

DEPICTING THE MARGINALIZATION AND EXCRUCIATING PANGS OF CHAKMA TRIBES IN TRIPURA

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Abstract:

India is the habitation of almost half the tribal population of the world. Tribals are characterized by their unique culture, primitive traits and socio-economic backwardness. Though the northeast Indian Tribals are a heterogeneous group, most of them remain at the lowest stratum of society due to various factors like geographical and cultural isolation, low levels of literary, primitive occupation, extreme levels of poverty, lack of proper education, and lack of technical facilities. One such indigenous and marginalized tribe is Chakma, the fourth largest tribal group in Tripura. Chakmas hold strong ethnic affinities to Tibeto-Burman groups in northeast India. Due to the language transmission in the past to consolidate power among the tribes, they adopted an Indo-Aryan language, Chakma, which is vastly related to the Chittagoian dialect of Bengali, predominant near the areas where they live. These Chakma people have been marginalized for many ages and their social identity faces a peculiar condition. They have been dispatched from their land, along with losing their primitive culture. Though scheduled Tribes are accorded special status under the fifth/sixth schedules of the Indian constitution, their situation on the whole remains unsatisfactory. This paper is an attempt to portrait the glimpses of their marginalization and excruciating pangs in Tripura.

Keywords: Tribal, Heterogeneous, Chakma, Tripura, Stratum, Indigenous, Chittagoian, Marginalization, excruciating pangs

Introduction:

Generally marginalization means a process where a group of people are made insignificant and powerless in a certain society. It depicts the naked actions or tendencies of human societies where mainstream community people excludes i. e, marginalizes those whom they think undesirable or without useful entity. These people, who are marginalized, form a 'Group' for their preservation and integration are known as marginalized. This restricts their opportunities and means for upliftment. Peter Leonard defines marginalization as "... being outside the mainstream of productive activity and or social reproductive activity. (Saksena, 14)

"Marginalization is both a condition and a process that prevents individuals and groups from full participation in social, economic and political life enjoyed by the wider society. (<http://elliott.gwu.edu>). In this context we can say that Chakma Tribes are the burning epitome of marginalization.

HISTORY OF CHAKMAS:

The Chakmas are one of the important tribe among the 19th schedule tribes in Tripura. They belong to Indo-Bangla subcontinent residing mostly in Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh; Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in India and Burma. They professed Buddhism since long and speak a dialect belong to the Indo-Aryan family. But on the basis of their physiognomical features and anthropologists, it appears that they belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of Mongolian race. They are known differently to different people for example, Thek, Tsek, Chek or Kyoorchha by the Burmese; Tuithek (pronounced Tuichek) by the Kukis; Takam (pronounced Chakam) by the modern Mizos (S.P.Talukdar, 58).

DISCRIMINATION AND EXPLOITATION AGAINST CHAKMAS:

There is no doubt to say that one of the most distinctive characteristic of India is its social system. It has been driven by casteism. It has partially been believed by the high caste Brahmins that casteism has saved Hinduism from disintegration. Therefore, they have preached the proletarian and the tribals that they are specially created by Brahma to rule over them. Due to this, they have divided the whole social system with four sections -Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The last section is called Dalit in which Chakmas belong to. Historically, they have been considered untouchables, isolated from the rest of society by the caste system. Therefore, they have to do menial works for their livelihood such as jhuming, terrace cultivation, weaving, handicrafts, livestock farming, carpentry, blacksmithing, pottery, etc.

These marginal people are forced to live in the most insanitary conditions with limited access to public health and sanitation amongst open sewers and open-air toilets. They live their life beyond the margins of social, economic, political, and cultural sphere. The Marxist and Communist Antonio Gramsci, an Italian theorist first introduces the pathetic condition of these marginal people in which he refers to the subordinate status of people who are scattered on the basis of class, caste, gender, economy, power, and social status from the rest of the society. Earlier it was applied as negative senses. But since the 1970s, it has decentred the logo and has begun to touch beyond the boundary which has marked the wretchedness state of the colonized people of the Indian subcontinent. But by the 1980s, the space and perspective of it have enlarged in which it refers to the non western peoples and their relationship with the westerns peoples. Through the *Geographies of Post Colonialism* (2008), Joanne Sharp shows how the European underlines the artificial ideological boundary with the non European. In the era of decolonization, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak and other theorists have undertaken the history of colonialism and have raised question that the voices of the subalterns have been unelucidated and unheard.

