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RESEARCH ARTICLE
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Barua Buddhist Community: A Brief Study on Socio-Economic History in India

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ABSTRACT

The research paper deals with the specific brief history of Barua Magh Buddhist Community in Indian. Under this study we have taken some positive efforts try to point out on the Socio-economic historical status of Barua Buddhist community in India. Here we have chosen about the major populated geographical area of this community of India *viz.,* Kolkata, Assam etc. It is telling that Kolkata is an important big Metropolitan City and whereas Assam is located in the south of the eastern Himalayas and which share its border with three international boundaries– Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan. Though, Assam has a large variety of racial elements, of India. It is a migrant community which has migrated by several ways from Chittagong in Bangladesh to India. Also, they have had connections with the Arakan of Myanmar. The Barua Magh community after coming to Kolkata have set up several socio-economic cultural, educational and religious institutions in the city.

Key Words : Buddist community, Brahmanical religion, Vajrayana, Barua

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism emerged in India in the 6th century B.C. Subsequently, many schools of thoughts developed in India and abroad within its fold. As a dynamic religion of the world, it received new modes of expression according to its needs for survival and expansion. Studies have shown that Buddhism absorbed local features and even contributed to the cultural evolution of a given region. Going by the general findings, Assam could not have been an exception to the development. Writers dealing with the history of Assam have highlighted the regions first long sociocultural contacts with the Indian mainland and its trade links with places such as Tibet, China, Bhutan, and Burma, where Buddhism had been dominant, from very early times. More importantly, the Brahmaputra Valley has been depicted as a region that had experienced waves of migration and settlement of people from various cultural and religious backgrounds. Some studies have shown that Buddhism had entered Assam even before the development of Brahmanical religion. Second, Traces of Buddhism of the early period of Assam can be seen at the places like Surya Pahar, Nilachala, and Hajo etc. People belonging to the lower strata of the Varna-based Brahmanical social order in Assam accepted Buddhism. Third Different forms of Buddhism such as Santayana, Vajrayana, and Sahajayana and Kalacakrayana simultaneously developed with the Puranic religious sects like Saktism Saivism and Vaisnavism between the 7th and the 13th centuries A.D. in Assam. Buddhist elements seem to have influenced the rites and ritual practices, language and literature of all strata of the population of Assam.

'Barua' means:

The surname Barua means which has two meaning. This word included two words first is 'Bara' which means 'Renowned' and second is 'ua' means 'ruler'. The most highly ranked military ruler in the ancient times of Chattagram under the kingship of Arakan was that a man

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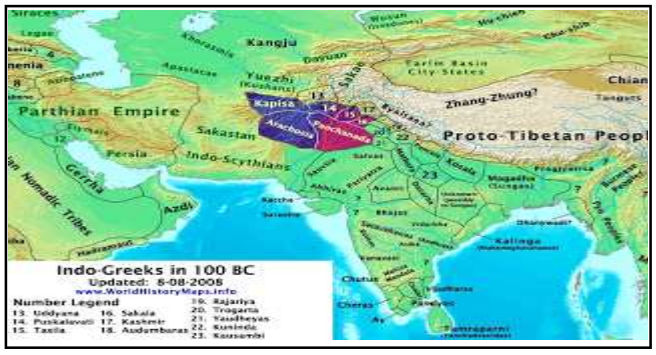
called name as 'Barua

In the Buddhist history Dark days effect on the Barua society

This was a period in history of Buddhism or Buddhist which are known as the dark days for the Buddhism had to pass through this period in India starting with the Muslim invasion when Ikhtiyar, Uddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji with his marauding soldiers plundered their way to the throne of India, it was a time when the identity and their existence were in dangerous. In this consequence, the Buddhist Viharas were destroyed and the brutally killing of monks on a mass level. They have to escape from their own place and later in this sequence; the Brahmins become too immense caused of damage to Buddhism by mass killing of monks and destroying to Buddhism. In the advent of the nineteenth century of, Buddhism was nearly extinct on the land of its birth save except numbers of Buddhist where it survived with the effector migration of Buddhist tribes from Myanmar, Chittagong (now in Bangladesh) and Thailand." Bhikkhu Bodhipala

Social changes in Baruas and other historical evident:



According to considering the statements of Mr Hunter and the Bengali Encyclopaedia and looking at the history of Buddhist kings in Bengal it becomes clear that Baruas are the descendants of those kings. There are some important following dynasties of Buddhist kings they have ruled on Bengal from 6th up till 13th century A.D. The period of Buddhist dynasty's Kingdom

