

Empowerment and Challenges of Women Tea Workers in Panitola Block with Specific Reference to their Social Status.

Sangita Hazarika

Research Scholar

Department of Legal Studies, Arunachal University of Studies, Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh (India).

Dr. Baloy Bhattacharjee

Research Supervisor

Associate Professor Department of Legal Studies, Arunachal University of Studies, Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh (India)

Dr. Sachchidanand Sharan Das

Research Co-Supervisor

Assistant Professor Centre for Juridical Studies, Dibrugarh University, Assam (India).

Abstract: Women workers hold a significant position in the tea plantation sector in Assam. Panitola Block in Dibrugarh District encompasses a significant portion of the tea gardens within the Dibrugarh District. The empowerment of women employed in tea plantations is essential; otherwise, it may negatively impact their working efficiency. Examining the social status of these women's groups reveals some enlightening insights about their existence. The wages, gender equality, education, and occupational health and safety represent significant domains for assessing social status. The aim of the study is to examine the factors that influence the social status of garden workers. Data was gathered from 63 women workers utilising questionnaires and interviews. The findings indicate that concerns among working women include compensation, healthcare access, and occupational health and safety. Another area of concern is healthcare facilities, housing facilities, working condition. One of the main causes for concern is the limited comprehension of their rights to these amenities. In any case, a lot of employees have expressed how satisfied they are with the company's low pay, which affects their financial status. The statistics also demonstrate the worker's incredibly low educational attainment. We must increase the minimum wage and provide better healthcare in order to eliminate these disparities. Furthermore, it is imperative that some mandatory standards be placed on vocational training.

Key words: Women worker, Social Status, Wages, Education, Health.

Introduction: Women's empowerment is the process of enhancing women's influence, decision-making abilities, and feeling of self-worth for the benefit of women, their families, and communities. Empowering women entails giving them more authority, independence, and resource management to further social, political, and economic advancement. The most common livelihood among the tea tribe women of Assam is to engage themselves in tea plantation jobs. The primary activity of women in tea gardens is the plucking of tea leaves, which is regarded as unskilled labour. The women from the different age groups are come to work in tea gardens. As these women are considered as marginalized class from their historical perspective they are subjected to some exploitation by the contractors and by the Tea company. The social status of this marginalized class is not strong as they are extremely controlled by the management of the tea companies. They are afraid off expressing their plight and they remain silent even though they are not receiving the basic rights. Dibrugarh is known as tea city of Assam first tea garden was established at Chabua, which is in the Dibrugarh District. The Panitola block is part of the Dibrugarh district, which has some of the area's most important tea estates. This block also houses the Chabua TE, which is regarded as one of Assam's oldest tea estates. Studying in this important field is considered to be more thorough.

Despite playing a vital part in the economy, women tea workers in Panitola Block encounter several obstacles. All tea garden women

have hectic daily schedules that conflict with their household responsibilities, leaving little time for leisure or rest. Despite their important contribution to the tea industry, they still do not receive the attention they deserve and instead deal with a number of social, political, economic, educational, and health issues.

Statement of problem: There are still some issues which are associated with the social status of the women tea garden worker in Panitola Block Dibrugarh District, the problem of low wages, health facilities, occupational health and safety and low educational level. These detriment to the welfare and well-being's of the women workers. This research attempts to determine the causes affecting the social status of the tea garden women workers.

Objectives:

1. To study about the social status of the women workers in Panitola block, Dibrugarh District.
2. To find put the causes affecting the social status of the tea garden women worker of Panitola block, Dibrugarh District from the point of view of labour welfare.

Research Questions:

1. What is the social status of the tea garden women worker in Panitola Block?
2. What are causes effecting the social status of tea garden women worker in Panitola Block, Dibrugarh District?

Literature Review:

According to **Amali Philips** in his study on "Rethinking culture and development: marriage and gender among the tea plantation workers in Sri Lanka", Married women on plantations endure self-denial, sacrifice, and subordination within impoverished, male-dominated households, while also facing exploitation and gender discrimination as laborers in the capitalist plantation production system. Patriarchy and plantations, along with kinship culture and capitalist agriculture, work together to subordinate women in their roles as wives and workers. This article examines the relationship between gender-based inequality and culture, with an emphasis on women's experiences in marriage and the workforce. I subsequently consider the potential trajectories for development programs implemented in the plantations.

