
SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF TEA WORKERS: A STUDY IN SILCOORIE TEA GARDEN OF CACHAR DISTRICT, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

The socio-economic situation or position of a person or group refers to their social standing or class in society. It is often determined by combining factors like wealth, level of education, and employment. An individual's or family's economic and social standing in comparison to that of other people is referred to as their socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is a combined economic and sociological overall assessment of a person's job experience. For determining the socioeconomic status of a family, factors such as household income, earners' education and employment, and combined income are considered, however when determining the socioeconomic status of an individual, just that person's personal characteristics are taken into consideration. On the other hand, socioeconomic status is most often employed to indicate a disparity in terms of a society's overall economic standing. The social and economic situations of tea garden employees and the people who rely on them are in a pitiful state. They are more behind on all socio-economic variables than those who do not work in the tea industry yet live in the same area. The workers in the tea garden are considered permanent employees; yet, they are paid on a daily basis since they are paid according to the number of real days they work. They are unable to manage for themselves many people have faced the problem of malnutrition. In Assam, those who work in tea gardens are held in high regard as a great labour force. However their socioeconomic situation is not up to their satisfaction. They also have a more limited scope of educational opportunities. Women who come from low socioeconomic origins are forced to participate in a variety of dangerous works, which may have a negative impact on their health. The 80 households were selected by using simple random sampling among the Silcoorie tea garden workers. In light of this, the researcher has chosen to focus their attention in this article on the socioeconomic status of the employees at the Silcoorie tea estate.

Key words: *Tea garden, Socio-economic, Family, Status, Society, Health.*

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of tea plantations in India was a thoughtful gesture on the part of the British colonial authority in the form of a gift. The Assam Company launched the first large tea business in upper Assam in 1839. Throughout the next two decades, several additional firms with British finance established themselves in various sections of Assam. Throughout the valleys of the Brahmaputra and the Barak, vast areas of uninhabited forest were cleared to make way for picturesque tea plantations. The economy of Assam was revolutionised when tea was first discovered and then produced commercially. The first tea plantation in Cachar was established in 1855 or 1856 by Williamson and Company. Due to the success of this plantation, several planters and businesspeople requested to get grants of land in Cachar. The tea business was responsible for employing a significant number of manual labourers. Together with people of several other castes and tribes, a significant number of Oraon migrated from other regions of the nation to the Barak Valley in order to work as labourers in the region's numerous tea gardens. Once they arrived in the area, they immediately confined the people in tea gardens and engaged them in work in the tea business so that they could support themselves generation after generation.

Every society has a socio economic background. Socio economic background relates to a combination of an individual's income, occupation and social background. Socio economic background is a key determinant of success and future life chances. So, here in this paper mainly include language known, caste category, marital status, size of family, education qualification, details of family members, type of house, ownership of the house, source of power, monthly income, occupation, size of land, types of crops they produce, animal husbandry, household items, Source of sanitation, source of drinking water, source of cooking and vehicle own by respondent etc. This paper deals with 80 households and all households are taken from Silcoorie Tea Garden, Cachar district of Assam. The respondents are classified according to their concern socioeconomic backgrounds are designed in statistical data below.

SEX

Sex refers to the biological differences between males and females, such as the genitalia and genetic differences. Here we discuss the sex distribution of the respondents of the Silcoorie Tea Garden in the following table –

Table: Distribution of respondents into Sex

Sex	Respondent	Percentage
Male	44	55

Female	36	45
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

Total respondents are 80 respondents out of which 55 percent respondents are Males and 45 percent respondents are females. All of them are in the tea garden as labourers.

AGE GROUP

Age group is a group of people who are the same age or a similar age. On the basis of age, respondents are divided into some groups. Respondents are divided into some groups.

Table: Age group of the respondents

Age group	Respondents	Percentage
18-23	7	8.75
24-29	9	11.25
30-35	13	16.25
36-41	6	7.5
42-47	19	23.75
48-53	9	11.25
54-59	10	12.5
More than 60	7	8.75
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

The study shows that 8.75 percent of respondent belongs to the age of (18-23), 11.25 percent of respondents belong to the age group of (24-29), 16.25 percent of the respondents belong to the age group of (30-35), 7.5 percent respondents belongs to the age group of (36-41), 23.75 percent respondents are belong to the age of (42-47), 11.25 percent respondents are from the age group of (48-53), 12.5 percent respondents belong to the age group of (54-59) and 8.75 percent respondents belong to the age group of more than 60.

