



Socio Economic Characteristics of Tai Ahom People in Assam: a Geographical Analysis

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ABSTRACT : *The Tai Ahom people are one of the important ethnic tribe of Assam as well as North -East India. They have been living mostly in the upper Assam district viz. Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji and also lives in Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh. But their habitats scatter in these parts except a few numbers of villages where they largely inhabited e.g. Patchaku, Parijat, Bakata, Nemuguri, Mahmara etc. At present the Tai Ahom peoples were suffering from multiple problems and their socio economic condition is determines. Therefore, it is most important to study the present socio economic characteristics of the Tai Ahom people living in the Assam. The study is based on primary data which have been reflected the socio economic characteristic of Tai Ahom people.*

Keywords: *Assam, North -East India, Socio Economic, Tai Ahom.*

I. Introduction:

Assam was ruled in the 18th century by Ahoms, who were a branch of the Shan/Tai race. The Shans were occupying the northern and eastern hill tracts of upper Burma and western Yunnan, where they formed a group of states called Mung-mau or Pong [1]. At present there about 1.9 million (1990 est.) Ahom peoples are live in Assam. They are the largest group of population in the Upper Assam region of India. According to Li [2] and many other historical linguistics, Ahom belongs in the Southwestern branch of the tai language family. Gait (1994) [3] suggests that Ahom is the language of a group of the Shan people who, since 1778 A.D., have migrated into the the easternmost part of India bordering on Burma to establish their own kingdom. The Tai Ahom people migrated from Muang Mao north of the Shall state in the 13th century. They crossed over the Patkal mountain range to settle in the Brahmaputra river valley. The foundations of present-day Assam are attributable to yet another migration from the east, of the Tai Ahoms, in the 13th century.

Su-Ka-Pha was the founder of the Ahom kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam [4]. Led by their redoubtable general Sukapha, an Ahom army crossed the Patkai range into the Brahmaputra valley, to establish an empire that would eventually extend throughout the valley. They had initially established themselves in the south-eastern corner of the Brahmaputra Valley



after subjugating the Moran and Borahi tribes, who were then got assimilated with in the Ahom system[5]. It was only in 1826, six hundred years later, that the Ahom Empire would give way to a century and a quarter of British rule. The Ahoms brought new technology to Assam, provided a framework of peace and stability, resisted Mughal incursions and invasions, and introduced and maintained a uniquely structured, complex and efficient system of administration. They established integrative and assimilative systems of governance, reaching out to the already established communities of the valley, and to the tribes of the adjacent hills, in the process forging the character of the mosaic of modern day Assam. It was only in the early years of the 19th century, weakened by internal strife and rebellion, and by a Burmese invasion that the edifice of the Ahom Empire finally crumbled.

II. Importance of the Study:

The isolation location of the Assam from the main stream of Indian subcontinent human life is hindering the economic activities of the tribes and facing multidimensional problems since centuries. The tribes of Assam are very backward in respect of economic, education and political matters. Though, a number of policies and programs were introduced for tribal development during the post-independence period by the government during different plans, but its fail to develop socio-economic conditions of the tribes. The tribes of the Assam basically encounter the low income and high incidence of unemployment; underemployment and high incidence of poverty. However, in most of the empirical studies the socio-economic condition is not clearly brought out. So for that the present study endeavors to enquire into the socio economic characteristics of the Tai Ahom of Assam.

III. Objectives of the Study:

1. The prime objective of the study is to trace the present socio-economic characteristics of the Tai Ahom people of Assam.
2. Another objective is to provide certain policy measures for the development of the community.

IV. Methodology :

In this study both primary and secondary sources have been used. The primary data are collected through field study from the sample households of the sample villages with the help of a set of schedule prepared for the



purpose. From the sample households required information has been collected from head of the family or any other knowledgeable person of the family. Secondary data were collected from government and non-government organization in the form of records, reports, census, books, newspapers, journals, thesis and internet data consisting of ethnographic, socio-economic and demographic records. The data have been analyzed by using tabular analysis with averages and percentages at appropriate places.

V. Result and Discussion:

According to Diller [6], the Ahom people number at approximately 8 million . There are approximately 30,000 real Ahom people descending from Ahom families of the Ahom Kingdom . At present , they can be found in Guwahati and in some areas of Sibsagar in the Assam state of India [7]. The study carried out from the 50 households of the Tai Ahom from Dibrugarh and Sivasagar district of Assam . Here an attempt has been made to study the socio-economic characteristics of the Tai Ahom people.

