

Examining the Socio-Economic Landscape of the Tea Garden Workers of Manohari Tea Estate Of Dibrugarh

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Abstract

Tea, a globally favoured beverage, stands as the second-largest production commodity in India after China. Three decades ago, Arunachal introduced tea cultivation, sending harvested leaves to Assam for processing. This study holds significance for comprehending tea cultivation and the labourers' conditions. It gauges socio-economic factors through field surveys, using primary indicators. Primary data have been collected using Interview schedules while statistical tool viz. SPSS 16 has been used to arrive at the findings. The study's purpose lies in understanding the socio-economic landscape of tea garden workers in Manohari Tea Estate situated in the Dibrugarh District. The research also addresses marital status, sanitation, housing, monthly income, etc. Moreover, it recommends raising awareness about human rights among tea garden employees.

Keywords: Socio-economic, tea garden, labourers

1. Introduction

Tea, a widely consumed beverage globally, has significantly shaped societies, economies, and cultures worldwide. Within the tea industry, the backbone comprises tea garden workers who contribute greatly to tea leaf production. Operating in remote areas with limited resources, these workers face distinctive socio-economic circumstances that necessitate exploration. India, a major tea producer, accounts for a significant portion of the world's tea production, with Assam leading in the country.

Dibrugarh, known as the tea city of India, has emerged as a notable tea hub with numerous small and medium-sized gardens. These tea estates have not only boosted the local economy but also provided employment through planting and processing. In the district of Dibrugarh, tea has deep historical and cultural significance, contributing substantially to the socio-economic well-being of garden workers. Although the region produces exceptional teas, many workers lack literacy and awareness of basic living standards. Challenges such as prejudice, superstitions, and alcoholism persist in this underprivileged community, leading to limited exposure and economic hardship. The study examines workers' education, income, occupation, family dynamics, housing, health, and suggests measures to address their socio-economic challenges.

Socio economic condition is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic

and social position in relation to others, based on household income, earners' education, and occupation are examined as well as combined income.

Tea estate labourers in Assam are the most backward and exploited community due to decades of continuous exploitation by tea estate management. The literacy rate of the community is lowest in Assam, particularly girls and women. Due to this, girls are extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation and early marriage. As tea estates are located in remote areas, majority of labourers living in labour lines inside the tea-estates are exploited by the tea planters leading to backwardness. Non- education, poverty, addiction of males to country-beer, poor standard of living, rising population and inadequate health facilities leads to poor socio economic conditions of tea garden workers.

2. Review of Literature

Another study by Baruah et al. (2020) offers insights into the soil characteristics and nutrient management practices in Namsai district. This study evaluates the soil fertility levels in tea gardens of Arunachal Pradesh and underscores the importance of maintaining optimal soil fertility for long-term tea cultivation.

Gupta et al. (2017) examine the potential impacts of climate change on global tea cultivation. While not focusing solely on Namsai district, their research sheds light on the climatic hurdles faced by tea growers and discusses adaptation techniques that could prove valuable for the region.

The research conducted by Hazarika et al. (2018) investigates the economic feasibility and production constraints of tea cultivation in Arunachal Pradesh, particularly in Namsai district. The study delves into the challenges encountered by tea farmers and proposes strategies to enhance the industry's sustainability and profitability.

Observing child labor in tea gardens, Das and Islam (2006) note in their study "Human Rights of the Tea Gardeners: Case Study of Selected Gardens in Sylhet" that children work in tea gardens to support their families. Unfortunately, the facilities provided for tea garden workers, such as housing, clean water, sanitary systems, and wages, are inadequate. Bosumatari and Goyari (2013) examine the educational status of women workers in Assam's tea plantations and find that educational facilities are insufficient. Borah (2013) investigates women workers' rights in Assam's tea gardens and discovers insufficient healthcare facilities, maternal mortality concerns, and unhealthy living conditions. The study also uncovers the issue of child marriage among tea garden workers. In Sonitpur District, Assam, Devi (2014) examines the socio-economic status of women employed in tea gardens. Her research highlights that tea garden families have larger household sizes, lower education levels among women workers, and monthly incomes below Rs. 5000 compared to other societal groups.

Borah (2013) further explores the socio-economic conditions of tea plantation workers in Assam, specifically at Lepetkota Tea Estate. Many workers spend less than Rs. 400 per month on their children, with a substantial portion of their income going towards meals. Due to their lower income compared to other community members, they allocate only a small fraction to clothing, housing, transportation, and other expenses.

3. Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this current study is to provide an in-depth portrayal of the socio-economic status of the tea garden labourers at Manohari Tea Estate in Dibrugarh. In addition to these overarching goals, there are specific aims as outlined below:

- 3.1 To analyse the living conditions of the tea garden labourers and welfare amenities provided to them.
- 3.2 To compare the wage structure of the permanent and temporary workers.

4. Scope of the Study

The current research focuses on the socio-economic situation of individuals employed in tea gardens. The study provides insights into their educational achievements, income status, financial assets, and cultural heritage. Moreover, it offers insights into areas requiring further development and can serve as a foundation for making comparisons.

5. Methodology of the study:

5.1 **Area of study:** The area of the study includes the tea garden workers of Manohari Tea Estate, Suntok Tea Company LLP, P.O. Mohanbari Airfield Dibrugarh, 786012.

5.2 **Study Sample:** Samples of 60 families have been taken for this study. A random sampling method had been used.

5.3 **Data Collection:** This study is based on both primary data as well as secondary data. Data was collected through a schedule and by personal interview method. Primary data has been directly collected from respondents through field study keeping in mind all the required information for the fulfilment of the objectives. The data has been collected from the respondents by approaching them and filling up the schedules by explaining them the questions. On the other hand secondary data that we use were collected from various web sites of related topics. The workers staying in the garden had also provided some secondary data.

6. Data Analysis & Interpretation

In this chapter, the data collected from the respondents are presented with the help of tables and figures. The data collected through the field study are analysed and interpreted herein.

Table 1: Number of Family Members

Number	Frequency	Percent
0-2	4	6.7
3-5	39	65.0
More than 5	17	28.3
Total	60	100.0

Table 1 shows the classification of respondents according to the number of family members. From the above we can analyse that out of total number of respondents 6.7% belongs to the category of 0-2 members per family, 65% belongs to the category of 3-5 members per family and the rest 28.3% belongs to the category of more than 5 members per family. The

respondents belongs to the second category is higher as compared to the others.

Table 2: Type of Family

Type	Frequency	Percent
Nuclear	35	58.3
Joint	25	41.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 2 shows the classification of respondents on the basis of the type of family. From the above we can analyse that out of the total respondents 58.3% or 35 respondents belong to nuclear family where as 41.7% or 25 respondents belongs to joint family. It shows that most of the families residing in the garden are nuclear family.

Table 3: No. of Children

Number	Frequency	Percent
0-2	50	83.3
more than 2	10	16.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 3 shows the classification of respondents according to the numbers of children in their family. From the above we can analyse that 83.3% respondent's family is having children ranging from 0-2 and the rest are having more than 2 children. Therefore it can be said that most of the families are having either no children or 1 or 2 children.

Table 4: School

School	Frequency	Percent
Yes	47	78.3
No	13	21.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 4 shows the classification of respondents on the basis of whether the children are going to school or not. From the above it can be analysed that out of the total respondents 78.3% respondent's family are having children who are going to school whereas 21.7% are still not going to any school in their nearby area. Here we can say that a good number of children are going to school and only few are left.

Table 5: Earning members

Earning Members	Frequency	Percent
Only 1	34	56.7
More than 1	26	43.3
Total	60	100.0

Table 5 shows the classification of respondents according to the number of earning members in the family. From the above we can analyse that out of 60 respondents 34 is having only one earning member in their family and the rest are having more than 1 earning member in their family. It shows most of them are having only 1 earning member in the family therefore accordingly their income is also low.

Table 6: Nature of Service

Nature of Service	Frequency	Percent
Permanent	53	91.37
Temporary	5	8.63
Total	58	100.0

Table 6 shows the classification of respondents according to the nature of service. From the above we can analyse that out of the total respondents 91.37% of the respondents are permanent workers and remaining 8.63% of the respondents are temporary workers of the tea estate. It shows that most of them are having fixed income.

Table 7: Weekly Income

Weekly Income	Frequency	Percent
Rs. 500-Rs.1000	38	63.3
More than Rs. 1000	22	36.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 7 shows the classification of respondents as per the slabs of weekly income of their family. From the above we can analyze that about 63.3% of the workers earn a weekly income of Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000 while 36.7% of the workers are earning more than Rs. 1000 in a week. It can be said that a most of the respondents' family's weekly income is less than Rs.1000.

