

A Comparative Study of the Income Pattern of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in Sivasagar District of Assam

Dr. Krishna Jyoti Handique*

Abstract

Assam is one of the old states of India and is well known as the land of variety of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes people since times immemorial. The people of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes and their mode of life in different period of history mounded varied social, cultural and economic traits in Assam. There exist some significant differences regarding socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes people with the mainstream population of the country. Keeping these backgrounds in mind the present paper attempts to discuss on income pattern of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes people in the Sivasagar district of Assam.

Key Words: Assam, Sivasagar District, Income pattern, Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes.

Introduction:

India is an old country in the world. The total geographical area is about 32, 87, 496 square kilometer where sheltered of 1210569573 person as per census 2011. The

*Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Gargaon College, Simaluguri, Assam
Email : kjhandique2006@gmail.com

country at present has support about 17 percent of the total population of the world. The Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes (SC) people have been living since times immemorial in India. Anthropological Survey of India identified 443 Scheduled Castes and 426 Scheduled Tribes out of 4384 communities living in India (Handique and Chutia, 2015). The hill areas have a greater concentration of tribes in comparison to the plains in India. It is seen that a tribe is a society the members of which have a common language, customs, traditions, religions, art, crafts and traditionally occupation of a distinct geographical areas. Most of the tribal people enjoy common property resources like water, land and forest in the country. The total number of Scheduled Tribes population was estimated at 5.29 percent, 6.85 percent, 6.93 percent, 7.53 percent, 8.10 percent, 8.19 and 8.60 percent of the total population in the country in 1951,1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011, respectively. The term 'Scheduled Caste' was first coined by the Simon Commission in 1935. The term used for the people described as untouchables in India (Ahuja,2012). The Scheduled Castes comprised of 14.26 percent, 14.59 percent, 15.7 percent, 16.73 percent and 16.6 percent of country's total population in 1961, 1971, 1981,1991 and 2011, respectively in India. The Constitution of India provided the political and economic safeguards and protection for the ST and SC people in India.

Assam is a vast state and is diverse in terms of geography, population, culture and levels of development. The state has a geographical area of 78,523 sq. km. and a population of 3,11,69,272 as per census 2011. The total ST and SC population were 38,84,371 and 22,31,321 as per the census 2011. Out of total 26395 villages, 25425 were inhabited villages in the state in 2011 (Statistical Hand Book Assam, 2014). As per the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes list modification order 1956, total number of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are 16 and 27, respectively, in Assam. The ST and SC are listed on the basis of their habitat, backwardness, customs and tradition in different states of India (Bhattacharya, 2000). As regards the literacy rate, much remains to be done for SC and ST. The literacy rate among ST and SC was 29.60 percent and 37.34 percent which was lower 52.20 percent of the national average in 1991. The total ST and SC population of the Sivasagar district were 49,039 and 42,347 respectively in the census 2011. The Sivasagar district is known as the land of colourful tribes. The Tribal population comprises Nagas, Deoris, Garos, Kachari, Mishings, Shyams Sonowals, Bodos etc. of the district. The Kaibartas (SC) are spread over the entire district (Sivasagar District Gazetteer, 1967). There exist some significant differences regarding socio-economic characteristics

of ST and SC peoples with the mainstream populations of the state as well as the country. It can be said that they have moved away more or less from their traditional socio-economic life style.

Objective:

The Sivasagar district is selected for our study as the members of the ST and SC are playing an important role in social, cultural and economic development in district of Assam. The ST and SC people and their mode of life in different period of history mounded varied economic traits. Considering this background, an attempt has been made a comparative study of income patterns of ST and SC people inhabiting in the Sivasagar district of Assam.

