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THE DIASPORIC FOOTPRINTS OF INDIAN TANGKHUL NAGA COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Indian Diaspora historically resulted due to the reasons such as slavery mercantilism, indentured labour under colonization, and guest work programmes post colonialism, but contemporarily, the reasons are- for seeking jobs and to study abroad. In the process of migration, many individuals faced a lot of difficulties, to the extent of being discriminated. To this the government of India is trying its best to secure the welfare of the Indians abroad. Representing the country in every host country, The Indian Diasporas, not only for their

benefits, but through them, has created a better connection with the rest of the world.

In addition, the Tangkhul community of Manipur comes under forced Diaspora, fleeing due to calamity and from the tyranny of a dictator. Tracing back to the origin of the Tangkhul Naga community of Manipur through oral tradition and the findings of the scholars, it is learned that the said community is one of the Naga races belonging to the Tibeto-Burman speaking people of Mongoloid origin. This paper is the study of diaspora of the Tangkhul community of Manipur.

KEYWORDS :Diaspora, Tangkhul, Naga, Forced Diaspora.

INTRODUCTION :

Movements of people from one place to another can be of various



reasons. Historically, the formation of Indian Diaspora occurred hundreds of years ago in the form of slavery under mercantilism, indentured labor under colonization. Contemporarily, the foremost tendency for Diaspora could be seeking for jobs to meet the needs and also to fulfill the desired wants. To do so, people look for a better place or environment to dwell in for a better promising life. To do away with the frequent occurrence of natural calamities befalling upon the people could also be the reason that forced them to move to another place. Another factor for the migration of the people could also be for the reason to escape the tyranny of a dictator or ruler, making a secret escape or flee from the dreaded figure. Whatever the reasons or types of movement or migration may be, the consequences

are not to be the same. It is to vary from one reason to another. Diaspora in the form of looking for a better land could result into a promising life though initially a lot of sacrifices and struggles have to be met and made. On the other hand movement of people due to natural calamities, escaping from the tyranny of a dictator could turn out to be worse as it involves time, energy, money, and above all the emotional disturbances, for which one is bound to sacrifice it, not knowing what the unscathed sea of life has in-stored for.

CONTEMPORARY REASONS FOR THE INDIAN DIASPORA:

In the modern world of globalization today has made the world a small place resulting it to become a global village. This has made one of the major factors which influence the movement of people internationally causing to the growth of transnational communities. It is estimated that 25 million of Indian community is found to have scattered around the globe. The important reasons for moving out of the Indian community to other countries of the world are to seek for jobs and to get higher and advanced education. In the pursuit of finding jobs, the two main contemporary flows from India are: first, highly skilled professionals, migrating especially to the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Secondly, unskilled or semiskilled workers, especially to Gulf countries, Malaysia etc., which are mainly from south India and some from the north. Aside from seeking jobs many Indian students are found to have gone especially to the USA, Canada and UK etc. to pursue for their higher studies. After having completed their studies many preferred to stay back in such countries as better promising job awaits them with the qualification they have sought for. India ranks one of the top twenty countries in the international migration flows. To this the Annual Report 2012 – 2013, quoting from OECD 2010, states, "The top 20 countries of migrant origin accounted for over half of all international migration flows in 2008, with China, Poland, India and Mexico at the top of the list".

IMPACT OF INDIAN DIASPORA:

India as a developing nation is known to be one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Sensing as an emerging key destination for foreign investors in recent years, many foreign countries have turned their attention to be key partners with India. This has led to high saving and investment rates. Domestic market is being expanded across the globe. Not only the home community, but also the ones whoever are abroad are collectively to be accounted for the growth of the nation's progress.

Many of the Indian brethren have gone out to different parts of the world. No doubt, they are out there to look for the greenery for oneself, but the result happens not to be only for selfish motive gain. To this the annual report 2012- 13 rightly states, "The Diasporas provide important links and contact points between home and host societies by building transnational networks which transact not only emotional and familial bonds, but also cultural, social and economic interests. With advances in information technology and cheaper transport services, the Diasporas as compared to situation prevailing earlier are able to maintain connections with people and networks back home more effectively". The Indian Diasporas have created a friendlier environment with the rest of the world. It helps to channel remittances, capital and investments, not only benefiting home community but also the host country counterparts. It can be said that the Indian Diasporas are the building blocks in building a bridge, bringing closer connection of friendship and cooperation with foreign countries. And also as the Diasporas render their diligent service in host countries, in different levels and departments, the home community is proud to acknowledge their service abroad which has gained momentum universal recognition for India as a country through their relentless and valuable contributions.

