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Analysing Education Law Implementation in Dibrugarh District Tea Community

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Abstract

Every human being has the inherent right to receive an education, regardless of caste, gender, or other factors. Recognizing this fundamental right, "The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act" was enacted on April 1, 2010, to safeguard the educational rights of children aged 6 to 14. This study focuses on the implementation and awareness of these educational laws within the tea garden community of Dibrugarh District. To gather insights, we conducted surveys in six randomly selected tea gardens within the district, where we interviewed a diverse group of individuals including students, locals, members of the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS), members of the All-Assam Tea Tribe Students Association, and teachers from state-run schools. The age range of the interviewees spanned from 6 to 57 years, and approximately 100 people were randomly interviewed from each tea garden. Our findings indicate that most children in the tea garden community have received education up to the primary level, typically until class 5, and expressed a strong desire to pursue further studies. While a handful of them managed to attend college and pursue bachelor's degrees, the majority did not have the opportunity to do so. It is worth noting that parents residing in the tea gardens were well aware of the significance of education for a better life and actively encouraged their children to pursue education to the best of their abilities. However, they lacked awareness of the specific laws and regulations about education, which resulted in missed opportunities for their children. By gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges and underlying reasons for the limited educational progress among children in the tea garden community, we are better equipped to devise and implement new laws and provisions that cater specifically to their needs. This research serves as a stepping stone towards improving educational opportunities and outcomes for the tea community, ultimately contributing to their overall development and well-being.

Keywords: Right to Education, Tea Community, Assam Tea Tribe Students Association, Dibrugarh District

1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental right that holds the key to empowering individuals and improving their lives. It is a powerful tool that can break the shackles of poverty and provide opportunities for growth and development. Every human being deserves access to education, regardless of their background or social status. In this regard, the tea tribes of Assam, India, represent a unique community with a rich historical background that dates back to the

colonial era. The discovery of tea plants in the upper Brahmaputra Valley by Robert Bruce in 1823¹ led to the establishment of tea plantations by the British. To meet the demand for cheap labour in these plantations, migrants were brought in from various regions of India, including Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh. These migrants and their descendants formed the tea tribes of Assam, a community that now comprises a significant population residing in approximately 803 tea estates in upper Assam.

Despite their contribution to the tea industry, the tea tribes have faced historical neglect when it comes to basic rights and access to quality education. The tea estates themselves have evolved into self-sustained microcosms with their social structures, norms, and unique cultural identities. Isolated from the outside world, many within the tea community lack the awareness of the transformative potential of education. This perpetuates socioeconomic disparities and restricts opportunities for personal and collective growth. The tea community's transient nature of work and the constant movement of workers from one estate to another pose challenges in establishing consistent and accessible educational opportunities. Moreover, a lack of understanding of their rights and a sense of fearlessness towards the law often leads to non-compliance with the Plantation Labour Act of 1951, which mandates that estates with twenty or more children between the ages of six and twelve must provide free and quality education.² Consequently, the basic right to education is hindered, limiting the potential for upward mobility and overall development within the tea community.

Efforts to improve educational access and quality within marginalized communities, including the tea tribes, have gained momentum in recent years. The Indian government, along with non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, has initiated several initiatives to enhance educational opportunities in the tea estates. Special focus has been placed on improving infrastructure, such as LP Schools, to meet the requirements of the Plantation Labour Act. Sensitization programs aimed at raising awareness about the importance of education have been conducted, encouraging parents and guardians to prioritize their children's education. Grassroots organizations have played a pivotal role in supporting educational initiatives tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of the tea community. They have addressed language barriers and cultural differences by introducing innovative teaching methods and curricula that resonate with the community.

Despite these positive strides, access to quality education remains a pressing concern for many tea estate children. Bridging educational disparities requires sustained advocacy and collaboration among government agencies, civil society organizations, and the tea estate community. While the establishment of infrastructure is crucial, it must be complemented by continuous efforts to improve teacher training, provide better learning resources, and address infrastructural gaps. Ensuring a comprehensive and holistic educational ecosystem within the tea estates is essential. Moreover, efforts to promote education must be integrated into a broader development framework that addresses the underlying socioeconomic issues faced by the tea community. This multifaceted approach will empower the tea tribes and contribute to creating a more equitable and inclusive society.

Education holds the potential to break the cycle of poverty and bring about transformative change. For the tea tribes of Assam, access to quality education represents an opportunity for empowerment, enabling individuals to make informed decisions, actively participate in society, and contribute to the nation's progress. Realizing the right to education for every child within the tea estates requires collective responsibility and collaborative action. Policymakers, educational institutions, communities, and other stakeholders must work together to overcome the challenges hindering educational opportunities. By fostering education, we can foster sustainable development and unlock the full potential of the tea tribes, benefitting not only the community itself but also contributing to the progress and prosperity of the entire nation.

