

## **Socio-Economic and Working Conditions of Tea Plantation Workers in Manjoor Block the Nilgiris**

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**Abstract:** The study was carried out to examine the socio-economic characteristics of tea plantation workers. The Tea industry in India has given occupation to the major work force in which Nilgiris is also take part. Out of total 172000 hectares under tea cultivation in South India, Nilgiris individually accounts for about 90000 hectares and these results in produces tea of about 30 million kg of tea annually which is nearly 60 per cent of the total population. This study has made an attempt to explore the living conditions of the tea garden workers in Nilgiris district. The study describes the Socio, Economic, Demographic Profile, Working Conditions, Determinant of Wages. Hence, the present study is both descriptive and analytical in nature. The selected sample is located in and around Manjoor Block of the Nilgiri's District. The study comprises eight villages viz., Kinnakorai, Merland, Thunari, Kandimattam, Mattakandi, Annamalai, Thaisolai, Bakorai. Totally 62 Small Plantation growers and 1140 workers are in the Manjoor block. The sample size was 10 per cent of the Plantation workers ie., 114 workers (90 females and 24 males) was selected randomly. The data was collected using a well structured interview scheduled. After the field survey, data analysis was followed with the help of appropriate statistical tools like descriptive statistics Mean and Standard Deviation, Percentage analysis, Multiple Regression analysis was used to fit earning function.

**Keywords:** Tea plantation, socio-economic, living condition, working condition.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

India is one of the leading producers of tea in the world. The country produces both 'CTC' ("Cut, tear & Curl") and 'Orthodox' types of tea. The most common tea consumed in India is CTC. About 27 percent of the world's tea is produced in India. India is also the world's largest consumer of tea. About 22 per cent of the world's consumption is in India. Tea production is both land as well as labour intensive activity. Tea Plantations are predominantly located in North-Eastern States of India, particularly Assam and Southern States of India. 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 social protection have been a recurring theme since its inception in the early 19th century. Among the total tea garden working labours in each tea garden only 30-40 per cent of them are regular employees and remaining are temporary in nature. During the peak season, each garden employs casual labourers at same wage structure. 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 makes tea garden populations helpless to various diseases (Sangeetia Saikie et al, 2015)<sup>1</sup>.

### **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Socio-economic conditions of the South Indian tea plantation workers were examined by **Raman<sup>2</sup> (1986)**. Historically, colonization paved the way for the formation of plantation system in India During the early period, standard of living of workers in plantations was very poor. They were ill-fed, ill-housed and ill-

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<sup>1</sup> Sangeetia Saikie, Supriyo Misra and Bandita Misra (2015) "The Garden Labours and Their Living conditions: A study on Sarusarai Tea Garden of Johart District of Assam" Research Paper.

<sup>2</sup> Raman. Ravi, K. (1986). 'Plantation Labour. Revisit Required; Official Paper, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XXI. No. 22. May 31.

treated, the researcher observes. Since independence, the constant protest of these labourers resulted in the introduction of Plantation Labour Act 1951. Raman also analyzed the labour market in Kerala and Tamil Nadu there are two types of workers, permanent and temporary. But in Karnataka, in addition to these permanent and temporary workers, casual/contract workers are also engaged. An important factor noted by the investigator is that productivity of women workers is high. Living conditions of workers are poor with inadequate drinking water, poor housing facility and insufficient medical care.

**Kurian<sup>3</sup> (1990)** made a study on socio-economic background and consumption pattern of women workers in tea plantation industries in Munnar, Idukki District in Kerala. The study was focused on the personal and family background of women workers their economic and living conditions, income and expenditure pattern, standard of living, social status, working conditions, welfare facilities and security. The tea industry is labour intensive and majority of workers are women. Information on households of the workers revealed the fact that women are major income earners of their family. Their educational status is very low. The workers get housing facility, electricity, day care facility, and social security benefits such as gratuity, family pension and maternity benefits. Despite all these facilities given by the companies, their socio-economic status is found to be very poor. They spend much of their income on food items. Their consumption of nutrients is found to be low. Medical care provided by companies, in general, is poor in quality. The women workers are facing many problems. Even though they are provided with housing facility, they have to travel by foot to distant places of work. In the work place, they are not provided with latrine facility; and they do not have any resting sheds. Leaf pluckers have no promotion and they do not have any recreation facility. The workers are not satisfied with the existing leave facilities and job security. The study suggests that the State, the management, and the trade unions have to give more attention to the problems of women workers.

