

Educational Thought of Panchanan Barma with Special Reference to Women Education

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Abstract: Panchanan Barma was the father of the Rajbangshi Community of Undivided North Bengal. He sacrifices his life for the society of the Rajbangshi Community. He had taken many reformation works for the recover the lost dignity of the Rajbangshi Society. He was shocked contemporary social discrimination and economic exploitation. Zamindars and moneylenders had crippled the rural economy by the rampant exploitation. The only reason for their backwardness is low education as well as unconsciousness about society. This papers aim is to focus education thought of Panchanan Barma and his role towards women education of the Rajbangshi community of North Bengal.

Keywords: Father, Educational Thought, Society, Status of Education, Backwardness, Development etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social contribution of Panchanan Barma was greatly emphasized with respect to the other noble persons through his sacrifice, his devotion to the common people and thus he led his life as a savior .He was born on 14thFebruary, 1866 in a respectable Rajbangshi family in the village of Khalisamari, P. S. Sitalkuchi under the Sub-division of Mathabhanga in contemporary Princely State of India-Coochbehar.[1] During the period of Panchanan Barma there were many crises like racial disintegration, financial imbalance in his contemporary society; negligence to education among common people, which deeply touched him. He realized that without education it is impossible to promote a nation He has taken various steps to spread the torch of education for the Rajbangshi community. Exertion to enquire, that is being made in my article.

II. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this paper are to focus the baseline educational information for the people of the Rajbangshi Community as well as other backward communities at the same time. Most of the people of the community are ill educated and living in different villages. Their only earning source is agriculture. A few persons of the community are engaged in business or government services. On the eve of the British rule in India, they exploited in economically by the local land lords due to lack of education. During the 3rd decades of the 20th century Bengal, the educational status of the Rajbangshi community was too. Panchanan Barma realized that the development of the community is impossible without taking modern education. He established Kshatriya Samiti at Rangpur in 1910 for serving the community. He built schools, hostels to promote education for the Rajbangshi society.The main objectives of this paper is to focus the educational activities of Panchanan Barma at the same time.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature is the mirror of any society or country. Literary works gives us vital information about the certain period that what had done. It not only bears the data about any societies, states, countries, lands, as well as any particular or general communities in a specific period. It presents to us all information about the social, economical, educational, political, cultural, and religious data to us. Before going to write this paper I read some of the literary books, i.e. Bengali, Assamese and Rajbangshi languages. As well as I have studied about the society and culture of the Rajbangshi community through

different Govt. Gazetteers, Reference Books, Magazines, Patrikas, periodicals & proceedings, tracts & treaties besides several Research Articles about the Rajbangshi community and Manishi Panchanan Barma. A few name of the important books are mentioned here like, Adhikari, Harakishore, Rajbangshi KulaPradip, (1314 BS). Barman, Upendranath, Rajbangshi Kshatriya Jaatir Itihas vol. I, (1941),Thakur Panchanan Barma Jiban Charit, (1387 BS), Uttar Bangar Sekal O Amar Jiban Smriti, (1392 BS), Deb Singha Barma, Kshatriya Rajbangshi Kula Kaumudi, (1317 BS), Kabyabhusan, Maniram, Rajbangshi Kshatriya Deepak, (1318 BS.), Roy, Chandreswar, Uttar Banga Rajbangshi Samajnit, Calcutta, (1333 BS.), Roy, Pulin Bihari, Sekaler Agradoot Ekaler Bismay Thakur Panchananer Itibritta, (1389 BS), Dharma, Narayan, Rai Saheb Panchanan, (1391 BS). As well as I met with some Rajbangshi writers to do collect actual information about the Rajbangshi community, Panchanan Barma and his Kshatriya Bank.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Method is the way of approach and procedures adopted in acquiring data. To reach in the objective of this research paper primary data has been collected from the kshatriya Samity led by Panchanan Barma and secondary also has been collected from different books, journals, periodicals, magazines regarding socio-economic, cultural status of the Rajbangshi community, Panchanan Barma and his Kshatriya Bank etc. Survey research is a method for collecting and analyzing data, obtained from large number of cases representing a specific population. It is the best way to proceed towards any goals through a legal methodology. Obviously, I already have used some methodology before going to write the certain research paper. All information is collected from primary sources, secondary sources and through Interview method.

V. STATUS OF EDUCATION

Before going to discuss the philosophical thought about the education of Panchanan Barma, it is essential discussing the background of educational status in this region. Today's North Bengal denotes the Northern most Districts of present West Bengal, viz. Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, South and North Dinajpur and Malda. The circumference of the present essay is Rangpur, Dinajpur, Goalpara of Assam, Princely State Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Malda of the the then undivided Bengal. 77.19% of gross Rajbangshi populations of West Bengal live in North Bengal[2].

