

**“ SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE TEA GARDEN WOMEN  
WORKERS IN ASSAM A CASE STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO SONITPUR DISTRICT .”**

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**Abstract:**

Women can play an important role in the upliftment of the society. Without economic, political and social participation, the human society could not be developing. The present study has been design to know the socio-economic status of the Tea garden women workers of the Sonitpur District of Assam. Simple random sampling methods were employed to select the sample of four Tea Gardens. Data collection was done with the help of “Socio-economic status scale” by Udai Parek and G. Trivedi (1964). The major findings reveled that there were various drawbacks in the Tea garden women workers.

**Key words:** Socio-economic, Tea garden, Women worker in tea garden.

**INTRODUCTION**

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its Women”-  
Jawaharlal Nehru.

The above statement by Nehru can be called in the sense that women constitute half of the entire population of a country. Since ancient times, women in India are making financial contribution for the betterment of their families. Their participation in economic activities of the country has grown enormously after rapid industrialization in post independence era. The prosperity and growth of a nation depends on the socio-economic status and development of its women.

India is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest populous country in the world which is just next to China. Accordingly to 2011 census report, the total population of Assam is 31169272 of which 15954927 are male and 15214345 are female. So, the State has a huge manpower. The total literacy rate of Assam is 73.18% of which male are 78.81% and 67.27% are female. Tea is one of the major industries of Assam with the National production of 415819000 Kilograms and out of that, Assam’s share is 215157000 Kilograms. Tea contributes about 17% of the state income. Now there are 751 tea labourers in Assam. About 1576935 labourers (Directors of Economics and statistics, Government of Assam) are working in these Tea Gardens daily.

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Women workers are the most potential labour force in the Tea industry of Assam. They are the victim of circumstances and they are struggling for their existences. Tea garden women workers are mostly illiterate and they are not aware of the minimum standard of living. Prejudice, superstitious beliefs, alcoholism etc. are high among this underdeveloped community. Socially they are less exposed, economically hard pressed and hand to mouth, educationally and culturally dwarf which cast gloomy picture on their posterity. There are more than 100 sub castes among the Tea labour community in Assam, who were from various cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic heritages. They have become now part and parcel of Assam.

According to Segen's Medical Dictionary (2012), Socio Economic status implies the standing of a person or group in a community or society based on education, occupation and income which is often used as a benchmark for investigating health inequalities. Here the investigator also study the educational qualification, their monthly income, occupation, caste, type of family, marital status etc of the sample tea gardens of Sonitpur District. Secondly women workers in the tea garden comprise half of the total population of the tea garden. Women have been employed in the tea industry from its inception. Out of the tea labour employed more than 50 to 60% is engaged in crop harvesting. From among these crop harvesting about 80% are women. It is the oldest and the largest tea producing state in India with about 55% of the production in the country.

In Assam, a women worker in the Tea plantations generally leads a very busy daily life with practically, no time to have leisure and relaxation. All Tea garden women carried her day to day work along with all domestic activities. The role of women has been changing in modern time with rapidly changing norms of our society both inside and outside home. In addition to their role within the family, the Tea garden women are now having a large role in the labour market. At present the problems of inadequate need based wages including other benefits; education, increasing unemployment and Socio-Economic backwardness are the most burning issues which can bring healthy working atmosphere of the tea gardens of Assam. Therefore, an attempt has been made to highlights the Socio-Economic backwardness of the Tea Garden women workers in Assam.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:-**

- a) To identify the factors that shows the Socio-Economic condition of the women workers in the Tea industry of Sonitpur District of Assam.
- b) To study the Socio-Economic backwardness of the Tea Garden women workers in the study area.
- c) To study the extent of social and economic exploitation of the Tea garden women workers in the study area.