The tea tribes of Assam represent a significant community with a unique historical background, contributing significantly to the tea industry. Despite their contributions, they have faced historical neglect in accessing quality education. However, recent initiatives have brought about positive changes, paving the way for educational opportunities in the tea estates. To address the remaining disparities, collaborative efforts are necessary, including

¹ Indian Tea Association. (n.d.). History of Indian Tea. https://www.indiatea.org/history_of_indian_tea

² Plantations Labour Act 1951

better infrastructure, improved teacher training, and comprehensive community engagement. By examining the historical context, challenges, and recent developments, this research paper aims to generate awareness and mobilize stakeholders to work towards ensuring that every child within the tea estates receives a quality education, fostering social progress and empowerment. Only through concerted efforts can we break the barriers hindering education and unlock the true potential of the tea tribes of Assam.

2. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to assess the implementation of the RTE Act in the tea community of Dibrugarh district and explore awareness among teachers, parents, and children. Despite being in effect for over a decade, challenges persist, like low attendance and high dropout rates in tea estates. The research focuses on understanding factors hindering RTE Act's success. Interacting with stakeholders in select estates, we seek insights into awareness levels and examine location's influence. By studying disparities, we aim to contribute to understanding implementation challenges in marginalized communities. Findings will provide valuable recommendations for policymakers to enhance RTE Act's effectiveness and ensure quality education for all tea estate children, fostering empowerment.

3. Significance of the Study

This study is vital for understanding the implementation challenges of the RTE Act in the tea community of Dibrugarh district. It provides valuable insights into low attendance, high dropout rates, and limited awareness among teachers, parents, and children. The findings can inform targeted interventions and policies to ensure equitable access to quality education within tea estates. Policymakers can use this research to design effective strategies for better educational outcomes, benefiting marginalized communities. Ultimately, the study contributes to building a just and equitable society through the promotion of education as a fundamental human right.

4. Methodology

The research methodology adopted for this study aimed to delve deep into the level of implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act in the tea community of the Dibrugarh district, as well as to gauge the awareness and understanding of RTE provisions among key stakeholders. By using a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods, the study sought to provide a comprehensive assessment of the challenges and opportunities in the educational landscape of the tea community.

Six tea estates out of 172 in Dibrugarh district were selected for a practical and thoughtful approach due to time and resource constraints. The factors justifying this selection were:

- A. Geographical Distribution: Chosen estates covered both urban and rural areas, capturing different socioeconomic backgrounds.
- B. Sample Size: Six estates provided a manageable size for data collection and analysis, allowing for in-depth insights.
- C. Representativeness: The selected estates were considered representative of the broader tea community.
- D. Resource Constraints: Focusing on six estates allowed the effective allocation of limited resources.

The decision to interview 812 participants was based on:

- A. Statistical Significance: A large enough sample size ensured statistical significance and increased confidence in results.
- B. Diversity of Perspectives: Interviews represented various stakeholders, providing diverse insights on the RTE Act's implementation.
- C. Depth of Analysis: Many interviews allowed for a more detailed analysis of data.
- D. Credibility and Reliability: A larger sample size enhanced the credibility and reliability of research findings.

The primary data collection involved a rich array of sources, including field observations, one-on-one interactions, and interviews with various stakeholders. Researchers engaged with teachers, students aged 6 to 14 years, parents,

welfare officers of the estates, and representatives of prominent organizations such as the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) and the Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (ATTSA). The ACMS, being one of the largest workers' unions in Asia with members spread across tea estates in Assam, provided valuable insights into the overall educational condition in the district. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and perceptions of parents, they were categorized based on occupation: Permanent workers, Non-Workers, Casual Workers, and Retired workers. Thirty parents from each estate were interviewed, and a set of five carefully designed questions were posed to gather pertinent information about their understanding and awareness of the RTE Act provisions.

Moreover, students and teachers from one school in each estate were interviewed to gain a holistic view of the current state of education in the tea community. The inclusion of passed-out students in the interviews added a temporal dimension to the study, enabling researchers to assess changes and improvements in educational opportunities over time. Despite the challenges of data collection, the researchers strived to include as many interviewees as possible to ensure the study's representativeness and credibility. However, due to various constraints and factors, the number of interviewees varied between estates, particularly for passed-out students.

In addition to primary data, secondary data from estate officials and local NGOs played a crucial role in the research. The records of literacy rates and attendance maintained by the estates were reliable and served as a crucial reference for the study. The data on average attendance and the number of students allowed researchers to analyze trends and patterns in school participation. The research team encountered some limitations during the data collection process. For instance, some estates were in the process of updating their literacy rate data for 2022, leading to incomplete information in certain cases. Nevertheless, the overall methodology of combining both primary and secondary data sources ensured a comprehensive analysis of the RTE Act's implementation and awareness in the tea community of the Dibrugarh district.

5. The Description of the estates is as follows

The Description of these estates is given based on the secondary data given and based on the observations made by us in the estates.