**Nair<sup>4</sup> (1989)** examined the socio-economic conditions of labourers in the Ponmudi tea estate a unit which is closed since 1973. He made a case study of this unit to highlight the fate of workers in a sinking factory. The employees are continuing in the factory because of the single reason that they have no other option. They are virtually suffering from poverty as a result of unemployment.

**Kurian<sup>5</sup> (1999)** made an evaluative study on the socio-economic background, working and living conditions, consumption pattern and physical quality of life of women workers in the plantation sector of Kerala. The terms and conditions of work of women workers in plantations are governed by the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, Kerala Plantations Labour Rules, 1959 and other statutory benefits. The study stresses that provisions of these Acts are not implemented fully and the physical quality of life of these women workers are far from satisfactory. The study reveals that facilities provided to them are not sufficient. Considering the case of consumption pattern major spending is on food, but the consumption of nutrients is very limited. Most of the women workers do not get proper toilet facility in plantations and they have to walk long distance from their house to the work place. Medical and child care facilities provided are also not fully satisfactory. Women in the plantations are educationally backward and social interaction and general awareness etc. is also poor. The study suggests to the authorities to give little more attention to these problems and find proper solutions. Literacy programme for women workers in plantations also must be strengthened.

A socio-economic study of tea plantation industry was made by **Sarkar<sup>6</sup> (1984)** with special emphasis on the aspect of labour. He discerns the fact that during the initial period labourer's life in estates are comparatively good. Houses are provided by the industry. Medical services are given free of cost. The management also takes care of free milk service for mother and child, creche service, and primary schooling. However, when the industry expands, there seems to be a tendency to form an attitude detrimental to the interests of the labourers. In this regard, there exists a difference of opinion regarding the behavioural pattern from the management side. Some expressed good opinion about the attitude of the management while others opined that the behaviour need not be favourable to the labourers. For example, there were incidents of forcing labourers to work when they are not well. The major problem among the estate workers are absenteeism and alcoholism. Sarkar has also made some observations on improving the tea industry. He is of the opinion that for the best marketing, tea made from 'two leaves and a bud' and its processing are very important. He suggests for mechanical harvesting for countries having shortage of labour.

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<sup>3</sup> Kurian, Tessa, (1990), *Socio-Economic Background and Consumption Pattern of Women Workers in the Tea Industry in Munnar, Idukki District*, M Phil, Dissertation, Department of Applied Economics, Cochin University of Science and Technology, Cochin.

<sup>4</sup> Nair, Manoharan, K. (1989), 'The Socio-Economic Conditions of Labourers: A case study of Ponmudi Tea Estate; *Southern Economist*, Vol. 28, No. 16, Dec.

<sup>5</sup> Kurian, Tessa (1999), *A study of Women Workers in the Plantation Sector of Kerala*, Ph.D. Thesis, Economics Research Centre, Government College, Kottayam (Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam.)

<sup>6</sup> Sarkar, Bidyut (1984), *Tea in India*, Consultative Committee of Plantation Association, Netaji Subash Road, Calcutta.

**Hazarika<sup>7</sup> (2012)** studied the vulnerable living conditions of tea tribes and labourers under urbanized culture. The main source of data collected for the study are books, published literature of plantation companies, associations, journals, reports published by different organizations etc. Apart from that primary data collected from 1500 workers in six big tea gardens of Assam. It is found that women workers in India are facing one of the worst forms of exploitation in modern times. Wage cut policy of the employers affect productivity of the industry. His analysis suggested that measures must be taken to prevent availability of alcoholic beverages and gambling in and around tea garden areas. Women empowerment is urgent need for the tea garden workers and special value based education should be introduced.

**Borah<sup>8</sup> (2013)** studied the socio – economic condition and income and expenditure pattern of plantation workers in Lepetkota tea estate in Assam. The study uses both primary and secondary data sources. The secondary data was conducted through journals, books and internet. The study found that majority of the Indian tea producers are not getting fair prices in the market for their tea and this passes to the workers as wage cuts and it further affects the tea industry without a strong and skilled labour force and there are lack of educational facilities for the children of the tea estate workers in the study area. The study also suggested that every worker must have bank account and deposit a few per cent of his income in the respective account, infrastructure facilities should develop in the study area so that the workers residential environment will improve and labour welfare department should regularly investigate the status of social security measures available in the tea gardens.

