



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI  
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Name of the Student : SHUBHALIKHA BORUAH  
Roll Number : 166141104  
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Name of Thesis Supervisor(s) : DR MITHILESH KUMAR JHA  
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The present study explores the intricate relationship between language, politics, and the construction of the modern Assamese identity. It aims to understand the making of modern Assamese identity by examining various linguistic movements in Assam that have occurred since Independence. It focuses on themes such as Nationalism, demands for autonomy from different linguistic communities, and the issue of indigeneity. By examining these interconnected topics, the study aims to understand the complexities inherent in making modern Assamese identity.

This study focuses on qualitative research methodology. The thesis has five chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter of the thesis contains the research problem, a section on a literature review, research questions, objectives, and methodology employed in this study. The second chapter of the thesis highlights the history of the construction of modern Assamese identity. The third chapter of the thesis explains the construction of modern Assamese identity during the language movements of the state of Assam in 1960 and 1972. The fourth and fifth chapters of the thesis deal with the construction of Assamese identity in the recent phase, especially during and after the signing of the *Assam accord* and surrounding the issues of the NRC and CAA.

The thesis contends that the notion of a language-centric modern Assamese identity was constructed during the colonial period and faced numerous internal and external challenges. It recognizes the significance of print media, particularly in the vernacular sphere, and the contributions of censuses and intellectuals in shaping a language-based modern Assamese identity during the colonial era. It argues that language also served as a foundation for forming Assamese identity in post-independence Assam. The thesis has examined how, following Independence, two notable advancements in language politics in Assam have played an essential role in forming the language-centric Assamese identity. The initial development pertains to the deliberate endeavour of the immigrant Muslim community to reinstate Assamese as their 'mother tongue' in census operations. However, the other one is the struggle for the recognition of separate identity and language by sections of the tribal population, which were once considered to be a part of Assamese identity. In addition, the thesis emphasizes how, in the recent phase, the construction of Assamese identity has been dominated mainly by the issues of indigeneity and religion. The thesis argues that the decline of Assamese speakers in recent census operations has redirected widespread attention in the state towards the immigrant Muslim community. It concludes that the prevailing political environment also fosters the construction of an Assamese identity, making religion one of its significant markers shifting its focus on language. Despite this, language plays a vital role in defining Assamese identity.