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Koch or Koch Rajbongshi : Tribal by Birth



Prof. Surjit Singha

Koches around the world are known by various names and styles which are synonyms to each other and means the same tribe. Koch tribe might have got divided because of the geographical boundaries but they are united as one of the international tribe because of their rich history and culture. They are known as Koch Rajbongshi in present state of Assam, Rajbongshi in the state of West Bengal, Koch in parts of Meghalaya and Rajbanshi in Nepal.

Koch Rajbongshi tribe (Koch) is an inhabitant of various Nations which includes India (Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, and Meghalaya), Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan. The Rajbanshi (Koch) of Nepal are officially designated as ‘Adivasi’.

Koch (Koch Rajbongshi) is considered as one of the international tribe because of its presence in various Nations of South Asia. The primary livelihood of the Tribe is agriculture and farming, they lives very close to the nature because of the fact that primitively they were ‘Animist’

and same significance is still prevailing among the tribe. Koch are the Ab-Origin and son of the soil and they are Tribal by birth, Koch Rajbongshis’ of Assam consider themselves as Tribal and inclusion in Schedule Tribe (ST) Plains of Koch (Koch Rajbongshi) of Assam is one of the basic rights which they deserve, Koch (Koch Rajbongshi) had been raising their birth right demand to be included under ST since 1967 and no permanent solution have been settled yet so far.

‘Justice delayed is Justice Denied’ : The Koch Rajbongshi Tribe of Assam was enlisted as ST(P) vide Ordinance No.9, 1996 dated 27 January, was re-promulgated vide Ordinance No.19, 1996 and Ordinance No.30, 1996 and Ordinance No.3 of 1997. In spite of continuous re-promulgation of the said ordinance for the fourth time, it was not enacted in time and leading to its lapses. It is a great injustice which has been done to the Koch Rajbongshi Tribe of Assam by denying the fundamental rights under the Constitution of India as the issue under

still hanging.

The Parliamentary Select Committee had submitted its report in the month of April, 1997 recommending for the inclusion of Koch Rajbongshi Tribe as ST(P). The Previous Government of Assam had also submitted their opinion on the report , the Parliamentary Select Committee recommending for the inclusion of Koch Rajbongshi Tribe as ST(P) vide their letter No.TAD/ST/98/92/PT.V/266 Dated 15 November, 1997 .

A Bill need to be introduced by the member/s of the parliament for the Birth Rights of Schedule Tribe (ST) to be granted to the Koch (Koch Rajbongshi) Tribe of Assam, Every human have the rights to call themselves what they are and practice their belief system whether be it cultural or religious belief system. Koch (Koch Rajbongshi) Tribe is Tribal by birth and they proudly call themselves as Tribal, but still they have not got the permanent official designation of ST.

The approach of Narendra Modi to turn Assam into a tribal state is appreciated by the community. A Committee was setup by Ministry of Home Affairs to recommend

the modalities for granting of Scheduled Tribe status to six communities namely, Koch Rajbongshi, Moran, Matak, Tai Ahom, Chutia and Adivasi (Tea Tribes) of Assam on 29 February 2016.

Koch (Koch Rajbongshi) Tribe of Assam believe that they do not require to be included under any modalities because already Koch (Koch Rajbongshi) Tribe of Assam had been conferred as ST(P) under special ordinance earlier and same bill need to be passed in the parliament by the member of the parliament with the updated date.

There is a saying ‘You can take out the Koch Rajbongshi from the village, but you cannot take out the village from the Koch Rajbongshi’. Koch Rajbongshis’ are Tribal by birth, in their conscience they are Tribal, culturally they are Tribal and in every breath they take they feel being Tribal, whether they are being given justification of ST status or not is secondary, but no one can take their birth right to call themselves as Koch Rajbongshi Tribal.

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