

**Occupational Shifting and Socio-Economic Condition of Scheduled Tribes  
of Assam in the Post –Liberalisation Period**

**Dr. Ayekpam Ibemcha Chanu**

Assistant Professor (Sl.Gd)

Department of Commerce

Assam University, Diphu Campus, Diphu, Assam

Email: [ibemchac6@gmail.com](mailto:ibemchac6@gmail.com)

Mobile no: 7002298404

**Abstract**

The basic objective of the paper is to examine the relationship between changes in the occupation and socio-economic condition of vulnerable section of the society like Scheduled Tribes (ST) of India in the post- reform period. It is assumed that in the post liberalisation period, though there is witness of several changes in the consumption culture and emergence a new form of elite middle class both in urban and rural areas, the socio-economic condition of large section of ST population of the country is not improved. In the present paper, a sample of 384 ST households of hill districts of Assam has been considered to examine the shifting pattern in occupation and their socio-economic condition in the post liberalisation period. The paper which is both descriptive and analytical in nature is based on both primary and secondary data. An index has been developed to measure the socio-economic condition. Descriptive and non-parametric statistics like Mann Whitney U test have been used to analyse data and test hypotheses. The test results reveal that there is significant association between shifting in occupation, area of settlement and socio-economic condition of the ST households of the study area.

Key words: Scheduled Tribes, Socio-economic, reform, occupation

**Introduction :**

What are the changes in the post- liberalisation period in India? Who are the main beneficiaries during this period? What type of class has been emerged in Indian society in the post liberalisation period? Have the traditional institutions, small ethnic communities of India become more vulnerable or about to extinct during this period? There are number of issues which come to mind whenever there is discussion on post liberalisation period. In India, during the last two and a half decades, we have seen tremendous changes in all the fronts. The consumption style of all the sections of society has been almost changed. The ownership of modern gadgets and technologies are no more concentrated in the hands of small section of urban elite class of the country. The free penetration of western based media and multinational products has even redefined the concept of beauty in remote areas of the country.. India has produced a countable number of billionaires and beauty peasants in the

post liberalisation period, however, there are different places of the country which have not been touched by the development process. And, those remote areas are the inhabitants of vulnerable section sections of the society like Scheduled Tribes (ST). The modern education among the ST of North -East India including hill districts of Assam has been imparted with establishment of Christian missionary schools by the Europeans; however, there is need to improve the socio-economic condition of them. The present paper examines the changes in the occupation and socio-economic condition Schedule Tribe (ST) households of hill districts of Assam in the post liberalisation period.

**Significance of the study:**

It was thought that India's policy of economic liberalisation would bring all round development and provide benefits to all the sections of society. However, there is a concentration of wealth among few section of the society, hence the gap between 'have and have not' has been widen. The ST population of the country in general and hill areas in particular are also lack of basic amenities and behind the race of development process. Hence, there is need to study the real socio-economic condition in the post liberalization period.

**Review of Literature:**

In good number of studies attempt to examine the socio-economic condition of ST of different regions of India and reveal that the ST are deprived from basic necessities of life , low income, poverty etc .( Basumatary, 2016, Rao, 2013, Ali & Basak, 2018, Chanu,2019). Regarding the socio-economic indicators, income, occupation, family size are widely used in most of the studies and it is seen in the studies of Babu (2012), Jayantakumar, A & Palaniyammal, P, (2016), Kumar, *et. al.*, (2018). The widely used formula of socio-economic status (SES) is Kuppuswami and Udai Pareekh's Scale (Wani 2019). However, there is lack of formula to measure the socio-economic condition. The studies are also mainly based on the conditions of ST of different regions of the country, hence, the present paper is an attempt to fill up the existing gap.

**Objectives:**

1. To investigate the pattern of shifting in occupation among the ST households of Assam Hills in the post liberalisation period
2. To examine the socio-economic condition of ST households of Assam Hills in the post liberalisation period
3. To examine the relationship between the shifting in occupation, area of settlement and socio-economic condition of ST households of Assam Hills in the post liberalisation period

**Hypothesis:**

H01 : There is no significant association between the shifting in occupation and socio-economic condition of ST households of Assam Hills in the post liberalisation period.

