

Topic - Study of Sino-Tibetan Languages in Assam

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Abstract:

Language studies have been reflected in India since ancient times. Attempts to analyse grammar or words are observed in ancient Vedic literature as well as various brahmin texts. The best example of grammar practice in India is paninis 'Astadhyayi' grammar written in the fifth century BC. They bear witness to the ancient and consistent history of language thinking in India. However, the history of language studies in Assam is not very old. In Assam, language thinking has crossed two centuries. (About 215 years.)

Language studies in Assam have gained importance on various occasions. One of the important and timely aspects of language study in Assam is the study of Sino - Tibetan languages. Assam and the North Eastern states the coordinates of different ethnic groups. These ethnic communities are familiar each with their own language - culture. Therefore, Assam and the North Eastern States are considered as the backbone for language-culture scholars.

KEYWORDS: Assam, Sino - Tibetan, Tibeto - Burma, Thai-chin, Language study.

METHODOLOGY

The main method of narrative and analytical methods has been taken, while discussing the theme 'Study of Sino-Tibetan language in Assam.'

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The report on the matter is large, since the scope of its study is also wide.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

The main purpose of the study titled 'Study on Sino-Tibetan language in Assam' is to look at the aspects of the study conducted in Assam on Tibbat Burma and Thai - Chin languages. It discusses the overall and individual studies of the Sino-Tibetan languages separately.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Articles about Sino-Tibetan languages have appeared in most of the books in Assam. Books have been enacted both overall and individual languages. Among these books, the 'Linguistic Survey of India 1901' vol. III, part-II' of Grierson, 'Studies on Sino - Tibetan Language' (1988) of Satyendra Narayan Goswami, 'Axmor Vasa' (1990) of Bhimkanta Baruah 'Axomiya anu Axomor Tibbatbarmiya Vasa' (2000) and 'Axomiya aru Axomor Vasa- Upovasa' (2009) of Upen Rabha Hakacham etc. In addition, languages of the Sino- Tibetan family are also discussed individually. This has been studied extensively in the Main Topic.

MAIN TOPIC

The tribal languages of Assam belong to the large Sino-Tibetan family. The Sino-Tibetan family is divided into two parts; by scholars Tibbat-Burma and Thai chin. Some of the

languages of Tibbat - Burma families found in Assam are Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Dimasa, Tiwa, Rabha, Deori, Garo etc. and the language of the Thai Chin family are Khamti, Turung, Khamyang, phake and Aaitan. The study of these Sino Tibetan languages in Assam is discussed below –

From the days of the English rulers and American missionaries who come to Assam in the 19th century, efforts to grammar, dictionary, formulation of Sino-Tibetan languages were observed. Later, through Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya's research book 'A descriptive analysis of the bodo language' (1977) Sino - Tibetan language gained scientific basis.

If we look at the history on the study of Tibeto-Burman languages, we must have to take the name of George Abraham Grierson. Grierson's book 'Linguistic, Survey of India 1901, Vol. III, Part-II', which collects information from 354 languages and dialects, discusses the Tibeto-Burman languages of Assam. This was followed by the 'Studies on Sino-Tibetan language' book of Satyendra Narayan Goswami published in 1988, which deals with many aspect of the phonetics and morphology of Rabha, Mising, Deori, Karbi and Bodo respectively.

Bhimkanta Baruah's 'Axomor Vasa' (1990) book on the overall study of Tibeto-Burman languages; give a brief introduction to the language families of India and give a glimpse of languages of the North East India. The book discusses the phonology, morphology and vocabulary of languages such as Bodo, Karbi, Rabha, missing, Deori, Tiwa etc. of the Tibeto-Burman Branch.

Upen Rabha Hakacham's name is particularly note worthy in the discussion of Tibetan languages. Hakacham's 'Axomiya aru Axomor Tibbet bormiya Vasa' (2000) and 'Axomiya aru Axomor Vasa Upovasa' are notable books. In the first book, the author discusses the alphabetical, morphological, etc. of the languages as well as comparative aspects. In the other book, the Tibeto-Burman branch has a brief linguistic introduction to the languages of Bodo, Rabha, Tiwa, Deori, Garo, Dimasa, karbi, Mising etc.

