

## A CASE STUDY OF UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM OF ORAON TEA GARDEN LABOURERS- BISWANATH CHARIALI DISTRICT OF ASSAM.

Dr. BANASMITA NATH  
Guwahati, Assam, India

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### Abstract

Tea garden labourers play an important role in our society. Tea garden labourers contribute towards economic growth of the society. In recent time the tea garden labourers are facing unemployment problem in various sector which lead to poor economic condition of the people. I want to highlight the unemployment problem of this section in general specifically in connection with Oraon tea garden labourers working in Sokamata, Dhullie, Pratapgarh and Monabari tea estate of Biswanath Chariali district of Assam.

**Keywords:** Unemployment, Economic condition, Tea Garden Labourers

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### Introduction

Tea is a labour oriented enterprise which requires labour at every aspect of tea plantation right from the clearance of jungle, making the land suitable for plantation. But unfortunately, the economic condition of tea garden labourers is not ideal due to unemployment problem among the particular section of the society. The problem of excess labour in the tea garden is heightened in the state. The problem of providing avenues of employment for tea plantation have been reduced and these will be exaggerates in the coming years which will create tension among the labourers in the tea garden. The unemployment leads to adverse economic condition as the people are dependent on the income of the family members.

### Objective

1. To study the causes of unemployment among tea garden labourers in proposed tea garden.

2. To study the socio-economic backwardness of labourers of proposed tea garden.
3. To study the involvement and awareness of tea garden labourers in social and economic aspect.

### Methodology

Due to large population of tea tribes who were surrounded by small groups inside the district of Assam, this study used stratified random sampling procedure to cover the four tea garden of Biswanath Chariali district of Assam. A questionnaire to open-ended questions was employed and administered through face to face interview of Oraon working in tea garden. A semi-structured interview guide was used for in-depth interview with informants. The secondary data was collected from journal, books and local magazines. The data analysis consists of tabulating the data to deal with primary structure of the study.

## Review of Literature

**Anup Karan** independently was, 'Changing Patterns of Migration from Rural Bihar', (2003) in the book entitled: *Migrant Labour and Human Rights in India*", edited by G.Iyer. Karan writes about the changing pattern discussing the socio economic status, choice of destination etc.

**Sharma (1997) Karan (2003)** observed entrenched rural poverty, population density and growth rate skewed access to productive resource and slow economic growth and among the drives of migration from Bihar, Odisha and Jharkhand. Many studies mentioned that historically poor household migrates extensively searching for livelihood.

**Nair (1983)** studied the impact of gulf migration along with the causes of emigration and also examined the socio-economic changes and characteristic of migrants and utilization of foreign remittances. It reflect the pull and push factor forced the Keralites to migrate to Gulf region. The emigration facilitates social mobility among the emigrants which brought favourable changes in the attitude of the Gulf families towards education, health, customs and lifestyle. Nair also observed that the higher socio-economic status of the emigrants may create conflict between the rich one and the old rich. He points the negative and positive impact of emigration at the household level. The

emigrants were more inclined towards education for the children, both boys and girls but the freedom granted to the girls in matter of education, career and marriages was limited in compare to sons.

**Jain M.K. (1993)** studied the "Employment pattern of Workers in the tea garden of Assam- A case study of Dibrugarh District" emphasized on the employment patterns of permanent, temporary , woman, child labours including the status of tea industry.

**U Phukan (1976)** studied the socio-economic status of the ex-tea garden in Assam and he observed that the household have agricultural crops, poultry, livestock and horticulture and consumed most of their produce in their households.

### Unemployment Problem of Oraon

In the tea garden there are two type of unemployment, one is seasonal and another is permanent. The seasonal unemployment occurs during the peak season when the temporary labour are recruit during the peak of plucking season as the permanent labours are not enough to meet the increased demand of the labour therefore temporary labours are recruited. After the season is over, the temporary labours are not employed and ceased their job during that time and after that they become unemployed. The permanent unemployment means where the person is unemployed for a long period and are not employed anywhere

**Table 1: Permanent and Temporary basis of Labour in Tea Garden**

	Temporary basis in the same garden	Temporary basis or permanent basis on other tea garden	Total
Garden labour	25	8	33

Outside labour	In urban place	In rural place	Total
	11	5	16

In the above table it has been observed that out of 33 most of the people are employed in the tea garden as the temporary worker and only 8 of them are employed outside the tea garden. They prefer to work within the tea garden area and their connection with the urban area is very low. The people are unskilled and therefore for them it is difficult to get job in other sector.

**Table 2: Nature of Work People Prefer**

Nature of work	Garden labour	labour under contract	Agricultural labour	Total
Labour	20 (74.07%)	5 (18.51)	2 (7.40%)	27
Teacher	Primary school			5
	5 (100%)			
Clerk	2 (100%)			2
Others	Watchman	Driver	Helper in the industry	11
	5 (45.45%)	3(27.27%)	3 (27.27%)	

In the above table the person are mostly employed in the tea garden area as the labour which constitutes (74.07%). There is only one person employed as teacher in the primary school as the position of the teacher in the school is temporary and under the supervision of the tea garden management. The others are employed as watchman, driver and helper in tea industry. The reason behind they left the job is due to health problem, less pay and they were terminated from the job.