**Research Methodology:**

The paper is both descriptive and analytical in nature; hence, the descriptive and analytical research designs have been applied. Out of the total population 164482, ST households (according to Census 2011), a sample of 384 ST households (192 each from both the districts covering 35 villages) of two hill districts of Assam have been considered. They are Dima Hasao district and undivided Karbi Anglong.<sup>1</sup> Multi stage sampling method has been applied. The sample size has been calculated based on Cochran's formula:  $n = Z^2 pq / e^2$  at 95% confidence level. Where,  $e$  = the margin of error,  $p$  = the estimated proportion of the population and  $q = 1 - p$ . The sample unit is ST households of the study area. Both primary and secondary data have been used and primary data have been collected during September 2018 to March 2019 through schedule which contains a set of both close and open ended questions. Secondary data have been collected from various sources like, online and print journals, books, government records and websites of various departments of state and central government, etc. To measure the socio-economic condition of the households, six socio-economic variables are considered. They are: occupation and average income of the family, housing condition, educational qualification of the head of the family, number of family members and ownership of four durable assets, *i.e.* television, mobile, motorcycle, car. A composite score of each sample households has been calculated and rank accordingly from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>. 1 = 'very good' (which has composite score between 31-36) and 6 = 'pathetic' (which has composite score below 6). The details on how the Socio-Economic Condition of ST households has been developed are shown below in Table 1 and the value of socio-economic variables are shown in table 2.

To analyse data, descriptive statistics like tabulation, simple percentage, standard deviation, median, mode, variance have been used and to check the normality, skewness and kurtosis tests have been conducted by using IBM-SPSS software. Non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test has been conducted to test the hypotheses.

**Profile of the study area:**

Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong districts are the hill districts of Assam which is situated in the central part of Assam and protected under the sixth Schedule of Indian constitution; accordingly both the districts have separate Autonomous Councils for administration. Earlier, both the districts were under one district called the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district. Both the districts were bifurcated in 1970 as North Cachar Hills and "Mikir Hills" districts. Dima Hasao district which was earlier known as North Cachar Hills District abbreviated as NC Hills District. The new name "Dima Hasao" emerged by vide Govt. Notification No. HAD.92/2008/31 dated Dispur, the 12th April, 2010. According to Census 2011, about ST population was 73 percent and having 28795 households. Karbi

---

<sup>1</sup> Now Karbi Anglong is divided into two districts: Karbi Anglong East and Karbi Anglong West.

Anglong which was known as Mikir Hill district was renamed as "Karbi Anglong District" w.e.f the 14th October'1976 (vide, Govt. Notification No. TAD/R/115/74/47 Dtd. 14-10-1976). According to Census 2011, Karbi Anglong recorded 56.33 percent ST populations having 67576 households. The female population recorded higher than male population in both the districts. The districts have abundance of natural resources and potential of tourism industry.

**Limitation:**

The observations and interpretations of data in present paper is based on the opinions of the respondents which is contemporary in nature. Hence, there is a possibility of change in the opinions of the respondent with the change in the availability of benefit schemes of the government or development of infrastructure. Though, one district has more ST households, sample size is distributed equally to both the hill districts. Though there are number of durable assets, only four assets have been considered.

**Findings:****1. Profile of Scheduled Tribe (ST) Households of Assam Hills:**

The profile of the sample ST households of the study area is shown in Table 3. Regarding the settlement, about 79 percent households are from rural area. The social system of the different tribal communities in Assam is patriarchal in nature and it is clearly reflected in the survey data; it is found that only 9 percent households have female as head of the family ; it is because of the death of the husbands which was the head of the family. The table further reveals that there are many communities in the Hill districts of Assam; however, Dimasas ( about 35 percent ) and Karbis (48 percent) communities have higher population than other communities. Dimasas has the highest population in Dima Hasao district and Karbis has the highest among other ST population in Karbi Anglong District.

Regarding religion, Hinduism is widely followed among the sample ST households (87 percent) of the study area; however, about 8 percent follow Christianity and 2 percent follow Buddhism. Islam is not found in the study area whereas 3 percent of the total households follow traditional religion of their own community like Sonsari. It is further found that till now almost 16 percent of head of the family is illiterate and not a single head of the family of the study area is found to be Post Graduate degree holder or any professional degrees like LLB, MBBS, MBA, etc. the highest qualification is found as graduate and about 13 percent of head of families are found in this category. Though, a sizable number (44 per) have passed HSLC ( class X), it can be derived from the findings that majority of the head of the families of ST household of the study area are away from the light of higher education; regarding the family structure, about 3 percent of the total households have more than 10 members.

Majority of the households have family members of 5-9 and about 45 percent have below 5 members. It indicates that though, the ST households do not have higher education, they are more concerned about small family norms.