Horen Goowalla, in his study on "Labour Relations Practices in Tea Industry of Assam-With Special Reference to Jorhat District of Assam" the researcher highlighted the employees of the selected tea estates demonstrate significant dissatisfaction concerning the recruitment and selection processes implemented by the management. The respondents perceive the presence of various pressure groups as obstacles to establishing a transparent, appropriate, and effective recruitment policy. The respondents from selected tea estates exhibit a significant variation in

their satisfaction levels concerning the current wage system. The levels of satisfaction in government-owned tea estates are significantly lower when compared to those in private and public sector tea estates. This situation arises from mismanagement, bureaucratic obstacles, and the government's inadequate investment in these tea estates. The working environment in which the employees operate presents a bleak scenario. The dispute redressal system is also not worker friendly by its procedure.

Dipali Basumatari and Phanindra Goyari, in their research on “*Educational Status of Tea Plantation Women Workers in Assam: An Empirical Analysis*”, rightly pointed out that the significant number of tea plantation workers in India are women, many of whom lack literacy or face educational disadvantages. Since gaining independence, the Government of India has been enacting a range of policies aimed at enhancing women's education, improving literacy rates, and decreasing school drop-out rates. Despite the implementation of various educational policies, a significant percentage of illiteracy persists among women laborers in tea gardens when compared to other occupations. This study analyses the educational status of women workers in tea plantations, investigating the factors contributing to low literacy rates and school drop-out rates among girls in these areas.

The study conducted by **Abir Hassan** on *Deplorable Living Conditions of Female Workers: A Study in a Tea Garden of Bangladesh*, the research elucidates the living conditions of female laborers in tea gardens in Bangladesh, examining the social and occupational environment while incorporating an analysis of their level of awareness, highlighting the distressing circumstances of their lifestyles. This study was conducted in the Lackatoorah Tea Estate, located in the Sylhet district of Bangladesh, selected randomly as the research area. It illustrates the pervasive oppression and suppression of female workers across all domains of existence, from domestic settings to professional environments. It clearly demonstrates that 68 % of female workers lack autonomy over their own income. 90% lack hereditary property ownership, despite their legal entitlement to inherit it from their family. 92% of women believe they are experiencing physical torture and mental harassment from their husbands, male family members, and representatives of estate management. 8- 6% percent of women express a desire to maintain a small family size; however, they often find themselves excluded from the decision-making processes regarding child-related matters. The research is entirely grounded in primary data, employing a stratified sampling method alongside a triangulated research design, while also engaging with relevant literature from previous studies.

The another study done by **Mridusmita Duara**, Women represent almost 50 % of the overall labor in Assam's tea

plantation business. But they continue to be excluded in several facets of the tea business. This research seeks to examine the present condition of the tea business in Assam in relation to the sexual division of labor, the influence of patriarchy, trade unions, sexual abuses, and the subjugation of women on tea estates. It analyzes the interaction of gender and class, workplace disparities, and the industrial relations context within tea estates. The minimal involvement of the State and inadequate social welfare initiatives may be cited as significant factors contributing to the deplorable working conditions, particularly the health risks faced by female workers.

Ananda Das Gupta and Sangeetha M. in their study on “*Improving Labour Productivity through Human Resource Development: A Case Study on Assam Tea Plantation Workers*”, the researcher focuses on the low labour productivity is often highlighted as the primary issue confronting the sector. Labor welfare measures and conventional, cost-inefficient management practices have also played a role in the near stagnation of production. Therefore, the study holds considerable importance in examining the infringement of welfare benefits for workers and its effect on reducing the productivity levels of labor in the Assam tea plantation.