POOR EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE:

Education is the manifestation of the human soul. It is a constitutional right of every citizen that equips an individual to play his or her role as a sophisticated member of society. In this context,

primary education is the stepping stone for the epitome of a nation which sets up the foundation on which future generations and their surrounds will flourish. Therefore, the governments and the societies around the world keep on striving to improve their educational systems and ensure that all children and youths have the benefit to go to school and acquire the knowledge and skills they need to lead their healthy life, peaceful mind and productive life style. But, unfortunately, there are no proper facilities for Chakmas.

In the hyper-real world, the purposes as well as methods are constantly changing in all over the world. India is the second largest country in terms of population. It has mosaic of culture, robust democracy and strong participation. Due to these it has to be expected that India has emerged as the fastest growing major economic country in the world. It has also to be expected that it will be one among the top three powerful countries in terms of economy in the world. But its educational infrastructure, especially tribal school infrastructure is still bad. Their school infrastructures are poor, unorganized services sectors, degree based education system, chalk black board based education system, lack of computer based education system, lack of skill based teaching and proper trained teacher, and the lack of strong policies making and their implications. Therefore, due to these, education system is not flourished and without good education a country will become parlayed which nowadays is a global issue.

VIOLATION AGAINST CHAKMAS' BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS:

Human beings are born with certain rights. It is their basic virtues which they inherent from the very they are born. It is mentioned in Indian Constitution that as an Indian citizen we all have equal rights to live with dignity and considered all of us as being. In this context the definition of The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 is remarkable: human rights mean the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India. But, Chakmas have no liberty, equality and dignity. Still, they face institutionalized racial discrimination, untouchability and domination. Their community has remained one of the most backward and vulnerable in the region. In recent years, this discrimination has become more systematic and institutionalised. In the state of Mizoram, for instance, the government recently introduced discriminatory laws to deprive Chakma students from attending medical and engineering courses through government-sponsored quota, that deny equal access to higher education to students belonging to my community.

MISERY OF CHAKMA WOMEN:

The condtion of Chakmas' women is more miserable than men. They are forced into the derogatory and odd jobs because of their descent. They are forced to work as lowly labourers, landless farm workers and peasants, and pushed into various other livelihoods such as, chair leader, washing clothes, sweeping floor and street, and even they have been used as a hot cake for the upper class

sections of the society. All these menial works are expected of them as a part of their miserable condition in society.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST CHAKMA WOMEN

Domestic violence against Chakma women has not caught the attention of social science researchers. The National Family Health Survey 2006 showed that the prevalence of violence is much higher against women belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes as compared to women outside these categories.

Within the family, domestic violence is prevalent. Regular incidents of domestic violence that span several years of married life. This violence often manifests itself in verbal abuse of the woman, accompanied by physical assault, but also entails sexual abuse including marital rape. Several cases of inter-caste marriages ending in domestic violence reveal caste and gender discrimination against the Chakma wife leading to violence. In most cases where a Chakma husband is concerned, the violence takes on a strong patriarchal dimension: women are tortured within the home for not bringing enough dowry, for not bearing male children, or allegedly unfaithful, for talking back to her husband, etc. Alcoholism among Chakma husbands is also a strong contributing factor to this domestic violence. Domestic violence resulted in some women being deserted by their husbands, or being forced to leave their marital home. For the majority of women, however, the social norms and pressures of married life and “duties” of wives to their husbands ensure that they continue to endure this violence. Moreover, as this violence often commences when they are but children given in marriage, their ability to question and stand up to this violence is often severely diminished. In this context, Solomon, Director, Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights rightly points out:

Dalit women are the poorest of the poor. We face caste discrimination from the rest of society but are also discriminated against by family members, especially the men. We don't want a bank account or cars, but we do want honourable lives, education and dignity (Solomon 45)

Conclusion:

The social, political, economic condition of the indigenous people of northeast India especially the Chakma tribe is still pathetic even in the second decade of the 21st century. As the forest area and resources are degrading the Chakma people are facing heavy economic crises. Chakma people's farming activities are centralized with jhum cultivation and it is banned by the government so they are forced to leave their mother land for their livelihood. Though the Constitution provides various safe guards and protection their condition remains same marginalized, alienated from mainstream society. Had the government agencies acted properly, their life style would have been different. As a democratic country they have rights to get equal opportunities and it is government's liability to ensure their rights.

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