CHAPTER - I

THE PROBLEM : THEORY AND HISTORY

Language is the most important means of human communication. Language presupposes both logically and factually the interaction among people. Language can be a great unifying as well as a divisive force. The linguistic questions assume a crucial importance in the shaping of the political structure of India given its multilingual nature.

India is a sub-continent extending for about two thousand kilometres from north to south and east to west. With an area almost equal to Europe without Russia, a population highest in the world next to China and a geographical position turning it into a meeting ground throughout history for people of diverse racial and demographic origin, it is hardly to be wondered that there should be great multiplicity and variety in the forms of speech in this country. In such a historical setting, the problem of language in India is beset with complexity as also apparent difficulty. Language being an important constituent of nationality and culture, there
cannot be any genuine solution to the problem without proper recognition of the urge for self-expression of the different cultural entities that constitute the complex reality of India.

The Indian linguistic scene is dominated by a variety of languages. Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India had put the total number of languages at 872 covering all the known language families.¹ The unique feature of the linguistic scene is the fact that there are over a dozen different languages each spoken by large number of people.² Some languages are more or less highly developed possessing a rich literature and a fairly long literary tradition; while there are also some languages that are comparatively newcomers in the field of literature. Then again, there are some languages which do not possess any written literature or even a script of their own. Thus, India is a veritable 'tower of babel' and the multilingual nature of the land affects every aspect of Indian life.³ It creates social cleavages in addition to those created by religion and caste. It gives linguistic foundation to regional as opposed to national loyalties. However, multilingualism in itself is not a sufficient cause of

². Map showing distribution of major linguistic groups in India, Fig.11.
language conflict in India. The examples of Belgium (the French and Wallons), Canada (the French Canadians and the Anglo-Canadians) and Sri Lanka (the Sinhalese and the Tamils) show that only two languages are enough to engender under certain circumstances strained relations between their speakers. On the other hand, where all major languages are on an equal official footing as in Switzerland, the presence of several language groups may not necessarily be divisive. Similarly, although it is far less widespread than Hindi, English is less divisive as an official language in India because all groups are more or less equally touched by it. The Soviet Union has even larger problems with ethnic and linguistic jingoism. The Soviet Union has over one hundred 'nationalities' twenty two of which comprise more than 2 million people. Despite all hopes that these nationalities will wither away under the impact of communism, nothing of the sort has happened. They were held under effective control by a resort to repressive measures. With Gorbachev preaching Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (restructuring the nationalities are baring their teeth and coming out into the open. That will explain the recent demonstrations in the Armenian capital of Yerevan, believed to be the largest since 1917, and the riots in the industrial town of Sumgaiy in

neighbouring Azerbaijan. Though all local languages are encouraged, the study of Russian is a must in all states and that undoubtedly created problems, apart from problems of assimilation.

India witnessed violent forms of linguistic on several occasions in connection with one or the other aspect of the problem. An examination of this question from a historical perspective suggests that the language issue cannot be treated in isolation from the national question and more fundamentally from the correlation of class forces existing in any social formation. The national question is first and foremost a question of solving vital problems of social development, abolishing national oppression and inequality, eliminating obstacles to the formation of nations and assuming freedom for the development of people including achievement of equality in national relations. In its widest sense, the national question embraces the entire complex of relationship between ethnic communities and above all between nations that have already been established, and those in the process of formation, their economic, social, judicial, political, linguistic, ideological and psychological manifestations. Therefore, it is part of a wider social question and must be studied in wider context.

We would examine in this chapter the language problem of Assam in the context of different facets of the national question in India thus giving it a deeper perspective. The focus would be on (i) the historical stage through which the national problem in India has evolved, (ii) the multinational character of the Indian Union and (iii) the uneven development of regions inhabited by various nationalities.

**Nation and Nationalities as Historical Categories:**

It is necessary to consider the linguistic issues in the framework of the categories of nations, nationalities and national minorities. The nation is a reality. As a form of human community it evolves historically on a given territory. It develops a common language, a common culture and builds up a common economic structure. Different social classes in their totality comprise the nation. The nation may follow in its formations two possible lines of evolution. It may arise out of a numerically preponderant single nationality or it may grow out of several distinct nationalities. Nationalities, on the other hand, are separate linguistic, cultural, ethnic formations which existed prior to capitalism and continue to exist for an indefinite period under capitalism. Nationality thus comprises predominantly a form of pre-capitalist communities.

