CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Modern South Asia is a product of two centuries of colonial rule. The British colonialist claimed that nationhood was their gift to the South Asians. With “5600 native states, races of 220 separate languages, two main hostile religions, 10 lacks outcaste or depressed classes called untouchable” India obviously could not claim nationhood for themselves. The British were guided by the European notion of nationhood was based on a single language culture, territory or ethnicity. Since colonial India did not match this European notion it was asserted that “there never was an Indian nation” nor could it become one. Despite such assertion which in turn justified the perpetuation of colonial rule the Indian nationalist were determined to project them as an emerging nation. While one group of nationalist asserted that India had always been a nation from the Vedic times. The modern nationalist felt that it was the very British rule which has made India into a nation through “a welding process of hard hammering and hitting.” While admitting that there were great diversity, they asserted that these numerous religions and language groups have a shared past of settlement and domicile made them one people. “A nationality is no longer either a religious or a social federation but a political unit. Diverse races professing different forms of religions and following different varieties of manners, customs, traditions easily submit to a common political faith to work out their common destiny.” Countering the charge of multiplicity of races the nationalist showed that even the ‘great British nation’ was not based on a single ethnic group. The Picts, Scots, Sexons, Normans, Protestants and Catholics together form the
British nation. As far as India was concerned "it is true that communities are divided from communities, sects from sects and provinces from provinces by differences of religion, languages and custom. The way of western civilization, however, with its unifying influence is leveling down these differences and creating a community of interest and feelings which is a precursor of a new dawn in our life."

The rise of nationalism in India was coeval with equally strong sub-national movement in the regions. This sub-national movement reflected itself in multiple ways (a) growth of respective vernacular literature, (b) agitation to establish particular languages as official languages of a particular area, (c) movements of backward nationalities to break way from advanced nationality and earn recognition for itself; (d) the movement of a particular nationality group who were separated from the present nationality and were existing amidst different cultural group as a result of administrative unitization, to join their cultural mainstream, and (e) the movement of the groups who were till in a tribal situation of development but struggled against the exploitation and the encroachment of outsiders, both English as well as Indians, to have a province of their own to minimize the exploitation and encroachment.

Pre-British India was a conglomeration of regions. These regions were generally culturally defined areas. Whenever an empire emerged in India it integrated all the regions under one political dispensation without disturbing their cultural configuration. Hence, whenever the empire disintegrated the regions became a sphere of autonomous rule again without disturbing cultural customs of the region. However, the colonial arrangement had disturbed the regions, cultural pattern. Marathi lands for example, were in Bombay presidency, central provinces, Hyderabad and small principalities of Deccan, the Telugus were in Madras presidency as well as Hyderabad, the Malayalis in Madras and Travancore-Cochin principalities, Oriyas in Madras and Bengal Presidency as well as Central provinces and the Bengalis in Bengal Presidency as well as Assam. This organization not only
stunted the growth of cultural communities but also created conflict situations in ethnic relationship. Such organization affected the unimpeded development of emerging nationalities and ethnic groups. Several nationality areas were often combined within one administrative unit. At the same time nationality areas were shared by several provinces.

The dynamics that set the forces of Indian national movement (Pan-Indian) in motion were also responsible for the beginning of the process of nationality formation amongst various cultural communities inhabiting different regions of the country. The backdrop was capitalism in colonial form for both these parallel processes. The new mode of production required a unified political territory, a homogeneous market and a common language. The British, therefore, brought about the administrative unification of the country, recognized languages of the major cultural groups they came across first as the official language of the area and broke upon the isolation and exclusivity of region and social groups. While this encouraged development of the relatively advanced cultural groups into nationalities, the backward groups remained suppressed. Due to the head-start, the advanced nationalities not only spread their social, economic and political domination over the backward nationalities, they even sometimes sought to absorb some of the incipient groups into its fold. The backward and incipient nationalities therefore had to fight out of this domination, resist absorption and struggle to assert their status. The homogenization thrust of colonial created further complications in this process because it altered the existing administrative boundaries and created provincial boundaries which criss-crossed several ethnic and nationality boundaries.

