



GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA

**A STUDY OF THE TEA GIRLS—SECOND PHASE  
ALTERNATIVE JOB PREFERENCE**

DIRECTORATE OF ECONOMICS, STATISTICS AND EVALUATION  
GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA  
SHILLONG

A STUDY OF THE TEA GIRLS - SECOND PHASE.  
ALTERNATIVE JOB PREFERENCE.

.....

1. FOR POLICY AND PROGRAMME in the context of the situation arising out of the shifting of Assam's Capital from Shillong it may be useful to find out other characteristics of the affected people and their alternative job preference. It has, however, not been possible to locate the tea stall owners who have closed down their stalls nor the tea girls thrown out of employment. Therefore, the enquiry was carried out with those still in the business on the assumption that what applies to these people would also hold for those who have already gone out of business.

2. Of the 47 tea stalls found functioning during the earlier enquiry, a cross section of 10 stalls was taken for the purpose of the present enquiry. 8 tea stall owners and 20 tea girls (2 from each stall) could be interviewed at their place of work by the staff of the Evaluation Directorate.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

3. The tea girls are in the age group of 35 years and below and 90 percent of them are below 25 years of age. 80 percent of the girls are unmarried. 20 percent of the girls have had other jobs previously while for 80 percent of the girls serving tea was their first employment. 25 percent of the girls have served tea for less than one year, 50 percent for one to five years and 25 percent for 5 to 10 years. None of the tea girls had remained as tea girls for more than 10 years.

4. Among the tea stall owners, 37 percent belong to the age group 15-25 years, another 37 percent to the age group 25-35 years and 25 percent are of older age groups. 88 percent of these owners are married and 12 percent are widowed or separated. None of the owners is single. 25 percent of the owners were otherwise employed previously while for 75 percent tea selling has been their first and only venture. 63 percent of the owners have been in this business for less than 10 years, 25 percent between 10 and 20 years and 12 percent for 20 years or more.

....2/-....

REASONS FOR PRESENT OCCUPATION.

5. 75 percent of the tea stall owners took up the present occupation because of the stable income and independence and because it is to them most attractive financially. 13 percent of the owners have taken up tea selling by tradition while for 12 percent there is no other alternative or for other reasons.
6. Among the tea girls, for 80 percent the wage was attractive while for 20 percent there was no other alternative or it was for other reasons.
7. All the tea stall owners have family members partly or wholly dependent on them. For 30 percent of the tea girls, the wage was only for maintenance of self while 70 percent of the girls contributed it towards the family budget.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

8. 75 percent of the stall owners and 25 percent of the girls had no formal education but all of them could read and write the names of the customers and do the totalling of the daily entries in their registers.
9. 25 percent of the owners have read up to between classes VI and X but none has gone beyond that.
10. Among the remaining tea girls, 30 percent have read upto Classes I - V, 40 percent between classes VI - X and 5 percent have passed matric or higher stages. It may thus be said that a sizeable number of the girls employed belong to the category of semi-educated with a sprinkle of educated. The shifting of Assam Capital has thus to an extent swelled the rank of semi-educated unemployed and has shrunk the possible avenues for educated.

ALTERNATIVE JOB PREFERENCE.

11. None of the stall owners would like to give up the present business as long as they secure a reasonable income and can make a living out of it. This was because of the years put in, in this business and because of the risks and uncertainties in new ventures. If the worst comes to the worst, 63 percent may set up small shops like pan, biri, cigarettes, sweetmeats etc., and 12 percent may take up tailoring and knitting.

25 percent of these people could see no other future and would be compelled to take jobs as maid servant or *ayah*.

12. Among the girls there was a general awareness that they stand little chance for better paid jobs because of ~~their~~ educational background and of the competition from the better educated for jobs for which they also are eligible. Strange enough, none of the girls interviewed would like to work as maid servants or *ayah* as next alternative even though this might be more beneficial to them financially. This was possibly because of the drudgery and loss of freedom as maid servant and because they think other jobs more fascinating. Some of those from the nearby villages would prefer to work in the fields than in the households. Infact, as many as 80 percent of the girls would try to retain connexion with the office as office cleaners, etc. 15 percent of the girls may take up tailoring or knitting with proper training and assistance while 5 percent may work in hospitals and dispensaries as assistants. The majority of the girls interviewed have taken up the present job not only for the wage paid but also for the experience they hoped to gain in the tea selling business. With this experience these girls cherished a desire to set up some day a tea shop of their own.

#### CONCLUSION

13. The results of the enquiry are also shown in tables in the Appendix I. The questionnaire used are attached as Appendices II & III.

14. This enquiry followed up the statistical enquiry undertaken a few days earlier. Due to the nature of the issues involved, there was no time to design for probing the problem in greater depth. As revealed by the earlier enquiry, the problem of the tea girls is currently not big in itself. The situation is still, however, fluid.