Bijay Chandra Boro and Kokila Saxena this research examines in their study on “*The impact of work-life balance on the wellbeing of employees in the tea gardens of Bodoland territorial region*”, how tea plantation workers produce a backward culture with poor living circumstances and work-life balance issues. Individuals must achieve a balance between personal (family, friends, and self) and professional (work, career) responsibilities. Plantation output and productivity rely heavily on personnel performance. The research examined employees' socioeconomic, vocational, and geographical backgrounds, as well as the main challenges they face in tea gardens, including low wages, poor living circumstances, health difficulties, and inadequate health benefits.

A systematic review conducted by **Silpi Das and Doyel Karmakar**, in their study on “*Lifestyle of Women in Tea Garden Community: A Systematic Literature Review*”, rightly pointed out that over 50% of the workforce in the tea industry consists of women. The economic contribution of women in the tea industry is highly significant. Within the tea garden community, women serve as the main providers, while men's livelihoods are reliant on their contributions. They balance their domestic responsibilities with their work in the tea estate from early morning until evening. Despite of the fact women are within their community, afforded minimal acknowledgment and worth. They face significant challenges in

obtaining quality education, healthcare, adequate living conditions, and safety. A systematic review was conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the lifestyle of the female tea garden community. According to these studies, educational and financial conditions are the primary factors that influence their lifestyle. Research indicates that women in the tea community occupy a highly vulnerable position. Every facet of their lifestyle is laden with challenges, from the onset of their marriage to inconsistencies in earnings. There is a necessity for evidence-based, comprehensive intervention strategies to enhance the lifestyle of women in the tea community.

Pronab Jyoti Powrel and Snehal Mishra this research aims to analyze the socio-economic conditions and current satisfaction levels of tea garden laborers in the Biswanath region of Assam. The research investigates seven distinct characteristics of job satisfaction: Compensation Amount, Compensation Regularity, Working Hours, Working Conditions, Occupational Safety, Training Resources, and Supervisor Conduct. The study was conducted in Biswanath District, Assam, India, over the 2023-2024 period. A total of 138 respondents, confirmed to be employed in tea gardens or factories, were surveyed using a semi-structured questionnaire. The socio-economic profile revealed a diverse age distribution and a notable gender disparity among respondents, with males outnumbering girls across all age groups. The research indicated significant dissatisfaction with pay, as more than 50% of respondents expressed their discontent. The study identifies critical areas for improvement in labor conditions within tea estates and businesses in the Biswanath district. Widespread dissatisfaction with remuneration, occupational safety, and managerial behavior underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions. Enhancing compensation frameworks, ensuring prompt remuneration, improving working conditions and safety measures, and fostering positive relationships between employees and management are essential initiatives.

Nura Afrin Kuasha et al., in their study on “*An Investigation on Livelihood Status of Tea Workers at Doldoli Tea Garden*”, the researcher highlighted about the livelihood conditions of tea workers in Doldoli. A field survey was performed, and 60 tea workers were selected randomly. The survey indicated that nearly half of the workers lacked of formal education (48.3%). Concerning monthly earnings, 55% of employees receive just 4500-5500 Taka. The majority of the workers had favorable sentiments regarding the provision of living facilities such as power, sanitation, medical treatment, and hygiene upkeep. While the majority of employees possess job stability, 80% lack bank balances. Only 40% of workers are aware of human rights. Seventy percent of workers said that the trade union is not fulfilling

its responsibilities adequately. Approximately 86.7% of the workforce is excluded from political participation. Homestead operations and animal husbandry are conducted by workers for both familial and commercial interests, but to a lower degree. The survey indicated that low wages was the primary issue for workers, with 30% in agreement, while the predominant proposed remedy, endorsed by 36% of workers, was an increase in pay.

Research Methodology:

Study Design: This research used both qualitative and quantitative approach to provide thorough insights on the empowerment and challenges of the women tea garden workers in Panitola Block, Dibrugarh.

Population and Sampling:

The study focused on tea garden women workers in Panitola Block, Dibrugarh. A total of 63 participants were selected using random sampling to ensure representation from tea plantation sector.

Data Collection Instruments: A structured questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale i.e, (SD-Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, N-Neutral, A-Agree, SA-Strongly Agree). The questionnaire included items related to demographic information, wages, working condition, housing facilities health protections medical facilities.

