

Welfare Facilities in Tea Gardens - A Comparative Study of the Daisajan & Khobong Tea Estates of Tinsukia District

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Abstract

In North East India it is often seen that tea garden labourers are mostly socially excluded. In India maximum numbers of tea gardens are in north east region. The main purpose of this study was to explore the welfare facilities of the tea garden labourers in two tea estates namely, Daisajan and Khobong tea estates of Tinsukia District in Assam. A total number of 100 respondents were selected through convenience sampling from each tea estate. From the study around 40% of labourers from Daisajan Tea Estate and 50% from Khobong Tea Estate were not satisfied with the welfare facilities which were provided by the company and as a result their living of standard was very poor. On the other hand maximum of respondents for each tea estate were deprived of housing facilities as well as of medical facilities by the company. The overall conditions of the labourers were not satisfactory in both the two tea estates. Such a scenario could lead to inefficient utilization of human and physical resources and lower the quality of institutions and policies, erode social cohesion, and foster social conflict. These inequalities are often reflected in social exclusion, which public policy interventions should address. The artificial social environment created by the earlier British tea planters, continued by the present tea companies. The artificial confinement and age old exploitation and the poor socio-economic condition of the tea garden labourers indicate not only social exclusion but also the intensity of exclusion.

Keywords: *Welfare, Tea garden, Labourers, Social environment, Social exclusion.*

Introduction:

Labour welfare activities in an industrialized society has far reaching impact not only on the work force but also all the facts of human resources. Labour welfare includes all such activities, which not only secures existential necessities but also ensures improvement in spiritual and emotional quotient. It comprises of short-term and long terms goal toward building human society. As labour welfare is a dynamic concept, changes in its principles activities and the rationale supporting them have not been static.

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Labour welfare work aim at providing such service facilities and amenities which enable the workers employed in an organisation to perform their work in a healthy congenial surrounding conducive to good health and high morale. Labour welfare implies the setting up of minimum desirable standards and the provision facilities like health, food, clothing, medical, assistance, education, insurance, job security, recreation, and so on.

During the study, the researcher attempted to know the labour welfare measures provided by the company and to study the various dimensions of welfare measures as received by the worker and to explore the perception of the respondents regarding the various labour welfare measures provided to them. And to suggest suitable human resource development intervention programme used to improve the welfare facilities.

Labour welfare includes both statutory as well as non-statutory activities undertaken by the employers, trade unions and both the central and state governments for the physical and mental development of the workers. Labour welfare enables workers to have richer and more satisfying life. It raises the standard of living of workers by indirectly reducing the burden on their pocket. Welfare measures improve the physical and physiological health of the employees, which in turn enhance their efficiency and productivity. Labour welfare promotes a sense of belongings among the workers, preventing them from resorting to unhealthy practices like absenteeism, labour unrest strike, etc. welfare work improves the relations between employees and employers. It promotes a real change of heart and a change of outlook of the part of both the employers and employees.

Objectives of the study:

1. To analyse the living conditions of the tea garden labourers and the welfare amenities provided to them.
2. To find out the difference between the satisfaction level of the labourers with their welfare facilities provided by the companies.

Rationale of study:

It is seen that the labour problems are rising day by day. Companies always try their best to improve the welfare conditions of all workers. Tea industry has contributed substantially to the economy of Assam. About 17% of the workers of Assam are engaged in the tea industry and is one of the biggest contributors to the organised workforce of the economy. (The Govt. of Assam, official website). The tea industry of Assam has also been empowering women by giving them job opportunities in the tea garden.

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 avenues for social mobility have been a recurring theme since its inception in the early 19th century. The tea garden labour lines have unique identity as it is neither an urban nor industrial nor a rural area. Among the total tea garden working labourers in each tea garden only 30-40% of them are permanent employees. During the peak season, each garden employs casual labourers (also called as 'Faltoo labourers') at same wage structure but less benefits than that of the permanent labourers. 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 in the residential colonies makes tea garden population helpless to various communicable diseases and malnutrition.

Incidence of exclusion prevailed in the past and is prevailing in the contemporary societies despite the continuous effort for inclusion. In every human society there is a group which is larger but excluded due to caste, creed, colour, sex, income, social status or any other such consideration. The Indian society is not exceptional to this. Caste has been the dominant factor of social classification and exclusion in India since long back. In ancient India Brahmin, Kshatriya, Baishya and Sudras were the four classifications and the Sudras were the lowest caste and socially excluded. Such instance of exclusion either on the basis of caste or income consideration is available in every human society around the world since time immemorial.

