

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF STATUSES OF SCHEDULED CASTE AND SCHEDULED TRIBE IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR.

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ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the socio-cultural statuses of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population in Jammu and Kashmir. It explains the detail analysis of their existence along with sociological status in the society. There is a remarkable number of populations of these two communities residing in Chenab valley, Pir-Panchal areas, Kandi belt of Jammu division and few are in Kashmir division. These castes are the victim of strong social exclusion in the region. There are 7% of scheduled castes, 12% of scheduled tribe in Jammu and Kashmir out of 1.25 crore total population as reported by Census 2011. These communities are deprived of political empowerment and social prestige as compare to other existing communities in the region. They have most backward economy and traditional cultural hierarchy. On the basis of literature review and secondary datas collected from government offices, it is found that no enhancement initiative has been taken to uplift these disadvantageous castes in the region. They are grappling with slow pace of socio-cultural development. Educational upliftment of these castes is the need of hour by involving government policies, Non-government organizations, and community participation as whole.

Keyword: socio-cultural, communities, castes, prestige, hierarchy, grappling.

1. INTRODUCTION

The caste system and regional disparities has been an influence on the socio-cultural and economic development of India. Despite of today's occupational changes and modernization, the structure of caste has changed but still exists in the society. As G.S.Ghurey said, "castes are small and complex social worlds in themselves marked off definitely from one another, though subsisting within the larger society".

The present union territory of Jammu and Kashmir lies at the extreme north of Indian sub-continent in Himalayan region bounded on north by China, east by Tibet and west by Pakistan, Pakistan occupied Kashmir and Afghanistan. Mughal Empire ruled the Kashmir from 1502 A.D. to 1747 A. D. and Afghan Durani dynasty ruled from 1747 A.D. to 1819 A.D. that year the Sikhs under the kingship of Ranjit Singh annexed Kashmir. In 15th of march 1846 the then king of Jammu Raja Gulab Singh purchased Kashmir from Britishers on payment of rupees sevety five lakh. The rule of this descedent under the paramouncy of British Crown lasted till 1947 A.D. The Jammu and Kashmir region has three geographical divisions i.e. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladhak

divisions. Recently government of India has changed its statehood status and created two union territories. According to the census report of 2011 the total population of scheduled caste in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is 9.24 lakh, out of these 30% are dweller of Chenab valley and remaining are spread over Kandi belt of Kathua, Samba R.S.Pura and jammu in Jammu division. Scheduled caste are mainly rural as many as 82.6% of them reside in rural areas. Census report says that maximum population of scheduled caste is in Jammu district with share of 24% followed by Kathua 23% and Udhampur 19.01%. All districts of Kashmir division recorded very meager population. There are 13 castes among all scheduled castes in Jammu and Kashmir out of which Megh (40%) are most populous in the region followed by Chammar (24.9%) and Doom (20.8%). These tree scheduled castes constitute 84.2% of the total population. Four scheduled caste namely Batwal, Barwalla, Basith and Saryara account for 12.9%. The remaining six castes constitute only 2.9% of the total population. Among all Wattal is the smallest community having below 200 populations only. The overall sex ratio of scheduled caste in Jammu and Kashmir

is 910 females per 1000 males which is quite lower than national average.

Scheduled castes of these regions are educationally backward as compare to other communities due to extreme poverty, exploitation from generation to generation by upper castes, local rituals and customs and regional geographical disparities. All these lower caste communities are among poorest of the poor. Socio-cultural conditions of these castes were vulnerable with low literacy rate, unemployment, traditional economy and hard terrain of the regions which are not fully developed yet. Historically they were considered as service castes with jajmani transactions. There was a strong social hierarchy in the society.

The scheduled castes of Chenab valley have unique cultural identity as compare to other areas lower castes. They have their own dialects, customs and rituals. They worship local deities whose temples are situated near each village periphery. These lower caste people affiliate their lineage with these deities locally called Kuldevtas. Some of these Kuldevtas are Baskinag, Bounnag, Bansalnag, leethnag, Balinag, Neelinag, looslanag. All these are male deities. The overall incharge of all these religious places are upper caste Hindus, scheduled caste are only for menial work in the service of these temples. In some of these temples they were not allowed to enter and worship publically. They only serve at the time of ritual celebrations. There are strict codes of conduct for scheduled caste in the society. These codes of conduct finally interlinked with culture. Hence the culture of the caste finally determines the human relationship. The prominent sociologist M.N.Srinvas said, "Caste system in villages is unique model. Every individual is governed by caste. Hence caste is responsible to govern the village."

2.IMPACT OF EXCLUSION ON SCHEDULED CASTE IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The impact of exclusion has made Dalit as vulnerable community since from Vedic time. The process of social exclusion of scheduled caste had made dependable on the other so called upper castes. In the contemporary scenario, due to the impact of exclusion, they are subjected to socially, economically and politically deprive. Social exclusion is still practiced in spite of officially banned by the constitution of India. According to

the official record of the crime report 64% of Dalit are restricted from entering Hindu temples during religious rituals celebrations and 52% of village scheduled caste are prevented from cremation grounds.

