

Women Labor in Temi Tea Garden of Sikkim: Rising Challenges and Changing Course

Renuka Sharma¹ and Namgyal DomaBhutia²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Geography, Kumaun University, Nainital

²Assistant Professor Department of English Sikkim Government College, Gyalshing
E-mail: renukasharmask@gmail.com, nambyb@yahoo.com

Abstract—India is one of the major tea producer and exporter in the world. This tea production in India was started in the 18th century by the Colonial Government to meet the supply of growing demand for tea in the world market. To work in the tea gardens, labors were indentured from various places. But the labors were subjected to inhumane conditions of living and the women's labors faced gender discrimination as far as wages were concerned. Most of the tea garden workers suffer from the uncontrolled hunger, poverty and unemployment, problems like illiteracy, drop-out, malnutrition, and various incurable diseases, combined with the effect of the vulnerabilities of trafficking of children and women in particular have become a trend in the surrounding areas of Tea gardens. It becomes all the more important to understand women's agency of labors in the changing plantation landscape, when women constitute more than half of the workforce in the tea garden. The paper, through case studies established across various contexts that women have negotiated and emerged from the contours of power and authority and their own space at work and the household. An attempt has been made in this study to examine the nature and types of gender discrimination, their challenges and the changing orientation among the women workers of Temi Tea Garden, Ravangla, South Sikkim.

Keywords: Tea Garden, Gender, Labor, Discrimination, Challenges, Changes, Temi Ravangla.

Introduction

Sikkim is an ancient Himalayan mountain kingdom annexed in May 1975 to the Indian Federation. It has become one of the most prosperous states in the country since its independence with frequent rises in many socioeconomic parameters bringing strong economic growth and socio-cultural stability (Jhaetal 2007). Horticulture is one of the people of Sikkim's major economic activities. The main crops are large cardamom, ginger and turmeric. The country is also a flowers paradise. Gladioli, Anthurium, lillium, Primula, rhododendron and many other flowering plants flourish here. Located in the southern district touching the bottom of the popular West District Tendong Hill, Temi Tea is managed by the state's industry department. Tea quality is often comparable to tea from Darjeeling. The garden was established with an estimated 437 acres area in 1969. It has a total of 406 workers and 43 employees. It produces about 100mt of tea annually. The state government funds all

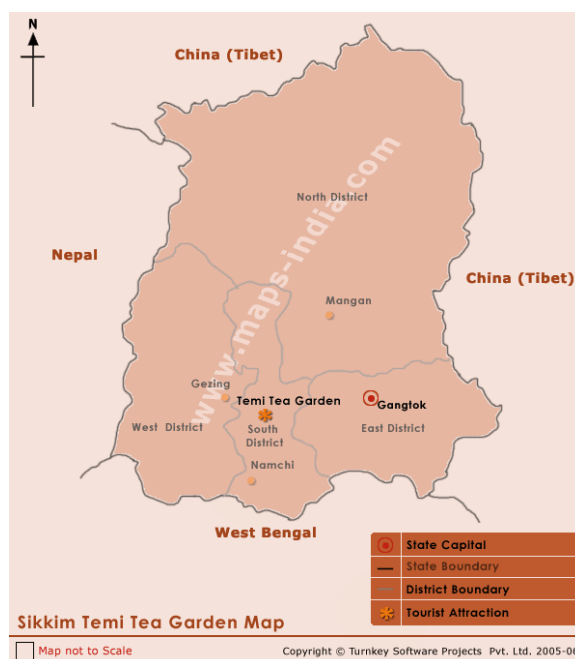
activities of the tea plantation, salaries and wages as per the rates fixed by the state.

Objective

To examine the nature and kind of changes that has been taken to improve the condition of the ladies laborers of Temi Tea Garden with the changing course of time.

Methodology

Gathering verbal information through interview among the female laborers and the officers (Temi tea, MD, Mrinalini Srivastava (IPS) and Field Assistant, Lawrence) of Temi tea garden. Group discussion method was used with the women workers to know about the facilities and initiatives taken to improve the condition of the women workers. The paper likewise depends on full-scale information, reports, books and diaries.