Research Methodology:

Universe of study: The study universe comprised of two tea estates of Tinsukia District in Assam. Daisajan Tea Estate is located near Doomdoma town in Tinsukia District, Assam. Total population in the estate was 2500, 709 permanent labour workers and around 85 staff members. There were 84 factory workers, 41 staff members, 2 Asst. Managers, 1 Factory Asst. Manager, 1 Manager and also 1 Doctor and 2 nurses in the hospital.

Khobong Tea Estate is located at Talap area under Tinsukia District, Assam. There was 3500 population, where 2075 were permanent workers and 150 temporary workers, 9 Executive Staff and 73 clerical as well as medical and Asst. staff. The total production in a year was around 1900000 kg. There were 27 lines surrounding an area of 1548.43 hectares.

Sampling procedure: For the purpose of this study stratified random sampling was used for the data collection in both the tea estates since this study was attempted to highlight the locality of the tea estates which do have easy access to basic amenities.

Sample size: 100 respondents were chosen as sample from each tea estates.

Method of data collection: For the study, interview schedule was used as a tool for data collection.

Analysis and Discussions:

1. Awareness about the various welfare programmes - From the table 1 it is seen that in Khobong Tea Estate 50% of labourers were aware about the various welfare programme that are ensured for an employee, 40% were not aware about this and 10% were to some extent aware about the various welfare programme. On the other hand, in Daisajan Tea State 53% of labourers were aware about the various welfare programme, 38% were not aware and 9% were aware to some extent.

Table 1: Awareness about the various welfare programmes.

Respondents View	Khobong Tea Estate		Daisajan Tea Estate		Total
	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage	
Yes	50	50%	53	53%	103
To Some Extent	10	10%	9	9%	19
No	40	40%	38	38%	78
Total	100	100%	100	100%	200

2. Satisfaction level of the labourers regarding the medical facilities - From the table 2 it is seen that in Daisajan Tea Estate 40% of labourers were moderately satisfied, 30% were satisfied, 25% were dissatisfied and only 5% were highly satisfied with the medical facilities provided by the company. On the other hand, in Khobong Tea Estate 51% of labourers were moderately satisfied, 20% were satisfied, 26% were dissatisfied and only 3% were highly satisfied with this facility.

Table 2: Satisfaction level of the labourers regarding the medical facilities.

Respondents View	Daisajan Tea Estate		Khobong Tea Estate		Total
	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage	
Highly Satisfied	5	5%	3	3%	8
Satisfied	30	30%	20	20%	50
Moderately satisfied	40	40%	51	51%	91
Dissatisfied	25	25%	26	26%	51
Total	100	100%	100	100%	200

3. Doctors and Nurses available in the garden Hospital - It has seen that in Daisajan Tea Estate there were 1 doctor and 2 nurses only. On the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate there were 2 doctors, 2 nurses and 2 pharmacists.

4. Availability of canteen facility in the workplace - It is found that 100% respondents' view was yes about the canteen facility provided by the company in both the Tea Estate.

5. Availability of crèche facility in the workplace - It is found that 100% of labourers' view was yes regarding the crèches facility provided by the company in both the tea estates.

6. Availability of housing facility for the workers - 100% of respondents' view was yes in terms of providing housing facility by the company in both the tea estates. The table 3 shows that in Daisajan Tea Estate out of 100 respondents 65 of labourers were dissatisfied with the condition of houses which is provided by the company, 20% were moderately satisfied and 15% were satisfied with the housing condition. On the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate out of 100 respondents 43 of labourers were moderately satisfied with the condition of houses which is provided by the company, 37% were dissatisfied and 18% were satisfied with the housing condition.

Table 3: Opinions on Condition of Housing Facilities.

Respondents View	Daisajan Tea Estate		Khobong Tea Estate		Total
	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage	
Highly Satisfied	0	0%	2	2%	2
Satisfied	15	15%	18	18%	33
Moderately satisfied	20	20%	43	43%	63
Dissatisfied	65	65%	37	37%	102
Total	100	100%	100	100%	200

7. Leave with full payment of wages - In Daisajan Tea Estate labourers get maximum 14 days leave with full payment of wages. On the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate labourers get maximum 20 days leave with full payment of wages in a year.