Apart from the overall study of Tibeto Burman Languages, a single language is seen to be studied individually. This is discussed below:

- i. Bodo Language:- The study of the Bodo Language is relatively high among the Tibeto Burman languages of Assam. The two grammar books in the Bodo language published in the days of missionaries are the Rev. Sidney Endle's Outline Grammar of the kachari (Bodo) Language”(1884), Rev.

L. Skrefdrud's "A short Grammar of the Mech or Bodo Language." (1889) etc.

The scientific study of the Bodo language begins with Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya. His 'A Descriptive Analysis of the Bodo language' is the most important book in the study of Bodo language. The book has a total of eight chapters including Introduction part.

In introduction section it discusses various aspects related to Sino - Tibetan language family, location of Bodo language, linguistic population, dialect of Bodo language, script, literary, culture. Bhattacharya, based on the views of earlier critics, including Grierson, identifies Bodo as a branch of the Assamese Burmese branch of the Tibetan Burmese branch of

the Sino-Tibetan Language family. According to Bhattacharya, there are four dialects of the Bodo language -

- i. North-Western Dialect (Northern part of undivided Goalpara and Kamrup districts)
- ii. South Western Dialect (South Goalpara, Garo Hills and parts of South Kamrup)
- iii. North Central Assam Dialect (Darrang, North Lakhimpur and Parts of Arunachal)
- iv. South Assam Dialect (Nagaon, North Kachar and Karbi Anglong regions)

The first chapter of the book discusses all aspects of the phonetics of the Bodo language. There are six vowels, three Semi-vowels, thirteen consonants and their Allophone, Juncture, Syllable etc. in the Bodo language, Bhattacharya mentioned that there are four tones in Bodo language. They are high, medium, low and ordinary respectively. However, there are different opinions among later critics of the Bodo language about the tone of the Bodo language. Chapter two of the book discusses the punctuation of the Bodo language. The third chapter discusses the morphology of the Bodo language on the basis of modern Morpheme science. It also includes discussion on the structure of adjacent parts and phrases. The fourth chapter, as part of the morphological analysis, discusses the detailed use of suffixes with various verbs such as pronouns and infinitives in the Bodo language, such as agent inflection, verb inflection, quantifier, gender etc. The fifth chapter discusses the structure of the Bodo language in detail by giving examples of various phrases, inflection etc. The sixth chapter presents sample of various texts such as fairy tales, poems, etc. in the Bodo language with phonetic transcriptions with English meaning. The seventh chapter presents samples of vocabulary in the Bodo language. This glossary of about hundred pages shows the sources of words from different languages. Thus, the book 'A Descriptive Analysis of the Bodo language' based on Bhattacharya's research work not only opens the way of scientific Study of Bodo languages; but also bought interested researchers in the research and study of tribal languages in Assam.

Bhattacharya's subsequent discussions on Bodo language include Bhawen Narjaris 'Bodo Vasa.'(1990) Madhuram Bodo's 'The (1990) Boro structure' (1990), 'The Historical Development of the Boro language' (1990), 'Assamese and Boro: A comparative and constructive study' (1990); Phukan Chandra Basumatary's "An Introduction to the Boro language" etc. has been discussed on the basis of modern linguistics' in those book. Among the dictionaries published in the Bodo language is D.N.S Bhat's 'Boro vocabulary,' Rajendralal Narjari's 'Boro - Assamese Dictionary' etc. Several Grammar books of the Bodo language have also been published. Among them, Kamal kumari Brahma's grammar book 'Bodo Raokhanti' (1986) Swarnaprabha Daimary's "Bodo Vasar Byakara" etc. can be named. It seems that the study of Bodo language has progressed to some extent from linguistic point of view.

- ii. Mising language: Mising is a notable language of the North Assam branch of the Tibeto Burmese family. The study of this language dates back to the days of the British and missionaries. In 1849 William Robinson compiled a grammer called 'Miri Abor Bhasa' and published it as a report in the journal of Asiatic Society. This was followed by J. E. Needham's 'Outline Grammar of the Shaiyang Miri Language' (1885), J.H. Lorein's 'Miri Language' (1900) and 'Dictionary of Abor Miri Language' (1907) etc, The missionaries also compiled an 'Abor Miri Padam' and a 'Padam Primer.' Among the books on mising language, the historical importance of books like 'Miri Duyan' by Sonaram payeng kotoki, 'Miri Duan' by Vibhishan Pegu etc. is immense.