### 3. METHODOLOGY:

So far methodology is concerned this paper is based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been collected mostly by direct contact method. The Questionnaires and interview schedules have been taken to carry out the whole investigation. All the information, based on primary sources have been collected from the selected Tea Estates of Sonitpur District of Assam with pre-structured questionnaires on a number of major aspects of age, education, marital status, living condition etc. Secondary information have been obtained from the magazines, newspapers, journals, books, theses and various other publications of Government of India and Government of Assam. This is a case study based on selected Tea estates of Sonitpur District. Samples were selected randomly. Data collection was done with the use of Socio-economic status scale by Udai Parek and G. Trivedi(1964) .

In Sontipur District there are four sub divisions. There are total numbers of 78 Tea Gardens in Sonitpur District. The investigator selected four sample Tea Gardens from the following sub divisions of Sonitpur District.

**Table -1**  
List of Tea Gardens in Sonitpur District

Sl no.	Sub Divisions	Name of the Tea Estates	No. of women workers
1.	Tezpur sub division	Ghogra Tea Estate	100
2.	Dhekiajuli sub division	Tinekharia Tea Estate	100
3.	Biswanath sub division	Baghmari Tea Estate	100
4.	Gohpur sub division	Dufflaghar Tea Estate	100

Total =400

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:-

Socio-economic status of the women workers in four Tea estates of Sonitpur District.

(a) **Age:-** It has been seen that out of total respondent, the age group of 20-30 years and 30-40 years are accordingly 32% and 29%. While 21.25%, 12.25% and 5.25% are of age group of 40-50 years, 50-60 years and 60 years and above. Therefore it is clear from the data that the majority of the Tea garden working women are in the age group of 30-40 years.

**(b)Educational qualification of the respondents:-**

It is transparent from the table 2, that the most of the women workers are illiterate. The educational qualification of the women workers, 72.25% are illiterate, while, 14% are undermatric, 6.75% are matriculate, 5.85% are undergraduate and rest 1.25% is graduate. Therefore, it is analyzed from the table 2, that the majority of the tea garden working women are illiterate. Those who are literate, most of them are engaged in other activities of the Tea gardens other than labourer.

**(c)Occupation of the women workers:-**

It is analyzed in the table 2, that the 72% of the respondents are permanent worker of those particular tea estates while 16% of the respondents are temporary and another 12% are housewife. Thus from the table 2, it can be concluded that, the majority of the women workers are permanent.

**(d)Caste of the women workers:-**

It is evident from the table 2, that all the women workers or labourers of tea communities of Assam are belonging from only MOBC or OBC category. This finding revealed that the respondents of the present investigation were from only one caste i.e. tea tribes or tea garden labour community of Assam.

**(e) Marital status of the tea garden women:-**

It is observed from the table 2, that 83% of the respondents have been married, 8% of the respondents were unmarried and remaining 9% were widows. It has been seen that due to early marriage, the marital status is going high among the Tea Garden community. The reason behind the large percentage of widow within the sample women workers seems that the life expectancy of the husbands were not more because they were strongly addicted to alcohol and not aware of their health.

**(f) Type of family:-**

It is transparent from the table 2, that 87% women working in the Tea Garden is nuclear type of family. Permanent workers in the Tea Garden area have their own quarters. So this is interesting to see that nuclear family trend is coming in the tea garden area too, while 13% of them are joint family. Thus it is concluded that majority of the working women are belongs to a nuclear types of family.

**(g) Size of the family:-**

It is seen that, 82% of the respondents in the selected Tea garden area have their minimum family member from 6-10 members, while 16% of them have 1-5 members and a very small member of respondents have 11-15 members. Thus, it is concluded that majority of the respondents have their family members from 6-10 members in the projected study area of Sonitpur District.

**(h)Average monthly income of the family:-**

It is observed from the table 2, that, 92% women workers have their average monthly income of Rs. 1000 to Rs. 5000 while, 12% of them have Rs. 5001 to 10000 and another 1% have Rs. 10001 to 15000. Thus it is concluded that majority of the respondents have their average monthly income of Rs. 5000 or below.