8. Provision of maternity and paternity leave benefit - Data shows that 100% of labourers in both Daisajan and Khobong Tea Estate viewed affirmative in terms of providing the maternity leave benefit.

9. Satisfaction regarding the maternity benefits scheme - It is seen that in Daisajan Tea Estate 45% of labourers were moderately satisfied with the maternity and paternity leave benefit, 35% labourers were satisfied on the other hand 20% are dissatisfied with these benefits provided by the company. In Khobong Tea Estate 44% of labourers were satisfied with the maternity and paternity leave benefit, 39% were moderately satisfied on the other hand 17% were dissatisfied with these benefits.

10. Satisfaction level regarding sanitation facilities at work place - It is seen that in Daisajan Tea Estate 46% of labourers were moderately satisfied with the sanitary facility provided by the company but 36% of labourers were dissatisfied with this and only 18% of labourers were satisfied with this facility. In Khobong Tea Estate 34% of labour were moderately satisfied with the sanitary facility provided by the company and also 34% of labourers were satisfied with this and 32% of labourers were satisfied with this facility.

11. Availability of proper drinking water facilities in the working area - In Daisajan Tea Estate 52% of labourers disagreed that proper drinking water is provided during working time, while 48% of agreed that they were getting. On the other hand, in Khobong Tea Estate 33% of labourers disagreed and 67% of labourers agreed that they were provided proper drinking water during working time.

12. Labours' satisfaction level in terms of amount of bonus - It is seen that in Daisajan Tea Estate 40% of labourers were dissatisfied with the amount of bonus provided by the company. On the other hand 37% were moderately satisfied and 23% labourers were satisfied with this facility. It is also found that in Khobong Tea Estate 45% of labourers were dissatisfied with the amount of bonus provided by the company. On the other hand 39% were moderately satisfied and 16% labourers were satisfied with this facility.

13. Provision for school bus facilities for the children - All respondents in both the tea estates agreed that the school bus facility was provided by the company.

14. Availability of schools inside the garden - Out of 100 respondents 91 of respondents viewed that there was no sufficient number of schools inside the

garden, while only 9% of respondents viewed it was sufficient in Daisajan Tea Estate. On the other hand, out of 100 respondents 59 viewed that there was no sufficient number of schools inside the garden and only 41 of respondents agreed that it was sufficient in Khobong Tea Estate.

15. Opinion regarding the amount of gratuity payment - In Daisajan Tea Estate 55% of labourers were not satisfied with the amount of pension payment, 30% of respondents were moderately satisfied and rest of 15% were only satisfied. On the other hand, in Khobong Tea Estate 45% of labourers were moderately satisfied with the amount of pension payment, 31% dissatisfied and rest of only 24% were satisfied.

16. Amount of ration - It is seen that in Daisajan Tea Estate labourers used to get 200gm ration per person on daily basis. On the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate they used to get 326 gm ration on daily basis.

17. Satisfaction regarding ration provided by the company - It is seen that in Daisajan Tea Estate 40% of labourers were moderately satisfied with the ration provided by the organization, 36% were dissatisfied and other rest of the 24% labourers were satisfied with the ration provided by the organization. On the other hand, in Khobong Tea Estate 47% of labourers were moderately satisfied with the ration provided by the organization, 34 % of were satisfied and other rest of the 19% labourers were dissatisfied with the ration provided by the company.

18. Views on the Employees Family Benefit Scheme - It is seen that in Daisajan Tea Estate 80% of the respondents agreed with the statement that Employee Family Benefit Scheme was really helpful for a family after the death of an employee. On the other hand 20% of employees had no idea about this. On the other hand, in Khobong Tea Estate 60% of labourers were agreed with the statement that Employee Family Benefit Scheme was really helpful for a family after the death of an employee. On the other hand 36% of labourers had no idea about this and 4% employees were not agreed with the statement.

19. Security for the labourers working night shift - It is seen that in Daisajan Tea Estate 70% of labourers viewed that organization did not take proper care of the labourers in working at night shift and 30% of labourers viewed affirmative. On the other hand, in Khobong Tea Estate 52% of labourers viewed that organization do not take proper care of the working at night shift and 48% of labourers viewed affirmative.