- **Estate I: Rural Setting with Challenges**
Estate one is located in a rural area, far from major cities, requiring a 6 km inward travel from the national highway. With two government schools for classes one to five, it has a total capacity of around one hundred eighty students. However, attendance fluctuates, with seventy percent during the off-season and forty-five percent during the operational season. Engaging with the people initially proved challenging due to their traditional mindset. Building rapport allowed us to gain valuable insights into the implementation and awareness of the Right to Education (RTE) Act in this estate. Understanding the reasons behind low attendance and limited RTE Act awareness is essential for formulating targeted interventions to improve educational opportunities within the tea community.
- **Estate II: Semi-Rural Landscape with Positive Engagement**
Estate two is situated in a semi-rural area, far from a national highway, approximately twelve kilometers from the nearest town. It features two government schools and an estate school, providing classes one to ten. The total capacity of all three schools is around three hundred students, with attendance fluctuating between seventy-five percent and seventy percent. In contrast to estate one, the people in this estate displayed a modern outlook and willingly participated in open discussions with us. This openness allowed us to gain deeper insights into their perceptions and experiences regarding education and the RTE Act.
- **Estate III: Another Semi-Rural Scenario with Modern Outlook**
Estate three is also situated in a semi-rural area, approximately thirteen kilometres from the nearest town. Similar to estate two, it has two schools catering to classes one to five. With a total capacity of around two hundred students, attendance patterns in estate three are akin to estate two. The people in this estate also displayed a modern outlook, and many of them had their businesses. Understanding the dynamics of education and the RTE Act awareness in this estate contributes to a comprehensive understanding of educational challenges faced by the tea community in the Dibrugarh district.
- **Estate IV: Urban Setup near an Industrial Town**

Estate four, strategically located near an industrial town, boasts a predominantly urban setup with various shops, hotels, and commercial establishments. It mainly comprises a young population, with approximately 70 out of 100 individuals having received an elementary-level education. The estate's location right beside a highway connects it to the nearby town, about 10 kilometres away. In contrast to the previous estates, estate four has a single government school catering to classes one to five. This school's total capacity is around a hundred students, and attendance rates are impressive, with ninety percent during the off-season and eighty-five percent during the on-season. Interestingly, many individuals here do not work in the tea estate itself, preferring to commute to the nearby town for better pay and opportunities.

- **Estate V: Multiple Schools and High Educational Aspirations**

Estate Five is strategically located right beside a highway, making it easily accessible. The estate comprises a predominantly young population, with approximately 80 out of 100 individuals having received an elementary-level education. The proximity to a highway connects the estate to a nearby town, about 7.3 kilometres away. In contrast to the previous estates, estate five stands out with six government schools, five of which cater to classes one to five, and the last one provides education for classes six to ten. This estate is divided into six divisions, each with its school, with a total capacity of around twelve hundred students. Attendance in estate five remains impressively high throughout the year, with a remarkable ninety-five percent during the off-season and approximately ninety-three percent during the on-season. This consistent attendance indicates a stable educational environment, irrespective of seasonal variations, and reflects the community's commitment to education. Many people here also engage in various businesses, and interestingly, a significant number do not work within the tea estate itself but prefer to commute to the nearby town for employment.

- **Estate VI: Scenic Semi-Urban Setup**

Estate Six is strategically situated right beside a highway, making it a semi-urban tea estate. The estate is home to a predominantly young population, with approximately 64 out of 100 individuals having received an elementary-level education. Its location close to a highway connects it conveniently to a nearby town, which is approximately 4.3 kilometres away. Interestingly, the estate's picturesque beauty has made it a popular sightseeing destination among locals. Similar to some of the other estates, estate six has one government school catering to classes one to five. The school's total capacity is around one hundred students. Despite being a semi-urban location, the estate maintains commendable attendance rates, with approximately eighty-five per cent attendance during the off-season and around eighty percent during the on-season. This consistent attendance indicates a stable educational environment, irrespective of seasonal variations, and reflects the community's commitment to education. Much like the previous estates, the people in estate six also display a modern outlook. Many of them are involved in various businesses. Interestingly, a significant number of individuals in this estate also choose not to work within the tea estate itself but prefer commuting to the nearby town for employment opportunities, where they can find better pay and prospects. The unique characteristics of estate six, including its semi-urban setting, popularity as a sightseeing spot, and preference for off-estate employment, offer valuable insights into the dynamics of education and livelihoods within the tea community. Understanding how a semi-urban location and tourism potential can influence education and economic choices will enrich the overall research study on the implementation of the RTE Act in the tea community of the Dibrugarh district. By closely analyzing the dynamics of estate six and comparing them with the other estates, we gain valuable insights into the factors contributing to educational success and progress within the tea community. Understanding the role of accessibility, school availability, and community attitude toward education in this estate will provide valuable information for shaping policies.

