



Socio-Economic Dynamics Of Women Workers Of Hathikuli Tea Estate Of Golaghat District: A Human Security Paradigm

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Abstract

Human security is a complex term. The present paper tried to study that though women constitute a significant portion of the workforce in the tea industry, performing hard task such as plucking tea leaves in adverse weather, yet they often face systematic inequalities. These include limited opportunities for upward mobility and poor working conditions. The paper also highlights the socio-cultural constraints that restrict their empowerment such as lack of education, limited health care facilities as well as vulnerability to exploitation. Besides the seasonal nature of tea work and dependency on a single crop economy further deepen their financial insecurity.

Key words : Human Security , Socio-economic Dynamics, Tea Garden Women

Human security is a modern concept or a phenomenon. Human security denotes to the concept that the security and well-being of individuals should be the major concern of security policies and strategies, rather than just focusing on the security of the nation. In this regard The United Nations Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report is considered a milestone publication in the field of human security with its motto that ensuring "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" for all individual is the best part to tackle the problem of global insecurity. The concept of human security was for the first time expressed in the words of **Mahbub Ul Haq**. It is different from the traditional school of security. The traditional concept of security which can be defined in terms of nation's security evolved after the end of cold war. A nation's security was always measured by its existing military technology at a given time. The term security thus refers absence of threats. However, the concept of human security was raised from traditional concept of security and becomes an important paradigm. Thus, the evolution of human security reflects a shift from a narrow outlook on state-centric security to a broader and more people-centric that considers the multifaceted challenges people face in the modern world.

India's concept of human security was influenced by its struggle for independence from British colonial rule. During this period, issues related to basic needs, social justice and civil rights were fore font of the movement. After gaining independence in 1947, India focused nation building and economic development for which government implemented policies aimed at poverty alleviation, social justice and healthcare, such as the Green Revolution and the establishment of public sector industries.

Assam is a land of multi ethnic community and among these communities some are belong to marginalized section. Tea garden community is one of them. They were migrated to Assam from different parts of India during British era. At present like the other community tea garden community has also become a determining factor of our socio-political system and became a part of greater Assamese society. But this section of community is still remained backward in every sphere of their life. They have been facing the problems of low wages; job insecurity, poor educational facilities, poor working conditions, gender discrimination, inadequate healthcare, poor housing and sanitation facilities.

Thus human security in tea gardens of Assam is a very complex term that involves various aspects of well-being and vulnerability in these areas. Although, the Tea Plantation Labour Act 1951 provides arrangement for socio-economic and educational development, yet they are still remained backward as compared to mainstream society.

Thus the present study tries to find out the intricate factors that influencing the human security of women workers of Hathikuli tea Estate of Assam examining aspects such as their economic status, health, education, and social support system, and vulnerability to various **Significance of the Study:**

The present study is significant because the Tea industry is a vital part of Assam's economy and its women work force is an integral part of it which is 50 percent of the total work force. But they are still remained lagging behind in every aspect of their lives. Thus, studying the socio-economic dynamics of women workers in Tea Garden from a human security perspective is crucial for promoting gender equality, ensuring the well-being of the individuals.

1. Literature of Review:

Ahmed & Hussain (2016) had made a study on "A study on working conditions of Tea Plantation Workers in Bangladesh." The report has revealed that the tea plantation workers are becoming conscious about the education in their lives. The study finds that the female workers in tea garden are the most potential labour as compared to man but their living standard is very low. The report also discloses gender issues like some parents do not feel safe to send their daughters to school, colleges instead the girl child remains busy in house hold activities.

Baro (2017) in his doctoral thesis tried to study education among tea garden labourers with special reference to Udalguri district of Assam. The objectives of the study are: Assess the status of education among the tea garden labourers of Udalguri district. Examine the relation of the socio-economic background of the tea garden labourers with their educational status. Discuss the role of the student organization of the community in the field of education and identity assertion.

