

Reang Uprising



Introduction

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The struggle of the tribal people occupies a special place in the history of the Peasant revolt in India. Exploitation and oppression of the Zamindar class and the tenant tribes in general were the main cause of the struggle. In the same way, the main reason for the Reang revolt by the Reang tribes organized in the native state of Tripura in 1942 was the exploitation, oppression and neglect of the Zamindars and the ruling class. Not only the Reang rebellion but also other tribal revolts in Tripura such as Tripura Rebellion (1850), the Jamatia Rebellion (1863) and the Kuki Rebellion (1844) were due to the exploitation and neglect of the Zamindars and moneylenders.

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The Reang Rebellion was organized during the reign of the last king of Tripura, Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya. The revolt was organized under the leadership of Ratan Mani Reang in protest of the persecution of the Reang tribes by the Reang chiefs during World War II. But the royal councils, not knowing the real facts of the revolt, strongly influenced the King by calling the revolt against the monarchy. The royal army killed many Reang rebels, destroyed 50 Reang villages and three thousands Reang tribes were taken prisoner. It is said that Ratan Mani, the main hero of the rebellion, was killed in captivity.

About Ratan Mani Reang

Ratan Mani Reang

The residence of Ratan Mani, the hero of the Reang rebellion, was at Ramchira village in Ramgarh Subdivision of Chittagong. He was known as Lokman Sadhu. His life and his dress was very ordinary. His life was that of a monk. He wore rudraksha garland around his neck and his disciples also carried a garland of rudraksha. He used to give advice in Ramayana, Mahabharata, Purana and Chaitanya, the incarnation of love. For about twelve years he visited various places of pilgrimage. Many believed that Ratan Mani Reang came to Tripura seven to Ten years before the Reang Uprising began.

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His first disciple in Tripura was Khushikrishna Noatia. He first took settle at Ekchari Moujai Taozam in Amarpur with his disciples KhushiKrishna, Gelakrishna, Ghaitrasena and few other disciples. Later, Several of his ashrams were established at Premtala Ashram at Shamkhumchhara in Dumbur, Amarpur and in Southern part of Maharani of Udaipur. While in Chittagong, he was inspired by the looting of the arsenal of the Indian Independence movement and the sacrifice and greatness of the indigenous fighter. Attracted by Ratan Mani's Spiritual consciousness and Swadeshi ideology, various Reang became his disciples.

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But the unfortunate thing is that the one who wanted to support the Reang community in socio-economic field later he had to face the wrath of the ruling class and faced death.

The cause of Reang Revolt

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Every year people of different castes and tribes gather at Amarpur for the holy bath of Makar or Poush Sankranti. At this time here some performs religious activities for the welfare of the souls of the dead relatives. In the past, Bengali Brahmins used to recite mantras to the tribes in all these activities and earn a lot of money from the innocent tribes by seizing the opportunity. Many times there was torture in the name of reciting mantras. Seeing all these, Ratan expressed his dissatisfaction. Eventually, the Reang community, with the help of the Chowdhurys, drove out the Brahmins and started reciting mantras on their own.

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The money collected was distributed among Ratanmani's followers and the Chowdhury. But within a few days, there was a dispute between the two over the distribution system. But at that moment Raja was tempted by Chowdhury's words and Ratan Mani was arrested and kept in captivity in the Capital Agartala. But Ratan Mani was able to escape from captivity. At that time in the eyes of disciples, Ratan Mani became a Swadeshi hero along with a Spiritual leader. At this point in the cycle of events the Reang community began to become more and more disciples of the oppressed masses.

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It was at this point that a clever resident of the Belonia subdivision Khagendra Reang set out to get the 'Rai' award of the Reang Community verdict. In the Reang society, the title of 'Rai' was the royal title for the Reang people. The one who received the award 'Rai' was accepted as the most important leaders of the Reang Nation. But according to the tradition of the Reang society, If a person awarded with 'Rai' no one can claim same award. But ignoring the custom Khagendra Reang demaded 'Rai' from Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya. But the king was also influenced by Khagendra's temptation and ousted the present 'Rai' awarded Debi Singh Reang and nominated Khagendra Reang as the new 'Rai'. Debi Singh complained to the royal court but to no avail.