6. Results and Findings

After conducting extensive data collection from both primary and secondary sources, the study revealed astonishing results regarding the implementation and awareness of the RTE Act within the tea community. It was

found that the entire population of the tea community was aware of the RTE Act's existence and its main provisions. While not all residents were familiar with the specific sections of the Act, they had a general understanding that the government must provide free and quality education to children between the ages of six to fourteen and that preventing a child from going to school is illegal. The level of awareness among teachers, students, and parents was quite commendable, with teachers being able to articulate the objectives of the RTE Act and its significance as a fundamental right.

Several factors contributed to the high level of awareness observed in the tea community. Firstly, local NGOs played a crucial role in raising awareness about child rights and the RTE Act. These NGOs often had members from the tea estates and regularly conducted surveys within the communities. Secondly, the advent of the Internet has significantly contributed to increased awareness. Access to information through the Internet has empowered both children and parents, making them more aware of their rights and the importance of education. Another essential factor contributing to awareness was the active involvement of welfare officers and other managerial staff in the estates. These officials worked diligently to ensure the welfare of the workers and also took the responsibility of informing them about their rights, including the right to education. They played a pivotal role in spreading awareness and addressing any grievances within the community. Additionally, the Worker Union and the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangath (ACMS) played a significant role in advocating for the rights of the tea community. They actively worked to raise awareness and represented the grievances of the community to the appropriate authorities. Their efforts have been instrumental in empowering the tea community with knowledge of their fundamental rights, including the right to education.

However, one area where the study found a need for improvement was the awareness among students about the role of the Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (ATTSA). In some instances, students were unaware of the association's purpose and its mission to protect the rights of children. Addressing this knowledge gap and enhancing the engagement of students with ATTSA could further strengthen the tea community's awareness of their rights. Overall, the study demonstrated that the RTE Act has made significant strides in terms of awareness within the tea community. The combined efforts of NGOs, the Internet, estate officials, and worker unions have played a vital role in creating awareness and promoting the right to education among the tea community. By leveraging these factors and addressing specific areas of improvement, policymakers and stakeholders can further enhance the implementation of the RTE Act and contribute to the development and empowerment of the tea community.

Despite the tea community having a good awareness of the RTE Act, we observed that its implementation in terms of school attendance was not uniform across all estates. Estates I, II, and III showed lower attendance rates compared to Estates IV, V, and VI. Further research revealed several reasons contributing to this disparity.

- Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Education

In our research, we noticed significant differences in the perceptions and attitudes towards education among the tea community members residing in Estates I, II, and III compared to the other estates. The mindset of the people in these particular estates appeared to be distinct, shaped by factors such as limited exposure to the outside world, fear of the unknown, and a lack of active involvement in their children's education. Many individuals in Estates I, II, and III seemed content with their current societal status and were reluctant to explore opportunities beyond the confines of the tea estates. They perceived education as having limited utility, believing that even if their children received an education, they would eventually return to work as labourers in the estate. This viewpoint stemmed from their lack of exposure to the world outside the estate and a sense of comfort within their familiar surroundings. The prevailing notion seemed to be that life within the estate was sufficient and venturing outside could be risky or uncertain. Despite understanding that education could potentially be a pathway out of poverty, some students who managed to pursue education up to the higher secondary level still returned to work in the estate. The fear of the unknown and their limited knowledge about the opportunities beyond the estate discouraged them from exploring alternative avenues outside their community. Moreover, we observed that parental involvement in their children's education was lacking in these estates. Parents who did send their children to school did so with little active interest in their academic progress or school activities. There seemed to be a sense of detachment and a lack of understanding about the significance of parental involvement in shaping a

child's educational journey. This lack of guidance and support from parents might hinder the students' overall development and academic performance. The perceptions and attitudes towards education in Estate I, II, and III appeared to be shaped by factors like limited exposure, fear of the unknown, and inadequate parental involvement. Understanding these underlying attitudes is crucial for designing targeted interventions to promote a more positive outlook towards education within the tea community. By addressing these issues and fostering a deeper understanding of the benefits of education, we can strive to create a more conducive environment for the holistic development and academic success of the children in these estates.

- Poverty:

Poverty plays a significant role in hindering education within the tea community, affecting the dreams and aspirations of many children. Estates IV, V, and VI stand apart from the rest, as a considerable number of residents in these estates run businesses, such as dairy farming, from their homes. This economic advantage enables them to support their children's higher studies, fostering a strong commitment to sending their children to school at the elementary level. However, in the other estates, poverty poses challenges, resulting in cases of students not attending school or leaving education prematurely due to a perceived lack of prospects or the necessity to contribute to their family's income. In Estates IV, V, and VI, where economic conditions are relatively better due to successful home-based businesses, parents prioritize education for their children. They recognize the importance of education as a means of social mobility and escaping the clutches of poverty. This awareness drives their efforts to ensure that their children receive an elementary education and, when possible, pursue higher studies. Conversely, in other estates facing more challenging economic circumstances, some children do not attend school regularly or discontinue their education prematurely. These students often perceive limited opportunities for advancement within their community, leading them to question the long-term value of education. Additionally, poverty's burden necessitates the need for some children to contribute to their family's income at an early age, making it difficult for them to prioritize schooling. The cyclical nature of poverty further compounds these challenges, as limited access to education perpetuates socio-economic disparities within the tea community. Children from financially disadvantaged backgrounds often lack the necessary resources and support to overcome these barriers, leading to a vicious cycle of poverty and restricted educational opportunities.

