

Political Orientation of Female Tea- Garden Workers:

An analytical study of Cachar District, Assam

Wazi Uddin Choudhury , M.A(Gold Medalist)
 Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University,
 Assam, India

Abstract:- Political Orientation of the people is an important aspect of every political system. Proper awareness and active participation of the citizens is essential for a successful political system. It is the beauty of democracy that people can participate actively in democracy. Awareness of the political environment and democracy are considered as interrelated. Beginning from voting right to understanding political debates, attending in political gatherings, exercising leadership role in the political arena are parts of the aspects of political orientation of the citizens. Political awareness of citizens is both beneficial to the citizens as well as state. The success of any democratic system is dependent on politically conscious and active participant citizens. The political orientation of Cachar District of Assam is constantly moving towards a positive direction. However, the Female Tea-Garden Workers of Cachar are one of the most neglected and marginalized sections of the society in various fields of human life. Lack of proper study and maintenance of records regarding political orientation and political participation of the Female Tea-Garden Workers is visible. Therefore, in this study an attempt is made to understand the political orientation of the Female Tea-Garden Workers of Cachar District.

Keywords:- Political Orientation, Citizens, Tea-Garden Workers, Cachar.

I. INTRODUCTION

Political Orientation of the people is an important aspect of every political system. Proper awareness and active participation of the citizens is essential for a successful political system. It is the beauty of democracy that people can participate actively in democracy. Awareness of political environment and democracy are considered as interrelated. Beginning from voting right to understanding political debates, attending in political gatherings, exercising leadership role in the political arena are parts of the aspects of political orientation of the citizens. Criticism is an important instrument through with citizens can keep in proper track the different plans and programs of governments. Understanding the political orientation is an utmost important aspect of a democratic country like India.

Important Factors which exercise impact on the political orientation of the people include –Socio- Economic condition, psychological condition, political situation etc. Impact of education, economic status , generation gap, age , belief system etc, is also worth mentioning. In addition to

these, one's position in hierarchical structure of parties, popularity, mental ability, decision making capability etc have relationships with his/her political orientation. Today the political orientation of the citizens of India is more enlightened as compared to the past. Like other citizens of India the political orientation of Female Tea-Garden Workers of Cachar District is day by day increasing towards enlightenment. It is a very positive sign that The Female Tea-Garden Worker's literacy rate is increasing. They now know the importance of political representation and value of their demographic composition.

Despite all these, Lack of proper study and maintenance of the records regarding the political orientation and political participation of the Female Tea-Garden Workers is visible. Therefore, in this study an attempt is made to understand the political orientation of the Female Tea-Garden Workers of Cachar District.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of relevant studies regarding the political orientation of the female citizens of tea tribe is given below :

WEINER (1978) categorized the Assamese immigrants into several types like- Tea plantation laborers (comprising of Adivasis who came from Odisha and Bihar), Bengali (Hindus and Muslims) and Marwaris (they are mostly engaged in trade and commerce) etc.

BANERJEE (1996) has said "The labour Community of the tea industry is largely illiterate, superstitious and untouched by modern progressive development. It is a fact that the wages do not match the welfare of the labour. No sincere efforts have been made by any corner to liberate these people from the clutches of feudalism by providing proper facilities for education. This has made them more and more dependent on the master rather than being independent."

K. HAZARIKA (2012) studied about the poor conditions of the tribal tea workers. He proved the pathetic conditions of the tea estate labourers by collecting data from 1500 labourers as primary source. As Secondary source, he collected data from various journals, publications, companies, books etc.

SAXENA (1990) has said, "The working class of India did not confine itself only to the economic demands for higher wages, curtailment of working hours and better living conditions, but was also political in nature. With the growth

of modern industries, the working class emerged on the political scene slowly and became conscious of the fact that colonialism was the main enemy of the people of India and the working class, a segment of Indian people, could not but become a part of National Mainstream”.

S.C. SARKAR (2013) studied the painful condition of tea labourers. He explained in details about their pathetic conditions. He also mentioned the increasingly worsening socio-economic status of the Tea Labourers. They do not have proper access to Hospitals and Schools easily. Lack of

- Assessing the nature of political orientation of the Female Tea-Garden Workers in Cachar District of Assam.

IV. RESEARCH METHEDODOLOGY

This study is basically empirical. The method followed in this study is observational and analytical. While collecting data, observation as well as interview method was adopted. In addition to these formal techniques, informal interactions with different organizations of Tea-Sector and their members were done.

