

A CASE STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN " WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AGOMANI, DHUBRI, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

Women can play an important role in the up liftment of the society. Without economic, political and social participation, the human society could not be developing. The present study has been design to know the socio-economic status of the Tea garden women workers of the Agomani District of Assam. Simple random sampling methods were employed. The major findings reveled that there were various drawbacks in the Tea garden women workers. Dhubri district is situated in the extreme western corner of Assam. This district is located on the globe between 89.42 to 90.12 degree east longitude and 26.22 to 25.28 degree north latitude. The district is situated at 30 meters above the sea level on average. The river Brahmaputra flows through the district. On the Northern side of the river Dhubri and Bilasipara Sub-Divisions are situated and on the Southern side with Southa SalmaraMankachar Sub-Division.

KEYWORDS: Socio-economic, Women, Agomani, Dhubri, Assam, district, workers, etc.

INTRODUCTION

The district of Dhubri is surrounded by the Kokrajhar district in the north, Meghalaya & Bangladesh in the south, Bongaigaon & Goal Para district in the east, West Bengal and Bangladesh in the west. The total area

of Dhubri district is 2838 sq. km. having a distance of about 290 k.m. from the State capital, Dispur [1]. It has four urban areas [Dhubri (Sadar), Bilasipara, South Salmara and Mankachar] covering an area of 27.24 sq. km., with a total urban population of 190546. "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its Women"- Jawaharlal Nehru. The above statement by Nehru can be called in the sense that women constitute half of the entire population of a country [2]. Since ancient times, women in India are making financial contribution for the betterment of their families. Their participation in economic activities of the country has grown enormously after rapid industrialization in post-independence era. The prosperity and growth of a nation depends on the socio-economic status and development of its women [3].

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Administratively, Dhubri has three sub-divisions namely Dhubri, Bilasipara, and South Salmara-Mankachar along with eight revenue circles (Tehsils) with fourteen blocks.

Sl. No.	Type	Number	Sl. No.	Type	Number
1.	Revenue Circle	8	2.	Tehsil	7
3.	Sub-Tehsil	2	4.	Revenue Village*	1133
5.	Model Village	3	6.	Anchalik Panchayat	14
7.	Mahkuma Parishad	3	8.	Municipal Board	1
9.	Gaon Panchayat*	168	10.	Police Outpost	7
11.	Basic Town	4	12.	Police Station	8
13.	Fire Service Station	2	14.	Police Watchpost	36
15.	Border Outpost	35	16.	River Police Outpost	3

Table- 1 Administrative Divisions of Dhubri

The total number of revenue villages in the district is 1133. The total number of Gram Panchayats is 168 covering these villages [4]. According to the 2001 Census, the total rural population of the district stands at 1444043 covering a rural stretch of 2810.76 sq. km.

As per the Census data 2001, 1634589 persons lived in Dhubri out of which about 88 per cent are rural. About 70 per cent of the total population is from Minority communities of which more than 95 per cent are Muslims. The population density of the district is 584, which is much higher than the state density of population i.e. 340 persons as per 2001 Census. The decadal variation of population growth shows that population growth has been maintaining a steady rate since 1951 to 1991.

However, since 1991, there has been a fall in population growth in the district [4]. The Crude Birth Rate (CBR) and Total Fertility Rates (CDR) for the district are 38.16 and 4.04 respectively. The literacy rate of the Dhubri district is 49.86 per cent as against of 63.25 per cent of the state total. Of this, the male literacy rate is 45.37 per cent and female literacy is 33.82 per cent.

Total			Rural	Urban	SC			ST	
Total	Male	Female	Total	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	
49.86	45.37	33.82	43.90	77.45	70.00	48.51	77.53	56.20	

Table 2- Literacy Rate by Area, Sex and Caste

1. The work participation rate in the district is 28.87:

The work participation rate in the district is 28.87 in 2001, of which 28.84 and 29.11 represent rural and urban work participation rates respectively [5]. The

distribution of work forces in the district as per the Census 2001 is shown below.

Location	Total/Urban /Rural	Total/ Male/ Female	% of Workers to total population		
			Total	Main Workers	Marginal Workers
Assam	Total	Total	35.9	26.6	9.3
		Male	49.9	42.3	7.6
		Female	20.8	9.7	11.1
	Urban	Total	32.0	29.6	2.4
		Male	51.0	48.2	2.8
		Female	10.3	8.4	1.9
Rural	Total	36.4	26.1	10.3	
	Male	49.8	41.5	8.3	
	Female	22.3	9.9	12.4	
Dhubri	Total	Total	28.07	24.47	15.24
		Male	50.48	43.67	10.05
		Female	4.34	4.14	48.42
	Urban	Total	4.92	24.18	16.16
		Male	8.82	43.32	10.60
		Female	0.80	3.92	51.49
	Rural	Total	23.15	26.69	8.30
		Male	41.66	46.29	5.95
		Female	3.54	5.89	24.13