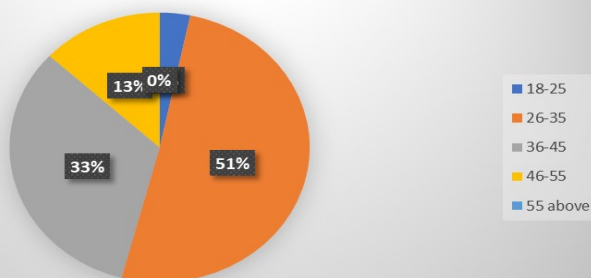
Data Analysis Statistical analysis, including descriptive statistics using SPSS. Qualitative Data Analysis Thematic analysis was employed through questioner data to extract themes related to participant experiences and perception.

Analysis and Discussion: This study basically covers 63 women workers in the Panitola Block Dibrugarh District. The table 1.1 indicates that 49% of the total respondents were in the age group category of 26-35 years. 32 % of the total respondents were in 36-45 years age group. In the below 25 years age group there were 4% respondents. The 46-55 and above age group is representing 13 % and above 55 is 3% The majority of the respondents were in the age group of 25-35 and 35- 45 years which are the most productive years in a person’s life.

Table 1.1: Age of the respondent

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percent
18-25	2	3.174603
26-35	31	49.20635
36-45	20	31.74603
46-55	8	12.69841
55 above	2	3.174603
	63	100

Age of the women worker

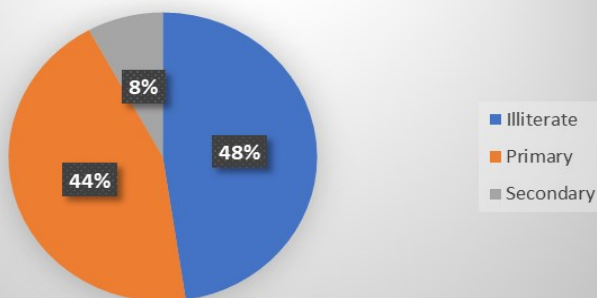


Educational Status -Education is the one of the major factors to shape one’s life. The table indicate the educational level of the women workers in the tea plantation sector in Panitola Block of Dibrugarh district. The respondent group majorly belongs to negligently from illiterate group which covers 48% of the selected population. Primary educational level which covers 44%. Secondary level of education is perused by 8 % of the sample population. Due to the low level of literacy among the tea garden women worker they are facing different type of problem and they even not able to identify if their rights get violate.

Table 1.2 Educational Status of the women workers

Educational Status	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	30	47.619
Primary	28	44.44444
Secondary	5	7.936508
Total	63	100

Educational Status



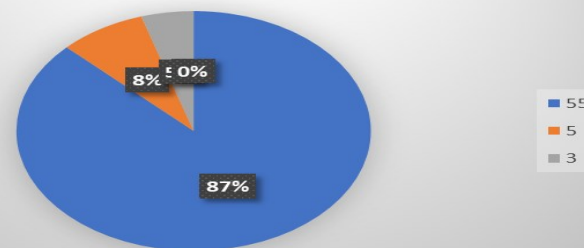
Marital Status-While study about the empowerment and challenges of the women worker in tea plantation sector of Panitola block the marital status of women worker is very important aspect which contribute towards the to determine challenges related to freedom of work. The table 1.3 represents the marital status of these women workers. Some of the women are married and maximum of the sample population are married rest of the population are widow and unmarried. Among these tea garden

women workers they are work even after marriage. The study reveals that 87 % of the women worker are married and they are getting full support from their family to work in tea gardens. The married women covered 8 %, they are expressing their willing to work even after marriage and rest of the 5 % are window they engage themselves as they have some financial constraints and engage themselves for survival.