RELIGION

The distribution of the religious group of the respondent of the Silcoorie Tea Garden are discussed in the table –

Table: Distribution of the respondent on the basis of Religious Group

Religion	Number of respondent	percentage
Hindu	34	42.5
Christian	46	57.5
Buddhist	0	0
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

The study reveals that 42.5 percent respondents belong to Hindu religion and 57.5 percent respondents belonging to Christian religion.

MOTHER TONGUE

Mother tongue refers that the first language that we learn when you are a baby, rather than a language learned at school. In the tea garden most of the respondent speaks Bengali as a medium of communication among them. Their mother tongues were recorded and listed below in the table –

Table: Respondents on the basis of Mother tongue

Mother tongue	No of respondent	Percentage
Santali	42	52.5
Bengali	25	31.25
Bhojpuri	13	16.25
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

Mother tongue of the respondents is shows that 52.5 percent are Santali, 31.25 percent are Bengali, 16.25 percent are Bhojpuri

LANGUAGE KNOWN

A language is a system of communication which consists of setoff sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing. Language is essential in every aspect and interaction in our everyday life. The languages known by the respondent's families are shown in the table given below –

Table: Respondent on the basis of language known

Language known	No of respondent	Percentage
Assamese	53	66.25
Santali	61	76.25
Hindi	58	72.5
Bengali	55	68.75
Oriya	39	48.75

Sources- Field work

Besides of their mother tongue most of the respondent can speak other language. 66.25 percent of the respondents know Assamese, 76.25 percent of the respondents know Santali, 72.5 percent of the respondents know Hindi, 68.75 percent of the respondents know Bengali, and 48.75 percent of the respondents know Oriya language.

CASTE

Caste is a one of the forms of social stratification of Indian society. On the basis of socio economics status of community as a whole the Indians society categories four caste groups within it. These are General, Schedule Tribe (ST), Schedule Caste (SC), and Other Backward Class (OBC).

Table - Respondent on the basis of Caste Category

Caste Category	No respondents	Percentage
General	0	0
OBC	76	95
MOBC	0	0
SC	4	5
ST	0	0
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

Caste category it is found that majority of respondents that is 95 percent respondents are belong to Other backward Class(OBC), and 5 percent respondents belong to SC

MARITAL STATUS

Marriage is a universal social institution. It is a biological social unit composed of husband and wife. It is a legal contract made by two or more people to live together. Marriage is established by the human society to control and

regulate the sex life of man. Among the respondents 5 types of status and found in Silcoorie Tea Garden. These are married, unmarried, divorced, Widow and widower.

Table : Respondents on the basis of marital status

Marital status	No of the respondents	Percentage
Married	28	35
Unmarried	17	21.25
Divorce	9	11.25
Widow	26	32.5
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

Regarding marital status, 35 percent respondents are married, 21.25 percent respondents are unmarried, and 11.25 percent respondents are Divorce, 32.5 percent respondents are widow.

SIZE OF FAMILY

Family is a primary social institution. It is the most simplest and elementary form of society which is made up of parents and their children. Family is different on the basis of size; for example Nuclear family and Joint family. A nuclear family or elementary family is a family group consisting of two parents and their children. On the other hand joint family is an extension of nuclear family. It is a large family where the grand-parents, father, mother, uncle, aunty and their children live united under one roof. In the joint family system, every member makes financial contribution to the common fund and share common rights in the household property.

Table: Family size of respondents

Size of family	Respondents	Percentage
1-2	6	7.5
3-4	8	10
4-5	19	23.75
6-7	34	42.5
8-9	11	13.75
10- above	2	2.5
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

7.5 percent respondent’s family have 1-2 family members, 10 percent have 3-4 family members, 23.75 percent have 4-5 family members, and 42.5 percent respondent’s have 6-7 family members. 13.75 percent respondents

have 8-9 family members and 2.5% have 10 – above. Thus, the respondent’s family is neither too large nor too small.

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Education is a lifelong process. The respondents are classified into different strata on the basis of their education qualification like illiterate, primary, upper primary, HSLC, HS, Graduate and post graduate etc

Table: Distribution of the Respondents on the basis of educational qualification

Education Qualification	No of respondent	Percentage
Illiterate	32	40
Primary	20	25
Upper primary	16	20
HSLC	9	11.25
HS	2	2.5
Graduate	1	1.25
Post graduate	0	0
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

Literacy is the predominant feature of the tea garden 40 percent respondents are illiterate, 25 percent respondents are educated up to primary level, and 20 percent respondents are educated up to upper primary, 11.25 percent respondents have passed HSLC, 2.5 percent respondents have passed HS. In the Silcoorie Tea Garden area 1.25 percent respondents are Graduate.

TYPES OF HOUSE

Shelter is the fundamental need of an individual. The types of house of the respondents are classified into Assam type full bricks, Assam type half bricks and hut.