- Alcoholism:

Alcoholism has been a long-standing tradition in the housing lines of tea estates since the British colonial period. Many residents of the tea community, especially in Estate I, II, and III, indulge in drinking alcohol every evening after a hard day's work. Unfortunately, this habit consumes a significant portion of their overall income, which could otherwise be utilized to improve their own and their family's lives. The prevalence of alcoholism not only leads to financial strain but also creates a negative environment within households, influencing the mindset of children who witness their parents' excessive drinking. The excessive consumption of alcohol contributes to the perpetuation of poverty in the tea community. A considerable amount of money that could have been allocated for children's education and the betterment of living conditions is instead spent on alcohol. This financial drain further hampers the ability of families to invest in their children's education, leading to a lack of resources for educational support. Moreover, the presence of alcoholism in households negatively impacts the children's perception of their future. When children grow up in an environment where heavy drinking is prevalent, they may develop a misguided belief that this is the norm for their own lives. Witnessing domestic violence and family conflicts resulting from alcohol abuse further pollutes the minds of young impressionable minds, leading to emotional and psychological distress. The consequences of alcoholism on education are far-reaching. Not only does it directly hinder financial support for schooling, but it also affects the emotional well-being and motivation of children to pursue education. The cycle of poverty and alcoholism creates a challenging environment for children to thrive academically and personally. The issue of alcoholism in the tea community requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders. Educational programs and awareness campaigns can be organized to highlight the negative effects of alcoholism on families, children, and the overall well-being of the community. Community-based support systems and counselling services can be established to help individuals struggling with alcohol addiction. Moreover, measures to improve the economic conditions of the tea community through skill development, job

opportunities, and financial literacy can aid in reducing the prevalence of alcoholism and its detrimental impact on education. By breaking the chains of alcoholism, the tea community can create a more conducive environment for education and upliftment.

- Impact of Child Marriage on Education in the Tea Industry

Child marriage remains a significant issue in the tea community of the Dibrugarh district. Despite the efforts of honourable Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and other government officials, the practice of child marriage continues to persist in the shadows. While some culprits have been arrested, the prevalence of child marriage poses a severe threat to the education and well-being of young girls in the community. One startling aspect of the problem is that often, it is not the parents who initiate child marriages, but rather young children themselves. Many girls between the ages of 12 to 14 run away from home to get married, a distressing trend that hinders their education and personal development. Due to their status as minors, these young individuals cannot be held fully accountable for their actions, and their parents are not entirely at fault, as they did not consent to such decisions. Child marriage has detrimental consequences on the educational opportunities for young girls in the tea community. When girls get married at such a young age, their education is usually cut short, and they are forced to assume adult responsibilities prematurely. The societal pressure to prioritize marriage over education perpetuates a cycle of limited opportunities for girls to reach their full potential. Furthermore, child marriage significantly impacts the physical and mental well-being of these young brides. Early marriage often leads to early childbirth, posing health risks for both the mother and the child. Moreover, young brides may face social isolation, lack of support, and limited access to essential services, leading to a compromised quality of life. Addressing the issue of child marriage requires a multi-faceted approach. Raising awareness about the negative consequences of child marriage and promoting the value of education for girls is crucial. Educational institutions, NGOs, and community leaders should collaborate to support and counsel young girls at risk of child marriage. Empowering girls with knowledge and life skills can help them make informed decisions and resist early marriage. Additionally, engaging parents, teachers, and community members in discussions about the importance of education and the harmful effects of child marriage can bring about positive change.

The tea industry and society as a whole need to work together to eradicate child marriage and create an environment that fosters education, gender equality, and empowerment for young girls. By breaking the shackles of child marriage, the tea community can pave the way for a brighter and more promising future for its youth.

