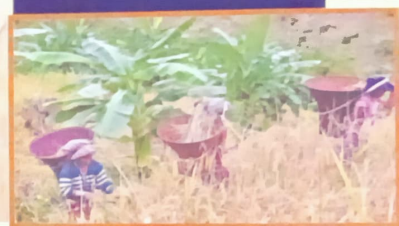


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Issues of Development in North-East India



Harendra Sinha
Subhash Sinha
Suhrid Sinha

Issues of Development in
North-East India

Harendra Sinha
Subhash Sinha • Suhrid Sinha



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ISSUES OF DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

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Harendra Sinha
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ROLE OF TEA GARDEN WOMEN WORKER IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

A Brief Study with Special References to Barak Valley

SANTOSH AKURA

'If you are cold, Tea will warm you,
If you are heated, It will cool you,
If you are depressed, It will cheer you,
If you are excited, It will calm you.'

- Gladstone.¹

Yes, here we find that Gladstone tells us about the benefit of using Tea. We generally use Tea as a drink item but sometime we find that in the Tea Garden area people used the Tea Leaf as chopped herbs mixed with boiled potato to be it and in the Garden area it is popularly known as 'Patisana'.

This is one of the main source of Economy of India, specially of Assam Economy. We always talk about Tea and its benefits, talk about its consumption, sale and purchase etc. Even once Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose told that – 'There can be no politics without Tea'²

Tea is famous everywhere in the world, everyone knows about this product but the persons who are generally involve in producing Tea farm the Tea leaf are forgotten, they got less respect, less value all the time in general.

Tea Industry is occupying a very important place in Indian Economy. It is also one of the traditional industries of Country. In 1833, Tea was found in Assam and accordingly plantation was started; in 1855, Tea was found first time in Barak Valley i.e. in Cachar District and after one year i.e., in the Year 1856 Tea factory was setup both in Cachar District and the nearest Shrihatta District. Depending on the Tea Garden in the second half of the 19th Century – Plantation Labourers were collected from various parts of India; the Britishers employed some 'Sender men' for this work. The Percentage of plantation labour who were collected from various parts of India in the year 1884 – 85 and in 1889 are clearly stated by Amalendu Guha in his book 'Planter Raj to Swaraj'. Dr. Guha writes – 'The Plantation Labour force was a multilingual heterogeneous society. In 1884-85, 44.7 percent of them were from Chhotanagpur, 27.2 percent from Bengal, 21.6 percent from U.P. and Bihar, 0.2 percent from Bombay, 0.7 percent from Madras and 5.5 percent from within Assam. In 1889, half of them were found to have been recruited from Chhotanagpur, about a quarter from Bengal and about 0.5 percent only from Assam itself.

It can be say that the expansion of the Tea Plantation in both the Valleys of Assam i.e. in the Brahmaputra and in Barak Valley opened the course of tremendous inflow of indentured workers who were mostly rootless, landless Adivashi peasants ⁴. Coming out from their original root they used to settled in this valley and formed a mixed culture in this region and became famous in the name of 'Tea Tribe'. With the passage of time Tea Garden community of Barak Valley had developed a new socio-cultural identity and contributed to the growth of a new composite society which is known here as 'Bagania Culture'. These cultural features make them as a distinct community within a new environment.

They lost their root and for that in the time of sadness, when they were in trouble-were tortured, humiliated by the 'Babu's' and 'Saheb' and sometimes by the 'Sardar's'- they broke into tears and in the lonely situation they share their heart touching feeling through some folk-song which is popularly known as 'Jhumur Song'. The state of their existence reflected as –

Ki Nithur Shyam,
Phanki Diye Aanili Assam
Sardar Bole Kaam-Kaam,
Babu Bole Dhire Aan
Saheb Bole Libo Pither Cham,
Hai, Nithur Shyam !
Phanki Diye Aanili Assam.

