

Left Movement in Assam: A Socio-Political Critique

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Abstract: Leftist element in Assam is not an isolated phenomenon and should be seen in the light of world politics. Before the Assam Agitation Assam had 12 MLAs from CPI (Communist Party of India)-Marxist and 4 from RCPI (Revolutionary Communist Party of India). How a state situated in Northeast India was affected by the theory of an on Non-Asian origin is certainly a topic worth discussing. Linguistic nationalism is another phenomenon this study tends to focus. Subjective objective terminology has been treated from MARXIST viewpoint. Post-Marx phenomenon's like structuralism is actually a topic drawn from Marx's thinking. In Assam leftist did not keep pace changing dimensions of Marxism.

Introduction:

The political concept of state is a concept originated after the sedentary cultivation began. With the method of surplus extraction a class ruled over another class. The social hierarchy of caste came along the concept economic distribution of means of production. In Assam leftist tried to change the socio political landscape and begin the move towards attaining equality. Various factor like linguistic nationalism, nationalism have been treated in the light of international picture. Bourgeoisie class has been treated from the Marxist viewpoint.

Result and discussion:

Historical development is much influenced by environmental context. Marxism as science responds to it. Like Marx said

‘With the advent of barbarism, however, we reach a stage where the difference in natural endowment of the two great continents begins to assert itself. The characteristic feature of the period of barbarism is the domestication and breeding of animals and cultivation of plants. Now the eastern Continent, the so called old world, contained almost all the animals suitable for domestication and all the cultivable cereals with one exception; while the western America, contained one domesticable mammal, the illama, and this only in the part of south; and only one cereal fit for cultivation, but that the best, maize. The effect of these different natural conditions was that from now on the population of each hemisphere went its own special way, and the landmarks on the border lines between the various stages are different in each of the two cases.’¹

In Assam the tribal economy was next stage of sedentary cultivation. The concept of tribal economy was not in the ambit of Marx's theory. In 20th century Russia also there was a

developed industrial class to lead the revolution. In china there was well developed peasant class for Mao Tse Tung to further develop a revolutionary class based upon them. But in North East India the picture was completely different. 'He (Karl Marx) was still in the dark about the tribal economic system whether in Asia or in other parts of the world. Tribal economy still persists now in North-Eastern India which could hardly be influenced either by pure capitalistic system or by Marx's socialistic idea' ²

Various pictures united to form a subjective condition for the left movement in Assam. 19th century was the year where linguistic nationalism started breeding in Assam. 'It is, however, in the pages of *Orunodoi* that Choudhury locates the seeds of linguistic nationalism in Assam. Right from 1846, the year of *Orunodoi*'s first appearance until 1858 and even beyond, the pages of the magazine remained the site where the case for Assamese language and its restoration in Assam was articulated' ³. Linguistic nationalism was present in Lenin's writing but in a moderate way. Lenin discovers the fact that in order to Great Russian language to flourish one does not need coercion. Besides, there was no such as Indian ness among the indigenous tribes of Assam. 'Based on ethnic or other historical facts and reasoning, it can be proved that indigenous tribes of Assam like Bodo, Karbi, Rabha, Mising etc have no real connection with the Indian culture. And that is why it is impractical to engross in false bondage of emotions like 'My India is Great' ⁴. So historically pan-Indianism has not influenced Assamese nationalism.

There was an interesting paradox regarding the gender issue in Assam. Left leaders were skeptical about gender perspective as it would lead to divisive tendencies in the proletariat revolution. 'when the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) emerged as a wing of the CPI in 1954, the women's organization shared a common ideology of social transformation with the parent body. As their struggle was led by Marxist ideologies they undermined the gender consciousness and feminist analysis of Patriarchy. Thus, at the initial stage, many left leaders of India criticized feminisms as it would lead to divisive tendencies within the class struggle.'⁵ However, some prominent women singers and artists like Hena Bora (Ganguli), Usha Dutta, Anurupa Bishwas, Manashi Jaigidar, Gopa Aice, Rina (Dutta) Chand, Rani Dev, Konika Biswas, Jharna Biswash, Reba Dutta (Mitra), Meera Kar, Shameli Kar, Anandamayee Bhattacharya, Satyapova Das, etc. were actively involved in the cultural programs organized by Gana Natya Sangha ⁶. Many leftist like Bishnu Rabha had serious doubts regarding the position of women in India and proposes the soviet model to imitate. ' Bishnu Rabha claimed that in India the only thing matters is their marriage, but in soviet Russia womens are given full scope to develop their human essence'.⁷

Amalendu Guha rightly pointed out that Bengali Hindu immigrants are primary threat to bourgeoisie class in Assam. Official stand of communist parties was akin to one of Guha. 'Amalendu Guha's chief contribution lay in his identification of the primarily economic nature of the agitation against the outsiders. He classifies the immigrants in Assam into four groups: (1) tea garden laborers (2) migrants from East Bengal prior to independence (3) Hindus who came as a result of migration, and (4) Nepalis who came in search of livelihood. Guha points out that of

these the Nepalis and the tea garden laborers did not compete with the natives for jobs, a factor, which rendered them more acceptable to the local people. The case of the Bengali immigrant was, however, different. According to Guha the immigrant Bengali Hindus were disliked because they competed with the dominant Assamese middle class for land, jobs and local power⁸. Similarly, Hiren Gogoi says that the bourgeoisie class developed in Assam under the patronage of British was from its initial stage, an opportunistic⁹. In this context what is important that leftism took a stand completely opposite of Assamese nationalism during Assam Agitation 1979-1985. They opposed violent means in the ground that subjective factors were yet to unfold.

Erasing the thin line between fascism and imperialism Indian Marxist formulated what can be called as joint force of pro-democratic wing against the combined force of imperialism and fascism of western Europe. "We saw the ugly face of fascism in our country earlier than the writers of the European countries, for it was the British imperialism which perfected the method of the concentration camp, torture and bombing for police purposes which Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese militarists have used so effectively later on".¹⁰

Regarding the insurgency movement in North East India, leftist resorted to democratic means as a solution than armed revolt, nationalism overtakes communism in case of democratic aspiration of the fringe elements of pan Indian society. Here it is worth mentioning, 'Before the advent of the British no empire based in mainland India had controlled any part of what now makes up the country's Northeast. Migration from the Indian mainland was limited to preachers and teachers, traders and soldiers of fortune. Mainland cultural influence was also limited to Assam, Manipur and Tripura, where the kings adopted variants of Hinduism as the state religion. The uninterrupted freedom from mainland conquest for a great length of history, coupled with the region's racial distinctiveness, gave its people a sense of being different from those in mainland India. So, India's northeast territories "look less and less India and more and more like the highland societies of Southeast Asia".¹¹

Marx is often misquoted as saying religion to be the opium of the masses, in the same breath he remarks that religion is the heart in the heartless world, shy of the oppressed creature. Marx has not regarded culture as something super structural, but has paid equal importance with economic element. Like Maxim Gorky said, 'For in great artists realism and romanticism seem to have blended'.¹²

Conclusion

Bishnu Rabha says that social regimes are not permanent and all that arises deserves to be destroyed¹³. So the task of formulating a design for social institutions is regarded by many scholars as euphoric, however, Marxism has a history of violent clashes in their urge to transform world into a better living place. In Assam communist parties has also tried radical policies in and out of the parliament.

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