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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EX- TEA GARDEN TRIBE AND LABOUR MOBILITY: A LOOK AT CHANGING DYNAMISM OF LABOUR IN SONITPUR DISTRICT, ASSAM

Krishna Mech

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Abstract

This paper examines the changing dynamics of labour of the Ex- Tea garden tribe from the Tea garden tribe in the Sonitpur District of Assam. Hence, factors such as migration or labour mobility, social, economic, cultural, and political aspects have been taken into account for understanding the socio-economic contribution of the Ex-Tea garden tribe labour population in the region. The paper also argues that Ex- Tea garden tribe labour despite their distinct identity and socio-economic contribution to the region is overlooked in different aspects of society in the region. This endangers the growth and development of Ex- Tea garden tribe labour community in various fields in the Sonitpur District of Assam.

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Introduction:-

The evolution of human civilization undoubtedly emerges from the core of the past. As such the historical interpretation becomes important in order to have meaningful information on the present-day society. In this context, the historical evolution of the Tea garden tribe in Assam belonging to various cultural, linguistic and ethnic heritages was from the provinces of Chota Nagpur Plateau, Bihar, Odisha, and West Bengal. They were also known as "Coolie" by the British planters, a derogatory meaning i.e. slaves and this group of labourers were transported/ migrated to various Tea industries within the Country. They were employed in Tea industries that gradually were recognized with a new identity despite their cultural, linguistic, geographical and ethnic diversities. This labour force formed a new group of labour with a new identity called the "Tea garden Labour" in Assam. This group of labour is also known as Adivasi, Baganiyas (People of the gardens) etc and remained the most economically and socially disadvantaged labour group in India (Sharma, 2018) interestingly, of all the tea gardens in India.

This labour population settled in the garden area which was called "Coolie lines" (Sharma, 2011) despite their diversities under a common identity as Tea garden labour identity. However, there were some of these labourers who began to flee or move away from the tea gardens because of their expired work contracts and denial to work under the British planters who treated them as slaves or commodities in the Tea industries. Therefore, some of them opted for the renewal of their work contract while some of them decided to leave the Tea gardens and moved back to their native villages within the country. But, most of them had settled back outside these Tea gardens in different rural villages along with the local communities in different Tea garden districts of Assam spreading their roots of existence and identity such as Darrang (now Sonitpur is separate), Kamrup, Goalpara, Lakhimpur, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Cachar, and Karbi Anglong. Thus, under such circumstances, this Ex- Tea garden tribe labour was formed or emerged from the Tea garden labour and Tea gardens (Guha, 1977).

Corresponding Author:- Krishna Mech

Moreover, after the Independence of India from colonial rule, the recognition and identity of both Tea gardens and Ex- Tea garden labourers were renamed or changed with the formation of the new Government that came to power in India. There were formed two distinct labour groups i.e. Tea garden tribe or Tea tribe labour and Ex- Tea garden tribe or Ex- Tea tribe labour with their distinct ethnic differences/diversities in Assam (Directorate for Welfare of Tea and Ex- Tea garden tribes). The emergence of the Ex- Tea garden tribe labour is not new; as this section of the labour, tribe has an emerged group of the human population that evolved from Tea tribe labour in the colonial period in Assam. The characteristics of the Ex-tea garden tribe labour population are First, they are migrant in origin. Second, they have emerged from the Tea garden tribe labour population. Third, they reside outside the Tea estates in Assam. However, after the Independence of India, the condition of the labour tribe which was secluded from the tea garden labourers has been facing inequalities and discrimination in various sectors from the native population in Assam. These Ex- Tea garden tribe labourers were mostly engaged in informal sectors such as working in various road works of the Public Work Department, earning daily wages working as informal labourers in factories and workshops, brick kilns, transport trucks driving and helping hand, domestic workers in various households etc which makes them a crucial part of the labour market in Assam. Since, they are mostly unskilled labourers, which leads them to less wage work that hampers their socioeconomic conditions in society.

This paper analyses the Ex- Tea garden tribe labourer's socio-economic and migration challenges and contribution to the development of the region (Sonitpur District of Assam). The paper critically examines the role of the State and Civil societies that have taken initiatives for the upliftment and welfare of this section of labour (both economically and socially) as a valuable part of the native society. It starts with a brief introduction to the evolution of the Ex- Tea garden tribe labour in the region which is a distinct ethnic tribe (labour tribe) and its depth of marginality to maintain their existence in the native society. It then suggests various policy implications for the welfare and study of Ex- Tea garden tribe labourers in Assam.