- 6th B.C. to 1st A.D Sinha. Banga (At present in Faridpur District and Bakargunj)
- 2nd to 5th A.D. Barmo, and Banga (Faridpur District, Bakargunj, and Mymensingh)
- 5th to 6th A.D. Shal in South East Bengal
- 7th to 8th A.D. Kharga
- 8th to 12th A.D. Pala Empire in North Bengal
- 10th to 11th A.D. Chandra dynasty in East Bengal
- 11th to 13th A.D. Chandra's (Deva Dynasty) in South-east Bengal

The Dev-Pahar of present Chittagong was said to be the capital of Deva kings. The ancient ruins are found here. Mr. Suniti opines that these lineages of a king are the ancestors of Bengali Baruas. The title of Manik Chandra from the Chandra Lineage was 'Barua'. And their subsequent generations dwelt near the place of Lalmai which is named after 'Barua'. In current time Barua is the name of a district. The descendants from the Chandra-lineage could be seen even today. They are the people who use 'Chandra' after their names such as Satish Chandra Barua, Sunil Chandra Barua etc.

By the British 'Chittagong' is said as a misrepresentation introduced as they found not easy to pronounce as the original name 'Datagram' (Cetiyagama – meaning the village of Stupas) which have been suggested how Buddhism once flourished there. This region was also known by many other names among the dwellers thereon as – Control, Cattragram, Cnatga. Their spoken language was Bengali of Chittagong (Chittagnongian) Bengali – and same as the official language of the country. "However, there are two languages which are not mutually comprehensible, meaning with that those who know only how to speak Standard Bengali will not understand easily by Chittagonian speakers"

They are existing in many divisions which known as Thanas. Dwellers of various thanas in Chittagong to have distinct differences in their languages. However, they follow the same family or kinship pattern, religious ceremonies, New Year festivals and various celebrations.

According to the history in Bangladesh of Buddhism, there was once a distortion of the religious system; particularly about the role of priests who were not known by the State and had no their sponsors. As there was no much government supports to their cultural rituals and for religious festivals which were incorporated with the Hindu system. From the outer side, they were like Hindus but among themselves, they also retained the identity of Buddhist which is important mainly by names. Priests were a group of the people known as 'ravioli prophets'. The Hindus also used the term 'prophet' which was to refer to a class of their priests. Ven. Saramedha (Saramitra) who was trained according to Burmese Buddhism played an important role in the early 19th century for the revival of this religion and establish in the original form.

However, even today, Hindu influences to Buddhist by many of their cultural aspects including their dresses and festivals etc., among them according to Theravada tradition the form of Buddhism. They have faith in that every male Buddhist should be destined as a Buddhist monk to at least for a weak. Otherwise, he will never be reborn as human and hence no possibility of his liberation from samsara. In fact, when such peoples die their dead body will not be carried by shoulders but it holding this coffins above the knee level.

Most of the religious festivals among Baruas are common to other Buddhist countries. New Year festival gained religious importance among them. The Kathin Festival as known as that period which comes after three months of the rainy season and it was celebrated and regarded as a joyful event. A devotional song has been developed which was in unwritten form and is known as Kirtan (or samkirtan singing together) in praise of Buddha and good principles of life. In the most of the Buddhist festivals, Kirtans are sung either by a single person, in a group or only by two persons who debate taking two roles (popularly Siddhartha and Devadatta) and capturing a historical incident in Buddha's life. Sivali puja – offering of a large number of food and fruit items in name of Arahanth Sivali is one of the festivals not much popular among Sri Lankan Buddhists. Offerings in name of Ven. Upagupta who appears as a prominent figure in the Sanskrit avadana literature and believed still living in Nagaloka is significant among the Baruas and Buddhists in Bangladesh as a whole. Ven. Sadhanananda – popular as 'vanabhante' (a still living forest monk, who meditated in the deep forest for 12 years) from the Chakma community is also venerated with great respects by them. The Barua community, there are many great Buddhist scholar monks who played important roles in the propagation of Buddhism in and outside of the country. Ven. Atisha Dipamkara srijnana – was the founder of Tibetan Buddhism in period of 10th century B.C. it is interpreted by Barua community's many scholars. Kripasaran Mahasthavir, Ven. Karmayogi with many others scholars was a close associated with Anagarika Dharmapala who has revived the Bodhgaya Buddhist Temple and Buddhism in India.

Prehistoric Barua Culture and Language:

In Bangladesh, during pre and post-Arakan period Baruas had their own, culture, and language, traditional costume etc. and later it was destroyed gradually during Muslim and Hindu ruling period. Now only Baruas have Buddhist culture and religion and it is linked with Buddhist temple.

Language and Culture of Modern Barua Community:

Presently Barua tribes speak Chittagong Bengali. In India, Baruas are adapted with local Indian culture and maintain their old traditional religion equally. Nothing can be denied; the Hinduism has influenced deeply to Baruas social life with the passing of time and the value of Buddhism is losing among in new generation, especially in India. In Bangladesh, the old tradition has been maintained some extent, although Islamic influence is clearly visible in their language and culture.

