

A Study On Socio-Economic And Educational Status Of Tea Garden Labourers With Special Reference To Powai Tea Estate, Tinsukia, Assam

Rashmi Rekha Singphow M.A, NET.

Political Science, Dibrugarh University

Email ID: rashmisingphow@gmail.com

Address: Village: Bashbari, P. O: Ketetong, Sub-div:

Margherita, District: Tinsukia,

State: Assam, PIN No: 786181

Abstract

Assam is one of the largest producers of tea in India. Tea industry of Assam has been providing a crucial contribution for the economic growth of the nation. The tea garden labourer plays a very important role for the growth and development of the tea-estates of Assam. Tea community forms a greater segment of Assamese society. They came to Assam for the purpose of tea industry during the time of British East India Company. The tea garden labourers always work hard for the better existence of tea industry but due to some hidden factors their socio-economic condition is not developed. The present paper discussed about various aspects of tea garden labourers of Assam with special reference to Powai tea-Estate and it examined about the main causes of their socio-economic and educational condition, exploitation in society based on the primary data of field survey and other secondary sources. The paper tried to find out various solutions to improve the socio-economic and educational status of tea garden people. Because, equal opportunity and equal distribution of resources among every section of society is always necessary to establish a welfare and developed nation. Tea community as one of the most crucial part of Assam, their all-round development is always very necessary to strengthen democracy.

Keywords: Tea garden labourer, tea-estate, tea-industry, education, socio-economic status.

Introduction:

Tea industry is one of the most crucial productive sectors for the economic development of the country. In respect of tea industry, India's leading states are Assam and West Bengal, but mainly Assam is very famous for its finest tea plantation. The tea plantation of Assam has linked with colonial history and it provides very essential contribution to the socio-economic aspects of Assam. The garden labourers play very pivotal role in giving the shape of tea industry in India. They are the main worker in the tea plantation process. According to different scholars, the first group of tea labourers were recruited by the East India Company in 1841 to work in the tea plantations of Assam. They consisted mostly of tribal and other backward Hindu Caste groups from the regions of Chotanagpur. Over the decade's labours from other parts of India like Bihar and Bengal were also brought to Assam. The tea community is spread throughout the tea gardens in all the districts of Assam. At present there are around 1000 tea gardens spread over all the districts of Assam. Tea community is also a class in Assam and their socio-economic and educational aspects are very important to know which become the integral of socio-economic life of Assam. Assam is famous for its diverse culture, scenic beauty, flora and fauna, tea industry and for Eco-tourism. Tea community in Assam are generally found in Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Jorhat, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sivasagar. The tea community have their own language like Sadri, Mundari, odia, saora, kui, kuruk, santhi etc. The tea community celebrates many festivals such as—Karam puja, Fagwa, Tusupuja, Danda puja, Diwali, Durga puja, Manasa puja etc. The garden labourers in Assam have become a crucial part of the greater Assamese society. But tea garden labourers are regarded as one of the most exploited and backward people in Assam including all over India. They are faced with many problems related to their living standard like poor socio-economic condition, lack of education and health facilities. Active participation, awareness, positive attitude towards the

educational rights are the very crucial means to remove various obstacles of their development process (Devi, 2014, pp. 36).

Objectives of the study

1. To know about the Socio-economic and educational status in Tea garden labourers of Powai tea-estate.
2. To find out the everyday problems faced by the tea-garden workers in the Powai tea estate.
3. To find out solution for the development of socioeconomic condition of the labourer in the study area.

Significance of the Study

Assam has the largest tea industry all over India and the tea garden labourer are the main basis of the tea garden of the nation they have been living here since the nineteenth century in India. Tea community plays very crucial contribution for the better progress of tea factory. But in terms of their significance role in the production sphere their socio-economic and educational conditions are not very good. These people have been facing a lot of problems in every aspects of their day-to-day life. Although, various welfare schemes, policies are formulated by the government of India as well as Assam, but till now the socio-economic and educational scenario of these tea community does not seem as much improved. Only a smaller number of people are improved to a greater extent than even before but still so many tea garden labourers are facing various problems in the path to progress.

Therefore, to know deeply about the social, educational and economic status of this community a thorough investigation and analysis is necessary. So, to get primary information from the existing source, the Powai tea-Estate is selected as the area of the study to understand the existing reality as well as to uncover the fact and to improve their condition to make a better developed society

Methodology:

The present study is based on descriptive method and both the primary and secondary data has been used. In

this study both male and female are selected as target group and total sample size is 70 respondents. Primary data have been collected from the tea garden labourers of Powai tea-Estate living in the garden areas through the technique of questionnaire, interview and observation tools to know existing reality about the target group of the study.