Religion:

Religion is a very important socio-economic variable, which play a vital role in the economic development and the growth of the population. Rigid religion and spiritual practice adversely affect on economic development and positive influence on population growth. The religion wise breakup of the sample population reveals that the maximum Tai Ahom people have faith in Hinduism. But the Tai Ahom maintains simultaneously the traditional religion. There are some minorities of Ahoms who practice their native religion, Furalung, and others who practice Buddhism, animism and worship to their forefathers.

Language:

The population under the present study use Assamese language in their communication. Some of them little know about Tai language but they didn't use in general. To communicate other people they use broken Hindi and Assamese. The study reveals that there are some Tai School under TADC in Assam which are not maintain due to insufficient capital or government policy.



Type of Family:

Family is the basic universal social institution. It fulfills the needs and performs functions which are indispensable for the continuity, integration and change in the social system. The Tai Ahom society is a patriarchal joint family as well as nuclear family. In the study it is found that the dominant form of the family structure is Nuclear character, i.e. 82 percent and that of the joint family structure is 18 percent.

Family Size:

An attempt has been made to distribute sample households by the size of family members. It is been always consider a small size family is good for all around development of a household. The following table gives an idea about the size of family members of the sample households of the Tai Ahom.

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample Households by the size of Family Members

N o o f f a m i l y m e m b e r	N O . O f h o u s e h o l d
U p t o 4	2 4
5 - 9	1 9
9 a n d a b o v e	7
T o t a l	5 0

Source: Field survey data, 2016

From the above table it is observed that most of the family consist up to 4 members (48 percent). Whereas 38 percent households have the family members 5-8 and 14 percent of households are having 9 and above family members.

Age Distribution of the Sample Population:

Age is the important factor which determines the work force and occupation status of the population. The information regarding age distribution of the sample households has been presented in the table below.

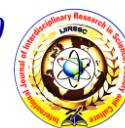


Table 2: Distribution of the Sample Population by Age Composition

Age group	Frequency	Percentage of Age Group	percentage of dependency	percentage of working population
0 - 14	70	24.30	24.30	
15 - 30	66	22.91		22.91
31 - 45	92	31.93		31.93
46 - 60	29	10.06		10.06
Above 60	31	10.76	10.76	
Total	288	100	35.06	64.90

Source: Field survey data, 2016

It appears from the above table that the working population is 64.90 percent (excluding age group 0-14 and 60 +) and dependent and old age population record 35.06 percent.

Sex Composition:

Sex composition is another important socio economic variable which shows the numbers of female per 1000 male persons.

Table 3: Distribution of Sample Population by Sex

Sex	No. of family member	Percentage
Male	132	45.84
Female	156	54.16
Total	288	100

Source: Field survey data, 2016

It is evident from the table that 45.84 percent male as against 54.16 percent female members. The sex ratio has been estimated 1182 females per 1000 males, which is more than state sex ratio (954 females per 1000 males in 2011) and that of national (940 in 2011).

Occupational Pattern:

Occupation as an activity has important place in the economy. It is undertaken for the sake of income generation. The Tai Ahom people are basically service holder (23.95%). However, occupational distribution is observed among



the Tai Ahom 8.33 percent persons engage in business; while 1.73 percent in agriculture, 0.34 percent in daily wage earner, 0.69 percent small tea grower, 29.86 percent Unemployed and 35.06 percent dependents.

Table 4: Distribution of Sample Population by the Nature of Occupation

Nature of Occupation	No. of Working Population	No. of Working Population
Service (both government & private)	6 9	2 3 . 9 5
B u s i n e s s	2 4	8 . 3 3
A g r i c u l t u r e	5	1 . 7 3
D a i l y W a g e E a r n e r	1	0 . 3 4
S m a l l T e a G r o w e r	2	0 . 6 9
U n e m p l o y e d	8 6	2 9 . 8 6
D e p e n d e n t	1 0 1	3 5 . 0 6
T o t a l	2 8 8	1 0 0

Source: Field survey data, 2016

Family Income:

Income has profound influence on the socio-economic status of a family. In calculating the yearly income of a sample households the all source of income have been taken into consideration.

