

Measuring Socio-Economic Status of the Tai-Khamyangs of Assam

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Abstract: The present study aims to measure the socio-economic status of the Tai-Khamyangs, a distinct scheduled tribe of Assam. Socio-economic status is a finely graded hierarchy of social positions. It can be represented by a variety of terms, including job status, occupational position, educational achievement, income and wealth, and so forth. It has an impact on people's educational accomplishments, household and personal experiences, and so on. The socio-economic status is an individual's or family's relative place within a hierarchical social structure based on access to or control over wealth, prestige, and power. It also has impact on economic as well as human development. The present research work is a primary data based study. In order to measure socio-economic status of the Tai-Khamyangs, Modified Kupuswamy Scale is used.

Key words: Socioeconomic status, Tai-Khamyangs, Kupuswamy scale

1. Introduction: Socioeconomic status is a finely graded hierarchy of social positions that may be used to characterize an individual's total social standing (Marks et al. 2000). Mueller and Parcel (1981) describe socioeconomic status as an individual's or family's relative place within a hierarchical social structure based on access to or control over wealth, prestige, and power. Socioeconomic issues also have an impact on economic development.

The Tai-Khamyangs are a subset of the Tai stock, commonly known as Khamjangs or Shyams. This name is most likely originated from their native country. The Khamyangs, Phakes, Turungs, Aitons, and Ahoms are the several Tai groups who moved to Assam in the past from Southwest China and North Myanmar. After conquering the Patkai highlands, the Khamyangs migrated to Assam from North Myanmar in the early 18th century (Sonowal & Baruah, 2012). The Khamyangs say they originated in the Patkai Mountains, but moved to Assam between 1807 and 1814 to escape Singpho's persecution. They are currently a distinct scheduled tribe of Assam, with their own traditions and customs. After 1981, there are no census figures on the Tai-Khamyangs' total population. According to the 1981 census, the population of Tai Khamyang was 812. Khamyangs have a total population of around 5000 people (Sonowal & Baruah, 2012). Furthermore, there are no precise demographic estimates for the Tai-Khamyangs in their "Tai-Khamyang Buranji." Despite the paucity of numbers, various studies show that the Tai-Khamyang population is quite tiny. In addition, the Tai-Khamyang language is on the danger of extinction (Morey, 2005). The Tai-Khamyang tribe's survival is imperilled owing to a low population and a lack of awareness about their language and culture among the younger generation.

Furthermore, the Khamyangs are a scheduled tribe according to an order issued by the President of India in 1950. They enjoy benefits from the reservation system, suggesting that they are from the backward communities of Assam. As a result, it is considered crucial to investigate the Tai-Khamyangs' socioeconomic and demographic status.

2. Objective: The main objective of this present research work is to examine the socio-economic status of the Tai Khamyangs in Assam.

3. Data Sources and Methodology: Despite the fact that the study is solely based on primary data, secondary data was acquired and used to supplement the original data. Data is obtained from a variety of reliable sources, including research publications, books, and certain governmental and semi-governmental organizations, e.g., the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, development blocks, panchayat offices, booth level officers, and UNDP reports on human and gender development.

The Tai-Khamyangs are predominantly found in the districts of Charaideo, Jorhat, Golaghat, and Tinsukia in Upper Assam. The Charaideo district was chosen as the sample district for this study because Tai-Khamyangs are dispersed over five villages in this district, which has the greatest Tai-Khamyang population. In the Charaideo area, the Tai-Khamyangs inhabit five villages: Rahan Shyam Gaon, Solapathar Shyam Gaon, Dichangpani Shyam Gaon, Sola Moniting, and Boangaon. For this study, all five villages were chosen as sample villages. A sample survey of 200 houses is used to acquire primary data. The samples were collected by utilizing a multi-stage sampling procedure that was both purposeful and random.

In order to measure socioeconomic status of the sample households, Modified Kuppusswamy Socioeconomic Scale is used.

4. Discussion and Findings: The Kuppusswamy scale was developed by Kuppusswamy and is the most extensively used scale for measuring an individual's or a family's socioeconomic status (SES). The scale was originally designed to assess a person's SES, but it was later updated to determine the SES of a family rather than an individual. The scale was developed by Kuppusswamy in 1976 and included index parameters such as education, occupation, and total income. It was further modified in later years to include the head of the family's educational status, occupational status, and aggregate income of the whole family, pooled from all sources. The Kuppusswamy SES contains three parameters, each of which is subdivided into subgroups, with scores assigned to each subgroup. Kuppusswamy SES has a total score range of 3 to 29, and it divides families into five groups: "upper class, upper

middle class, lower middle class, upper lower, and lower socio-economic class."