Observation as a data collection tool helped to observe and understand the living style, economic condition of tea garden Labourers. Interview helped to collect lots of information from the respondents through various structured and unstructured questionnaire about educational, social and economic issues and challenges. The secondary data are collected from various sources such as articles, research papers, journals, books, magazines, newspapers, periodical report, government reports, government documents etc.

Socio-Economic and Educational Status of Tea Garden Labourers of Powai Tea-Estate

In the tea industries of Assam both the male and female employee have been employed as tea garden labour. Most of the women of tea community earn money but their social system is patriarchal. Apart from the tea estate work, they also involve in hunting animals, animal husbandry, making handicrafts, collecting woods etc. Again, education is the main means of social change and it is the chief way for the welfare of the society. But most of the tea garden labourers are ignoring their education and they belong to very poor educational status of society. Most of the family are not interested to send their children to study at educational institute rather they are interested to involve them in the works of tea garden. Which lead them a poor socio-economic status of society. Lack of education affects their lower socio-economic condition. Their ignorance of education creates barrier for the development process of tea community. Most of the parents are not interested and they do not value education. Lack of education leads early marriage, domestic violence, exploitation of women, abuse, harassment, population growth poverty kind of social barrier. They used wine almost their every socio-cultural program and after having hard

work they drink wine and it causes wife biting, domestic conflict and creates negative social environment.

Income level indicates the economic condition of a family and society. From the study, it is found that the income level of the tea garden labourers of this particular area is very low. Wages are given to them after 15 days. In the Powai tea-estate some workers are permanent and other are temporary. From the research it observed that economic condition of permanent worker is comparatively better than the temporary workers of this particular area. Because the permanent labours have their free quarter facility, toilet and water facilities and some of them has their own cultivation, animal husbandry etc. Education plays very significant role in the development of a society. In this study it is revealed that the educational condition is not very well among the respondents. There are also primary school and Anganwadi centre in front of tea-estate but rate of school dropout is high among the tea community of this particular area. The literacy rate is very low and most of the people are unaware about various government facilities and funds which are specially granted for tea community.

Data collection and Analysis

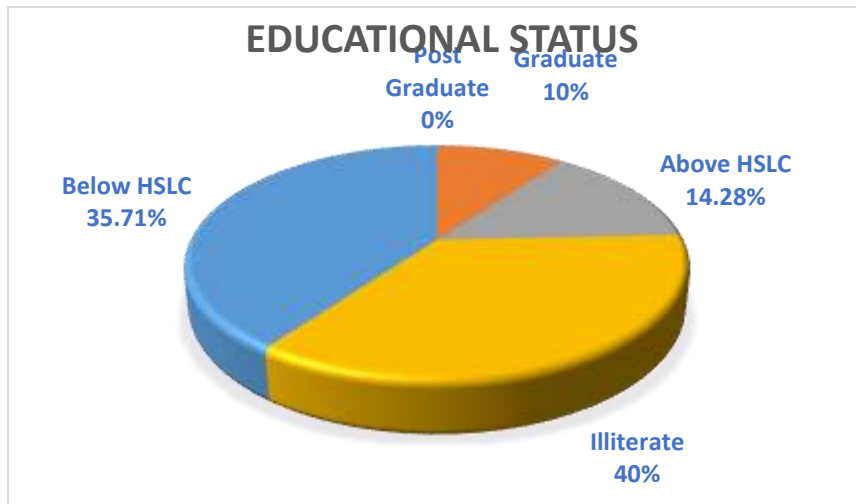
Table no. 1 Educational Status of Respondents:

Qualification	Respondents	Percentage%
Post Graduate	0	0%
Graduate	7	10%
Above HSLC	10	14.28%
Below HSLC	25	35.71%
Illiterate	28	40%

Source: Field work

From table 1, it is clear that out of 70 respondents 10% are Graduate, 14.28% are above HSLC, and 35.71% of are below HSLC, 40% are illiterate. Due to low level of education, the most of the tea garden labourers are unable to take advantages of various welfare schemes.

Figure:1



The above figure clearly portrayed that most of the labourers of Powai tea-Estate are illiterate.

Table no. 2 Occupational Structure of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Occupation	No. of respondent	Percentage
1.	Permanent worker	55	78.57%
2.	Temporary worker	15	21.42%

Source: Field work

Table no. 2 clearly showed that the among the total number of respondents 78.57% respondents are permanent worker of Powai tea-estate and other remaining 21.42% respondents are temporary worker of the tea-estate.

