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**Rashmi Rekha Kalita**

Ph.D Research Scholar  
Department of Extension &  
Communication Management,  
College of Community Science  
Assam Agricultural University,  
Jorhat, Assam, India

## Role of tea garden workers in rural development of Assam

**Rashmi Rekha Kalita**

### Abstract

Rural development is the process of improving the status of the rural people as well as the economic well-being of the society. Our economic system is depending upon the agricultural development. Agricultural development means not only the rice cultivation but also cultivation of other farm related such as paddy, wheat, tea and vegetable cultivation etc. Assam is famous for the tea cultivation. That's why the researchers make an attempt to study the role of tea garden workers in rural development of Assam. This study was conducted in Jorhat district of Assam. Four tea garden under public corporation were selected purposively from the Jorhat subdivision. A total 120 tea plantation workers were selected for the research study. Data revealed that majority of the respondents (45.83%) were under the age group of 18-30 years, 54.17 percent respondents had daily waged earner was the main occupation of the head of the family and 50 percent of the respondents earned between (Rs.4600-6100) monthly. Data also revealed that an average respondent spent 7.94 hours in working at tea garden in a day and, they faced lots of problems in cultivation of tea such as insufficient wage was ranked as I with mean score 2.99. Followed by lack of toilet facilities at work and No provisions for protective gears at work was ranked as II and III with mean score 2.95 and 2.82 respectively.

**Keywords:** Rural development, tea garden, tea garden workers, Assam, economic system

### Introduction

The tea plantations of Assam had launched by the British colonial regime in the mid-nineteenth century and from these periods considerably transformed the socio-economic profile of the state. Its impact had seen on the state's peasant economic rate. From the ancient time to the present period of time tea plantation rate gradually increases day by day. Tea plantation is not only work as a rural development but also act as a development of the nation, society or individual.

Presently we see that many people open a tea garden like small tea garden. For this occupation not only helped the owner as well as the tea garden workers' family. Now a day, tea gardening is work as an entrepreneurial development. Assam's tea is world famous. For this reason, Assam tea is transferred from here to the other state or other country.

The newly emerging concept of entrepreneurship in Tea plantation of Assam in homestead garden and unutilized land along with other crops play is an important role for the rural development as well as the urban development. These gardens are mostly benefitted among younger age group and upcoming local entrepreneurs. It also acts as a solving the problems of unemployability of the educated and uneducated youths. The concept of small tea garden is a recent phenomenon and the first small tea garden was established in Sivasagar District (presently Golaghat district) of Assam in the year 1978. Late Sonowar Bora an MLA from Golaghat and then Agriculture Minister of Assam was the pioneer in the establishment of the Small Tea Garden. These gardens (STGs) were come into existence after a year's wait of 150 years since the introduction of tea in Assam. Within a short period of time just over two decades it has spread to about all the districts of Assam. Therefore, adding around 50 thousand hectares additionally under tea and about 25 percent of total tea production in Assam and significantly converting the small tea sectors to a major player of Assam.

### Tea Plantation Acts

After independence, the condition of the tea plantation labour was pathetic in the country for that reason the Parliament of India passed an Act called the Plantation Labour Act 1951. The provisions of this Act include that the registration of the plantation and the appointment of chief inspector of the state Government who has to verify the provision of basic facilities of

**Corresponding Author:**

**Rashmi Rekha Kalita**

Ph.D Research Scholar  
Department of Extension &  
Communication Management,  
College of Community Science  
Assam Agricultural University,  
Jorhat, Assam, India

life health care, drinking water, sanitation, canteen crèches, recreational facilities and housing facilities in the tea gardens. Under the Act, the State Government also has the power to appoint a labour commissioner to look into the issues related to tea gardens. The Act also stipulates that no adult worker worked more than 48 hours and adolescent or children shall not be worked for more than 27 hours in a week and that every worker is entitled for a day of rest during the seven days period. But the rules prepared by the State Government on the basis of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. Here the provision of leading to the widening of the chasm between the productivity of labour and the compensation disbursed. The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) set up by the previous government's Union Labour Minister had looked into various issues relating to the tea plantation sector in the country. The reports of IMC says that the welfare committees ordinarily provided by the state to the citizens of the country need to be extended to the plantation estates too and therefore the relevant provisions in the Plantation Labour Act need to be reviewed. No substantial plan has been announced so far for promoting the human development of the tea garden labourers (Nirmolia PL *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[5]</sup>.

