

Socio-Economic Condition of Tea Garden Workers in Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal, India

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1. Introduction

Tea is the most popular drink in the world. China is the largest consumer of tea and India is second largest country. Then Kenya, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. This popular drink originated in china after that in India tea is introduced by British Raj. India is a second largest tea producer country after China as per tea board of India. India recorded an annual production of 1250.49 m kgs in the year of 2016-17. Assam is the largest tea producer state in India contributes 52 percent and west Bengal is second largest state contributing 27 percent of tea production. It has about 450 tea garden in west Bengal which employs 6.5lakh workers and in estimate that more than 2.5lakh peoples are fully dependent on only tea garden. Though the tea garden workers is permanent worker but they are daily rated. They get the wages for the actual day that they work. The daily wages of tea garden workers in rupees 122 which is below the minimum wages of agricultural labourers i.e.206. as the wages is very low the worker cannot afford their basic needs.

2. Study Area

Uttar dinajpur district lies between latitudes 25°11' N to 26°49' N and longitudes 87°49' E to 90°00' E. Occupying the area of 3142 sq km enclosed by Panchagarh Thakurganj and Dinajpur district of Bangladesh on the east Kishanganj ,Purnia and Katihar district of Bihar on the West. Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district on the North and Malda and Dakhsin dinajpur district on the south. Uttar dinajpur is the most Backward district out of 640 district of the country . Total population of this is 3 million and 60 percent is literate . The density of the population is 960 per sq km and Sex Ratio is 930 (census 2011). Population growth rate is 22.90 in the decade 2001-11. Bengali, Rajbanshi and Surjapuri is the common language in this district.

About 1485 acre area is covered by mixed Deciduous forest. The regional topography is generally flat with a gentle southerly slope towards which the main river likes Kulik, Nagar and Mahananda. Soil nature in the district is very fertile.

In Uttar Dinajpur District there are two sub-division, Raiganj and Islampur. In the both sub-division soil is very rich to grow paddy, jute, maize and sugarcane. But the soil of Islampur sub-division specially Chopra and Islampur block is also suitable for the growth of Tea plantation. The climatic condition is also favorable for the growth of Tea.

3. Objective of research

The major objective are -

1. To analysis the socio-economic condition of tea garden workers in Uttar Dinajpur.
2. To asses the workers level of consciousness about their basic right .
3. To find out the major problems found by the tea garden workers.
4. To give some suitable suggestion to improve the socio-economic condition of the workers.

4. Methodology

The entire study is based on the information collected primary and secondary data sources. Primary data have been collected through personal interview administrated at the household level. The secondary data obtained from the statistic hand book of tea board of India ,Different government office and published journals.

For assessing the socio-economic condition of tea garden workers , the survey was conducted in the tea estate of Chopra and Islampur block in Uttar Dinajpur District. The survey was covered by 130 respondents from 6 tea estates. Details of the selected tea estates are following below -

5. Design and size of sample

Table 1

Selected tea estate	Location	No of respondents	Present status
Puspa Tea Estate	Daspara	25	Open
Goalgach Tea Estate	Asharubasti	25	Open
Lakhipur Dancan	Lakhipur	25	Lockout
Paragan Tea Estate	Jagir	25	Open
Riverview Tea Estate	Sujali	25	Open
Chandan Tea EState	Daspara	2	Open

Source: field survey data.

In the selected six tea estates have collectively population about 20000 .Most of the workers are fully dependent only in the tea garden. In the tea garden there are two types of workers i.e. permanent workers and casual workers. The survey was done based on permanent workers.

6. Age of the respondents:

The age composition of the sample tea garden workers is presented in the table 2

Table 2. Age composition

Age Group	No of respondents	Percent
18-30	39	26
30-45	60	40
45-60	51	34

Source – field Survey data.

The study area reveals that the large number of worker are belonging to the age group of 30-45 years . About 34 percent of workers are belongs to the age group of 45-60 years. And rest 26 percent workers belongs to the age group 18-30 years.

7. Gender of respondents

Sex composition of respondents of tea garden workers are given below in the table 3

Table 3 Sex composition

Gender	No of respondents	Percent
Male	24	16
Female	126	84

Source: Field survey data.

Female workers are more preferable than male in tea plantation. So in the study area out of 150 workers , the number of women workers are 126 and constitute 76 percent and number of men workers are 24 constitute only 16 percent.

8. Marital status:

The marital status of the sample of tea garden workers is presented in the table 4

Marital status	No of respondents	percent
Unmarried	17	11.33
Married	118	78.66
Divorced	2	1.33
Widowed	13	8.66

Source: Field survey data.

In the study area 78 .66 percent of workers are married where as 11.33 percent workers are unmarried. 1.33 percent workers are divorced and 8.66 percent workers are widowed.

9. Educational status

Educational status of respondents are not so good. Details are presented in the table 5

Level of education	No of respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	79	52.66
Primary	53	35.33
Upper primary	12	8
Secondary	5	3.33
Higher secondary and above	1	0.66

Source : Field survey data.

In the study are above 52 percent of workers are illiterate and 35 percent of workers are studied up to primary level. Only 8 percent of workers are studied up to elementary level where as 3.33 percent workers pursued secondary degree. Among the literate workers only 6 women studied up to primary level.

10. Income of respondents :

Monthly income of tea garden workers is very low. Details of income are presented in the table 6

Table 6 Monthly income in rupees

Income	No of respondents	Percent
Below 3000	29	19.33
3000-6000	103	68.66
Above 6000	18	12

Source: field survey data.

The wages of tea garden workers were fixed by tripartite agreement between the tea garden owner , Government and trade union for every 3 years . Presently on 19 February 2015 the wages fixed 112.50 for first year 122.50 for second year and 132.50 rupees for third years.

In the table 6 it is observed that 68 percent of workers earn 3000- 6000 rupees per month. 19.33 percent of workers monthly income below 3000 rupees. 12 percent of workers having monthly income above 6000 rupees. They works in others field like agriculture, fishing beside tea garden .

11. Housing Condition

The housing condition of respondents are represented in table 7

Table 7 Housing condition

House types	No of respondents	Percent
Pucca	7	4.66
Kutchcha	101	67.33
Mixed	42	28.00

Source : field survey data.

As per Plantation Labour Act 1952 Every year about 8 percent of the workers house should be converted into pucca house but only 4.66 percent house pucca where as 67 percent house were kutch rest 28 percent house were mixed.

12. Water supply sanitation facility:

Sanitation is one of the most important indicator of socio-economic development. In the study area there are only 56 percent of respondents having sanitation facilities . rest 44 percent of respondents have no sanitary . 82 percent of respondents were having water supply by different method like tube well, pipe line etc.

13. Electricity Facilities :

86 respondents out of total having electricity facilities supply by west Bengal state electricity distribution company Limited and rest 14 percent house have no electricity supply.

14. Labour union and welfare society :

There is no labour welfare society in the study area but some political trade union like INTUC, INTTUC, CITU works for the preservation of labour right .

15. Suggestion for improvement socio-economic condition

1. There should be a proper implementation of Plantation labour act 1952.
2. The wages of labour should be increase as per minimum wages of labour.
3. Government should open skill development institute for the tea garden workers.
4. Sufficient toilet should be constructed by Nirmal Banga and Swachha bharat mission .
5. Government should supply purified water for tea garden workers.

16. Conclusion

From the overall study about the socio-economic condition of tea garden workers it can be said that the most important problems of the study area is that the low wage of the workers. Which led them to live pathetic life. The management of tea garden workers do not give salary timely per month and they also do not give house grant other facilities timely. The housing condition, sanitary facility, medical facility not so good.

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