

Agra conversion



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Rajiv Roy 17 December 2014 10655 views

Hinduism is not a religion whose motive is to increase its numbers. It is believed that conversion to Hinduism and vice versa is not a part of this religion. Therefore baptism, an integral part of other religions practiced in various names, forms their main facet because they believe that by birth they are not actually the inheritor of that religion in which they are born. Of late, after the conversion of 300 Muslims in Agra many a questions are raised. This is seen reverberating in the winter session of the parliament where the so called opposition tried to score few brownie points. But when the government countered that by saying “Let there be an anti-conversion law in the country” the same opposition was seen “notoriously” silent because they know well then what they will be left with to do politics in this country. In fact, why the same “secular parliamentarians” were mute when a famous sportsperson in Jharkhand was duped by her husband who pretended to be a Hindu while marrying her and was later arrested when he tried to forcibly convert her to Islam. This is double standard of a clear form and nothing else. The opposition these days has nothing to offer in the parliament. After the decimation of the [Congress](#) party in the last general election and repeated elimination in the assembly elections in poll bound states recently, this party is reduced to oblivion. The son of the mother-son duo these days comes out of the parliament with some seemingly dejected faces of parliamentarians in the name of opposition – given the reality that there is no opposition in the parliament since they could not fulfill the 10% criteria – and stood ahead of the statue of the Father of the Nation on some issues or the other.

Coming to the issue of conversion there are allegations by some mainland groups that the tribal communities of Northeastern region has been lured or forced into Christianity and this has been continuing unabatedly till date. Many may differ on this controversial issue because faith is involved but it cannot be out-rightly rejected on that. But irrespective of this controversial fact in this region let us also try to see the other side of the coin. Dr S Omana in his exhaustive research work on Sree Narayana Guru, who instrumentally relieved Kerala's caste based society into its present egalitarianism, at the University of Kerala writes quoting the Saint, "If a Hindu has no belief in his religion and has belief in another religion, it is good that he embraces the religion in which he believes. Such a conversion will help Hinduism in getting rid of a non-believer, and the religion to which the man gets converted will have the benefit of adding one more believer to it. Moreover the man will be benefited with love and sympathy which he will get from his fellow-believers." If we assess what he said then we can determine that his words actually apply to every other religion. "What is the use of having only numbers than real faithful" is the central theme of his message? That the apostle of "One Caste, One Religion and One God", that is, Sree Narayana Guru was so correct can be realized from these contemporary incidents.

It is totally wrong to say that conversion to Christianity by luring, if not by force, is not prevalent in this region. Let me share an experience of my own having born and brought up here and attended one of the best Christian missionary institution in Meghalaya. With due respect to my alma mater, the parent Christian private body under which this institution functions is trying to eat up the whole cake by saying that tribal communities education in this region is entirely attributed to Christian church. Well that is a laughable stock and entirely incorrect. That such a thankless statement deleting the contributions of other religious institutions can come from a religious entity like church is unbecoming of clergymen. This fiction can at best be shattered with this incident that happened with me. The computer teacher of my college one day took me to a typical Khasi tea shop that exists in Shillong's roadsides and offered me a cup of tea with jingbam (snacks). I could not understand my teacher's motive suddenly taking me to a stall and offering me tea and snacks. He then gifted me a Holy Bible and asked me to read it and tell him my feelings later. He started reading some of the verses from it on his own inside the stall. I was naïve then and could not realize his intent and his offering of more jingbam. Well jingbam was just the edifice of his ulterior motive to lure me into his faith. He even narrated an incident of his when he was attacked in Madras by zealots and how his faith came to his rescue. But whatever, I lost my respect for him the day I realized his motive. Today when I recall the incident I can only wonder why he kept on asking me after classroom periods about my feelings and also attempting me to offer tea again and again. With due respect to the Holy Bible, I did not read even a single page and thought had my teacher gifted it to me instead of luring then I may well have gone through it and even tell him my experiences on my own. If this is not luring then I believe that the word lure should not find place in dictionary. And whether this luring is not there in this region is inconceivable. A historian from Guwahati told this author that Christian missionaries lured poor people to conversion in return of education,

healthcare, community development, economic avenues and the rest of it in this region since British Raj. He said that this can still be seen in the tea belts of Upper Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, plain belts of Garo Hills and Bodoland among others. But he said that in the last thirty years the base is lost as people are now realizing their real intent. Therefore, one who fall trap into this luring then he/she is said to have embraced Christianity by “choice”, which is nothing except “trickery”. This “practice to increase headcounts” by any means, without any humanitarian development, is a thing of the west.

It is also wrong to say that there is no division in Christianity and caste system in tribal society of this region. This author is told by Christian faithful that the many denominations and the sprouting of several believers' churches have fragmented this religion of love and hope to nonentity. Such is the condition today that in the words of a churchgoer, "In some places of worship of the lord there are less devotees than denominations outside." This is the "Americanized" version of Christianity, they say, which is doing no good rather than "selling it in new packages" to lure and increase numbers. This has set its foot even in this region and is not seen as a savior by those who practices real Christianity. And Christianity has not been able to do away with the prevailing "type" of caste system that is seen here. For example, if we take the case of Meghalaya in this region, whoever says that there is no caste system in the tribal society here they are deceiving themselves as they prefer to see only one side of the coin. What would one call when a fellow Khasi detest another fellow Jaintia as "Synteng" (low caste)? Let us be brutally upfront here. Why is a fellow Garo looked down upon as "inferiors" by the other two tribesmen of Meghalaya? Is this not casteism, that is, I am superior to the other. And for that matter what is this detestation which is rampant in tribal Meghalaya. Is not such detestation stems from treating a particular sect on the basis of their background? So what is so jarring here and the boasting about tribal society being egalitarian and what not in the NE region. This is not equality when a fellow tribesman from a hill of the state is treated with caste based remarks. This is sheer caste system.

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Shillong

BY RAJIV ROY

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