthusiastic knowledge also attracted Devananda Bharali. The above mentioned book of Bharali is a production of such an effect.

When Devananda Bharali wrote the book the study of Indian languages based on western philological perspective was at primary level not only in Assam but also in whole India. So, not only in Assamese Philology; but also among the first individual investigators of the modern Indian languages Bharali was able to get a seat (Bharali: 1993:09). The history of grammatology or linguistics is ancient: contemporary to the Vedic period. But the history of individual language study is comparatively modern (Bharali: 1993:08). The western scholars discovered the structure of the Sanskrit language in eighteen century. As soon as the similarities were discovered between the Sanskrit Language and the Awestan, Latin and Greek languages, the comparative philological study was started among the indo-European languages. The 'Eastern theory or the comparative studies of the indo-European languages were at first limited only at the western scholars. They made comparative studies about the trends of historical evolution of the Sanskrit and European languages. Some were busy at the study of Sanskrit and medieval Aryan languages. After the study of Pali-Prakrit the Neo-Aryan Languages also took the eye of the linguists. The book *Grammar of the Prakit Language* by R. Piscal, *Comparative Grammar of the Modern Indian Language* by John Beames and *Comparative Grammar of the Gaudian Languages* by Hoernle Sahab were the books which were written through comparative and historical perspective of the Neo-Aryan languages; these books are recognized as the source of later discussions and research (Sharma and Das, 1984).

The book *Gujrati Bhashano Itihash* (1866) by Shastri Brojral Kalidas was known as the first book of historical analysis of Indian languages. He also wrote another book titled 'Utshargamala' or 'Gujrati Bhashar Dhvani poriwatornor niyom' in 1870. He was interested in the Indian history. The western comparative philology did not influence in his analytical style. But Ram Krishna Bhandarkar applied the comparative and historical evaluation in his lectures *Wilson's Philological Lectures*. His book acts as a mile stone for philological studies. His research works inspired the later scholars.

During the period of twenty century the study of philology spread widely and published many books. *Linguistic survey of India* by G.A Grierson, *Gujrati Language and literature* by Narahingha Rao Bholanath Dibatia and *Marathi Its Sources and Development* by H. N. Apte are the books that were written in this period.

When the book 'La Formation Lengu Marathi' was published then it became as the example of origin and development for the individual languages. *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* (1926) by Suniti Kumer Chattopadhyya; *Assamese, Its Formation and Development* (1941) by Banikanta Kakoti; *The Evolution of Awadhi* (1936) by Baburam Saxena; *The Formation of Kankani* by Sumitromangesh Katre were the examples of philological books.

From the above mentioned background we can say that Bharali was in highly position than the twentieth century's scholars or linguists. When Bharali's book was published then Banikanta Kakoti and Suniti Kumer Chatopadhyya were Post graduate and intermediate students. Along with them Baburam Saxena and Sumitra Mangesh or many other linguists of twentieth century were also college students. So we can define that Bharali was not only in the Assamese language but also he was pioneer for the neo-Indo-Aryan languages. But he was not known to outside of Assam. The limitations of his language studies are-First- His discussions were published in Assamese. Secondly, He had no any degree in

linguistics or philology. So the methods he used in his writings were not so scientific (Sharma², Das: 1984). Thirdly, many contradictions were found in his writings. Nevertheless in such a time it was so wonderful to discuss about philology without any help belonged to a backward place like Assam (Deka, 2017:121).

Bharali had no any formal education or training in linguistics or philology. He acquired the trends of western comparative-historical philology which were developed in western countries in nineteenth century and with the help of philology he discussed the trends of origin and development of the Assamese language. It was possible only for his interest and enthusiastic studies. That's why we found many new or fundamental ideas in his book 'Axomia Bhaxar Moulik Bichar'. He wrote in the preface of his book, 'This book is not written to fulfill any needs of the Assamese language. Philology also provides much interest like- geometry and astrology. The discussions of the book were an effect of such interest (Bharali: 1912, Preface).' Though his philological study was based on personal interest, there was a purpose behind this study. He says, 'The purpose of this book is to define the ways of archeological studies of the Assamese language than to discover any new ideas (Bharali, 1912, preface).' So he defines three ways to attain the purpose. These are- 1. to define the development of the Assamese language through history and old literature. 2. To define the uniqueness of Assamese grammar and to establish the features of the Assamese language by comparing it with other magadhian languages. 3. To enlighten the source of Assamese word (Bharali, 1912, preface). From the above illustrations we come to know that Bharali acquired the western philological theory well. 'Though many ideas or discussions of the Assamese language were not included in his book due to the small length but in such a sphere he tried to see the Assamese grammar from different perspectives' (Goswami, 2008: 120).

Bharali mentioned in the preface of the first edition that if the proper investigation would go in this way then the size will be increased. Bharali's assumption became true. The second edition of this book was published in 1932. In the second edition Bharali changed the name as *Axomia Bhaxar Moulik bichar and Sahityar Sinaki* and corrected and increased the size of the book 15+288). It is notable that the books by Jul Block, G.A Grierson, Suniti Kumer Chattopadhyaya were published before publishing the second edition of Bharali. So we can say that Bharali got the chance to read these books.