Methodology:

The study is mainly based on primary data collected purposively from ST and SC populations of Sivasagar district, primary data have been collected from different groups belonging to ST and SC categories. The ST population of Sivasagar district belongs to different social groups like Mishing, Deori, Sonowal Kachari, Konyak Naga and Bodo; while the selected social group belonging to SC category is the Kaibarta since the presence of other groups of SC category in the district is very less. 50 households of ST category of Sivasagar district, i.e., 10 households from each of the selected scheduled tribes have been chosen for the purpose of collecting primary information. On the other hand, 30 households of Kaibartta of SC category of Sivasagar district have been interviewed to gather primary information about their income pattern. Thus, total number of household of both category, ST and SC, is equal to 80 households. The primary data were collected from the three sub-divisions, i.e., Sivasagar, Nazira and Charaideo of Sivasagar district in 2013-14. In addition to primary data, secondary information has been collected from different government and non-government publications.

Results & Discussion:**(a) Family Size:**

There is relationship between family size and income pattern of a family. According to NFHS-3, the average family size of the state is 4.7 which is almost equal to the national average of 4.8. The average family size of the respondent families has been

estimated to be 5.36 for the ST category, as against 4.86 for the SC category. The average family size of the nuclear families of former category has been calculated at 4.25, while it is as low as 3.88 for the latter category. On the other hand, the average family size of the joint families has been observed to be 6.65 and 6.15 in case of ST and SC category, respectively. The data regarding family size of the ST and SC category are presented in Table-1.

Table-1 : Family Size of Respondent ST and SC Families

No. of family member	No. of sample ST family	No. of sample SC family
<i>Col. (1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(3)</i>
2-4	18 (36)	15 (50)
5-7	26 (52)	12 (40)
8-10	4 (8)	3 (10)
10<	2 (4)	0 (0)
Total	50 (100)	30 (100)

Source: Field survey

(b) Income:

The living level of a family depends on income. Income is one of the major factors of economic development of the individual. Level of income is one of the indicators of family poverty and standard of living. The poverty head count ratio as per Tendulkar (Suresh D. Tendulkar-1939-2011) methodology is 37.9 percent for Assam as against the national figure 29.8 percent in 2009-10. The per capita income in Assam at current prices was Rs. 53618.00 which was lower as compared to Rs. 86879.00 at national average in 2014-15. It is to be noted that the respondent families belonging to ST category of Sivasagar district bear agrarian characteristic as 56 percent of them have been found engaged themselves primarily in agricultural activities. On the other hand, 22 percent respondent

families have been found working as government servants at different levels, while 10 percent of them are self-employed, 6 percent are wage earners and only 2 percent are involved in private sector. The field survey confirmed that out of total 30 respondent families belonging to SC category, only 10 percent have been found adopting agriculture as main occupation for livelihood. A few of the Kaibarta (SC) families under study are fishermen by profession. The respondent families belonging to SC category bear agrarian characteristic as 33.3 percent of them have been found engaged in occupations. Flood proneness and smaller agricultural land holding due to fragmentation of large families are also another two reasons of their involvement in some other occupations other than direct agricultural activities such as paddy cultivation.

Poverty is one of the major problems in our society. Family poverty is prevalent amongst the sample ST and SC families of Sivasagar district too. Monthly income of 22 percent respondent families belonging to ST category and 20 percent respondent families representing SC category has been found less than Rs. 5000. This fund is quite insufficient in the midst of heavy inflationary pressure to collect bread and butter for the families consisting of 5.38 and 4.83 members respectively on an average. Although the average monthly family income, as reported by the respondents, has been estimated to be more than Rs. 18 thousands for both the categories, inequalities of income among themselves can never be denied. This is evident from Table - 4 & 5.

Table-4 : Monthly Family Income of the Respondent ST Families

Class interval of family income (in Rs.)	No. of respondent families	Total monthly income of respondent families	Monthly income per family	Percentage share to total income
<i>Col. (1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(3)/(2)=(4)</i>	<i>(5)</i>
Less than 5000	11 (22.00)	29000	2636.36	3.19
5000-10000	14 (28.00)	79500	5678.57	8.74
10000-15000	3 (6.00)	32000	10666.66	3.52
15000-20000	5 (10.00)	80000	16000.00	8.80

20000-25000	2 (4.00)	43000	21500.00	4.73
25000-30000	4 (8.00)	103000	25750.00	11.32
30000-35000	4 (8.00)	123000	30750.00	13.52
35000 and above	7 (14.00)	420000	60000.00	46.18
Total	50 (100.00)	909500	18190.00	100
Mean family income=18190.00, SD of family income=19493.30, minimum value=1000.00, maximum value=70000.00.				