Table 1.3 Marital Status of the tea garden women worker

	Frequency	Percent
Married	55	87.30159
Unmarried	5	7.936508
Widow	3	4.761905
	63	100

Marital Status of the tea garden women worker

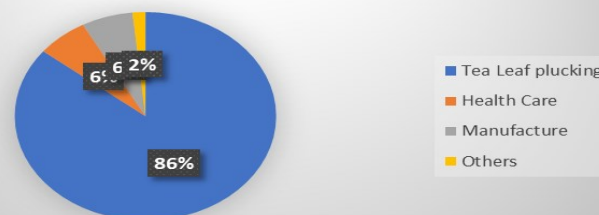


Type of Employment -As the majority of the worker in the tea garden are the women and they majorly engage is tea leaf plucking 86% of the sample population engaged in tea leaf plucking work. The rest 6% of the worker engaged in manufacture activities other 6% are engaged in health care activities of the garden and 2% of the women workers engaged in other miscellaneous activities.

Table 1.4 Type of employment of the tea garden women worker

Type of Employment	Frequency	Percent
Tea Leaf plucking	54	85.71429
Health Care	4	6.349206
Manufacture	4	6.349206
Others	1	1.587302
	63	100

Type of employment of the tea garden women worker

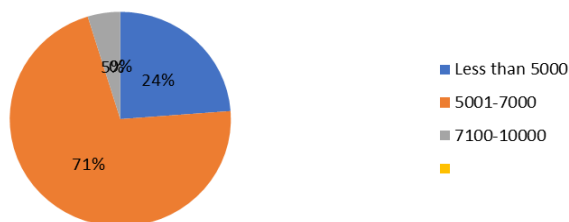


Income: Financial stability is always depended on the income and the salary received by a person. The salary of the tea garden women worker is not satisfying. They only received a minimum scale for their work. 71 % of the sample population are receiving 5001-7000 rupees per month. The rest 24% of the sample population are receiving less than 5000 rupees as their monthly salary and only 5 % of the women worker are receiving 7100-10000.

Table 1.5 Monthly income of the tea garden women worker

Salary	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5000	15	23.80952
5001-7000	45	71.42857
7100-10000	3	4.761905
	63	100

Monthly income of the tea garden women workerles



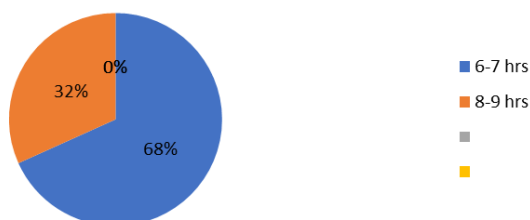
Working Condition

Working Hours: A decent working hour is very important to maintain good health and a balance professional life without effecting the personal life. From the study it has been find out that the working hours of the workers are not uniform. The table 1.6 represents 68% working for 6-7 hours where 32% of the women workers are working for more than 8 hours.

Table 1.6 represent the working hour of the tea garden women worker

Working hour	Frequency	Percent
6-7 hrs	43	68.25397
8-9 hrs	20	31.74603
	63	100

Working hours of the tea garden women workers



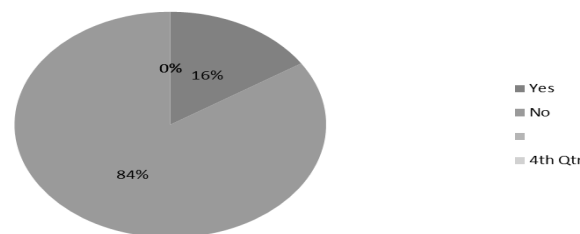
Medical Accessibility

Availability of Medical officer: Medical facilities are always a very important matter of concern in tea garden and medical officer pays a very pivotal role in imparting health care awareness among the garden workers. He is the person who is responsible for primary health check-up for the workers and their family members. But this study revels that the condition in the tea gardens of the Dibrugarh district in regards to medical officer is very poor, only 16% of the respondent acknowledge that they have their medical officer in the tea garden but rest of the 84% are responding negatively as the post of the medical officer is vacant. Therefore, they difficulty in accessing the proper medical assistance during their necessity. Most of the garden hospitals are run by the nurses only without and qualified doctor.

Table 1.7 represent Availability of Medical officer in tea garden

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	10	15.87302
No	53	84.12698
	63	100

Availability of Medical officer in tea garden



Women Participation in labour Union

While studying on the socio- legal status of the women worker and talking about the equal right and equal participation of the women worker it is a major factor to see the participation of the women worker in labour union of the tea gardens. But the finding shows that in table 1.8 which represents that the participation of the women worker in labour union is very less which covers the 8% of the total respondent are response positively rest 92% of the sample population is not part of the labour union of the garden neither they get the opportunity to took part in the labour union of the tea garden. It shows that the women worker are not get equal opportunity in participation as a member of the tea garden labour union.