The Study Area

Location Map:

The Temi Tea Garden (27.2367°N 88.4222°E) in Temi, set up in 1969 by the Government of Sikkim, is situated in South Sikkim in the northeastern Indian province of Sikkim. It is the main tea garden in Sikkim and thought about truly outstanding in India and in the world. Top quality tea is created, which is sought after in the worldwide market. The nursery is laid over a slowly slanting slope. The tea created in this nursery is additionally halfway showcased under the exchange name "Temi Tea. The rules gave by the Institute of Marketology (IMO) of Switzerland to create natural tea have been embraced in the Temi Tea Garden; an undertaking started in April 2005 and nearing finishing. In developing natural tea, agro-synthetic concoctions are kept away from by the tea homes that outcome in low generation costs. Numerous European nations and Japan have indicated inclination for tea created by receiving natural manuring technique. The Temi Tea home was built up in 1969 covering a region of 177 hectares (440 sections of land). The lie of the land shows delicate slants that begin from the Tendong slope extend. The ground conditions show loamy soils with incline of 30–half. The ground surface is liable to direct disintegration and is spread with sensible level of stones. The nursery has 406 laborers upheld by a staff of 43. Its yearly tea generation is on a normal around 100 tons. The domain capacities under a Tea Board set up by the Government of Sikkim and under its aegis the 'Sang-Martam Tea Growers' Cooperative Society' has been built up to advance developing of various assortments of value tea."

History

In the mid eighteenth century, the British presented another sort of economy in India, the estate of Tea. There was an enormous interest for tea in England which was provided by China in return of bullion. Be that as it may, with the Charter Act of 1833, nullified the exchange between British India and China because of which tea ranch was acquainted in India with supplement the developing interest for tea on the planet advertise. To work in the tea gardens, works were obligated from different spots. However, the works were exposed to in human states of living and the ladies work confronted sexual orientation segregation to the extent wages were concerned. They got less pay than their male partners. Further ladies were dependent upon more abuse like the European burra sahibs used to ravish the recently wedded virgin spouses of the tea garden laborers. In this way viciousness against ladies in the tea nursery can be followed from time of provincial guideline. In the post pilgrim period, the brutality against ladies in the tea nurseries has expanded. They faced issues like sexual maltreatment, powerlessness to substance exchange, aggressive behavior at home and segregation in compensation.

Since economic progression, the manor business of the world has observer significant emergencies. The quick end result of

infection and conclusion of tea nurseries fell legitimately on the laborers, their relative and especially youngsters having a place with socially and financial minimized inborn and non-ancestral networks. The majority of the tea garden laborers experience the ill effects of uncontrolled of appetite and destitution and joblessness, issues like lack of education, ailing health's and different serious maladies and joined with impact of vulnerabilities of dealing of youngsters and ladies specifically. This type of treatment is still prevalent around the Tea states of Assam and West Bengal (IJEDR, 2017,vol.5, issue 4).

Demographic Status of Women in Sikkim

In Sikkim, women make up almost 47% of the total population. Their social position in the society in the rest of the country seems to be greater than that. Women are not excluded, though infanticide or dowry-related deaths were not recorded. Women also play a major role in trading activities, allowing them to take part in decision-making much more than in most other countries. Women's work is, as it is elsewhere, an important foundation of society and economy in Sikkim. The fact that the number of women headed households in the rural areas of Sikkim in 1999 (143 per thousand) was higher than the national average not only indicates the impact of migration but also the status given to women in the state as mentioned in the table below:

TABLE 1.FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN SIKKIM (PER 1000 HOUSEHOLDS)

RESIDENCE	SIKKIM	INDIA
RURAL	143	104
URBAN	83	99

Source: Government of Sikkim, Sikkim in Brief, Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Gangtok, June 1999.