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The Reang Community was enraged by this incident and accepted Ratan Mani's discipleship in groups. On the other hand in 1943, famine occurred at Amarpur, Udaipur, Belonia, Sabroom subdivision of South Tripura as a result of sending large quantities of grain to the battlefield without considering the general public. As a result the Reang Community was disappointed. The Maharaja decided to recruit troops from the Reang Community from the tribes of Tripura during World War II inspired by the extraordinary loyalty of the Reang Community and their heroism.

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During the reign of Maharaja Dhanya Manikya, Rai Kachag and Rai Kachham of the Reang Community demanded praise for the way they defeated Hussain Shah. But the Reang youths were reluctant to join the army. The main reason of reluctant to join army was not paying to the social grievances of the Reang Community. But unfortunately, Reang Chowdhury persuaded the King that the disciples, inspired by Ratan Mani and decided to rebellion against the King.

The King's reaction to the rebellion



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The king without inquiring into the cause of the revolt, listened to Chowdhury and ordered the revolt to be suppressed. Ratan Mani's disciples fought a fierce battle with the king's armed forces. Many people on both sides were killed and the king's armed forces inflicted heavy casualties on the Reang. The houses of Reang were set on fire and thousands of Reang were captured and brought to the capital Agartala. The King converted the Captive Reangs to Vaishnavism and released them. Ratanmani was captured by the British troops from Chittagong and sent to Agartala. Ratan Mani died earlier in the trial due to excessive torture. The Reang rebellion came to an end with the death of Ratan Mani.

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After the death of Ratan Mani, an article was published in the Paper of that time named Swadhinata evaluating the Reang rebellion. After learning the report of Reang rebellion, Jawaharlal Nehru gave a historical letter to the King Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya.

Formation of Committee on Reang rebellion

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After receiving a letter from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, The King Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya formed a four-member committee in 1945 to find out the real facts of the Reang Rebellion. The committee was asked to find out the cause of the chaos and unrest in the Reang community and to find out a way to remedy it and with that that they are asked to find a way to improve their moral, social and financial condition.

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The reports that have been taken out from the committee are given below:

- 1) Ratan Mani tried to bring the allegations injustice against Khagen Roy and Chowdhury to the notice of the King. But it did not get remedy as Harchandra Thakur was in favour of Khagen Roy.
- 2) The Reangs complained in writing to Lusai Chief Rangbunghar , the king became angry to them in this incident.
- 3) Rai and Chowdhury used to collect fines or unjustly from the poor Reangs. They themselves violated many of the social norms of the Reangs, but they judged and fined others for the same reason.

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- 4) Debi Singh Roy was replaced by Khagendra Chowdhury who was nominated as 'rai' by the King. But there was no provision to change 'rai' when the present 'rai' was alive.
- 5) Many poor Reangs were compelled to do hard work on land or in other activities by Chowdhury.
- 6) It was rumored that Ratan Mani's team has contact with the Japanese and they were getting help from Japan.

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- 7) The Reangs did not protest against the King. They had started movement against a number of Chowdhury and 'rai'.

Conclusion

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Finally, we can say that in the report of the committee formed by the King Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya that the Reang rebellion led by Ratan Mani was not against monarchy in practice. There is no doubt that this revolt was in fact against the brutal oppression and harassment of Khagendra Reang and Chowdhury. The main goal of this revolt was freedom from all forms of exploitation and oppression. Emphasizing the report of the committee formed to analyze the cause of discontent and agitation among the Reang Community, one of the followers of Ratan Mani, Raj Prasad Chowdhury was appointed as the full minister of Tripura during the time of Tripura Chief Minister Sachindra Lal Singh and the Reang rebellion led by Ratan Mani was given the status of a freedom struggle.

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