CHALLENGES FACED BY INDIAN DIASPORAS:

To better one's life, the Diasporas looking for greener side of life are not left without challenges to be faced. Discriminations are often met by individuals abroad, especially the students pursuing higher studies and young professionals in their various work places, occurring in countries like Australia, UK and Canada. Also, of the working groups, many a times, holding back of passport and non-payment occurred in foreign countries especially in Middle East, Gulf countries. Besides the harassment met by various individuals, attacks on Indian sacred places abroad has occurred time to time.

In order to do away with any untoward incidences and to look into the grievances of the Indian nationalities abroad, the government of India is trying its best to facilitate help towards the Indian people abroad to help secure their well being. Quoting the Annual Report 2012-13 of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, "The Emigration Division of the Ministry of Labour and Employment was attached to the new Ministry in December 2004 and now functions as the Emigration Services Division which also has within the protectorate General of Emigrants (PGE)".

FORCED DIASPORA:

Having no written record during the primeval history, the origin of the Tangkhul Nagas cannot be ascertained. But through the oral traditions such as folk songs and folk stories it is learnt that the said community originates from a place called Thaungdut which is better known as Samshok to the Tangkhuls. Scholars are of different opinions to the origin of the people. However many scholars, and in general, are of the view that the Tangkhuls were one of the ancient diasporas along with many other Tibeto- Burman speaking people such as the Igorot of Philippine, Dyak of Indonesia, Kayan of Malaya, who were dispersed into different directions around the middle part of the 200th B.C. from China, fearing the suppression of emperor Qin Shi Huang. Nagas are believed to have settled in the west bank of Chindwin river of Myanmar, from which the final sojourn was made to the present settlement, particularly in the Ukhrul district of Manipur.

In addition, diaspora with special reference to the Tangkhul community of Manipur State comes under forced Diaspora, which was learnt to have been caused due to natural calamity and also at the second stage, as a result, to escape the tyranny of a dictator, which let to their final destination as settled in their present habitation from their long sojourn.

Looking into the ancient origin and diaspora of the Tangkhul Naga community, it is of great contention even among the scholars as the accuracy cannot be ascertain. In the absence of written record maintenance, the only available information that can be depended on is the oral traditions through folk lore, folk songs, folk stories, etc. Though there could be many other opinions, yet it is the researcher's humble attempt to make out the best possible about the Diaspora of the said community, of how it had all started and has come thus far to be settled at the present settlement.

Tangkhul is one of the tribes of the Naga race, who are Tibeto-Burman speaking people of Mongoloid origin, residing in the eastern part of Manipur of the north- east of India. The habitation of the Tangkhul roughly lies between the latitude of 24° N and 25.41° N, and longitude of 94°E and 94.47°E. The Ukhrul district which lies in the eastern part of the Manipur state, is the homeland of the Tangkhuls, approximately covering an area of 4500 sq. km., with the approximate population of about two Lakhs. The district neighbored with the Meitei of Manipur valley to the south- east; the Mao-Maram- Poumei to the west; the Chakhesang to the north; the Kachin and Kuki to the east and Maring to the south.

Due to the absence of written records in the primeval history, the origin of the Tangkhul Nagas

cannot be ascertained with accuracy. But through oral/primitive traditions such as folk songs and folk tales (which have to be depended on) reveal that Tangkhuls migrated to the present place from a place called Thaugdut, but which is pronounced by the Tangkhuls as Samshok, situated on the west bank of the river Chindwin in Myanmar. Prior to this, there is no indication made available as to their origin. To this, scholars are of different opinions as to the conception of the people's origin. However, to many scholars and the general, it is of the view, bringing to a common platform that Tangkhul ethnically belongs to the Naga group, who according to the general understanding among many scholars believed that the mongoloid of the north- east migrated to their habitat from central Asia via China and its surrounding areas. These let us look into a wider range of the question as then who the Nagas are.

