

Status of Health Security among the Hajong Tribe: A Study Based on Ledo Hajong Village.

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Abstract:

Hajong is derived from the Kachari word Hajo which literary means the people who live in high hills. Some other scholars are of the opinion that the word Hajong originates from Garo word Ha-Jong (Ha=land, Jong=ant/worm). As the hajongs, main occupation is agriculture, so this word is used for them. Health plays an important part in the production of wealth. Health is fundamental to national progress in any sphere. It is the measure of energy and productive capacity in any country. Loss of health effects productivity as well as efficiency in the national production. Health does not mean merely the absence of disease but complete adjustment of individual to external environments physical and social. Thus, it is a positive state of well being of the individual having harmonious development of physical and mental capacities. The objectives of the study are:

- i. To explore the health problems of Hajong tribe.
- ii. To examine the health security measures provided by the state among the Hajong people
- iii. To start out the challenges and opportunities in the areas of the health of the rural Hajong tribe.

The present study is expected to unravel different weakness of our health security measures. It may be particularly relevant for framing suitable politics to improving the status of health in the countryside. The study based on primary as well as secondary data and use simple random sampling itself.

Keywords: Hajong Tribe, Ledo, Health Security, Countryside.

Introduction:

Hajongs, like most of the tribes of northeastern India, are of Mongol origin. Their first settlement in India was in the Kamrup District of Assam and this was their home for a long time. Following natural calamities a major portion of the tribe settled in areas of West Bengal, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh and also in hilly parts of Bangladesh. Ledo Hajong Village is located under the Ketetong Gaon Panchayat of Margherita Subdivision under Tinsukia District.

The total population of Hajong Village is about 1015 and total household is 167. The village is bounded by Mulang to the west, Amrit Gaon to the east, Buri Dehing River to the north and Ledo to the south.

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Methodology:

For the present study, structure interview method is used. This means that first step interview method was used and letter data were collected on the basis of the open discussion method. The study is carried out 30 % i.e. 50 numbers of the total household in simple random sampling method to collect sampling entire the Hajong village and some cases secondary data are collected in documentary sources.

Socio-cultural life of Hajong Tribes in Assam:

Hajongs follow Hindu rites and customs and also take Hindu titles. Every Hajong family has a temple for worship called 'Deo Ghar' and they offer prayers in the morning and evening. Hajong community is patriarchal and father or elder man is the chief of a Hajong family. Hajongs live in groups and the area of a group is called a 'Para' or 'Gaon'. A Hajong village is like an autonomous Kingdom. Every Hajong man compulsory to takes membership of a 'Gaon.' Hajongs

live on agriculture. After marriage, the Hajong bride goes to the bridegrooms' house. Polygamy and divorce is rarely seen in the tribe. Hajongs have close cultural links with the Garos.

Like many other aborigines, Hajongs are basically a farming community. At one time they were accustomed to Jhum farming, but now they follow plough farming. Side by side with rice and other crops they grow cotton and make fabrics at home. In addition to these activities, people belonging to the Hajong community collect wood from jungles and do some other kinds of work.

In terms of religious belief Hajongs are close to Hindus. Hajongs worship Durga and other Hindu gods and goddesses. But Lord Shiva is their chief deity. They observe a number of bratas (vows) including the Kartik brata performed in the month of Kartik (October-November). Girls and women dance and sing in brata ceremonies. Hajongs also worship the Brahmaputra River. Like Hindu Brahmins, Hajongs wear paita (the holy thread) on their bodies. Hajongs are believers in reincarnation too.

In some cases they use some drug in religious propose, such as use of “bhang “in the religious ceremony of **Sivaratry**. This kind of drug can highly affect the degradation of health status of Hajong people.

Hajong society is patriarchal. After the death of the father sons inherit his property. Daughters however, are given some money and ornaments at the time of their marriage to start a new family life specially those who are not financially sound. Young men and women marry with their parents' consent. A Hajong man can marry a woman of his own clan as well as of a different clan. After marriage, women put on Sindur (vermilion) mark on their sithi (parting of the hair on the middle of the head). Child marriage is not allowed. Premarital sex is strictly prohibited. Hajongs generally abide by the rules and principles of marital purity. A husband cannot have more than one wife. Divorce is not uncommon and widows can remarry.

