



NEO-FASCISM, A DISTINCT VERSION IN MIZORAM- A CASE STUDY OF THE REANG TRIBE

Dr. Bornali Bhattacharjee

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science
S. K. Roy College, Katlicherra

Abstract

Neo-fascism does not include state-led racial purity or totalitarian control. Infact, there lies a nativist attitude which often aims to protect and maintain the conducive culture where dominant indigenous group is able to play a hegemonic role within the country's federal structure. It aims to maintain and defend a distinct ethnic identity to a greater extent. It is an identity- driven movement using state mechanisms and public pressure to control borders, thus reflecting strong nativism and often associated with newer forms of nationalist politics and it operates by working within democratic frameworks. In most of the countries of the world, there exist a large number of dominant ethnic groups and they have some distinct socio-economic and political interests of their own and they often oppose the other minor groups who are different from them. The displacement of the people from one place to another within the country occurred due to the adoption of the policy of ultra nationalism and fostering anti-immigration sentiments by the dominant ethnic group and this is not a new phenomenon.

The condition of the displaced Reangs of Mizoram is one of the examples of victims due to such policies taken by the majority group in the state. The chauvinistic sections amongst the Mizos consider the Reangs as immigrants as they are ethnically different from the dominant Mizos. The Reangs belong to the Bodo group of Tibeto-Burman tribes of north eastern region. The Mizos belong to the Chin – Kuki group of Tibeto- Burman tribes. Due to ethnic clashes with the dominant Mizos, a large number of Reangs were displaced and took shelter in Kanchanpur Sub division of Tripura and Hailakandi district of Assam in the year 1997.

Keywords: *Neo- Fascism, Anti-immigration, Mizos, Reangs, Ultra -nationalism.*

Introduction

Neo-fascism in North East India appears as a form of identity politics, majoritarian rule, domination of minor group due to fear of demographic change, economic competition etc. It includes the principles like ultra nationalism, populism, anti-immigration or, where relevant, nativism, anti-communism and anti-marxism. It is different from traditional or western form of neo- fascism. It's a kind of control of resources and power by the dominant group of the state within Indian federal structure and aims to protect the dominant culture to a greater extent by strong measure which ultimately led to undermine the minor ethnic groups culture and identity. In many countries, there exists some dominant ethnic groups and they have some socio-economic and political interests of their own and they try to dominate the minor groups. The roles of these distinct groups are different based on their socio-economic and political interests. The displacement of the people from one place to another due to adoption of anti-immigration policies and ultra national feelings of the dominant group is not a new phenomenon. No state in the world is free from such problems. The north eastern states of India are no way an exception from this scenario. The Reangs of Mizoram is one of the victims due to such policies of the Mizos in the state.

The Reangs are recognized as a Scheduled tribe in Mizoram. They are economically and educationally backward and their main occupation is shifting cultivation (jhum cultivation). They are concentrated in 75 villages in Aizawl (now Mamit district) and some villages of Lunglei and Chintuipui districts of Mizoram. The Reangs are the followers of indigenous faith, animistic in nature and they have accepted some sorts of Hinduism. But now about half of them have embraced Christianity. The Reangs are ethnically different from the Mizos. The Reangs belong to the Bodo group of the Tibeto –Burman tribes of north eastern region . On the other hand, the Mizos belong to the Chin Kuki group of Tibeto – Burman tribes. The chauvinistic sections amongst the Mizos consider the Reangs as immigrants. They have some ultra national feelings of their own and are very eager defenders of their own tribal interests. In their enthusiasm to assert their own rights, they try to impose their will on the minor groups. The politics and culture of Mizoram reflect the presence of dominant ethnic group. The Reangs often face unpleasant situations when they negotiate with the Government for minor political and economic demands. The dominant student organizations in Mizoram are threatening the Reangs and are demanding that they (Reangs) should conform to the general cultural and religious standards followed in the state.

To protect their cultural identity and socio economic and political interests, the Reangs formed some associations and raised the demand for an Autonomous District Council under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India in the year 1997 on the pattern of Chakma, Lai and Mara Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram. This infuriated a chauvinistic section of the dominant group and a situation of uncertainty was created which made the stay in the state difficult of the Reangs. A strong political view in Mizoram disfavours any further autonomy granted to the smaller ethnic group emerged and they considered such concession as a threat to unity and integrity of greater Mizo polity in the state. When the demands of the

Reangs were made openly, there started ethnic strife between the two tribes. The result of such ethnic strife was the exodus of a large number of Reangs in the Hailakandi District of Assam and Kanchanpur sub division of Tripura in 1997. Till today, the Reangs are living in different relief camps of Tripura. The number is increased in the camps of Tripura due to the arrival of a large number of Reang refugees from Hailakandi district of Assam. The Reangs claim that the number is above 50,000 but the Mizoram administration slashed the number to a small figure of 14,907. The Government of Tripura declared that the number is 30,690.

