



## Role of Students in Language Movement of Assam

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### ABSTRACT

Student movement has been recognized as a universal phenomenon in recent times as these movements have great impact on social, educational and political issues of the whole world. The fact is that such movements have become more organized, have well versed networking system. An analysis of student movements in both the developed and developing nations not only focuses on the students and their movements as a dynamic force for change, be it educational, social, economic or political but at times as 'a reactionary force' upholding traditional elements in the society as Altbach put it, and in so doing reflects the larger social system of which the student community is an integral part. As it is said that students of the world involve themselves to solve problems in their respective societies, their interest is not confined to the campus problems, it extends beyond the campus and includes the problems and issues of general social and political importance.

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### 1. Introduction

Student politics thus has two major areas of operation –'on campus' and 'off campus'- although quite often issues and involvements in one area impinge on the other. The student community of Assam always play active role in all problems of the state. They played a tremendous in the year 1960 and 1972 when the mother language of the state of Assam was in crisis. So in our paper we will try to make an in depth study about the role played the student community of Assam in Official Language Movement and Medium of Instruction Movement of 1972.

### 2. Meaning and Definitions of Student Movements:

It is difficult to locate a movement of students alone. They are to be found with various other sections of youth, middle strata and the rising intelligentsia. On several occasions, an organization cannot be labeled as belonging to the students alone; yet the belonging of the students association's activities are to be found in them. A sociological Approach defines student movement as "a deeper problem of social change." Cormack, for instance, states that any attempt to isolate the antecedent variables of student indiscipline must fit into the psycho cultural gestalt or sequence of life experiences extending to socio-economic changes, changes in structure of family, marital problems, religion and policies. In fact, Cormack symbolizes these changes that are taking place in India as "the struggle between Lakshmi and Saraswati". She believes that Indian's problem is not 'student indiscipline,' 'corruption or party politics"—it is the deeper problem of social change.

In stable societies, culture largely makes the man, and in societies undergoing social change, man largely moulds culture". Such an approach may be suitable to Indian conditions but at the same time, the historical roots would not be ignored. Moreover, it would not suffice to explain the rise of student movements in stable democracies like the UK and USA. According to Philip Altbach, Students movements are generated by an emotional feeling often associated with inter-generational conflicts. They also have positive goals. As young intellectuals, they assume that they have a special historical mission to achieve what the other generation has failed to achieve or to correct imperfections in their environments. Student's Movements are combinations of emotional responses and intellectual convictions. Moreover, the first generations of learners find it difficult to adjust to the new demands and values of

society unlike those who have the advantage of generations of an emotional background in families. Some scholars, however, do not share these observations on the generation gap. Studies on the values of students and those of their parents show that the students do not differ from their parents so far as values are concerned, except in matters of dress and sexual mores. The majority of the students accept the caste system, caste customs, family Student Movements norms, the subjugated status of women, hierarchy, economic structure etc. Divergence between the two is conspicuous in the sphere of aspirations.

Student movements in different parts of the world and at different times have been concerned with issues varying from educational problems to political issues. Though students often take up issues affecting their own narrow interests, sometimes they also take up causes, which do not directly affect them. Aileen Ross (1969) classifies student's protest into five types: (1) Political Protests; (2) Economic Protests; (3) Moral Protests; (4) Educational Protests; and (5) Protest for funs. These protests are often inter-related. The Educational Commission (1964) lists some of the factors related to the education system responsible for so-called "student indiscipline". They include: (1) Mechanical and unsatisfactory nature of many curricular programs; (2) Totally inadequate facilities for teaching and learning in many of the educational institutions; (3) Poor students – teachers – contacts; (4) Inefficiency and lack of scholarship on the part of many teachers and their failure to interest themselves in the student's problems; (5) Absence of imagination and tact combined with firmness on the part of institutions; and (6) Prevalence of teacher's politics in some colleges and universities. As a result of mass education there is lack of teacher– taught contact. As Grayson L. Krick effectively puts it, "students proclaim that they are little more than unit in an anonymous mass, numbers on a computer tape, and to the Professor faceless beings in a lecture hall. They insist that they have no opportunity to develop meaningful personal relationship with professors who are indifferent to their needs and problems."