- Insufficient School Facilities as a Barrier to Education

One significant reason contributing to the low attendance and dropouts in the tea community is the lack of adequate school facilities. While each tea estate has a government school catering to classes one to five, the provision for higher education is limited, with only a few estates having schools for classes six to ten. This lack of higher educational institutions poses a major obstacle for children who wish to continue their studies beyond the elementary level. As a result, many families do not see the practicality of promoting education if their children are unable to complete their schooling due to the unavailability of suitable facilities. In certain tea estates located near towns, the problem lies in the financial aspect. Families may struggle to afford the additional expenses associated with sending their children to schools or colleges located far away from their homes. Transportation costs, boarding fees, and other related expenditures become significant burdens for families already facing economic constraints. As a result, children from such estates may be forced to discontinue their education, perpetuating the cycle of limited opportunities and lack of socio-economic mobility. Similarly, estates situated in rural areas face similar challenges. The remoteness of these locations often translates to limited accessibility to educational institutions. With schools and colleges situated far away from their homes, students from rural tea estates encounter difficulties in pursuing higher studies. The lack of nearby educational facilities leaves families with few options to support their children's educational aspirations, leading to a disheartening cycle of limited educational opportunities. The absence of appropriate school facilities creates a barrier to education, hindering the academic and personal development of children in the tea community. Addressing this issue requires collaborative efforts from government authorities, estate management, and other stakeholders to invest in and establish educational institutions that cater to higher-grade levels within or near the tea estates. By bridging this gap in educational infrastructure, the tea community can

have greater access to quality education, empowering the younger generation with enhanced opportunities for personal growth and socio-economic advancement.

- Lack of Fear Factor and Respect for the Law

One prominent issue contributing to the non-compliance with the RTE Act in the tea community is the diminishing fear factor and respect for the law. Despite being aware of the RTE Act's provisions, many members of the tea community choose not to follow the law, and instances of its violation often go unreported. This lack of adherence to the law is attributed to the strong sense of brotherhood and unity within the community, which dissuades outsiders from intervening in their affairs. In the close-knit tea community, there is a prevailing belief that they are immune to the consequences of breaking the law, especially when it comes to minor offences. The perception that they can evade punishment fosters a sense of impunity, leading some individuals to believe they are above the law. This misplaced confidence in their immunity from legal consequences undermines the effective implementation of the RTE Act. Moreover, the solidarity among members of the tea community further contributes to the disregard for the law. The sense of collective support and loyalty creates an environment where individuals feel shielded from external scrutiny or consequences. This bond of brotherhood often prevents any dissent or willingness to report fellow community members for breaking the law, even if it involves non-compliance with the RTE Act. As a result, the fear factor and respect for the law have gradually eroded in the tea community, leading to a culture of non-compliance with legal provisions such as the RTE Act. To address this issue, efforts are needed to instil a sense of responsibility and accountability among community members, fostering a culture where everyone upholds the law, irrespective of their social affiliations. Raising awareness about the importance of adhering to the RTE Act and promoting a sense of collective responsibility for the education of children can help in restoring respect for the law and ensure the implementation of the Act's provisions for the benefit of the tea community's younger generation.

- Adverse Domestic Environment

A significant barrier to the implementation of the RTE Act in tea estates is the prevalent negative environment. This environment encompasses various factors, including the influence of bad company on children, which can adversely impact their education. Children are highly impressionable, and the company they keep can shape their attitudes and behaviours, leading to distractions from their studies. In many instances, the negative environment in the tea estates is exacerbated by the presence of alcoholism and its consequences. When neighbours or family members engage in excessive drinking and create disturbances, it disrupts the peaceful atmosphere necessary for focused studying. The noise and commotion caused by such activities can hinder a child's concentration and make it challenging to concentrate on their studies, particularly during crucial examination periods. The negative environment prevailing in some tea estates can also give rise to social issues, such as domestic violence, which can further impact children's well-being and academic progress. Witnessing or experiencing domestic violence at home can create emotional turmoil for children, affecting their mental and emotional development, and subsequently, their ability to excel academically. Moreover, the lack of positive role models in the community can contribute to the negative environment. When children do not have inspiring figures to look up to, they may not prioritize their education or set ambitious goals for themselves. The absence of such role models can lead to a lack of motivation to pursue higher education or strive for academic excellence. Addressing the negative environment in the tea estates is crucial for fostering a conducive atmosphere for education and implementing the RTE Act effectively. Measures such as community-based awareness programs, counselling services, and support for families dealing with alcoholism and domestic issues can help create a more positive and nurturing environment for the children.

- Impact of Social Media

The advent of social media has brought about both opportunities and challenges for the tea community, particularly in terms of education. With the shift to online classes during the pandemic, access to education became heavily reliant on digital devices. However, this transition posed a significant challenge for many students in the tea estates who could not afford smartphones or reliable internet connections. As a result, a considerable number of students were unable to continue their studies effectively. For those who managed to access smartphones, social media became a major distraction from their studies. Instead of focusing on their textbooks and coursework, many students got engrossed in social media platforms,

diverting their attention from academic pursuits. This diversion led to a decline in their academic performance and sometimes contributed to dropping out of school. Moreover, the rise of social media has brought about new challenges in the form of child marriages. The easy access to social media platforms exposes children to various influences and interactions, some of which may not be suitable for their age. Online spaces can sometimes facilitate harmful practices, including child marriages, which further disrupt the education and well-being of children in the tea community. The impact of social media on the tea community's education system necessitates a comprehensive approach to address the issue. This could include promoting digital literacy among students and parents, encouraging responsible use of social media, and providing support to ensure that every child has access to digital devices for online education. Additionally, awareness campaigns on the potential risks of social media and online platforms can help empower students to make informed choices and prioritize their studies over distractions. By acknowledging and addressing the impact of social media on education, the tea community can work towards creating a more conducive learning environment for its children and ensure that the provisions of the RTE Act are effectively implemented.