### Rural Development

Rural development is the process of improving the status of the rural people as well as the economic well-being of the society. With the onset of Globalization the need has arisen to the different perspective such as education, entrepreneurship, physical infrastructure, social infrastructure etc. To improve the rural lives with participation of rural people themselves so as to meet the required need of the rural areas. Our economic system is mainly depending upon the agricultural development. Agricultural development means not only the rice cultivation but also the other farm related cultivation. Assam is famous for the tea plantation. For keeping these views researchers make an attempt to study the role of tea garden workers in rural development of Assam: Issues and challenges with the following objectives-

### Objectives

1. To study the socio-economic background of the tea garden workers of Assam
2. To analyze the time utilization pattern of tea garden workers in doing different activities
3. To explore the problem faced by the tea garden workers

of Assam in doing tea garden activities.

### Methodology

The study was carried out in Jorhat district of Assam. A multi stage purposive cum simple random sampling method was followed for selection of tea gardens from the Jorhat district. Four tea gardens under public cooperation from Jorhat sub-division were selected using purposive sampling method. From each selected tea gardens 30 tea garden workers were selected randomly. Altogether 120 numbers of respondents were selected for the present research study. A multistage purposive cum random sampling design was followed. Structured interview schedule was selected as a research tool and data was collected personally by the researcher.

### Result and Discussion

#### Socio-Economic status of the tea garden workers

From the Table1, it is revealed that 45.83 per cent of the respondents belonged to younger age group (18-30 years) and 81.67 per cent respondents were married. Most of the respondents (58.33%) belonged to Other Backward Caste (OBC) category. More than half of the respondents (54.17%) had daily wage earner as their main occupation of the head of the family. Most of the respondents (87.00%) belonged to nuclear families and very few per cent of the respondents belong to joint families. As far as family size is concerned 60.83 per cent of the respondents had small family followed by medium and large family size. In case of education, majority of the respondents (45.83%) had formal education up to middle school level followed by high school level and illiterate. The table revealed that majority (40.83%) of the respondents had no membership of any organization. Followed by 20.17 per cent were member of one organization and almost similar (30%) were member of more than one organization. More than half (51.67) percentage of the respondents lived in katcha house followed by mixed type of house and pucca house. Material possession referred to the household equipment possessed by the families of the tea garden workers used to perform various household activities. Numbers of respondents (43.33%) had medium level of material possession followed by low and high level of material possession. Majority of the respondents (39.16%) sometimes used the mass media exposure such as watching TV, use of mobile phone and reading newspaper etc.

**Table 1:** Distribution of respondents according to their Socio-Economic status of the tea garden workers of Assam

S. N.	Characteristics	Category	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
1	Earning per month	3000-4500	30	25.00
		4600-6100	60	50.00
		6200-7700	10	8.33
2	Family type	Nuclear	105	87.00
		Joint	15	13.00
3	Family size	Small(up to 4 members)	73	60.83
		Medium (5-8 members)	38	31.67
		Large (above 8 members)	9	7.50
4	Education	Illiterate	27	22.50
		Middle school level	55	45.83
		High school level	38	31.67
6	Organizational membership	No membership	49	40.83
		Member of one organization	35	29.17
		Member of more than one organization	36	30
7	Type of house	Katcha	62	51.67
		Mixed	30	25.00
		Pucca	28	23.33

8	Material possession	Low	43	44.16
		Medium	52	43.33
		High	15	12.50
9	Mass media exposure	Regularly	16	13.33
		Sometimes	47	39.16
		Never	57	47.50

