

Education of Children of Tea Garden Workers: Organisations, Provisions and Challenges

Sultana Begum

Research Scholar, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi
naaziasultana31@gmail.com

Dr.QuaziFerdoushi Islam

Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

ABSTRACT

The tea garden workers are generally known as “Tea Tribe” In Assam the tea garden workers are the ones of the marginalized group or community which is still deprived from education. Although the government has taken numerous measures to improve their educational and socio-economic conditions but still they are lagging behind in the process of comprehensive development. The future of a nation is being framed by the children. Children are not only the hope of one’s family but also anticipation of the development of one’s community or society and the country. Education is a process which can bring the progression of the community and when community will be developed, the state or the nations will uplift as well.

This paper deals with the education of children of tea garden in the state of Assam and its aims to highlight the various government organizations, schemes and provisions and the challenges in attaining the benefits from these. The study draws on the review of secondary data such as journals, articles, document, and news paper clippings etc. After observing and analyzing all the secondary sources, the study reveals that the condition of education of tea garden workers children is still very impoverished.

Key words: tea garden tea tribe, education, indigenous, government organization, schemes and policies, challenges

INTRODUCTION

Short Description about Tea Garden Workers

Generally Tea garden workers are generally migrant people. In Assam they are known as “Tea Tribe”. The word tea tribe consists of two words the former is “TEA” which is largely planted shrub of leaves and the latter is “TRIBE” which means cluster of an aboriginal or an indigenous people. Hence, the term tea tribe characterized as a specific group of people who devoted to their life in the field of tea plantation. But they are aboriginal tribe of India but not of the state of Assam. Because some years ago, the British planters fetch some people from different origins and different places of India such as Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Tamilnadu

and Orissa in to tea gardens of Assam to engage in a work of tea cultivation as labourers. The tea tribe community is not sole ethnic group, it has a features of ethnic pluralism or cultural pluralism or can be said that multiculturalism.

Simply speaking the tea garden workers of Assam recognized as Tea Tribe, they also known as Adivasi (the primeval or ancient dweller) Sayar Singh Chopra, 2016. Officially the tea tribe community falls under the Other Backward Class (OBC) of Assam who has been struggling for their original identity as schedule tribe status in Assam. They can be also branded as the Most Other Backward Class (MOBC) of Assam. According to national commission for backward classes (NCBC) the tea tribe community is combining together with the 96 subgroups in the central list of OBCs. The

concept of tea tribe includes tea garden labourers, tea garden tribes and ex tea garden labourers and ex tea garden tribes. (NCBC, 2012)

Definitions of key terms

1. Education

According to Oxford English Dictionary, education is

- “The systematic instruction, schooling, or training of children and young people, or by extension, instruction obtained in adult life; the whole course of such instruction received by a person. Also, provision of this, as an aspect of public policy”.

According to Cambridge Dictionary,

- Education is the process of teaching and learning, especially in a school or college, or the knowledge that you get from this.
- Education is the process and learning or the organization such as schools where this process happens.

2. Provision

According to Cambridge dictionary, “provision means a statement in an agreement or a law that a particular thing must happen or be done”.

According to oxford English dictionary, provision denotes.

- A measure or measures taken beforehand; a precaution
- Make prior arrangement or preparation, supply necessary resources.
- A legal and formal statement providing for some particular matter or making a stipulation or condition.
- Provision for education is a duty of the state.

3. Tea gardenworkers: The people working in tea garden area are known as tea garden workers

4. Tea tribe: The tea garden workers of Assam called as tea tribe.

Government Organizations, Schemes and Provisions

There are several organizations dedicated to the well-being of the tea industry and its workers, From the above lists more relevant organizations which have important roles towards the education and life of tea garden people are discussed below-

The Tea Board of India

The Tea Board's headquarters, as well as three divisions in Assam, are located in Kolkata. It manages the growth of tea gardens and the improvement of quality through modernizing tea factories and providing extension services to growers.

The board also examines the regulation process to control the tea industry and trade. For effective policy intervention and initiatives the board also collect necessary data and disseminate the information to various stakeholders of tea industry on a regular basis. The following is a list of different programmes has been made by tea board of India.