They are sufferer politically due to regionalism and less presentation in politics. Politically their identity status is excluded by bureaucrats as for instance in Jammu and Kashmir the scheduled caste certificate is issued by the tehsildars under approved SROs. Government always keep changing these SROs time to time like before it was SRO-272, then SRO-294 and now SRO-126. This means that Scheduled Caste must prove their identities again and again. Besides, the concern authorized officer issues two caste certificates for same individual- one for Jammu and Kashmir and other for India. Thus these scheduled castes are facing issues of their identity due to the creation of bureaucratic hurdles. This is human discrimination against scheduled caste in the region.

3.SOCIO-ECONOMIC SETTING OF SCHEDULED TRIBE IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Defining tribe in India is of great debate; about one thousand tribes in India are in completely contrasted to each other in their occupations, culture, rituals belief systems and customs. Thus simple definition of tribe cannot incorporate because they are heterogeneous in their nature. As D.N.Majumdar has explained that instead of defining them, it's important that their characteristics must be incorporated in their identification. He talked about some of the main characteristics of tribes in India –endogamous, common ancestral worship, dual political organization, common geographical boundaries, and believers of ancient religion and practice ancient mode of production. The geographical spread of tribes in India is heterogeneous and diverse in region and Climate.As B. S.Guha has identified three geographical regions of tribes in India,they are North Eastern and Northern region,Central region and Southern regions.Besides this LeelaDube also included one more regions in these called coastal tribes comprising Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands.

Scheduled tribe population of Jammu and Kashmir is spread over Chenab valley, Pir-Panchall, Mirpur, Balwallakote, Poonch and Rajoury regions. There

are two type of tribe reside according to religions i.e. Hindu scheduled tribes and Muslim scheduled tribes. Hindus tribes are residing mostly in Chenab valley areas. They are considered as the immigrants of neighboring state of Himachal. Locally they are known as Gaddi. Here they affiliate themselves with Rajputs but Rajputs socially boycott them. Further, they maintain strong social hierarchy with scheduled caste. They have unique dialect other than the local one and different religious practices. Now they are facing their identity crisis in the society.

Among Muslim tribes Gujjar and Bakarwal are dominant in other areas of the region. They reside in hilly slopes of Pir-Panchal and Mirpur regions. Gojri is their local dialect. Domestication of animals which include sheeps, goats, buffalows, cows, horses, dogs and hens is their livelihood profession. In summer season they moved toward jungles in search of fooder and pastures for their cattles. Their economy is based on this profession only. Some of them have permanent settlement with Kacha houses made up of mud and stones. Among them Bakarwal are nomadic in nature. They along with their flocks of sheeps and goats move from one place to another. Men are supposed to follow the flocks of goats and sheeps while as women travelled with horses only. These horses carry their needful articles for journey. They remain on travelling for three months countinously in high mountain areas of greater Himalayas. They stay in tents, caves and sometime under big trees in the forest. They trace their lineage from Kabali race which settled down on both side of present line of control. A famous author Fredrick Drew, in his book, "The Northern Barrier of India" has identified different castes in these tribes which are- Malik, Charal, Chib, Sudan, Thakyal, Doom, Dhamal, Perozaal, Thogad, Khakey, Bombay, Jat, Rathore, Kamaal, Syed, Khursheed and Pathan.

A great sufi poet Hazrat Mayoore of Khaddi Shrief Mirpur has written a book named, "Masnavi-Betul- Malukh" in 1892 to 1907. He in his book explained in detail the socio-cultural setting of Gujjars and Bakarwal tribes in the region. Maize is the main crop of these tribes. They also sow rice in irrigated land. Kawa and Sattu are their favourite dish. Here men wear long kurta and Salwar with big turban over the head. Women wear jewellery and simple clothes. The main seasonal amusement games of these tribes are

horse race, Ghatka, Cock-fight,, Handpower, goat fight and local wrestling. Only male members do participate in these social games. Female are spectators only. The tenth century famous book "Rajtrangani" written by Khelan shows the detail existence of history of these tribes in Jammu and Kashmir.

4. CONTEMPORARY ISSUES OF TRIBES IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The Bakarwal have extremely hard nomadic life while travelling across the Jammu and Kashmir. Some times their animals die on the way naturally or by road accidents on travelling through highways which is irreparable loss for this community. They keep on without food for many days due to non availability of food item along mountain crossing paths. Sometimes they don't have money for travel fare. Due to the ongoing insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir, they are afraid of both militants as well as Army. Sometimes their goats and sheeps are openly snatched by these insurgents. If they deny then they are being beaten by them mercilessly as they are helpless and armless. They have nothing to lose other than their animals.

Their children remain illiterate due to transhuman activities. They are the part of economy but highly accused of Bakarwali culture by other caste people especially Hindus. Bakarwal always face hostility and challenges in modern India. They are unable to practice any other profession in the region. They are deprived of tribal rights and childhood safety as an eight year old girl was raped and murdered in the forests of Kathua district few months back, which have change their perception of childhood safety and security.