In the regions language has been the dominant marker of culture. Religion was appropriated by the colonial rulers to implement its policy of divide and rule. As a result the Indian swallowed the trap and used religion for mobilization. Thus emerged the Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha and the Akali Dal, which used their respective religions for political mobilization relegating language to a secondary role.
position Paul R. Brass, "language and religion has been among the major symbols of
group identity in South Asia during the past century. Language and religion have
been used both to broaden man's identities in South Asian countries and to
undermine the sovereignty of existing political units India too have experienced a
succession of regional linguistic and religions movements which have sometimes
seem to be on the point of breaking the unity of the country.14

While religion based movement have actually resulted in the partition of the
century 1947), language movement had either threatened to disintegrate the Indian
nation (Tamil secessionist movement in 1960's) or actually balkanized a particular
province, for example Assam Language conflicts was of two types (i) resistance
against the dominance against a single language at the central level as was
experienced during the national language controversy in the 1960's, when most of
the region of India violently erupted against the imposition of Hindi language in
1960. These movements were experienced in post independent India, (ii)The other
language conflict involved the resistance of smaller language group or suppress
language group against the dominance, hegemony and supremacy of a major
language group. Such movements were, however, present in the pre-independence
period too. "The Bengalis, the Marathas and the Tamils were surrounded by
submerged linguistic groups whose advancement and distinctive claims were
neglected A linguistic rival to these depressed groups could preside both a symbol
and a point of union for movements designed to challenge the pre-eminence of their
neighbours the social dominance of the Bengali were challenged by the Assamese
on the Oriyas In Bihar a movement demanding separation from Bengal had taken
shape at the end of 19th century After it had its way in 1911 it went on agitating
against Bengali dominance in the new province During the first years of the new
century the demands of Oriyas for separation both from Bengal and Madras were
being framed, while Telegu leaders envisaged against the Tamils and called for an
'Andradesh' of their own The stirrings of the Kanarese speaking people in
Karnataka hitherto confined to sentimental allusion to Vijayanagara now swelled into a full blown demand to be get rid of the domination of Mahārāṣṭra Hindi speakers of Central province based on Jabalpur now called for severance from the Marathi speakers based on Nagpur. In the same way regions where one language and one people were dominant pressed for a separate recognition.15

On the question of why religion or communication was more dominant form of political mobilization, Paul Brass stated that in India religion cleavage was the primary cleavage as was evident between the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.16 While other religious groups are numerically insignificant, they either did not make political demand or did not do so successfully. The second aspect of religion and language especially in the northern India was that the two types of cleavages (language and religion) had been non-congruent. Although has not been a barrier between religious groups for communication. It was turned into a symbolic barrier by political elites to advance the interest of their religious groups. A third aspect of language situation in India is the enormous dialectical diversity. The states called Hindi speaking only contained nearly two dozen regional and tribal dialects which can and do lay claim to status as language distinct and separate from Hindi. Yet the only language which was successful in attaining such a status was Punjabi and Urdu.17

However, after independence the total result of using religion for political mobilization was apparent when the devastation of partition of India into the two states of India and Pakistan to both the nationalist and communalist alike. There was temporary retrain from the use successfully used for the creation of Pakistan where as it reduced the Muslims into a minority in post colonial India. Urdu was conceded as a language for the specification of the Muslims. Sikh religion was used for the demand of a Sikh province and when “Punjabi Subah” has granted Punjabi language too was recognized as a language of the state.18