- Capital grant programme for the development of school/college buildings and hostels connected to the school/colleges.
- Capital grant programme for educational institutions/organizations to expand school buildings, etc.
- A stipend for tea plantation employees' children to attend school.
- Tea producers' association/registered voluntary organization/labour group created and maintain a book grant programme for libraries.
- Financial Assistance from the Tea Board to Bharat Scouts and Guides in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala.
- A scheme of financial aid from the board to encourage tea plantation employees to participate in sports.
- During the 11th Plan period, a scheme for enhancing the health of tea garden residents was implemented, including the supply of safe drinking water and sanitation

The Directorate for Welfare of Tea Garden and Ex Tea Garden Tribes (1983)

The government of Assam also constituted The Directorate for Welfare of Tea Garden and Ex Tea Garden Tribes (1983) which introduce various schemes regarding education, scholarships and grant in aid. For instance

- Family oriented income generating schemes (FOIGS)
- Pre- matric and post matric scholarship

- Grants for non –government educational institution
- Grants for cultural activities including education tour
- Grants for non government organization
- Grants to parents suffering from T.B and other malignant disease
- Grants for purchase of text book and uniform

Assam Tea Employees' Welfare Board

Assam Tea Employees' Welfare Board to introduce varied training programs especially for female workers such as cutting and tailoring, weaving, and embroidery.

Under the Ministry Of Labour And Employment with the purpose to impart educational programmes such as vocational training to raise awareness among the worker and adult education programme and to educate the workers **Central Board for Workers Education (CBWE)** was set up by the government of India.

The Assam Tea Labour Welfare Board

The Assam Tea Labour Welfare Board was established to advance the welfare of the tea labour. Through this implement schemes to provide skill development training among the tea garden labourers. This board also gives amenities to the children of tea garden area, which are

- Hostel facility for the tea garden workers children in higher education.
- For class eight to university student of tea garden workers children can get one time scholarship for purchasing textbooks.
- Also assist the educated students of tea garden workers with the nursing training programme etc.

The ABITA (Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association) ,TAI (Tea Association of India) , BCO (Bharatiya Chai Parishad), ATPA(Assam Tea Planters Association) are an umbrella organizations with tea garden management representation in different district of Assam to deal with the industrial issues and labour management .Gradually these organization come in to partnership with organizations such as UNICEF (United Nation International Children's Emergency Funds) .

There is a **partnership between the ABITA (Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association) and UNICEF with the purpose to improve lives of excluded and marginalized children and woman** living in 128 tea gardens of Assam by spreading awareness related to their survival, well being and development and government resources.

All the activities of ABITA (Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association) – UNICEF project on promotion of child protection, health and nutrition amongst children and adolescents from tea communities across 116 tea garden of three district of Assam such as **Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Sivasagar** are coordinate and monitor by the **Sustainable Cell introduced by the Indian Tea Association in 2016**. At present the following programmes are being done

- Nutrition for workers and their families
- Water ,sanitation and hygiene program to enhance health standard in tea garden
- Child protection and child rights program amongst tea communities etc.(Indian Tea Association , 2016)

The government of India has been introduced policies and programs to accelerate the educational status of the tea tribe community which are given below –

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a flagship programme of government of India launched in 2001 for free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years elementary education as enacted by 86th amendment to the constitution of India. It is a conscious effort for universalizing the elementary education. Its take various initiative to enhance the efficiency of schooling system and to develop quality of education. It also gives focus on the inclusion and participation of socially and economically backward children, minorities, other disadvantage group and children with special needs.

The SarvaSiksha Abhiyan (SSA) mission in Assam developed the community participation committees at the school, village, tea garden, gaonpanchayat and at the district level, for instance

- School Management Committee (SMC)
 - Village Education Committee (VEC)
 - Tea Garden Education Committee (TGEC)
 - Ward Education Committee (WEC)
 - Gaon Panchayat Education Committee (GPEC)
- The Tea Garden Education Committee was formed by the **community representatives such as one local welfare officer, one head teacher and six parents(three man and women respectively)** with the objective to play active role in the maintenance of education. (Aditi & at all ,2009)
- The Tea Garden Cell (2003) was established to give special focus in the development of the education of tea garden children and it also highlighted the area which was backward in terms of education under the registered 825 tea gardens in 2004.
- The SarvaSiksha Abhiyan launched developmental educational activities are given below
- The **Enrolment Drive Programme** to increase the enrolment of the tea garden children, **Meena Campaign** is an effort to advance the active participation of girl child in education and survey etc.
 - The special enrolment drive programme was executed in the tea garden and ex tea garden areas by the **All Assam Tea Tribe Students Association (AATSA)**.
 - The mobilizing activity such as arrangement of community meeting in tea garden area was organized by the **Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS)**.
 - Some other programmes organized in the tea garden schools such as **summer vacation, summer camps and also orient them about the scout & guide, drills and also developed reading ability of the children and skills for co curricular activities.**
- The Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP) is kind of special initiative of the follow up action on the Sachar Committee recommendations. The programme aims at improving the socio-economic conditions of minorities and backward children and providing basic amenities to them for improving the quality of life of the people and this scheme also made provision of scholarship for the talented children of backward community.(N.K.Das,2016)

The Right to Free & Compulsory Education Act, 2009

RTE act provides a justifiable legal plan that designated to all children between the ages of 6-14 years for free and compulsory elementary education as per the 86th amendment via Article 21A .It brings equalization of educational opportunities among the children based on the principles of equity and non-discrimination.