Education of head of the family	Score	Occupation of head of the family	Score	Total per capita family income per month (Rupees)	Score
Professional Degree	7	Professional	10	≥ 2000	12
Graduate	6	Semi Professional	6	1000-1999	10
Intermediate/ Diploma	5	Clerical/Shop /Farm	5	750-999	6
High School	4	Skilled worker	4	500-749	4
Middle School	3	Semiskilled worker	3	300-499	3
Primary School	2	Unskilled Worker	2	101-299	2
Illiterate	1	Unemployed	1	≤100	1

The total score is calculated by summing the three scores, namely, education, occupation and total family income. Based on the overall score thus calculated, the family is placed in the appropriate socioeconomic class as shown in the table below:

Total Score	Socioeconomic Class
26-29	Upper Class
16-25	Upper Middle
11-15	Lower Middle
5-10	Upper Lower
Below 5	Lower

The main findings of present study after data analysis are given below:

a) The primary religious communities in Assam are Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, and Buddhism. Religion is an essential component of any group or culture. According to the findings of the survey, the entire sample home is Buddhist. They are very religious. Each Khamyang village has its own monastery. Songkram is the main religious celebration of the Khamyangs.

b) The Khamyangs speak a Tai dialect that is close to Khamti. They have used both Khamyang and Assamese as a means of communication. The younger generation has started to talk more in Assamese than in Tai-Khamyangs. As a result, the elderly and leaders from the community are increasingly concerned that the Tai-Khamyang language may be lost in the future. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, it is a critically endangered language (UNESCO).

c) Family, as a major social group, is commonly acknowledged to be the foundation of all human pursuits and activities. According to the findings of the current study, out of 200 households 185 (92.5 percent) are of nuclear, while 15 (7.5

percent) are of joint, indicating that the common form of family structure among the Tai-Khamyangs is nuclear.

d) It has been observed that most of the family consists of up to 4 members (52 per cent.). On the other hand, 47 per cent of the household have family size 5-8 and only 1 per cent of the household have a family size above 8.

e) In India, for census purposes, a person aged 7 and above who can read and write in any language with understanding is considered literate. So, in the current study, the population aged 7 and above has been used to determine the literacy rate of the Tai Khamyangs. It has been found that the majority of the sample respondents acquired their education up to the higher school, intermediate/diploma level. 98.85 percent of the overall population is literate, and the remaining 1.09 percent is illiterate.

f) Occupation denotes a trade or a profession. It indicates the character of a country's economic growth. Many features of a region's population are influenced by occupational structure. Occupational structure also has an impact on the socioeconomic growth of a region or community. In most situations, the respondent's employment influences the household's income level as well as its economic and social position. It has been observed that majority of the respondent's (31.5%) occupation fall in the clerical/ shop/ farm category. There are some semi-professional workers also (24.5%). But the numbers of professional job holders are very less. Job mobility among the Tai Khamyangs is a positive indicator of their economic progress.

g) Household income is a major measure of a household's economic situation. It is a significant component that not only affects a household's socioeconomic standing but also has a direct impact on people's living standards. Majority of the sample household's monthly per capita income fall under ≥2000 rupees and 1000 rupees to 1999 rupees categories.

h) After summing up the three scores, i.e., education, occupation and total family income of sample households using Kuppusswamy scale, it has been found that majority of the Tai-Khamyangs families fall under "Lower Middle" socioeconomic class (73.5%). Only 15 per cent families fall under "Upper Middle" socioeconomic class.

5. Conclusion: The analysis of socio-economic variables of sampled households provides insight into the socio-economic and demographic status of the Tai-Khamyangs of Charaideo district. It has been reported that the Tai-Khamyang tribe's survival is threatened by a lack of linguistic understanding. This is one of the most important observations made by the residents of the community. The predominance of nuclear families reflects the tendency of family structure to nuclearization. In terms of educational achievement, while the literacy rate is high, the number of highly educated people is quite low. So, we can say that the socio-economic status of the Tai Khamyangs is inconclusive. It is satisfactory in some aspects, such as literacy rate, occupational mobility, housing etc. The backwardness of agriculture and low production of food grains hinders economic development of the Tai-Khamyangs.

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