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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Livelihood pattern among the Tea garden labours: Some Observations.

*Anand Sharma¹ and Biplob Bhuyan².

1. Department of Anthropology, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam.
2. Department of Anthropology, Nandalal Borgohain City College, Dibrugarh, Assam.

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Abstract

The main occupation of the Tea garden labour is wage labour. The economic condition is not highly sound among the Tea Garden community. The permanent workers have their own quarters allotted by the owner of that particular Tea garden. This study aims to show the living conditions of the tea garden labourers of Maijan Rajgarh Borline. A primary survey is conducted on Maijan Rajgarh Borline of Maijan tea garden i.e male and female, skilled and semi skilled. The study reveals that the conditions of the tea garden labours are very poor although they avail the facilities from the management of the Tea Garden. The data were collected from daily wage labour, elderly persons, permanent workers, etc.

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Introduction:-

India is the 2nd largest populous country in the world which is just next to China. Accordingly to 2011 census report, the total population of Assam is 3,11,69,272 of which 1,59,54,927 are male and 1,52,14,345 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. (Directors of Economics and statistics, Government of Assam). Tea is one of the major industries of Assam and it contributes about 17% of the state income. Assam is the largest producer of tea and also has the largest area under tea cropping. Of the agriculture based industries, tea plantation occupies an important place in Assam. In Assam, tea is grown both in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley. Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Nagaon, Sonitpur are the districts where tea gardens are mostly found. Assam produces 51% of tea produced in India and about 1/6th of the tea produced in the world (The Govt. of Assam, official website).

The working class in the tea gardens of Assam is perhaps the most exploited class in the organised sector of economy. Low wages, poor housing and lack of avenues for social mobility have been a recurring theme since its inception in the early 19th century. The tea garden labour lines have unique identity as it is neither an urban nor industrial nor a rural area. Among the total tea garden working labours in each tea garden only 30-40% of them are permanent employees. During the peak season, each garden employs casual labourers (also called as 'Faltoos labours') at same wage structure but less benefits than that of the permanent labourers. There is also no maternity benefit scheme for the tea garden workers. It has been observed that during pregnancy and post-natal period, women continue to engage in hard works. Besides poor socio-economic condition, illiteracy, over-crowded and unhygienic living conditions in the residential colonies makes tea garden populations helpless to various communicable diseases and underfeeding. (Saikia Sangita, et al).

Corresponding Author:- Anand Sharma.

Address:- Department of Anthropology, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam.

The study area:-

This study is carried out in Maijan Rajgarh Borline of Maijan Tea Garden which is located in Dibrugarh district of Assam. Dibrugarh is the easternmost district of Assam. The study area Maijan Rajgarh Borline is situated 12km away towards west from Dibrugarh town. The boundary states that Rajgarh Chotaline is towards east, Assam Medical College on the west, Paltan Bazaar towards north and Maijan T.E is on the south respectively.

Objectives of the study:-

- 1) To analyse the living conditions of the tea garden labour.
- 2) To show the socio cultural profile of tea garden labour.

Methodology:-

The relevant data for the studied population collected from Maijan Rajgarh Borline of Maijan Tea Estate of Dibrugarh district, Assam. Data was collected through personal interview method. Both permanent and casual tea garden laborers and other skilled and semi skilled workers have been interviewed for the study. The methods used in the field are Observation method, Interview method, random sampling.

Findings:-

Maijan Rajgarh Borline is a privately owned tea garden. The total population of Maijan Rajgarh Borline is of about 380 populations where only 85 people are permanent workers and 80 are casual workers. Out of 85 permanent workers 48 are male workers and 37 are female workers and out of 80 casual workers 29 are male workers and 59 are female are collected.

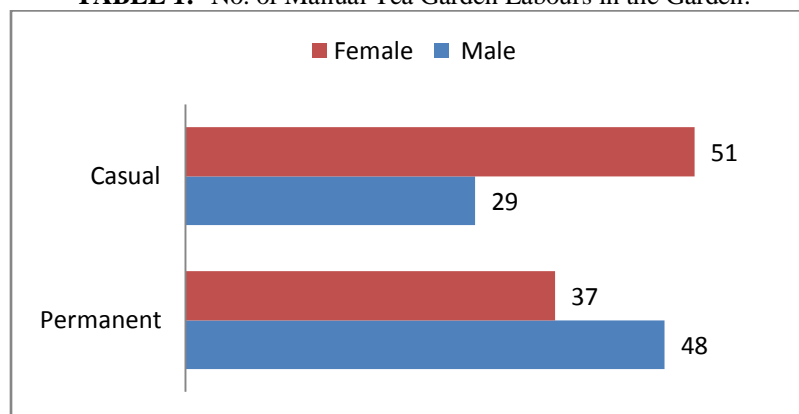
TABLE 1:- No. of Manual Tea Garden Labours in the Garden:

Table 1 show that in Maijan Rajgarh Borline of Maijan Tea estate there are 48 male (62%) and 37 female (48%) labours are found. On the other hand there are 29 male (33%) and 51 female (57%) labours are seen.

TABLE 2:- Distribution of population of sex

SL. NO	POPULATION	NO OF HOUSEHOLD	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
			NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
1	Tea garden labour	71	175	46.05	205	53.94	380	99.99

Table 2 depicts the distribution of population by sex of Maijan Rajgarh Borline of Maijan T.E. The village posses 71 household and the total population are 380. Out of which 175 are male (46.05%) and 205(53.94%) are female.

Wage Structure:-

The wage structure is based on 12 day basis and it is not paid by the daily basis. It reveals that the average daily earnings of the workers employed as plantation labour works out to be at Rs. 127/- irrespective of male and female permanent and casual labours. The average monthly salary of worker is Rs.3048/- which is very less and not sound for them.