- Provision of Free and Compulsory Elementary Education
- It also make provisions of 25% reservation in the private school children belonging to SC/ST (schedule tribe, schedule caste), other socially and educationally backward categories.
- Provision of Neighborhood School
- The RTE act also set a suitable teacher pupil ratio (PTR) at 30:1 for primary level and 35:1 for upper primary level to promote the teaching and learning process.
- Qualifications and terms and conditions of service of school teachers.
- Prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational purposes:

- School Management Committee to manage, monitor and support a school.

Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, 2009

The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan launched in 2009 by the ministry of human resources development to strengthen the secondary school infrastructure in the country is a step in the right direction. It has taken initiative for the age group of 14 to 18 to provide quality education and make it available, accessible and affordable for this mention group. Under RMSA, the Finance Minister has launched a new scheme during his budget 2017-18. Under this scheme the Assam government has initiated to set up 100 new Upper Primary (UP) School in tea garden area. There are less numbers of Upper Primary (UP) School in tea garden area. As a result school dropout rate increases among the tea garden children. In order to enhance enrollment in primary and upper primary level, the government has taken progressive step to upgrade the existing Lower primary (LP) and Upper primary (UP) schools to High schools up to class –X. The effort is done in a public private partnership (PPP) mode with experienced non-government societies. It is carried out by the public private partnership (PPP) mode with experienced non- government societies.

An initiative is taken by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the equal development of all sections of the society with the slogan of “sabkasath, sabkavikash, sabkaviswas” in 2016. Under this a project was launched by the Assam government for the education of tea community on 10 October 2020. The Assam government took a revolutionary step towards development of education of tea garden children, which did not take previous state government since independence. The government is going to build 119 model high schools in tea garden of Assam and said **“no child should be deprived of higher education in tea garden area”**. According to several research papers and documentation, due to lack of high schools in tea garden area and nearby, the tea garden children get hopeless for further study which increases the primary school dropout rate. The Assam Chief Minister also

highlighted that the tea tribe community is an integral part of the population of Assam, as they enrich the socio-cultural aspect of the state and emphasizes that this progressive step would play a vital role to change the education scenario of the tea garden children. The estimated cost for the construction school was Rs 142.5 cr and stated from November 1, 2020. This scheme also includes the following provision:

- Mobile medical units for tea garden
- Construction of road in more than 800 tea garden
- Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar Mela :Rs 25000 one time financial assistance to tea community youth for self employment
- Scholarship to meritorious students
- Wage compensation to pregnant woman
- Smartphones to tea garden Chiefs.

Challenges in the Education of Tea Garden Workers

In spite of the above provisions, facilities by the government both at the center and the state, the situation of education of tea garden workers children is in a dismal condition. The evidence of this outlined given in the form of challenges faced by the children of tea garden workers in the state of Assam, which are given in the bellow-

1. Unavailability of Educational Facilities

School facilities have an impact on the learning, physical and mental health and overall performance of the children. In order to create leaning environment the school should be supplied with adequate amenities. The tea garden areas of Assam are severely lacking in educational facilities such as poor condition of school building, lack of teaching- learning materials and lack of transportations facilities. This is also highlighted in a study conducted by (Bosumatari & Gogoi, 2013). Similar finding is also corroborated by (Gogoi, 2015). This leads to a potential challenge towards attainment of education of tea garden children.

2. Poor Living Condition

Good living condition can give a better life style and can create conducive environment for learning. Unfortunately, the living condition is not good enough in the tea garden areas. This is

also enumerated from the study done by (Chakrabarty, 2012). This finding is also similar with the study of (Saikia 2017) and this fact is also highlighted in the study conducted by (Purkayastha&Kalita, 2016). This indicates that the children living in tea garden are suffering from poor living condition, which becomes an obstacle in the path of acquisition of education.

