

# A Study on Socio-Economic Status of the Tea Garden Women Workers with Special Reference to Bokakhat Sub-division of Golaghat District of Assam

Dr Manoj Kumar Sarma  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Statistics  
D.K.D. College, Dergaon, Golaghat, Assam, India.

**Abstract:** Women play a vital role in the overall development of family, society, state as well as the country. Women workers are the major labour force in various tea gardens of Assam. They play a significant role in the establishment of tea industry. The present study has been designed to know the socio-economic status of the tea garden women workers of the Bokakhat sub-division of the Golaghat district of Assam. The information required for the study has been collected from both the primary and secondary sources. Average and percentage analysis was carried out to draw meaningful interpretation of the results. The study revealed that the tea garden women workers are still lagging behind socio-economically, culturally and educationally in the study area.

**Keywords:** Tea Garden, Women Worker, Socio-Economic Condition, Potential Labour Force.

**1. Introduction:** India is the second largest tea producer country in the world after China. Tea industry plays a vital role in the socio-economic condition in India. 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. The women workers in Assam generally lead a very busy daily life. All tea garden women workers carry out her day to day work along with all domestic activities. They are now having a large role in labour market. At present, they have faced various socio-economic problems. In this study an attempt has been made to study the educational qualification, their monthly income, occupation, caste, type of family, marital status, housing etc. of the sampled tea garden of Bokakhat sub-division under Golaghat district of Assam and also to highlight their socio economic backwardness. In addition an attempt has also been made to suggest some measures to improve the condition of the women workers.

## 2. Objectives of the Study:

In our present study the following objectives are proposed.

1. To study the socio economic status of tea garden women workers in the study area.
2. To study the socio economic backwardness of the tea garden women workers.
3. To evolve strategies and suggest measures to improve the condition of the women workers.

**3. Methodology:** This study is empirical one. For the entire study, relevant primary and secondary data are being collected from different sources. Necessary Primary data have been collected at household level through sample survey with the help of a well designed survey schedule from five (5) tea estates of Bokakhat Sub-division of Golaghat district of Assam. Secondary data have been collected through magazines, journals, books, newspaper, internet etc.

## 4. Analysis:

### 4.1 Socio economic profile of the respondents:

The study is carried out in selected five tea estates, which are located in Bokakhat Subdivision of Golaghat district of Assam. There are 11 tea estates in Bokakhat Subdivision viz. Hatikhuli, Methoni, Bokakhat, Diffaoo, Borsapori, Bihora, Numaligarh, Rangagorah, Radhabari, Nahorjan and Anandapur. The investigator selected 5 sample tea estates from the 11 tea estates using simple random Sampling technique. The selected tea estates are Hatikhuli, Diffaloo, Bihora, Radhabari and Nahorjan as displayed in table 4.1.1.

**Table 4.1.1**  
**List of selected Tea Estates under Bokakhat Subdivision**

Serial No.	Name of the Tea Estates	No. of Women Workers
1	Hatikhuli	50
2	Diffaloo	50
3	Bihora	50
4	Radhabari	50
5	Nahorjan	50

Source: Primary Data

**Table 4.1.2**  
**Age of the Respondent**

Serial No.	Age Group (in year)	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	15-25	62	31
2	25-35	48	24
3	35-45	44	22
4	45-55	35	18
5	Above 55	11	5
Total		200	100

Source: Primary Data

The age composition of the tea garden women in table 4.1.2 reveals that large segment (31 percent) of the women worker belongs to the age group 15-25 years. About 24 percent of the women workers belong to the age group 25-35 years while 22 percent and 18 percent belong to the age group 35-45 and 45-55 respectively. Only 5 percent of the respondents are in the age group 55 and above.

**Table 4.1.3**  
**Educational status of the Respondents**

Serial No.	Level of Education	No. of Respondent	Percentage of the Respondent
1	Illiterate	116	58
2	I-V	40	20
3	VI-X	40	20
4	XI and above	4	2
Total		200	100

Source: Primary Data

From table 4.1.3 it has been observed that 58 percent of the women workers are illiterate, 20 percent of the women workers studied in the class from I to class V, 20 percent of the women workers studied in the class from VI to X and while only 2 percent of them have qualification XI and above. Despite Tea gardens are operating on tea plantation Act 1952 which has a provision that every tea garden should have school, in spite of that there is higher rate of illiteracy in the tea plantation as most of the respondent discontinued their education due to poverty.

**Table 4.1.4**  
**Occupational Structure of the Respondents**

Serial No.	Occupation	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Permanent Worker	140	70
2	Temporary Worker	38	19
3	Housewife	22	11
Total		200	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 4.1.4 exhibits that 70 percent of the women workers are permanent worker while 19 percent of the women workers are temporary worker and 11 percent are house wife. Thus it is found that majority of the women workers are permanent.