But in other areas language continued to be a symbol for mobilization, autonomy and statehood demand. The Indian National Congress had already foreseen
the potent threat emanating from the adverse linguistic situation in India. Hence it had recognized the principle of linguistic provinces as the guideline for building a federal India. The principle was repeatedly recognized in the various annual Congress sessions. But once India became independent, the process was not immediately implemented as more urgent issues had to be dealt with. But the Andhra State Movement launched by the Telugu speaking people of Madras Presidency created a volatile situation. The India government not only was forced to grant statehood to the Telugu speaking people in the form of Andhra Pradesh but also constitute State Recognition Commission (SRC) in 1956. The recommendation of the SRC as well as consequent recognition of India State did not pacified the volatile situation in India. It created many more demands and created new conflict situation in 1960. Neelam Sanjib Reddy in his presidential speech to the Indian National Congress said, “The present in an especially opportunity time to bring about this charge since as a result of SRC organization we have reformed the map of India to confirm broadly to linguistic grouping. Language is a very important cohesive factor and though should not allow a love of it to degenerate into a kind of narrow regional patriotism, still there is nothing wrong in a people speaking the same language and having the same custom and manners coming together to administer themselves better. For one thing the feeling of close association with their own administration in their own language will help to bring about a large amount of good will and cooperation among the people. The formation of the Andhra state in 1953 and the result it was able to achieve in three years have clearly demonstrated that linguistic state can function much better than a composite one and at the same time the patriotic ties towards a central citizenship will, if at all, be strengthen and not weakened.”

The Andhra state movement demonstrated that the emotion a language movement could Stir. The Telugu language movement not only emotionally integrated the entire Telegu people but also created its first language Martyr - Potti Srinamalu Srinamalu simplify fasted unto death which stirred most emotional upheaval amongst its followers. It resulted in such a uprising that the Nehru government was forced to grant statehood to Telegu speaking people. All most simultaneously few more youths lost their lives for their mother tongue in the
neighbouring state of East Pakistan. The youths were fighting for recognition to their mother tongue Bengali language and restricting the hegemony of the Urdu language. Few years later few Tamilians gave up their lives through self-emollition in protest to the imposition of Hindi language on them. Suddenly it seemed that the South Asian sub-continent which was recently partitioned on the basis of the religion would be distinguished on the question of language. Language emerged as a major symbol of national identity. In some areas Language had risen as the unit of mobilization while in others people were resisting the imposition of another language on them. At the national level the attempt to introduced Hindi as the national language was seen as an act of big nation oppression and massive protests were launched every non-Hindi speaking areas of India foiling the Centre’s attempt. The resistance was so massive that it seemed India was going to disintegrate. This also launched the emergence of language based identities. Gujaratis claimed a Gujrati asmita based on Gujrati language; so did the Marathas on the basis of their language and both demanded reorganization of their provinces. In Bihar there were movements for Bhojpuri and Awadhi speaking areas. The Assam state declared Assamese as the state language of Assam which was resisted by all the tribal groups of the state as well as the Bengali speaking minority people of Assam. It seemed that the country was “on the verge of a civil war” A scholar-statesman described the situation as ‘linguism’. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru though was instrumental in promising linguistic provinces was in no position to implement it immediately. There were more urgent issues pending. Hence the agitation of people on language had upset him. He tried to argue it out but without much success. He stated in the Lok Sabha, “I recognize that the language of the people is vital matter for their development, whether it is education, administration or any other matter. But there is a distinction between developing the language to the fullest extent and this passion for building up a wall around a linguistic area and calling it a border. I completely accept the statement that people really cannot grow except through their language but it does not follow that in order to make them and their language grows, a barrier must be erected between them and others.” The issue had hurt him so much that he stated in disgust and bitterness, “We live in closed society – not one closed society but numerous closed
societies There is a Bengali closed society, a Marathi closed society, a Malayali closed society and so on "

The present thesis is about the emergence of language as the dominant symbol of national identity and resistance against linguistic hegemony in selected South Asian regions We studied the language movement of Manbhum area of then Bihar which was the first movement of such kind followed by similar movement in East Pakistan and Barak Valley. The movement in Manbhum though fizzled out, the movement in East Pakistan paved way to the formation of new nation called Bangladesh and the movement in Barak Valley was successful in earning the nationality rights of the Bengali speaking people living in Barak Valley