Table 1.8 represents the participation of the women worker in labour union

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	5	7.936508
No	58	92.06349
	63	100

Women worker Participation in labour Union



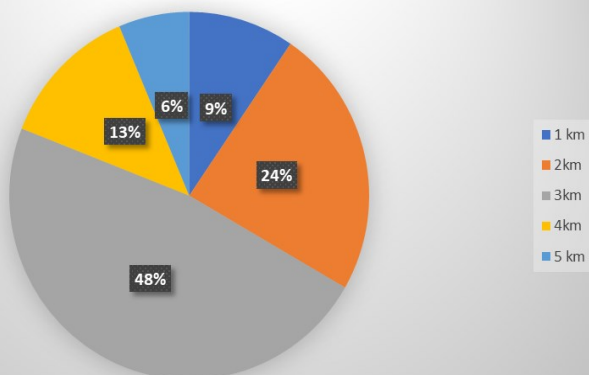
Road and Transport Facility:The road and connectivity to these gardens of the Dibrugarh District is good enough but gardens are situated in some remote and out squared places from the town. In this part of the study the mode of transportation and distance to the work place of the women worker is represented.

Distance from house:The table represents that 24% of the sample population covered 2 km of distance to reach their workplace, where 48 % of the sample population have to cover 3km of distance. The rest 10% covers 1km and 13% of the worker covers 4 km. Rest 6% of the sample population have to cover 5 km.

Table 1.9 represent distance of the work place from their resident tea garden

Distance	Frequency	Percent
1 km	6	9.52381
2km	15	23.80952
3km	30	47.61905
4km	8	12.69841
5 km	4	6.349206
	63	100

Distance of the work place from their resident tea garden

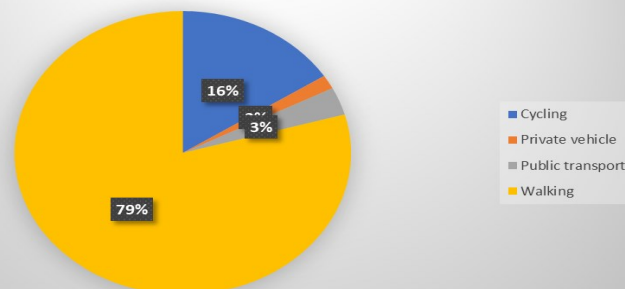


Mode of Transportation: The table 1.10 is representing the mode of transportation of the women worker to reach their work place shows that 79% of the sample population come to the tea garden by walking. Rest 16% come by cycling and rest 3% and 2% of the women respondent come by public transport and private vehicle.

Table 1.10 mode of transportation of the tea garden worker to reach workplace.

	Frequency	Percent
Cycling	10	15.87301587
Private vehicle	1	1.587301587
Public transport	2	3.174603175
Walking	50	79.36507937
	63	100

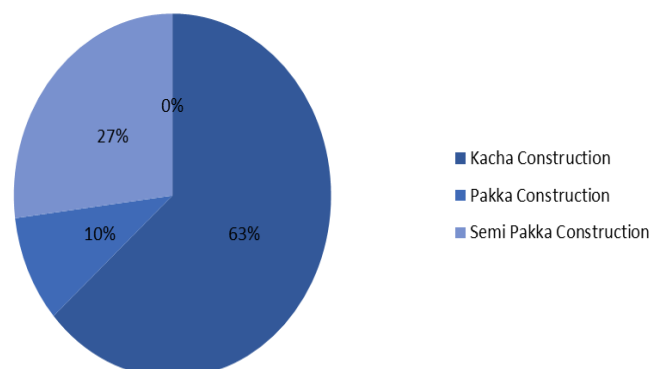
Mode of transportation of the tea garden worker to reach workplace



Housing facilities :Housing is the most important and basic facilities for the workers working in the tea garden. Maximum workers are residing in the quarter provided by the garden authority. Table 1.11 represents the structure of the garden quarters. It shows that 49% of the respondent population resides in semi pakka construction other 32% resides in pakka construction and rest 19% resides in kacha constructed house.