Futhermore, the main issues of Hindu Gaddi tribes in Jammu and Kashmir is that they are losing their existential identity in the region. It is because they are less in numbers and facing alliance fixation issues in the region. They are also suffering from social exclusion in the existing society. They speak unique dialect, different rituals and faiths and are spread over the isolated hamlets across the Chenab valley.

5. COLONIAL POLICIES AND TRIBES

Before Britishers arrival in India, tribes were geographically isolated and maintained their autonomy throughout the history. Britishers in

order to generate revenue first time ever in history interfered in the lands and jungles of tribes and took over all their properties which were traditionally parts of their heritage and culture. This led to great unrest among the tribes in India. Various reactionary movements and retaliatory actions had been taken against outsiders and to revitalize their own culture. Even among the British officials and ethnographers, there was a debate over tribal policies in India; a British Anthropologist V Elvin preferred the policy of isolation because they are habitual of it where as Nationalist Anthropologist like G.S. Ghurya preferred the policy of Assimilation because they believed that tribes had never been isolated never in history. They are the backward Hindus who have been left behind in the course of development. They must be brought in the mainstream of the society.

During British rule in missionaries' activities had also been promoted which led to mass conversion of tribes especially in north-east and particularly in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, MP etc. Due to British policies various outsiders like contractors, government officials, Mahajans, businessmen etc. entered in the tribal's land and exploited them heavily. Various reactionary actions have been taken against outsiders known as DHIKKUS and to revitalize their own culture.

6.ISSUES OF INTEGRATION AND AUTONOMY OF TRIBES

Theory of isolation believed that tribes of India had never been part of main stream of society. They are habitual of living in autonomous environment and non-interference. They supported this view that they should be left free from any administrative and cultural interference. But this policy had been heavily criticized by nationalists who accused Britishers for making tribal zoo for their academic convenience .G .S. Ghurye called tribes as backward Hindu and supported theory of integration for them. He believed that tribes are always been part of wider society and only in the course of development, they are left behind. Thus it is the responsibilities of the state to developed and bring them in the main stream.

Indian government shifted its policy from British policy of isolation to policy of integration. This policy suggest that states and central government should adopt measures to bring tribes in the main

stream so that they can take benefits of national and social development but simultaneously in this process they should not lose their identities and must maintain their cultural heritage. The policy of integration has the following reasons-

1. Since 8% of the total population of the country is left uneducated and under developed, finally it will harm the national development.
2. Their various economic policies and behavior is anti-national since they are dependent on jungles, flora and faunas which are precious national assets, they destroy it for food and all.
3. Some of their rituals, traditions and practices are against basic human rights like human sacrifices.
4. On one hand the population of India is increasing along with increase in age expectancy and on other hand so many tribes are at the verge of extinction.
5. In any civil and welfare state, it is the responsibility of state to uplift the life style of its citizens. Tribes are equally competent if given opportunity and state must ensure that they get the due in national development.

The policy of integration led to crisis of identity among tribes of India. N.K.Bose in his book "INDIAS' EASTERN TRIBES" wrote that after independence state, through this policy tried to bring them into mainstream the relative power and influence in the interaction created the problems of identity. Many of the tribes had been merged with Hindus castes; some converted to Islam and Christianity or become urban rural individuals and left their identity. This identity crisis had led to unrest especially in north east, various ethnic movements, separatist movements and demand of own statehood.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1975, in his foreword to Elwin's Philosophy of NEFA laid down five principles known as Panchasheela as a part of integration. The tribal panchasheela is as under-

1. Nothing should be imposed on tribal people. They must be allowed to develop along the line of their genius. We should try to encourage in every way their own tradition, art and culture.
2. Tribe's rights on land in which they are living and also on the forest must be respected.

3. Attempt must be made to build up and trained a team of their own people to the work of administration and development. Some technical person from outside will be of great help for them in the beginning but too many outsiders must not be sent to the tribal territory.
4. Over administering the tribal areas or overwhelming them with too many schemes, must be avoided. We should not work in rivalry to their own social and cultural institution.

The result of the work must be adjudged by the quality of the human character that is evolved and not by the statistics or the amount of money spent.

7.ISSUES OF GENDER INTERFERENCE AMONG SCHEDULED CASTE AND SCHEDULED TRIBE

The assessments of human development at aggregate level hide the gender differences. The women from marginalized sections suffered from triple deprivations arising out of lack of access to economic resources, castes and discriminations. The SC/ST/Minority women are perhaps the most economically deprived sections of Indian society. Most of them do not own agricultural land and work in wage laborers. Besides this large number of scheduled caste women work in unclean occupations.

The lack of educational development is another problem of these women. Their literacy rate is quite low as compare to their counterparts furthermore; there are some specific caste related deprivations which have evolved from social customs and religious practices in Hindu society. Some of these include religious prostitution in the form of Devdasi and Jogini system.

8.CONCLUSIONS

The marginalized sections of our society need an affirmative approach by the government policies, non-governmental organizations, technological adaptations, modern education among them, community participation at large, social help groups, cultural integration and role of social institutions are need of hour for enhancement of these communities.

Furthermore, global developmental initiative may be utilized for their upliftment so that these marginalized sections of Indian society may compete at par with world community.

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