The researcher found a deplorable educational scenario of schools under sarva siksha mission of the survey tea gardens of Udalguri district. In this regard, the study has highlighted that lacks of proper classroom facilities, infrastructural facilities, inadequacy of proper trained teacher are responsible. Moreover, the study revealed that poor economic conditions of the labourers are the main reason of their educational backwardness. Improper implementation of the provisions of Labour Plantation Act of 1951 is also mainly responsible their socio-economic backwardness. The study further found that AATSA and AASA are two student organizations which have been taking initiative in creating educational awareness among tea garden labourers.

Baruah (2008) has made an extensive analytical research of Assam tea industry since its origin's. The book deals with the each and every aspect of origin, development over the years, production, marketing, labour, contribution to the economy of Assam, quality factors. Besides, the book covers problems and prospects of tea industry of Assam in the present day situation, causes of degrading the quality of Assam tea, stagnation of tea price leads a serious challenge of its survival and suggested research based findings measures for future development.

Borgohain. J (2018) has made an excellent description of migrated tea garden workers and their socio-economic condition and how their lives are different from the mainstream society, in her novel 'Aangkush'

Bosumatari and Goyari (2013) in their study revealed that a large number of women workforce is engaging in tea industry of Assam are educationally backward. Although the government has been implementing various policies from time to time yet a large section of women are still illiterate which impacts in their day-

to-day life. The study finds out some major hindrance of girl child's education i.e. negligence of girl child education by their parents, early marriage of girls, non-availability of schools in tea garden areas.

Chakravorty (1997) in his book author presents the socio-economic condition of plantation workers of Assam and Tripura. The book described period of growth, rise and development tea industry and its workers. Hence, the book also contains with the workers education and other areas of their development.

Chatterjee (2001) in his book 'A Time for Tea' book deals with a sophisticated examination of the production, consumption and circulation of tea. The book exposes terrible working condition, low wages and coercive labor practices enforced in the post colonial tea plantation in India. The book is also recognized as one of the significant work in the feminism.

Choudhury (2018) has made an evaluative study on social educational status of tea tribe women of Status of tea tribe women of Sonitpur district of Assam. The study found that the conditions of tea garden workers are very backward and their wages is also very low as compared to other jobs. Illiteracy is a major hindrance of their development. For which they are being exploited in every aspect of their life.

Duara and Mallick (2019) have tried to analyze the gender based work culture that has been existing in the tea estates in Assam since its origin. Apart from these the plantation industry in Assam has been role of patriarchy that has been facing by women both at the work place as well as in social aspects. The study found that women issues are not raised effectively by the trade Unions and their representation in the trade union is also very less.

Mishra, Upadhyay and Kumar (2011) have revealed about the livelihood strategies and living conditions of the tea garden workers of Assam. The book also deals with various challenges that have been faced by tea sector of Assam since 1990.

Sarma and Rabha (2020) in their study attempts to investigate the educational problem as well as infrastructural facilities available in the Primary Schools of tea gardens in Dhekiajuli Sub-division. The major findings of the study are: Majority of the students in Primary schools suffers from linguistic difficulties. 70% of the parents are not at all conscious about their child education. Lack of Adult education centre in the tea garden areas. School supervision is not done on regular basis. Many schools have single classroom for two or three classes and one or two teachers for the whole school.

Kurmi (2014) conducted a study on "the problems of educational attainment of children, a case study of the tea garden laborers of households in Derby Tea Estate". The study revealed that mother's education is played a significant role in educating their child's.

Pathak (2020) has examined various socio-economic and health related challenges faced by the tea tribe women of Assam. The study revealed that although women are integral part of our society, yet they are still remained backward. Lack of awareness and education become the major obstacles of their upliftment. The study significantly mentioned about human trafficking which is a serious challenge that have been faced by tea tribe women in recent times. Besides, prevailing of superstitious beliefs among tea tribes of Assam is another serious challenge of their development. The study has recommended that the govt. and Ngo's should come forward and take initiative in organizing awareness camp in tea gardens.