Margaret L. Cormack has also dealt with the causes of student unrest in detail. She suggests three inter-related areas of student unrest in India, namely, political-structural, professional and socio-psychological. Under the first, she includes favouritism, regionalism, castism and political affiliation as the bases of appointment and promotion in the institutions of higher education and involvement of the faculty and students in party politics. Under the second, she examines faculty administration - faculty relations and faculty - student relations. Under the socio – psychological area are such factors as the role of parents, lack of association between faculty and students, bad conditions in most of the hostels, lack of proper student government, etc. Edward Shill's analysis brings to light several sources of student unrest and indiscipline-

A book published by Ministry of Education in 1954 identifies the cause of student unrest mainly as the destruction of old values and failures to create a new set of values. Special factors contributing to student dissatisfaction and indiscipline in the country were then noted as loss of leadership of teachers, growth of economic difficulties, defects in the system of education and general decline in idealism. Elaborating the cause of student unrest, Humayun Kabir says that, rapid increase in the number of students, many of whom were drawn from socio-economic strata that could not meet their needs, intensified the economic struggle and enhanced the feeling of financial insecurity resulting in unrest. He points out that authoritarian character of education was one reason for indiscipline

In Assam also students of Gauhati University, Dibrugarh University and Assam University have been involved in various movements of Assam since independence. Bhasa Andolan (Language Movement) of 1960, Tell Andolan (Oil Movement) and finally the Bideshi Bahiskar Andolan (Foreigners Movement) known popularly as Assam Movement of 1979 are some of the best examples in this regard.

Although various causes are identified as the causes of student indiscipline in India, yet the most vital cause of student unrest or indiscipline is the interference of political parties in educational institutions, which is responsible for creating lawlessness in the institutions. Realizing the importance of student power, political parties attempt to penetrate,

organize, mobilize and recruit students as a social category and a political class by-taking an interest in student's demands and grievances and by establishing or patronizing student organizations and leaders. There seems to have been keen competition among the political parties to draw cadres or workers from among the students. Every political party has its student wing and there are reports that in some universities student politicians regularly receive money from political parties. In India at present Indian National Congress has its student wing named National Students Union of India (NSUI), Bharatiya Janata Party has its student wing known as Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), Student Federation of India (SFI) are the students wings of Communist party of India. These political parties have affected greatly student indiscipline.

### 3. Objectives of The Study

The main objective of our study is to find out how the students of Assam played an active role while their mother language was in crisis.

### 4. Methodology

This paper is mainly a descriptive one; hence the paper is mainly based on secondary data. Data will be collected from various sources of libraries, newspapers, journals, booklets etc. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied for the data analysis.

#### 4.1 The Official Language Movement of 1960

Though the Official Language Movement in Assam was started formally in 1960 but it can be said that the movement had begun after the very next day of India's independence. The Assam Jatiya Mahasabha and the Asomiya Sangha took a leading role in this regard. The Assam Jatiya Mahasabha was quite vocal and demanded that Assamese should be recognised as the state language and the medium of Instruction. A memorandum was submitted to Gopinath Bordoloi, the then Chief Minister of Assam by Ambikagiri Roy Choudhary, the president of the Mahasabha, to concede the persistent demands of the Association. 'Assam for Assamese' was the soul slogan of their organization. Chandra Kanta Phukon, President of Asomiya Sangha, Nagaon, also pleaded for recognition of Assamese as the state language.