---

on whose disintegration the modern capitalist society w -
crystallized. If these still continue to exist under capitalism it is either due to the backward nature of the capitalism or the long duration of pre-capitalist survivals. Thus, it is clear that nationality in its pure form belongs to the epoch of localized economies. The development of commerce and industry breaks down the barriers in a given nationality and between various nationalities of a given country. In a developed 'lite' capitalist society, nationalities still continue to exist as a mere community of descent and language. Therefore, the issues pertaining to nationalities and national minorities in their modern context, including the right of self-determination of nations are the products of capitalist development first in the west and then onwards in the rest of the world.

The important requirement of a scientific theory in investigating any social question is that the question should be examined within definite historical limits and if it refers to a particular country (e.g., the national programme for a given country) due account should be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others in the same historical epoch. First of all, it implies that a clear distinction must be drawn between the two periods of capitalism which differ radically from

each other as far as the national movement is concerned. On the one hand, there is the period of the collapse of feudalism and absolutism, the period of the formation of the bourgeois democratic society and state, when the national movement for the first time become mass movement and in one way or the other draw all classes of the population into politics through the press, participation in representative institutions etc. On the other hand, there is the period of fully formed capitalist state, a long established constitutional regime and a highly developed antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, a period that may be called the eve of the collapse of capitalism. The national question is, therefore, very much a democratic question and needs to be considered in their historical, socio-economic and cultural context. The struggle for national rights is identified more and more often with the movements for a fundamental solution of acute social problems. This is quite logical because conflict between nationalities today are rooted in the capitalist system itself in its exploitative essence. These developments are borne out by Lenin's and, 'Imperialism does not halt the development of capitalism and the growth of democratic tendencies among the masses of population. On the contrary, it accentuates the antagonism between their democratic aspirations and the anti-democratic

9. ibid.
tendency of the trust.\textsuperscript{10} The growth of the national liberation movement is linked to this process, which is further assisted by the emergence and growing strength of the social system. Among the factors\textsuperscript{11} underlying the aggravation of the nationalities question are the general crisis of capitalism, the sharpening of existing social contradictions and the emergence of new ones in capitalist countries, the involvement in political life of the intermediate social strata, the increasingly uneven socio-economic development of regions and the integrative processes in the capitalist economy that are breaking up long standing national ethnic ties, creating new and aggravating old nationalities problem. In the concrete conditions prevailing in an individual country, the operation of these factors is peculiar and often highly specific. For example, in Belgium we find two groups, the Flemings and Wallons, whose economic and cultural development had proceeded along totally different lines, were united in a single state. For a long time, the heterogeneity of the Belgian population was practically of no consequence for the reason that when the state was proclaimed none of the regions had a national movement, seeking to set up a state structure of its own. In India, we find that the national problem remains unsolved leading to

\textsuperscript{10} Lenin, V.I., Collected Works, Vol. 23, Moscow, 1964.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
the emergence of various problems like communalism, separatism, linguistic chauvinism, provincialism and regionalism. Therefore a concrete analysis of the Indian situation from the historical perspective is essential.

Colonialism and uneven development:

India was integrated into the world capitalist economy in a subordinate colonial position during the nineteenth century. It emerged as a classic colony playing a crucial role in the development of British capitalism. The colonial Indian economy was very much a part of world capitalism which needs to be viewed as a single world-wide system of which colonial economics were an integral part. The historical process that led to this colonial integration or this pattern of modernization inevitably led to the underdevelopment of India.13

