

Child Labour in the Tea Garden Area: A Study on Rajgarh Tea Estate, Dibrugarh

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ABSTRACT

Child labour is one of the burning problems of any society. Assamese society is also not free from its blessings. Child labour is also observed in Assam in various areas like coal mines, street baggers, street pickers, factories, houses etc. This study is an attempt to investigate the causes of child labour in the Rajgarh Tea Estate of Dibrugarh District of Assam with the following objectives like socio-economic condition, daily income of the children, educational qualification and living condition. The study concluded that the effect of child labour in this region also prevail and found that the children are still deprive of their fundamental right.

Key Words : Child labour, Tea garden, Tea estate

INTRODUCTION

Childhood is considered as the most important period of life in every one's life cycle. The future of a child is vastly depends on the childhood. It is the period which known as the base of life which shapes a child future and his/her whole life depends on it. There are many social hazards which can damage a child future; child labour is one of them. Thus, child labour is a restricted sense means of employment of children in gainful occupations which are dangerous to their health and deny them to the opportunities of development (Selva, 2005 and Joshi, 2006).

Child labour is a universal phenomenon. The problem of child labour has emerged as a harsh reality in India during the part of twentieth century (Joshi, 2006). The term child labour means both the "employed child" and the "working child". The term child labour not only applies to the children working industries but also the children working in all forms of non-industrial occupations which are injurious to their physical, mental and social development (Selva 2005).

India has the largest child population in the world

with approximately 42% population below the age of 15 years including (15.37 % i.e. 157.8 million children between the age group of 0-6 years). Unemployment makes a man absolutely poor, when adults are unable or fail to get them employed, there is on option left except to depend on children employment. The problem of child labour is commonly prevalent in all the developing countries. The problem of child labour is rooted in the socio-economic, education, poverty conditions, prevailing in a country child labour refers to any work performed by a person usually below 14 years of age (Selva, 2005).

Child labour is not only inhuman but also destroys the vitals of pestering wasting away thousands of future citizens. Millions of children work to help their families in ways that are either harmful or exploitative. Child labour is the practice of having children engage in economic activity on part or full time basis. The practice deprives children of their childhood and is harmful to their physical and mental development. Poverty, lack of good school and growth of informal economy are considered as the important causes of child labour in India (Joshi, 2006).

Child labour is perhaps one of the most visible forms of discrimination against children. Every day on estimated

215 million boys and girls works as child labour in the farms, fields, factories and houses etc. (Joshi, 2006).

Child labour is violation of the fundamental human right and has been shown to hinder children's development potentially leading to lifelong physical and psychological damage. Evidence point to a strong link between household poverty and child labour and child perpetuates poverty across generation by keeping children of the poor out of the school and limiting their prospects for upward social mobility (Saikia, 2008).

Child labours have been part arming a variety of works from dawn to dusk at their early childhood age between 5-14 years. Child labour is generally recognized as having an influence up on the supply of labour resulting in unemployment and low wages for both young workers and adults. Child labour is the product of circumstances of the family and economic condition of the nation (Report of ILO, 1996).

As per Census 2011, India, with a population of 121.1 Corer, has 16.45 Cr children in the age group 0-6 years and 37.24 Corer in the age group 0-14 years which constitute 13.59% and 30.76% of the total population, respectively. 48% of the child population in the age group 0-14 years is female. 74% of the children (0-6 years) live in rural areas where as the rural population constitute 69% of the total population of India (Children in India 2018 - A Statistical Appraisal).

Objective of the study:

Keeping the above aspects in consideration the study was carried out with the following objectives:

- To know about the socio-economic condition and the family background of the children at work.
- To know about the daily income of the children of Rajgarh tea estate who are working as a child labour in that area.
- To know about the educational qualification of working children.
- To know about the living condition of working children in that area.

Research questions:

However, there are certain questions arise in the mind of the researcher while conducting the research work. These questions were given below:

- Is the poverty considered as a factor of child labour?
- What are the causes that have forced the child

to involve as a labour?

- Is the primary education system helps to remove the child labour?