Figure : 2

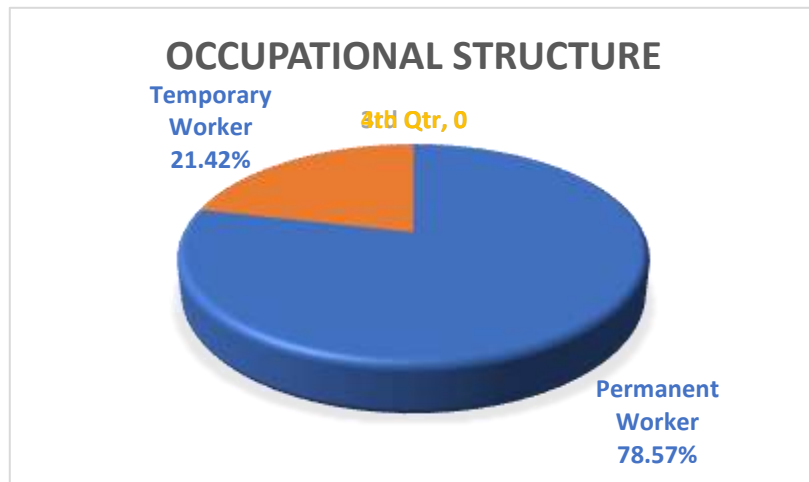


Figure no. 2 showed the number of permanent labourers is more than the number of temporary labourers in the Powai tea- Estate.

Table no. 3 Average Monthly Income of The Respondents:

Sl. No.	Average monthly income	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Up to 3000	5	7.14%
2	3000- 5000	35	50%
3	5000- 8000	23	32.85%
4	Above 8000	7	10%

Source: Field work

From table no 3. it is clear that out of total respondents, the average monthly income of 7.14% respondents are up to 3000. The monthly income of 50% respondents is between 3000-5000, 32.85% of respondents monthly income is between 5000-8000. Remaining 10% comes under above 8000 monthly earning.

Figure.3

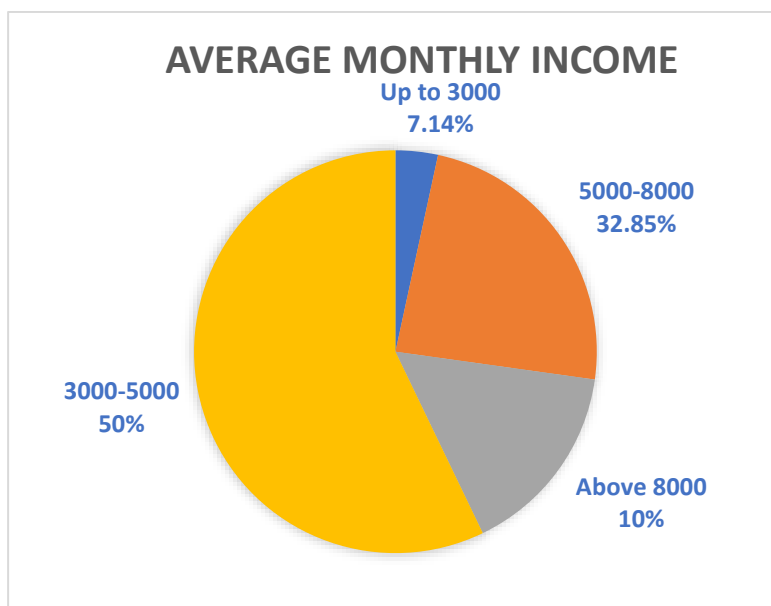


Figure:3 clearly showed that monthly average income of the tea garden worker is 3000-5000. Which is very less monthly income and it being not sufficient for them to meet their daily needs of their day-to-day life.

Findings

Among the tea garden labourer's illiteracy is a big factor which leads various socio-economic problems in their day to day life. Again, they are economically very poor. Their monthly earning is not sufficient to meet the needs of their daily life. Most of the families of tea garden labourer involves in the hunting animal, animal husbandry like-cow, goat, pig, hen, duck, fishing and they also works as labour at other house in their extra time. Most of young boys and girls are getting married at their very lower ages, which leads various domestic conflict, biting on wife, abuses due to use of wine by both husband and wife which leads various social barriers like- domestic violence, divorce, social conflict etc. Due to illiteracy they are facing many problem in coping up with present technological era to complete various governmental process in the day to day life such as-to fill up forms of Banks, Panchayati raj institutions, another works which are related to reading and writing, to give application etc. Most of the tea garden workers are not able to speak other languages fluently like- Assamese, Hindi, English for this reason they faced problem to adjust in public place and to communicate with other people in social life.

