Child Education in Cachar District: Problem and Prospects among the Children of Tea Garden Labour Community

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ABSTRACT:*Education is not only a gift for life but also it is a way to live a life. It helps to enlights a person to unlock the potential and realize his dream. Education offers knowledge and skills that are aimed at enlightening women and girls in society. But unfortunately attainment of education level is very poor among the children of tea garden labour community in Cachar. This paper seeks to examine the level of educational status among the children of tea garden labour community.*

Key Words- Educational attainment, Middle man, Family Debt, Wages

1. Introduction

The tea industry is one of the leading industries in Cachar as well as Assam. With the establishment of tea garden in Assam, a large number of labour force from various linguistic and ethnic groups were brought to Assam from different parts of India. The tea companies were in great need of utilizing huge labour force for the growth of tea industries, which they could not manage locally. This necessitated importation of labour from different parts of India. It is not wrong to infer here that those periods witnessed frequent famines and epidemics in Central Province, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal due to the miss- governance of the East India Company (Kumar P. 2006). The middle man takes the opportunity of the famines and epidemics and trapped these labours in plea of good earnings. These indentured labour forces of tea gardens of Assam are now very important and integral part of the socio-economic life of Assam. At present 58 tea gardens are there in Cachar district (2015) which is 6.95% of Assam as a whole.(Surma Valley Branch, ITI Report Book)

Since the mid of 19th century they have been living like bonded labour. The idea of education cannot infuse into their mind that it is the education which can emancipated them from the yoke of exploitation .Culture and civilization invariably based on the proper education. It enlightens the society. Proper education is the means of making perfection of human development and civilization. The percentage literates among tea garden labours are much lower in comparison to the state percentage. This has pushed them in a state of misery and backwardness. The tea garden labours are much reluctant of sending their children to even primary school. Children of Plantation labour either stay at home for looking after young brother and sister or engage themselves as casual labour in function of plucking, weeding, hoeing and nursery work

Tea Gardens Educational Status in Cachar:-Like the state educational status, educational statuses of tea labourer are very poor the general condition of education is horrible in tea gardens of Cachar. There does not exit any provision or institution either public or private in any part of Cachar for the instruction of the people of tea garden labour communities. This sad state of affairs continued for a long period in the tea estate of Barak Valley which were completely detached and isolated from the general stream of life of the rural and urban center. The means of instruction would indeed be a boon and gratefully received as such by the inhabitants of Cachar where education of any sort is wholly unknown but I fear the resource. " The constitution of India included a number of important provisions relating to education. As for example, article 45 imposed direct responsibility for education on the states. The state shall endeavor to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. The constitution of India also mentioned that state shall promote the educational and economic interest of the weaker section with special care for the people of schedule caste, schedule tribe and other backward classes irrespective of caste, sex, religion, place of birth etc. But the objectives of the Indian constitution have not yet been fulfilled. Among the tea gardens labourers, illiteracy is a major obstacle that stands on the way of socio economic political progress of this particular society. Because of lack of literate people in tea garden labourers, they display a lack of consciousness towards the evil effects of natural and environmental problems. Further they are unable to utilize the advantages given by the government. Illiterate people are easy prey to superstitions, communalism, child marriage and other social evils.

There were no high schools or higher secondary school in the tea estate for a long period. No record available to show when and where the first primary school was opened in the tea garden areas. Poor communication, isolated environment, lack of initiative by the planters to open primary schools in the garden, non-availability of teachers to teach in garden school, lack of awareness among the tea labourers regarding the value of education has resulted very low educational status among the tea garden people. Not only is that regarding the women educational status the situation pathetic. It has been found that still there prevail discrimination between the boys and girls in respect of sending their children to schools. It is general thought of the household of the tea garden labourers explains itself about the discrimination of sending of their girls that 'por likh ke ki hobe, akhir toh chhula to fukei hoto" –means what will be the value of education for girls, at the end they have to serve in the kitchen. The then BJP Prime Ministerial candidate and Present Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi expressed his view on tea garden labourers of Barak Valley in an election campaign at Silchar. Modi promised quality and dignified life to tea garden labourers of Assam. "The tea industry has given an identity to Assam and for the last 150 years, labourers from others parts of the country have come here and worked hard to ensure the world gets its tea," Modi said while addressing a rally at Ramnagar (Silchar). The living condition of the tea garden labourers was, however, deplorable and there has been no improvement in their living conditions over four to five generations, said Modi. Modi asked: "Will they continue to live like this? Are they not entitled to proper houses, education for their children, health facilities and a dignified life?" If voted