Significance of the study:

Children are the supremely important asset of any nation. Children need to develop in a free and competitive way. Childhood is the period when the foundation for secured and prosperous future is built and children who have not been able to get into school and are working in unhygienic and harmful conditions without rest and leisure are definitely missing many things in life. The child labour is a multi-dimensional problem. Child labour is a major problem in the world today. Many children in poor families as sent to work because of poverty and so are not given a fair chance to move out of the poverty trap into which they have been born. A child is differentiated from adult worker on the ground of age. The problem of child labour is inter-related to the problem of living wage of adult worker.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in one of the 33 district of Assam. Assam is a beautiful and diverse state with an incredible range of cultures and landscapes located in the North East of India. Assam has an area of 78,550 sq. km and the total population of Assam is 31,169,272 (as per 2011 census) and the literacy of Assam is 73.18%. Dibrugarh is one of an administrative district of Assam, occupying areas of 3,381 sq. km. According to 2011 census, the population of Dibrugarh is 13, 27,748. Dibrugarh has the world largest area covered by tea gardens and the majority of the population belongs to the Tea tribe.

The universe for the study is purposively selected from the tea gardens of Dibrugarh District. The Tea garden so selected is the Rajgarh Tea Estate. This was established in the year 1918. The Tea Estate is spread to an area of 447.44 hectores where a total of 589 workers including 293 workers of the male category and 296 workers of the female category.

Nature and source of data:

For the fulfilment of the objectives of the study both primary as well as secondary data will be used. With the help of purposive sampling method data were collected from the household of the Rajgarh Tea Estate especially the workers category. The study was conducted from

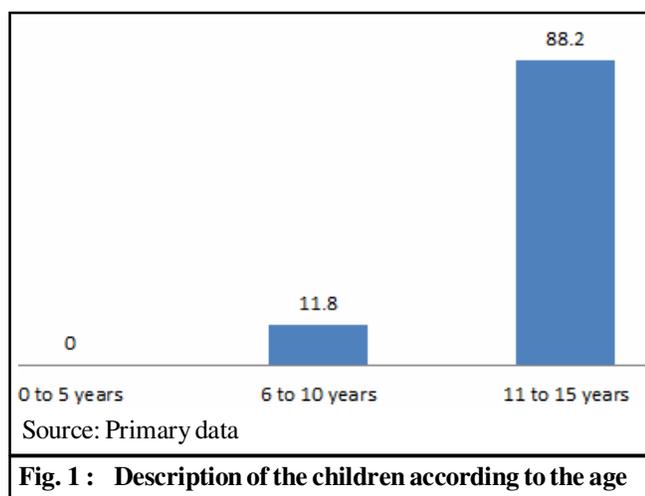
the 51 no of households. The researcher collected the data through interview schedule and personal observation methods. Different kinds of tools such as camera, note book, pen, recorder etc. were also used for the collection of necessary data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As discussed earlier, the analysis of the study was carried out in various different heads and categories. In this study, 51 households were selected purposively and the study was carried out. The data were analysed chronologically below:

Age wise distribution of the Children:

In this study, children are selected from the age group of 0 to 15 years. The age group from 0 to 15 years were divided into three categories *i.e.* 0 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years and 11 to 15 years. The Fig. 1 given indicates the age of children engaged in child labour.

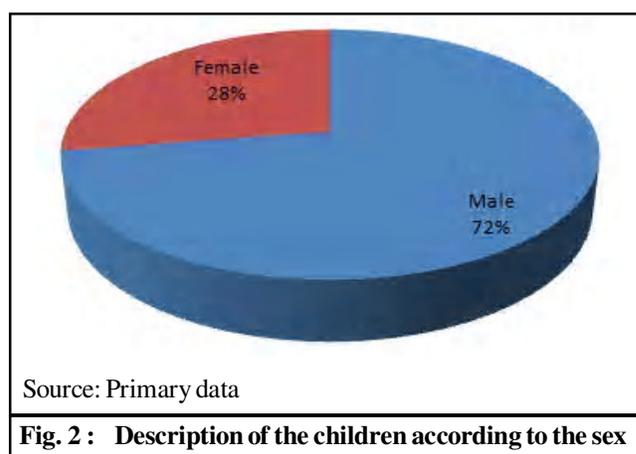


The diagram given above, it has been observed that there are no children between the age group 0 to 5 years who are working as child labour. But the child belonging to the age group 11 to 15 years has the highest per cent of child labour *i.e.* 88.2% among the selected respondents followed by the age group 6 to 10 years *i.e.* 11.8.

Sex wise distribution of the Children:

The data relating to the sex were collected in two different categories. They are male and female as shown in the Fig. 2. Most of the children in this study are found to be male *i.e.* 72.5 % children are working as child labour. However, there are also female children who are

engaged as child labour in various works.