After independence, Assamese was recognized as one of the languages in the VIIIth Schedule of the constitution. But controversy started over the declaration of Assamese as the state language due to the fact that Assam is a multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural state of North-East India. So, it was very difficult to declare Assamese as the state official language by the state Government without considering the consent of the other major communities of the state. Being the majority in the state the Assamese people and other nationalist organization of Assam pressurized the Assam Government to declare Assamese as the state official language. This proposal began agitating the people's mind in the Brahmaputra valley, in Cachar and the Hill districts for some time prior to the outbreak of July 4, 1960.

Again, it can be said that the Official Language Movement of 1960 was a direct sequel to the appointment of the state's Re-Organization Committee (S.R.C) in 1955 and dates back to the agitation for adoption of Assamese as the official language in 1950.

The Assam Sahitya Sabha - a non-political literary organization of Assamese people, had submitted two resolutions in 1950 and 1959 and demanded that Assamese must be declared as the official language within 1960. Though this first demand was placed before the government in 1950 but the government had not given any importance to it. Therefore, again in 1959 at Nagaon conference, the Sabha had resolved that Assamese must be declared as the official language within 1960. Placing this the Sabha cleared that this demand was a people's demand, hence, no harm and injustices will be made to non-Assamese and to the brothers living in the hill areas of

Assam. Six months later (Sept. 9, 1959) a 'state Language Day' was observed throughout Assam and resolutions were also adopted at meetings. Processions were also taken out to pressurise the government to this effect. Gradually, the official language movement got momentum in Assam.

Initially started as an elite movement by Assam Sahitya Sabha, the official Language movement spearheaded by the student community comprising All Assam Students' Federation (under the banner of the Students' Association of Guwahati). The All Assam Students Association and the Assam Students' Federation with 'Assam for Assamese', as its ideology, the leadership of the movement demanded that Assamese be made the official language in the state. Therefore, like other previous movements of Assam, whether the freedom struggle of India or after India's independence, the student community of Assam once again jumped into the official language movement with the same spirit to achieve its goal and was ready to sacrifice everything it needed.

It has already been mentioned that the student community of Assam had played a tremendous role in the popularisation of this movement among the people of Assam and like Sahitya Sabha, the newly formed All Assam Students' Association (Sept. 22, 1959) submitted a memorandum to the then Chief Minister of Assam through a deputation led by Bhuban Talukdar and Bhubneswar Bezbaruah on March 22, 1960 demanding declaration of Assamese as the state language. Language Movement gradually got intensified in Assam and a series of protest meetings and processions were organised to fulfill the demand of the people. On March 26, the local people and the students organised a public meeting at Borpeta and demanded the recognition and implementation of Assamese as official language by Assam Legislative Assembly within 1960. The students went on a strike and paraded the roads of the main town with slogans in demand of the declaration of Assamese as the state official language. Guwahati Students' Federation also organised a public meeting on April 2, which criticized bitterly the Chief Minister's stand on the issue and demanded immediate declaration of Assamese as the official language. Resolution was also adopted to form a Student Action Committee consisting representatives of different student organizations of Assam to decide the future course of action, if Assamese was not declared as the state language. It is specially to be mentioned that strong demand was also placed before Jawaharlal Nehru, the then P.M. of India by a student body when he visited Gauhati University on April 17, 1960, to declare Assamese as the state official language immediately.

As against this, the non-Assamese people of the state, especially the Bengalis were under tremendous pressure and fear psychosis thinking that if Assamese be implemented as the state official language they would be deprived from getting opportunities in the government structure mainly in the appointment in the government jobs. Finally, this fear exposed by community when the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee passed a resolution on April 22 demanding the implementation of Assamese as the official language of the state.

Reacting strongly to the demand of the Assamese community to make Assamese as the state official language, the minorities especially the Bengalis took out a procession in Shillong on May 21, 1960. The processionists shouted anti-APCC and provocative slogans against the Assamese community. One of the slogans was 'Assamese is a donkey's language' shouted by the processionists. The situation of Assam became very tense after the Shillong procession of May 21 when the processionists, mainly the Bengalis hit the heart of the sentiments and emotions of the Assamese community commenting their language as the donkey's language. At Guwahati and elsewhere in Assam, the Student's Federation (a leftist organization) and other organizations protested against the Shillong procession and subsequent minority meetings.