Discussion

Most of the members of Tea garden labourers of Powai tea-estate left the school before completing their education and many of them never attended to any formal school. They are also economically very poor and due to lack of financial support, parental support from the family leads the increasing number of early dropout rate in the local school. Most of the children works all the domestic works including rearing and caring of their younger siblings, some are involving as child labour. Most of the guardian thinks that education can never improve their condition of life. They have a negative attitude towards the education. For such reason they send their child to tea garden as their main workplace to earn money rather send to school. They think that earning money is more important than being educated, such factors also lead school dropout and early girl's marriage. Due to lack of education and awareness they do not know about various governmental schemes, policies, how to take advantages from those policies and how to apply or where to inform about their problems and issues.

Suggestion

Educational awareness campaign, awareness about family planning should be held in such tea-estate areas so that positive attitude towards education can be developed among the tea garden labourers to improve their socio-economic condition as well as to get employed in different sector. Awareness campaign on various governmental facilities should be conducted by government departments, panchayat raj institutions, educational institutions so that each and every people can take benefits of governmental welfare schemes. Awareness and education are very crucial means to improve the socio-economic situation of the tea garden labourers and to remove various social evils like- domestic violence, alcohol addiction, child marriage, divorce, social conflict etc.

Conclusion

From the above discussion it is clear that illiteracy, lack of awareness, poor economic condition are the main obstacle due to which the tea garden labourers of Powai

tea-estate failed to maintain better living standard. Though, some facilities are provided by the garden authorities to the labourers but it is not enough to make their comfortable and better life. The labour wages are very low to meet their all basic needs to sustain their daily life. Various developmental and welfare schemes are taken by the government for the upliftment of socio-economic status of tea community in India. But sometimes due to improper implementation of such schemes fails to fulfil the welfare goal of the nation. Various factors like – corruption, lack of regular supervision by the higher authority, lack of awareness of stakeholders, illiteracy leads unsuccessful implementation of such schemes. Therefore, proper education, awareness programme by the government departments like schools, medicals, members and officers of Panchayati raj, local member of legislative assembly, administrative officers should play their responsible role to educate those people to take advantages from various schemes and should make aware about various process how to inform about their problems to the government authorities so that the welfare goals can be achieved. Again, the condition of the women tea garden labourer is also not well due to various issues like domestic conflict, health degradation, overloaded work of both domestic and tea garden, lack of health facilities, biting by alcohol addicted husband, divorce issue leads their lower socio-economic status. Therefore, it is the duty of the social institutions, Non-governmental organizations, governmental organizations to make them literate, knowledgeable, economically self-dependent, culturally reach so that they can contribute for the socio-economic and educational development of the whole society.

REFERENCES

- Ansari, S. and Sheeren, S. (2016) Socio -Economic condition of tea garden workers in Alipuduar District west Bengal. International journal of research and social science. Vol. 6, Issue.2.
- Bosumatari, D., & Goyari, P. (2013). Educational status of Tea Plantation Women Workers in Assam: An empirical analysis, Vol. 2, pp.17-26.

- Bishwasarma, Anita. & Borah, Bitu. Social and Educational Condition of Tea Tribes of Assam: A Study. Volume 6, Issue 6, pp. 343-344.
- Biswal, G.C. (1985) Tribal development and education some issues, Vangajati.
- Devi, Pallabi. (2014). SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE TEA GARDEN WOMEN WORKERS IN ASSAM A CASE STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SONITPUR DISTRICT. Volume 2, Issue 2, pp. 1-7.
- Debnath, S., and Debnath, P., (2017) Socio-Economic Condition of Tea Garden Workers of West Tripura District with Special Reference to Meghilipara Tea Estate, Vol.5, pp 248-261.
- Devi, P. (2014). Socio- Economic status of the tea garden women workers in Assam. A case study with special preference to Sonitpur district, Vol.3, Issue.2, pp.34-67.
- Kar, R. K. (1975), Unity in Diversity: A Note on the Adaptation of a Tribe in a Tea Industry. Bulletin, Department of Anthropology, Dibrugarh University, 4: 11-15.
- Kumar, S. (2022). A quest for sustainium (sustainability Premium): review of sustainable bonds. Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies Journal, Vol. 26, no.2, pp. 1-18
- Narzary, P. K. (2006), Hidden Truth of Ethnic Clash Between Boro Tribe and Santhals in Assam, India, Studies of Tribes and Tribals, Vo.4, pp. 57-69.
- Singh, S.N., Narain, A. and Kumar, P. (2006), Socio-Economic and Political Problems of Tea Garden Workers: A Study of Assam, Mittal Publication, New Delhi.