Though the Bharali's book was not so much important for the scholars of the Assamese language but from the historical perspective it has more importance and it becomes as a document. Some statements of his book have been kept importance till now (Sharma², Das: 1984). He was the first who tried to give definition of language-dialect, causes of dialect creation, and how a dialect get standard form he discusses in his book. Most probably at first he gave such definition in the Assamese linguistic discussions (Talukdar 2018:19). Bharali discussed about the non-Aryan languages, its influences on the Assamese language, development of the Indo-Aryan language, the origin and development of the Assamese language before Banikanta Kakoti and Kaliram Medhi.

While Bharali moves to the origin of the Assamese language he defines the origin and development of the fundamental elements of Assamese grammar. Thus he started the study of historical philology in the history of the Assamese language discussions. Many new ideas are evoked in the field of Prefix, suffix, gender, conjunction through his morphological discussions. By defining the uniqueness of the elements of the Assamese grammar he became popular and he was able to write his name in the history of language discussions. In later years the topics discussed by Bharali were scientifically and widely discussed by Kaliram Medhi (*Axomia Bhakha tatwa aru Byakron*) and Dr. BaniKanta Kakoti (*Assamese, Its formation and Development*) (Goswami 2008:209).

Golok Chandra Goswami says, 'Along with the origin of the Assamese language Bharali also defines the origin and development of the Assamese grammar and also tried to discuss the descriptive analysis of the language in short. So we can call him as the pioneer in this field'. (Goswami 2008:209). 'But this book can't be said as scientific and full discussions of the Assamese language structure' (Sharma 2008:51). At the end of the book he discussed about the inscriptions, copper board and Assamese script. Thus he played the role in the history of Assamese script study.

In his article titled 'Axomia Bhaxar Utpatti aru prokriti' he also discussed the origin and characteristics of the Assamese language. His another book titled 'A Manual of Assamese Grammar' he also gave an introduction of different grammatical concepts of the Assamese language.

The book by Bharali 'A Study of Phonology and Vocabulary of the Assamese Language' (1959) is another contribution to the history of Assamese language studies. This is the first book of phonology in Assamese. Bharali observed the rules of pitch-stress, the rules of vowel and consonant changing in the book without having any formal education in linguistics. So Devananda Bharali was not only the founder of the Assamese philology but a minute narrator also.

Though the Assamese language discussions began in 1795, but the systematic discussions were in less numbers during Bharali's time. Generally languages can be studied in terms of Descriptive, historical and comparative methods. Though Robinson, Nathan Brown and other linguists of nineteenth century discussed the structure of the Assamese language through grammar, descriptive method was also behind their discussions.

Nathan Brown, Robinson, Anondoram Dhekial Phukan, Hemchandra Baruah, Gunabhiram Baruah discussed the origin of Assamese language but they did not discuss it scientifically using historical method through proper historical documents or data. When Nathan Brown tried to define the Assamese and Bengali language as sister language then he used comparative method. For Example: Brown discussed the differences in the pronunciation of 'b' and 'w' and 'Ch' and 'j' sounds in his grammar book with the examples of words from both Assamese and Bengali language. Anondaram Dhekial Phukan also tried to compare between Assamese and Bangla words with comparative method in his book titled 'A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language and on Vernacular Education in Assam'. And in some articles of Arunodoi paper he also tried to establish the uniqueness of the Assamese language by comparing with Assamese, Oria and Bengali language through comparative method. But the language study was not preceded scientifically during this time.

From the above discussions we came to know that Bharali acquired the comparative-historical philology well with his enthusiastic studies and own interest. He discussed the different trends in the origin and development of the Assamese language by staying only in Assam with the help of philological books that were published during that time. So, many new ideas or newness have been found in his book 'Axomia Bhakhar Moulik Bichar'. Though he used the comparative and historical methods which are used in western language studies in the discussion of origin of the Assamese language and fundamental concepts of the origin and development of the Assamese grammar, but it was not systematic and scientific like other trained linguists' (Deka 2017:121).

It is also memorable that 'The methods which are recognized as higher and acceptable methods at a time will also be rejected or unfitted for another time'. The methods which were taken by Block, Chattopadhaya, Kakoti and Saxena were recognized as higher methods and many scholars took this method as example to discuss the origin and development of different languages. But this method has been criticized as old and non-acceptable method by the modern linguists. Though his discussions were not scientific we can't deny his contributions like-theories, data, statements.

Conclusion:

Many disorders are found in Bharali's discussions in terms of age limitations or lack of training. Golok Chandra Goswami says: It is Undoubted that Banikanta Kakoti, Kaliram Medhi and Devananda Bharali are the trinity of Assamese philological research and studies. Though Banikanta Kakoti's scientific and systematic discussions suppress Bharali's writings but Bharali's importance will never be faded. Their philological studies have importance and it inspires and provides many ways to the later linguists (Sharma² and Das:1984). Mahendra Bora says-Bharali wrote the book *Axomia bhakhar Moulik bichar* with self trained knowledge in 1912. Undoubtedly it was the first book of philology. His book 'A Study of Phonology and Vocabulary of the Assamese Language' is a great contribution to the Assamese language. Many statements of Bharali's may not be acceptable at present but it is also notable that he was the pioneer of philological studies or research of the Assamese Language (Sharma and Das). By

looking at the Philological studies of whole over India, the contributions Bharali offered to the Assamese language with limited opportunities from a backward place like Assam will always be remembered in the history of the Assamese language studies.

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