A meeting of Dibrugarh Branch of Assam Chatra Sanmilian was held on May 29 and adopted resolution demanding the implementation of Assamese as the official language. On the same day a deputation of local students led by Haren Dev Goswami, (G.U./Law) and Dilip Kakoti, Union Secretary, Cotton College, met the Chief Minister and submitted a memorandum demanding strong action against the processionist who shouted anti-Assamese slogan on

May 21. It was observed that the students were the main force who popularised the official language movement in Assam organising meetings and processions throughout the state. Meetings were held at Sibsagar on June 3 and at Darang on June 2. A complete hartal was organised by the students of Nagaon on June 2 and similarly the students of North Lakhimpur went on strike on June 8 in protest against the language issue. Demonstration was organised by students of Golaghat on June 9, with bringing out a procession, hartal, picketing in offices, schools, Railway etc., paralysed the normal life of the people, as a mark of protest against the anti-Assamese propaganda in Assam. This was followed by processions and meetings at Dibrugarh on 11 June, Khowang on June 13, Borbarua on June 13, Maran on June 11, Nagaon on June 11. It is important to note that at Dibrugarh and Jorhat, a student rally was taken out consisting more than 10,000 students on June 13, 1960, which condemned the slogan shouted at Shillong and demanded that Assamese must be implemented as the official language immediately. The counter-slogan against the Bengalis was followed on June 18 at Mariani. It is worth mentioning that in the month of June a total 30 meetings were held at Sibsagar, 12 in Goalpara, 4 in Darrang, 11 in Nagaon and 30 in Lakhimpur condemning Shillong procession and demanding the making of Assamese as the state official language.

Clashes and conflicts started between the Assamese community and the Bengali speaking people in different parts of Assam during the movement. It has already been mentioned that the Bengalis had feared if Assamese be made the official language they would be deprived from the all government opportunities, including government job etc. And finally, they found that their doubt was going to be true when Mr. Chaliha, the then C.M. of Assam declared on June 23 that the government is planning to introduce a Bill in the Assembly on the line of the A.P.C.C. resolution.

The situation became very tense when assault and counter assault between the two communities took place on 29 and 30 June. It can be said that the Bengali papers were also responsible for creating this situation through their unauthentic writings which provoked the Bengalis against the Assamese terming the movement as the "Bengali Kheda movement" (Drive away Bengalis). Hence, at Guwahati the Calcutta based papers were burnt by the agitationists on June 29. Seeing the worse situation, the administration imposed curfew under section 144 criminal procedure code. The Post-Graduate Students Union of Gauhati University had requested the Chief Minister of Assam through a telegram on July 1 requesting him to convene an emergency Assembly session to declare Assamese as the state official language. To protest the demand made by the Assamese people a conference was also organised at Silchar by the Bengali speaking people on July 3 to review the situation.

Clash between the Assamese and non-Assamese speaking people continued. While Assamese speaking people were pressurizing the government to recognise Assamese as the official language of the state, on the other hand, the non-Assamese people were busy with their propaganda to oppose it. On June 21, 1960, the Mizo students led by Lalzar Liana and others carried out a procession showing dissatisfaction with Assam government while the Garo students held a meeting on July 1 at Benefa-Atbla (Tura) expressing their determination to foil the declaration of Assamese as the state language. It was observed that gradually the situation of Assam worsened and the relationship between the Assamese speaking and the non-Assamese people deteriorated and widened. The supporters of the movement, especially the students were aware of the fact that the Bengalis were the main who opposed the implementation of Assamese as the official language. Hence, they had taken some steps to stop the activities of the Bengalis which they thought was against their movement. On July 1, the students of Digboi requested the Manager of Jashoda Talkie, to stop screening a Bengali picture and a Hindi picture was screened in its place, while a batch of students compelled some Bengali businessman of North Lakhimpur to remove Bengali signboards. On July 2, students damaged some Bengali signboards and burnt some Bengali calendars at Laluk and Bihpuria. The police firing on the Cotton College boarders on July 4, 1960 was the climax of the language movement, in which Ranjit Borpujari was killed and other six were injured. This incident was condemned by all concerns of people. The Secretary

