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The Endangered Systemic Racism and Multi Culturalism – In Conversation with Prof. Daniel Drache

Dr. Eftthikar Ahamed B.

Assistant Professor
Dept. of English & Comparative Literature
Central University of Kerala
Kasaragod – KERALA.

(An exclusive interview with Prof. Daniel Drache, the internationally acclaimed Canadian socio-political scientist, globalization researcher and cultural studies expert)

“The contemporary biosphere is about to sing a swan-song harbingering the bereavement of the much-nourished systemic racism and multi culturalism, unless something drastic is done!” observes Prof. Daniel Drache, the Emeritus Professor in the Dept. of Political Science and Fellow of the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies at York University, Toronto, Canada.

A Senior Research Fellow and Visiting Scholar at the Macquarrie University and the University of Western Sydney and South Wales, Dr. Drache has already established his identity as one who critically examines the different bodies of interdisciplinary works. *The Market of the Public Domain: Global Governance and the Asymmetries of Power* (2001), *Defiant Publics: the Unprecedented Reach of the Global Citizen* (2008), etc. are some of his analytical works which have offered him a prominent position in the contemporary socio-political space like the scholar Noam Chomsky.

He was on a short visit to India as part of his researches on the comparative indigenous communities of India and the aboriginals of Canada. While visiting the Central University of Kerala, he opened up his concerns. The excerpts:

Question: *How will you substantiate your arguments of the danger you have predicted over the systemic racism and multi culturalism of the world? How will you relate the same with the contemporary Indian society?*

Answer: Man is basically and fundamentally a racist! May be, we can blame the genetical transfer for this upsetting situation. The plight of the Indian Dalits and Adivasis has similarities with the aboriginals of Canada or Australia. Some of the Arab refugees, especially the Syrian ones, have been getting degraded into the position of the same. There are parallels in the attacks leveled against them too. The present trend of the hegemonised ethnic groups against these marginalized is to convert them into the voiceless ones, not to annihilate them physically.

The role of counter-publics, skeptics, and contrarians politicizing and mobilizing the civil society is very weak when compared to the mainstream moves.

Let's take the issues of contemporary India. Who are being attacked and killed in the name of rituals, religion, and even food habits? Obviously the Dalits, the minorities, and the women! How many protests were being registered against these? The Beef-controversy, the New Delhi Rape Case, etc. are some of the issues brought to be visible. That doesn't mean that these attempts against ethnic cleansing are not coming out completely. On the other hand, these are the only ones the Indian media dug out to the public. But the most interesting thing here is that the media's interest is only to sensationalize things.

The Rita Fountaine case was an analogous one happened in Canada. Rita was a sixteen year old Canadian aboriginal girl. This First Nation damsel was brutally raped and murdered. The Canadian media was reluctant to publish this issue in the beginning. One of the reasons for this was that the Canadian press was not interested in sensationalizing things like in India – except in the case of some tabloids. It took years to carry over this case into the limelight of the international media. The reason is simple – the race. Yes, the race does matter.

Question: *What is your analysis of the media all over the world about their responses against the atrocities leveled against the marginalized and the minorities?*

Answer: Each newspaper reports a story on the First Nations all over the world. But, you know, the power of these reports is very insignificant. Or, better we could say that these 'issues' are very weak indeed. They neglect the issues of the marginalized. But, at the same time they can say that they publish 'issues' or stories. The physical, sexual, and psychological abuses experienced by the aboriginals in my side of the world, and the Adivasis or Dalits of your side are weak issues for the media.

The prohibition of the indigenous languages, cultures, rituals, etc. is at work with the blessings of the media. Nearly forty thousand children belonging to the First Nation parents had been stolen in Canada only. We have about 350 tribal communities with a very less life-expectancy of 52 years only. Half of them are unemployed. There is gender discrimination and violence too.

Multi culturalism, here, is a terribly skeptic matter. About 1200 aboriginal women had been either killed or reported missing five years ago. The trauma leads some victims to suicide and some others into delirium. The disinterestedness and the intentional distancing of the media are to please the hegemonic immigrant communities of the nation. The First Nation citizens who are not immigrants face second hand treatment. So any violence on the indigenous groups is not worthy bringing out to the light. The Indian media has the same *modus operandi*. If there is a room for sensationalism, they may take the issue up. That's all.

Question: *There are allegations against the mainstream political parties and revolutionary organizations that they never make moves to redress the issues in a proactive manner. What, according to you, is the heart of this matter?*

Answer: The answer is very simple – the main stream political parties and organizations have been well-fed by the hegemonized groups. Donald Trump’s policy to attack the minorities and Harper’s refusal to the refugees are some of the examples. There should be accommodation, not adjustment. The three hundred thousand immigrants of Canada are only three percentage of the total national population. My country is a sanctuary of refugees. But among the Arab refugees, the Syrians are not well entertained and treated. You cannot see any attempt from the ruling and oppositional parties to accommodate them in the national artery or the main stream of the region. So, how can we expect equal opportunity and human rights?

Another alarming concern is the growing assimilation rate of the aboriginals against the ways of the hegemonized. Those who are not provided with proper drinking water, without any surprise, may easily be assimilated and appropriated to any space due to harsh realities. That’s what is happening now-a-days. The indigenous nature of cultures gets forcibly assimilated to the hegemony-claimed ones. It is racial stereotyping. The comment of our Chief Justice, “Canada is colonialist and cultural genocide is a reality” clarifies the attitude. The Hindu fundamentalists in India with their political propaganda have some similarity with this. The Hispanic and Jewish issues of the West and the minorities of the West Asia have the same common features. The heart of the matter is very distinct – it is to wipe off the aboriginal ways and values of the world for placing the popular and the prevalent.

Question: *Your studies on the role of Social Media as transformative networks of amazing complexity, as detailed in the path-breaking book The Changing Workplace criticize the limitations of the same in the empowerment of the minorities. Do you still keep the opinion?*

Answer: I was able to publish a series of digital reports on the Activist Counter Publics and the remarkable iconography of dissent in post-modernity in collaboration with Jamia Millia Islamia University. The studies on Adivasis and Dalits of India vividly reveal the fact that they are also becoming silenced and unrepresented. The dissent against such silencing, you can argue, gets represented in the platform of Social Media. But the power of this dissent is so meager that the effect of them may end in some peripheral-level discussions and sharing. The institutionalizing attempts of silencing the marginalized by the ruling powers cannot be properly resisted with these dissent notes only. It requires tough leaders with uncompromising leadership skills. To be precise, India needs an Ambedkar-like figure very badly.

The Arab Spring Revolution, Muhammed Akhlaq lynching in U.P., Rohit Vemula suicide, etc. might have been, partially placed within the space of the international discussions through the interference of this social media. But these issues are only the tip of an iceberg. The

nomenclature ‘viral’ in Indian Social Media itself is short-lived experience. The impact which an issue can create through this media is very weak in nations like India. Those who use and live in this virtual world convert their time and effort just for the sake of ‘a mere time-pass’. This media has to traverse a lot to strengthen the democratic discourses.