Area of the Study

The area of the study is compressed into a local region which is Tezpur; a place in the Sonitpur District of Assam. Tezpur as headquarter and sub-division of the district lies on the Banks of the Mighty Brahmaputra River with a population of 282032 people as per census is the largest of the North Bank towns. The etymological meaning of the place Tezpur in Sanskrit is "Tej" meaning blood and "Pura" meaning city or town. Tezpur is one of the places with several tea estates or industries and is surrounded by several Ex-Tea garden tribe populations in both urban and rural societies residing in assimilation with other ethnic communities in the region.

The villages selected for the study in Tezpur which have several households with an Ex-Tea tribe population working in various informal sectors as labour are: Panbari, Niz Goroimari and Baithabhanga along with a Tea estate namely Sonabeel TE which is located near these villages.

Objectives:-

The fixed objectives of this study are given below:

1. To study the socio-economic contribution of the migrant Ex- Tea garden tribe labour has given to the growth and development of the region apart from the Tea industry
2. To analyze the pattern and significance of labour mobility or migration of Ex- Tea garden tribe labour in the Postcolonial Period

Review Of Literature:-

According to Marx, the labour-power that the worker sells to the capitalist for the production of the commodity is exploited and is deprived of the surplus value that is obtained from the commodity. He also argued that in the Capitalist society, the aspect of labour becomes the commodity which is alienated from the labourers when it is sold to the Capitalist (Marx, 1976).

According to Yates (2001) in his book, "A short History of the US Working Class" which mentions that the working class plays a crucial role in making human history also points out that the society is directly or indirectly built by the workers through building our homes and roads, growing our food etc. According to him, the workers must be given more priority in modern history because the struggle of these workers would impact the building of a better world along with social change. He was also not satisfied with the available literature on the workers as many of them described them but very few of them focused on improving their condition or situation in the society. Most

of the population who are engaged in academics do not consider themselves in the category of workers, though they work in institutions or organizations which are considered workplaces in society.

Informal employment plays an important role in establishing the women's lives in the informal sector than the formal as the majority of the women labourers is engaged in this sector than the men. Moreover, 60 per cent of women workers are seen employed in the informal sector apart from agriculture in the developing nations. Women are more involved in the work where they are paid less and unstable wages which could risk their condition to poverty. They are also seen to work as account workers, domestic workers etc and are considered an invisible hand in various sectors of workplaces. Moreover, one could also witness the difference in hourly or monthly earnings between men and women in various sectors of employment except in some public sector employment in countries like El Salvador and Egypt, the difference does not exist. The women are also seen to engage more in unpaid work than paid work. Perhaps, the women also contribute to the family economically through their earnings despite their unstable working conditions along with some additional incomes through various activities that keep the family away from poverty (Majumdar, 2011).

Another journal article entitled, "From Plantation Workers to Naukrani: The changing labour discourses of Migrant Domestic Workers" attempts to emphasize on the recent economic transformation of labour from tea plantations to household works from Doors, West Bengal as alternative employment. Especially the women workers were hired as domestic workers in states like Delhi and Gurgaon. This paper even explores how migration from rural to urban areas played a crucial part in labour mobility. It also argues how society forms perception on domestic workers as migrant women's work and low status in nature. There is a gendered division of labour where women are only meant to work as care workers or domestic workers with low skilled and low status; even after the change in their employment from tea worker to the domestic worker (Banerjee, 2018).

According to him, a large number of populations mobilizes /migrates from the rural to urban or within the rural economy into the informal sectors rather than the formal sectors because of the easy recruitment pattern in this sector. According to him, migration of labour is an essential element/ process in the informal sectors of urban areas. He also criticizes the state agencies for their weak participation when it comes to taking initiative in the improvement of the quality of life. (Bremar, 1996). The labour market is always in transition and not static to one sector only, which not only influenced the workers from Gujarat as mentioned in this book, which could be witnessed in the lives of the tea tribe in Assam through migration or labour mobility.

The tea garden labourers along with the different ethnic groups of Assam have their organizations. They are not aware of their existence because they do not have any organizations (Borpujari, 2013).

The labourers for tea gardens from outside were mostly considered as ex-tea garden tribe labourers who settled permanently outside the garden limits (Vaghaiwalla, 1954).

Tanti (1973), then Minister for labour, Assam gave a speech on the occasion of the Annual Conference, All Mikir Hill Tea garden tribes Association. There he said that 22 lakhs ex-tea garden tribe labourers were spread over the State and 5.38 lakhs were working as labourers in the tea gardens of Assam (The Assam Tribune, Friday April 27, 1973).