Educational status wise distribution of the Children:

In order to determine the educational qualification of the respondents, the data were collected in four different parameters. The four different parameters are illiterate, lower primary, middle school and high school as shown in the Table 1. In case of educational qualification among the respondents it has been observed that all the children who are engaged in child labour are either illiterate or they do not have the primary qualification. As shown in the Table 1, 35.3 % of the respondents are illiterate and 64.7 % respondents are only at the primary level. There are no children who are either having the middle school qualification or high school qualification. As the table suggest, the culture of schooling among the children of the Rajgarh Tea Estate is very poor. However, one cannot state any reason for the cause without understanding the other factors. Let us see the other factors associated with the lower level of schooling and the causes of child labour.

Table 1 : Representation of children educational qualification		
Particulars	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	18	35.3
Lower primary	33	64.7
Middle school	0	0
High school	0	0
Total	51	100.0

Source: Primary data

Economic condition of parents:

One of the most important criteria for a child to work as a labour at a premature age is the economic condition of the parents. In the study, economic condition

is considered as one of the criteria for the cause of child labour and it is judge in two different parameters. The two different parameters are job status of the parents and annual income of the parents.

Job status of the parents:

In this Among the 51 respondents it has been observed that the job status of the parents were not satisfactory. The job statuses of the parents were divided into six different categories. The categories were daily wage labour, permanent worker, Govt. Employee, Entrepreneur, Farmer and Other occupation. As the Table 2. A. Indicates, most of the respondents parents were daily wage labour (80.4 % father and 72.5 %), very few parents were permanent workers (13.7 % father and 11.8 % mother). There are no one's parents who are either govt. employee or entrepreneur. However, there are some cases where the respondents do not have either father or mother.

Annual income of the parents:

In order to determine the economic condition of the two parameters were taken, annual income of the parents is the second parameter. Income of a person is directly related to child labour. In this study, the incomes of the parents were taken into consideration while determining the economic condition as a factor of child labour. In the following table the income of the parents were explain.

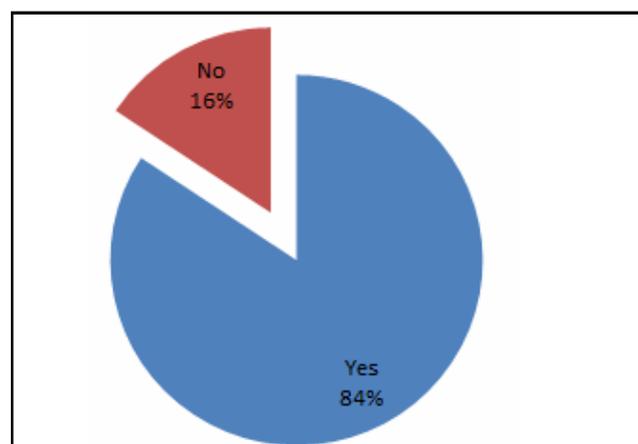
As shown in the given Table 3, the incomes of the parents were divided into three categories. In has been observed that the most of the parents income belong to

the second category *i.e.* Rs. 20001 to Rs. 30000. In this category it is observed that 80.4 % of the father and 49 % of the mother have their earning. In the third category, very few household has the annual income.

Alcoholism:

Alcohol is one of the most important harmful social substances which not only affect the family but also the society as well. In this study, alcoholism is taken as another parameter to measure the child labour. Following diagram, a detail of the family members regarding alcoholism has been shown.

As the Fig. 3 shows, almost all the family members of the selected respondent are alcoholic. Only 15.7 % of the family members of the respondents were found as



Source: Primary data

Fig. 3 : Representation of alcoholic among the family

Table 2 : Representation of job status of the parents

Particulars	Father	Percentage (%) of the father	Mother	Percentage (%) of the mother
Daily wage worker	41	80.4	37	72.5
Permanent worker	7	13.7	6	11.8
Other occupation	-	-	4	7.8
No father/mother	3	5.9	4	7.8
Total	51	100.0	51	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table 3 : Representation of annual income of the parents

Income Groups	Father's income	Percentage (%)	Mother's income	Percentage (%)
Rs. 10001 to Rs. 20000	3	5.9	2	3.9
Rs. 20001 to Rs. 30000	41	80.4	25	49.0
Rs. 30001 to Rs. 40000	4	7.8	20	39.2
No Father / Mother	3	5.9	4	7.8
Total	51	100.0	51	100.0

Source: field survey.

non-alcoholic. In this study it is seen that 84.3 % of the family members of the respondents used alcohol.

Number of family members and children's:

In a family number of children always affect the family income. Greater the number of children, more the requirement of income because per children expenditure increases. In this head, a cross tabulation is shown between the number of family members and the number of children that each family has.