Table 3- Distribution of workforce

Women workers are the most potential labour force in the Tea industry of Assam. They are the victim of circumstances and they are struggling for their existences. Tea garden women workers are mostly illiterate and they are not aware of the minimum standard of living [6]. Prejudice, superstitious beliefs, alcoholism etc. are high among this underdeveloped community. Socially they are less exposed, economically hard pressed and hand to mouth, educationally and culturally dwarf which cast gloomy picture on their posterity. There are more than 100 sub castes among the Tea labour community in Assam, who were from various cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic heritages. They have become now part and parcel of Assam [7]. Socio Economic status implies the standing of a person or group in a community or society based on education, occupation and income which is often used as a benchmark for investigating health inequalities. Here the investigator also study the educational qualification, their monthly income, occupation, caste, type of family, marital status etc. of the sample tea gardens of Dhubri District. Secondly women workers in the tea garden comprise half of the total population of the tea garden [8]. Women have been employed in

the tea industry from its inception. Out of the tea labour employed more than 50 to 60% is engaged in crop harvesting. From among these crop harvesting about 80% are women [9]. It is the oldest and the largest tea producing state in India with about 55% of the production in the country. In Assam, a women worker in the Tea plantations generally leads a very busy daily life with practically, no time to have leisure and relaxation. All Tea garden women carried her day to day work along with all domestic activities. The role of women has been changing in modern time with rapidly changing norms of our society both inside and outside home [10]. In addition to their role within the family, the Tea garden women are now having a large role in the labour market. At present the problems of inadequate need based wages including other benefits; education, increasing unemployment and Socio-Economic backwardness are the most burning issues which can bring healthy working atmosphere of the tea gardens of Assam [11]. Therefore, an attempt has been made to highlights the Socio-Economic backwardness of the Tea Garden women workers in Assam.

2. Economy:

Dhubri district is primarily dependent on agriculture and forest products. Main source of income is paddy with surplus production along with cash crops including Jute and mustard seed. From forest mainly timber and bamboo add to the income though boulder and sand also available. Fish, milk, meat and egg have small contribution to the economy. Land revenue collection is very small in amount whereas excise duty occupies a lion's share of the Government exchequer. Devoid of any industrial production the district is considered as one of the poor districts of Assam. The economy of Dhubri is rural with lower rate of urbanization over the

years. As already pointed out, the district has only three urban locations of which Dhubri is rated as class IV urban township. The total employment in agriculture sector of the district is 75.9 per cent with 28.84 per cent of agricultural laborer's. Major cropping pattern of the district is rice based cropping system in which combinations like winter rice - wheat, winter rice - mustard - jute, summer rice - winter rice - vegetables, and summer rice - mustard/pulses/potato/vegetables are followed. The farming system of the district is traditional in general, so far farm mechanization is concerned in general. The industrial scenario of the district is not much encouraging. As of 31-12-2005, the district had 1120 registered Small-Scale Industries (SSIs). Although, number wise, Dhubri has a good number of SSIs, but in terms of profitable venturing the district has not attained desirable progress despite having rich potentialities.

3. Migration, Employment and Wage Income Earning:

Out of the total population of the sample villages, 1497 went of the village to search jobs within the state, 200 went outside the State and, 125 settled outside the village but within the district of Dhubri. The survey also showed that of the 30 sample villages, people from 24 villages move out looking for works on daily basis. More than 3000 people of these villages go out of the villages to work out side. The migration of workers extends from district level to national level. The monthly income of the migrated workers ranges from Rs. 900 to Rs. 12,200. The survey data indicates that over the years there has been increase in the supply of casual labour in 29 of the 30 sample villages. Most of the migrant workers have been helped by the relatives or friends to get jobs outside their villages. It also indicates that migration of agricultural labour is

basically due to the livelihood problem. Similarly, the existing wage rates in villages are not of any acceptable status. Moreover, gender disparity has been very high. This discrepancy is prominent in government programmes also. The evil of child labour may also be noticed in the surveyed villages.

4. Rural Development Programmes and Beneficiaries Assisted:

It is to note that PMGSY covered two of the sample villages namely, Baladmara and Hatsingimari. Other programmes (excluding SGRY) have so far allotted Rs.267500 in 10 of the 30 sample villages. The amount of allotment under SGRY policy could not be collected. Moreover, it is also found that the households have not been adequately assisted by the developmental programmes so far been undertaken. It is clear from the wide discrepancies in wage payments, inclusion of workers etc. Besides, there is a clear indication of lower induction of females in such developmental programmes. These programmes have created employment opportunities for 355 male and 47 females of the sample villages.

CONCLUSION

It is important and utmost necessary that women of every society tend to work for the upliftment of her own personality and their family to increase their per capita income. From the above discussion, it is concluded that tea garden women workers are still lagging behind in terms of socially, economically and culturally. Most of them are illiterate and for that they are working only for their livelihood of their family. It is the duty of the society, NGOs, Government agencies to make them literate, culturally reach, and economically stable so that they can live in

this beautiful world happily and peacefully.

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