of Cotton College Teachers' Association in a public statement condemned the police action in the following manner, "Never in the history of Cotton College, not even in the days of British rule, was such an unholy outrage committed in the holy name of law and order and liberty of the student community of Assam". R.B. Pabbi, the then S.P. was the main culprit who created tension among the people during the period of the movement. He was also the culprit in the murder case of Ranjit Borpujari and was also involved in the Dulal Baruah, General Secretary, PGSU, arrest case on May 22. He produced a paper containing several allegations against Dulal Baruah and suggested that he be expelled from the University. At this Pabbi shouted, "I don't mind shooting fifty students if necessary to curb the students' indiscipline."

A circular which was issued by the Education Department of Assam to all Inspector and Deputy Inspectors of Schools directing them to take immediate steps to make Assamese as the compulsory medium of instruction in all the schools of Assam valley also helped widening the rift between the two communities. The circular also added that in places where the spoken language is used as medium for primary education, Assamese would be taught as the effort of the government to replace Bengali in course of time in all those schools where Bengali was the soul medium of Instruction. It is to be noted that the Bengali Muslims and the migrant labourers were seen generally admitted in to the Assamese schools. But the Bengali Hindus, on the other hands, tried continuously to have their schools with Bengali medium. Therefore, the Bengalis protested the government decision and placed their voice with an organized effort before the Govt. called Cachar District Committee. "Assam Bengal Association" was another Association which voiced on the same tone when it declared that Bengalis were the majority in Assam and it would not take long time to have Bengalis as an accepted state language of Assam." Going a further step ahead the Bengalis had complained it to Sardar Patel and tried to take away the Assam Government to implement such an order in their schools and also requested to provide employment facilities to the employees hailing from Syhlet. We have repeatedly been mentioned above that the Bengalis of Assam were under the fear psychosis that the Assamese community had planned to drive them out of Assam, hence, they tried their best to foil the imposition of Assamese as the state official language in Assam. Again, to prove the intention of the Assamese people against the Bengalis, they collected some publications namely 'Matikar and Ashirwar' which were the publications of short stories. According to the Bengalis, 'These books and some hand bills had not only prepared ground for driving out the Bengalis but had also laid down the techniques. Seeing the increasing clash between the Assamese and the non-Assamese people, mainly the Bengalis and the involvement of the students in the issue largely, the government of Assam issued a circular on August 30, 1960, which curtailed the democratic rights of the students. Involvement of students in procession and meeting were prohibited. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was also against student involvement in the official language movement which was clearly reflected in his speech delivered at Guwahati on July 18. Nehru referred to the role of students in the language agitation and wondered whether they realised the consequences of their actions. He also stated that the country's energies were now geared to step up economic prosperity and Assam's problems had to be always considered in this perspective. As regards the death of Ranjit Borpujari, Nehru said, "He was blameless. It is a matter of sorrow." It is worth mentioning that atrocities on students continued after the government order and on Sept. 6, Dulal Baruah, General Secretary, P.G.S.U of Gauhati University and the President of Central Steering Committee was arrested under the Prevention Detention Act on the charge of assault and petty robbery. Not only Assamese but eleven Bengali students were also killed in this movement at Hailakandi on June 1961 at police firing.