The British administration of India systematically destroyed all the fibres and foundations of Indian society. Its land and taxation policy ruined India's village economy and substituted for it the parasitic landowner and money lender. Its commercial policy destroyed the Indian artisans and created slums of the Indian cities filled with millions of starving and diseased paupers. Its economic policy broke down whatever beginnings that were of an indigenous industrial development and promoted the proliferations of

speculators, petty-businessmen, agents and precarious livelihood in the meshes of a decaying society. Thus, British rule consolidated itself by creating new classes and vested interests who were tied up with that rule and whose privileges depended on its continuance. There were the landowners and the princes, and there were a large number of subordinate members of the services in various departments of the government from the patwari, the village headmen upwards. To all these methods must be added the deliberate policy, pursued throughout the period of British rule, of creating divisions among Indians, of encouraging one group at the cost of the other. It is thus a fair assessment of the effects on India of two centuries of domination by Western capitalism as well as a correct analysis of the causes of India's present uneven development. As Nehru put it, 'Nearly all our major problems today have grown up during British rule and as a direct result of British policy; the princes, the minority problems, various vested interests - foreign and Indian, the lack of industry and the neglect of agriculture, the extreme backwardness in the social services and above all, the tragic poverty of the people.'

The policy of economic development pursued by the colonialists created serious regional imbalances which generated political tensions of various kinds. Growth of trade and

16. Ibid.
commerce in colonial India meant the creation of jobs and educational opportunities at the lower level at coastal centres like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. This led to the emergence of some industries in these enclaves and hence, to the development of a merchant capitalist class which started investing in industry. This gave these regions a lead start over other regions, before independence was achieved. Today, these disparities have been accentuated and exacerbated by the later uneven development of India.

**Rise of Indian Capitalist class:**

The Indian capitalist class, in the strictly modern sense, arose during British period. It arose as a consequence of a number of measures adopted by the British rulers to transform India into a colony to subserve their own interests. When capitalism developed in historically belated countries like India, it developed under different and more unfavourable conditions from those in the pioneering capitalist countries. The first capitalist countries subordinated other societies to facilitate their own development by gaining access to the markets and resources of these societies. The societies thus subordinated, like India, faced this same process as a barrier to their own capital accumulation process. In contrast to what was the case in the first capitalist countries the Indian capitalist class found it difficult even to get access to its own home market against the established competition of British
industry. British imperialism took away resources that could have sustained India's own development and the colonial state neglected to provide the necessary overheads for competitive industrialisation.\textsuperscript{17}

The Indian capitalist class realized that imperialist economic exploitation of India blocked their long term growth and it opposed all the three major channels through which the metropolis extracted India's social surplus. Those channels were - domination of the Indian market, investment of foreign capital both industrial and finance, and direct surplus expropriation through control over public finance and in particular through high military expenditure for imperial purposes. Therefore, the Indian capitalist class gave broad support to the nationalist movement against imperialism and it also formed its organisations to project its specific problems. They sensed that the people of India as a whole desired freedom from imperialist bondage. It was also realized that their conditions of life and their contradiction with imperialism would propel their nationalist political activity irrespective of the participation of the capitalist class. The basic task before the capitalist class was, therefore, to remain relevant to such a basic and powerful social force as nationalism and try to establish its hegemony over the programme, organisation, strategy and the

\textsuperscript{17} Davy, B., The Economic Development of India, New York, 1975.
pattern of struggle. This two fold relationship of the capitalist class with imperialism led it to work for a non-revolutionary pattern of anti-imperialist struggle. Thus the struggle was to be based on the strategy of struggle (pressure), compromise and stage by stage advance towards a bourgeois nation state and independent economic development.

Nationalism:

Indian nationalism is a modern phenomenon. The roots of modern nationalism are found in the critique levelled by the emerging Indian intelligentsia during the second half of the nineteenth century against the inherent limitations of the colonial economy, society and political structure as a whole. It was the breadth of this critique and the creation of a humanist vision which infact had much in common initially with the developing liberal-democracy in Britain thus enabling the nationalists and their party - the Congress in India, to relate to diverse social groups up and down the economic ladder to influence them, and mobilize them in the movement for winning political independence. In this respect, Indian nationalism was never narrowly based.

Indian nationalism came into conflict with the rule of British Capitalism supported by Indian feudal remnants.