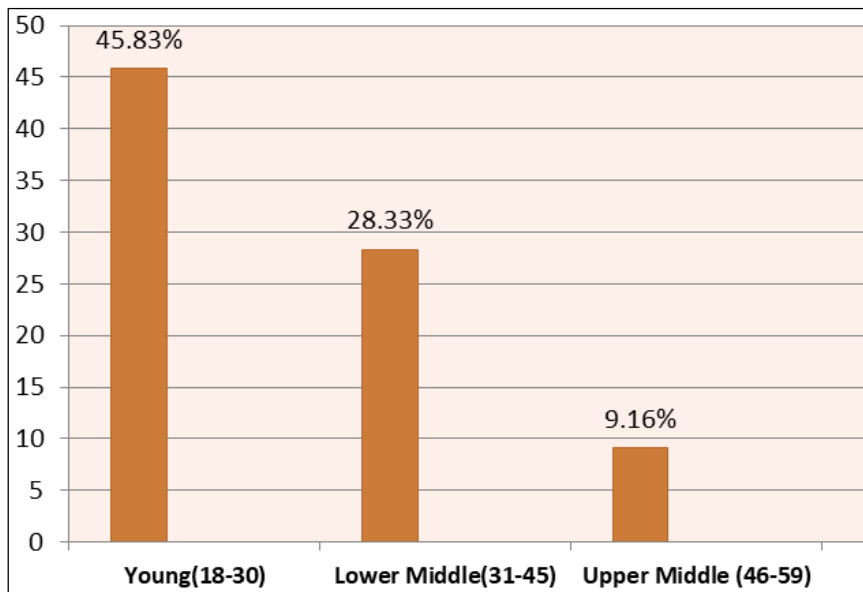


Fig 1: Distribution of the respondents according to age group

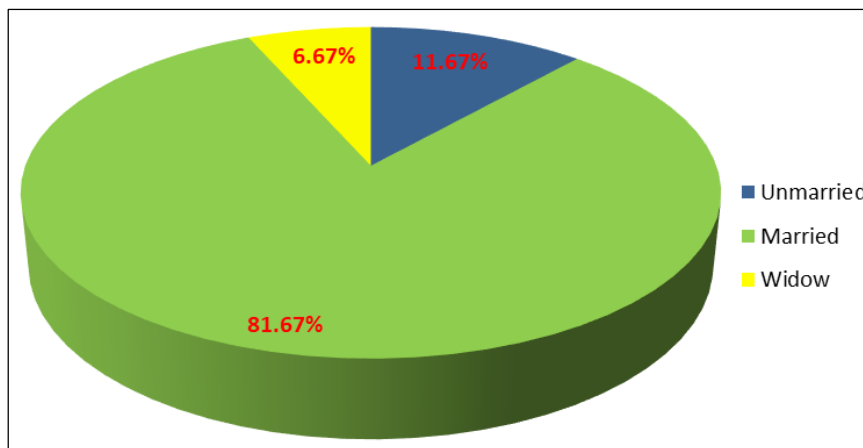


Fig 2: Distribution of the respondents according to marital status

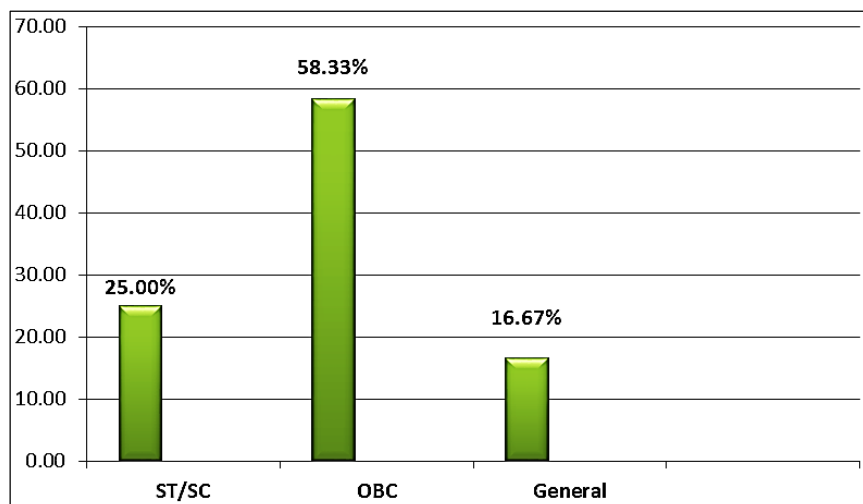
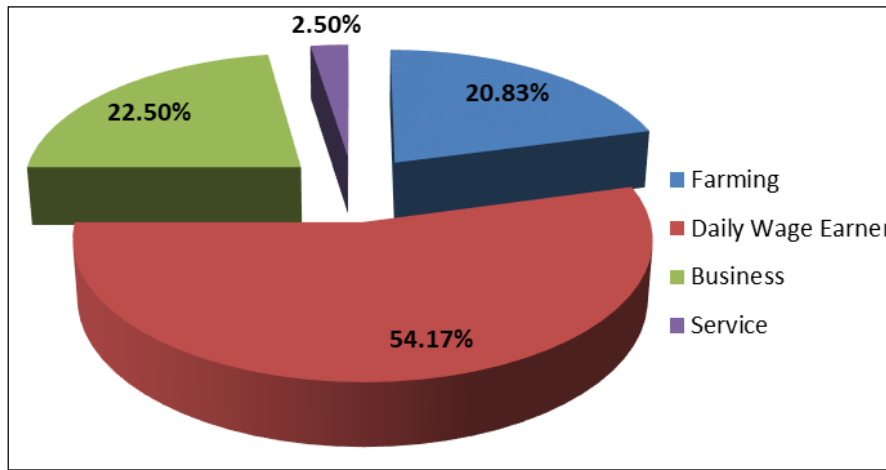