Table 8: Weekly expenditure

Weekly Expenditure	Frequency	Percent
Less than Rs. 500	8	13.3
Rs. 500 - Rs.1000	34	56.7
More than Rs. 1000	18	30.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 8 shows the classification of the respondents according to the level of their weekly income. From the above, it can be analyzed that the weekly expenditure of 8 respondent's family belongs to the first category of less than 500, 34 belongs to next category of 500-1000 and the rest belongs to the category of more than 1000.

Respondents belongs to the category of 500-1000 is maximum in this case.

Table 9: Saving Habits

Bank a/c	Frequency	Percent
Yes	50	83.3
No	10	16.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 9 shows the classification of respondents according to their saving habits. From the above we can analyze that most of the respondents have saving habits i.e. about 78.3% of the total respondents save their money in banks, post offices etc. while the rest still do not have the saving habits.

Saving Habits	Frequency	Percent
Yes	47	78.3
No	13	21.7
Total	60	100

Table 10: Bank account

Table 10 shows the classification of the respondents on the basis holding bank account. From the above we can analyse that out of 60 respondents 50 of them are having bank a/c whereas only 10 of them are not having any bank account. It can be said that majority of them are having their own bank accounts.

Table 11: Electricity Facility

Electricity	Frequency	Percent
Yes	58	96.7
No	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0

Table 11 shows the classification on basis of having electricity facility or not. From the above we can say that 96.7% of the respondents have electricity connection in their house while 3.3% of the respondents have no electricity connection. It means that they are able to enjoy the modern social life at least.

Table 12: Fuel for cooking

Fuel	Frequency	Percent
LPG	24	40.0
Firewood	36	60.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 12 shows the classification on the basis of use of fuel for cooking. From the above it can be analyse that

40% of the respondent's household is using LPG where as 60% of the respondents families are using firewood as fuel for cooking. It can be said that most of the households are using firewood.

Table 13: Type of House

Type of House	Frequency	Percent
Kutcccha	39	65.0
Pucca	21	35.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 13 shows the classification of respondents according to the type of house the lives in. from the above we can analyse that out of the total respondents 65% of the respondents are living in kuccha house whereas 35% are living in pucca house. Therefore we can that most of them i.e. almost double of the respondents are living in kuccha house.

Table 14: Source of Water

Water Source	Frequency	Percent
Hand pump	58	96.7
Well	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0

Table 14 shows the classification of respondents according to the source water they use. It is seen from the above analysis that hand pumps are the most common source of water supply in the Tea Garden (65%). Notably, one hand pump is provided for 4 to 5 families at an average, which is a much higher ratio compared to the norms followed by the water supply programmes of the Government of India. Only 35 % of the families use wells as their source of water.

Table 15: Purification of drinking water

Purification	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	18.3
No	49	81.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 15 shows the classification of respondents on the basis of their habit of purification of drinking water. From the above it can be analyse that out of the total respondents only 18.3% purify water before drinking and the rest 81.7% respondent's family do not purify drinking water. It can be said that most of them do not purify water before drinking.

Table 16: Sanitation facility

Sanitation	Frequency	Percent
Sanitation Latrine	50	83.3
Local Sanitation	6	10.0
Others	4	6.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 16 shows the classification of respondents on the basis of their sanitation facility. The above chart helps us to interpret that 10% of the respondents have no sanitary toilet. They use local sanitation. 83.3 % of the respondents have sanitary toilet while 6.7% of the respondents use direct pit toilets (without water seals) connected to open pits. The superstructure are mostly made of local materials (bamboo and thatched) walls but are often too cramped to allow individuals to use the toilets comfortably.

Table 17: Ration Card

Ration Card	Frequency	Percent
Yes	47	78.3
No	13	21.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 17 show the classification of the respondents on the basis of holder and non-holder of ration card. From the above it can be analyse that about 78.3% of the family is holding a ration card whereas 21.7% of the family do not hold any ration card. It shows that majority of the people are holding ration cards whereas still a very little portion are left.

7. Findings of the Study

7.1 We can analyse that out of the total respondents 58.3% or 35 respondents belongs to nuclear family where as 41.7% or 25 respondents belongs to joint family. It shows that most of the families residing in the garden are nuclear family.

7.2 Most of the families are having either no children or only 1 or 2 children. It might be because of the various family planning schemes initiated by the government.

7.3 78.3% of the respondent’s family is having children who are going to school whereas 21.7% are still not going to school. It is a good sign that most of the parents have understood the importance of education and hence admitting their children in the local schools. Only a very small percentage of the children are not going to school and it is because they are not eligible to go to school.