Methodology:-

As far as this study was concerned; a qualitative research method has been taken and the study had been conducted using the non-probability sampling method. However, in the study, the participants were selected through purposive sampling considering the convenience of both the researchers and the participants. In-depth interviews and informal discussions helped in collecting the primary sources of data. The secondary sources not only enriched the information but also helped in finding the literature gap in the field of this research study through various sources such as published documents, archival, local news, the internet etc. The interview questionnaire was in the semi-structured form in this study.

Results and Discussion:-

The study was organized with 28 respondents as the sample size from the three selected villages: Panbari, Baithabanga, Niz Goroimari and one Tea estate i.e. Sonabeel TE. The primary data from the three selected villages

with a majority Ex- Tea garden tribe labour population and the Tea estate labour population was based on the comparison in the context of socio-economic contribution, marginality and migration aspects. However, in the context of socio-economic contribution, the social factors that were taken into account were Age, sex ratio, Religion and Housing which played an important role in social contribution to the growth of the region.

Therefore, the study reported that most of the participants in the selected villages and the Tea estate labourers from the Ex- Tea garden tribe and Tea garden tribe labourers respectively belonged to the age group above 25 years who are mostly engaged in their respective employments in the region. It has also been witnessed from the survey that the number of male labourers of the ex- tea garden tribe labour and tea garden tribe labour is more than the female labourers of both the tribes. It has also been observed that the female labourers are less in demand than male ex- tea garden tribe labourers of the region. Moreover, both the ex- tea garden and the tea garden tribe labourers have patriarchal nature in the society. Therefore, the sex ratio of male labourers is more than the female labourers in the four study areas.

Religion is an important aspect that needs to be taken into account while conducting any study. It contributes to the social development of society. Similarly, it was also observed that the majority of Christian labourers are from the Tea garden tribe labour in Sonabeel TE. Perhaps, no ex- tea garden tribe labourers followed the Christian religion in the three villages. This shows that the Ex- tea garden tribe labour in the three villages has adopted the native community's religious faith with the purpose of assimilation with the other communities in the villages. The Tea garden tribe labour has adopted the Christian religion to get benefits from the Church and due to this many labourers have converted themselves to Christianity in the Tea Gardens. Therefore, it was noticed that the Hindu religion is dominating the faith of labourers in the study areas.

Housing structure defines the living conditions of the participant labourers of the study areas in this research study. This Housing structure is also one of the social factors that let us understand the socio-economic contribution these labourers have made in the housing structures. Thus, it has been observed that the majority of the participants were living in the Semi- Pucca built houses rather than completely Pucca and Kutcha houses in all the villages. The Semi-Pucca and the Pucca houses in these areas were built by the Gram Panchayat under the scheme of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). The Housing structures of the participants were mostly dependent on their Income and their Type of Employment. Further, it has been found that the number of participants belonging to the Ex- tea garden tribe labour with Semi- Pucca houses was more than the other housing structures. Moreover, there were no Kutcha and Semi-Pucca houses in the Tea estate of Tea garden tribe labour. Thus, in all the villages, the Ex- tea garden tribe labour population had more Semi- Pucca houses and the Tea garden tribe labour had more Pucca houses on the estate.

The economic structure consists mainly of economic characteristics, such as Occupational structure, wages or salaries, income, living and working conditions etc. Thus, to determine the structure of the economy or the factors that were contributed by both ex- tea garden tribe labour as well as tea garden tribe labour participants, a study of their economic structure has been made in the study areas. From the survey, it was inferred that education of most of the female labourers was restricted only up to primary level, male labourers, on the other hand, were mostly educated up to middle school level and if compared more male labourers had reached the middle school than female labourers. Female dropout was mostly seen after the primary school itself while male dropout level was more after the middle school level. None of the respondents from both the labour tribes had acquired education after high school level. Therefore, it has been seen that not much difference is noticed between the two tribes regarding primary level education and a huge difference was noticed between the educational level with primary level education dominating in all the villages as well as in the Tea estate.

Table 1:- shows the difference in the educational level of the four study areas.