(What a cruel friend, (Why) brought to Assam by deceiving me. Sardar asks for more work. The Babu abuses and the Saheb threaten to peel the skin of the back. Oh! Cruel friend, you brought (me) Assam by deceiving me.) ⁵

Becoming fool by hearing the words from Britishers or by the 'Arkathis' (Senderman) - ' Gach Hilanese rupeya milenga' or in the words of tea garden labourer- ' Gach Jharle poisa paoa jai' – i. e. They were told that - ' Money will fall if you sweep a tree. Inshort, they were informed that in this part of the country , money falls just like the leaves from the trees . This state is also reflected here in the words of Tea Garden Labourers of Barak Valley. Onne of the famous Jhumur Song found here which reflects the pain as -

Gach Hilale Poisa Pabi,
Etai Shune Chale Aaili,
Na Bujhe Aaise Kore Dishahara Hoili.....
Na, Hoili Assami,
Na, Hoili Bangali,
Kopaleri Lekha Chilo..
Bagania Hoili.

(Money will fall, if you sweep a tree, hearing this exitedly came in this region, due to ignorance become fool and hopeless. Lost existence! Neither become Assamese, Nor become Bengali, It is written in the fate that became 'Bagania' (i.e. tea tribe).⁶

Historically, the tea plantation are a product of colonialism. In Barak Valley at present there are near about 237 Tea Gardens⁷ are there , out of these 92 Nos. Are main Garden and rest 145 Nos. Are out Garden and in these Gardens more than 150 types⁸ or titles of Tea Garden and Ex- Tea Garden people are living from their four to five generations.

Having a well-known Identity as Tea Garden community, the ancestors of these people bring various well developed 'cultural bucket' along with them and generation after generation becoming a part of this Industrial Revolution they shows their care and love

to the environment as well as in the development of the Economy also. Creative these people – represent themselves as 'Subaltern'. They are also taking part in their cultural events like – Jewtia, Piria, Chatt, Tushu, Karam etc. - they believe in various folk rituals.

The Tea Garden people constitute a major segment to the present day society of this region. Therefore, it is also observed that the labour based Tea Industry is not only an asset in the Economic Sector, but also a component of the Socio-cultural, Political formation of a Society. So it is very necessary for everyone to study the exact condition of their living Standard, Settlement pattern, culture, their Socio-Economic cultural adjustment and interaction with the Society. Although we find a multilingual heterogeneous culture in Barak Valley but mainly the Bengali culture is found in a large segment and mode of communication is Bengali, which is commonly followed in this region.

In the tea garden of Barak Valley we find that two types of language are there -mixed Bengali and mixed Hindi which is known as '**Bagania Bangla**' and '**Bagania Hindi**' or '**Bhojpuri**' and another language which in some tea gardens used is '**Oriya**' language (in the District of karimganj). Infact here we find a admixture language .From the official records of the Cachar Cha Shramik Union we find that here in the tea Garden area -Hindi, Bengali, Oriya and Bhojpuri language are spoken .However ,the impact of the dominant regional language like Bengali acts a powerful influence in the process of bilingual and multilingual in the tea garden society in Barak Valley region.

In Barak Valley the tea garden people specially the women play a leading role in performing their rituals and folk culture .Not only in cultural aspects they shows their ability in the field of Economic development of this region. Now a days tea garden women plays a great role in the field of socio-cultural, educational, political, economical and in the field of literature also.

The families of the tea Garden people – labourer including the women are also engaged in the tea Industry. Now a days we find that the no. Of women worker or Labourer is higher than the no. of male worker. Not only this part we see that the women participation is growing gradually in every aspects of the society. Tea Garden women worker are free to work, even most of the cases the women became the head of the family as the male worker waste the maximum part of their income in drinking wine, cigar etc. Male workers are often shows less care to their family

than as women worker. In most of the village it is found that the tea garden male labourer are involved themselves in eating and drinking and also involve themselves in production of children. For that, women are bound to take much role for the family as well as the Garden also. This work is basically an attempt to cover the surface of lives of the Tea Garden women labourer of Barak Valley and also try to show a comprehensive picture of their social, Economic, political and cultural aspects. The main motive behind the work is to internalize the power of women, specially the working women of the tea garden of Barak Valley, who are daughter of India, in briefly, but by a thorough study of the lives of women tea garden labourers.