It was observed that later the students of Assam mainly concentrated their eyes on the killer of Ranjit Borpujari demanding stern action against Mr. B. R. Pabbi, gradually sidetracked their attention from the movement. An emergency meeting of Gauhati Students Action Committee was held on July 23, 1961 at Cotton College which demanded that the Government of Assam should take the necessary action for the prosecution of B.R. Pabbi by

August 7, 1961, failing which the student would start direct action from August 10. Public meetings, strikes, hartals were organised in support of their movement. They were also ready to resort to satyagraha if their demand was not considered. The meeting was also opposed to Shastri's 8-point formula regarding the language problem. To prevent the students from their declared programme of action the I.G.P issued a circular to all police officers directing the officer-in-charge of the various circles to 'particularly keep watch over the students, the movement of students leaders and agitators from Gauhati to place within their jurisdiction.' It was also observed that the official language movement of Assam created a worse situation in the state which had not been experienced by the people of Assam since Independence. The question about the implementation of Assamese as the official language was placed by Mr. Hareswar Goswami, the leader of the opposition, on the floor of the Legislative Assembly though the demand had been placed before the government by several renowned organizations of Assam, mainly by Assam Sahitya Sabha. Mr. Bimala Pd. Chaliha, the then C.M. replied to this question on March 6, 1960. Though there was peace among the people and there was no much opposition from organizations if implemented Assamese as the state official language except from All-party Hill Leaders Conference and All Tribal Organizations, but after listening to the comment made by Mr. Chaliha as a leader of liberal mind the situation of Assam changed totally with communal forces rose up to foil the demand of the Assamese people to make Assamese the state official language. Bimala Prasad Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam stated that the government must wait to make Assamese official language till the demand is not forwarded by the non-Assamese people of Assam. The rift between the Assamese speaking and the Bengalis were widened after the comment passed by the Chief Minister of Assam and they attacked each other when they got chances. Noted writer of Assam Surya Bora had been killed brutally at Siliguri during those days by some unidentified miscreants. The life of the opposition leader, Hareswar Goswami also fell in danger but he could not be killed.

Finally, feeling tremendous pressure from the people of Assam, the Government of Assam passed the Official Language Bill in the Assembly on October 17, 1960. The act provided that 'Assamese shall be used for all or any of the official purposes of the state of Assam.' Further the act provided that the English language so long as the use thereof is permissible and thereafter Hindi in place of English, shall also be used for such official purpose of the Secretariat and the offices of the Heads of the departments of the state Government (the Assam Official Language Act, 1960). The Act was again amended on 7 October 1961.

It can be said in the conclusion that though the Official Language Bill was passed to make Assamese the official language but the problem had not been permanently solved. Hence, the students of Assam had to jump again into another movement called Medium of Instruction Movement began in the year 1972 which was the off-spring of the Official Language Movement of Assam.

#### 4.2 Medium of Instruction Movement of 1972

Medium of Instruction movement was another big issue which has created a tremendous storm in the educational, social and political scenario of Assam in 1972 where the student community of Assam involved themselves actively to achieve the desired goal of the movement as like that of the previous instances of movement. Again, it can be said that though the Assam government passed the Official Language Bill in 1960 to make Assamese the official language of the state but the language problem of Assam had not been permanently solved and this movement can be regarded also as the off-spring of the language movement of 1960.

It has already been mentioned in our previous sub-chapter on Official Language movement of 1960 that the Constitution of India had recognised Assamese as one of the 14 constitutional languages in the VIIIth Schedule of the constitution. And, after a mass movement on the state official language the Government of Assam had also passed the State Official Language Bill on 1960. Therefore, the people of Assam, especially the students requested the university authority and the government of Assam to introduce Assamese as the medium of instruction in the higher

educational institutions on the basis of recommendations made by Radha Krishanan Committee of 1948 and the Kothari Committee of 1964-66. These committees had recommended that regional languages should replace English as medium of instruction in the universities. Though normalcy prevailed at first and the opinions of the people was in favour of the demand but after a statement given by Chief Minister of Assam on the issue at Cachar Political Conference held at Ramkrishna Nagar, Cachar on June 2, 1972 and also the decision taken by the Academic Council of Gauhati University on June 6, 1972, had changed the situation completely from normal to a terrible one and hopelessly energized the students of Assam again in to action.