Rice is the staple food of Hajongs. Fruits, vegetables, mutton, pork, ducks and chicken are other major items of their diet.

Hajong men wear Bhiza Lengti(Gamsa) and women wear Ranga pathin, Plain pathin phula agron prepared by themselves. Hajong men & women are very expert in weaving, they weave pathin, phula agron, gamsa and rumal for themselves and for others too.

Hajongs lead simple lives like Garos. Most families live in thatched houses. Relatively better off families have tin-shed or brick-built houses. Houses are neat and clean reflecting the neatness of their life-style. As modernization is making people's life standard in different turn, more and more Hajongs are dwelling houses in town and cities. Like other ethnic groups, Hajongs build and maintain community houses for social needs as well as for other purposes.

Hajongs have their own language, but do not have an alphabet. Their spoken language is a mixture of local dialects. Speaking in colloquial Bangla is a common practice among them. The Hajong language was originally a member of the Tibeto-Burmese group of languages, but later got mixed with Assamese and Bangla. Modern education is being gradually spread in Hajong society.

In their life-style, Hajong people maintain, to a large extent, their traditional ethos of simplicity, honesty, and hospitality as well as other common plebeian characteristics. False play and deceit are rare in this society. Like Garos, Hajong people have protested vehemently against injustice, oppression, exploitation and persecution in the past and have histories of rebellion against feudal and imperialist forces. They took part in historic movements like the Hatikheda movement, the Tonk Movement, agitations against Zamindars, and the Tebhaga Movement. Hajongs cremate dead bodies. Usually, after 13 days of death the Shraddha(obsequies) ceremony is performed.

Main findings and Discussion:

Family background:

Table no. 1

Family Size

Size of family (no. of members)	Total no.
Single	Nil
2-4	16(32%)
5-7	26(52%)
8-10	6(12%)
11-above	2(4%)
Total	50(100%)

Source: Field Survey

About 52% households reported 5-7 members in the family, while 2-4 members' families constituted 16%. And 8-10 members family constituted 6% while 11-above only 2%.

Occupational Background:

The occupational pattern of Hajong tribes of Ledo Hajong Village is shown in Table No. 2.

Table No. 2

Occupation wise breakup of Hajong tribes residing at Ledo Hajong Village

Primary Occupation	No. of households
Agriculture	39 (78%)
Tea-Garden/ planters	Nil
Daily Wage earner	5(10%)
Business (small trader)	3(6%)
Govt. and Semi Govt. service	1(2%)
Pvt. Service	2(4%)
Non-agricultural wage earners	Nil
Others (priest/forest products collectors, etc)	Nil
Total	50(100%)

Source: Field Survey

N.B.: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of column total.

Sources of water: (Drinking & household purposes)

Table No. 3
Sources of water

Sources	Respondents
Well	3(6%)
Tube Well	12 (24%)
Pond	30 (60%)
River	5 (10%)
Community water supply	Nil
Total	50 (100%)

Source: Field Survey

The 60% of respondents of the study area regularly uses pond's water for the purpose of drinking and household, only 6% of respondents use well water while 24% people use tube well and also 10% people use river as for drinking and household purpose.

Sanitation:

The concept of health and hygiene among the Hajong is not very high order. The village is devoid of any specific dumping place for refused materials. The drainage system is extremely poor and every house drains let off its waste at the rear portion. Houses are designed to have a particular place to be used as latrine and the latrine is cleared through natural process.

Table no. 4

The modes of sanitation

	Mode	Respondents No
1.	Toilet with specific tank	02(04%)
2.	Kuchha toilet	38(76%)
3.	Open space	10(20%)
4.	Community toilet	Nil
	Total	50 (100%)

Source: Field Survey

The 76% of respondents of the study area have the kuchha toilet for sanitation while 4% of respondents have toilet with specific tank on the other hand 20 % of respondents use open space for sanitation.

Educational Status:

Table no. 5

Educational institution:

Sl.no.	Educational institution	No. of institution
1.	Lower primary school	01
2.	Upper primary school	Nil
3.	M.E. School	Nil
4	High School	Nil

Source: Field Survey

From our observation it is found that the study area has only one educational institution i.e. 1.No. Kuhiabari L.P. which is not enough for educational development of this area.

