

The Genesis And Development Of Tribal Sentiment: Role Of Bhimbar Deori's Political Activities In Assam

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ABSTRACT:

North East India is comprised of eight states peopled by tribes and communities, majority of which are culturally and ethnically different from the rest of India. The North East India has a tribal history of it's own. The tribes and the tribal situation of North East India may be considered as concrete examples of the theme of variation and diversity of bio-social and cultural life in terms of genetic strains, language, ideologies, social organization, cultural traditions, political organizations and economic life etc. One of the most significant developments among the tribes of North East India is the ethnic identity movement based on factors like territory, language, religion etc.

Keywords: culture, ethnic, identity, North East India, tribal.

INTRODUCTION:

The origin of Tribal Sentiment is prior to the independence, while the freedom struggle was in full swing all over India including Assam. " Plains tribes " is a term used in the contemporary political and administrative discourse from the 1930's, when it was introduced by the British as a generic term clubbing the valley tribes like the Kacharies(Bodo), Mikirs(karbis), Miris(misings), Lalung(tiwa), and Rabhas together. It's continued usage by the

tribal leaders is indicative of the appropriation of the term in an attempt to unify these varied communities on a single platform for political purposes.

The early 20th century saw the emergence of various associations within these communities which culminated in the emergence of the Tribal League in 1933. The initiative of an educated middle class, the Kacharies, Mikirs, Miris and Rabhas made certain progress in comprehending the politics of Rights, Representation and emancipation.

The term “ Plain Tribal ” was first used by the colonial rulers in Assam to lump together a diverse set of people defined in semi geographical and semi-sociological terms. It was taken up and crafted into an identity in the competitive politics of late colonial Assam by representatives of tribal groups who successfully welded this diverse set into a unified political and social category.

Prior to the independence, while the freedom struggle was in full swing all over India including Assam, the Assam Backward Plains Tribal League or the Tribal League was formed in 1933 on April 17th, at Raha of Nagaon, under the leadership of Bhimbar Deori and others with a view to struggle for the amelioration of the tribal people of Assam. The league raised voice against the oppression that was effected by the non-tribal rulers upon them since it's inception. The formation of the tribal league paved the way to tribal unity.

Before convening of the tribal league, Bhimbar Deori came across bitter experience of casteism of the upper caste Hindu Chauvinists. Bhimbar Deori, a stern nationalist from the indigenous society of Assam played an important role on the eve of the change of colonial power in Assam. He was one of the main architects of the famous “Khasi Darbar Hall Resolutions ” held on 21st, 22nd and 23rd March 1945 where indigenous leaders of different ethnic identities resolved resolutions to restore their independent homelands against Indian

occupation is still remind us his political foresightedness and his aspiration for freedom. He lead the history of North East as a new turn and vision to look ahead with the prime development and with essence of freedom to self in dependence by different tribes. His vision was much more sharp and realistic to serve the tribal community.

Bhimbar Deori was the General Secretary of Assam Backward Plains Tribal League in 1933. He worked to ensure that indigenouse Assamese people be allotted land pattas when the British government was not stopping the remission of land revenue. With his efforts Assam province was included in Republic of India, refusing British viceroy's plan to include it in Pakistan. He quoted that government was not justified in stopping reservation of land revenue. He tried hard to ensure that indigenouse people of the State to allotted the land Pattas. He complained for the interests on the tribal boys in the hostel of different institution to allow in the general dining hall in June 18,1941 and also criticized the improper mass literacy champagne during the Assam Legislative Council Budget session on 9 to 13 March 1943, with effort of late Bhimbar Deori the Indian government amended the Deori people as schedule tribes in the Indian Constitution.

Bhimbar Deori was one of those leaders who played a leading role and fought to save Assam from merging into East Pakistan. He also urged parents to motivate and inspire their children to take up their studies more seriously so that they could acquire more knowledge.

Objective of the Study:

To know about the various roles of Bhimbar Deori's in politics.

To examine the different problems among tribal peoples.

To investigate the genesis of tribal sentiment of Assam.

Role of Bhimbar Deori's in Political Activities:

Bhimbar Deori was a freedom fighter and a renowned lawyer from the state of Assam in India. He led the history of North East as a new turn and vision to look ahead with a prime development and with essence of freedom to self in dependence by different tribes. His vision was much more sharp and realistic to serve the tribal community.

