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Human Rights Education: A Development Strategy for the Rights of Tea Garden Workers of Assam

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Abstract

Human rights are rights availed to all human beings. Its application in human life enables all individuals to shape and determine their own lives in liberty, equality and respect for human dignity. Human rights encompass civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as the collective rights of peoples. We know that the tea industry of Assam is considered as one of the country's largest industry with intensive labour force. But these labourers under the industry enjoys undermine labour rights and many of the human issues confronting the tea garden workers relate directly to working conditions, widespread poverty, malnutrition, human trafficking and starvation, discrimination, employment, wages, health and safety. And thus deprive workers from basic needs and underscoring the desire for a better life. **Human Rights Education** for all, is only the way for promotion and propagation of Human Rights. This will, help to evolve effective solutions to wipe out the plight of disadvantage groups whose rights are adversely affected, and who do not have adequate knowledge and awareness for the realization of their legally guaranteed rights. So, the focus of the paper is on understanding human right violations associated with tea garden worker population and find out the possible mechanism that can contribute to long term and sustainable development and remedy of human rights through Human Right Education.

Keywords: Human Rights, Education, Tea Garden Labourers, Awareness.

1.1 Introduction :

Everyone need love, freedom, rights, liberty, security etc, for living a peaceful life in the society as well as in the country irrespective of one's sex, religion, caste, race etc for living dignified life as well as for their all round development. It will happen when every person know about their basic human rights. Education is the most powerful weapon which changes everything and works as a instrument that promote and develop the right of every person to enjoy access to education of good quality, without discrimination or exclusion. Economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully as citizens.

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The phrase "human rights" refers to the basic rights and freedoms to which everyone has an inherent right just by virtue of being a person. These rights are seen as universal, inalienable, and indivisible, which indicates that they pertain to everyone, cannot be removed, and are connected. Human rights are an essential idea in contemporary international law and moral systems. Human rights are fundamental rights that apply to all people without distinction for their gender, race, nationality, place of residence, sex, ethnicity, religion, or other characteristics. Human rights are therefore non-discriminatory, which means that everyone has a right to them and cannot be denied one. Despite the fact that everyone has the right to human rights, not everyone in the world enjoys them equally. Many countries and individuals blatantly violate and abuse other people's human rights. The idea of human rights provides a moral and legal foundation for advancing equality, justice, and peace in societies all over the world. In their attempts to establish a world where human dignity and fundamental freedoms are respected and preserved, governments, organizations, and private citizens are guided by this.

Human rights are interconnected and indivisible. Each human right is dependent upon and entails other rights, thus when one of these rights is violated, it has an impact on how those other rights can be exercised. For instance, respect for the right to food and a sufficient level of living is a requirement for the right to life. A person's ability to access the justice system and engage in civic life may be hampered by the denial of their right to a basic education. Freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association are prerequisites for the advancement and defense of economic and social rights. Therefore, each person's dignity and integrity are complemented by and equally dependent upon their civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights. Additionally, respect for all rights is a requirement for lasting peace and advancement.

1.2 Human right Education :

Human rights education is a pre-condition for a healthy democratic society and it means it is the education about and only for human rights, for example; teaching people about human right violations and how they can protect and respect their inalienable rights etc. The term "human rights education" (HRE) refers to activities intended to increase societal and individual respect for and knowledge of human rights. Developing the knowledge, attitudes, and abilities necessary to preserve human rights, advance social justice, and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive world is a lifelong process that attempts to empower individuals. Education, instruction, and instruction geared toward creating a global human rights culture. A thorough education in human rights not only gives knowledge of those

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rights and the safeguards that keep them protected, but also the abilities necessary to advance, defend, and use such rights in daily life. Education of human rights cultivates the attitudes and behaviors necessary to defend those rights for all members of society(International Program of the United Nations).

Here are key aspects of the concept of human rights education:

- Human rights education is action-oriented and seeks to provide people with the tools they need to actively defend and advance human rights. This could entail social activity, community involvement, and advocacy.
- It provides people with the knowledge and abilities needed to recognize, evaluate, and respond to abuses of human rights. These abilities may include advocacy, conflict resolution, critical thinking, and active citizenship.
- Civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights are all covered, as well as all other facets of human rights. It acknowledges the interconnectedness and indivisibility of human rights.
- Human rights are universal and should be respected by everyone, regardless of their history, identity, or situation. Human right education aims to connect with a variety of audiences, including children, young people, adults, and underrepresented groups.
- It frequently has a worldwide component, promoting a sense of interconnection and global citizenship. It motivates people to acknowledge their place in a globalized world and take on global issues.

