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Socio-Economic analysis of Rural Education: A Case from Dhemaji District, Assam

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Abstract

Education is the doorway to the wider world. The education sector is crucial for developing the human capital of countries to innovate and find solutions for sustained and equitable growth. Article 45 of Indian Constitution state that, basic elementary education must be provided to all the children up to the age of fourteen years. Even after 68 years of independence some states of India are still struggling to achieve universal enrolment, retention and quality education. The North Eastern region of India is a thought provoking example of diversity well reflected in the matrix of socio-cultural traits, which are followed by myriads of distinct aboriginal tribal communities inhabiting in this region. The Deoris are also a part of these aboriginal communities inhabiting primarily in the rural areas of Assam. The rural education system of Assam is challenged by various socio-economic factors. Government is making various policies to improve the quality of rural education in the country but in various situations the socio-economic as well as environmental condition prevents the implementation of such policies. The present paper attempts to make an educational assessment of Chenia Deori Village of Dhemaji District, Assam. The Many factors including natural calamities like flood, lack of higher educational institution as well as poor condition of the existing schools are affecting the education system of the village. Such factors are decreasing the enrolment of students in schools and increasing the drop outs. Also the socio-economic condition of the villagers contributes to the wastage and stagnation of school children.

***Key Words:* Rural Education, Socio-economic, Deori, Flood, Drop outs.**

Introduction: There is no adequate definition education which can define its actual meaning. It is a lifelong process and it is very hard to define it by a single definition. Education is the doorway to the wider world and an exposition on rural infrastructure is incomplete without an assessment of the extent to which we have been able to open this door for the children of rural India. Man is a social animal who differs from other animals because of the presence of culture, which is exclusive to human societies. Education is an important tool which develops man culturally and helps to make him a social being. It is considered as an instrument of social development. The education sector is crucial for developing the human capital of a country to innovate and find solutions for sustained and equitable growth. At present, Right to Education is the primary right of every citizen of India. 'Historically, Indian Education has been elitist. Traditional Hindu education was tailored to the needs of Brahmin boys who were taught to read and write by a Brahmin teacher. Under British rule from the 1700s until 1947, India's education policies reinforced the pre-existing elitist tendencies, trying entrance and advancement in government service to academic education' (Cheney, 2006). According to the Article 45 of Indian Constitution the basic elementary education must be provided to all the children up to the age of fourteen years. To provide basic education available to each and every children of the country, government of India is making various plans and programmes. Although government is making various policies to improve the quality of rural education in the country but in various situations the socio-economic as well as environmental condition prevents the implementation of such policies.

North East India in the context of India occupies a distinctive place due primarily to its geographical, historical, social, cultural, and political features (Ali and Das, 2003). It comprises eight

states: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. North East India is the homeland of a large number of ethnic groups who came from different directions at different historical times. These groups belong to different racial stocks, speak different languages and have varied socio-cultural traditions. This region has been occupied by different streams of the Mongoloid people who came from the north and the east at different periods. The Australoids came to this region before the coming of the Mongoloids who partially or fully absorbed the Australoid strains (Das, 1960, 1970). This region of India is a thought provoking example of diversity well reflected in the matrix of socio-cultural traits, which are followed by myriads of distinct aboriginal tribal communities inhabiting in this region. The Deoris are also a part of these aboriginal communities who have been maintaining their distinct identity in social, religious, cultural and traditional practices from the long past. The Deoris are one of the four divisions of the Chutiyas. These divisions are Hindu Chutia, Ahom Chutia, Borahi Chutia, and Deori (Bodoloi et al., 1987:22). About the Deoris Dalton (1872) writes, 'An isolated colony on the river Dikrong in Lakhimpur calling themselves Deori Chutiya who had a peculiar language which they called Chutiya and they were styled Deoris'. It has been stated in the available documents that the Deoris are ethnically affiliated to the great Tibeto-Burman tribes of North-East India (Deori, 2002:11). The Deoris are distributed in different parts of Assam. Mainly their present habitations are spread in the riverine areas of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Sonitpur districts of Assam. According to Brown (1895), the original seat of the Deoris was in the region beyond Sadiya. The whole Deori community is divided in to four broad divisions (*khel*) - Dibangia, Tengapania, Bargaya and Patargaya. The Deoris are patrilineal tribe and their descent, inheritance, succession, authority and residence after marriage are traced in male line.

Area of Study: The present study is conducted in Chenia Deori Village of Dhemaji District, Assam. The village is about 35 km from the district headquarters Dhemaji. It falls under Bordoloni Development Block. The village is solely inhabited by Deori population. People of other communities are not found in the village. There are total 707 population in the village out of which 382 (54.03%) are male and 325 (45.97%) are female. Primary occupation of most of the villagers is agriculture.

Methodology: Fieldwork has been conducted to collect primary data from Chenia Deori Village of Bordoloni Development Block, District Dhemaji, Assam. The data were collected by applying various anthropological methods. Prior to fieldwork, intensive library work has been undertaken for the present paper.