19. Ibid.
end other reactionary forces. This was in contrast to the nationalism of the English and the French peoples, who came into conflict with their own indigenous feudal classes. This was one of the basic peculiarities of Indian nationalism. The basic colonial character of British rule and its harmful impact on the lives of the Indian people led to the rise and development of a powerful anti-imperialist movement in India. This movement was a national movement because it embraced within its fold all the different classes and groups of Indian society. These classes and groups had their own contradictions with imperialism which brought them together in a common national movement.

The basic political objectives of the nationalist leaders were, (a) to help the process of unifying Indian people into a nation, (b) to promote the growth of modern capitalist economy, (c) to create an all-India national leadership and (d) to generalize form and crystallize an anti-imperialist ideology and in the end to create a broad all India national movement. In this process they undertook an analysis of the basic character of British colonialism in India and spread their understanding of its exploitative character among the Indian people.

section of the Indian leadership at no stage believed in the benevolent intentions of the rulers. Dedabhei Neoroji, for example, resolved it by calling British rule in India un-British. Moreover, the newspapers invariably gave a more open, direct and bold expression to the feelings of the rank and file of national leadership than the public men did, and played an important part in developing and moulding popular nationalist sentiments on economic questions and their political bearings.

The nationalist leaders adopted a national approach towards economic development. Their total concern was with the general welfare of the community and they, therefore, tried to represent the interest of all classes of Indian society. They felt that while they were engaged in the struggle for getting economic justice and equality for the entire nation they should not take up the fight for justice and equality between classes. They decided therefore not to take up any activity which would tend to divide the people at a time when the need was to unite them into a nation. This perspective, however correct, made them ignore


other aspects of contemporary reality. Initially, the nationalist movement did not have a wide social base. The area of its influence was limited mainly to the urban educated Indians. However, with the emergence of Gandhi, the character of Indian national movement changed with a new ideology and a mass social base. Gandhi was firmly rooted in the Indian soil and it was from this fact that he drew immense strength. The masses, the peasants and workers came into the national movement primarily in the Gandhian era. This is perhaps the most important aspect of the growth of national movement. It is also equally important to note that the capitalists as a class also joined the movement and came to support it actively, though primarily financially, during this era. Thus, Indian national movement was a multi-class movement of the Indian people against imperialism. The Congress before independence was not a party of the bourgeoisie but a platform, an open-ended organisation heading a popular movement, in which different classes and different shades of political and economic opinion could contend for hegemony.

The Problem of National Minorities

The problem of nationalities and minorities were evolved in the course of Indian national movement. It is

not a unique problem of Indian nationalism. Such a problem did emerge and demanded solution in the history of a number of modern people such as the Austrians, the Hungarians, and the Russians. However, it is not that every modern people was confronted by their historical development with the problem of nationalities. For example, the English, and the French did not have to confront such a problem on the road to their consolidation as nations. In contrast to this, the peoples of the East European countries like the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Balkens, and others, had to confront this problem. Specific historical reasons are responsible for this distinction.24

It is interesting to study how the problem of Indian national minorities emerged and came to the forefront of Indian nationalist politics. The growth of nationalism was an uneven process among different communities and provinces in India. The impact of British rule as well as the penetration of new forces did not take place at the same pace throughout the country. At the same time, the conditions which led to the rise of political and national consciousness matured unevenly among different parts and communities. Some parts of India and some communities became politically conscious earlier than others. As a result, the development of the national movement was paralleled by the growth of independent political movements of such socio-religious categories as the Muslims, the depressed classes,

the Sikhs and the non-Brahmins and of such provincial social
groups speaking the same language and having the same
culture as the Tamils, the Telegus, the Malayalis, the
Kenarese, the Marathis, the Oriyas, the Gujaratis, the Tur-
jabis, the Sindhis, the Bengalis, the Biharis, the Assamese
and others. As group awareness developed among these groups
of people, they felt a yearning for a corporate life
unhampered by the existing provincial division, which did
not correspond to linguistic groups but were created mainly
for administrative convenience. The politicising role of
language was felt not only by those who benefited from
linguistic expansion but by those who were threatened by it.
The Bengalis, the Marathis and the Tamils were surrounded by
submerged linguistic groups whose advancement and distinctive
claims were not taken care of. The Assamese, the Oriyas and
the Biharis eventually expressed their resentment against the
Bengalis by urging the claims of their own languages.
Similarly, in Andhra the Telegus followed the same tactic
against the claims of the Tamils; the intrusions of Marathi
were denounced by Hindi speakers in the Central Provinces and
the Kenarese-speakers in the south of Bombay provinces. The
social dominance of Bengali speaking people in Assam, Orissa,
Chota Nagpur and parts of Bihar was reflected in the
dominance of their language. Although these areas were backward in the new education and professional training, they came