Also, along with the primary sources, Secondary materials like Academic books, Social Science Journals, Government databases, seminar reports and state and National newspaper articles were used. The two Tea-Garden Estates of Cachar District of Assam which were selected for this comprehensive study are :-

suitable drinking water facilities is also a major concern for them.

From the above mentioned writings of different prominent scholars regarding Tea-Gardens and the related issues of them, we have got a summarized idea of the same.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was done keeping in mind the following basic objectives:-

- Assessing the extent of political orientation of the Female Tea-Garden Workers in Cachar District of Assam.
- BINNAKANDI TEA ESTATE
- DOLOO TEA ESTATE

V. ANALYSIS OF DATA

An analysis was made after collecting data from the two Tea Estates of Cachar District of Assam. From the selected Gardens data was gathered after interview of Different Women respondents.

With a purpose to analyze the Political orientation of the Female Tea-Garden Workers, the following five tables have been kept in consideration.

Table 1 Whether you are affiliated to any political party or organizations?

TEA ESTATE NAME	YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
BINNAKANDI	18 (36%)	29(58%)	3 (6%)	50 (100%)
DOLOO	16 (32%)	31(62%)	3(6%)	50(100%)
Average Percentage:	34%	60%	6%	

We know that the Political Orientation of citizens of a country is enhanced towards active participation in Politics, when the citizens are engaged in social and political parties and organizations. That is why necessity was felt to enquire the respondents of the Tea Estates if they are members of any political party or organizations. From the above mentioned table (1), it is obviously visible that:-

- Around 60 percent of the respondents are not affiliated to any political party or organizations.

- An aggregate of 34 percent the respondents are affiliated to a political party or organizations.
- 6 percent of the respondents did not give any response at all.

After analysis of the data, an assumption can be made, here, that the overall political orientation of the citizens is that of unconsciousness and lack of interest in the political process.

Table 2 Whether regional parties of North East India are capable of being alternatives to the national parties of India?

TEA ESTATE NAME	YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
BINNAKANDI	12(24%)	34(68%)	4(8%)	50(100%)
DOLOO	10(20%)	37(74%)	3(6%)	50(100%)
Average Percentage:	22%	71%	7%	

Though both Regional Parties and National Parties play immense important roles in the Political spheres for the welfare of the citizens, it is also important to understand the political inclination of the citizens whether they have more faith in the Regional Parties or National Parties. Therefore, an attempt was made to understand this aspect.

- From the table it is clear that:-
- More than 70 Percent of the respondents do not think that Regional Parties can be alternatives to the National Parties.

- An aggregate of 22 Percent of the respondents are in favor of Regional Parties for being capable to become alternatives to National Parties.
- 7 Percent of the respondents did not give any response at all.

The result of the study depicts the popularity of the National Parties among the citizens of the Tea-Garden Area.

Table 3 Whether there should be a separate Political party / parties of the Tea-Garden community?

TEA ESTATE NAME	YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
BINNAKANDI	39(78%)	7(14%)	4(8%)	50(100%)
DOLOO	41(82%)	5(10%)	4(8%)	50(100%)
Average Percentage:		80%	12%	8%

Usually the need of separate Political Party is felt by a community when they have the feeling of being deprived of their rights and proper representation in the Political Process. This questionnaire can be utilized as a tool to assess the Political Orientation of the citizens whether they are politically conscious of collective interests of their community or not. It is evident from the study that :-

- An aggregate of 80 percent of the respondents feel the necessity of separate party/Parties of their community.

- 12 percent of the respondents are against any need of a separate party/parties for their community.
- 8 percent of the respondents had no response.

An aggregate 80% of the respondents expressing their opinion in favor of establishing their own political Party/Parties, show us their feelings of being deprived and marginalized. At the same time it also shows their increasing awareness of Political Affairs.

Table 1.4 Whether you feel the necessity of representation of woman in the state Legislative Assembly and Parliament of India ?

TEA ESTATE NAME	YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
BINNAKANDI	11 (22%)	37 (74%)	2(4%)	50(100%)
DOLOO	9 (18%)	38(76%)	3(6%)	50(100%)
Average Percentage:		20%	75%	5%

In the 21st Century, women are increasingly playing pivotal role in the democratic process all over the world. There should be a quest about the orientation of women citizens of the Tea-Gardens regarding their mindset in the direction of female representation in politics.

The table (4) shows that :-

- 75 percent of the respondents are against the idea of representation of women in state legislative assembly and parliament of India.
- Only 20 percent of the respondents are in favor of women representative in the state legislative assembly and the parliament of India.