Results and Discussion: The education system of rural Assam is facing serious challenges. Chenia Deori Village is a trival village located in the remote area of Dhemaji District. The education sector of the village is very poor. The existing schools of the village are unable to provide the required facilities. Natural calamities mainly flood effects the educational environment of the village every year. Also the economic condition of the villagers as well as various social – cultural factors is creating hindrance to attain complete education of the village children. Due to such reasons many drop out students are produced in the village.

Factors Effecting Sound Educational Environment in the Village:

- (i) **Natural Calamities:** Flood is the major cause of hindrance in the education system of the village. Every year the village is attacked by severe flood. The village is surrounded by river Gai and Jiadhal, and its water over flows and enters the village in the month of June to August every year. During this time the whole boundary of the school is covered by water. The road leading to the schools are destroyed by flood and sometimes water enters the school buildings also. The valuable items of the schools are destroyed by flood every year. It becomes very hard for the school authorities to maintain the proper schedule during the floods. Also the houses of the villagers are destroyed by flood and many valuable study materials of the students are damaged by flood. After flood, for many days the proper schedule of the schools cannot be maintained due to renovation of the school campus.
- (ii) **Lack of Proper Educational Facilities:** The village lacks the proper educational facilities. There are only two schools in the village, one Lower Primary and one Middle English. The name of the L.P school is "Purana Chenia Deori Primary School" and the name of M.E School is "Purana Chenia Elaba Deori M.E School. There is no other higher educational institution in

the village. For high school and higher secondary studies, the students of the village had to go to Bordoloni Collegiate High School and Bordoloni Junior College respectively, located about 5 km from the village. For graduate level studies, the nearest college is Bordoloni College, located about 10 km from the village. The physical condition of the existing schools of the village is very poor. There is no proper classroom facility in Purana Chenia Deori Primary School. The school lacks desk and benches for the students. The students have to sit in the mud floor while attending the classes. There is no sanitary system in the school campus. Source of drinking water is only a tube well in the school campus. On the other hand the school is run by only two teachers. The infrastructure of Purana Chenia Elaba Deori M.E School is better than the L.P school. Proper sitting arrangements are available in the school. Sanitation facility is quite good in comparison to the L.P school and there is a tube well in the school. There are five teachers in the school.

- (iii) **Economic Factor and emigration:** Economic condition is another major factor creating hindrance in education. Primary occupation of most of the villagers is agriculture. Flood is a major obstacle of agriculture in the village and every year it destroys a major portion of the agriculture fields. In such situations, to manage their livelihood some school going students are engaged in various earning sources. They help their parents in short time occupation like fishing, small business etc. Due to lack of money for higher education, many students left their education life and engaged in some small jobs to fulfill their needs. Many boys of the village left their village in search of jobs and most of them are in other states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, doing small jobs. Such conditions are creating emigrations in large quantity every year.
- (iv) **Lack of Interest:** The villagers are not much concerned about education. Most of the parents lack interest in sending their children to schools. To a limited stage they send their children to schools but when they grow up, the parents are not interested to send them to schools and prefer to use them to help them in earning money. Such situation prevails due to lack of parent's education. Parent's education is most important to decorate a children educational carrier. Parents do not give much importance towards girl's education. After getting a minimum education qualification, the girls are prepared for marriage rather than providing higher education. For such reason the literacy rate of the girls are found very low than the boys.

Distribution of students in Purana Chenia Deori Primary School in 2013

Class	Boys	%	Girls	%	Total
I	12	46.2	14	53.85	26
II	24	75	8	25	32
III	23	76.67	7	23.33	30
IV	7	53.84	6	46.15	13
V	10	52.63	9	47.37	19
TOTAL	76	63.33	44	36.67	120

Enrolment of Students in Purana Chenia Elaba Deori M.E School

Year	Class VI	Class VII	Class VIII
2011	21	22	62
2012	23	22	72
2013	12	12	39
Total	56	56	173

Conclusion: Education is an important tool for human development. It spreads awareness in a society and better education can make a person more civilized and useful for the society. According to Montessori (1946), 'Scientific observation has established that education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not only by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment. The task of the teacher becomes that of preparing a series of motives of cultural activity, spread over a specially prepared environment, and then refraining from obtrusive interference. Human teachers can only help

the great work that is being done, as servants help the master. Doing so, they will be witness to the unfolding of the human soul and to the rising of a New Man who will not be a victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society'. Every year government of India is taking many strategies to develop the education sector of the country. Besides such attempts many areas of the country is still in facing serious problem in the field of education. The present study reveals the pathetic condition of educational environment of the study village. Implementation of proper government educational schemes are lacking in the village. The villagers are not much aware of the importance of education. The poor condition of the existing schools and natural calamities, mainly flood is creating main hindrance in the implementation of proper education system in the village. Such reasons led to the creation of a good number of dropout students each year. Mainly the students are attracted towards money oriented small jobs rather than acquiring minimum required education for a better survival.

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