Women workers plucking Tea Leaf in the field

In tea Industry women labourers are given much more priority. Women worker plays a great role in developing the economy. Women labourers get priority because owing to their nimble fingers, they are experts in plucking the tea leaves, they used to do plucking, cleaning, pruning, cutting, work as 'Safai Karmi', work in packeting unit, marking, sealing, carrying-every work has been done by them. They were supervised by a women 'Sardarni' or some time by a male 'Sardar' – who is expert in all these works. In the field women workers were divided in several groups and each groups were supervised by an expert women worker or male worker who are known as 'Sardarni' (Woman)/ 'Sardar' (Man) .The groups in the tea garden are known in the name of 'Dopha'. It is very hard to pluck a tea leaf, it requires a lot of expertise to pluck only two leaves and a bud and that too without causing damage to the trees.

In some tea gardens male workers also used in the process of plucking. Generally, men are used in the field to cleaning the jungles, cutting the tea trees, spray medicine and all this. It is found that the women worker are very much preferred in nursing the tea tree. Coming to the field nursing the tea tree they were living their lives in the same unchanged work culture and in return they are getting less amount of wages. Sometimes in the field, they get deprived by the Babus and all the management faculties. Sometimes the pain of such women worker reflects in 'Tushu' song also. The 'Tushu' song which reflects such thought is –

Pati tullaam kini kini ,
Kole ojon diyechi,
Noimon Pati choimon hoilo-
Mone beraj hoyechi...

(Tea plucked from the tree – bud by bud, pulled in the machine, taken the weight, nine became six in straight, Heart became very upset)⁸

This song speaks about the misery and mental agony of the women labourers and the social and cultural life of them. The women labourer does hard labour day and night in return of very low wage from the owner and no wages for household activities. Now a days they are getting only Rs. 210/- day (Daily wage given to the labourer of Bagbahar T. E. Cachar, Assam) and free ration of 3.5kgs. of rice/wheat per week and 2.5gms of tea in a month including low level of medical facility which is not equals against their labour, which they give to the company owner.

The family life of these labourers comprises of multiple problems ranging from unchanged work culture, lack of awareness and education. Involvement in petty unsocial activities and drinking leads them to economic hardships.

The female tea garden labourers of Barak Valley as well as Assam toil hard to strengthen the Economy of the garden owners and the state as well, but in return they get torture, low wage, unhealthy rooms to dwell, unclean drinking water and various other deprivation. As a result not only they suffer but even the entire family of the labourers are receded deep down the Socio-Economic ladder. Though now a days the situation is getting change - awareness were seen little bit but this enlightenment cannot reach to the grass root level. In Barak Valley as there is no any other way to survive, the tea gardens are the only way

where number of people can get involve and can survive their lives.

Women as Skill Worker

The garden women are skilled in the household as well in their works also plucking of tea leaves a proper manner is very important task in the tea manufacturing process. The women labourers are engaged in plucking of leaves and cleaning them subsequently before the tea is manufactured in the factory, after making the tea in various grades, they are packed according to their grades and this packeting also women workers are playing a vital role. So this is the fact that women are very much skilled and expert in this trade. In some tea gardens we see that experts or skilled labourers were being appreciated and encouraged by the owners in Cachar district. West Jalenga T.E. is there where the skilled labour can get cell phones or various other gifts according to their performance and this is done once in a year and this thing has been done in Dwarbond tea garden also, which is an out garden of West Jalenga T.E. The following is the figure which shows the states of the skilled women tea garden labourers in the various tea garden of Barak Valley- Bagbahar T.E. - 70% , West Jalenga T.E. - 78% (Cachar District); Narsingpur T.E. - 76% , Aeinakhal T.E. - 60%, Borakhai T.E. - 75% (Hailakandi District); Shepinjuri T.E.- 72%, Langai T.E. - 76% (Karimganj District).

The tea garden women doing physically demanding jobs that require standing, walking and carrying loads. Although a large workforce within the tea Industry, women of tea garden community worked in the family also and plays a leading role in the society, they get involve themselves in every function of their locality they celebrate the birth, marriage, rituals etc. Take part in the cremation, enjoyed the folkdance, folksong, take part in the festive like – Chatt, Jewtia, Pidia, Karam etc. Being as a worker the women tea garden labourer put their existence globally. As Iran, Russia, UAE, UK, Chaina, USA, Germany and Japan are some of the largest consumers of Assam tea.