**Sarkar<sup>9</sup> (2013)** studied the condition of tea garden workers of Jalpaiguri district in Colonial India. The study was conducted with the help of secondary data available from district gazettes. His study found that the situation of children and women workers in the tea gardens of Dooars is considerably worse in some areas. They are persecuted by the managers, watchmen and others in the tea garden. The workers were paid low wages and bound to do over – duty without bonus money. The garden workers had to borrow money at high interest from money lenders and they could not pay back with interest and they had to sell their children for relief from abysmal poverty. Most of the workers suffered from the lack of nourishment and proper medical treatment. There was no school for children and lack of safe drinking water. The workers could not maintain their family smoothly. The study suggested that there is a need for creating a good relationship among owners, managerial staff and labourers. There is a need to setup a department to look into the welfare of tea garden labourers.

### III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Tea industry in India has given occupation to the major work force in which Nilgiris is also take part. Out of total 172000 hectares under tea cultivation in South India, Nilgiris individually accounts for about 90000 hectares and these results in produces tea of about 30 million kg of tea annually which is nearly 60 per cent of the total population. Every year, hundreds of tea plantation workers are affected from water-borne diseases, like Gastro-Enteritis. There is no drinking water facility and a drainage system is most of the plantations. Most of the workers are suffering from Anemia and Tuberculosis, where malaria is widely spread. It affects the children and the women mostly. Leech bite and Snake bite are the major problem in the plantation field but no proper medical treatment and prevention measures are totally out of clutch. Wild animals are often seen in the plantation field and no proper security measures are provided. The death ratio due to the above said bites and the wild animals is consistent. The health system is not effective. Hence the present study.

### IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The followings are the main objectives of the study.

1. To study the socio-economic and demographic profile of the plantation workers in Manjoor block- The Nilgiris.
2. To know the working conditions of plantation workers.
3. To identify the determinants of earnings.

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<sup>7</sup> Kakali Hazarika (2012), "Tea Tribes are Lagging behind in the Process of Urbanization", *International Journal of Trends in Economics Management and Technology*, Volume 1, Issue 6, pp. 2–6.

<sup>8</sup> Achyut Krishna Borah (2013), "Socio-economic Condition and Income and Expenditure Pattern of Plantation Workers with Special Reference to Lepetkota Tea Estate", *Tactful Management Research Journal*, Volume 2, Issue 2, ISSN: 2319-7943, pp. 1-7.

<sup>9</sup> Shyamal Chandra Sarkar (2013), "The Condition of Tea Garden Workers of Jalpaiguri District in Colonial India", *International Journal of Advance Research*, IJOAR. Org, Volume 1, Issue 8, ISSN 2320-9151, pp. 14 – 25.

## V. DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The Tea Plantation workers working in Nilgiris district are considered as the targeted sample respondents for the research study. The study describes the Socio, Economic, Demographic Profile, Working Conditions, and Determinants of Wages. Hence, the present study is both descriptive and analytical in nature. The sample selected was Manjoor block of Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu. The study comprising of eight villages viz., Kinnakorai, Merland, Thunari, Kandimattam, Mattakandi, Annamalai, Thaisolai, Bakorai was selected as the study area located in and around Manjoor Block of the Nilgiri's District. Totally 62 Small Plantation growers are in the Manjoor block. Out of 1140 plantation workers, 900 are females and 245 are males. The sample size was 10 per cent of the Plantation workers ie., 114 workers (90 females and 24 males) was selected randomly from the workers employed in Small Plantation Growers. The required data was collected from the 114 plantation workers working in Small Plantation growers by using a well structured interview scheduled. After the field survey, data analysis was followed with the help of appropriate statistical tools like descriptive statistics Mean and Standard Deviation, Percentage analysis, Multiple Regression analysis was used to fit earning function.

## VI. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study would help to know about the socio, economic and demographic profile of Plantation workers. Further, the present study also helps to know about the determinants of earnings, working conditions. The research findings will uplift the plantation labour community in all status and it will be the great example for a Government which is really interested to help the Plantation Workers. Many people will get job opportunity and the plantation labour community will also reach a good status in the society thereby proving all are equal before Law and in the society.

## VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In spite of detailed analysis made in the present study, this study is not free from limitations. The following are the important limitations:

- i. The study is purely based on the views of 114 plantation workers in the only and hence the results may not be universally applicable.
- ii. The geographical area of this study is confined only to Manjoor Block.
- iii. The study is period specific.
- iv. The study will be conducted only the small plantation growers and it will not be generalized to big tea estates.

## SOCIO- ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF SMALL TEA PLANTATION WORKERS:

Variables		Tea Plantation Workers	Total Workers
Age	15-30	6 (5.3)	6 (5.3)
	31-45	51 (4.7)	51 (4.7)
	46-60	43 (37.7)	43 (37.7)
	Above 60	14 (12.3)	14 (12.3)
<b>Total</b>		<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>
Gender	Male	24 (21.1)	24 (21.1)
	Female	90 (78.9)	90 (78.9)
<b>Total</b>		<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>
Marital Status	Unmarried	4 (3.5)	4 (3.5)
	Married	81 (71.1)	81 (71.1)
	Widower/widowee	29 (25.4)	29 (25.4)

	<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>
<b>Nature of the family</b>	Nuclear Family	93 (81.6)	93 (81.6)
	Single	21 (18.4)	21 (18.4)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>
<b>Religion</b>	Hindu	104 (91.2)	104 (91.2)
	Christian	10 (8.8)	10 (8.8)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>
<b>Education Qualification</b>	Illiterate	60 (52.6)	60 (52.6)
	Primary School (1-5)	18 (15.8)	18 (15.8)
	Middle School (6-8)	11 (9.6)	11 (9.6)
	High School (9-10)	21 (18.4)	21 (18.4)
	Higher Secondary (+1,+2)	4 (3.5)	4 (3.5)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>
<b>Migration</b>	Migrated	22 (19.3)	22 (19.3)
	Not Migrated	92 (80.7)	92 (80.7)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	<b>114</b> <b>(100.0)</b>

*Source: Primary Data*

Among the total number of plantation workers, 90 female workers (79 per cent) and 24 male workers (21 per cent) were selected in the tea plantation of small tea growers in the Manjoor Block. Plantation workers were employed on a family based and the most significant features of the tea plantation is that almost 80 per cent of its workers are women. The Age composition of plantation workers in the Manjoor Block, nearly half of the plantation belongs to the age group between 31 to 45 years. The marital status of a worker decides the quality of work one does. This may be because of the fact that a worker who is married may have a chance of doing many works out of the working hours. This will in a way effect in his working style and working quality. A very string feature is more than 70 per cent of the plantation workers belongs to the Married category. It is clear from the data that three-fourth of the plantation workers come under the Nuclear family system. The sample consists of mixed religious groups population in Manjoor block. At the time of field work, researcher identified only two religious groups of plantation workers. More than 90 per cent of workers were belongs to Hindus. An analysis of the illiteracy rate of the plantation workers in the tea gardens of small tea growers of Manjoor block reveals that more than half of the workers were Illiterate. This seems to indicate that education is not a barrier to enter into The Nilgiris Labour Market, especially in tea plantations. Among the plantation workers, four-fifths of the workers were migrants and one-fifth of the workers were non-migrants. The researcher found that the majority of the plantation workers migrated.

### **WORKING CONDITIONS OF SMALL TEA PLANTATION WORKERS:**

Discrimination of Wage among Males and Gender-wise Discrimination of Wage in the Plantation workers

Sample Village	Gender	Nature of Job					
		Plucking	Punning	Weeding	Pesticide Sprayer	Fertilizer Spreader	Carrying / Loading
Kinnakorai	Male	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Female	70-80	70-80	70-80	-	-	70-80

Merland	Male	170	180	180	180	180	180
	Female	150	150	150	-	-	150
Thunari	Male	270-350	270-350	270-350	-	-	270-350
	Female	100	100	100	-	-	100
Kandimattam	Male	220-250	220-250	220-250	220-250	220-250	220-250
	Female	100	100	100	-	-	100
Mattakandi	Male	220-250	220-250	220-250	220-250	220-250	220-250
	Female	100	100	100	-	-	100
Annamalai	Male	250-350	250-350	250-350	250-350	250-350	250-350
	Female	120	120	120	-	-	120
Thaisolai	Male	250	250	250	250	250	250
	Female	150	150	150	-	-	150
Bakorai	Male	250-300	250-300	250-300	250-300	250-300	250-300
	Female	120-150	120-150	120-150	-	-	120-150

