

Evangelization as Separatism Tool for North East Indian Tribal

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Abstract: Separatism as a tool or strategy, refers to the use of demands for autonomy or independence by a group within a larger political entity to achieve specific political, social, or economic objectives. Historically, India has suffered with religious radical separatism in 1947, but there are some mild separatist movements which support or sympathy for tribal people, tribal leaders or other communities outside the region. Evangelized institutions are making external support that can provide legitimacy, resources, and diplomatic backing to new separatist aspirations. The process of evangelization also deals with religious freedom. The impact of this separatism lead to restrictions on religious practices, discrimination against Hindu and Adivasi, or the destruction of religious sites as part of broader conflict dynamics. Evangelized institution is targeting tribals with separatist movements to hold uncompromising ideological positions, viewing independence, grievances, oppression or injustices by government or authority. During the colonial time, the tribal regions, Kho and Munda under the leadership of Birsa Munda fought against the proselytizing Christian missionary activities. After this battle new thought of separatism has cultivated in North East India, including ethnic identities, political grievances, religious dynamics.

Keywords: Separatism strategy, political entity, Evangelical churches, North East India, Tribal

EVANGELIZATION AND SEPARATISM OF TRIBAL IDENTITY

Evangelical churches have significant presence among several area and impact on several tribal communities in North East India, particularly in states like, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and parts of Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. The spread of Christianity among these tribes influenced their socio-cultural identity and in cultivated intersected with demand for autonomy or independence (Hmar Lalrinnunga, 2013). Systematic deculturation and separatism was

cultivated in North East India which is different modus operandi of Evangelical Missionaries. The Naga separatist movement, has roots in ethnic and political grievances dating back to the British colonial period (E M Richard, 2000). The Naga movement is primarily driven by ethnic and political aspirations for self-determination but most important, Christianity has played a significant role in shaping Naga identity and providing a cultural basis for their distinctiveness. The Mizos are predominantly Christian, and the movement was influenced and funded by evangelical global forum by desire to protect their cultural and New religious identity from perceived marginalization by the central government. Assam and Tripura have different tension which intersected with broader separatist movement with non-tribal communities (D Nath, 2011).

SEEDING OF SEPARATISM BY BRITISH

From 1735 to 1770, Protestants witnessed and participated in a transatlantic explosion of evangelical revivalism that had an immense impact on indigenous missionary work. Before 1735 only New England Congregationalists had substantial number of native preachers in their missions. Adivasis were seen as a collection of diverse communities located across the subcontinent when Britishers were invaded in India. In the process, they created narration they are were highly neglected and started new ideological subversion (S.Munshi, 1979).

Conversion action was carried out in waves by various religious sects and missionaries at different times in North East India. The North East is one of the strategically located regions where many ethnic communities have migrated at different stages of time. Though Christianity was introduced in this region during Mughal rule, their number started to increase at

a significant rate by the middle of twentieth century. By the end of the twentieth century, Christian communities developed in Meghalaya and Upper Assam mainly among the tea laborers belong from Chotanagpur. British Raj and Evangelical churches functioned hand to hand for benefiting each other to rule and evangelization of North East. By creating Hindu and Non-Hindu, Adivasi and Non-Adivasi narrations along with their presence in the region leads to the conversion of the tribes mostly into Christianity (Gogoi, K., 2019).

During the earlier period, only Meghalaya experienced some sort conversion movement which was much higher in comparison other states like Assam, Nagaland, etc. The new narrations also galvanized, North East states are Non-Indian nation state and this conversion strategy of proselytizing of Christian missionaries in all states. For Nagaland evangelical missionaries worked differently, Ao, Sema and Angami – rely on the translation strategy of the bible into the vernacular language of the Naga and by appropriating their lesser deities of immediate lives into a single entity as Jesus for expansion of their worldview from microcosm to macrocosm (Eaton, 1984). The role of Christianity in reform of religious worship and fluid form of boundary that often created among the religious adherents and their changing affiliation.

During ancient times, Assam was recognized as a region inhabited by various stock of mongoloid groups. In terms of religious practices, such groups of people used to practice their own tribal religion, whereas evangelical churches provide besides providing humanitarian aids and materials benefits as a tool to convert simple people. Evangelists took the advantage of large-scale superstition by imposing fear among them by telling the story of hell-fire after death where only those people can survive from the jolt of bell-fire who are the followers of Christianity (Zhimo, 2015). Assamese *Vaishnavite* led to conversion of many Mishing tribe people into Christianity in *Majuli*. Although Christian Missionaries began their evangelical activities among the tribal groups of Brahmaputra valley from 19th Century onwards. The Christian missionaries, during British period, provided education and medical facilities and therefore the tribal people were attracted by them. Many time, missionaries had chosen village headman of the tribal groups to convert the whole community into

Christianity. However, many a times such conversion of one group within the community developed a conflicting situation within the community.

CONCLUSION

In missionary writing from the 1950s it has been possible to discern the emergence of a variety of trends in missionary activity. In general, these trends may divided into ecumenical and evangelical. The evangelical patterns has continued to strongly to the traditional eschatological understanding of mission and individual salvation; the ecumenical view has changed in response to social and political issues. Such uniform pattern of conversion from Hinduism to Islam, Christianity, can be ascertained on different phases of religious conversion mostly among the tribes in India. However, such religious transformation and checking conversion drive led to boiling up conflict-ridden situation among the members of society. Some state governments also implemented anti-conversion law to check the conversion process from time to time but this become contradict the secular ethos of Indian democracy. North East tribes in India often located in an ambiguous situation while they were asked about their religion. Though it was said that most of the tribe in India practices own tribal religion, but due to non-existence of their written historical records, they were became the victims of misapprehension of their earlier religious faith and undergo the process of conversion. Due to intermingling with the various religious communities, their earlier religious practices have gone extinct and immersed gradually into another religious faith through the process of conversion.

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