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

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Abstract

Women play a vital role in the overall development of family, society, state as well as country. Women workers are the major labour source in various tea garden of Sub-Himalayan regions of West Bengal. They play a significant role in the establishment of tea industry in this region. The present study reveals that the present socio-economic status of the tea garden women workers. Major findings revealed that there were various drawbacks in the tea garden women workers.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, Tea garden, Women worker

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. About 70% worker of the tea industry are women who [Figure 1 and 2] are the most potential labour force (Sarma, 2013; Devi, 2014) [5, 3] and are well trained from their previous generations. Although plucking machine, pruning knife etc. introduced in tea industry but their skill defiant them. The female workers are so much sincere and skilled that the quality of tea is highly established. Women labour participation in the tea plantation industry of North Bengal has a very long history. The "Adivasi" and "Nepali" women worker all along formed the majority of the workforce of this industry in this region (Dutta, 2015) [4]. The rights of tea garden women worker is still now neglecting and they are facing several problems in their daily life (Borah, 2013) [2].

2. Materials and Methods

In this paper, methodology is mainly based on primary and secondary data sources. 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 Udai Parek and Trivedi (1964). In Sub-Himalayan regions of West Bengal there are three districts namely Darjeeling, 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, Raipur Tea Estate, Mongalkata Tea Estate, Totapara Tea Estate, Mujnai Tea Estate, Hansimara Tea Estate, Kalchini Tea Estate, Bhatkawa Tea Estate etc.

3. 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 that is May to September. The female worker can done plucking, pruning, sparing, mulching of weeds, factory work and also look after the baby day care centre.

Age wise temporary and permanent women works data are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Age distribution of sample population

Study area	Nature of worker	Number	Age range	Percentage
Darjeeling	Permanent female worker	350 – 400	18 – 30	35%
			30 – 40	40%
			Above 40	25%
	Temporary female worker	100 – 150	18 – 30	48%
			30 – 40	20%
			Above 40	33%
Terai	Permanent female worker	300 – 350	18 – 30	45%
			30 – 40	25%
			Above 40	30%
	Temporary female worker	200 – 250	18 – 30	30%
			30 – 40	45%
			Above 40	25%
Duars	Permanent female worker	500 – 550	18 – 30	25%
			30 – 40	35%
			Above 40	40%
	Temporary female worker	450 – 500	18 – 30	50%
			30 – 40	25%
			Above 40	25%

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 (Same Darjeeling, Terai and Duars)

- Salary of factory worker Rs-141.00/- per day (Same Darjeeling, Terai and Duars)

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 women workers of sub-Himalayan regions of West Bengal

The tea garden women 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

3. Conclusion

It is very much significant that the women of each and every society plays vital role for their families, societies as well as countries. From the above discussion, it is concluded that tea garden women workers are facing several daily problems and still behind in terms of socio-economically, culturally and educationally. Most of them are innocent and illiterate for that they are working only for their livelihood survivality of their family. So it is our duty to literate them and always gives them moral support to establish as a socio-economically sound people.





Fig 1: Women worker outside the factory

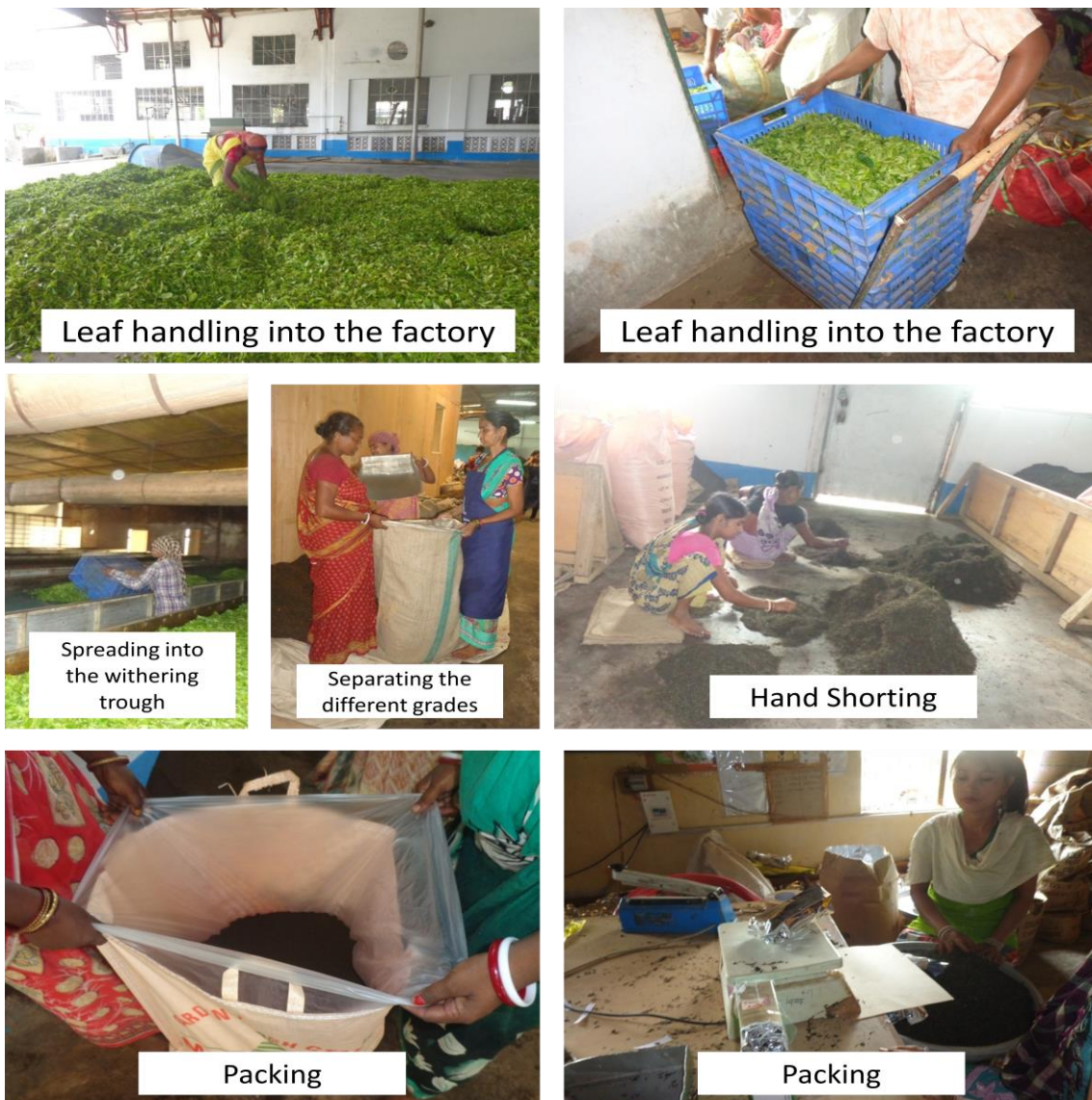


Fig 2: Women worker in the factory

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