

Biodiversity, language and logical participation of the state

Language is ceaselessly constructed; it exists, and is also transformed, depending on the relationship of biodiversity, and by protecting that relationship. So far, the initiatives and participation of the state regarding the issues of language and biodiversity were not distinctively different from the corporate controlled male chauvinist attitudes. On the one hand, right to mother language is recognised, while on the other, not enough initiatives are taken to protect the matrilineal elements and resources that construct that mother language. When a language loses its matrilineal elements, it can no longer be called a mother language. So, state initiative is an imperative, as the linguistic space and structure is dependent on the conservation of biodiversity.

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LANGUAGE is no unilateral, linear medium. Because of the ways of expression, production of meaning and the discursive space it creates, language is represented as a global phenomenon. Whether it is mainstream or subaltern, it is always related to the power structure. When Bengali middleclass people go to Shaheed Minar bare footed on the morning of Ekushey February, or when the United Nations declares it International Mother Language Day, its historical multiplicity becomes more evident. How a language spreads, or how it is constructed, or how it exists, attracts our attention.

It is often said that many languages are on the verge of extinction/are lost forever. But can any language be lost forever? What does this suppression of language indicate? Does any institutional aggression or hegemony become the language suppressing the many faces of language?

Raising these questions within the language discourse, and searching for a solution, is very important for political decision-making regarding language. As we have seen, a language does not become extinct for nothing, without any external intervention. A language faces such a fate when the elements and conditions in which it is constructed, and functions, are altered. In this process, a language loses its own distinctive features and becomes a concept of a dominant linguistic scheme/hegemony.

In that altered reality, the altered/new language structure is also presented as a "new" formation of that language. We are told that it is an inevitable process of linguistic change. "Why should a language survive when it does not deserve to be so worthy?" (Survival of the fittest!). In this article we want to consider the relationship between language, biodiversity and the participation of the state. It is an important issue as it is directly related to the sovereignty of the state and the continued existence of the people and institutional framework of the state.

Language grows around the surrounding ecology and ecosystem -- language is a part of ecologi-

cal systems and is diffused around local biodiversity. It is the philosophical statement of this delta landscape. We do not want this discourse to be ethnocentric. But we present a platform of relationship between the languages people use and the biodiversity of this landscape.

Once Mandis used to live in big trees of ha.chek(hill/mountain). Then rurupa kokothokopa (procupine) one day asked them: "Can't you build houses?" Balfong nokma chipong rachcha (crab of mountain streams) first showed the way. Then came me.npa chekshena (sal forest insect) and taught them the technique of making bamboo sheds. Saramma dusinem (sal forest bird) showed the way of living in that house.

Then Mandis built their own houses and started to live in them, in Mandi kusuk (language) it is called nokmandi. These ideas no longer exist in Mandi kusuk of Madhupur sal forest. As there is no sal forest, no nokmandi now, ideas like rurupa kokothokopa, me.npa chekshena, saramma dusinem have also disappeared.

ADB and other donor agencies have imported "development" agendas, and corporate companies have expanded their business in Madhupur. The Sal forest has undergone a total transformation under National Park/eco park projects and colonial forest laws(1927). In this changing situation, the condition of the Mandi language and of oppressed Mandi life under this transformation is never taken into consideration in any institutional framework or policy reform processes related to forest biodiversity conservation, indigenous people's rights, and development.

In today's Mandi linguistic usage, many terms related to local biodiversity are no longer used, as the lives the terms denote are no longer there -- they have disappeared or become extinct. Many words like sarengma rongthamben and dembra jagedong are used no longer in Mandi kusuk (language). Instead, new words and ideas like BR-29, BR-11, Pajam, IRRI have replaced them. The reason is that sarengma rongthamben and dembra jagedong(local jhum rice), all rice varieties, have disappeared

from Mandi lands.

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A large part of the forestland was burnt in the flames, destroying the ecological balance of the forest. In 2004, I went there to make a list of trees again. This time I found that the new generation adolescents were no longer using the terms that describe or name the trees that disappeared from the area after the blowout. When I name a few which I could not find the second time but were there during my first survey, they said that they had not heard most of these names.

Then I discussed with the elders the linguistic changes within the Khasi (Mankhomer language family) and Kokborok (Tibetan-Berman family) languages of the locality. They told me that nobody remembers the names of trees that are no longer there. Libang, paichi boduk, kaichi boduk, masua phai, sokshuma, abithi were burned to ashes by the fire, and have become extinct in these villages. These names have gradually disappeared from the language commonly used by new generation adolescent Tripurites. Likewise, kraporda, kraseya, tiarman, kraking, chiral are not commonly used in Khasi language of the new generation.

Changes in local biodiversity directly influence the patterns of language structure. So far we have always overlooked this relationship in development initiatives and institutional policy processes regarding language. Destroying biodiversity is also destroying one's own language. Language is built around local biodiversity. When a language loses its matrilineal elements, it is bound to change in its matrilineal formation.

Once, in the rivers like Jadukata, Rokti, Kimao Maimadi (Nita), Simsang (Someshwari) that flow from mountain streams of northeastern Sunamganj-Netrokona near the borders of Meghalaya,

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