Table: Type of house of the respondents

Types of the house	Respondents	Percentage
Assam types full brick	27	33.75
Assam types half brick	41	51.25
Hut	12	15
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

Living condition of the respondents shows that 33.75 percent respondents are living in Assam types full brick house, 51.25 percent respondents live in Assam type half brick and 15 percent respondents lives in hut.

OWNERSHIP OF HOUSE

Shelter is a fundamental need of an individual. All the respondents have their houses to stay. It protects us from sun-light, rain and other natural calamities. It also gives us security and individual. The below table shows family who posses own house, family who are in garden quarter and family who are in rented house.

Table: Ownership of the respondent house

Owner of house	Respondents	Percentage
Own house	39	48.75
Garden Quater	16	20
Rented house	25	31.25
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

20 percent respondents and staying in the garden quarter and 48.75 percent respondents are living in own houses. Only 31.25 percent respondents are staying in rented house.

SOURCE OF POWER

Source of power here refers to lighting facility On the basis of source of power the respondents are classified into different categories.

Table: Lighting facility of respondent house

Source of power	Respondents	Percentage
Electricity	33	41.25
Solar	36	45
Kerosene	11	13.75
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

For power supply 41.25 percent of the total respondents use only electricity as source of light, 13.75 percent respondents use kerosene and 45 percent of the total respondents use solar system to light their houses.

MONTHLY INCOME

Income is an important factor for maintaining standard of living. Family monthly income of the respondent are classified as below- 0-1000, 1000-2000, 2000-3000, 3000-4000, 4000-5000, 5000-above.

Table: Distribution of the respondent on the basis of Monthly Income

Monthly income	Respondents	Percentage
0-1000	0	0
1000-2000	2	2.5
2000-3000	6	7.5
3000-4000	8	10
4000-5000	36	45
5000- above	28	35
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

0 percent respondents monthly income is in between 0-1000, 2.5 percent respondents monthly income is in between 1000-2000, 7.5 percent respondents monthly is in between 2000-3000,10 percent respondents monthly income between 3000-4000, 45 percent respondents monthly income 4000-5000, only 35 percent respondent’s monthly income is in between 5000- above. Therefore majority of respondent’s belong to monthly income of 4000-5000.

OCCUPATION

The respondent’s parents have various occupations for their daily needs and survival. Occupation is the principal activity in everyone’s life to earn money. To live one must earn and for that one needs one occupation. The respondent’s parental occupations are listed in the following table:

Table: Occupation of respondents

Types of occupation	Respondent	Percentage
Permanent labour	8	10
Casual labour	38	47.5
Farmers and casual farmers	11	13.75
Casual labour and collecting fine woods	16	20
Shopkeeper	7	8.75
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

The respondents practices different types of occupations. 10 percent respondent’s occupation is permanent labour, 47.5 percent respondent’s occupation is casual labour, 13.75 of respondent’s occupation is Farmers and casual

farmers, 20 percent respondent's occupation is Casual labour and collecting fire woods, 8.75 percent respondents occupation is Shopkeeper.

SIZE OF LAND HOLDING

The respondents maintain their livelihood by earning through cultivable land. Size of land holding by the respondents is given below-

Table: Size of land holding

Size of land holding	Respondents	Percentage
Less than one bigha	14	17.5
One bigha	39	48.75
More than one bigha	27	33.75
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

For land holder, 17.5 percent of the respondents have less than one bigha, 48.75 percent respondents have one bigha land and only 33.75% respondents have more than one bigha land. It can be said that maximum respondents have no land.

TYPES OF THE CROPS

The respondents produce different types of crops in their land. They are as – rice, vegetables and fruit.

Table: Types of crops produce by the respondents

Types of crops	Respondents	Percentage
Rice	27	33.75
Vegetables	32	40
Fruit	21	26.25
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

The respondents produce different types of crops. 33.75 percent respondent produce rice, 40 percent respondent produce vegetables and only 26.25 percent respondent produce fruit. As they have not much land to produce any crops for commercial basis.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Respondents have different types of animal for their agriculture as well as for the economic purpose.

Table: Animal husbandry

Types of animal	Respondents	Percentage
Cow	08	10
Cow and Pig	22	27.5
Cow, Pig and Hen	13	16.25
Cow and Goat	21	26.25
Cow, Duck, Goat, Hen, Pig	16	20
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

The respondent have doemstic animals like 10 percent of the respondents have cow; 27.5 percent of the respondent have only cow and pig; 16.25 percent of the respondent have cow, pig and hen; 26.25 percent respondent have cow and goat and only 20 percent respondents have cow, duck, goat, hen and pig. These pet animals are use for agriculture, domestic and commercial purpose.