Migrated Baruas in India:

Most of Baruas are migrated from their ethnic place to India and other countries during the British Colonial period and East Pakistan. The main purpose of the migration of Barua community was to search job and find religious freedom.

Economic Condition of Barua Community:

The Economic conditions of Baruas in the village of (Bangladesh) are moderately lower middle class and depend mostly on agriculture. Today most of the youths of Barua are migrating toward the city or to a foreign country for the search of a job. There are few of Baruas have well established in Chittagong town. The government of Bangladesh has been listed as bother on minorities for their health, economic, and social

development. It is evident that many of dropout minor students from Barua are joining to garment manufacture industry for a fist of wages. Therefore the futures of them ruining at an early age. After become independents of Bangladesh, in Chittagong, there are some villages, few of underground by the Islamic land mafias and forcefully seizing ethic Baruas land and disestablishing Buddhist society and their culture. Likely in a recent decade, some improvements have seen in the political arena, where few ministers, belonging to Barua community elected as Local Minister and doing betterment for Barua community.

In India, most of the Baruas are lower middle class although Baruas are considering as minority community without any government economic support, except West Bengal. As an occupation, in India most of the Baruas are engage in a retail business, motor mechanic and some of them are serving government job in group C and Group D post. After migration from British India or East Pakistan, unluckily from Barua community does not have represented even a single ICS (Indian Civil Service), head of any Banks /PSUs or MP and Corporate from North East of India, except one or two from Northern belt and West Bengal. It is unfortunate because the Government of India being silent in this regards. It is indicating that the social and economic positions of Baruas are vulnerable stage. Government of India and State Governments from North East India has list bother with this unique Buddhist Barua tribe.

Barua:

Government of West Bengal has been recognized and accepted as a special ethnic group belongs to Schedule Tribe of Mug in the listed Indian constitution. Unluckily, just by the name of 'Barua' not yet distinctly listed in the constitution.

The Association of Assam said this community should be re-enlisted as "Magh" Barua tribe. In West Bengal has on lines of the Magh tribal the Magh Barua Buddhists of Assam have demanded tribal status for the community. There are the eighth periodic conference of the Federation of Magh Barua Buddhist Welfare has been Schedule list of Assam as in Tripura and West Bengal as per the Schedule Tribe Order (1950) Part I rules and other provisions under the Constitution. Unfortunately, in other states, Baruas are in muted mood in this subject and some of them are opposed to secure the benefit given by Indian constitutions. According to them, Baruas are from the higher clan and does not deserve for listing in the ethnic tribe.

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of this research have been as follows:

(i) To traces the brief history and development of Barua Buddhist Community of Assam and West Bengal in India.

(ii) To examine the socio-economic impact on the society of Barua Buddhist Community.

(iii) To highlight the brief history in the context of Bangladesh and Pakistan being earlier part of India.

METHODOLOGY

The areas where the considerable number of Magh Baruas has been available have been identified on the basis of that the study conducted. The secondary data has been received from the various institutes of religious, social, cultural, and economic importance to the Maghs Barua Community point of view. The data is collected with the help of related literature which is important for this study. And a source of information being relevance books, journals, photographs, and educational institute's records etc. was base of this study.

Review of literature:

In this Buddhological historiography, scholars generally assess the importance of the role of Sangha, monastery, ethical principles of early Buddhism without offering much analysis to Mahayana and Vajrayana and the non-institutional Buddhist Siddhas traditions which have taken a form somewhat different from its earlier tradition. Scholars, who deal with religion, have also examined the relationship between religion and philosophical formulations against the backdrop of socio-economic settings. Accordingly, the emergence of Buddhism has been studied in the socio-economic context.

FINDING AND CONCLUSION

From the above study, it can be said that the history of Barua Buddhist Community India was not new. It was a very rich religion spiritually and social culturally. The Maha Bodhi Society and the Bauddha Dharmankur Sabha are quite active in creating international links with the Buddhist world as a result of which huge donations and collaborations have flowed into these places. This was very old religious in its existence with dynastically. At that when Muslims invader came to India and Brahmins both have done against Buddhism. They both were destroyed their identity by various ways like by brutally mass killing of Buddhist, plundered they're thrown, destroyed Buddh Vihar, education and religious institutions. This period was known as dark-days of this community and religion. The economic condition of Barua community is not good even today because the source of income of family depends on little agriculture base. The study said that they are not representing their proper representation in govt. sector's job. The community could not secure even a single post in civil service today. For the preservation of this minority community govt. need to conduct proper senses of their population for better planning and development programmes.

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