Fig 3: Distribution of the respondents according to caste



**Fig 4:** Distribution of the respondents according to Occupation of the head of the family

**Time Utilization pattern of tea garden workers of Assam**

The data presented in table 2 depicts that the number of hours spent daily by tea workers in tea garden and home related activities. In time period, tea garden workers spent 7.94 hours in working at tea garden in a day followed by 7.88 hours in sleeping, 2.08 hours in kitchen, 0.95 hours in watching TV,

listening radio etc, 0.91 hours in personal care, 0.81 hours in care for children and family, 0.60 hours in housekeeping, 0.29 in fetching water and cleaning, 0.28 hours in religious activities, 0.25 hours in collection of firewood, 0.10 hours in care for animals and 0.77 hours in social activities in a day.

**Table 2:** Distribution of the respondents according to the Time Utilization pattern of tea garden workers in different activities, N=120

S. N.	Type of Work	Hours per day
1	Working at tea garden	7.94
2	Kitchen work	2.08
3	Care for children and family	0.81
4	House keeping	0.69
5	Care of animals	0.10
6	Collection of fire wood	0.25
7	Social activities	0.77
8	Sleeping	7.88
9	Religious activities	0.28
10	Fetching water and cleaning	0.29
11	Watching TV, listening radio etc	0.95
12	Personal care	0.91

**Problems Faced by the tea garden workers of Assam**

The data in the table 3 revealed that insufficient wage was ranked I with mean score 2.99, followed by lack of toilet facilities at work was ranked II with mean score 2.95, no provisions for protective gears at work was ranked III with

mean score 2.82, back pain due to carrying of tea baskets for a long time was ranked IV with mean score 2.45, cuts and rashes on fingers and palm due to plucking of tea leaves was ranked V with mean score 2.43.

**Table 3:** Distribution of the respondents according to the Problems Faced by the tea garden workers in doing tea garden activities, N=120

S. N.	Problems	Mean Score	Rank
1	Cuts and rashes on fingers and palm due to plucking of tea leaves	2.43	V
2	Back pain due to carrying of tea baskets for a long time	2.45	IV
3	Insufficient wage	2.99	I
4	Lack of toilet facilities at work	2.95	II
5	No provisions for protective gears at work	2.82	III

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to analyze the “Role of tea garden workers in rural development of Assam: Issues and challenges” because tea garden workers are the major contributors in the rural development as well as the development of economy of the society or nation. It is evident that their work ranges from tea plantation to tea industry. For doing these activities’ tea garden workers faced lots of problems. Also, they worked hard in the tea industry but comparing to the work load they got less amount of money. So, their economic condition is not good enough. In spite of

this small tea gardening is one of the important entrepreneurial activities. They solve the problems of unemployability of the youth and also the one of the best work of the utilization of unutilized land. From this concept government have provided lots of helping hand for the improvement of tea gardening working condition and also improve the payment system. Government must formulate the policies to enhance their skills and their work should be counted in economic indicators. All these actions will bring some changes in the status of the tea garden workers in the society.

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