to power, Modi said, he would initiate several schemes for the development and progress of tea garden labourers. The BJP leader also attacked the Congress government for creating a divide among tea gardens of Brahmaputra and Barak Valley. "Why are wage rate of labourers in Brahmaputra Valley different from that of Barak Valley? Should labourers in the industry not get the same wage?" Modi pointed out that this neglect of tea gardens in Barak Valley has resulted in sick gardens with labourers suffering and unemployment on the rise. (The Echo Of India-Siliguri, Sunday, February 23, 2014, page no-4)

2. Objectives of the Study

The study is carried out with the objectives that
- (i)　To examine the educational status among the tea gardens children in Cachar district
- (ii)　To examine the problems that stands on the way of educational attainment among the children of tea garden in Cachar district.

3. Population and Sample

The study is based on primary data. Data is collected from the fifteen (15) tea gardens in Cachar district. For the collection of data random sampling is sampling is used. Only one child from each household of age 16 and above who is found to have completed his/ her study (according to parents' opinion), is included in the study sample. Data pertaining to grade completed by the student, households and parental characteristics etc. are collected with the help of a well structured schedule with through personal interview method.

4. Theoretical of Framework

The process of educational attainment of the children or broadly the process of inter-generational status attainment has also been studied extensively from both economic & sociological point of view. These analyses are distinguished by a wide variety of theoretical approaches, numerous methodological & statistical models; various observed outcomes & a multitude of data sets.

Economic Issues: - Economic issues are the most relevant factor regarding the educational status of the children of the tea garden labourers. Becker's model emphasizes children's schooling are viewed in the same frame work as the other choices regarding the allocation of family resources. Knowing the relevant determinants of their children well-being [except luck or chance], parents have a demand function for their children education that depends on the family's income, children's endowment and market opportunities. The model was also expanded to include parental fertility decision and highlighted the trade –off between the child quantity & quality.

Socialization   issues: - In this framework like the parental economic success is relevant to children's attainment, socialization reflects also in the children education attainment. The working mother hypothesis, for example suggests that the mother's absence from the home may a source of developmental problem in children, manifested in reduced inn achievement in verities of dimension's. The "welfare culture" hypothesis emphasizes the harmful effects that parental dependence on public assistance may have children's aspiration and on the capacity for independence action. Macualy presents this theoretical position most explicitly. The welfare culture hypothesis is related closely to the "culture of the poverty" model; both frameworks emphasize the influence of the state poverty or welfare dependency on personal adequacy, independence and self esteem. Finally the "signaling framework" suggests that a variety of readily observable characteristics of the parent's simply may serve as signal of or proxies for important unmeasured characteristics of parent's e.g. Motivation, farsightedness, constitution that influence the children;' productivity,

Physical Schooling Condition: - Physical schooling condition is one of the attributes in achieving educational status among tea garden workers. Good physical condition definitely has a positive impact on children's education in primary level. Children's primary schooling has significant relationship between education & physical condition of the schools. Providing incentive for attending schools making the school process attracting to the children make it more vocational in job oriented and providing better infrastructure for the schools are some of the policies likely to improve the scenario.