15. If we consider that the process of shifting by Assam is yet to be completed and of Arunachal is about to start and that the movement of Meghalaya offices from the present sites to the secretariat and other buildings would also create dislocation to the tea girls, it is almost certain that the problems will assumed enlarged magnitude in the days ahead.

And because other sectors of the economy and sections of the population are also affected by the shifting, it may linger and may become complicated if its get pretracted.

16. It is hoped that the findings of this enquiry would enable all concerned to take a view of the problem of the tea girls in its proper perspective and to chalk out such policies and programmes for the tea girls, and related sections, both affected and vulnerable, so that the current phase of unemployment and recession passes off quickly just as a Storm in the Tea Cup.

APPENDIX - I

(1)	<u>Tea stall-owners</u>		<u>Tea Girls</u>	
	<u>Number</u> (2)	<u>Percent</u> (3)	<u>Number</u> (4)	<u>Percent</u> (5)
<u>Table I.- Age Composition</u>				
<u>Age Groups (Years)</u>				
15 - 25	3	37.5	18	90
25 - 35	3	37.5	2	10
35 and above	2	25.0	-	-
TOTAL -	8	100.0	20	100
<u>Table II.- Marital Status</u>				
Single	-	-	16	80
Married	7	88	4	20
Widow/separated	1	12	-	-
TOTAL	8	100	20	100
<u>Table III.-Previous Occupation.</u>				
Yes	2	25	4	20
No	6	75	16	80
TOTAL	8	100	20	100
<u>Table IV.-Tenure in present Occupation.</u>				
Less than 1 year	-	-	5	25
1 - 5 years	5	63	10	50
5 - 10 years	-	-	-	-
10 - 20 years	2	25	-	-
20 years and above	1	12	-	-
TOTAL -	8	100	20	100

(1).	<u>Tea stall-owners</u>		<u>Tea Girls</u>	
	<u>Number</u> (2)	<u>Percent</u> (3)	<u>Number</u> (4)	<u>Percent</u> (5)

Table V.- Reason for Present Occupation

Stable income	6	75	16	80
Tradition	1	12	-	-
No better alternative	1	13	4	20
TOTAL	8	100	20	100

Table VI.- Education Background

No education	6	75	5	25
Class I - V	-	-	6	30
Class VI - X	2	25	8	40
Matric and upward	-	-	1	5
TOTAL	8	100	20	100

Table VII.- Alternative Jobs

<u>Preferred</u>				
House hold service as maid servants, ayah, etc.	2	25	-	-
Unskilled office jobs as cleaners, etc.	-	-	16	80
Tailoring/Knitting	1	12	3	15
Unskilled hospital jobs	-	-	1	5
Starting new shops	5	63	-	-
TOTAL	8	200	20	100

.....

APPENDIX - II  
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE  
TEA GIRLS

1. Name :-
2. Address :-
3. Age :-
4. Educational qualification :-
5. Single/Married/Widow :-
6. How long have you been working in :-  
this job ?
7. Before working as a Tea Girl have you :-  
worked in any other job ? Yes/No.
8. If Yes? Why did you leave the job ? :-  
Less Pay/No future/No job satisfac-  
tion/Too Tedious.
9. What made you take up this job ? :-
10. What benefits have you gained as a :-  
tea girl? Financial/Job satisfaction/  
better chance for bright marriage  
prospects/No other alternative/tra-  
ditional job.
11. Reason for not continuing with :-  
education. Financial/No means  
of supports.
12. Do you support your family or only :-  
self ?
13. If thrown out of employment what :-  
jobs would you take up? Maid servant/  
Govt. job of cleaners/Would go for  
training in sewing or knitting/  
Helpers in Hospital.
14. Are you working full time or part time? :-
15. Do you have any plans to set up your :-  
own shop or would like to take up  
other jobs.

.....

APPENDIX - III  
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

ATTITUDE OF TEA GIRLS TOWARDS OTHER JOBS ALTERNATIVE  
TEA STALL OWNERS.

1. Name :-
2. Address :-
3. Age :-
4. Single/Married/Widow :-
5. Religion :-
6. Educational Qualification :-
7. How long have you been working in :-  
this job ?
8. Before working as a Tea Girl have you :-  
worked in any other job ? Yes/No.
9. If Yes? Why did you leave the Job ? :-  
Less pay/No future/No job satis-  
faction/Too Tedious.
10. What made you take up this job ? :-
11. What benefits have you gained as  
a tea girl? Financial job satis-  
faction/better chance for bright marriage  
prospects/No other alternative  
traditional job.
12. How many tea girls have you employed :-  
in your shop.
13. Do you intend to go on selling tea ? :-
14. Do you compete with other tea shops :-  
near by in catering.
15. There are many other profitable jobs :-  
Why have you not gone in for them.
16. Are you the only one supporting your :-  
family with this job ?
17. Are your children also working with :-  
you ?

....