The repatriation process of the Reangs was started on 2010 and some of them have returned to Mizoram. But there is little success as there are differences of opinion between the Government of Mizoram and the displaced Reangs about the genuineness of the refugee returnees and the identification of the genuine Mizoram Reangs. On the other hand, the Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF), an organization which represents all the displaced Reangs in the camps demanded that before repatriation, an agreement should be made between the Government of India, Government of Mizoram, Government of Tripura and Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) in order to identify the genuine Reangs of Mizoram and their demands which would fulfill their socio economic interests. The Reangs want to settle within Mamit district after their repatriation to Mizoram and the Government of Mizoram wants to resettle them in different villages of Mizoram and these villages are located in many districts of Mizoram. On January 16, 2020, a quadripartite agreement was signed in New Delhi between the Government of India, Government of Mizoram, Government of Tripura and the Reang rerepresentatives. But till date, the details of this agreement have not yet been implemented. The inhabitants and the local Reang people of Tripura have opposed the resettlement of Reang refugees in Kanchanpur Sub-division of Tripura as it will affect the jhum (shifting cultivation) farmlands and put pressure on the inhabitants of the state. The impasse continues.

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to analyse the neo-fascist ideology not in its traditional European counterpart but in a local manifestation through some policies which preserve dominant culture by adopting extreme protective measures. The study mainly highlights the problems faced by the Reangs, the minor ethnic group of Mizoram due to the adoption of anti immigration policy and ultra national feelings of the dominant ethnic group, who try to establish and maintain their hegemonic position in socio- economic and political platforms to a greater extent.

Hypothesis

No area, more or less wide, is homogeneous in population and different groups of people live there. In a state, where many ethnic groups live, the dominant group try to maintain their absolute hegemony in all spheres- political, economic and social by using some principles of ultra nationalism and also fostering anti-immigration sentiments. In this atmosphere, the minor groups suffer more. The minor groups nurture

political aspirations in their mind to fulfil their socio- economic needs. In absence of a rational solution through mutual accommodation of such aspirations, the ethnic clashes become a reality often leading to displacement of a hapless ethnic group.

Methodology –

The study is an analytical one. The study is based on some secondary sources like books, newspapers etc and the primary data are collected through print and web.

Findings –

In the whole tangle, the concept of ultra nationalism and anti immigration policies taken by the dominant Mizos in order to oppose the interests of the smaller ethnic tribes in the state come at the centre stage. Mizoram, like any other state is a multi ethnic society, a fact the majority group in the state cannot easily bear with grace. Where the multi ethnic situation is accepted with grace, there is less chances of turmoils. Already, the Chakmas, the Maras and the Lais have their autonomous district councils in Mizoram, the new claimants are the Reangs. While the other three mentioned above are well entrenched in their areas held by them, the Reangs were, in the beginning, unorganized when the issue came to the fore for settlement.

A modern state demands proofs which the camp dwellers could hardly show to the satisfaction of the officials. If some of the camp dwellers could show any, the officials disputed their claims quickly. The impasse on the identification continues. Everybody feels a quick solution of the problem and there should be the mediator to solve the impasse. The camp, is after all, a temporary shelter for the people in distress, it should not be made to look like a permanent settlement for some people.

Conclusion –

As a part of modified phase of neo- fascism in Mizoram, the Reang problem is made unusually politicalised and the parties are not serious about the speedy solution of the problem. The ethnicity question should attract the attentions of all concerned people and the state government should accept it as a reality. It is, not merely the question of ‘dominant’ and ‘non dominant’ ethnic groups inhabiting a state, there should emerge a constitutional system where all ethnic groups can peacefully live together. There are lots of minor groups who face the similar problems. Due to ultra national feelings, the dominant groups become ethnically more assertive and treat the other minor groups as immigrants. The result of such treatment is the adoption of anti immigration policy towards the smaller groups. When a group concentrates all political power in their hands, the executive part of the government is backed by the ruling elite who have both political and economic decision making powers. In this atmosphere, the smaller groups suffer more. The non-solution of such problem ultimately disturbs the peaceful condition in the whole region.

References;

1. Neo-Fascism – Wikipedia available; [https:// en.m.wikipedia . org> wiki> Neo-f...](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-f...)
2. Sharma U. “Modern Indian Political Thought” (Lakshmi Narain Agarwal Educational Publishers, Agra-3).
3. Mukhi H.R.”Political Thought”(SBD Publishers’ Distributors 4075, NAI SARAK DELHI- 110006).
4. Bhattacharjee D C ‘Political Theory’ (Vijoya Publishing House 27 A, Khelat Babu Lane , Calcutta-India).
5. Mukhi H.R. ‘ Modern Indian Political Thought’ (S B D Enterprises Post Box No 10614422-23, Nai Sarak, Delhi-110006).
6. An unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation titled ‘Ethnicity and Displacement- A Case Study of The Reangs of Mizoram’’ submitted by Bornali Bhattacharjee to the Assam University, Silchar on 2009
7. Bhattacharjee S.K. “ Reang” People of India : Mizoram, Vol. XXXiii (Ed) K.S.Singh (Naveen Kishore Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1995).