The statement which created tremendous resentment among the people of Assam after it had commented by Mr. Sarat Ch. Singha, the then Chief Minister of Assam was that Bengali would be made one of the medium of instruction in the colleges of Gauhati University. On the other hand, the decision of the Academic Council was that Assamese would be the medium of instruction in the university but students could write their examinations in either Assamese, Bengali, English or Hindi. The student community and the intelligentsia of Assam, mainly in the Brahmaputra valley expressed their deep dissatisfaction on the comment and the decision. They considered that if Bengali language will get preference, the others be given the same privilege then it will lead to the formulation of multi-lingual process. Thus, according to them, it will bring complexity in the process. On the other hand, they criticised the decision of the Academic Council as bring Bengali and Hindi at par with Assamese. So both the statement of Chief Minister and the Council had again brought the student community in the forefront.

A meeting of the students was held at Gauhati University on June 3, 1972 which condemned the statement of the Chief Minister. Another meeting was also held at Gauhati University under the chairmanship of Ananda Bormudoi. The meeting expressed strong resentment over the 'hasty' decision of the Academic Council. A procession was taken out and the effigy of the Academic Council was burnt down to pressurize the Council to reverse its decision. They also vowed to finish the three-language formula at any cost. To achieve their goals, two committees namely 'The Action Committee and the Disciplinary Action Committee were formed to smoothly conduct of the movement.

Gradually the medium of instruction movement got momentum and on June 8, 1972, seven students were arrested and section 144 was imposed by District Magistrate of Kamrup to bring the tense situation under control. Picketing launched by students had paralyzed totally the administration of Gauhati University. The following day on June 9, all the students boycotted their classes, took out a procession to Church Field and organised a meeting which strongly condemned the decision of the council.

It is worth mentioning that feeling tremendous pressure from the public specially from the students, the Academic Council finally decided to withdraw its decision and accordingly a meeting was held for the purpose on June 12. The students were gathered outside the meeting hall when the meeting was going on to heard the decision of the meeting which would bring victory for the students' power and for their oneness. They congratulated each other and in the evening there was illumination in the university campus. The meeting had finally withdrawn its decision and made the Assamese as the medium of instruction in the colleges under the jurisdiction of Gauhati University.

But it was also observed that the rift started again between the Assamese community and the Bengali speaking people in this movement as was witnessed in the previous official language movement of 1960. The rift was clearly visible when the Governing Body of Gurucharan College of Silchar (Cachar) along with three other colleges affiliated to Gauhati University petitioned the Supreme Court as the University's decision restricting the medium only to Assamese violated Article 30 of the Indian Constitution related to the linguistic minorities. Therefore, they appealed that the decision of the Gauhati University should be restored by the Apex Court.



On the other hand, The All Assam Students Union (AASU) appealed to the student of Assam to observe September 15, 1972 as the 'Demand Day' to introduce Assamese as the medium of instruction. This clarion call of AASU was responded all over Assam except some Bengali dominated areas such as Hojai, Lanka, Silchar and Karimganj etc.

Further one step ahead the AASU declared a 'Assam Bandh' call on October 5 protesting against the decision which was taken by Assam Legislative Assembly to establish a university at Cachar on September 23, 1972. They strongly opposed this move of the Assam Legislative Assembly to attempt to separate Cachar from the jurisdiction of Gauhati University and introduction of Bengali as the medium of instruction which would convert Assam in to a bi-lingual state.