Table 1.11 represent the housing facilities tea garden

Housing facilities tea garden



Findings

- In this study respondent women workers of the tea garden in Panitola block Dibrugarh district are maximum from the age group 25-45 years and married with some widow's women also working in the plantations.
- It is observed that the illiteracy rate of the sample respondents is 48%, the respondent population of 44% are having the educational qualification up to primary level and 5% women are secondary level educational qualification.
- The 86 % of respondent population of the tea garden engaged in tea leaf plucking activities and rest are engaged in manufacture and health care related task.
- The wages paid to the comparatively low they, 71% of the sample population received their monthly salary 5001-7000 which is not sufficient for their basic amenities. This low payment influence on their economic condition and social life.
- During the course of the research, it was discovered that the working hours of the employees are not consistent with one another. A total of 68% of workers are employed for a duration of 6-7 hours, whereas 32% of female workers are employed for times that exceed 8 hours.
- Health and medical accessibility are not satisfactory. This study reveals that the maximum tea gardens in Panitola Block of Dibrugarh District are having their hospital or the primary health care centre for their workers and their family there is the scarcity for medical officer, only 16% of the respondent acknowledge that they have their medical officer in the tea garden but rest of the 84% are responding negatively as the post of the medical officer is vacant.
- While studying on the socio- legal status of the women worker and talking about the equal right and equal participation of the women worker it is a major factor to see the participation of the women worker in labour union of the tea gardens. But the finding shows that in table 1.8 which represents that the participation of the women worker in labour union is very less which covers the 8% of the total respondent are response positively rest 92% of the sample population is not part of the labour union of the garden neither they get the opportunity to took part in the labour union of the tea garden. It shows that the women worker is not get equal opportunity in participation as a member of the tea garden labour union.
- Housing is the most important and basic facilities for the workers working in the tea garden. Maximum workers are residing in the quarter provided by the garden authority. Table 1.12 represents the structure of the garden quarters. It shows that 27% of the respondent population resides in semi pakka construction other 10% resides in pakka construction and rest 63% resides in kacha constructed house. But the quates condition are not good they are not well

maintained.

- The worker has to manage a long distance from their residence to their work place and maximum women workers come by walking with all their heavy belongings.

Conclusion: The study conducted in Panitola Block, Dibrugarh District reveals significant challenges in the social status of the women tea garden worker they are facing some problems related to their wages as the wages paid to them is very nominal, they showed dissatisfaction in this aspect. The findings also highlight substantial deficiencies in health care services in garden due to lack of medical officer. The educational level of the women worker is notably low this also hamper the social status as they are not aware about rights and protection. The findings underscore the urgent need for consistent enforcement and comprehensive support that effectively protect women employees along with their basic amenities and housing facilities with proper maintenance.

Recommendation:

- Enhance Awareness and Training Programs by implementing comprehensive education and training initiatives to increase awareness among women workers about their legal rights and the protections under law.
- Strengthen Enforcement Mechanisms with improvement in the wage structure according to the rules and regulations for the tea garden workers.
- Working hours should be uniform and it must be accompanied by a balance structure of work because constant tea leaf plucking for the women worker create adverse effect to their health.
- Improve Health Support by enhancing proper basic medical facilities with appoint of medical officer and nurses or related health care employees.

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शब्दों का खाकरोब कहानी में आर्थिक समस्याएँ

उमा बणिचुल

शोधार्थी

हिंदी विभाग, विश्वविद्यालय-हैदराबाद

समस्या कहने का तात्पर्य कठिन प्रसंग, कठिन विषय, जटिल स्थिति, उलझा हुआ मामला, मुसीबत आदि को माना जाता है। आर्थिक समस्या कहने से आर्थिक क्षेत्र में परेशानी के अनेकी स्थिति को समझा जा सकता है। विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में विभिन्न प्रकार की समस्याएँ होती हैं। विभिन्न कारणों से आर्थिक समस्या आती रहती है। यह है- अशिक्षा, बेरोजगारी, निर्धनता एवं दारिद्र्यता, भूमि संबंधी विषमताएँ, ऋणग्रस्तता, भ्रष्टाचार, घूसखोरी, व्यसनाधीनता, दहेज प्रथा, यांत्रिकीकरण, प्राकृतिक कारक, शोषण, जमींदार एवं साहूकार वर्ग अथवा उच्च वर्ग द्वारा निम्न वर्ग का शोषण आदि।