Note: Figures in the parentheses are the percentage to total respondent families.

Source: Field survey

Table-5 : Monthly Family Income of the Respondent SC Families

Class interval of family income (in Rs.)	No. of respondent families	Total monthly income of respondent families	Monthly income per family	Percentage share to total income
<i>Col. (1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(3)/(2)=(4)</i>	<i>(5)</i>
Less than 5000	6 (20.00)	24000	4000.00	4.06
5000-10000	4 (13.33)	35500	8875.00	6.01
10000-15000	7 (23.33)	86000	12285.71	14.55
15000-20000	1 (3.33)	17000	17000.00	2.88
20000-25000	4 (13.33)	85000	21250.00	14.38
25000-30000	2 (6.67)	52000	26000.00	8.80

30000-35000	1 (3.33)	30000	30000.00	5.07
35000 and above	5 (16.67)	261500	52300.00	44.25
Total	30 (100.00)	591000	19700.00	100.00
Mean family income=19700.00, SD of family income=17456.68, minimum value=3500.00, maximum value=85000.00.				

Note: Figures in the parentheses are the percentage to total respondent families.

Source: Field survey

It is to be noted that category wise comparison states that unequal distribution of income is greater amongst the ST sample families than that of the SC sample families of the district. For, the standard deviation (SD) of monthly family income of the former category is worked out to be Rs. 19493.30 as against Rs. 17456.68 for the latter. Besides, income inequality ratio also indicates occurrence of larger income inequality amongst the ST respondent families (3.15) as compared to the SC respondent families (2.45), because closer the value of this ratio to zero lesser inequality of income amongst families.

In addition to these, unequal distribution of income amongst the sample ST and SC families can be viewed in terms of percentage share to total income captured by the families of each class interval of income as presented in Table 4&5. It has been found that 22 percent of the respondent ST families who earn less than Rs. 5000 per month are able to accumulate only 3.19 percent of total income, while 14 percent of respondent families of the same category who earn Rs. 35000 and above are accruing 46.18 percent of total family income. Likewise, 44.25 percent of total income of sample SC families remains in hands of only 5 percent families of this category, but only 4.06 percent of total income is left for 20 percent of the respondent families of this category. Such inequality of income is the result of unequal distribution of land asset, occupational difference, difference in literacy level and existence of dependent population in the respondent families of each category in the Sivasagar district of Assam.

(c) Relationship between Family size and Income:

To examine the association between family size and income of the ST and SC

sample households, a correlation analysis is used. Karl Pearson correlation coefficient has been used to measure degree of linear relationships between the parameters which is defined as:

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - \sum X\sum Y}{\left[\left\{ N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2 \right\} \left\{ N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2 \right\} \right]^{1/2}}$$

Where X and Y are two random variables, N is the number of experimental units in the sample.

Table 4.19: Correlation Coefficient of family size and Income of ST and SC sample households

Correlation Coefficient of family size and Income of ST		
	Family Size	Income
Pearson Correlation (r)	1	.4740
p-value		.005
Correlation Coefficient of family size and Income of SC		
Pearson Correlation (r)	1	.518
p-value		.007

Source : Field Survey

In Table 4.19, it is apparent that there is positive correlation between **Family Size** and income ($r=0.4740$) which is statistically significant at 1percent level of significance ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that increase in family size of ST sample households generates income. In the same way, results of Pearson correlation shows that family size of SC sample households is positively correlated ($r=.518$) to income level of the farmers at five percent level of significance. Thus, now it can be generalized the findings of this study that increase in family size of the ST and SC sample households of the study is positively associated with their income level.

Conclusion:

It is quite clear from the above discussion that the living pattern of ST and SC people depends largely on the unique social, cultural and economic characteristics of the society. The ST and SC people have different social and economic characteristics which reflect the different level of living in the district between ST and SC people. However, we observed inequality in the level of income among the ST and SC people living in the district. Thus, to reduce inequality and boost up income level, government should take some applied community specific schemes in the district.

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