The other some books in mising language are Nahendra Padun's 'Mising Axomiya Paath' (1981), 'Mising Agom Minang' (1974), 'Mising Gomlam' (1987), Tabu Tide's 'Mising Agom Ayyin' (1971), 'Mising Bhasar Banan Paddhati' (1983), 'Short Introduction to mising language (1988) by the Northeastern Language Society. Tabu Tide and Nahendra Padun have made significant contributions to the modern analysis of the mising Language.

Four dictionaries are of particular importance among the dictionaries published in the Mising language -

- a. J. H. Lorein's 'A Dictionary of the Abor Miri Language' (1910). The dictionary is divided into four parts: the first part discusses some grammatical aspects of the Abar Miri language, the second part contains English synonyms of 7,005 Abar Miri words, third part contains English words of Abar miri synonyms and the fourth part contains 2411 Abar miri words, phrases and suffixes.
- b. Tabu Tide's 'A Dictionary of the Mising Language' (2009). This dictionary is a trilingual dictionary of Mising, English and Assamese languages. The total number of entries is 2803. It is an advanced dictionary in terms of lexicography.
- c. Jeetmal Doley's 'The pronouncing of mising English Assamese dictionary' (2004). This is based on the pronunciation of the mising Language. The dictionary contains 7,478 entries. The introduction discusses the phone and phoneme of the mising language, general characteristics of the language, word formation, use of pronouns, verbs, tenses and adjectives.
- d. Tabu Tide's 'Mising Gompir kumsung' (2010): The dictionary is the largest dictionary of the mising language published by the Anandaram Barua Language, Arts and Culture Society. The 212 page introduction to the bilingual dictionary is an important discussion from a linguistic point of view. The dictionary contains about 10,000 words.

Basanta Kumar Doley has done research on 'A morphological study of the mising language'(1996).

- iii. Deori Language: The first discussion of the Deori language is found in W. B. Brown's 'An outline Grammar of the Deori Chutia Language (1895). Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India also includes a discussion of the Deori language. The Phonetics, morphology and Lexical aspects of the Deori language are discussed in 'An Introduction to the Deori language, (1994) by Upendra Nath Goswami. Sharanan Deori's book 'Deori-Sahitya-Samaj contains a bibliological analysis of the evolution of Deori language, phone, structure of words etc. Recently, Deori Language Dictionary has been publishes in the efforts of Nripen Deori, Herambo Deori etc.
- iv. Karbi Language: The missionaries paved the way for the study of Karbi language like other languages of Assam. Rev. N.E. Neighbor's 'Illustrative sentences', the first grammar of the Karbi language was published in 1878.

Among the studies of the Karbi Language, Arpana Konwar's research book 'Karbi: The people and their language' presents a scientific discussion of the Language. The third part of the book introduces the Karbi language and its dialects and discusses in detail the phonetics, morphology and Vocabulary and syntax of the language. In addition, Lankam

Teron's 'Primary Karbi Education,' (1977), Rangbang Terang's 'Karbi Bhasar somu Parichoy', 'Karbi Lamkuru', 'Karbi Lamtasam', G. D Walker's, 'A Dictionary of the Mikir

Language' (1925), V. V Jaypal's 'Karbi Grammar' (1987) etc. have been published on Karbi language.