Medical Facilities:-

The hospital is situated at a distance about 2 k.m. from Maijan Rajgarh Borline. Maijan Hospital consists of one medical officer, two pharmacists, 3 nurses and 2 attendants. The Maijan hospital have 2 indoor wards for males and 2 for females, one children ward, one maternity ward and one labor room. Regarding the provision of medical facilities in the tea garden a dispensary is provided by the Tea Garden Authority. The management provides free treatment, medicines and the indoor patients are given food to the workers in the garden. The management also provides 24*7 ambulance service to the patients to check up. Certain health problems like mal-nutrition, diarrhoea, tuberculosis etc. are common among the tea plantation labours. During such condition they have to rush to the nearest Assam Medical College and Hospital.

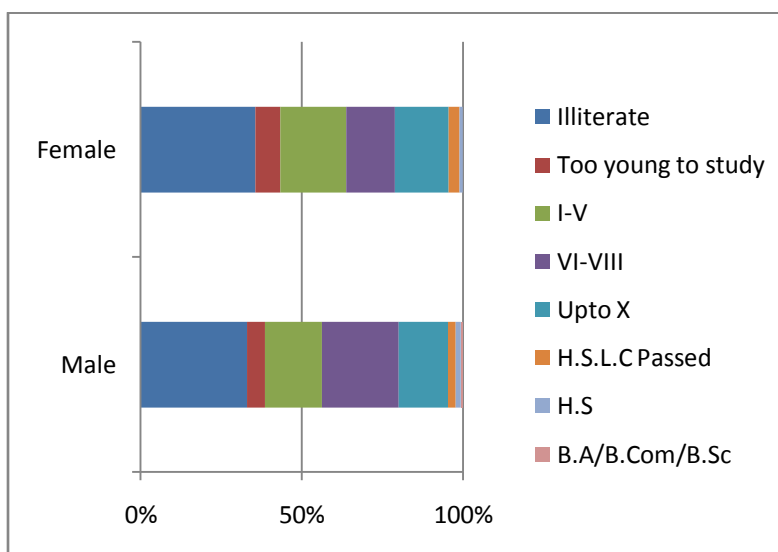
Educational status and facilities:-**Table 3:-** Distribution of Population by Sex and Education

Table 3 depicts the distribution of population by Sex and Education. From the above table it is clearly evident that there are 131 are illiterates which are highest in Maijan Rajgarh Borline. Out of which 58(15.26%) are male and 73(19.21%) are female. The next category starts from I to V standard shows the maximum number of literate where 31 are male (8.51%) and 42 are female (11.05%) are found and also same in VI-VIII standard i.e. 42 are male (11.05%) and 31 are female (8.51%) respectively.

Children in the tea garden have low levels of enrolment and education and a special effort is required to bring them into the school organization. This is perhaps because both parents work in the plantation and the elder children, especially girls, often have to stay back at home to look after their younger siblings. There is one Anganbadi school in the Maijan Rajgarh Borline. The midday meal scheme provided by the government is also available. There is one L.P. school in the village in which one is government. There is no high school Maijan Rajgarh Borline. For higher studies students goes to other places such as Medical Barburi, Tita Dumuri, etc.

Average family size:-

The average family size of the Maijan Rajgarh Borline is 6-7 per family. They have large number of family members living in a particular household. The government has initiated the family planning schemes but they are yet to achieve those facilities due to lack of proper awareness and illiteracy.

Fuels used for cooking:-

They use firewood for cooking which they get from the jungle or from nearby villages. The permanent workers receive some allowance to procure fuels and this is not given to the casual workers.

Electricity:-

There is no electricity in the Maijan Rajgarh Borline.

Sanitation:-

Sanitary condition is not good in every house. Few of the household of Maijan Rajgarh Borline have got pucca bathroom but most of the houses don't have their bathroom. The Tea Garden Management does not have access to appropriate water supply and sanitation facility. Mostly direct pit toilets (without water seals) connected to open pits are used.

Water Supply:-

Tubewell are the most common source of water supply in the Tea Garden. Most of the household i.e 60% of them did not have their own tubewell.

Skilled and Semi-skilled Labors working outside the tea garden:-

There are about 53 semi- skilled and skilled labors working outside the tea garden of Maijan Rajgarh Borline. As it is not possible for the Tea Garden Authority to employ all the people in the garden they are bound to work outside the garden for their livelihood. The following classification shown below:

Table 4:- Classification of skilled and semi-skilled workers

Profession	No. of workers	Income per day(Rs)
Mason	13	250
Carpenter	12	200
Daily wage labour	19	180-200
Private jobs	3	100
Tailor	1	100-300

Conclusion:-

The Maijan Rajgarh Borline community is highly deprived in all respects of their living condition of their life. Only 43.42% of the total population is employed in the tea garden as permanent and casual labours. The living standard of the tea labourers was very low and they were very casual regarding maintenance of their families. As soon as they got their wages, they used to spend their money without thinking for their future. To be specific, they used to spend their earnings in drinking alcohol and purchasing unnecessary things without keeping any provision for the essential commodities, like – food stuff, clothing etc. It is the habit of drinking alcohol that corrupted their social life. They did not even pay little amount of money from their wages to their family members for their maintenance and it was necessary for them to have savings after meeting the necessary expenditures, which they did not do. They live in an unhygienic environment without basic amenities. Though they avail the medical facilities but it was not quite satisfactory for them. Due to lack of proper sanitation facility air borne diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery etc. is found frequently in the studied area.

A multi- prolonged strategy is therefore needed to ensure physical access and regular participation in school of children in tea garden areas (Saikia Sangita,et al)

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