Survey of literature

There are not many works on the Language Movement of Barak Valley. The most notable N. Cuoudhury’s *Ashamer Bhasa Danga* (Calcutta, 1973) and Amotab Choudhury’s *Mukher Bhasa Buker Rudhir* (Calcutta, 1961). Both are in Bengali and passionate Hence they lack academic character. The recently published *Barak Upatyaker Bhasa Sangramer Itihas* by Subir Kar (Calcutta, 1999), it is in Bengali and a more reliable work. A series of seven books edited by Dilip Kanti Laskar in Bengali was published by Lalan Mancha Prakashani of Karimganj 2001, under different titles *Unisher Bhasha Shahidera, Unisher Mer Itihas, Bharata Bangla Bhasa Sangram 1972-86, Bharate Bangla Bhasa Sangram: Ekti Mulyan Prachesta, Assama Bangla Bhasa Sankat, unisher Kabita o Gan and Unisher Katha Sahtiya*. These works are the result of hard work and dedication In some volumes documents related to the Language Movement of Barak Valley are enclosed Placing of photographs of the people that were died on police firing and the interviews of the relatives of the deceased along with the writings of various persons who participated in the movement make this series of works an important source of the movement of Barak Valley The eminent literary personalities of the Barak Valley also contributed by writing in this series of works Barak Upatyaka Matri Bhasa Suraksha Samiti has publication like *Ekshati Bhasa Sangram o Sangramotor Panchas Bacher Prapt-prapti*, Silchar 2012 in Bengali, *Bhasa Sangramer Putulmondo Itihas* by Sanat Kumar
Kairi in Bengali (Silchar, 2008) is a work of trust and a collection of photographs and evidences related to the Language Movement of Silchar. In English there is M Purkayastha’s The Autonomy of North-East (Silchar, 1980). Besides these there are Sandhya Barua’s Languages Politics in Assam (Delhi, 1997); Assam Sahitya Sabha has publication like The Language Problem of Assam (Guwahati, 1973), Assam’s Language Question: A Symposium (Jorhat, 1961) and Assam’s State Language (Jorhat, 1960) Besides these, there is work by Sanjib Baruah, India Against Itself: Assam the Politics of Nationality, (OUP, 1999) which deals with the issue only in episodes. The focus of the study is elsewhere. H K Borpujari dealt with the issue in North East India: Problems, Politics and Prospects (Guwahati, 1998), which again devote only few pages to the entire issue. Sajal Nag’s Roots of ethnic Conflicts: Nationality Question in North East India traces the ancestry of language politics in colonial period but stops at independence. It offers a details of the language politics in colonial Assam in particular and India in general. V. Venkata Rao and Niru Hazarika’s Century of Government of Politics in North East India, vol. 1 (Assam), (Delhi, 1999) only related the events. At the National level there are other works like Prakash Karat Language and Nationality Politics (Madras, 1973), K. Kodesa The Problem of Linguistic States in India (New Delhi, 1969), Jyotirindra Dasgupta Language Conflict and National Development (California, 1970), Paul Brass, Language, Religion and Politics in North India (Delhi, 1974), B.I. Kluyeb, India: National and Language Problem in India (Delhi, 1981); all of which deal with the problem of language and nationality politics at other regions of India. For international language movement there are books like Nationalities Question on USA and USSR by S.S. Chauhan (Bombay, 1973), Badaruddin Umar’s Bhasa Andoloon Prasango vol 1 and 2 in Bengali, Dhaka, 1995 and Language Movement in Sirajul Islam (ed) History of Bangladesh 1704-1971, Political History, vol. 1 (Dhaka, 1999); M. Mamoon and Jayanta Ray Civil Society in Bangladesh: Resilience and Retreat (Calcutta, 1996), Basir Alhelal Bhasa Andoloner Inhas, in Bengali Dhaka. 1986, Mustafa Zaman Abbasi (ed) 50 Years of Ekushey February Celebrating the Mother Tongue, Dhaka, 2002, Mohammad Hannan Bangladesh: Mukti juddher Inhas, in Bengali, Dhaka 1992; Tafiqul Islam Barendra Anchale Bhasa Andoloon, Dhaka 1999, Prasanta Sannayal (ed) Mukti juddher Paclus Bochor, Dhaka, 1996 and
Objectives

The objective of this project is to locate the importance of language movement in Barak Valley of Assam as well as the language movements in Manbhum (a part of which is now in the Purulia District of West Bengal and rest in the state of Jharkhand) and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in the history of such resistance and vernacular movements in South Asia. The work is the study of the importance of language in nationality formation and a report of investigation that why languages are so dear that people easily embrace death while fighting for mother tongue. It also is a study of the theories of mother tongue, concept of martyrdom and history of resistance movement to language imposition and contextualized the movement of in Barak Valley against the imposition of Assamese language.