Sharma (1992) has made an evaluative study regarding the problem of non enrolment and retention of the children of the tea garden labours of Sibsagar district. The study revealed that the children of tea labourers were engaged in domestic and non domestic works was the major hindrance of non-enrolment and drop out from school. Besides, lack of adequate facilities in school also another cause of their low attendance the school. Moreover, the most of the parents spend their earnings in drinking alcohol for which they are unable to bear educational expenditures.

2. Objectives of the study:

- To know the various Human Security threats that has been facing by women workers in the Hathikuli Tea Garden.

3. Methodology:

A qualitative methodology is to be undertaken for the study. Qualitative research is naturalistic inquiry that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting.

A qualitative method with in-depth, semi-structured interviews will be used for collection of data.

4. Sources of Data:

Both Primary and secondary sources will be used in the proposed research study.

Primary Data will be collected directly from the field by the researcher. The researcher will collect the firsthand information by in-depth interview from Hathikuli Tea estate.

Secondary Data are being collected from books, journals, magazines, newspaper and various other online sources.

5. Research Questions:

- What are the key socio-economic threats faced by women workers in Hathikuli Tea Estate and how do these challenges affect their human security?

6. Major Findings of the Study:

- Although Right to Education is a constitutional right yet, this section of our society faces the problem of low access of education.
- Though the constitution of India Provides right to equality for all but the workers of tea gardens or this section of people face discrimination based on their ethnicity and caste. People call them Coolie or labour community many times which also affects their rights and social status.
- It is found that due to the low income of the respondents they could not meet the proper needs of their life. Economy plays an important role in individual's life as well as family. Monthly income of the respondents determines their standard of living and quality of life. It is found that the monthly income of the Tea Garden Women Workers is still very low as compared to other jobs. Thus, low income of the respondent is another serious problem of their life.
- Another finding of the study is that lack of job security among temporary workers is also a threat to their life. Because the temporary workers get job as and when required by the institution. Moreover, the tea industry is going through a very tough situation where a lot of tea gardens are shut as the owners or the companies could not run due to continuous losses incurred by them and the workers are also feeling insecure working there.
- The workers informed that they get only the primary healthcare facilities by the estate.
- As the Tea estate is surrounded by forest and also nearby Kaziranga National Park, that provides a perfect habitat for variety of wild animals like leopards, elephant, wild boar, wild buffalo. There are instances where workers were attacked and injured many times. Thus, workers living within the estate are most at risk.
- The workers of estate also faced the problem of identity crisis. The state government had not provided the status of ST (Scheduled Tribe), as provided by the other states of the country. They are categorized as OBC (Other Backward Class) in Assam.
- The health care facilities are also limited for the tea garden populations. As most of the tea gardens are located in very remote areas the health care facilities are nor as like others. Though the gardens have their own medical facilities but it's mostly catered to the permanent workforce only. Even most of the tea garden hospitals don't have medical officers, for which they need go to government hospitals which mostly very far from the gardens or they need to go to some private hospitals which is again a very costly affair.

- The living condition of the garden people is also very poor. Most of the populations live in the facility provided by the companies or the garden authorities. But due to lack of upkeep, the living condition of most of the worker colonies are very poor. The houses are not repaired, roofs are leaking, broken doors and windows, proper drinking water facilities are not provided.

7. Recommendations:

- Adequate education is utmost important for making aware of their rights. So government and NGO's should work for this. In this regard National Open Schooling System (NIOS) will be helpful for them.
- The wages should be increased so that they can meet up their basic needs of their of lives and raise their child properly.
- Proper Medical facilities should be provided to all workers living in the garden.
- Early marriage should be strictly banned in the tea garden.
- In collaboration with Tea companies, the government should provide pension to the tea garden women workers after their retirement so that their retirement life is better.

8. References:

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