### B. Occupation of ST households

The occupation of the head of families of sample households and changes are shown in Table 4; the table clearly reveals that majority ( about 73 percent) are farmers which is followed by government service ( about 22 percent) respectively before the introduction of new economic policy 1991. However, there is a drastic change in the occupation of head of the family of ST households in some areas in the post liberalisation period. Farming which is the predominant occupation has been decreased to about 42 percent from 77 percent whereas in case of service, it has increased to 31 percent. The major changes in occupation are found in the cases of entrepreneurship, small trading, daily wage earners and agricultural labourers. Though there was 3.4 percent households who were engaged in entrepreneurial activities before the liberalisation period, the number has increased to 13 percent in the post liberalisation period. Regarding the small trading /business, it is found that there is a change from 1 percent to about 7 percent from pre to post liberalisation. Regarding daily wage earner, it was less than 1 percent, however, the number has increased to more than 3 percent. There was no agricultural labourers among the head of families; they worked in their own fields; however, in the post liberalisation period, the number has jumped from nil to more than 3 percent. Hence, it can be derived from the findings that there is shifting in the occupation among the ST households of the study area.

### C. Type of house, income of Households and Ownership of Durable Assets

The housing condition and average monthly income of the ST households of the study area is shown in table 5 and it can be revealed that nearly a half of the ( about 46 percent) of the total population are living in Kutcha house which has either thatch or aluminum on the roof with mud walls and about 41 percent stay at semi-pucca house with cemented floor. Though a sizable number of households has average monthly income above INR 14000 , 40 percent has less than average monthly income of INR 10,000. It can be derived from the findings that for majority the housing condition as well as average monthly income are not improved for the majority section of ST in the post liberalisation period. Regarding the ownership of durable assets (Table 6), majority ( 70.3 percent ) has Television and more than 90 percent households have mobile-phones; though majority (about 59 percent) do not have motorcycles, a sizable number of households (41 percent) have it and about 21 percent has own car(s).

**II. Socio-Economic Condition of ST households:** Regarding the Socio-Economic Conditions, many study reveal a worrisome situations of ST/ SC population of the country. In the similar line, in case of hill districts of Assam, it is found that the condition of a sizable number of the households (about

41 percent) is 'bad' and about 2 percent are in 'very bad' condition. Only 7 percent of households' condition are found to be very good and about 28 percent are found as 'good'. Table 7 clearly indicates the result of the field survey. From the findings, it can be derived that still there is long way to go to improve the condition of ST in the study area.

### **III: Descriptive statistics result of select variables**

The descriptive statistics result of the select socio-economic variables is shown in table 8; it is revealed from the table that the median value in case of family member is found in the series of 2-9 which means that half of the ST households have a family members less than the series and half the households of the study area have family members greater than the median value.

In case of average income also, it is found that half of the households of the study area has average monthly income more than 10001-14000 and a half of them has less than it. The socio-economic condition also shows that half is below 'fair' and half is above fair status. Regarding the settlement and shifting occupation, the mode values are found as 2 which is rural which means that there is higher frequencies of ST households in this series. To measure the dispersion, standard deviation values of family members, average income of the family and socio-economic condition have been calculated and the result shows that in case of family members, there is moderate dispersion (.54), high dispersion in case of average income (1.2) and less dispersion in case of socio-economic condition.

The skewness value of all the variables except in socio-economic condition (-1.4) is found as between -0.5 and 0.5, which means that the distribution is approximately symmetric. In case of socio-economic condition (SEC), it is highly skewed. The negative skewness result of all the variables except SEC shows that family members, average monthly income of the family are above the average (median) value which is shown in table 8 where as in case of SEC, it indicates that average ST households are below the fair category.

### **IV : Relationship between the shifting in occupation and socio-economic condition of ST households of Assam Hills in the post liberalisation period:**

To find out the nature of relationship between the shifting in occupation and socio-economic condition of ST households of Assam Hills in the liberalisation period, partial correlation has been calculated and the result is found as negative (table 9.); however, it is very low (-0.121). It indicates that both the variables have inverse relationship.

### **V: Hypotheses testing result:**

The hypotheses testing result which is shown in table 10 clearly reveal the  $z$  value as well as  $p$  value. The  $p$  value of the hypothesis testing result is found to be less than .05 which means that the

hypothesis is rejected. The null hypothesis rejected at 5% level of significant. Hence, the alternative hypotheses *‘There is significant relationship between the shifting in occupation and socio-economic condition of ST households of Assam Hills in the post liberalisation period’* is accepted.

**Major findings:**

The major findings of the present study are: There are few number of ST Households of the study area which the head of family is female. Majority of ST of Assam hills follow Hinduism. There are sizable numbers of head of family who are illiterate. Only few numbers have the degree of higher education. Still kutcha house is common among the ST households; however, they maintain small family size. Higher degree of shifting in occupation in the post liberalisation period is found in case of agriculture, entrepreneurial activities and labourers. The socio-economic condition of ST households is not good in the study area.