**(i)Type of housing facilities:-**

It is clear from the table 2, that 63% respondents have their Pacca type of housing facilities while, 37% of them have Kaccha type of housing facilities in. The permanent workers have their own quarters allotted by the owner of that particular Tea garden. Thus, majority of the workers residing in Pacca types of houses in the study area.

**Table -2**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their Socio-Economic characteristics.**

Sl. NO.	Characteristics		No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Age	20-30 Years	128	32
		30-40 Years	116	29
		40-50 Years	86	21.50
		50-60 Years	49	12.25
		60 above	21	5.25
2.	Educational Qualification	Illiterate	289	72.25
		Undermatric	56	14
		Matriculate	27	6.75
		Undergraduate	23	5.85
		Graduate.	5	1.25
3.	Occupation	Permanent workers	288	72
		Temporary workers.	64	16
		Housewife.	48	12
4.	Caste	General	00	00
		MOBC/OBC	400	100
		SC	00	00
		ST	00	00
5	Marital Status	Married	332	83
		Unmarried	32	8
		Widow	36	9
6.	Types of family	Nuclear family	348	87
		Joint family	52	13
7.	Size of the family	1-5 members	64	16

		6-10 members	328	82
		11-15 members	8	2
		16 & above	NIL	NIL
8.	Average Monthly income (in Rs.)	1000-5000	368	92
		5001-10000	28	7
		10001-15000	4	1
		15001-20000	00	00
9.	Housing facilities	Pacca	252	63
		Kaccha	148	37

*\*\* Source :- Field Study.*

### 5. FINDING OF THE STUDY:-

1. Total 61% of the respondents are in the age group of 30-40 years.
2. 72.25% of the respondents are illiterate, while 14% are undermatric, 6.75% are matriculate, 5.85% are undergraduate and rest 1.25% is graduate.
3. 72% of the respondents are permanent in nature of occupation while 16% and 12% of them are temporary workers and housewives.
4. 100% of the women workers are in MOBC/OBC category.
5. 83% women are working in the sample Tea Gardens are married while 8% are unmarried and prevailing 9% signifies as widows.
6. 87% women workers in the Tea Garden area are of nuclear type of while 13% of them are joint family in the selected sample Tea Gardens of Sonitpur Districts.
7. Highest 82% of respondents have their minimum family member from 6-10 persons while 16% have 1-5 persons and 2% have 11-15 persons in the Tea Garden women workers family.
8. 92% of the women workers have their monthly wage Rs. 1000-5000 in the selected Tea Garden areas of Sonitpur District.
9. 63% respondents have Pacca while 37% of them have Kaccha type of housing facilities.

### 6. SUGGESTIONS:-

1. Women education should be given importance at all levels. Education gives liberation to them, to act independently to some extent.
2. The management and trade unions should organize the literacy campaign among Tea Garden workers to their own time to improve their level of education.
3. The management and the government should organize the family planning programmed among the women workers.

4. The Government should implement various legislative provisions concerning women workers for their empowerment.
5. From the investigation, the investigator noticed that, they are suffering problems with their health. Most of the children and aged person dies due to various diseases. The ration, they are getting from the tea gardens have low nutritional values and that needs to be looked after.
6. As they are less conscious about their heat and food they eat, the mortality rate is much higher within the tea garden workers, so they need to be more conscious. Moreover NGOs, Government agencies should take measures so that they can be conscious about their health.
7. It has been seen that the superstitious beliefs are very prevailing in the tea garden communities and for that tea garden women are suffering more by their community itself. It is the education by which they can be organized socially.

## 7. CONCLUSION:-

It is important and utmost necessary that women of every society tend to work for the upliftment of her own personality and their family to increase their per capita income.

From the above discussion, it is concluded that tea garden women workers are still lagging behind in terms of socially, economically and culturally. Most of them are illiterate and for that they are working only for their livelihood of their family. It is the duty of the society, NGOs, Government agencies to make them literate, culturally reach, and economically stable so that they can live in this beautiful world happily and peacefully.

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