The Nagas are of Tibeto- Burman speaking people of Mongoloid origin, who, according to Chandrika Singh, were originally known as 'non Chinese- Chiang tribes', who migrated from the central Asia to the south- western China in B.C. era due to inhospitable land and environment they had been occupying. But as limited with scientific finding, their earliest settlement could be traced only between from Hwang Ho and Yangtse rivers, who, later migrated to the north- west part of Myanmar. To this, quoting Sothing W.A. Shimray, "The discovery of Pleistocene fossils remains at Choukoutien about ninety kilometers south of Peking and the subsequent findings in the Hwang Ho and Yangtse Kiang river valley basins suggest the early home of the mongoloid people found traceable in these river valley basins". The migration of the Nagas, along with many other Tibeto – Burman speaking people such as the Igorot of Philippine, Dyak of Indonesia, Kayan of Malaya who were dispersed in different direction around the middle part of the 200th year before Christ, from China, and specially the Nagas to the west bank of Chindwin river of Myanmar was a flee fearing the suppression of Emperor Qin Shi Huang at the time of 'The Great Wall' construction. Considering the physical and cultural similarities of the said groups of people, many anthropologists are of the view and believed that they must have shared common habitat and environment in some period of time in the past.

Various beliefs, assumptions and versions are accorded behind the nomenclature of the term 'Naga', which is an agglomeration of the people living in Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and also the west of Myanmar. But interestingly it is to be noted that the term 'Naga' is a recent one which came to be known and used by the Nagas. For in the past the people, till late 19th century, had never used nor heard of themselves being called Naga. The Nagas, if asked of their identity, as to, who they were, they would merely respond to say they were from such and such village. Their identification is made whole through their village along with the linguistic tribe they belong to.

Looking into the origin, the name 'Naga' is found to be mysterious to scholars, for the very name was given by non- Nagas and not the Nagas themselves. Some opined that the word 'Naga' originated from Sanskrit 'Nag' i.e. snake, connoting Nag- worship cult. But the Nagas had never been snake worshippers. Some are of opinion that the word Naga originates from Assamese language which means naked. The people in the hilly areas, in those ancient days were believed to have been found naked. Hence, the name Naga which refers to these people are recorded in Assamese literature, called the Buranji. Another version is of the view that in Myanmar the Naga tribes are called Na- ka, (which was later changed to the word Naga), meaning people with pierced earlobes. Nagas are of the practice in piercing their earlobes, especially as a rite done to the boys signifying about their entering into manhood with special ceremony performed. The latest mentioned version is thought to be accepted the best, for even the British who had come in contact with the Burmese since 1795 and with the Nagas in 1832 had learned the naming of the name 'Naga' from the Burmese. To quote A.S. Shimray, it reads, ".....the Ahoms, who originally belong to Thai race, entered Assam from Myanmar (Burma) in 1228 A.D., and had picked the name Noga from the Burmese." Of the same the word Noga was replaced by Naga.

Having departed from China, the Nagas finally reached the west bank of Chindwin River where they stayed for some period of years. Not ending up with the settlement at Chindwin, the Nagas, especially the Tangkhuls made a move again which was to be the second final sojourn in the lives of the Tangkhul-Naga history, moving into the north- westward direction entering the Imphal valley (the capital of Manipur) where they stayed there for some years. To end up the so- called- the 'habit of migration', the Tangkhuls left the Imphal valley for their final destination to the land where they are settled at present, i.e. the Ukhrul district. The reason for migrating from Imphal valley to the present place, according to Dr. Khashim, "It was because of the heat and unbearable mosquitoes' bite and because of the constant occurrences of epidemic diseases like malaria and cholera that they moved again towards the north- eastern foothills and entered into the present habitat via Shokvao."

Inquiring into the origin of the name 'Tangkhul', it is found out to be a recent one. How the name Tangkhul came to be acquired is of an interesting phenomenon; having different versions as opined by different scholars. As given, amidst the different versions, one cannot help but has to admit to think and say that the different versions cannot be established as a matter of fact due to the unavailability of written records. The different versions are as follows to be taken under some considerations which are to be discussed. But as this may not fulfill the desired accuracy to ascertain the fact, a better way of doing the finding, if any, is left to the future researchers/scholars.