**Table 3: Period of unemployment**

1 year	2 year	3 year	4 year
5	7	10	5

The duration that the people were unemployed from the above table is 3 years. From the above table it can be concluded that the tea garden labourers lack the nature of mobility. They prefer job within the area where they live. They do not prefer to go outside and work in other places and therefore they remain unemployed for a longer period of time and the therefore problem of unemployment increase with due course of time.

**Table 4: The expectation of the student regarding the preference of job after education.**

Choice of job	Percentage
School teacher	15 (17.87%)
Tea garden labour	30 (35.71%)

Nurse	11 (13.09%)
Business	8 (9.52%)
Clerk in the garden	20 (23.80%)

From the above table it has been observed the majority of them prefer to work in the tea garden as labour which constitutes 35.71%. Least were interested in setting up a business of their own as for setting up a business capital is needed which is difficult for them. Those who are educated prefer the job of teacher (17.87%) and clerk in the tea garden (23.08%). Majority of person prefers job within the tea garden as the management provide social security to them by providing quarter, subsidized ration and firewood.

**Table 5: Knowledge of Craft among the unemployed**

Driving	Tailoring	Weaving	Basket making	Cycle repairing	Total
15(19.48%)	10 (12.98%)	8 (10.38%)	25 (32.46%)	19 (24.67%)	77

The common craft known by the people are basket making (32.46%) and cycle repairing (24.67%). The craft of weaving constitute the lowest percentage (10.38%) the weaving is mostly done by the women but women do not get time for learning such craft as they remain busy in the tea garden.

Earlier there was no fixed age to get retired and the labours were allowed to work as they were physically capable to do so. The retirement of the tea garden labour is voluntary. The authorities do not have any record of the age of the tea garden workers to allow retirement. This is one of the reasons of unemployment due to lack of recognized retiring. As the people do not get retired at fixed age there is less opportunity for other section of the group to get employed. The authority terminates the workers on the basis of misconduct and absenteeism. But such cases of termination are very rare in the tea garden therefore it cannot be included as the contributing factor in unemployment.

In recent years the strikes have been increased in the tea garden for their demands. They demand for bonus, proper medical facilities. The problems that the tea garden faced are indebtedness, problem between the management and the labour and the price oscillation. The tea garden with economic crisis cannot provide employment to the labour and it results in the termination of labour and therefore the problem of unemployment rises. As they are unskilled labour there is no scope for them to get job in other sector and therefore they remain unemployed for longer period of time. The scope of employment in the tea industry is very limited. The tea gardens are not increasing proportionately according to the increase in population. The tea garden authority cannot provide scope for the employment of the labour community in the tea garden. The scope of employment depends on the production of the tea industry. When the production does not increase in relation to the employment then the management restricts the employment of the labour.

The tea garden workers are always isolated from the mainstream population of the state. The tea garden workers live in the quarter provided by the tea garden authority which is situated in an isolated place. The workers of particular group like Oraon live in a area where majority are Oraons so that they can have close proximity with them but they does not have any contact with the mainstream population because they feel they will be treated differently by the people as they are still regard as outsiders. The workers were migrated from different state to work in the tea garden by the British because the local people refused to work in the tea garden as the labour and demanded higher wage so the British brought the innocent tribal from Jharkhand and different state in cheap rate. The tea estate is regarded as closed society where the labours live there and therefore such people have no proximity with the indigenous people of the neighbouring area. The tea garden workers are still regarded as the outsiders and the government and administration does not give adequate priority for the development of such people. Tea gardens are in remote area where there is lack of accessibility, very limited state intercession, political disturbances and the past which prohibit them to venture in a new place. Apart from tea industry there are no other industries or other sector employment opportunities are available. The workers are uneducated and most of them are unskilled to work in other sector and therefore they do not have any other alternative to work in tea garden rather than other sector. They have very limited scope for all round development of the people. It is important to provide avenues to train the workers so that they become

skill to work in other sector and so that they should not confine their life within the boundary of the tea garden.

### Conclusion

The pull and push factors plays a role in the immobility nature of the tea garden workers and their life become stagnant within the boundary of the tea garden. Lack of education, relative backwardness of the region and ignorance of the workers are some of the factor for the immobility of the labour. In order to regulate the wage of the labour two steps should be implemented the first one is that the wage should be determined according to the Minimum wages and should not be influence by the employers. Secondly the government should take proper initiative for the all over development of this section of the people.

Due to lack of education the people do not get opportunity to work in other sector. In the tea garden the individual proficiency is given more value than the education. The children of the tea labour remain backward in educational sphere. They do not get much opportunity to study more because of the backwardness in the economic status. The avenues for occupation are gradually decreasing for the tea garden labour as they are limited to certain job. They cannot set up a job and become self-independent because of lack of savings. The increase in population and the fixation of tea garden area lead to the problem of unemployment. The adoption of modern techniques in the factory led to little impact on unemployment. The avenue for employment outside the tea garden is very limited as the labour of the tea garden is unskilled and cannot opt for other option. The immobility nature of the tea garden

labour limits them to stay within the tea garden area and do not have any desire to move to other place for earning better income outside the tea garden and change their economic status.

Education in modern time is very important as it generates skill and knowledge and creates attitude towards work and production. The need of education is very important for the economic development of the society. The illiteracy prevents in the creativity of skills and they remain ignorant about the modern techniques used in the modern times. The skilled labour has the better opportunity to have better use of resources. The importance of education helps in mental and moral development of the individual. For the equalization of educational facilities it is necessary for equalization of opportunities for all the section of the society.

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