25. Seal, A., The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, New York
1971.
slowly to produce their own educated people. Thence, they attempted to redress the balance by asserting the claims for introduction of their own languages in administration and law courts. Bengali patriotism, and pride in language came to be challenged by the patriotism of the speakers of Assamese, Oriya and Bihari. For example, the enlightened section of the Assamese educated in Calcutta brought out their own literary journal in 1889 named 'Joneki' which stressed the linguistic identity of Assamese. A Few Remarks on Assam, 27 by Ananda Ram Dhekiai Phukan affirmed the separate identity of the Assamese language against the expansionist claims of the Bengali.

However, the question of linguistic re-organisation of provinces received scant attention during the British rule. The concrete issue of linguistic re-organisation made its first official appearance in the 1917 Calcutta Congress session. The Congress then held the view that the maintenance of non-linguistic administrative divisions by the British government was arbitrary and a part of the policy of 'divide and rule' and it was argued by some of the prominent Congress leaders that 'language in this country stood for and represented culture, race, history, individuality and finally a sub-nation'.

---

It was imperative for the Congress under Gandhi, if it had to become a mass organisation, to channelise the linguistic nationality sentiment and use the national languages as vehicles of political communication and propaganda. The Congress, all through the period of the freedom movement, never formulated a concrete plan of action but contented itself in assuaging nationality sentiments by merely passing resolutions and accepting the principle of linguistic basis for recognition of different provinces. Adoption of linguistic principle for reorganisation of the administrative and political divisions marked a turning point for the Congress and transformed it from a middle class assembly to a mass organisation by deriving support from different regions and building up the national movement by harnessing the forces of regionalism.

But later on limitations were imposed on such a principle by the Congress itself leaving it to public sentiments to grow in course of time.

Even after the achievement of independence, the government at the centre continued to resist the demand for the linguistic reorganisation of states for a long time. Therefore, in the post-independence period, many hitherto...


backward or less developed minorities become conscious of their rights and have put forward claims for the early recognition of their distinct entity. The State Reorganisation Commission\textsuperscript{31} with some hesitation, had accepted the principles of linguistic states. Although the acceptance of the principle of linguistic self determination was not officially acknowledged, India was divided into fourteen states that subsequently increased to twenty five states most of which embody a cultural and linguistic identity.

The principle of linguistic states has no doubt some inherent inadequacies. Historically, the implicit acceptance of the principle ended divisive language conflicts in some states, while setting into motion new conflicts in other states. In states that were relatively culturally homogeneous or where the rates of social and economic transformation kept up with the assimilative capacity of dominant cultures the creation of linguistic states resulted in resolution of language conflicts within the states. However, in culturally heterogeneous states and where social transformation ran ahead of assimilative capacities of dominant cultures, linguistic states only gave a boost to new conflicts.\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{31} Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, Delhi, 1955.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Barveh, S., Lessons of Assem, Economic and Political Weekly, Bombay, Feb 15, 1986.
\end{itemize}
apart, there were also other forces at work which have been given concession in some cases in course of time.

**Multinational character**

India is a multinational state. It has various nationalities marked out by language and culture. For example, Tamil, Telegu, Malyalam, Merathi, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Bengali, Assamese etc. There are variations in the degree of nationality formations dependent on the respective class formations within the nationalities themselves. The multinationality problem in India is further complicated by the existence of a number of castes, religions and ethnic groups.

