

The curse of education



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By ***Education***, I mean what we generally believe---'the concept of acquiring one degree after another'. The reader might be shocked to see the word '***Curse***' in this context. But, in order to understand the point, one has to go through this write-up. At the very outset, I would like to state that this piece is not applicable to parts of the world other than Assam.

Being born and brought up in the State of Assam, I can cite various examples how education has proved to be fatal for the Assamese people as a whole. The erosion is going on without observation. Just take the example of the so called 'Assamese middle class' (those with the surnames 'Hazarika', 'Gogoi', 'Barua', 'Bora', 'Kakoti' et al). Are they into farming or any agricultural practice any longer?

We claim the Assamese society to be an Agrarian Society. But how many 'Assamese' take to Agriculture nowadays? Once there is a rendezvous with formal education, farming is left at the mercy of hired labourers. While the children move out to towns and cities, the village farmland is run with the help of illegal migrants from Bangladesh. The outgoing population never return and their old parents pass away. Gradually, these migrants settle down in the deserted villages and have a hold over the green pastures.

All other Indian States can boast of being a self-sufficient society. The Assamese have never been a self-sufficient people. Merchants from Rajasthan, barbers from Bihar, milkmen from Nepal, labourers from Bangladesh have always had a grip over economic activities. The only Sector left was Agriculture. That too is being gulped gradually by Bangladeshi farmers. Moreover, these migrant farmers are developing themselves by producing crops and vegetables on a commercial scale. On the other hand, the Assamese farmer would till his land only to sustain himself and his family. This complacency has always been a hindrance to economic upliftment of the State's economy as well as individual development.

Again, the average Assamese villager shies away from selling his product. The element of competence which is a pre-requisite for survival in modern times is at its lowest ebb.

In the State of Punjab, farming is taken up as a profession by highly qualified boys. This is a distant dream for Assam. The attitude of Assamese youths towards agriculture is the greatest hindrance in this regard. There is a notion that farming is debasing after getting a college degree.

The Bangladeshi farmer doesn't send any of his children to school. However, whenever there is an exception, it will be that he would send one of his brood for formal education. On the other hand, the Assamese sends his children to school. Earlier, only one child for would be sent for higher education, the one who was exceptionally bright. Nowadays, all and sundry in Assamese households go for a college degree, be it in subjects with very limited employment opportunities. As such, vocational qualification in the field of agriculture has struck the rock bottom.

Again, the Assamese are always prone to blaming the government for funds. A Bangladeshi farmer is developing himself not with government funds, but his own labour and effort. They are resilient masses and can survive and grow food as well as cash crops even in flood-prone river banks. They would buy a tractor and a power-tiller with the profit from earlier produce. Whereas, the Assamese grumbles for loans even before they put their hands to work.

A Nation or a Society is not challenged when it has to hire doctors and engineers. But, a Nation or a Society cannot afford to procure farmers. For, when it does so, its very existence is at stake. When a migrant population succeeds in getting a stronghold in agriculture, the pre-existing society would be wiped out in due course of time.

By Dristi Barua, Guwahati

editor

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