Building societies that respect and uphold human rights, stop prejudice and violence, and advance social justice and equality all depend on human rights education. It gives people the power to become informed, accountable, and engaged citizens who advance human rights for everyone.

India has a strong legal framework for human rights education. The Indian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights, and various laws and policies are in place to promote human rights, including the Right to Education Act, 2009, which emphasizes the importance of human rights education. State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs) also contribute to human rights education by organizing seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns on various human rights issues. Human rights education is integrated into the school curriculum at various levels. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) encourages the inclusion of human rights topics in school textbooks and teaching materials.

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1.3 Tea Garden Workers of Assam:

In the state of Assam, India the labourers and tea gardens are an essential component of the state's culture, history, and economics. One of the biggest tea industries in the world is found in Assam. Assam is one of the largest tea-producing states in India, with over 800 tea estates and more than 1.5 million tea garden workers. Tea garden workers in Assam have long faced issues related to labor rights, including low wages, poor working conditions, and limited access to healthcare and education. In recent years, there have been efforts to improve these conditions, including the implementation of minimum wage laws and the establishment of healthcare and educational facilities in tea garden areas. However, many challenges remain, and workers continue to advocate for their rights. Tea garden workers in Assam have historically migrated from other parts of India, including Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal, to work in the tea gardens. This migration has been driven by a variety of factors, including economic opportunities, political instability, and social pressures. However, the migration process has often been fraught with challenges, including limited access to healthcare and education, discrimination and exploitation, and difficulties in maintaining cultural and community ties. Despite these challenges, many tea garden workers have formed strong communities in Assam, and their contributions to the region's economy and culture are widely recognized.

In order for development to be equitable, inclusive, and beneficial to all parts of society, particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups like tea garden workers, it must go beyond economic growth. Governments, employers, civil society organizations, and international organizations can all play a part in defending tea garden workers' rights to development and advancing their general welfare and empowerment. Promoting the right to development through human rights education for tea garden workers is an effective way to empower this marginalized community, raise awareness about their rights, and facilitate their active participation in the development process. Human rights education can serve as a tool to ensure that the development initiatives in tea garden areas are equitable, inclusive, and respectful of human dignity.

2. Methodology: This study is followed by qualitative research, based on secondary data available from various reports, articles, newspapers etc.

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3. Livelihood of Tea Garden Laborers in Assam:

Workers in tea gardens often face challenging working conditions. They work long hours, including early mornings, and are exposed to harsh weather conditions, such as heavy rainfall. Health and safety standards in some gardens are often inadequate, putting workers at risk. Depending on the season, the duties carried out by tea garden workers vary. The majority of the work done by employees is picking tea leaves during the plucking season; however, additional jobs, such as pruning and maintenance, might need to be done during other times of the year. Wages for tea garden workers in Assam have been a contentious issue. Labor unions and workers have often demanded higher wages, as many laborers earn daily wages that are often near the minimum wage set by the government. Income disparities among laborers are also common. Gender-based discrimination and violence have been reported in some tea gardens. Women workers may face specific challenges, and gender equality issues may need attention. Moreover, many tea garden workers are employed on a seasonal or temporary basis, which can result in job insecurity. Permanent employment offers more stability and benefits.

Tea garden workers in Assam often lack access to basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation facilities, and healthcare. Many laborers live in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, which can lead to the spread of diseases. Housing provided by the tea estates is home to many workers in the tea gardens. The quality of housing might vary greatly, with some workers living in substandard quarters that lack basic conveniences. In a far-off tea garden, there are few healthcare services available. It's possible that worker' families don't have access to basic medical care, which can cause avoidable health problems. Living conditions are affected by social dynamics and cultural norms in tea garden communities, including caste, ethnicity, and social hierarchies concerns.