Though India is a multinational state just as Russia or China, the nationality question has assumed different forms in India. The Indian situation is different due to different historical position. Since India was a British colony for several centuries, imperialism itself had become a great hurdle for development of nations in this country; that is why the national consciousness of those nationalities has developed as a part of the anti-imperialist consciousness. Moreover, the historical circumstances under which capitalism arose and developed in India brought in their wake a complex uneven development of nationalities and regions. All parts of India and all Indian nationalities did not come under British rule at one and the same point of time. Nor were they at the same stage of socio-economic development. This
unevenness left its imprint on the manifestation of nationalism at various levels, both in terms of chronology and in terms of the emotional content and identity. This uneven development is inseparably tied to the entrenched existence of backward relations of production of the Indian society and the most retrograde survivals of the feudal past. The uneven development of the various regions inhabited by the nationalities produce social and economic tensions between the different regions and the centre. This problem gets further complicated in the process of economic development. One of the most striking experiences of planned development in India has been that economically backward areas have gained little from planning. In many states, though the development effort has increased in every successive plan period, its benefit has percolated more to the already developed areas. The failure of the planning process developed economic imbalances between states, regions and sub-regions. State wise per capita income at constant prices, although not an adequate indicator, would fairly indicate the trend of economic growth in states (table 1). It is evident from the table-1 that by the ranking method the states that occupy the last five positions, viz. Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh with the exception of Karnataka, continued to occupy the same positions from 1960-61 to 1970-71. While Bihar continued to have the same per capita income during the period, Rajasthan and Orissa showed even s
Table-1.1: Statewise Per Capita Income at Constant Prices : 1960-1961 to 1970-71

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Per Capita</td>
<td>Index All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>India=100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>399 (1)</td>
<td>128.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>338 (2)</td>
<td>125.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>376 (3)</td>
<td>121.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>344 (4)</td>
<td>111.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>327 (5)</td>
<td>105.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>313 (6)</td>
<td>101.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>291 (7)</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td>287 (8)</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>263 (9)</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>255 (10)</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>254 (11)</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>251 (12)</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>247 (13)</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>247 (13)</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>242 (14)</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>216 (15)</td>
<td>69.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Figures in brackets indicate ranks of the states
1 Figure for the year 1960-61
2 Figure for the year 1966-67
+ Figure for the year 1968-69

decline in the real income and Uttar Pradesh and Assam showed a marginal improvement. But all these states are trailing behind the all-India average per capita income of Rs. 147. The absolute dependent position of the states on the centre has doubtlessly hampered balanced regional development.

In India the problems of national unity like casteism, linguistic division, the position of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes etc. have been more and more complex. These conflicts broke out on many of these issues like the separatist Telengana movement, the official language movement in Assam, the Bardoli movement in Bihar etc. These conflicts seem to be within the realm of ideas and cultural pattern. Close investigation, however, reveals that behind the apparent caste, religious and linguistic differences, economic causes are the determining factors. It has been observed that vested interests are fanning the flames of religious, communal, linguistic and regional susceptibilities for their own partisan ends. The major task the democratic movement in India is confronted with is to quieten the tension, restore harmony on these issues and to concentrate attention on the burning economic and political demands. These problems are related to the nature of the Indian socio-economic formation and to the dialectical relationship to the base and superstructure. Keeping this in view, the present study relates to the problem of language formation. This is one of the significant issues in the process of political development in India.
The Problem

Assem presents a unique fusion of different linguistic and racial elements. For reasons of a historical nature dating back to the early days of the Company Raj, induction of Bengali elements to the administration in Assam gave rise to conflicts between the Assamese and the Bengalis on issues related to the use of the language as a medium of instruction and language of the courts as well as University. The present study is designed to focus the dynamics of the relationships between Assamese, the language spoken by the majority of the people in the state, and Bengali, the language of an important linguistic minority in the state. The pattern of linguistic conflict in each state in India is reflected not only in the number of language groups and their relative size but also in the degree of relatedness and distinction among them. Historical reasons apart, the tagging of Bengali speaking Cachar district to the Assamese speaking Brahmaputra Valley within the same state has further complicated the problem. This provided, as it historically did in most parts of India, a specific area in which politics could be manipulated. This study is an attempt to examine this political scenario based on the official language question.