Before going to discuss the education system prevailing in this region. We should have knowledge about a education scenario. The light of modern education did not reach the remotest area. Even primary education was not imparted to this vast human tract. We get a glimpse on it from the account of Sri Braja Mohon Mallick's report (1863), "The place was so backward and the people so unwilling to support our endeavor that the spread of education could not be satisfactory at all unless a very large expenditure was incurred by the state. At first the people used to pay something but when the novelty wore out and they saw that the education received by their children instead of bringing in a suitable return, unfitted the boys in many cases for their ordinary work, a reaction set in and subscriptions were stopped. The boys coming to these schools did not quite like to handle the ploughs in afterlife"[3]. This is the educational scenario of the Princely State Coochbehar in the report of Mr. Mallick. On the other hand out off thousands (1000) only fifty-one (51) Rajbangshi persons were literate, according to the census report of 1911.[4] Panchanan was pained to see the utter negligence of education among the people in his contemporary era. So, he called the Rajbangshi Society "Educate your own sons. Make your child learn even by begging door to door"[5]

VI. ROLE OF KSHATRIYA SAMITI (SOCIETY)

Kshatriya Samiti was established in Rangpur (now in Bangladesh) Natya Mandir on 1st may 1910 led by Panchanan Barma [6] Kshatriya Samiti established by the leading role of Panchanan Barma is a noteworthy work in his life. He was the founder and life- time secretary of that association^[6]. Each and every year holding of annual meeting of this association was compulsory. Here miscellaneous subjects was discussed to materialize the all-round development of the society. The topics discussed in the annual meeting were –education, social-education, female-education, work-education, social reformation, reformation of administration, self-dignity, self-establishment and so on. Among the subjects discussed and considered in the association, the most important was given to education. That "without education furtherance of this society is by no means possible" has been said repeatedly[7]

Therefore, it was exigent and essential to Panchanan to increase the growth of education among the contemporary Rajbansi people. The deplorable condition of education amongst Rajbansi society elicited agony in Panchanan's mind. So, while going to determine the purpose of education he thought that the analysis of the scenario is very urgent. In the annual account of Kshatriya Samiti Assembly in 1319 B.S. Panchanan Barma had said about the aim of education.[8] This statement of Panchanan discloses versatility of education. He opines that excellence of education enhances through practice. If time is used keeping any constructive aim ahead of us, that would be education in any field. He had said about humanity too, which is known as moral education or value education. This modern thought too was said by Panchanan. Religion of the humanity of man and perfection of humanity is the aim of education.

Panchanan Barma wished to literate fully the Rajbanshi caste and society, giving importance to Indian culture and heritage. In the first assembly[9] of the Kshatriya Samiti where he said that the education is essential for all-round development the personality. Education can be divided into three parts- Practice of Religion, good morality and position of wealth. At present we acquire education without morality. Religion helps us to reach the spiritual ends in this temporal world. The performance of our present life will be reflected in our future life and that is the goal which we should attain in our life. In his opinion sacrifice for the love of pleasure and attainment of the mental courage would lead to all round development.

Sole theme of Panchanan Barma teaching of religion is tolerance to other religions, to behave others politely, without hurting them and above all pay respect to others. In his personal life Panchanan Barma devoted himself to the study of Sri Mad Bhagbat Gita and to imbibe the ideals of it, which promoted him to cultivate religious ideals and spiritualism. Learning for earning was one of his exceptional prime principles of life. More or less we find here Gandhiji to see eye to eye with Panchanan Babu on the principles of basic education, for instance theoretical learning with its practical application. We find the similarity of modern educational system with his principles of education viewed so many days ago.

VII. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The UNESCO has published a report for the purpose of development of education on 1972-speaking of Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to be and Learning to live together[10] These four aims and objectives have been indicated for the development of education in the 21st century. If we look into the fact, it is quite evident that Panchanan Barma recommended those aims and objectives earlier than UNESCO. It is undeniable that Panchanan Barma was honest, clear, modernist regarding his views on education.

Panchanan Barma appeared in the 2nd half of the nineteenth century. During the decades of 1870 British administrative policy and economic exploitation created social inequality. English education in Bengal, Bombay and Madras Presidency was widely spread. So-called 'Varna Hindus' received many opportunities, which paved the way for their placement on upper strata of the society.[11] In view of these circumstances Panchanan Barma endeavored to diffuse education to the backward Rajbansi society through the establishment of Chhatrabas (Hostel), schools. His generous developmental outlook for the uplift of a backward community tasks him to the apex of a great society. The intellectual should take the initiative to focus a light on his social thoughts. He remains un-honoured in this arena up till now. We may be optimistic regarding a picturesque description of his social and educational outlook through concerted efforts from Institutional as well as all levels of society.