- Impact of Population Growth

One might think what does the population have to do with children going to school, But it has so much to do, In tea estates, we can see as given in the description of the tea estates that the percentage of attendance decreases during season time. This decrease is a lot in some cases and some cases are very little. Most of this decrease is because older children stay back at home to look after their younger siblings. While their parents go to work there is no one to look after the young ones. In tea gardens, there is a creche house available that looks after the young ones while the parents work, But this is available only for permanent workers. Heading: Impact of Population Growth Population growth plays a significant role in influencing children's attendance at schools in tea estates. During the peak season, when work demands intensify in the estates, the percentage of student attendance tends to decrease. This decline is attributed to older children staying back at home to take care of their younger siblings while their parents are engaged in work. In such circumstances, the responsibility of looking after the young ones falls on the elder siblings, leading to their absence from school. In tea estates, there are creche houses available to take care of young children while their parents are at work. However, these facilities are typically limited to permanent workers, leaving casual workers and non-workers with no access to such support. As a result, children from families that do not qualify for these services face a greater challenge in attending school regularly, especially during the peak season when the demand for labour is high. The issue of population growth further underscores the importance of implementing policies and measures that support families with children in tea estates. Ensuring access to childcare services for all workers, regardless of their employment status, could alleviate the burden on older siblings and enable more children to attend school consistently. Additionally, community-based initiatives and collaborations with NGOs can help provide support to families with limited access to resources, mitigating the impact of population growth on children's education. Understanding the relationship between population dynamics and children's attendance in tea estates is crucial for designing targeted interventions that address the barriers hindering educational opportunities. By recognizing the influence of population growth on education, stakeholders can work towards creating a more inclusive and supportive environment that enables all children in the tea community to exercise their right to education.

- Lack of Educational Guidance

In tea estates, a lack of proper educational guidance poses a significant challenge for families aspiring to send their children to college for further studies. Many parents are unaware of how to guide their children from a young age to prepare them for higher education. As a result, children may miss out on crucial opportunities and support that could have otherwise fostered their academic growth. Without adequate guidance and support, children may not be aware of the various educational paths available to them or the steps they need to take to achieve their goals. This lack of clarity can lead to a decline in the overall educational attainment of children within the tea community. Additionally, parents who are unfamiliar with the education system may struggle to provide the necessary motivation and resources to help their children succeed academically. Moreover, the absence of proper guidance can also impact children's long-term career prospects. Many children in tea estates may not have access to role models or mentors who can inspire them to pursue higher education or explore diverse career options. Consequently, they may

be limited in their aspirations and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Addressing the issue of lack of educational guidance requires targeted efforts by both the government and community-based organizations. Initiatives that focus on educating parents about the importance of early education, career opportunities, and academic support can empower them to better guide their children's educational journey. Additionally, mentorship programs that connect students with successful individuals from similar backgrounds can provide invaluable guidance and encouragement. By recognizing and addressing the challenges stemming from the lack of educational guidance, the tea community can take significant strides towards improving educational outcomes and fostering a brighter future for its children.

Education decline in the tea community is attributed to factors like parental and child motivation. Some parents face obstacles, that impact their ability to support quality education, while others in Estates IV, V, and VI, and a few in Estates I, II, and III show exceptional dedication to their children's education. Understanding the reasons behind these contrasting outcomes is crucial. The reasons are as follows:

- Positive Parental Mindset

A positive parental mindset emerged as a crucial factor influencing children's access to education in the tea estates. During the interviews with parents, it was evident that some of them displayed a mindset that prioritized their child's education above all else. Despite facing poverty and limited educational opportunities themselves, these parents demonstrated unwavering determination to support their children's future through education. Many parents in the tea community engaged in side businesses or took on additional work solely to finance their children's education. They firmly believed that education was the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and providing better opportunities for their children. Their self-sacrifice and resilience reflected a strong commitment to ensuring their child's access to quality education. The presence of such positive parental role models within the community can serve as a source of inspiration for other parents and children alike. By fostering a mindset that places value on education, more families can be encouraged to overcome financial challenges and prioritize their children's educational pursuits. The support and encouragement provided by parents with a proper mindset can empower children to persevere in their studies and pursue higher education despite the obstacles they may face. Recognizing and promoting the importance of a positive parental mindset within the tea community can be instrumental in enhancing overall educational outcomes. Encouraging parent-teacher collaborations and community engagement can further strengthen the impact of a proper mindset on children's educational aspirations. By fostering an environment that values education and supports parental involvement, tea estates can create a conducive atmosphere for students to thrive academically and realize their full potential.