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Household item means the things which tools, machines and other essential things used in a house. Respondent have things like bed, chair, table, fan, mobile, TV. etc.

Table: Respondents household items

Household items	Respondent	Percentage
Bed, Chair, TV	28	35
Bed, Chair, TV, Fan	15	18.75
Bed, Chair, TV, Mobile, Almira, Cycle	11	13.75
Chair and Bed	19	23.75
Only Bed	07	8.75
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

The respondent have house hold items like 35 percent of the respondents have Bed, Chair, TV; 18.75 percent of the respondent have only Bed, Chair, TV, Fan; 13.75 percent of the respondent have Bed, Chair, TV, Mobile, Almira, Cycle; 23.75 percent respondent have Chair and Bed and only 8.75 percent respondents have Only Bed

BANK ACCOUNT

A bank account is a financial account maintained by a bank or other financial institution in which the financial transactions between the bank and a customer are recorded. Recently, 2015 the central government of India give the scheme of Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana by which maximum labourers open a bank account.

Table: Distribution of respondent on the basis of bank account

Bank account	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	67	83.75
No	13	16.25
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

Total of the respondents, 83.75 percent respondents have bank account and only 16.25 percent have no bank account. According to them, maximum accounts are open under the scheme Pradhan Manti Jan Dhan Yojana.

SOURCE OF SANITATION

Sanitation is a state of being clean and conducive to health, making something free of germs. It is something relating to public health, which includes public health conditions related to clean drinking water and adequate treatment and disposal of human excreta and sewage. The respondents were also asked questions regarding their sanitation system to know about their consciousness towards hygiene.

Table: Source of sanitation

Sanitation	Respondent	Percentage
Pucca latrine	12	15
Kasha latrine	10	12.5
Semi pucca	13	16.25
Open place	22	27.5
Sementry	23	28.75
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

For sanitary uses, 15 percent of the respondents are having Pucca latrines which are given by the company of the Silcoorie Tea Garden. 12.5 percent respondents have kasha latrine and 16.25 percent respondents having semi pucca. Total respondent, 27.5 percent respondents are also going to open place and only 28.75 percent respondents have use sementry.

SOURCE OF DRINKING WATER

Water is one of the most essential elements to life on Earth. The sources of drinking water of the respondents are also an important thing to look out. Without water people cannot survive in the earth. There are many sources of drinking water which are used by people in their daily life. There are various sources of drinking water used by the respondents. These are tube well, Kasha well, pucca well and PHE community. Details are given below.

Table: Source of drinking water

Source of drinking water	Respondents	Percentage
Kasha well	21	26.25
Tubel	32	40
Pakka well	19	23.75
PHE tap	8	10
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

Regarding water supply, 26.25 percent of total respondents use Kacha well, 10 percent of total respondents use the PHE tap as source of drinking water. Then 40 percent respondents are taking their water from Tubel. 23.75 percent respondents are taking water from Pucca well. There are no respondents who use river and pond as source of drinking water.

SOURCE OF COOKING

Cooking is the art, technology science and craft of preparing food for consumption. Types of cooking also depend on the skill levels and training of cooks. Modern cooking energy sources are obtained from liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), fire wood, Charcoal, animal dung and straw. In this area the respondent uses like - LPG, wood fire and any other source for cooking.

Table: Source of cooking

Source of cooking	Respondent	Percentage
LPG	27	33.75
Wood fire	34	42.5
Any other	19	23.75
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

For source of cooking, 33.75 percent of the respondents are having LPG facilities, 42.5 percent respondents are having fire wood fire facilities, 23.75 percent of the respondents have other cooking facilities.

VEHICLE OWNED BY RESPONDENT

A vehicle is a machine that transports people from one place to another place, for example cars, bicycle and buses etc. The respondents are use bicycle, two wheeler and four wheeler. Some of the respondents have no vehicle.

Details are given below -

Table: Vehicle owned by respondent

Vehicle	Respondent	Percentage
Bicycle	38	47.5
Two wheeler	19	23.75
Four wheeler	8	10
No	15	18.75
Total	80	100

Sources- Field work

Half of the total respondents, which are 47.5 percent respondents, have Bicycle; 23.75 percent respondents have two Wheeler, 10 percent respondents have four wheeler. But 18.75 percent respondents have no vehicle.

CONCLUSION

It can be summarized that Tea garden labourers are very backward in some particular side. Their living condition is very poor and not hygienic. They faced many problems in every sphere of life. Due to their low income, they cannot fulfill their basic needs and they cannot send their children to schools and colleges. Majority of parents and children are illiterate.

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