Findings:

- In Daisajan Tea Estate, 50% labourers were aware about the various welfare programmes of the organization. On the other hand in Khobong tea estate, 58% labourers were aware about this welfare facility.
- In Daisajan Tea Estate majority of 40% of labourers were moderately satisfied, 30% were satisfied and 25% labourers were dissatisfied with the medical facilities provided by the company. On the other hand in case of Daisajan Tea Estate 51% of labourers were moderately satisfied, 20% were satisfied and 26% labourers were dissatisfied with this facilities.
- In Daisajan Tea Estate 65% of labourers were dissatisfied with the housing condition which was provided by the company. On the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate 37% were dissatisfied with these facilities.
- In Daisajan Tea Estate labourers get maximum 14 days leave with full payment of wages in a year on the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate labourers get maximum 20 days leave with full payment of wages in a year.
- In Daisajan Tea Estate maximum number of labourers i.e. 45% was moderately satisfied with the maternity leave benefit and on the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate maximum number of labourers i.e. 44% were satisfied with this benefit provided by the company.
- In Daisajan Tea Estate only 18% were satisfied with the sanitation facility provided by the company. On the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate 34 % of labourers were satisfied with this sanitation facility.
- In Daisajan Tea state 52% of labourers' view was 'No' and 48% of labourers' view was 'Yes' regarding providing proper drinking water during working time. On the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate 33% of labourers' view was 'No' and 67% of labourers' view was 'Yes' regarding providing proper drinking water during working time.
- In Daisajan Tea Estate 40% of labourers were dissatisfied, 37% are moderately satisfied and 23% labourers were satisfied with the amount of bonus provided by the company. On the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate 45% of labourers were dissatisfied, 39% are moderately satisfied and 16% labourers were satisfied with the amount of bonus .
- In Daisajan Tea Estate 55% of labourers were dissatisfied with the amount of pension payment on the other hand in Khobong Tea Estate 31% of labours were dissatisfied.
- In Daisajan Tea Estate 36% of labourers were dissatisfied with the ration provided by the organization. But in case of Khobong Tea Estate 19% of labourers were dissatisfied with the ration provided by the company.
- In Daisajan Tea Estate 70% of labourers viewed that company do not take proper care of the labourers working at night shift and but in case of Khobong

Tea Estate 52% of labourers viewed that company takes proper care of the employees working at night shift.

Suggestions:

- Medical facilities should be upgraded to improve the health condition of the labourers.
- Housing condition should be improved and well maintained so that all workers can be able to get the minimum level of satisfaction.
- Medical leave facility should be provided to all labourers so that they can take rest if they are sick and they can get away from the burden of their work.
- Sanitation facility should be improved inside the factory and it should be clean and hygienic.
- The organisation should set up public taps, tube wells and drinking water facility should be supplied to all workers during the working time.
- Amount of pension should be improved to maximize the labourer's satisfaction.
- Ration should be provided by the organisation due to the poor economic condition of the labourers, so that they get the benefit of food grains and other products.
- Family benefit scheme should be provided to the labourers to get rid of such issues like health, children's education etc.
- Proper care should be taken to the labourers who are working at night shift, the companies should pay extra hourly rate for night shifts workers.

Conclusion:

As per the study it was observed that in Daisajan and Khobong Tea Estate were providing various facilities to the workers and also were following the rules and regulation of state and Indian Government. The management required to provide good facilities to all workers in such way that workers were satisfied with the labour welfare facilities. It increases productivity as well as quality and quantity.

The industry in Assam in general and tea industry in particular have long been neglecting the human right aspect of the organization. Most of the industries do not even have a personnel manager. Now the time has come for the tea industries of Assam to realize that in order to produce extra ordinary result, organizations will have to depend a great deal on human aspect as this will help in bringing about the much needed competitive edge. This has made 'labour relation' more significant and meaningful. The tea industry should understand that technology is no longer monopoly nor is the availability of money, but what may be monopoly would be the people associated with the business

organization. The competitor of the industry can duplicate the business strategies, but cannot duplicate the people.

Income inequalities pose a danger to social and political stability, and the sustainability of the growth process itself. The pursuit for equal opportunities stems from the belief that it is a basic human right to be treated equally in terms of access to opportunities. Equal access to opportunities increases growth potential and conversely, inequality in opportunities diminishes growth and makes it unsustainable. Such a scenario could lead to inefficient utilization of human and physical resources and lower the quality of institutions and policies, erode social cohesion, and foster social conflict. These inequalities are often reflected in social exclusion, which public policy interventions should address. The artificial social environment created by the British tea planters and continued by the present tea companies, the artificial confinement and age old exploitation and the poor socio-economic condition of the tea garden labourers indicate not only social exclusions but also the intensity of exclusion.

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