He basically observed that the flow of innumerable migrants from east Bengal to Assam might create immense crisis to future Assam. For this he blamed than the Saddulla Ministry, as encouraging these immigrants. It is noted that the budget session of 1940 he stated that Saddulla wants to satisfy indigenous people requiring protection. He also at the same time provided room for settling landless immigrant population. The difficulty is that there is no end to the number of landless immigrant population. Such landless immigrants are being given lands in vast areas of different districts of Assam valley . Their number, instead of dwindling has been gradually increasing. The Government of India Act, 1935 was the first document through which the Bodos along with other plains tribal communities vane to share power in provincial sphere, could have been such provision of land and the difficulty would have been already settled had the government taken steps to restrict or rather stop immigration from other provinces. He argued and also ask How the Government of Assam is bound to provide land and land to the landless people of other provinces, Assam is not a charitable institution where all poor landless people of Assam must first see to the welfare of the people is inhabiting it and should not invite people from other provinces giving them advantages which are really harmful to the peoples inhabiting it. Bhimbar Deori termed the policy adopted by Sir Saddulla's successive governments as a Policy of invitation of new immigrants. He also remarked that the earlier governments by their omissions and commissioned encouraged landless peoples pouring into the province in large hordes. He further commented that the decision on the question of the

Line System was delayed because of their underlying motive though the entire indigenous people of the Assam had been pressing for such solution He expressed his satisfaction over the representation of tribals in the legislative Assembly according to the 1935 Act. He stated that the Act for the first time introduced representation of the tribal people and both the plains and hills in the legislature. During this period he hopefully sending representatives to the Assembly for voicing their grievances. Assam Legislative Council Debates 1940, he pointed out the tribal peoples are the oldest inhabitants of the province and they have their own culture and traditions. They are the people who can really claim Assam to be their own. Most fortunately to us and to the external shame to the section of the people in whose hand, directly or indirectly, the government of Assam had fallen for the last hundred years the case of the tribal peoples, plain are utterly neglected by others.. they are now become the poorest and most backward of the people.

Bhimbar Deori stressed much to execute the Line System all throughout Assam because line system according to him would protect the tribal lands.

Maulana Hamid Khan Bhasani had migrated to Goalpara district of Assam from Pabna District in 1928. In 1937 he became a member of Assam legislative Assembly. It was he who undertook a sustained campaign for abolition of the Line System and Saddulla was the moderator in all respects found it difficult to adjust with his aggressive politics. In 1941 Bhimbar Deori realised that the future of Assamese nationality and tribal people depended on the existence of Line. System. In 1941, Land development scheme planning was made by the the government to give the waste lands to the landless and the Assamese people but in reality they could not derive these facility because the poor to pay Rs. 5 s premium per bigha to Acquire the land. The revoking of the line system by Saddulla ministry this historical precedent May certainly have

inspired concerned thinkers like Bhimbar Deori to introduce and enforce tribal belts for protection and survival. Hence

Bhimbar Deori suggested to create “Tribal belts “and blocks and it was accepted in the Assembly within the support of Gopinath Bardoloi. Bhimbar Deori felt that only tribal belts and blocks could provide protection to the backward people of Assam. He openly criticized those groups of people who looked down upon them. In Muttoks meeting he is stated that tribal League appeal to the tribal people to give their identity as tribals caste Hindus where trying to influence them to introduce themselves as Hindus by race and Hindus by religion. It is true that the attitude of upper Hindu caste is the main factor and it create the differences between tribal and non tribal. Bhimbar Deori that the showing of Hindus by religion and community would deprive the tribal from getting extra consideration. He explain dead the contradictory role of caste Hindus because they were not in favour of reservation of service for that travels but insist then employment should be made on basis of merit. Bhimbar Deori vehemently resented the fact is the caste Hindu themselves wear seeking reservation system instead of merit for securing jobs.

Bhimbar Deori openly complaint that there prevailed a communal tendency among the caste Hindu who always insist on merit when question of job to the tribals travels come up. He pointed out that the backward tribes would be eligible only by the proper training. The Muslim got the opportunity for education during the Saddulla regime and Bhimbar Assam Legislative Council Debates, 1939 on general principle of recruitment Maiden speech by Bhimbar Deori as MLC, Deori requested Saddulla that similar facilities must be given to the tribals, he stated the advanced communities during the last one hundred years enjoyed in this particular field also privileges far in excess of what they are entitle to. They should now make certain sacrifice

for our good and advancement. Bhimbar Deori identified that illiteracy was the main reason for backwardness of the tribals. So he thought that if education was not spread among them then they would remain far behind the other communities. Therefore, he demanded that primary education should be made compulsory among the tribals. In 1938, Bhimbar stressed on the importance of primary education. He said that education was the most important tool not only to eradicate poverty but also to uplift Assam in general and the tribal communities of Assam in particular. In 1938 the first session of Kamrup district in his tribal conference he explained if primary education could be made compulsory than specially the backward communist would be benefited immensely. He also stated if educationally backward tribal Hindu labour community also benefited. Through this speech it will demanded to give special privilege for the backward tribals in secondary And higher Education, agriculture, engineering, vocational education etc. he also talked about the scholarships should not be given on the basis of population ratio by government should ensure that they should be lifted from backwardness in every aspect so that they could stand with the advanced communities equally. Bhimbar Deori also expressed his concerned for the tribal people in the Legislative Assembly as illiteracy among them was found to be appealing and they were the poorest and the most backward of all peoples in Assam. He also spoke about the middle English schools in the tribal and other backward areas which needed government aid. Regarding venture lower primary schools he commented that government should see that all such schools are taken up by local boards or government within a very short time. Such talking or sanctioning will encourage village populations to start more such venture schools now. Hence Bhimbar Deori felt that these should be the best way for spreading primary education with rapid strides in Assam. But he was not much impressed by the mass literacy campaign inaugurated by the Congress coalition