Role in family and in Society

The female tea garden labourers get married at a very early age, unlike their traditional forms of marriage system, intercommunity marriages are common in the tea garden society. They got early marriage and subsequently also become mothers at a considerable low age. Even the tea garden labourers are not

very much conscious about their health and family planning so they are not very much conscious about their education also. In the matter of education the condition of the women are not good, though now a days little bit consciousness is growing. They are actually not in a position to reap the fruits of the various facilities made available by the Govt. The ratio of child birth is quite higher in comparison to other castes of people. Giving birth to a 4-5 children are quite commonly found in this community. The percentage of birth rate can be shown as— No. of one child -1 percent; No. of two children-2 percent; No. of three children -7 percent; No. of four children -10 percent; and No. of five or more than this Children percentage is near about 30. As women of this community got their marriages at very early age and most of the women get married — because of this the birth rate becomes high. As most of the family cannot support their children to get Education. At the age when they are supposed to get engaged in looking after their younger brothers and sisters, because their parents have to work in the tea gardens from dawn till dusk. From the tender of age they take on the reigns of the family and so could never get the light of education, some time they enroll their children- only just because of getting the rice provided by the school authority.

The situation for which they cannot get the chance of taking Education or become a caretaker is reflected in the following rhymes -

Ghuma nunu ghuma
Tor ma gelo jhill.
Tu mare bhate gil..

(Sleep baby sleep, your mom went to Lake (for bringing water), Delicious juicy rice please you take!).¹⁰ Baby is told to sleep by eating a delicious juicy rice because his/her mother is busy in some other works so the elder one taking care of that baby, because of such situation the level of Education is very poor, sometime the family cannot support their children because of their financial weakness. In such situation also some children' are coming now a days, they can get their education as the Govt. providing free education up to Higher Secondary level. The tea garden people are coming now a days to get Education. Though the level of Education between male and female are very low in comparison to other common people. Now a days we see that in Barak Valley the tea garden community are taking part in the process of education. They become conscious about their children.

Even now a days we can count some names who became IAS, ACS through their capacity; some of them became MLA and MP also some became teacher, joined Army, Police and several other post and served for the State and the Country as well. Rarely but we got some female writers also in this region. Jhumur Pandey, Kajal Demta are the two names who are well known figure in the field of Literature.

The women tea labourers play a vital role in the socio-cultural arena. They actively participate in various folk rituals like - Jewtia, Karam, Pidia, Chatt, Tushu etc. and various other religious festivals.

Now it seems that due to passage of time the life of these people also undergoes myriad changes. The tea garden women get them involved in the political field also. They are taking part in the local G.P. Elections. They seek vote from their ward to serve their locality. They can now be seen to contest and win Z.P, G.P., and President Seats also. Even they are seen to be involved in Women labourers' welfare association also. Among such kind of power short of short comings are also there. It is observed that both male and female are addicted to alcohol. Addiction of alcohol is a common habit to the life of the people of tea gardens of Barak Valley.

The religious life of the tea tribe society are also unique. They are successfully maintaining their own religion, custom and belief system since from the colonial period. The Santhals, the Mundas, the Oraons and other ethnic groups had their own God's and Goddess. In some tea garden we find that the traditional God and Goddess like Lord Shiva and Goddess Durga are famous in their local names- Goddess Durga is named as 'Maharani Mai'; some lords as - ' Diha Baba', 'Kanki Baba' etc. All these God and Goddess were worshipped once in a year in 'Gram Puja' or in the time of epidemic disease. The woman as well as man together shows their devotion to these God and Goddess.

Some festivals like Karam Puja, Chatt Puja, Pidia Puja, Jewtia Puja, Tushu Puja etc. and art forms like Jhumur dance and song, Tushu song etc. are identified as the cultural expressions of the whole tea garden workers society and in this art form and festivals women participation is mandatory, women plays a great role in these activity. These Hindu religious festivals permitted in to the religious life of the tea garden workers through the process of acculturation. Folk songs like Jhumur, Karam, Tushu, Sahar,

Pidia, Kajri song, marriage song and group dance like Jhumur dance which are performed in the course of the celebrations are now become a common cultural tradition of the entire tea garden community of this region.¹¹

Inter-Colonialism is a new dimension in the life of tea garden community. Inter-Colonialism is a serious threat to the lives of these people. The selfish kind of nature of the developed people of this society leads these things.

