

7. Issues and Challenges of Tea Garden Labourers Related to Their Socio-Economic and Educational Problems

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Abstract:

One of the most backward and exploited communities of Assam is Tea Garden Community. They are recognized as tea tribes by Government of Assam. They are the descendent of workers brought by British Colonial planters in 19th century from different parts of the country. Most of the people from this community are workers. Their socio-economic and educational development is very pathetic due to low wages, poor housing, poor health condition, lack of avenues for social mobility, lack of safety and lack of proper educational facilities. Specially Illiteracy among girls and women is the main reason for their sexual exploitation and child marriage. The purpose of this study is to investigate the issues and challenges faced by tea garden labourers related to their Socio-economic and educational problems.

Keywords:

Tea tribe, socio-economic, Educational, backwardness

7.1 Introduction:

Among the North-Eastern states of India Assam is one of the most beautiful states of India Which is richest in natural resources. Since times immemorial the state of Assam has been regarded as the land of immigration. The tea tribes of Assam are one of the most backward and exploited community of Assam. They are decedents of workers brought by British colonial planters in 19th century from different parts of the country. They are originally the people from Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, west Bengal, Tamil Nadu etc. and later on they become as the permanent resident of assam.

The state of Assam is well known in world tea industry and market. Assam contributes 55% of India's total production of tea. This industry is one of the most influential sectors of government revenue. This industry is highly depended on large no of manpower and most importantly maximum numbers of workers are female. Tea tribes are mainly found in upper division of Assam likely Jorhat, Sivsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur. Total population of tea tribe in Assam approximate 1 crore. Tea tribes are basically divided in to two parts: Adivasi and Tea tribe. The tea tribes are those who are living in a dominant tea garden area and Adivasis are those who may not live dominant tea garden areas.

Objectives of the study:

1. To study about the culture of tea tribes
2. To study about the socio-economic and educational challenges faced by tea tribes.

Methodology: Descriptive method has used in this study.

Data collection: Collected data for this study from secondary sources.

7.2 Discussion:

Objective 1: After going through the study, the researcher has found that the social life of the tea tribes is enriched with folk songs, folk dances, folk tales, traditional customs, festivals etc. down the ages, tea tribes got settled down in Assam, assimilated with Assamese society and contributes a lot of elements to the greater Assamese culture. They are the people of various ethnolinguistic origin from different regions of eastern India comprised of various castes. The list of tribes and castes among them are, Bhumij, Koiri, Gowala, Munda, Bengra, Ghatowar, Rajowar, Baiga, Basphor, Baraik, Laik, Dusad, Ganju, Julaha, Rajbonshi, Santhal, Tati, Manki, Savar, Patnaik, Tassa, Sonar, Teli, Mal, Kharia, Mirdha, Dhanbari, Dhanowar, Pradhan, Birija, Mahli, Sawra etc.

People of this community speak Sadri, Odia, Saora, Kurukh, Santhali and Mundari. Sadri is the predominantly spoken language, and serve as lingua franca. Gradually with the rise of literacy among newer generations they are becoming fluent in Assamese, Hindi and English.

Music dance and festivals are an important element of their community. Their music is collectively performed in various occasions and festivals. Jhumur is a famous folk dance performed by them collectively wearing red border white saree. Karam puja is one of their festivals which is celebrated to devote Karam Devi. Karam dance is also an important dance performed by both the boys and girls during Karam festival. Some traditional musical instruments like bansuri, dhols, nagaras, nishans, tamaks etc. are used by this community. Tusu puja, karam puja, fagua, durga puja, manasa puja are some of their major festivals.

Objective 2: The tea tribes of Assam are the most exploited people of the society. They have been experiencing deprivation, discrimination, and suppression since British colonial rule. It is to be noted that people working in the gardens live a life full of misery. Most of the tea gardens are located in remote areas. There is no proper transportation facility. Lack of adequate schools and requirements their literacy rate is very low which has greater impact on every aspect of their life. Without proper education it's not possible to improve their socio-economic status. Due to this female and children are mostly exploited. The researcher has interacted with some tea garden workers of this area and came to know that they are exploited by their tea garden owners and tea companies. Women are mostly victims of oppression and sexual exploitation. They spend most of their time in working tea gardens so they could not take care of their children.

Human rights violations like low wages of workers, there is no proper facilities, low quality of ration provided to them, they are harassed both economically and socially.

They are also educationally deprived. scarcity of school and teacher is one of the reasons of educational backwardness. Due to low income, they do not want to send their children to school.

Girls of their community are extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation and early marriage is also practiced among them.

Mostly tea estates are located in remote areas and this leads to the exploitation and backwardness. There planters exploit them every possible way.

Their health condition is also very poor. They are unaware of their health issue. They take tea with salt which is very bad for health. People of this community are mostly illiterate; approximately 52% adults are manual worker. Oral tobaccos like gutkha, pan masala, kp, shikhar etc. And alcohol, homemade beer is commonly used by them. Due to alcohol and tobacco children suffer from hyper tension, struck worm skin infection like skin diseases respiratory infections including tuberculosis, filariasisetc. They are not given lifesaving medicine in due time.

Wide spread use of alcohol and tobacco causes morbidity among them is reported by most of the researcher. Sore throat and cough among men and headache among female workers. Are common morbidity another study reported that diarrhoea, dysentery, typhoid, scarbies are also found among these people.

7.3 Conclusion:

From the above study it is found that the tea tribes of Assam are enriched with various music, dance and festivals. But due to lack of educational awareness and proper health facilities they are lagging behind in every aspect of life. Getting low wages from garden authorities they cannot maintain their healthy life and living style.

They are one of the most exploited and backward community in Assam. Girls of their community are extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation and early marriage is also practiced among them. Therefore, to improve their socio economic and educational conditions it is necessary that the government should take initiatives and create awareness among them regarding health and education. They should also provide desired wages so that they can Uplift their living standard and educate their children.

7.4 References:

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