- 5 percent of the respondents did not give any answer.

This table shows that the Female are pretty convinced that they should confine themselves only in household duties. It also reflects their mindset regarding gender that they think themselves as inferior to men. As though women are constantly voting in the past few elections, their mindset is about practicing the right to vote a citizen, but they are basically not interested in leadership roles. As compared female of other communities, a wide gap is visible regarding political orientation of Tea-Garden areas in the aspect of Political Participation of women in state and National Politics.

Table 5 What is your view regarding political orientation and active involvement of female Tea-Garden workers?

TEA ESTATE NAME	Very High (76-100)	High (51-75)	Medium (25-50)	Low Below 25	No Response	Total
BINNAKANDI	NIL	8(16%)	21(42%)	17(34%)	4(8%)	50(100%)
DOLOO	NIL	8(16%)	16(32%)	22(44%)	4(8%)	50(100%)
Average Percentage:		16%	37%	39%	8%	

Evident results from the table (5) are :-

- According to 16 percent of the respondents, the political orientation and active involvement of female Tea-Gardens workers are high.
- Medium and low account for about 76 percent of the number of respondents.
- 8 percent of the respondents did not give any response.

VI. MAJOR FINDINGS

After the analysis of the tables (1. to 5), the major findings of the present study are:

- The Political awareness of female Tea-Garden workers is comparatively less the citizens of other communities of the country.
- In the Tea-Garden areas, the citizens have more faith in National Parties than
- Regional Parties.

- The Opinion of the respondents regarding formation of their own political parties was in favor of it unanimously. It reflects their increasing consciousness of political situations.
- It is found that even in this 21st century, the Female Tea-Garden workers want, instead of involvement in direct politics, more to be involved in Household activities.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

A few significant recommendations after this study on “Political Orientation of Female Tea-Garden workers : an analytical study of Cachar District of Assam” are :-

- It is utmost important to provide proper education to the citizens of Tea-Garden areas and more importantly the Female Tea-Garden workers.
- Special Programs and policies, keeping in mind the development of that Tea-Garden Areas, should be the prime priority of Governments.
- Proper Mechanisms for ending illiteracy among the female Tea-Garden workers should be adopted by Tea-Garden Managements.
- For making the Female Tea-Garden workers politically conscious and active, they must be empowered economically and socially, by removing the Socio-political obstacles.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The study unambiguously shows that political awareness of the female Tea-Garden workers is very low. Being economically weak is a reason of their being politically less conscious. A huge percentage of them are illiterate and even do not have ambitions for leadership roles in active politics. As the Tea-Garden Communities are patriarchal, even the elected female candidates are just like puppets at the hands of their male guardians. All the political activities of the Female Tea-Garden workers are mostly influenced by the male members of the family. Hence, sincere study for political initiatives has to be done to help the Female Tea-Garden workers for increasing their political awareness and political empowerment. This would enhance the representation of the female Tea-Garden workers in state as well as national politics.

REFERENCES

- [1]. WEINER, M (1978). Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India, Princeton, New Jersey : Princeton University Press.
- [2]. HAZARIKA, K. (2012). Tea Tribes are lagging behind in the process of Urbanization. International Journal of Trends in Economics Management and Technology 1 (6) (2012) 2-6.
- [3]. MISRA, U (2007). “Adivasi Struggle in Assam”, Economic & Political Weekly, Vol 42, No 51, pp 11-14.
- [4]. BANERJEE, G. (1996). Tea Plantation Industry between 1850 and 1992 Structural Changes. Guwahati: Lawyer’s Book Stall; pp 328-329.

- [5]. SAXENA, KIRAN (1990). Trade Union Movement and the National Movement. New Delhi : South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- [6]. SARKAR, S.C. The Condition of Tea Garden Workers of Jalpaiguri District in Colonial India. International Journal of Advance Research 1 (8) (2013)14-25.
- [7]. DAS, B. (2014). Political Participation of the Tea Tribes Community: A case Study of Sonitpur District, Assam, India. Germany Scholar’s Press: p-5.
- [8]. SAIKIA, B (2008). “ Development of Tea Garden Community and Adivasi Identity Politics in Assam,” Indian Journal of Labour Economics, Vol 51, No 2, pp 307-22 .
- [9]. KANDULNA, G (1999). “Socio-Economic Conditions of the Adivasis in the Tea Plantation of Assam”, Identity of Adivasis in Assam, Thomas Pulloppillil (ed) , Guwahati: Don Bosco Publications, pp 157-64.