Villages	Niz Goroimari		Panbari		Baithabhangra		Sonabeel TE	
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Illiterate	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	1

Primary level	3	1	3	2	3	1	3	1
Middle School	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1
High School	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total	7		7		7		7	

Source: Field survey

Moreover, in this study, it was witnessed that children were also engaged in informal work in various unorganized sectors along with their families. However, mostly the ex- tea garden tribe labourers seem to engage in casual work as these works were only available in the area for them. Thus, income defines the type of employment these labourers are seen involved in the region. The various type of work where ex- tea garden tribe labourers are engaged from the three villages-

- 1) Driver: Self Employed wage paid labour.
- 2) Carpenter: Self Employed wage paid labour.
- 3) Painter: Self Employed wage paid labour.
- 4) Plumber: Self Employed wage paid labour.
- 5) Factory or Industry: Permanent and Temporary wage paid labour.
- 6) Casual labour (Construction labour, agricultural labour, domestic worker, Brick kiln worker etc): Temporary wage paid labour.
- 7) Tea garden labour: Painter, Plumber, factory worker, Sardar (contractors) and Field labour (Plucking leaves, cleaning, cutting etc). Permanent in nature.

Thus, it is referred in the study that more female workers were engaged in Temporary work than male workers. Thus, we can also observe that women labourers were not engaged in any self-employment in the region. Perhaps, more labourers were engaged in temporary employment than the other employments in the region. Therefore, it was witnessed that ex- tea garden tribe labour respondents were engaged in both Permanent and Temporary work in various unorganized sectors while the Tea garden tribe labour was completely engaged in Permanent work in the organized sector of the Tea garden.

Table 2:- shows the nature of work or employment of the respondents in the four areas.

Nature of Employment	Niz Goroimari		Panbari		Baithabhangha		Sonabeel TE	
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Self Employed	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Permanent	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3
Temporary	3	2	2	2	4	3	0	0

Source: Field Survey

Both the ex- tea garden as well as tea garden tribe labour respondents fall in the income range between Rs.5000 – 10000. Moreover, it has also been observed that the percentage of male respondents earning a monthly income between Rs. 5000 – 10000 was more than the female respondents in the range of less than Rs. 5000 in the study areas. Through this study, one can also understand the wage or income differentials of male and female respondents of both the ex- tea garden as well as the tea garden tribe labourers along with the villages and the Tea Estate difference.

Table 3:- Distribution of wage difference of respondents.

Wage Difference(Gender difference)	Respondents	Percentage	Wage difference(Community difference)	Respondents	Percentage
The equal wage for both male and female labourers outside or inside of Tea garden	9	45	The equal wage for both TGL and Ex-TGL(Villages and Tea garden)	6	21.4
the Low wages of female than male labourers inside or outside the Tea garden	19	67.8	Low wages of Ex- TGL than TGL(Villages and Tea garden)	22	78.5
Total	28	100		28	100

Source: Field Survey

From the above socioeconomic contribution of both the tribes, it has been reported that all the factors of social and economic are interrelated with each other for the development and growth of the region as well as their respective tribes.

Marginality from the sampled study areas has been discussed based on ethnicity and identity; from the primordial paradigm, it has been witnessed that through their long stay in Assam, this tribe lost a lot. They could not establish their ethnic identity, hold on land for their families; they could not even claim for rights and belongingness for various opportunities and to village land or surroundings respectively. In relation to the local people, they remained as an immigrant labourer group. Instead on the other hand, the migrant group of population such as Bengalis, Biharis, Nepalis and the Marwaris in the region had established themselves in various aspects in comparison to this tribe. These established tribes became more influential and local for the native communities. This ex-tea garden tribe labour with its immigrant identity entrusted by the local communities could not become an ethnic group universally recognize as local.

From the Constructivist paradigm; it has been observed that the contested term Adivasi led to the understanding of the meaning of their original inhabitants and also this term was used for Ex-tea garden tribe labour as a method and indicator to locate the group's originality to a particular place. Many scholars had proved that the term Adivasi is contested identity for both tea garden and ex-tea garden tribe labourers. This term Adivasi also has not been mentioned in the Indian Constitution to describe their rights instead they are mentioned as Scheduled Tribes in the Constitution. Hence, this might have proved that the Adivasi identity is socially constructed term for the ex-tea garden tribe labourers to claim their equal rights and opportunities just like other ethnic groups in this given society.

From the instrumentalist paradigm, it has been witnessed one interesting fact under the umbrella of Adivasi identity is that both the tea garden as well as ex- tea garden tribe labourers are deprived of the ST status in

Assam including the region. This terminology of Adivasi identity is instrumental as it had helped in enhancing unity as well as exclusion among tea garden and ex-tea garden communities for common causes like the demand for ST status and political existence respectively. Therefore, this community with Adivasi identity is overpowered by the tea garden tribe labour in various aspects of opportunities and privileges in the region and Assam. Hence, the instrumentalist paradigm of this tribe has not benefitted instead marginalized this tribe in various aspects of the society.

