

## Book Review-1

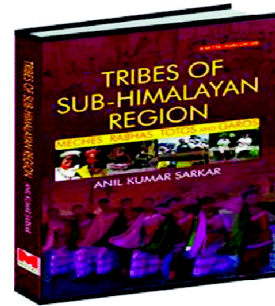
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**Tribes of Sub-Himalayan Region: Meches, Rabhas, Totos and Garos by Anil Kumar Sarkar, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, Page 210, Rs. 700**

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This book has written by Anil Kumar Sarkar, Professor of History, the University of Kalyani, published by Mittal Publications, New Delhi(India) 2021 which entitled Tribes of Sub-Himalayan Region( Meches, Rabhas, Totos, Garos) mainly deals with the tribes of Meches, Rabhas, Totos, Garos of Sub-Himalayan North Bengal region from the days of antiquity to the first decade of the twenty-first century, to understand their origin, religion, culture, diseases and medicine, tradition, different social institutions like family, clan and marriage, social and economic structure and social stratification.

Near about 300 million indigenous people presently living in over 70 countries. But a common phenomenon is that the indigenous people have always been victimized and their socio-economic condition deteriorated all over the World. India had taken some positive steps to improve the overall condition of its tribal populations before international efforts. After independence, the Indian Government had taken a series of development policies for the welfare of tribes and recommended that the tribes should be able to enjoy the advantages of modern medicine, education, agriculture and economic growth. The main architect of this plan was Jawaharlal Nehru said, development in tribal areas should be slow and steady, the bureaucrats or the development personnel should be pro-tribal in mind and spirit and create the environment for increasing participation of tribes in the development process. Various five years plans were set up for their development from early time to the present day and the last five-year plan emphasized empowerment on social economic as well as social justice.

With the advent of the East India Company in India, and established its political, economic and cultural hegemony, they wanted to exploit the resources and forest too. They invade these tribal areas and satisfy their

selfish ends in the name of developments. As resulted in the loss of land and of economic independence also. The restrictions imposed on them had endangered the freedom of natives or tribes. But the Great revolt of 1857 was a turning point in the established historiographical approach to political colonialism. This event ended the civilizing role of the white regime. This new policy of the Crown regime was not interfering with Indian life and institutions and to rule India with the fullest regard to Indian ways of life.

Presently, eight districts of North Bengal are today called by the lovers of North Bengal as Eight Sisters- Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda. These areas of North Bengal may call the museum of races and tribes of India. The present work intends to study Meches, Rabhas, Totos and Garos of Sub-Himalayan North Bengal. Whether they are the original inhabitant or not is a very controversial issue among the researcher. The answer is also complicated because there is no authentic evidence about this. But it may be said that the tribes of North Bengal are divided into two categories- indigenous tribes and settlers or migrant tribes.

However, now we come to the main focus on these four tribes. Most of the scholars agreed that the Meches lacked the historical instinct. They are the Mongoloid groups, which constitute the third largest group of racial elements in India. Some scholars think that the Meches migrated into India through Patkoi hills between India and Burma and gradually spread themselves into the whole of Assam, North Bengal and parts of East Bengal.

There is strong controversy about the origin of the Rabha tribe. Rabha community is also one of the tribes of the Indian Territory. Apart from Assam, these Rabhas are also found in other states of India like West Bengal and the state of Assam namely Goalpara and Kamrup districts. In West Bengal, these groups scattered in and around Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts. The Rabha tribe has excelled in cultural heritage. Apart from practicing animistic rituals and customs, they follow a distinct belief which is an amalgamation of Hindu rituals and customs. Differences are found among the ritual practices of the village and forest of Rabha groups.

We observed from the present work that the Toto's are a very primitive tribe. Presently they are live on a small hill area at foot of the Himalayas of Duars of North Bengal. The Toto are of the Mongoloid race and the area of the entire Toto country called at present Totopara is 1996.96 acres. They have a flat nose, broad and square cheeks, thick lips and small eyes and black iris. Despite influence from others, the Toto's appears to be a distinct tribe. However, Scholars are unknown from where the name of Toto is the origin.

We have no exact information of any historical value, and origin of the Garo tribes. At the western end of the range of hills which forms the southern boundary of the Brahmaputra valley, where the river flows through Assam,

the Garo hill district is situated. According to the legend, the ancestors of the Garos inhabited a province of Tibet named Torua, whence without any apparent reason they started on a voyage of discovery under the leadership of two chiefs, Jappa- Jalinpa and Sukpa-Bongpia. The Garos may be roughly divided into hill Garos and plain Garos. Plain Garos are also found in the Mymensingh( Now Bangladesh), Goalpara and Kamrup (Assam), Khasi and Jaintia, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri(West Bengal).

We know that sub-Himalaya of North Bengal is a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual region. Social diversity is perhaps the most powerful manifestation of the area. The social groups of diverse ethnic and linguistic origins, representing various racial stocks and social status have found a place for themselves for different points of time adapting themselves to the different ecological niches offered by the physiographic and climatic setting of the area. The waves of immigration have drawn the ancestor of the majority of the present population of the area from the surrounding territories. Their dispersal has resulted in the creation of the social mosaic with ethnic distinctiveness.