अशिक्षा और बेरोजगारी:-आधुनिक युग में भी भारत जैसे देश में लगभग तीस प्रतिशत आबादी अशिक्षित है। सर्वेक्षण से पता चलता है कि पुरुषों की तुलना में महिलाओं की अशिक्षा संख्या कहीं अधिक है। इतनी बड़ी आबादी के अशिक्षित होने से देश के आर्थिक विकास में बाधा उत्पन्न हो रही है। अशिक्षा को प्रभावित करने वाले कारक हैं- निर्धनता, निर्धनता और अशिक्षा के बीच में परम्पर संबंध है। यह भी कहा जा सकता है कि अशिक्षा से गरीबी बढ़ती है एवं गरीबी बढ़ने से लोग शिक्षित नहीं हो पाते। एक दूसरे के लिए दोनों दोषी हैं।

भारत कृषि प्रधान देश है। इसकी अस्सी प्रतिशत आबादी गाँव में निवास करती है। आधुनिक युग में शहरी चकचौंधता से प्रभावित होने के कारण गाँवों की आबादी में कुछ कमी आई। गाँव में अशिक्षित लोग शिक्षा का महत्व समझ नहीं पाते जिसके कारण वह अपने बच्चों को विद्यालय नहीं भेज पाते। फलतः वे अशिक्षित रह जाते हैं। अशिक्षा के कारण अच्छे रोजगार नहीं मिल पाते जिससे गरीबी बढ़ती जाती है, मेहनत-मजदूरी करनी पड़ती है, नहीं तो सेठ-साहूकारों तथा जमींदारों के कर्ज के चंगुल में फँस जाते हैं।

'शब्दों का खाकरोब' कहानी संग्रह में 'मुकदमा' प्रमुख कहानी है। इस कहानी का प्रमुख पात्र पूरन गाँव में रहने वाला एक सरल एवं मेहनती आदमी था। वह कृषि एवं मजदूरी करके अपने परिवार का गुजारा कर रहा था। उसका एक चचेरा भाई था मूलू जो शहर में रहता था। वह पूरन के पैतृक संपत्ति पर अपना अधिकार का जमाना चाहता था। जिसके लिए वह गलत तरीके से अपनाकर पूरन की जमीन हड़प कर अपने मित्र राम प्रसाद को बेचना चाहता था। अतः उसने पूरन के खिलाफ मुकदमा दर्ज कर दिया। चपरासी ने मुकदमे का नोटिस पूरन को देते हुए अँगूठा लगाने को कहा जिसका वर्णन कहानी में इस प्रकार किया गया है-

“चपरासी के कहने पर पूरन ने जहाँ बताया अँगूठा लगा दिया। बेचारा समझ नहीं पाया, आज तक केवल लगान की रसीद पर ही अँगूठा लगाया था।” इससे स्पष्ट होता है कि पूरन यदि पढ़ा-लिखा अर्थात् शिक्षित होता तो उस मुकदमे के नोटिस को अच्छी तरह पढ़कर समझ पाता। इस प्रकार चपरासी के कहने पर तुरंत बिना सोचे समझे अँगूठा नहीं लगाता। अशिक्षा के कारण उसे शिक्षित व्यक्ति की हाँ में हाँ न मिलाना पड़ता। अपने अधिकार को प्राप्त करने के लिए दूसरों पर निर्भर न रहना पड़ता है।

भ्रष्टाचार-भारत देश में भ्रष्टाचार बहुत बड़ा तथा व्यापक रूप ले चुका है। कुछ लोग कानूनी नीति नियमों को उल्लंघन कर भ्रष्टाचार को बढ़ावा