As the name Tangkhul is mentioned to be a recent one, it was never mentioned or heard to be used in the past, beginning from the earliest settlement i.e. the land between Hwang Ho and Yangtse rivers till the time when the said race set its foot in the west bank of Chindwin river. The name Tangkhul came to be used only when they got settled in the place where the Tangkhuls at present are residing in. of the first, the name Tangkhul derives from the Meitei dialect 'Tada Khun', which means 'brother's village'. The question then came about as to why the Meiteis did ever mention the word brother, and also as to what relation have they to be related as brothers. Though the origin lies amiss, yet traditionally the Tangkhuls (of the hills) and the Meiteis (of the Manipur valley) are believed to be brothers. The former is known to be the elder brother and the latter the younger brother. Traditionally it is told that the younger one, in search of a better place, moved to the valley where he found life to be easier due to fertile soil.

As opined by others, the word Tangkhul derives, yet again, from the Meitei dialect 'AtangbaKhun', which means 'Atangba' as rare and 'Khun' as village. In support to the meaning it means that Tangkhuls, since time immemorial, have been known for their generosity and hospitality, especially in receiving the visitors whoever comes to their house. Visitors or guests are warmly welcomed and fed. As kind and loving hearted people, they see to it that the visitors are treated well and are careful that they are not hurt in any sense during their stay. They don't keep anything to themselves but share all they can to afford. This is how 'Tangkhul' which derives from the Meitei dialect 'AtangbaKhun' comes to be known as a kind of a rare group of people. In the words of A.S.W. Shimary it reads, "....the Tangkhuls are generous, full of hospitality and liberal who provided food and drink to their guests. Therefore, their Meitei counterparts called them 'Tangkhul'- 'Atangba' meaning rare, unique; and 'khul' means village- there is no village as liberal and generous as these people."

Another version for the name Tangkhul, again, ridiculously derives from the Meitei dialect 'Atangbakhun' which means 'poor village'. The reason for indicating such a meaning is that, the Tangkhuls in the past were known as head hunters; engaging almost whole of their days in waging wars against each others' village, and also spending most of their time in hunting animals rather than concentrating in the field work, also hindrance of wild animals menace, due to which the agricultural work failed. In such course of time when the Tangkhuls came down to the valley in search of work for

food, as mentioned in Sothing W.A. Shimray, it reads "....the Meiteis taking advantages of the difficult situation in the hill, whenever met them ridiculed by calling them 'man from the poor villages' and the village of these people were nicknamed 'Atangbakhun' (atangba= poor, khun= village)." Whatever the differences, yet in this way, for phonetic convenience the word Atangbakhun was shortened and came to be known as Tangkhul. Though of different versions and opinions to the origin and meaning of the name Tangkhul, yet it is, at present, deeply rooted and recognized as TANGKHUL officially.

CONCLUSION:

The process of human life is dynamic, it doesn't remain the same. Some way or the other whether you like it or not, change is bound to occur as time rolls down the history. But if one is aware enough and provided having made use of one life's span to the best possible manner in his or her endeavor, changes which could be rectified through relentless effort can turn out to bring an amicable solution to one's life struggle, making it a meaningful one. It is the wish for all to have a change for the better, but going through the process of change matters. For, to bring that change one may have to give up prior comforts, sacrifice time and energy which could cause unprecedented immense pain and struggle. Likewise, as Diaspora refers to the phase of change; movement of people from a place to another, the consequences could take a toll of much struggle of initial sacrifices, resulting to various reasons as mentioned above. Be it individual or as a community, there could have been a lot of struggles in the course of the process having met a lot of discrimination, such as being mistreated by the host country but having determined to reach the goal, the struggles don't go in vain, it pays. In the context of India, in general as individuals and collectively, the returns have been escalated to manifold, such as, the Diasporas could earn to live more comfortable life affecting to the economy of the nation through collective efforts. It has also brought a closer tie with foreign countries. A friendlier environment is being created through Diaspora's global interactions. Hence, all in all, considering all the pros and cons, in the process of Diaspora, the positive impact overweighs the negative affecting to greater heights in the global business arena as a developing nation.

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