- Impact of Education Facilities

Access to education facilities significantly influences the educational opportunities available to children in tea estates. Estates that are connected by highways have a distinct advantage in providing easier access to colleges and schools essential for their future education. Having proper transportation infrastructure in place makes it more feasible for students to travel to educational institutions outside the estate and pursue higher studies. In contrast, estates that lack convenient access to educational facilities face challenges in ensuring that children receive quality education beyond the elementary level. The limited availability of schools for classes six to ten often compels students to travel long distances to continue their education. This can be a major deterrent for both students and parents, leading to a decline in attendance and an increase in dropouts. Ensuring better access to education facilities, especially for higher education, is crucial in enhancing the educational outcomes for children in tea estates. By strategically planning the establishment of educational institutions and addressing transportation issues, the tea community can empower its youth with better educational opportunities and pave the way for their future success.

- Impact of Side Income

The availability of side income opportunities in several tea estates near urban areas has had a positive impact on children's education. Many individuals from these estates seek additional employment in nearby towns, where they often receive better pay. As a result, families have access to increased financial resources, which, in turn, promotes a supportive environment for their children's education. With the availability of side income, parents can invest more in their children's schooling, covering expenses like school fees, books, and uniforms. This financial stability enables children to attend school regularly

without the worry of financial constraints. Moreover, parents who have a steady additional income are more likely to prioritize their children's education and provide the necessary support and encouragement for their academic growth. Additionally, the presence of side income has contributed to a more stable lifestyle for these families. Unlike the traditional model where the sole reliance on estate jobs can lead to uncertainties and relocation, having supplementary income allows parents to settle in one place, ensuring continuity in their children's education. This stability fosters a conducive learning environment for the children, leading to better educational outcomes.

Furthermore, the pursuit of better-paying jobs in urban areas has also exposed parents to the significance of education in securing higher-paying jobs. This exposure motivates parents to value education and aspire for better educational opportunities for their children, leading to an overall improvement in the educational aspirations within the community. In estates IV, V, and VI, where community members have actively pursued side income opportunities, we observed a strong culture of family support for education. Parents in these estates actively encourage their children to pursue their studies and provide the necessary guidance and resources to help them succeed academically. As a result, children in these estates have access to a supportive family network that nurtures their educational growth and fosters a positive attitude towards learning.

7. Suggestions

To address the challenges impacting educational outcomes in the tea community, several targeted interventions can be implemented. Here are a few suggestions to fix these problems:

1. **Community Awareness Programs:** Organize community awareness programs to educate parents about the long-term benefits of education. Highlight success stories of individuals who have achieved personal and professional growth through education.
2. **Improved School Facilities:** Focus on improving the quality of existing government schools and establishing schools for higher classes in estates lacking such facilities.
3. **Reduce Alcoholism:** Collaborate with local authorities and NGOs to address alcoholism within the tea community. Create awareness about the detrimental effects of alcohol on family dynamics and promote support systems to address addiction.
4. **Digital Literacy Programs:** Introduce digital literacy programs to familiarize students with technology and the Internet. Teach responsible use of smartphones and social media platforms to minimize distractions and ensure that students use technology for educational purposes.
5. **Inclusive Educational Policies:** Advocate for inclusive educational policies that consider the unique challenges faced by the tea community. Policies should aim to provide equal educational opportunities and remove barriers hindering access to education.
6. **Parent-Teacher Engagement:** Strengthen the collaboration between parents and teachers through regular meetings, progress updates, and parent-teacher associations. Involving parents in their child's educational journey can lead to better support and encouragement from home.

By implementing these suggestions and fostering a supportive environment for education, it is possible to improve educational outcomes and create a brighter future for the tea community. It requires a collaborative effort involving government authorities, NGOs, tea estate officials, worker unions, and the tea community itself to overcome the challenges and ensure every child receives a quality education.

8. Conclusion

Education in the tea estates is a critical issue that demands attention. Although the tea community is well aware of the RTE Act, its implementation varies across the Dibrugarh district's tea gardens, resulting in unequal student attendance rates. To address this, a shift in the community's mindset is imperative. While each estate has at least one elementary school, targeted interventions are needed. Establishing police outposts to ensure law and order and focusing on underdeveloped estates are crucial steps. By promoting community awareness and providing better infrastructure and resources, the government can bridge the educational gap. Equitable access to quality education

is essential for the tea community's children, empowering them to build a brighter future. Concerted efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the RTE Act and address hindrances to educational growth will pave the way for a more prosperous and educated tea community in the Dibrugarh district. By fostering a supportive and conducive environment for education, we can empower the tea community's children with the knowledge and skills needed to build a brighter future for themselves and their community.

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