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IMBROGLIO OF THE BODO IN ASSAM AND EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

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Abstract:

*“Learned men see with an equal eye
a scholarly and dignified priest,
a cow, an elephant, a dog,
and even an outcaste scavenger”.* **DeeptiShenoy**

Indian society is characterized by a high degree of structural inequality based upon the organization of people into caste and ethnic groups. Inclusive growth demands that all social groups have equal access to the services provided by the State and equal opportunity for upward economic and social mobility. It is also necessary to ensure that there is no discrimination against any section of our society. In India, certain social groups such as the SCs, STs, OBCs and Minorities have historically been disadvantaged and vulnerable. Our Constitution contains various provisions for the development of such marginalized groups, for instance, Article 341 for SCs, Article 342 for STs, Article 340 for OBCs, Article 30 which provides the right to minorities to establish and administer educational institutions and so on.

The Bodos represents one of the largest ethnic and linguistic groups of the Brahmaputra valley. The 1971 census report indicated Bodos being the 8th largest scheduled-tribe (ST) group in India. Close to 1.5 million people speak Bodo Language. The Bodo Language is one of the National languages after inclusion of it into the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. It is medium of instruction in Assam, full-fledged department in Gauhati University and MIL in many other Universities including NEHU. But still this language has myriad of problems including survival as medium and development of language and literature. After the formation of BTC even though in the true sense of term it is said that every people is equal in the eyes of law and justice should be given to the people to maintained peace and tranquility in the state. But all these are happening exactly opposite in BTC.

KEYWORDS:

Bodo, Schedule Tribes, Government, Inequality, Discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Discriminatory and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of over 167 million people in India has been justified on the basis of caste. Caste is descent-based and hereditary in nature. It is a characteristic determined by one's birth into a particular caste, irrespective of the faith practiced by the individual. Caste denotes a traditional system of rigid social stratification into ranked groups defined by descent and occupation. Caste divisions dominate in housing, marriage, employment, and general social interaction—divisions that are reinforced through the practice and threat of social ostracism, economic

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boycotts, and physical violence. Although the practice has been condemned by many Indian leaders, including most recently by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, unless the government accepts responsibility to end the widespread prejudice, crimes against Dalits will continue. India has consistently cited its numerous legislations and government policies as a measure of compliance with its obligations to end caste-based discrimination, choosing to ignore its failure to implement these measures which has resulted in continued, and sometimes enhanced, brutalities against Dalits or ST/SC people.

OVERALL DISCUSSION:

Jati, or caste, is a second factor specifying rank in the Hindu social hierarchy. Jatis are roughly determined by occupation. Often region-specific, they are more precise than the sweeping varna system which is common across India and can be divided further into sub-castes. This is also the case among untouchables. Andre Beteille defines caste as "a small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system." Despite constitutional prohibitions and laws, most recently the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989, violence and injustices against untouchables continue today. The Government of India's National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes states that "...even after 50 years of Independence Untouchability has not been abolished as provided in Article 17 of the Constitution & incidents continued to be reported." For 2011, the Commission lists 1,157 "registered" cases of abuse of untouchables and tribals.

On January 26, 1950, India became a republic, with an entire section dedicated to "Fundamental Rights," the Indian Constitution prohibits any discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth (Article 15[1]). This law extends to all public institutions, such as government-run educational facilities, to access to hotels and restaurants, public employment and public wells, tanks (manmade ponds for water supply and bathing), and roads. The practice of untouchability is declared illegal (Article 17).

Significantly, Article 15, which prohibits discrimination, also contains a clause allowing the union and state governments to make "any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes." This language was added in 1951 within weeks of a Supreme Court decision outlawing quotas in school admissions. The speed of the amendment is indicative of the strong political support for reservations, Nehru's personal views notwithstanding.

Similarly, Article 16, calling for "equality of opportunity in matters of public employment," contains clauses permitting the "reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State" and another allowing "reservation in matters of promotion" for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Regarding the reservation of jobs, Article 335 of the Constitution mandates that the "claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration." Finally, a National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was created to investigate, monitor, advise, and evaluate the progress of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the schemes aimed at the socio-economic development of these groups. Another Commission was also created to investigate the conditions of the socially and educationally backward classes.