**Conclusion:**

The socio-economic development needs a number of pro-poor, pro-people policy programmes and proper implementation of such programmes. Based on the findings of the present paper, it is argued that there is a long way to go to improve the socio-economic condition of Scheduled Tribes in Assam hills. There is need to develop policies towards inclusive education and measures to improve the income earning capacity. The author strongly feels that the policy towards privatization of education as a result of economic reform would adversely affect the vulnerable section of the society like Scheduled Tribes. The findings of the present paper have also clearly revealed that there is strong association between the area of settlement and socio-economic condition as well as shifting occupation and socio-economic condition of ST households of the study area. The rural area is still lack of basic amenities and infrastructural development. ( Chanu, 2019). *However, modern gadgets like mobile has become part and partial of almost all the ST households.* The farming, which was one of the predominant occupations among the ST becomes no more predominant in the post liberalisation period. *The agricultural labourers and daily wage earner among the head of families which were almost nil during pre liberalisation period, has become prominent in the post liberalisation period. The emergence of higher number of entrepreneurs and trader show that a new class of capitalist among the ST has been emerged in the post liberalisation period.*

Table 1: Socio-Economic Condition Index

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Total score of HH</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Very good	31-36	1
Good	25-30	2
Fair	19-24	3
Bad	13-18	4
Very bad	7-12	5
Pathetic	Below 6	6

Source: developed by the author

Table 2 : Scoring value of socio-economic variables of the

Sl.No	Variables	value	SL.No	variables	Value				
1	occupati on	Government service/ Executives in private firms	07	4	Number of family members	Below 5	3		
		Business/ entrepreneurship	06			6-9	2		
		Small Trading	05			10 and above	1		
		2	Income	Farming (for own consumption)	04	5	Educational Qualificatio n of Head of the family	PG/ Professional Degree	7
				Daily wage earner	03			Graduation	6
				Household activities	02			HSSLC	5
				Agricultural labourers	01			HSLC	4
14001 and above	5			Middle	3				
10001-14000	4			Primary	2				
3	Housing condition	6001-10000	3	6	Durable assets	Illiterate	1		
		2001-6000	2			Car	4		
		0-2001	1			Motorcycle ( with/without gear)	3		
		Double/Multi storey building/Mansion	4			Mobile	2		
		Single storey building	3			Television	1		
	Semi-pucca	2							
	Kutcha house	1							

Source: developed by the author

Table 3: Profile of sample ST Households

Attributes		Frequency percent	Valid percent	Attributes		Frequency percent	Valid percent
Area of settlement	Rural	82	21.4	Religion	Hinduism	334	87.0
	Urban	302	78.6		Christianity	30	7.8
	Total	384	100.0		Buddism	8	2.1
Gender of household	Male	349	90.9		Others	12	3.1
	Female	35	9.1		<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.0</b>	Educational qualification	Illiterate	61	15.9
Ethnic Community	Bodo	1	.3		Primary	69	18.0
	Dimasa	133	34.6		Middle school	72	18.8
	Hmar	4	1.0		HSLC	86	22.4
	Hrangkhoh	39	10.2		HSSLC	36	9.4
	Karbi	185	48.2		Graduate	49	12.8

	Tiwa	10	2.6	Family members	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>1000</b>
	Zeme	8	2.1		above 10	10	2.6
	Kuki	4	1.0		5-9	202	52.6
					below 5	172	44.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>1000</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>1000</b>

Source: field survey

Table 4 : Occupation of ST households ( head of the family )

Occupation of head of HH before 1991	Frequency	Percent	Occupation of head of HH at present	Frequency	Percent
Farming	279	72.7	farming	160	41.7
household activities	2	.5	agricultural labourers	12	3.1
entrepreneurship	13	3.4	household activities	5	1.3
small trading/business	4	1.0	/entrepreneurship	50	13.0
daily wage earner	3	.8	small trading/business	25	6.5
governmnt service	83	21.6	daily wage earner	13	3.4
Total	384	1000	government service	119	31.0
			Total	384	1000

Source: field survey .