Table 5: Distribution of Households by Monthly Family Income

Level of Income (in Rs.)	No. of Households	P e r c e n t a g e
4 0 0 0 - 6 0 0 0	6	1 2
6 0 0 0 - 8 0 0 0	3	6
8 0 0 0 - 1 0 0 0 0	6	1 2
1 0 0 0 0 - 1 5 0 0 0	7	1 4
1 5 0 0 0 - 2 0 0 0 0	6	1 2
2 0 0 0 0 - 2 5 0 0 0	5	1 0
2 5 0 0 0 - 3 0 0 0 0	9	1 8
3 0 0 0 0 - 4 0 0 0 0	8	1 6

Source: Field survey data, 2016



It is evident from the table that among the surveyed households only 16 percent has annual income in between Rs. 30000-40000 is reported. The sample households belonging to 25000-30000 category has highest 18 percentages and household belonging to 6000-8000 category has lowest 6 percent.

Housing and Living condition:

Better housing and living condition is an important indicator of quality life to live as well as standard of living of the people. The study depict that the housing conditions of the universe as tabulated below-

Table 6: Distribution of the Sample Households by Type of House

T y p e o f H o u s e	N u m b e r o f f a m i l i e s	P e r c e n t a g e
P u c c a	10	20
S e m i - P u c c a	30	60
S e m i - P u c c a	10	20
T o t a l	50	100

Source: Field survey data, 2016

It is evident from the table that 60 percent of the total households live in semi pacca; while 20 percent live in pacca and 20 percent in katcha houses.

Table 7: Distribution of the Sample Households by the nos. of Living Rooms

No of living room	No of Household	Percentage
1-3	3	6
4-6	27	54
ABOVE 7	20	40
TOTAL	50	100

Source: Field survey data, 2016

Above table presents the number of living rooms of the sample households. It appears that 54 percent of households are having 4-6 living room followed by the number of household’s having above living room 7 (40%) and about 6 percent are having 1-3 living rooms.



Table 8: Distribution of the sample households by Toilet Facility

Type of Toilet	No. of Households	Percentage
Sanitary	41	82
Pit	9	18
Other	50	100

Source: Field survey data, 2016

Above table reveals that 82 percent households enjoy sanitary toilet facilities and 18 percent pit toilet of the sample households. Therefore, it never is a satisfactory situation regarding toilet facilities. On the basis of collected data the hygiene condition of the Tai Ahom people is not satisfactory.

On the basis of the field survey data regarding socio economic characteristics of the Tai Ahom people, some major observation can be summed up as follows:

1. The maximum Tai Ahom people are faith in Hinduism and side by side they practice worship of their forefather.
2. They use Assamese language for day to day communication and with other they use Broken Hindi .
3. 82 percent of surveyed households are nuclear family.
- 4.The study has found that the working population size contain 64.90 percent.
- 5.Educational attainment of the sample population has been found poor. There is 34 percent population recorded illiteracy.
6. 23.95 percent surveyed Tai Ahom population engage in service sectors.
7. Living and hygiene condition of the Tai Ahom are not satisfactory. Study found that the majority (60 percent) of houses are semi pucca, with no proper sanitary system, insufficient living rooms etc.



8. Sex ratio estimated females (1182) per 1000 males which is more than state sex ratio i. e. 954 females per 1000 males (2011) and the national 940 (2011).

Measures:

On the basis of present study, the following are put forward for the improvement of the socio economic conditions of the Tai Ahom people of Assam.

1. There is an urgent need to proper implementation of the tribal development policies by the Government.
2. Special schemes should be implemented for the improvement of the education level and health facilities of the Tai Ahom people.
3. Steps should be taken to improve requirement level of Tai Ahom people.

VI.Conclusion:

Despite all the efforts taken by the government to improve the status of the tribal population, still it is not realized in the Assam. Illiteracy and unemployment is still prevailing among the Tai Ahom population, Poverty is found among the Tai Ahom population and the government spending on the welfare of the Tai Ahom population is still needed attention. There is a need for a separate organization to look into the requirement of the Tai Ahom population for the equalitarian growth of the society. It can be concluded from the study that the socio-economic condition of the Tai Ahom people is not satisfactory. Thus the Tai Ahom rightly deserves the status of scheduled tribes.

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