Source: Primary Data

The Gender-wise Discrimination of Wage and Discrimination of wage in the Plantation Workers Discrimination of work among the plantation workers in Manjoor Block . The Nature of Job of plantation fixed has been changed is to six categories viz., Plucking, Purning, Weeding, Pesticides Spraying, Fertilizer Spreaders and Carrying/Loading Operations. In general male workers are working all the six categories of the nature of Job in plantation, female workers are not opted for pesticide spraying and Fertilizer Spreading. These type of Jobs have more hazards as compared with the other the jobs. The field work carried on eight villages of Manjoor Block. Among the eight villages of the plantation workers received different amount of wages in their job. The male workers were received very low level of wages in Kinnakorai in their respective jobs and the same job male workers recived highest wage of more than 300 in Thunari, Annamali Villages no rest of the Villages workers getting less than these two villages as more than Kinnakorai. As compared with the workers, female workers were discriminated very high degree of the all the job in all the eight villages. They receive very poor wages as compared with male counter parts. The data reveals that there was very high degree of discrimination of wage among the villages by the male workers for the same job. The female workers were very much discriminated in all the jobs in all villages of Manjoor Block.

### DETERMINANTS OF EARNINGS OF THE PLANTATION WORKERS IN MANJOOR BLOCK:

Empirical Model

$$\ln \text{Ear} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{AGE} + \beta_2 \text{GEN} + \beta_3 \text{EDU} + \beta_4 \text{RELI} + \beta_5 \text{MRSTS} + \mu$$

### Descriptive Statistics and Earning Function

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall Health Status	114	1	4	2.9474	.37256
Individual family	114	.00	1.00	.8158	.38937
Hindu	114	.00	1.00	.9123	.28414
Christian	114	.00	1.00	.0877	.28414
Male	114	.00	1.00	.2105	.40948
Female	114	.00	1.00	.7895	.40948
Uneducated	114	.00	1.00	.5263	.50151
Educated	114	.00	1.00	.4737	.50151
Family Monthly Income	114	1750	19000	7449.78	3343.996
Never married	114	.00	1.00	.0351	.18481
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	114	.00	1.00	.9649	.18481
Married	114	.00	1.00	.7105	.45552
Age	114	28	75	47.02	10.958
Valid N (list wise) 114					

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	7629.461	2519.945		3.028	.003	
Migration modified	195.677	868.793	.023	.225	.822	
Female	-1779.126	891.718	-.216	-1.995	.049	
Hindu	1482.864	1117.718	.125	1.327	.187	
Married	1325.624	879.435	.179	1.507	.135	
Age of the Respondent	-44.903	38.623	-.146	-1.163	.248	

a. Dependent Variable: Family Monthly Income

#### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.345 <sup>a</sup>	.119	.079	3242.50765

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age of the Respondent, Hindu, Male, Migration modified, Married

The discussion of the regression results could be done by classifying the variables, the variables included in this equation are monthly income (Log function) is dependent variable and Age, Marital Status, Gender, Religion and Migration Status are the independent variables. The semi-log earning function results that only female earnings variable has negative influence on monthly earnings of the plantation workers and all other variables are not significant in this model due to small sample workers was the reason.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

From the above discussions it is concluded that the living standard of the tea estate workers are very miserable. They are economically and socially backward and deprived from the modern social life. Most of the tea estate workers are illiterate so that they have no ideas regarding various labour welfare and other social security schemes which are implemented by the Government. They haven't been provided proper sanitation in which women are the biggest victims, water facilities are way far away from the working place, they are not giving permanent status so to escape from union fights. The government should look after this matter, the government should provide proper laws and regulation so to protect this skill labors, and tea plantation is not only feeding the Indian people but also it is the biggest source of Indian export market. The government should make a separate body to look after this and make some stringent laws to protect this worker to get exploited. Government should make labor unions who will look upon the rights of the plantation workers, government should connect plantation workers to the labor law departments directly so that workers can directly go there and fight for their right, owners of the plantation field should strictly tell to have proper working hours and should give proper wages also wages of women and men should be same.

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