



Socio-economic status of the tea garden men workers: A case study from Sub-Himalayan and Himalayan regions of West Bengal, India

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Abstract

Men worker can play a vital role in the development of family, society, state as well as country. Men are the minor source of labour in the various tea garden of Sub-Himalayan and Himalayan regions of West Bengal. They play a significant role in the establishment of tea industry. The present study reveals that the socio-economic and various drawbacks of the tea garden men workers.

Keywords: socio-economic status, tea garden, men worker

Introduction

India is the second largest tea producer country in the world. Tea industry plays a vital role in the socio-economic condition of India. Men worker are the most potential labour force in the Tea industry (Devi, 2014; Sarma, 2013) ^[7, 9]. About 30-40% worker of the tea industry are men who are well trained from their previous generations (Sarkar *et al.*, 2016a) ^[4, 10]. Although plucking machine, pruning knife etc. introduced in tea industry but their skill defiant them. The male workers are so much sincere and skilled that the quality of tea is highly established. Men labour participation in the tea plantation industry of North Bengal has a very long history. The “Adivasi” and “Nepali” men worker all along formed the majority of the workforce of this industry in this region (Dutta, 2015) ^[8]. The rights of tea garden men worker are still now neglected and they are facing several problems in their daily life (Borah, 2013) ^[2].

Materials and Methods

In this paper, methodology is mainly based on primary and secondary data sources generated through extensive survey. Primary data have been collected by direct contact method with the questionnaires and interview schedules and the secondary data have been collected from different tea association, tea board office, various newspaper and journals. Simple random sampling methods were employed to select the

sample of ten tea gardens. Data collections were performed with the help of Socio-economic status scale by Parek and Trivedi (1964). In Sub-Himalayan and Himalayan regions of West Bengal there are three districts namely Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar. Following tea gardens have been selected for data collection such as; Gayabari Tea Estate, Sourenee Tea Estate, Sukna Tea Estate, Makaibari Tea Estate, Kamalpur Tea Estate, Matigara Tea Estate, Kiran Chandra Tea Estate, Raipur Tea Estate, Mongalkata Tea Estate, Totapara Tea Estate, Mujnai Tea Estate, Hansimara Tea Estate, Kalchini Tea Estate, Bhatkawa Tea Estate etc.

Results and Discussions

There are two types of worker present in tea estates of our survey area. They are permanent or contractual. Contractual workers are appointed at the pick time during May to September. The male worker can done the maintenance of tea clone nursery, tea seed nursery, shade tree nursery, management of shade trees, pruning practice, irrigation practice, different types of spraying practice, transportation and several manufacturing related work in the factory as well as handling of tea waste also (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2015, 2016a, b; Sarkar *et al.*, 2016b, 2016c) ^[3, 4, 10, 5, 11, 6, 12]. They also work in some small tea gardens in various purposes (Chowdhury *et al.* 2016c) ^[6, 12]. Age wise temporary and permanent women works data are given below:

Table 1: Age distribution of sample population

Study area	Nature of worker	Number	Age range	Percentage
Hill (Darjeeling & Kalimpong)	Permanent male worker	200 – 250	18 – 30	40%
			30 – 40	35%
			Above 40	25%
	Temporary male worker	50 – 100	18 – 30	45%
			30 – 40	30%
			Above 40	35%
Terai	Permanent male worker	100 – 150	18 – 30	45%
			30 – 40	30%
			Above 40	25%
	Temporary male worker	50 – 100	18 – 30	35%
			30 – 40	40%
			Above 40	25%
Duars	Permanent male worker	250 – 300	18 – 30	40%
			30 – 40	37%
			Above 40	23%
	Temporary female worker	200 – 250	18 – 30	48%
			30 – 40	32%
			Above 40	20%

Details pay structure of tea garden worker of sub-Himalayan regions of West Bengal

- Salary same in permanent and temporary tea garden worker
- Salary of field worker Rs-132.50/- per day
- Salary of factory worker Rs-141.00/- per day

This pay structure is fixed by Darjeeling Tea Association for Hill tea gardens, D.B.I.T.A. for Duars tea gardens and T.I.P.A. for Terai tea gardens.

Some problems faced by the men workers of sub-Himalayan and Himalayan regions of West Bengal

The tea garden men workers are not only deprived of various rights but also face various other problems inside the tea gardens. They are facing various social, economic and health related problems such as:

- Poor health care facility
- Maternal mortality
- Problems of epidemics of various diseases
- Scarcity of drinking water
- Early marriage
- Child labour
- Alcoholism
- Illiteracy
- Superstition belief

Corrective measures

Two types of problems found in tea garden so far as health matters are concerned. They are:

- a. Poor health care facility
- b. Lack of consciousness of health

Government must impart proper health care facility to this labourer group. And the government also arrange some health consciousness programmes so that they can easily get well acquainted with the varied and various types of health problems. Consciousness should also be made in case of epidemics of various diseases. But virus transmitted disease like HIV-AIDS creates a great problem to the people belonging to tea garden. NGO's, social organisation and trust

body have to play a vital role in eradicating virus transmitted disease.

Even drinking water problems are also found in tea gardens. Pure and arsenic free water are much essential for everyone. Early marriage leads to the minor girls to immature death & destruction and necessitate stopping it. Men worker in tea garden are mostly addicted to alcohol. Owing to this they are diagnosed with enlarged liver, pancreas problems, heart problems and family problems. The presence of superstitious belief is seen in tea garden. So education is required for them and makes them aware of the superstitious beliefs and the dire consequences of it. The government law should also be promoted in tea garden to decrease and stop the child labour. If all failed to take corrective measures regarding the above problems, child labour spoil the childhood. Childhood is considered as the supreme state of mankind. For its heavenly qualities it has haunted the psyche of the poets. The discussion of childhood is found in the poetry of Vaughan, Thomas Hood, Rabindranath Tagore, Blake and even in the old English poetry like 'Pearl'. The romantic poet Wordsworth always uses the language "the language really used by men" and to him poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings taking its origin "emotions recollected in tranquillity". Childhood is the heavenly association described in the Bible.

"Out of the mouth of babes and suckling's hast thou ordained strength" – BIBLE, Psalm 8:2

"A little child shall lead them" - BIBLE, Saiah 11:6

Conclusion

It is very much significant that the men of each and every society play vital role for their families, societies as well as countries. From the above discussion, it is concluded that tea garden men workers are facing several daily problems and still they are socially "detached", economically "underprivileged and educationally unlettered". Most of them are innocent and illiterate and opportunities are denied to them. They only get involved with the tea garden for their livelihood and economical upliftment. So emphasis should also be laid on

their proper education, counselling and always stretch own moral support to uplift their socio economical condition. Otherwise “nothing will be lift for them, except crying and crying”.

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