ministry. He is stated that the old man of a village would not come forward to read and write while there was no lower primary school in a village for educating their children. Discussing about the pathetic economic condition of the tribals he commented that despite agriculture being the main source of livelihood of the backward communist the government and the educated section did not take any steps for they are development. He noticed that markets for selling they are finished products were in the hands of the outsiders. This was happening because of the disunity of the peasant community and negligence of the government towards agriculture. It was the traders who enjoyed the fruits of the peasants labour. Therefore, he appealed to the government to give stress on the development of agriculture amongst the tribals. In the first meeting of Kamrup zila Tribal Sanmilan in Barama as president, he spoke on the importance of agriculture for economic development of Assamese society. He appealed to the people of Assam to learn from tea industry the importance of coalition of industry, agriculture, production and business development. In the tea industry the manufactures had their own selling houses but the agriculturalist who produced crops were dependent upon the middleman to sell their products. This Trend acted as a deterrent which ultimately led to the ruin of agriculture. Bhimbar Deori's missions are to work for the welfare of the tribals but at the same time he was champion of greater Assamese nationalism. This believe head informed his whole being and lifestyle because he had underlined this even in personal letters to intimate friends like Sonaram Hazarika. He stood for the interest of Assam in the Assamese and also underscored that demands of the tribal League in the larger interest of the people of Assam..

Plains Tribal Community of Assam:

The untimely death of Bhimbar Deori created a vacuum in the tribal league, they are appeared no efficient leaders among the league to shoulder the troubles of the tribal people. The

formulation of the tribal belts and blocks proves to be a grand farce and government level to the tribal people, although the tribal belts and block could not protect the tribal land as envisaged, it paves the way of demanding separate administrative setup for the tribals in the consecutive decades. H was the soul of the league. He able leadership made the organization not only dynamic, but also source of hope of his people. Much after the death of Bhimbar Deori, the announcement made by the than prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi in January, 1967, about the Government of India proposal for reorganization of Assam on federal structure in order to meet the demand raised by the all party he leaders conference APHLC for a separate hill state, sparked in the minds of the tribal people once again of their political rights. If you tribal persons felt very much concerned about the declaration. The meeting was held at Kokrajhar on 27th of February, 1967. Here the meeting decided to form common political platform of the tribals and as a result the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) came into being on 18th March 1967 under the leadership of Mr. Bhimbar Deori , Samar Brahma Chaudhary and Charan Narzary as it's president, vice president and secretary respectively. The formation of PTCA was another step that was initiated by the tribal people of Assam in concretizing that tribal sentiment of the locality . A separate administrative setup for tribals is a cherished dream and it rises among them at every possible opportunity. The PTCA leaders to raise a demand for separate identity for the tribals. The history of the state itself reveals that there was always a tribal land in Assam in demanding a tribal administrative setup wedding Assam by the tribals is always a legitimate one. The constitution of India further strengthens that tribal demand for curing out a separate administrative set up for them within the Indian sovereign. The present day tribal Youth have become more empathetic in their demand with the help of such historical background and the growing education of the constitution, The

functioning of the constitutional systems in their Societies and the bias and prejudice that have been exercised by the political leaders upon them since independence. The youth of the day draws out inspiration from such social imbalances that are still prevalent in the societies they live in.

Conclusion:

The north east India, more particularly Assam, the most diverse and populous is state in the region, has been witnessing struggles ranging from the demands for various forms of autonomy to separation from the Indian union. Regarding Reorganization of North East India, Imdad Hussain once said: Sir John Strachy's remark in an address to Cambridge Undergraduates in 1884 that there never was an India of the kind that emerged under the British in the nineteenth century could well have been said of modern Assam. The diverse tribal groups inhabiting in the state have been pressing either for the creation of separate and Autonomous State on the basis of their socio-cultural identities or for special constitutional safeguards of their respective identities. Bhimbar Deori played an important role on the different ethnic identities resolved to restore their Independent homelands. It is noted that with his efforts Assam province was included in the republic of India, refusing British viceroy's plan to include it in Pakistan. His contribution towards the Assamese people be allotted land pattas when the British government was not stopping the remission of land revenue.

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