Though, the Assam bandh was observed peacefully in most of the places of Assam but tragic incident had also been reported where students had been killed brutally by enraged people in some place in the clash occurred between rival groups in different parts of Assam. Moizamul Hague, a student leader of Darrang district, who visited Kharupetia area near Mangaldoi with some of his colleagues to enquire the cause after receiving the news that the bandh had failed totally in the area. A tragic incident had occurred in the form of a clash between two rival groups on the day where Haque had sustained serious injury and breathed his last at Gauhati Medical College. Another tragic incident took place on October 7, when the Nagaon District Students Union called to observe October 7 as the 'Condolence Day.' The student body of the district made full preparation to make the programme a success and sent instructions to all its branches regarding their programme on October 6, 1972. Unfortunately, the district committee received information from Hojai that the condolence day could not be observed at Hojai due to the strong opposition of Bengali student. Finally, the district committee had decided to send some of its member to Hojai to successfully observe the day. Though, there was strong protest from the Bengali students but the programme was carried out. Anil Bora, a leader of the student body of the district was reported missing from 7 October to 16 October. A headless body was found by the Dimow river and it was finally confirmed by the inquiry committee headed by Justice M.C. Pathak of Gauhati High Court that the body found was the body of Anil Bora.

The situation of Assam became very tense and worsened following the brutal killing of the two students leaders. Finally, the central Government had intervened over the matter and sent F.A. Ahmed, a Cabinet Rank Minister to Assam on October 14, 1972, to review the grim situation of Assam. Mr. Jagjivan Ram, the Defence Minister of India and Ram Nivas Mirdha also visited Assam to make an on-spot assessment of the situation on the last week of October, 1972. Reviewing the grim situation of Assam, Mr. Mirdha suggested that English should continue for an indefinite period and also suggested to drop the resolution adopted in the Assam Legislative Assembly. But his suggestion was rejected by the people of Cachar. At the same time the Supreme Court in a verdict rejected the appeal made by the Governing Bodies of some colleges of Silchar and Hojai and declared that the resolution passed by the Academic Council of Guwahati University was constitutionally valid.

The Chief Minister of Assam also with positive motive to solve the burning problem invited AASU to talk with the Government on the matter and declared that the resolution adopted by the State Legislative Assembly on the basis of Academic Council's resolution would be implemented. But they rejected the Chief Minister's talk offer which did not satisfy them and the AASU called a satyagraha programme from 6 to 16 November to defy the round of talks with the Congress President Shankar Dayal Sarma who arrived in the city on November 2.

The medium of instruction movement finally came to an end on November 12, 1972 when the AASU decided to suspend it after the announcement made by Sarat Ch. Sinha, the then Chief Minister of Assam on November 11 that the government of Assam finally accepted the Academic Council's resolution and rejected the Assembly's resolution of September 23 and it would be dropped in the next session of the Assembly. This was followed by Cachar

Gana Sangram Parishad due to an appeal made by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India on November 7 when she visited Assam to inaugurate the session of the North Eastern Council. It is observed that though the objectives of the medium of instruction movement was comparatively narrow to the official language movement of 1960 but this movement had also tremendous effect on the Assamese society, especially the student community of Assam. To love one's own language is a basic instinct and its related with the identity and emotion of a community. Hence, the Assamese people wanted to see their mother tongue as the medium in the higher educational institutions. On the other hand, the Bengalis which is also regarded a large minority community of Assam vehemently opposed it seeing the future to be related to its identity crisis and to fear the loss of language hegemony they enjoyed since long.

### 5. Conclusion:

It can also be said that the impact of language movement which had started in Assam quickly after independence of India which was thought to be finally ended with the medium of instruction movement of Assam in 1972 did not end. Its impact was also seen in the famous Assam movement of 1979-85. At present, definition of 'Assamese' given by various organization of Assam relating to the Sixth Schedule of the constitution is seen mostly influenced by the language movement of 1960 and 1972.

Finally, we can say that to bring the success to these movements the role played by the student community of Assam was notable and without whose active participation it would be difficult for the people of Assam to see their mother tongue as the state official language and as medium of instruction in the higher educational institutions today.

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