ROLE OF TEA TRIBES OF ASSAM TO INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

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ABSTRACT
The tea tribe community of Assam famously known as ‘Adibashi’ is an important ethnic community of Assam. They have imported into colonial Assam by Company rules, between 1860 to 1890, from the predominantly backward tribes and castes dominated regions of present day West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa etc. states of India, to work in the tea estates of Assam as wage labourers. Historically, we have seen that, the tea tribe community of Assam have a properly unrecorded glorious history from different angles, role of tea tribe people to Indian Freedom Struggle is an important example of that glorious history. Before independent of our country, as well as other communities of Assam, tea tribe communities people of Assam immensely participated in the freedom movement in different times from different areas. Therefore, except the discussion on the role of tea tribes to Indian Freedom Struggle from Assam, the history of Assam is always incomplete.

INTRODUCTION

Aim and Objectives of the study
- Causes behind the mass participations of tea tribe people to freedom movement in Assam.
- Explore them along with their names, places and activities, where from tea tribe people of Assam actively participated in freedom movement.
- Reactions towards them by their authorities as well as British govt. & historical problems of tea tribe community along with recommendations also will be mentioned.

Methodology of the study
Method of the writing of this paper is descriptive with applying historical analysis. Data has been collected from different secondary sources like books, research papers, research thesis, newspapers, souvenirs etc.

Historical Background
After annexation Assam by British a new door was opening to outsiders. Britishers were trader class, they always gave the importance of trade and commerce. They searched new colonies to make new markets, to get raw materials. After entering and discovering tea in Assam, they tremendously took to plant this commercial crop in the different regions of the state to their rapid profit. But in the beginning due to the lack of wage labourers in contemporary Assam to work in the tea garden, they had faced a serious problem. Therefore as soon as possible they imported tea labourers to Assam from north and central India like Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, U.P., Bengal and also from Andhra Pradesh. Since earliest times of those imported wage labourers, they have been exploiting and dominating by their authorities. But gradually those imported tea tribe communities people of Assam became conscious of their rights. Simultaneously, they were inspired by contemporary India's various nationalist movements. Specifically through the inspirations of nationalist leaders and their heroic activities, tea tribe people of Assam gradually jumped into the Indian freedom struggle.

Participation to Freedom Struggle
In the very beginning in 1915 due to the ignite of a revolt against Planter Raj at Sonitpur's Rangapara, Christion Munda was publicly hanged by Company government in 1916. Historically, he was the first male martyr of Indian freedom struggle, belonged to the tea tribe community of Assam. The year of 1921 was a turning point to Indian freedom movement. In that time, tremendously Gandhi's non cooperation movement became popular in Assam as well as all over India. Simultaneously, Gandhi's visit to Assam for first time in 1921, nationalism in Assam had became more powerful and effective. By the inspiration of Gandhi's works and thoughts, tea tribe communities people of Assam came out from their huts, left

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their work and started strikes against Planter Raj. In the different parts of Assam they started non cooperation activities against Company rules. In that period, tea labourers of Helem and tea labourers of Kacharigaon, Sonitpur district of Assam started this movement in their areas. In 1921 due to the active participation to non cooperation movement Malati Mem or Mangri Oran was killed by company authority, she belonged to Ghagara tea estate, Tezpur, she was the first female martyr of Assam as well as tea tribe of Assam; who sacrificed her life to the name of our country. In the same year, another tea labourer was Pratap Garh was imprisoned due to the membership of Congress. Again Sambhuram Garh along with his friend Jagamohan had arrested by police. Sambhu threw to jail for two months, Jagomohan had ordered to pay Rs. 50 as fine due to participate at freedom struggle. Subsequently, during the time of Quit India Movement in 1942, at Darrang police station along with other patriots Dayalu Panikar, Mongol Kurmi, belonged to the tea tribe communities were killed due to their patriotic and heroic activities. They went to fly India's National Flag at Darrang police station. At the same time, Rams chan Garh along with others had tortured by police at Helem. At the same time, another two persons had also tortured by police, one was Arjun Ghatowar; who actively participated in freedom struggle and regularly visited Congress office was at Dhekiajuli, Sonitpur.

On the south bank of Brahmaputra, especially in Golaghat district of Assam was an another important rebellion area of tea tribe people. Due to the participation in freedom movement, Bidesh Kumar threw into jail by police, Ansha Bhuyan also threw into jail for four months, they were belonged to Garanga tea estate of Golaghat. Radha Muha and Gobind Tanti of Batiyani tea estate also threw into jail for six months. In the same district, some another tea labourers had imprisoned for their nationalist activities. Those were Balia Bhuyan, Atoya Bhuyan, Buhalikson of Batiyali village, Mahabir Gowala, Santara Tanti of Garanga tea estate, Karma Das, Panika Kour, Mohan Panika, Burma Garh, Sukura Nagbonsi of Sarupather, Bhanu Kheria of Bengena khuwa village etc. Between 1937 - 1946 a problem arose among those tea tribe communities of Assam. Due to the lack of ration and salary, to obtain it they again immensely started a revolt against their authority. Besides they also arranged some secret societies within the tea estates to supplying secret messages against British Raj. 

**Historical Problems of Tea tribe People in Assam**

Historically we have seen that through the mass movement led by tea tribes had played an important role to independent our country. From the earliest time, they have been exploiting and neglecting by their authority as well as other communities. Even, before pre-independent they were neglecting by some Congress leaders in Assam. Although role of tea tribe people of Assam to Indain freedom struggle is an undivided part of our history, but still their history is incomplete. Because their history, historic activities to freedom struggle have still totally undiscovered. Simultaneously, people of tea tribe communities of Assam is still unconscious about their bright history. They didn't know about the heroic activities of their former generation. Actually real fact is other, lack of abundant source, study and interest of writers and researchers still this field is lying far from us. The tea tribe people of Assam is still facing and feeling the negligence and loneliness by others. Socially, Economically still they are exploiting by opportunist class. Politically they are regarding only as voters, tea estates of Assam still have considered an important vote bank by political leaders. Even their representatives still have failed to promote their different conditions. Lack of proper plan to promote them, lack of modern technical education, lack of health treatment are some other serious problems of this community. Bitter truth is that, these are all historical problems of this community, because these problems of tea tribes of Assam have been existing since the earliest time till today. However, one good news is that, at present, some writers have been trying to rescue their glorious history, as well as researchers have come near to their fields and researched their past and present in terms of their socio-cultural, religious and economic developments. They are also trying to study their problems and also try to recommend to solve those. Undoubtedly it is an important news for us.

**CONCLUSION**

History repeats itself but it is never ended. We can't change our history, but we can progress it, by discovering and exploring new sources, new information. The history of the tea tribes of Assam and their different activities in different periods, like their role to Indain freedom struggle is an important chapter of our History. As well as other communities of Assam we should know, we should focus on this chapter properly. We hope, contributions of tea tribe communities to Indian Freedom Struggle in Assam will always remain as a golden chapter of our history, and also we want to see prosperity of the status of tea tribes of Assam, instead of degradations.

**References**