It is noted that after completing the Primary education, the children have to go Bisa Gaon M.E. School and Ledo High School for secondary education.

Health among the Hajong Tribe:

“Health is wealth”, Health is fundamental to national progress in any sphere. It is the measure of energy and productivity capacity of national production. It does not mean merely the absence of the disease about the complete adjustment of individual to external environments physical and social. Thus it is a positive state of wellbeing of the capacities. Health involves not only medical factors, but socio-economic and educational factors are also. The health survey development committee observed ... The term health implies more than absence of sickness in the individual and indicates a state of harmonious functioning of the body and mind in relation to his physical and social environment. So as to enable him to enjoy life to the fullest possible extent and to reach his maximum level of productive capacity.

Hajong people are not aware about the family planning system. They have a general attitude toward the old view of family planning method.

A greater section of people is using allopathic treatment, at present time. But a small number of people are using old methods of medical treatment prevalent in this area.

Some respondents point out that mobile medical services are provided by the State in some cases. They have contended use of 108 and “Adoroni” in taking health checkups during serious conditions.

Hajong people are not conscious about the women health. Women are generally involving in domestic affairs.

At present the status of Hajong people is use in modern treatment during pregnancy period. Hajong people are totally not conscious about health education. Gnarly 30% of total people are conscious about the HIV positive and sexual transmits disease.

Nutrition is perhaps the most important simple factor to maintain of health and resistance to disease. There is direct relation between the nutrition and productive capacity of and individual. Hajong people are following in traditional subsistence economy. There is a nutrition problem are prevalent here, low repentance of adequate diet and poor living condition.

Hajong people are not concern about the environment, but they are only depending on nature. Hajong people are use in local medical patent for primary treatment i.e. farness, accident and treatment for health care.

The medical facilities are not available in public health centre. They are not satisfied for there treatment and they are not satisfied about health security what they provide.

Hajongs are concern about the modern method of medical treatment and they want to health security provide by central State. Hajong people are conscious about the life insurance corporation.

All of Hajong community live in hygienic area and they live in the bank of Trip River. This area is totally fulfilled of natural resources.

Hajong people are concern about the modern diseases and they also prevent of communicable diseases. They also use traditional medical practice to prevent the communicable diseases.

Majority section of respondent point out that, they were conscious about the child health and education. Majority section of respondent replied there is no any one can taken special preference about health education.

The following table shows the actual picture of the health status of the study area.

Table no. 6

Health:

Sl.No.	Health Centre	No. of PHC
1.	PHC	Nil
2.	Dispensary	Nil
3.	Other Drug Clinic /laboratory	Nil

Source: Field Survey

The health status of Hajong tribe is not comparable than other tribe because they are not enough conscious about their health. In our observation the table no 5 has shown the real picture of the health status of Hajong tribe. The public health centre, Dispensary, drug clinic as well as laboratory are not available in the village. People of the study area are going to Ledo PHC for health checkup when they feel ill particularly in case of women, when they pregnant in advance stage, they are carried on two wheels like ‘Thela’ due to backward communication system. NGO can play an important role for the development of human society. Especially the Hajong village one NGO (the old vision of India) came to this backward area to provide medical facility with the collaboration of Margherita Sub-division.

Low Health Status of Hajong People:

1. Low status of health practice among the Hajong people.

2. Lack of proper medical care i.e. curative and preventive.
3. Lack of hygienic environment conducive to helpful living. i.e. lack of pure drinking water, sanitation and absence of proper removal of human waste.
4. Low resistance due to lack of adequate diet and poor nutrition
5. Lack of general health education.
6. Lack of proper housing condition.

Conclusion and Suggestion to Improve the Status of Hajong Community:

1. Need for advance Primary health campus and also need a mobile health service.
2. Need for medical dispensary and extra care center.
3. Need for reconstruction of backward communication system.
4. Need for a bridge over Tirap River to communicate other people easily.
5. Need for health camp regarding modern diseases i.e. STD etc.
6. Need for environmental awareness among them.
7. Need for modern facilities provided by the State like community water supply and other amenities facilities.
8. Need for health education.

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