

Education in Arunachal Pradesh, India for the Chakmas

Education is the key success in today's competitive world that develops the personality of an individual. Education thus helps in uplifting society with literacy rate and with the creation of more responsible citizens in our society. To increase the literacy rate, the basic need is education. The Indian government has been trying to increase literacy rate by introducing more schools in far-flung rural areas across the country.

The quality education matters in developing the personalities of the students too. Other than class related books and teachings, music, sports and other extra-curricular activities is considered a part of education in the schools. But there are schools in Arunachal Pradesh where this kind of complete package education is not provided especially for Chakma students just because their parents are refugees. They are not allowed to participate in any extra classes like cultural nites, sports and annual functions other than bare minimal education.

I would like to share my experiences as a school student of Government Higher Secondary School in a small town called Miao at Changlang District of Arunachal Pradesh. I was better than an average student in my class being liked by almost all teachers because of my good results in the class. As a young student, even I had an interest in participating in cultural activities like singing and dancing as well as sports classes like other students. Once our new music teacher selected me and my sister for a group dance and song with couple of students more for stage show. After days of practice, when it was reported to the General Secretary of Students Union that two chakma girls are also participating for cultural programme, they at once stopped us going for further practice. It was very embarrassing coming out of the room in presence of everyone just that we could not participate because we were chakmas.

Other than the above mentioned incident, we were not allowed to participate in Annual school week celebration which is actually a week celebrated by the students held once in a year where various competitions in the field of sports, debates and cultural evenings take place. So we could not show case our abilities and talents in any fields. May be we had talents in us, however due to lack of chance we could not grow our capabilities and hence lost confidence. There is a saying "**Nine tenths of education is encouragement.**" But in lieu of encouragement what we got was discouragement that led us nowhere except losing of self-confidence.

That part would also have been better just for mere education but in 1994 that mere education has also been abolished for chakma students. There has been a strike called off to remove Chakmas from Arunachal Pradesh because that time the Committee for citizenship Rights of Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh was having a talk for citizenship rights with Home ministry which made the All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union(AAPSU) take action against Chakma students by stopping them to go to schools. They were warned that no Chakma students to be seen in School premises or else they will be killed. There was no notice from the school authorities especially from the School Principal regarding the entry prohibition in the school premises. But it's the Students Union who used to take every decision

during that kind of ugly and bad period. Teaching and other staffs were mere spectators of happening around the school. That year was the turning point in that school. The chakma families who resided in Miao were asked to vacate the place at earliest. The families were also threatened that their houses would be burnt the same night. Due to this threatening few families had to flee from Miao to some other local villages to save their lives. Their temporary land and houses were occupied by local tribal. Since the families left their houses to save their lives, the nearby Chakma Buddhist temple which was being looked after by the fled families was also being captured later by the tribal people. Since that time after that riot, no Chakma students were allowed to take admission in Govt Higher Secondary School of Miao till today. That was the only school in the centre of Miao Sub-Division where most of the students take admission after passing out from various rural elementary (Primary) schools, Middle schools and secondary schools. Because of that Chakma students had to go all the way to Assam for further studies even in school levels just because admission was not open for chakmas. In spite of all the odds people still managed to educate their children with hardships. Thanks to Sneha and Mahabodhi who made it easier by locating their schools in the needy area of Diyun where chakma students are now able to perform in a better way in every field and show-casing their talents. I therefore encourage organizations to promote and expand education for the needy people in needy areas.