4. Lack of human rights awareness of tea garden workers of Assam:

The vulnerability of tea garden workers in Assam, India, and their difficult living and working situations are significantly impacted by their lack of human rights understanding

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A. Several factors contribute to this lack of awareness:

- i. **Education Barrier:** Access to high-quality education is generally limited for workers in tea gardens. Their comprehension of fundamental human rights ideas may be hampered by their lack of a formal education. Many tea garden workers reside in remote areas, far from educational institutions. The lack of nearby schools makes it difficult for children to access education. Even when schools are available in tea garden areas, they lack basic infrastructure and facilities such as proper classrooms, sanitation, and clean drinking water. Language diversity is common among tea garden communities, and many children are not proficient in the regional or national language used in schools. This language barrier can impede learning. Some tea garden workers may not fully understand the importance of education and the long-term benefits it can offer. This lack of awareness can lead to lower enrollment and higher dropout rates.
- ii. **Isolation:** Due to the location of some tea estates, it is challenging for workers to learn about their rights. Having little contact with the outside world can result in ignorance. Lack of knowledge of one's rights, official initiatives, and other crucial issues can also be a sign of isolation. Workers may be more open to exploitation as a result of this lack of information. Isolation restricts workers' access to economic opportunities outside of tea cultivation. This can lead to economic dependence on the tea estates and limit their ability to seek better-paying employment elsewhere.
- iii. **Language Barriers:** Communities in tea gardens frequently speak different languages. Workers can lack proficiency in the language that is widely spoken in their country or region, which might restrict their access to information. Many tea garden workers may not be proficient in the regional or national language used in broader society and in formal institutions such as schools and government offices. This can hinder their ability to access essential services and information.
- iv. **Low socioeconomic status:** Workers in tea gardens frequently come from underprivileged and socially isolated homes. They may be primarily concerned with obtaining the necessities of life, which may leave them with little free time or energy. Income disparities among tea garden workers exist, with variations in wages based on factors such as skill level, years of experience, and estate policies. Some tea garden workers are trapped in cycles of debt due to low incomes and the need to borrow money for emergencies or other essential expenses. This can lead to persistent poverty.

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- v. **Limited Information Access:** Tea gardens lack access to information on labor regulations, benefits, and human rights. Workers might not be aware of where to look for information or support.
- vi. **Exploitative Labor Practices:** To keep control over the workforce and discourage labor agitation, estate owners or management may occasionally fail to provide basic information about labor rights. Many workers are employed on a seasonal or temporary basis, which lead to job insecurity and make it challenging to access social security benefits.

Efforts to improve the Human right education among the tea garden workers:

A concerted effort is needed from a number of stakeholders, including labor unions, government agencies, civil society organizations, tea estate owners, and the workers themselves, to improve human rights education among tea garden employees. following actions can be taken to improve human rights education in tea garden communities:

- a. **Assessment and Needs Analysis:** There is need to perform a thorough evaluation of the knowledge and understanding of human rights among tea garden employees. And identify the unique human rights issues and challenges encountered by the community.
- b. **Community Engagement:** we can engage tea garden workers and their families in the development and implementation of human rights education programs. There is need to establish community-based forums and committees to promote dialogue and participation in human rights initiatives.
- c. **Initiatives at Work:** Tea estate owners and management can promote human rights by holding training sessions, seminars, and workshops on workers' legal rights and obligations. they can establish measures that will allow employees to report human rights abuses without worrying about retaliation.
- d. Competent agencies can collaborate with legal aid organizations to provide tea garden workers with legal support in cases of human rights violations.
- e. Government can integrate gender sensitivity and women's rights education into human rights programs to address gender-based discrimination and violence.

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- f. **Monitoring and Reporting:** There is need to Establish mechanisms for monitoring and reporting human rights violations within tea gardens and encourage these workers to report abuses and provide support for those who come forward.

Conclusion

Increasing knowledge about human rights among tea garden workers is important for legal compliance as well as for empowering these underprivileged groups, advancing social justice, and enhancing their general well-being. It is a shared obligation that calls for cooperation, resources, and a dedication to safeguarding the fundamentals of human rights. Efforts to combat exploitative labor practices in tea gardens require the collaboration of government agencies, civil society organizations, employers, and the wider community to ensure that the rights and well-being of tea garden workers are protected and upheld.

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