From the social identity approach, it has been witnessed that this labour tribe in different aspects, was found that their identity as a tribe is still struggling to uplift themselves in different sectors and aspects through various state initiatives and civil society organizations in the area. Thus, one can witness how the identity of this ex- tea garden tribe labour has affected the various parts or aspects of this labour tribe and has left them as a weak and vulnerable tribe in this region of the study.

Migration is not an old concept or process of movement in India as it has been continuing since ancient time. Similarly, the process of movement of people from one place to another is also not new in Assam. The History of Assam has been based on migration of various communities to this land of diversity. Migration in Assam is also a historical concept with the advent of the British rule in the State. Migration has played an important role in the formation of the Ex-tea garden tribe labour population within the state. The formation of the ex- tea garden tribe labour provided the region i.e. Sonitpur district including Tezpur with a new population of working-class and a new identity of Ex- tea garden tribe labour who was not only considered as an emerged tea garden tribe labourers but that labour tribe who were engaged in different sectors of employment outside the tea gardens in the region. Earlier when colonial rule was prevalent in this region, the erstwhile Darrang district also experienced the migration of labourers in the tea gardens of this region in 1983 and it was divided into Sonitpur and Darrang districts which also led to the distribution of labourers in the two districts separately. Thus, in this process of distribution of labourers through labour mobility, many labourers were left out or released who also later settled outside the tea gardens with a new identity as Ex-tea garden tribe labourers in Sonitpur district including Tezpur. Later, they were also known as Assamese Adivasi community or ex- tea garden tribe labourers.

Some of them are given below –

- 1) Earlier, during the colonial period this tribe labourer was released as unused labour by the British Tea garden Companies from various Tea gardens of the region.
- 2) The ex- tea garden tribe labourers were considered a landless labour tribe as they had no agricultural land for cultivation of their own.
- 3) Another very prominent cause of labour mobility of this tribe labourer was to avail better opportunities of employment in the region.
- 4) The labourers of this tribe were paid fewer wages in agricultural work as compared to industrial work.
- 5) Lastly, employment in industrial sectors was easily available which forced the ex- tea garden tribe labourers to engage in various informal sectors for work in this region.

Moreover, the changing nature of labour mobility or migration in the post-colonial period also influenced various aspects of the social, economic, cultural, political etc factors of development and growth in the region. Hence, migration or labour mobility was also considered as one of the factors that had contributed to the socio-economic development or growth of the region. The labour mobility or migration of labour in ex- tea garden tribe labourers had changed to a great extent in this region. Therefore, this tribe has also faced various deprivation or exclusion from both their indigenous tribe i.e. Tea garden tribe labourers as well as the native communities of the region.

Thus, the labour mobility or migration of labourers during the colonial period till Independence had changed the dynamics of the tea tribe labour in various aspects; first, it started with the formation of emerged tribe labourers from tea garden tribe labour who had different and distinct characteristics which distinguish them from the newly formed labourers. It has been observed that it was due to the migration or labour mobility factor that the labour dynamics of the tea tribe labour were no longer confined only within the tea gardens of the region but had formed a different and new identity that has been contributing to various aspects of development and growth in the region.

Role of the State and Civil society

Dreze and Sen (1996) stated that society could help the masses with social opportunities and rights through their active participation in the form of their action. Ideally, the role of the State is to guarantee the society's basic needs

(Loomis, 1943). Similarly, the organizations of civil society are also considered an important part of society. There is the interrelationship of the state, society and civil society as three of them are interdependent to each other. State and society support each other in various aspects for growth and development. However, the relationship between a state and its society leads to a win-win solution to optimize the benefits of both the parties (Newton and Van Deth, 2005).

Hence, in the field survey, through various responses of the respondents about ex- tea garden labourers; we had noticed various initiatives that the State and the civil society had introduced were not properly implemented in various sectors in the study areas. Through observation and the previous socioeconomic contribution figures would throw light on the implementation of these initiatives in the region. The initiatives that the State had introduced are the Schemes with facilities of opportunities and privileges.