It is found in study that in Barak Valley tea garden society believed in the existence of various kinds of spirits and evil practice. In the time of any disease or in sickness they think that their might have some evil effects and because of this belief they prefer more on 'Jadu- Tona', they think that these things are happened by the effects of certain spirits or supernatural power and for that before going to any treatment they supposed to go to the house of 'Ojha'. They believe in the existence of 'ghost' and 'daini' i.e. the evil spirit. They strongly believe that the various disease or other calamities to individuals, families or to the villagers are all happened because of those evil spirit.

They believe in various 'totem' follow various 'taboo' also. Belief in ghost, the existence of 'daini' or 'dain' become an integral part in the religious and cultural tradition of the tea garden community of Barak Valley as well as the tea garden community of Assam, and women are found in taking great care in such kind of beliefs.

It can be said that women of tea garden labourer community contributed a lot in the improvement of the Socio-cultural, Economic and political aspects of this region and at the same time Assam and the country as well. They are used for the growth of the Garden owner, involved for the development of the society and for the family. But they are still remaining in such a situation that it is not easy to them to get improvement. In their society the reflection of light is coming like the light from a 'twinkling stars'. The need of the time is to improve the condition, but reality says that it is not so easy. Because these condition is become their fate, Britishers deprived them somehow for more than a period of century of years, after independent they became again fall in another type of situation, a form of Inter-Colonialism leads to a serious problem to the life of these community—specially to the lives of the women. They must be taken to the mainstream of the society, proper roadmap must be required to get improve the

condition of these women — who have taken every responsibility without any question!

The fact observed from various tea gardens that the tea garden women actually never got any special treatment for being women; rather they were used in other way. From the beginning i. e. since from their migration to till today situation, the process of improvement needed more support from everywhere and can say that this could not be an easy task in all the time. We have to wait for that day. The tea garden women are no longer get them involve in 'feminism!' We see even these women can say - 'what is feminism?' These women are 'Subaltern' in the real sense. Not only the women, the entire tea garden community can be termed as 'Subaltern'. Sometime the entire Garden can be sold by the tea garden Owner and accordingly all the villagers, labourers of the garden can be sold or brought by any moment. There must be a special kind of Socio-Economic, Cultural and Political issues which can be seen and apart from men, the women involvement or the role of these tea garden women can easily be observed. These women are skilled enough in their profession, if they can get the opportunity they can show their ability in every field, but actually in grass root level the situation is not so good and is needed much more importance to be improve. A united process could have might change the situation, society need to come forward to achieve such kind of goals. We should start a journey from here till the goal is not achieved. Success can be achieved easily because the tea garden women labourers of Barak Valley are very much skilled in every field. They are very much rich in their work culture.

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9

EMPLOYEES PERCEPTION IN THE POST-CLOSURE OF CACHAR PAPER MILL An Empirical Study

DIPANKAR DAS AND RAM CHANDRA DAS

Introduction

Any nation in the world with a large population and a wide range of resources can grow economically with the help of industrialization. The historical record shows that the industrialized nations of the globe ended the cycle of poverty by concentrating first on agriculture or the production of domestic resources (Chapain & Murie, 2008; Coulter & Ligas, 2000).

The role played by industry in an economy for the overall development of the country includes growing national income, foreign exchange, balanced development, self-sustained growth, national security, exploitation of resources, better standard of living, economic stability, growing employment opportunities, greater control of economic activity, technological advancement, reduce population growth, more savings and investments, low pressure on land, development of markets and increase in government revenue (Franko, 1971); Gordus. 1984; Hansson & Wigblad. 2006).

By observing the effects of economic development, job creation, and technological innovation in any nation in the world, one can understand the value of a sector or a business. It is believed that failing companies release their knowledge and resources which benefits the economy and society as a whole. The expenses for a company's survival may be reduced as a result of