Other Factors :- Apart from these the paper is dealt with other factors like mothers role in children's education , household's main income, family debt, distance of high school from the household, family size, savings, mother's education etc. Based on the above literacy work children educational status (CES) is examined by analyzing the different set of attributes in the paper. The regression model takes the form of –

$Y=f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, X_7, X_8, u_i)$

Where,

Y= Educated Completed by the Child (in Years)

X_1= Age of Father (in years)

X_2= Sex of Children (Dummy, 1 if the child is Male; 0 otherwise)

X_3= Household's total Income from all sources (in Rs)

X_4= Family Debt (Current, accumulated; in Rs)

X_5= Housing Condition (Dummy, 1 if pucca; 0 otherwise)

X_6= Distance of High School from the household (in Km)

X_7= Mother's Education (in years)

X_8= Family size (number).

5. Data Analysis, Result and Discussion: - In this section of the study data is analysed with simple statistical tools, tabular form etc. after this the result of the regression is presented in tabular for and discussed below. In this section relative attributes is observed and discussed to reach the objective of the study.

Table -5.1
Demographic characteristics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Education of Children completed(in years)	7.25	4.37
Age of children(in years)	21.14	4.65
Age of father(in years)	50.57	7.74
Age of mother(in years)	48.38	6.94
Family size(in number)	5.20	1.07

Source: Calculated by Scholar

In the Table -5.1 the data reflects the demographic characterizes of the tea garden labour community of Cachar. The Table reveals that mean year of children's education completed is 7.25 which are too low, as the sample of children for the study is collected 16 years and above, the mean education should be at least 10. Besides, average age of the children is 21.14 and standard deviation of the age of children is 4.65.In respect of father's average age and mother's average age are found to be 50.57 and 48.38 respectively; whereas standard deviation are 7.74 and 6.94 respectively. In case of family size, average family size is 5.20 which is also seems to be larger.

Table -5.2
Total Candidates Appeared in H.S.L.C Examinations in Assam and In Tea Gardens in Different Years

Year	Total Appeared (in Assam)	Total Passed	Total Appeared (In Tea Garden)	Passed in Tea Areas	Share of Appeared in Percent
2009	189750	118397	4155	1522	0.80210804
2010	213091	137865	4494	1711	0.80294334
2011	234730	166851	6469	3461	1.47446002
2012	278698	194067	10891	4877	1.74992286
2013	366475	259148	17686	8978	2.44982605

Source:-Result Hand Book of H.S.L.C Examination

Table: - 5.2 show the performance of H.S.L.C result and the percentage of children who appeared from tea garden areas in H.S.L.C Examination from 2009 to 2013. In 2009 only 0.802 percent of children appeared in H.S.L.C Examination was from tea gardens areas. The corresponding percentages of the said for the yea 2010,2011,2012,2013 are 0.802, 1.47, 1.74, and 2.44 respectively. In 2009 only 1522 tea garden candidates appeared in H.S.L.C Examination where as 1711,3461,4877,8978 candidates appeared in 2010,2011,2012,2013 respectively. The figures show an increase in the percentage share of such candidates out of the total in Assam.

Table -5.3
Performance of H.S.L.C Examination in Assam, Cachar, Tea Garden Areas of Assam and Surveyed Areas in Different Years (In %)

Year	Assam	Cachar	Tea Garden Areas of Assam	Surveyed Areas
2009	62.39	64.84	36.63	6.95
2010	64.69	65.17	38.07	10.12
2011	71.08	65.17	53.50	9.24
2012	69.63	54.72	44.78	11.12
2013	70.71	58.25	50.76	13.25

Source:-Result Hand Book of H.S.L.C Examination & Field Survey

Table- 5.3 reveals that in 2009, the pass percentage of students in H.S.L.C Examination in Assam is 62.39 where as in Cachar, the same is 64.84. But in Tea garden areas the pass percentage is only 36.63. This low percentage of pass out in H.S.L.C Examinations in tea garden areas indicates towards poor educational performance of children in Tea garden areas. The table also shows such a comparative picture of the performance of children in Assam, Cachar and Tea Garden areas of Assam in H.S.L.C Examinations in the year 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013. The relevant figures in the table show that the percentage of pass out in H.S.L.C Examinations of children of tea garden areas has increased from 36.63 percent in 2009 to 50.76 percent in 2013. This indicates substantial improvement in the performance of children in tea garden area. However, the same in comparison to state performance is still a dismal long, the performance of children of Cachar district is far better in percentage term. The figures in Table:-3.5 are a testimonial to the fact that children of tea garden areas are still backward in educational attainments. But in case of study area in Cachar district the situation is much pathetic. Performance in H.S L.C is very poor. The pass percent in H.S.L.C is 6.95% in 2009, 10.12% in 2010, 9.24% in 2011, 11.12% in 2012 and 13.25% in 2013.