7.4 Out of 60 respondents, 34 are having only one earning member in their family and the rests are having more than 1earning member in their family. It shows that most of the families consist of only one earning member as because they basically belong to nuclear families and as a result their income level is also low.

7.5 Out of the total respondents, 58 respondent’s families are using service as their source of income whereas only 2 are using other sources for generation of income. It shows that most of them are working in the tea garden and only 2 of them are having their own shops.

7.6 91.37% of the respondents are permanent workers and remaining 8.63% of the respondents are temporary workers of the tea estate. It shows that most of them are having fixed income. However, the tea garden authority should undertake sufficient measures to increase their level of income which can help them to improve their economic condition.

7.7 The weekly expenditure of 8 respondent’s family belongs to the first category of less than Rs.500, 34 belongs to next category of Rs. 500-1000 and the rest belongs to the category of more than Rs.1000. Respondents belongs to the category of Rs.500-1000 is maximum in this case. It can be said that their expenditure level as compared to their income is more due to which they resort to borrowings.

7.8 Most of the respondents have saving habits i.e. about 78.3% of the total respondents save their money in banks, post offices etc. while the rest still do not have the saving habits. Though they have habit of saving money but because of low income, their savings are not fixed. It is temporary.

7.9 Out of 60 respondents, 50 of them are having bank a/c whereas only 10 of them are not having any bank account. It can be said that majority of them are having their own bank accounts. The tea garden authority has taken the initiative to facilitate banking habits so that they can save a portion of their income in their bank accounts.

7.10 From our survey, we found that electricity is available in almost all the households.

7.11 Most of them use firewood for cooking which they procure from the nearby shops or from the nearby villages. The permanent workers receive some allowances to procure fuels and this is not available to the casual workers. LPG is not preferred due to their low income.

7.12 From the survey, it is found that most of them are provided with kuccha houses. Along with that, a

good number of respondents are living in pucca houses. It can be said that the housing facilities provided by the authority is quite good.

7.13 Hand pumps are the most common source of water supply in the Tea Garden (96.7%). Notably, one hand pump is provided for 4 to 5 families at an average, which is a much higher ratio compared to the norms followed by the water supply programmes of the Government of India. Only 3.3 % of the families use wells as their source of water.

7.14 10% of the respondents have no sanitary toilet. They use local sanitation. 83.3 % of the respondents have sanitary toilet while 6.7% of the respondents use direct pit toilets (without water seals) connected to open pits. The superstructure are mostly made of local materials (bamboo and thatched) walls but are often too cramped to allow individuals to use the toilets comfortably.

7.15 Most of the families possess ration cards which provides assistance to them for buying the necessary goods at a lower price. But, a small portion of the families are not acquiring ration cards because of lack of awareness about its usefulness.

7.16 Most of them are having television, fan etc. as they are provided with good electricity connection.

7.17 The field survey revealed that 53.3% of the households had poultry rearing, hen rearing, milk cow etc. it was observed that on an average 27% of the households sold the products and generated an extra source of income.

8. Conclusion

Tea industry in Assam has immense potential from the points of both providing employment and generating revenue. It plays a vital role in improving the socio economic condition of tea garden workers. The Manohari tea estate, Assam is spread over 1800 acres of land, with over 1000 acres plantation. It produces nearly three million pounds of black and green tea annually. Most of the workers of Manohari Tea Estate are provided employment on permanent basis and are paid wages at moderate rate although measures should be taken to increase the income of workers. This tea garden of Assam was the first to pay its workers through online banking system and ATM and provided its workers with other banking facilities. The literacy rate of the tea garden is quite better. The workers are provided with land of tea estate for residing, provided with good water facility and electricity connection. For further development and betterment of the workers,

Tea estate authority, Government and NGOs may take initiative for economic, social and cultural development of the tea estate workers of Manohari tea estate. Thus, the socio economic condition of the Manohari tea estate worker is better as the tea estate has been able to provide sufficient employment to the labourers with moderate wages and other incentives. Also by providing housing, education, and various other facilities to the workers, the tea estate has raised the standard of living of its workers.

9. Limitations of the Study

9.1 Time is the main limitation in the way of evaluation of the true picture of the study due to which we study only 20% of the whole population.

9.2 The study is based on only a single tea estate therefore it might not able to draw the actual conclusion rather it just gave a generalised view.

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