Data and Methodology

The basic data of any historical research work are archival materials. The data for the period is now open and these have been consulted extensively. An important source of this research is newspapers, reports published in local, regional and national media. These have also been studied. Various resolutions of the non-governmental organization, voluntary associations, literary bodies, cultural organizations, political parties, reports of the committees and commissions, legislatively assembly proceedings containing resolutions and debates, other published and non-published documents also taken into account for the reconstruction of the events. As far as methodology is concerned the historical empiricism was applied. This was supplemented by interviews, memoirs and such oral sources and field studies appropriate for the investigation.

Organization

The thesis consists of different but connected chapters. The entire study is organized into seven chapters including an introductory and a conclusive chapter.
CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

The first chapter constitutes the introduction, which examine the problems relating to the nationality question. It also deals with the rise of national and sub-national movements in different regions under different circumstances. Pre-British character of India and how the colonial arrangements had disturbed the regions. The dynamic that set the forces of Indian national movement in motion and its responsibility in the process of nationality formation. And how language played a significant role in the rise of nationalism and sub-nationalism.

CHAPTER TWO : LANGUAGE MOVEMENT IN MANBHUM

The second chapter provides descriptions of the language movement of Manbhum. The political history of this region and the absorption of this area by the British. The policy of the colonial ruler and how it ultimately led to the development of a language movement in this region. To place the movement in modern history as it was the first of such kind in India.

CHAPTER THREE : LANGUAGE MOVEMENT IN EAST PAKISTAN

The third chapter deals with the language movement of East Pakistan now Bangladesh. It also deals with the geo-political and political history of Bengal. The origin and the growth of the movement from the colonial period. The partition of India and its effects on Bangladesh and the rise of linguistic nationalism that ultimately led to the liberation war of Bangladesh.

CHAPTER FOUR : LANGUAGE MOVEMENT IN BARAK VALLEY

The fourth chapter studies the language movement of Barak Valley then Cacher. It begins with the political history of this region. And how the Bengali hegemony was established in Assam in the 19th century. The development of Assamese nationality and how it challenged the domination of Bengali language that ultimately led to some unhappy incidents. Finally it describes the language movement and its aftermath.
CHAPTER FIVE: LANGUAGE MOVEMENT IN HAILAKANDI

The fifth chapter narrates the language movement of Hailakandi Sub-division of then Cacher. It examines the reasons behind the rise of an anti-Bengali language movement in Hailakandi which ultimately turned the language movement of Barak Valley in a separate direction and how it became the root cause in putting down the scale of the language movement of Barak Valley.

CHAPTER SIX: MOTHER TONGUE, MARTYRDOM AND MOVEMENT

The sixth chapter studies the definitions and theory of mother tongue, martyrdom and movement. It examines the character of the language movement of South Asia. The definition of mother tongue also discussed elaborately and how the concept of it became a part of history. Whether the term martyrdom is applicable to the people who died in different language movements. This chapter also gives attention to the definition of movement and its development.

CHAPTER SEVENTH: CONCLUSION

The seventh chapter is the conclusion which briefly summarizes the conclusion reached as a result of the study.
5. Ibid
7. Ibid
8. Lala Lajpat Rai, Speeches and Writings, Vol.1, cited in Bipan Chandra op.cit
10. Ibid, pp 41-43
11. Ibid
12. Ibid
13. Ibid, pp 120-121
16. Paul R Brass, op.cit
17. Paul R Brass. op cit
18. For details see Sajal Nag, Nationalism Separatism and secessionism, Jaipur, 1999.
19. Sajal Nag, op-cit, Pp 122-124
20. Ibid
22. Selig Harrison, India The Most Dangerous Decades, London. 1960
24. Sajal Nag, Nationalism Separatism and Secessionism, Jaipur, 1999, p 140