Table 5.4
Availability of School factors

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Distance from Primary schools(in K. M)	0.37	0.09
Distance from Secondary schools (in K. M	0.52	0.09

Source: Field Survey

In the Table-5.4 data shows that average distance of the primary school is 0.37. Further average distance of the secondary school is 0.52 where as standard deviation of the distance of the secondary school is 0.09. There is no high school found the study areas. For higher education the students of tea garden labourer in Cachar district have to travels outside the tea garden areas, which is also a hindrance on the way of better educational level. Non-availability of adequate number schools in the premises of the gardens is another reason why children are deprived of education.

Table -5.5
Regression Result

Variable	Coefficient	't' value	Level of Significance
Const	-3.679	-0.573	0.570
X_1	0.174	1.621	0.114
X_2	0.487	0.419	0.678
X_3	0.00012	2.238	0.031
X_4	-0.0001	-1.294	0.204
X_5	0.320	0.197	0.845
X_6	0.684	0.908	0.370
X_7	5.661	0.926	0.360
X_8	0.553	2.860	0.007
X_9	-1.457	-2.514	0.016

Source: Estimated by Scholar

R^2=0.471
Adjusted R^2= 0.342
F Value = 3.661
D-W Test Value = 1.534

The estimated coefficient values, the 't' values and the level at which the variables have turned up statistically significant are presented in Table-5.5. Variable X_8 (Mother's education) has turned up statistically significant at 1 % level of significant and as expected, it exerts positive influence on Children's education.. A rise in the level of mother's education will raise the educational attainment of the children among the tea garden labour community. The variable X_9 (Family size) is statistically significant at 2% level of significance. The variable 'family size' has negative impact on children's education. More child (or family member) causes more burdens in the households. The variable X_3 (Household's yearly income) is found to be significant at 3% level of significance and its impact on children's educational attainment is positive. The result indicates that as household's income increases, the children's educational attainment also increases. However, as the families of the tea-garden labourers is, in general, poverty afflicted, its impact is found to be extremely weak on the dependent variable. The other variable that is found to be statistically significant at a level slightly higher than 10 % (11.4%) is X_1 i.e. Father's age. This variable also has positive effect on children's schooling implying that older parents (father's age and mother's age are highly positively correlated) have children with higher level of schooling. The result is unexpected since literature suggests that age of father (or father's age squared) generally has negative impact on children's education. This is because, older parents prefer their children to join labour force at the earliest. The present result needs further proving with a wider data set to draw conclusion.

The other important variables such as 'Sex of the Child', 'Family Debt', 'Father's exposure to outside world' etc have turned up statistically insignificant even at 20% level of significance in the regression results. However, they exhibited expected causal direction with the dependent variable.

CONCLUSION

Educational attainment of children in the tea garden workers is very low. This has further helped to perpetuate the lower status of future tea workers. They are totally ignorant about the role of modern education in improving the standard of living The women are socialized in such a way that social institutions condition them to accept their own exploitation.. Their ignorance, lack of skill and assertive nature make them subservient both at the place of work and family life. Mother's education has significant role in attaining the children's education in tea-garden areas as expected and exerts positive influence on children's education. But mother's education is found to be poor in the tea garden areas. Further due to low mother education (women education), there is ignorance about the family size which has a direct impact on the attainments of children education. Tea garden labour communities have the thinking that more children will help the increase the income level due to increase in earning members. The level of household income is found to have a positive impact on the attainment of children's education. But in tea-garden areas this particular dependent variable is found to be very low. The policy implication is that the eradication of poverty from this community will improve the educational achievements of the children of the tea-garden workers families.

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