3. High Rates of School Dropout and Poor Academic Performance

Day by day dropout in primary education is increasing in the area of tea garden. The academic performance is also worse. This statement is endorsed with the study conducted by (Saikia, 2016). As we know that primary education is a foundational stage on which depends the future of one nation. The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) primarily highlighted that the destiny of a country is being shaped in its classroom. However dropout in primary education has been a hurdle in progress of the individual and the nation as well.

4. Low Enrolment Rate in Elementary, Secondary and Higher Education. Needles to say, there is limited Elementary school in tea garden area out of them some are located far away from residential area. As a result, student keeps avoid going to school and it also encourages the low enrolment in Elementary education. There is no secondary and higher education institution in the tea garden area and nearby area of tea garden. This above assertion is reasserted by the study done by (Sarma, 2009). This finding is also reaffirmed with the study of (Saikia, 2017). This indicates that less number of school building and low enrolment of the children proved as challenge in the way of teaching and learning process.

5. Poor Socio-Economic Condition of the Family

The poor socio- economic condition of tea garden people become a challenge in bring out of education of tea garden children. Due to socio economic backwardness, the most of the people living in tea garden area do not have positive views toward life and education and they don't think their life beyond the tea garden area. The tea garden area has limited facilities in terms of school and home environment, health and hygiene, transportation, etc. This above information is also collected by (Shyamal,

2013) and the similar finding is corroborated by (Ruma&Dipa 2014).

6. Illiteracy of the Parents

Family is an agent of primary socialization where the parents are first teacher, guide for their children. Article 51A (clause k) of 86th amendment also emphasizes that "who is a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years". Although the most of the people living in tea garden area are not literate. In this situation it becomes challenge for them to bring optimum development of education of their children. There are different studies (Rajeshwari & P. Usha, 2014; Ruma&Dipa 2014) which also highlighted the illiteracy among the parents of tea garden children.

7. Lack of Awareness Regarding Education

Education is a way in which one can meet their goal of life and can resolve their personal, social and educational and emotional problems as well. For this purpose they have to get more education, knowledge and skills. If it lacks then it never help them to develop their inner and highest potentialities to do something innovative. But the people living in tea garden area neglect education and do not have much awareness about the benefits and importance of education which can make better their every sphere of life. The above statement is also supported by the study of (Saikia, 2016). The similar finding is also found in the study conducted by (Saikia 2017). It has been becoming hindrance in the door way to learning.

8. Violation of RTE Act, 2009

For effective class room teaching and learning, it is necessary to have an appropriate teacher pupil ratio. It also emphasizes in the RTE Act, Section 25 seeks to give for maintenance of **Pupil Teacher Ratio**, by the appropriate government and local authority. However the school runs by tea garden authorities do not give more consideration to keep up right teacher pupil ratio as mentioned in RTE Act (2009). The above views also confirm by one of the surveys conducted by the Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (ASCP CR). The report is also highlighted that there is a lack of

qualified and trained teacher in the school of tea garden area. Although they spend most of their time looking after managerial works in the tea garden. Similar findings also indorsed by the study of (Saikia, 2017) and this study also revealed the pathetic condition of Mid Day Milk scheme. Until and unless, there is a quality teacher and organized pattern of pupil teacher ratio etc it is challenging to impart and manage quality education for all.

CONCLUSION:

There are many government plans and programs for the development of tea garden people. In spite of the fact that condition of education of tea garden worker's children are still backward. According to different research studies the children of tea garden workers are faced numerous challenges in the attainment of education, which are **unavailability of educational facilities such as teaching learning material, school building, and playground(Bosumatari,2013;Gogoi,2015),poor living condition(Chakrabarty,2012;Saikia,2017), school dropouts and poor academic condition(Saikia,2016), Low enrolment rate(Sarma,2009; Saikia,2017) , poor socio-economic condition of the family and Illiteracy of the parents (Shyama,2013;Ruma and Dipa,2014; Rajeshwari &Usha,2014) , lack of awareness regarding education (Saikia,2016;Saikia 2017), violation of RTE Act ,2009(ASPCR report,2015; Saikia,2017).**

The state and center government and tea garden authorities should make such kind of provisions which can improve their condition for instance, equip them with required teaching learning aids, construct and maintain school buildings and play grounds, increase the wages of workers, organize awareness camp regarding importance of education, arrange guidance and counseling programs (personal, educational, vocational, etc) for the children, parents and the community members as well. The tea garden authorities should give some considerations to follow and maintain the rules and regulations are given by various Acts for the development of that community. They should scrutinize the various government provisions and its implementation

level to meet the requirement of tea garden children.

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