The Table 4 given, two variables *i.e.* no. of family members and no. of children are taken. No. of family members is shown in the row and No. of children is shown in the column and both the total are shown in the last box. It is observed from the Table 4 that there are families having a total of 3 members up to 13 members. In case of no. of children in a family, it is observed that there are families having children from 1 to 11. The highest number of children in a family is 11 where the total family member is 13. In case of highest frequency, no. of children is 3 and 5 whereas the highest frequency of family members is 5 and 6 families were found.

Till now all the discussion is being presented on the factors affecting the cause of child labour. The points given below are the discussion of the combined factors and the cause and effect relationship. For example child labour with respect to the causes of child labour.

Discussion of the study:

As discussed in the earlier chapters, the study was conducted in the Rajgarh tea estate of Dibrugarh District of Assam. From the above analysis it is observed that

though child labour is recognised as one of the social hazards, but the practice of child labour is still exist in the societies like this. The practice of child labour is affected by many causes. In this study very few causes of child labour are taken into consideration. As discussed by earlier researchers in their studies, concludes poverty and inadequate public education infrastructure are some of the causes of child labour in India. According to a 2008 study by ILO, among the most important factors driving children to harmful labour is the lack of availability and quality of schooling. Many communities, particularly rural areas do not possess adequate school facilities. Even when schools are sometimes available, they are too far away, difficult to reach, unaffordable or the quality of education is so poor that parents wonder if going to school is really worthwhile. In government-run primary schools, even when children show up, government-paid teachers do not show up 25% of the time.

In this study also similar kind of findings were generated. It is observed that the cause of child labour in this region are economic condition of the people, poor education, low level of awareness among the people and low government interest. However, another reason of child labour was the use of alcohol as a means of entertainment, satisfaction and as meanslife sustainability. In this study it is also found that majority of the children are from the age group of 11 years to 15 years and the income of the family is in between Rs. 20001 to Rs. 30000. The education as a cause shows that the children are either does not have any qualification or they are upto primary standards. It can be concluded that child labour as a means of most dangerous and harmful social hazard

Table 4 : Description of the family members and the number of children's

Number of family members	No of children											Total	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
4	1	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
5	-	3	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
6	-	-	1	7	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
7	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
8	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
9	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	4
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	5
12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Total	3	6	10	7	11	1	3	2	5	2	1		51

Source: Primary data

still prevail in our society and there is a need to have a better understanding of the situation and also reforms are needed for the same.

Suggestions:

While conducting the study it was found that there are many problems relating to the child labour. On the basis of those problems some suggestion were given below:

- Education is one of the most important defences to abolish child labour from the society. A right to education is indispensable in the interpretation of a development as human rights. Education of children is an important right of a child. Education is critical for economic and social development for not only of the children but also for the family. The social benefits of education spread in many directions. Education leads to better health care, smaller family norms, greater community and political participation, less income inequality and a greater reduction of absolute poverty.

- Immediately conduct a thorough, effective, and transparent large-scale investigation of the child labour practice and human rights violations in this region and with the full participation victims.

- To ensure full and effective implementation of the Indian Constitution and the Child Labour Act that India has framed. Conduct a nation-wide comprehensive study of the causes, nature and extent of child labour and human trafficking, identify the causes of malfunctions and take all necessary measures to solve problems.

- No child below the age fifteen years shall be employed in work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment. The identified children are to be withdrawn from these occupations & processes and then put into special schools in order to enable them to be mainstreamed into formal schooling system.

- Any person who employs any child in contravention of the provisions of Section 3 of the Act is liable for punishment with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than three months but which may extend to one year, or with fine which shall not be less than Rs 10,000 but which may extend to Rs. 20,000, or both (Section 14 of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986) (Source: <http://labour.nic.in/cwl/childlabour.html>).

Concluding observation:

This study was carried to examine the various aspect of child labour like the economic condition, living standard, educational qualification, income generated by the children

for the family etc. From the study it can be identified that the life of children of Rajgarh Tea Estate of Dibrugarh district are not in a very advantageous level. Infact, it was seen that these children like other tea garden children are too engaged in child labour and allied activities. From the study, it was also found that no one, the tea garden authority, parents, local agencies and even government have shown interest to remove child labour from that area. If it continues like this then one day the future of these children as well as the future of the country will be in dark. It is not only the responsibility of the government but also the responsibility of the common people to think and rethink over this matter and find some permanent solution of this problem.

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