VIII. WOMEN EDUCATION

If we discuss Panchanan Barma's ideas on the women's question, we can find that they were quintessentially reflections of the contemporary society. In all the reform movements of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the reformers wanted overall development of our womenfolk and spread of education among them; because they realized that the betterment of the society was impossible without the betterment of women. Rammohan Roy was the first person to build up a movement in Bengal on the custom of *sati* (burning of widows on the pyres of husbands) and rights of women. But Roy had no fundamental role in the abolition of *sati*. It was Mrityunjay Vidyalkar who, in 1817, first established logically that burning of *satis* was against the edicts of Hindu scriptures.[12]. Rammohan's article against this custom had, however, been published in 1814.[13] What Rammohan effectively did was to have the custom banned with the help of William Bentinck, the English Governor General. On the other hand, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar was the first person to set

up schools for girls, to move against childhood marriage and above all, to secure legal sanction for widow remarriage. If we make a comparison in this regard, we can find that regarding ideas about women, the positions of Rammohan, Vidyasagar and Panchanan Barma were the same. Here it is worthwhile to mention that in those days, in Bengal, particularly in South Bengal, the customs of *sati* and childhood marriage were widespread. But these two practices were almost non-existent in North Bengal. One of the reasons was the absence of Brahminical domination in this region.

One focal point of Panchanan Barma's activities was the spread of modern education, particularly that of women's education. He wanted to lift the womenfolk from the utterly humiliating and degrading conditions and to establish them on the foundation of their own rights. During 1921-23, abduction and rape of women assumed menacing proportions in Rangpur region. In 1923, a lady named Barada Sundari was forcibly abducted and raped. Then a number of ladies, namely Tadamani Barmani, Gritakumari Baishnabi, Kanduri Barmani etc., were raped one by one. Against such oppression, Panchanan Barma raised the voice of protest. He built up an organization named *Nari Rakhsa Upasamity* (Committee for the Protection of Women). Through this organization, he sought to make women self-reliant by giving them proper education and by training them in stick-play, word-fight and wrestling. He did not receive any cooperation from English rulers, yet he persisted in his work. If this fact is taken into account, it will perhaps not be far out of truth to argue that Panchanan's success far exceeded that of Rammohan and Vidyasagar. It was Panchanan who first, in a debate in the Bengal Legislative Council in 1921, spoke of women's franchise. Here the thrust of his argument was, "Our conception is not that the house is a house but that it is the women in the house who is really the house." That is why the Rai Sahib wanted to view women's freedom as 'not simply a case of politics.' [14] At present, we come across a large amount of discussions about women's freedom and rights, but is it possible to establish this freedom and right unless the society becomes civilized and conscious. Women's freedom lies in the relation of mutual respect between men and women, and Panchanan's perception of this truth can be detected in his poem 'Dangdhari Mao'. In this poem, Panchanan Barma exhorted the youth community to stand up against wrongs and injustices. At that point of time, it acted like a tonic.

Like other social reformers of Greater Bengal, Panchanan Barma too realized that social advancement of the society was impossible without spread of education. He was particularly pained at the pitiable picture of education in the Rajbansi community. From the Census Report of 1911 it was known that at that time, only 51 persons per one thousand were literate. Among men, 97 per one thousand were literate, while the figure among women was only 2. [15]

One principal reason was lack of proper educational environment, coupled with a strong apathy about getting educated. Hence Panchanan called the youth community to come forward. A reading of the annual proceedings and minutes of the Kshatriya Samity throws light on his thoughts on education. A few sentences should suffice to clarify the point, "The aim of education is the full flowering of humanity. Since the ideas on what humanity means are different, the meanings of education too differ. Those who call accumulation and exercise of physical strength as the hallmark of humanity mean by education such practices as are favourable to such accumulation and exercise. Those who observe the narrowness, ephemeral character, conflicts and miseries of the earthly judgments and consider the attainment of greatness, constancy, amity and lasting pleasure as the flowering of humanity consider practices favourable to these virtues as real education. Be that as it may, practices aimed at the establishment of ideals constitute real education" [16] If this statement is scrutinized, it can be found that Panchanan Barma here provided a glimpse of what he meant by higher education.

IX. CONCLUSION

The time period of spread of higher education in Greater Bengal may be divided into two temporal phases. In the nineteenth century, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar launched his vast programme of education by setting up schools. In the twentieth, Panchanan Barma, by motivating the zamindars of North Bengal to set up schools and by setting up a students' hostel himself, raised this work to a great height. The four pillars of present-day education are, 'Learning to know', 'Learning to do', 'Learning to live together' and 'Learning to be'. [17] Panchanan Barma spoke of these pillars long ago and his thoughts on education were framed by them. He was not ready to compromise on the ideal of learning to be a full-grown human being. At the same time, he used to help poor and meritorious students economically. The case of Jogesh Sircar of Mekhligunj is one example. He took the initiative in making arrangements through the Kshatriya Samity for Jogeshchandra's higher education in England. This bears testimony to his sympathetic mind.

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