**Table 4.1.5**  
**Caste and Community of the Respondents**

Serial No.	Caste	No. of Respondent	Percentage of Respondent
1	General	0	0
2	MOBC/OBC	170	85
3	SC	30	15
4	ST	0	0

Source: Primary Data

From table 4.1.5 it has been found that majority (85 percent) of the women worker in the study area of MOBC/OBC category while 15 percent of them are of SC category.

**Table 4.1.6**  
**Marital Status of the Respondents**

Serial No.	Marital Status	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Married	162	81
2	Unmarried	16	8
3	Divorced	2	1
4	Widowed	20	10

Source: Primary Data

In table 4.1.6, the marital statuses of the women workers are displayed. Among the respondents, 81 percent are married, 10 percent are widowed and 8 percent are unmarried while 1 percent is divorced as evinced by table 4.1.6.

**Table 4.1.7**  
**Type of family of the Respondents**

Serial No.	Type of Family	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Nuclear Family	154	77
2	Joint Family	46	23

Source: Primary Data

Regarding the type of family of the women workers, it has been observed from table 4.1.7 that 77 percent of the workers are of nuclear type family, while 23 percent of them have joint family.

**Table 4.1.8**  
**Size of family of the Respondents**

Serial No.	Size of Family	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	1 to 4	104	52
2	5 to 8	88	44
3	9 to 12	8	4

Source: Primary Data

The size of the family determines the standard of living in the family. Large family requires high income to maintain the standard of living where as small family requires small amount. It is observed from the table 4.1.8 that 52 percent of the women workers in the selected sample area have their minimum family members from 1 to 4, while 44 percent have 5 to 8 and only 4 percent have family members from 9 to 12.

**Table 4.1.9**  
**Average Monthly Income of the Respondents**

Serial No.	Average Monthly Income	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Up to 2500	48	24
2	2500 to 3500	51	25.6
3	3500 to 5000	69	34.4
4	5000 and above	32	16.0

Source: Primary Data

Income is the important factor which influenced the most of the social factors. Table 4.1.9 reveals that 24 percent of the respondents have their average monthly income up to Rs 2500, while 25.6 percent have Rs 2500 to 3500, 34.4 percent have Rs 3500 to 5000 and 16 percent have Rs 5000 and above. Thus majority of the women workers have their average income from Rs 3500 to 5000.

**Table 4.1.10**  
**Housing Facilities of the Respondents**

Serial No.	Housing Facilities	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Pacca	66	33
2	Kaccha	134	67

Source: Primary Data

As tea garden is guided by the Plantation Labour Act 1952 and there is provision of housing facilities to the worker by the tea garden management and every year about 8 percent of the worker houses should be converted into pacca houses, but despite that very least pacca houses are built. From table 4.1.10 it has been observed that only 33 percent of the women workers have pacca houses where as 67 Percent of the workers reside in kaccha houses made from bamboo and tin shed.

### 5. Major Findings of the Study:

- Large segment of the worker (31%) belongs to the age group 15-25 years.
- The number of illiterates are more than literates in the study area. 58 percent of the respondents are illiterate where as 20 percent studied up to class V. Only 2 percent of the respondents studied after class X.
- Majority of the women workers (70 percent) are permanent.
- Majority (85 percent) of the women worker in the study belong to MOBC/OBC category while 15 percent of them belong to SC category.
- 77 percent of women laborers have nuclear type family.
- 24 percent of the women workers earn less than Rs 2500 per month while 16 percent of the women workers earn more than Rs 5000 per month. The majority of the women workers earn in between Rs 3500 to Rs 5000.
- 67 percent of the women workers live in kaccha houses.

### 6. Suggestions:

1. Most of the women workers in the study area are illiterate and not able to appreciate the value of girls' education. As such women education should be given importance at all levels. The government should open institution in the tea garden area offering different vocational courses to upgrade the skill of the women workers and thus in turn to make them self reliant.
2. The Government should implement various legislative provisions concerning women workers for their empowerment.

3. Constant campaign should be organized to aware the women workers about family planning programmes by the health department, NGOs and tea garden authorities.
4. The mortality rate of the women workers is much higher and this is due to their lack of knowledge regarding good nutrition and health practices. Therefore they should be made more conscious about their health by organizing different health awareness programmes by the government agencies, tea garden authorities and NGOs.
5. It has been observed that tea garden communities are predominated by the superstitious beliefs and as a result tea garden women have been suffering a lot. It is the education by which they can be organized socially.

#### 7. Conclusion:

It is very much significant that the women of each and every society plays vital role for the families, societies as well as the countries. From the above discussion, it is concluded that tea garden women workers are still lagging behind socio-economically, culturally and educationally. Most of the women workers are illiterate and they are working only for the livelihood of their family. Therefore, it is a high time for the government as well as the owners and management to come forward and uplift this particular society. It is the duty of the society, NGOs, Government agencies to make them literate and economically stable so that they can live in this beautiful world happily and peacefully.

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