However, the significance of one of the schemes “MNREGA” in these villages of ex- tea garden tribe labourers is considered more in both the rural development Programme through Gram Panchayat and in the Tea tribes welfare Department. Perhaps, this scheme provides ex- tea garden tribe labourers with employment opportunities through job cards from the selected villages. All labourers who had benefitted from this scheme were provided with job cards in the villages. Moreover, the labourers under this scheme were engaged in work for only 15 days and for absenteeism their wage was cut from those 15 days' wages in various unskilled manual works that they were recruited in the villages. Most of the labourers mentioned during the survey that the scheme provided them employment only when work was available under this scheme in the villages. The job cards were available in every household of the respondents in the villages but unfortunately, the job card holder among men is more than the women in these villages.

Another scheme NRLM that focuses more on the Self – help groups for empowering women has been observed to have more significance in the Tea tribe welfare department too. It was witnessed under the NRLM scheme, that women ex- tea garden labourers in these villages has also benefitted from the institution of self-help groups of women as these institution encouraged women from this tribe in the villages to empower themselves in various social and economic aspects. The women's self-help group is also considered an important institution which takes initiatives for uplifting women of these emerged labourers through funds for self-employment and in various sectors of microfinance. There are various women's self-help groups where these tribe women are engaged with various local communities. Most of the self-help groups are women based under NRLM and multi-ethnic. There are no separate women SHGs for ex tea garden labour communities. The SHGs under NRLM provided by the Tea tribes welfare department mainly focus on the women tea garden tribe labourers' empowerment. Therefore, the several self-help groups in these villages also play an important part in empowering these women labourers along with their families. However, it has also been reported that, as these SHGs consist of women from the nearby local communities such as Bodo and Assamese; these emerged women labourers were overlooked or considered inferior to the local communities in various activities of the groups in this region. Perhaps, the reason behind less number of respondents under the NRLM scheme for SHGs was that some respondents both men and women were involved in SHGs under Bank Linkage Programme.

The participation of civil society organizations in this region was found to be very weak regarding the welfare of ex-tea garden tribe labourers. Hence, these labourers were unorganized; with no specific formal Institutions or Organizations for the welfare and upliftment of this community in the region. However, there is only one Non - governmental Organization (NGO) in the region named “PAJHRA” which aims to promote and advancement of Justice, harmony and rights of Adivasis. Perhaps, being the only existing NGO in the region working for ex- tea garden as well as tea garden tribe labourer's upliftment and growth in various aspects were unable to engage or involve through various facilities with the emerged labourers in various villages in this region. They were mostly concerned about the development of the tea garden labourers in various tea gardens in the region. The level of participation was low and weak for this NGO for the upliftment and well-being of the emerged labourers from selected villages.

Therefore, the above given introduced initiatives in the State were bold but unfortunately, their implementation was weak with loopholes for the welfare and upliftment of the Ex-tea garden tribe labour in the region.

Conclusion:-

In this study, we have witnessed that the ex- tea garden tribe labourers are more prone to challenges from different sectors of society in this region. These labourers were known for their engagement in tea plantations in the colonial period gradually turned to the formation of a new labour tribe within them who had a distinct identity of engaging in different sectors apart from tea plantations. However, the question arises that whether these labourers with their distinct identity in future could achieve a better or decent status like the other local tribes in the region; or whether their status would remain the same as in the present period. Thus, this study highlights the condition of these labourers who despite their new identity as ex- tea garden tribe labour are still facing discrimination and exclusion in different aspects from various local as well as their parental tribes in the study region. Moreover, they are also the permanent citizen and tribes of the state, their situation or condition is still overlooked or neglected by the Governmental institutions and organizations, civil society organizations and also to mention academic associations and institutions.

Policy Implications

Some suggestions for the welfare of ex- tea garden tribe labourers have been provided in this study 1) The expansion of their identity in the society as an ethnic tribe must be a concern in the society. They should be recognized as a different tribe from the tea tribe labour through provision of legislation so that they could claim their legal rightful place in the society and avail the opportunities and privileges which were snatched from them.

2) Despite of their distinct identity in the state, there are no official records regarding this community at both local and national level government institutions and organizations. Hence, data or information is needed/required about this tribe.

3) The policies that the state introduces for the tea tribe labour are also meant for this tribe according to the Government, but these policies in reality never concern this labour tribe population. So, these policies should be made specific about the inclusion of this tribe before implementation for the upliftment of this tribe.

4) The community being distinct has been considered different from the tea garden tribe labourers as well as the native communities, which makes this tribe unfamiliar to various common people and so their struggle and life remains unknown to the society. Thus, their peculiar emergence as a distinct tribe in the history of Assam should be introduced to the new generation through various means of education or tribe activities etc so that they could keep their tribe's distinct identity alive among the other communities in the region.

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