Table 5 : Type of house and average monthly income of ST households

Type of house	Frequency	Percent	Income ( in Rs )	Frequency	Percent
two storey and above	6	1.6	below 2000	5	1.3
single storey building	47	12.2	2001-6000	66	17.2
semi pucca house	156	40.6	6001-10000	85	22.1
kutchha house	175	45.6	10001-14000	52	13.5
			14001 and above	176	45.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: field survey

Table 6. Ownership of Durable Assets

Assets	Attributes	Frequency	Percent	Assets	Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Television	Yes	270	70.3	Motorcycle	Yes	158	41.1
	No	114	29.7		No	226	58.9
	Total	384	1000		Total	384	1000
Mobile	Yes	351	91.4	Car	Yes	80	20.8
	No	33	8.6		No	304	79.2
	Total	384	1000		Total	384	1000

Source: field survey

**Table 7: Socio-Economic Condition of ST households**

Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Very good	27	7.0
Good	106	27.6
Fair	87	22.7
Bad	157	40.9
Very bad	7	1.8
Total	384	100.0

Source: computed by the author from field survey data

**Table 8: Descriptive statistics results of select Variables.**

	Family members	Average monthly income of the family	Shifting occupation	Socio-Economic condition (SEC)
N Valid	384	384	384	384
Missing	0	0	0	0
Std. Error of Mean	.02780	.06181	.02474	.05207
Median	2-9	10001-14000	-----	Fair
Mode	---	----	no	
Std. Deviation	.54475	1.21117	-----*	.020940
Variance	.297	1.467	.235	.410341
Skewness	-.173	-.480	-.518	.168
Std. Error of Skewness	.125	.125	.125	-1.404
Kurtosis	-1.021	-1.224	-1.740	.125
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.248	.248	.248	-.030

Computed based on field survey data

\*since settlement and shifting occupation are nominal data, mode value has been computed and standard deviation has not been calculated.

**Table 9 : Relationship between the shifting in occupation and socio-economic condition of ST households of Assam Hills in the post reform period**

<b>Correlations Result</b>				
Control Variables			settlement	Shifting occupation
Socio Economic Condition	Shifting occupation	Correlation	-.121	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.018	.
		df	381	0

Source: computed based on field survey data

**Table 10: Hypotheses testing Result:**

<b>Table 9. Test Statistics: <sup>a</sup> (a.Grouping Variable: shifting occupation)</b>		
	Socio-Economic Condition	Remarks *
Mann-Whitney U	1.411E4	Hypothesis : Rejected
Wilcoxon W	2.455E4	
Z	-3.172	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	

Source: computed based on field survey data

\*rejected at 5 percent level of significant

**Acknowledgement:** This paper has been developed as a part of ICSSR –New Delhi funded Major Research Project entitled Shifting Occupation and Socio-economic condition of ST household of hill districts of Assam in the post liberalisation period. The author is grateful to the ICSSR New Delhi for its financial support. I am also thankful to Deepika Kemprai and Hunmilan Timungpi, field investigators of the project and the respondents who have supplied the information.

**References:**

Ali, Ershad and Basak Arindam (2018). Socio Economic Condition of Oraon Tribe in Garal Bari Gram Panchayat of Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal. International journal of Innovative knowledge Concept. 6(6)

Basumatary, Monjita (December, 2016).Socio Economic Problem Faced By Tribal People Of Rural Area in Assam their Status, Contribution in Economic Development of the Society: A Case Study in Dhemaji District. International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies (IJIRAS). 3. (13) 261-264

Babu, K.S, ( 2012 ). Socio-Economic and Health Conditions of Some Major Tribes in Andhra Pradesh. Social Work Chronicle, 1(2)...

Barpujari, S. K. (1997) History of the Dimasas: from the earliest times to 1896 AD, Haflong: Autonomous Council, N.C. Hills District (Assam) .

Chanu, Ayekpam Ibemcha (2019). Occupational Pattern and Socio-Economic Condition of Dimasa Tribe of Dima Hasao District of Assam in the post liberalisation Period. Management Covergence. 10(2). 50-56

Jayantakumar, A & Palaniyammal, P, (2016). Socio-Economic Status Of Scheduled Tribes In Kalrayan Hills. International Journal of Research Granthlaayah 4(3)..

**Kumar, V, ( April 2018): Recalibrations of the Tribal's Socio, Economic and Political Status in Tanjavur: An Explorative Study** ,International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) 2 (..)

Mandal, Jayatra & Sengupta, Puspita (2016): Socio-Economic Status of Tribe: A Case Study of Porobusty, Alipuduar, West Bengal, Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, 2( 5), 536-541.

Rao, D. Pulla (2013). Socio-economic Status of Schedule Tribes. MERC Global's. International Journal of Management. 1(1) 36-50.

Wani, Rabbanie Tariq. (2019). Socio-Economic Status scales -modified Kuppaswami and Udai Pareekh's Scale Updated for 2019. Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care 8 (6). 1846-1849

### **Reports**

Government of India. Handbook of Industrial Policy and Statistic. 2001, p. 10.

Primary Census Abstract, Census of India 2011