- v. Rabha Language: There is not much discussion about the Rabha language, but among those that have been discussed, Upen Rabha Hakacham is particularly noteworthy. Hakacham's research book 'Rabha Spoken Language and Assamese Language: A comparative Study' discusses the structural aspects of the Rabha language and compares it with the Assamese language. His books 'Rabha Language and Literature' (2003), 'Rabhami: Language and Instruction' (2005), 'The Rabhas' (2010) discuss the Rabha language. Phukan Chandra Basumatary's 'The Rabha Tribe of North East India Bengal and Bangladesh' (2010) is an important discussion book on this subject.
- vi. Tiwa Language: There is no special discussion of the Tiwa Language. Only a few dictionaries and a few grammar books have been found. For example- M. Balwan's 'Outline of Lalung Grammar' (1974), Rameswar Konwar's 'Tiwa Vocabullary' (1981), Moneswar Deori's 'History of the Tiwa Tribe and language'(1988), etc. Benu Gogoi's research book 'A critical study on the Tiwa community and their language' is an important work in the field of study of the Tiwa Language.
- vii. Dimasa Language: Some preliminary work has also been done on the Dimasa language. V.C. Dundas's 'An Outline Grammar and Dictionary of the Kachari (Dimasa) Language' (1908) provides valuable discussion of the Language. Among the discussions on the Dimasa language, Nirupama Hagie is particularly noteworthy. His most notable work is 'Dimasa Bhasa aru Sanskriti' published by the Assam Sahitya Sabha (edited by Shailen Das).
- viii. Garo Language: The vocabulary of the Garo language has been discussed since the nineteenth century. Francis Hamilton's 'Account of the District or Zila of Rangpur' gives a list of about 1800 Gargo words. The first research book on the Gargo language spoken in Assam has been published by Praneeta Devi. His 'Gargo Bhasar Maulik bisar' (2005) (fundamentals of the Gargo language) is an important work on the subject. The book is the result of his 1997 research work 'A Descriptive Analysis of the Garo language'. The book covers the existence of the Gargo language, its dialects, standard forms, origin of words, script, etc. in the introduction in six chapters. Chapter two discusses the Phonetics of the Garo language, including five vowels and sixteenth distinct consonants, as well as the essential aspects of the phonetics of the language. Chapter Three and Four cover the morphological aspects of the language, discussion of Morpheme, Garo words and their classification, various forms of verbs etc. chapter five presents a syntactic analysis of the Gargo language. Chapter six briefly mentions the characteristics of the Gargo language as an appendix.

Like the Tibeto-Burmese languages, there has been little discussion of the Thai-chin languages, both collectively and independently. English Officers and missionaries pioneered the study of these Languages. Grierson's 'Linguistic Survey of India vol. III, Part II' contains the first discussion of the Thai-Chin languages. Similarly, 'Studies on Sino- Tibetan language' (1988) by Satyendra Narayan Goswami discusses the languages of Thai-chin branch. This book is a phonetics and morphological discussion of the Ahom, Phake and Khamti languages.

The first comprehensive discussion of the Thai-Chin languages of Assam is found in Bhimkanta Barua's 'Axomor Vasa' (1990). It analyses the phonetic, morphological and lexical aspects of the Thai- chin languages such as Tai- Khamti, Tai-Phake, Tai Aitan, Tai Khamyang and Tai - Turung.

These languages are also discussed in the book 'Axomiya aru Axomor Vasa Upovasa' by Upen Rabha Hakacham.

Among the languages of the Thai Chin branch, several grammar books and a few dictionaries have been published in Tai language. These include Nomal Chandra Gogoi's 'Assamese - English Dictionary' (1987), 'Grammar of Tai language'; 'Elementary Tai primer (1942) by Aimakyam Gohain; Leithon Mouk's 'Tai language Education' (2008); Puspa Gogoi's 'Tai Vasa aru Sahitya,' Tai Assamese English Dictionary' (1996), Aichenglun Weinkem's 'Tai Jatir Hohoshrabdar Jilingoni' (2009 etc. Biju Moran's 'Taiphake Vasa – Sanskriti' (2009) and 'Taiphak Dictionary' (2009) written about Taiphake language have been published. The first book is a descriptive study of the Taiphake language and presents its phonetic and morphological characteristics.

'The Tai Khamyang History' (2004) is an introductory book to the Tai Khamyang people published by the Tai Khamyang History Publishing Society.

Some research has also been done on the languages of the Thai-chin branch. These include 'Morphological Study of Tai Phake language' by Nomal Chandra Grogoi, 'Khamti people and language? A study by Prabin Saikia, 'Tai Turung language: a descriptive study' by Balin Handique, 'Tai Phake language: A Descriptive study' by Biju Moran.

FINDINGS

Recently, Researchers have received doctorate degree in Sino-Tibetan Languages of North East India, Especially Bodo, karbi, Mising, Rabha, Tsingphou, Garo, Turung, Khamti, Phake, Tai Ahom etc. Such research has not yet played the role it should have I played in the study of languages. The amount of work the work that is currently being done is in its infancy. There are many ethnic languages in Assam that are endangered due to bilingualism or Globalization. Therefore these languages need to be studied in detail.

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