BODO COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT:

The Government of Assam towards the Bodo medium is like step mother for which till today the medium's problem are not solved nor the government care to find a solution. The problems of Bodo medium is yet not solved till date much to concern of the students, teachers and guardians who have long been facing the difficulties due to the negligence. There are several schools which have not yet sufficient teachers, class rooms and infrastructures as per the RTE Act. The government is not doing for implementation of the RTE Act. Separate Directorate is the only way through which the Bodo medium problems including timely distribution of books can be solved. There are separate directorates for Assamese and High Madrassa mediums but though the Bodos are demanding separate directorate for Bodo medium the Assam Government has no yet fulfilled the demand. Despite of Bodo majority in BTC area Assamese medium schools are more than in comparison with Bodo medium school.

Now the Bodo language has accepted as a national language under the 8th schedule of the Constitution. Bodo culture and language has now come under main stream of national culture. Even though the Bodo language and culture which is not receives sufficient patronage from official sources. Even after

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independence, when Assam was recognised, Bodos rich language and culture is not recognised.

In BTC area the Primary Health centres infrastructures are in poor condition and Dispensaries are also too. It is pointed out that these are running almost without doctors and inadequate medical staffs and short of medicine stock. These are happening only for Assam government.

The discriminatory policies adopted by the successive state government continue to truncate socio-economic prosperity of the community. For instance, the appointment of Assamese teachers in Bodo medium schools, non provincialisation of large number of ventured Bodo medium schools, rejection of demand for a separate directorate for Bodo medium schools.

In the TET examination of Assam state which is conducted for Higher Secondary level subject teachers as criteria the Assam state made a mandatory criteria that one who has 50% in M.A, he/she can apply for the examination. But this is to be noted that according to UGC ST/SC students have to get 50% in M.A to get norms and general category students have to get 55% to get norms. Then it comes to us that general category students can apply for TET without UGC norms but a student of ST/SC cannot apply for TET without UGC norms. So, question arises about the reservation regarding ST/SC.

On the other hand, in the name of countering insurgency continues to victimise even those who are not insurgency group's member. According to unofficial estimates, at least 500-600 Bodo youths have been killed in the name of fighting insurgence between 2009-2013. As for example- on 11th December 2013, three school going boys were shot in wee hours of about 1A.M. at Raidangbari village under Runikatha Police Station in Chirang District of BTC region in Assam Police and Army officers. Two among them JirimiyaNarzary and PranjitNarzary died on the spot while another NikodinNarzary sustained serious injuries. PranjitNarzary was only a student of class VI(six) at Salbari ME School and another one is JirimiyaNarzary was a student of class X(ten) at Dwimalu High School. But there was no any voice against the inhuman act on behalf of Human Rights Act. The General category or Bureaucrats also have not raised any objection to the encounter of the students in the name of insurgency.

The two tribal (Rava) women was raped and murdered by three person's namely-Kishore Das, Nipen Das and GopalBorman. The family members were lost what to do and whom to approach for seeking justice of their owndaughters and so they came to at Kajigaon Police Station for FIR. But, unfortunately the OC of the police station did not accept their FIR by saying that the incident which had occurred at Azara,(Guahati)he was not acceptable case as his choice. Due to this reason, alternately they approached to ABSU for justice and then after getting information ABSU directly approach to the OC then only the police bound hadtoaccept the FIR against the culprits. But, in case of higher class woman's when there is raped or murdered there is a lot of voices from the elite sections of people as well as Woman Commission of India. It should be noted that on 9th July 2012, in Guahatiwhena girl was allegedly molested by a crowd and there was a lots of voices from government, woman commission, civil society and so on. After that culprits were arrested soon. But from the incidents of Azara it seems that there is not taken such kind of initiatives neither the culprits punished nor there is fair judgment. From that we know the tribal woman are discriminated such kind of commission and civil society also.

CONCLUSION:

The Bodos are struggling for their identity and establishment of their constitutional rights. The Bodos are neglected initially, even though they are larger ethnic group compared to some other ethnic groups who were accorded constitutional rights. The story can thus be analysed as when a marginalised tribe or a community with good historical background is neglected a more advanced community, it becomes like the shrubs underneath the big tree not getting sufficient sunlight for Photosynthetic activities to experience growth being used up in maximum by the canopy in big leaves. A crying child needs care and an ailing child longs for a healing touch. So long as the government lack political will to solve the irritated BTC issue it will continue to be the playground of the political game.

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