However, the geographical conditions of rugged steep terrain, heavy rainfall, etc., women bear the brunt of all weather hazards directly. Sikkimese women's heavy workload in their daily lives has serious implications for their health. This is more so because the families in Sikkim are large—30% of rural families and 22% of urban families have more than six members, which takes a toll on the women's health. This is reflected in the 29-60 age group's declining sex ratio in Sikkim (Lama 2001).

Status of Women laborers in Temi Tea Garden:

The year 2019 was celebrated as the 50th year of establishment of the Temi Tea Garden with the record of women force of 58%, i.e. 261 workers out of 450 workers in the Temi Tea Garden. While women tea pluckers in other tea states are branded as "unskilled" laborers (Juri Baruah, 2017) on the other hand Sikkim acknowledges women empowerment, the Temi Tea Garden appointed Mrs. Fulmaya Sherpa as woman supervisor of the pluckers in the year 2018 for smooth and efficient functioning of work. 2018 was also the year where, for the first time in 40 year women participated in the election

for various posts in the Temi Tea Garden. Another Ms. Sang Dolma was also elected as the first Vice President of the Garden workers working in The Temi Tea Estate. Since then many women workers have taken charge of many departments in the Temi Tea Graden workplace, including packaging and tasting of the products.

The following additional benefits are provided to Temi tea garden staff and laborers:

- (a) Wage is double of what exists for other tea growing areas.
- (b) Free housing
- (c) Free medical benefits
- (d) Bonus
- (e) Provident Fund.

Findings of the study

In the present examination the specialist found that the greater part of the respondents was female (77%).

Many developments have also come together in forms of Infrastructure Facilities, like:

- Crèche inside the garden estate that can accommodate 20 infants and playroom.
- There are three trained ASHA female workers working as nurse.
- Nurses visit the Garden weekly and undertake counseling of the workers.
- No. of women working in Temi Tea Estate for the last 5 years- 234
- No. of seasonal workers working in Temi Tea Estate for the last 5 years-68
- No. Of working women presently working at Temi tea Estate- 261
- Daily wages received by the Tea pluckers- 300/per day.

Table 2: Training Records of Women workers at Temi Tea Estate for the last 3 years are as follows:

Sl. No	Name	Trainings
1.	Ms. Sumina Sharma	Toklai Tea Research Institution FSSC, Assam
2.	Ms. Hissay Dolma Sherpa	Administration Foundation, SAPB1 (Basic Training), Accounts, FSSC, Gangtok Singapore
3.	Mrs. Reshma Gurung	Payroll, Accounts, FSSC, Gangtok
4.	Ms. Indra Kumari Pradhan	Tourism Gangtok

5.	Ms. Sapna Gurung	Tourism Gangtok
6.	Mrs. Santa Kumari Subba	Bamboo Craft Bangalore
7.	Mrs. Sharmila Gurung	Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP), Kolkata.
8.	Ms. Kabita Chettri	Hospitality Jorthang
9.	Mrs. Prava Rai	Hospitality
10.	Mrs. Pramila Gurung	Hospitality
11.	Mrs. Shanti Rai	Bamboo Crafts, Guwahati.

Source: info@sikkimtemitea.com

Conclusion

From the above discussion it is reasoned that the expectation for everyday comforts of the tea home laborers of Temi Tea Estate are truly privileged. They are financially and socially strong as compared to the other state women workers. Their social position in the society in the rest of the country seems to be greater than that. With the record of women force of 58%, i.e. 261 workers out of 450 workers in the Temi Tea Garden, we can say that the women of Sikkim as a whole has been enjoying all the privileges given by the Central Board and the State Board. No differences in wages between male and female workers have been found while doing the research, which we see in other parts of India (Tea Estates). There have been no records of women trafficking till date, which is a major problem in Assam and West Bengal tea estates. There has been no record of child labor or forced labor, as the recorded age of female laborers were recorded from a consensual age between 25-50s, when asked about it they made us clear stating that the Government Policy is against it and they strictly follow the Government norms. Till date no protest for any issues has been recorded. We saw a rising challenges with the changing course of time which has helped a lot to improve the condition of the women workers of Temi Tea Garden.

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