

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is Descriptive study. Field study was conducted for this research. Chabua Tea Estate was selected for field study. Pilot study was conducted before choosing Chabua Tea Estate as my final study area on the first week of November, 2018. The pilot study introduced me with the respondents and encouraged me to conduct in-depth study of women tea plantation workers in Chabua Tea Estate.

This study is based both on primary as well as the secondary data. Primary data were collected mostly through personal interviews. The study undertaken was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. It is qualitative in nature because some data and personal experience could not be quantified. Likewise, the qualitative study does not capture the entire study I have done; therefore I choose quantitative study as well. The data for the study was collected using semi-structured interview schedule in which major information concern to Biographical details, Working Details, Labour Welfare details, Harassment and Molestation details. The personal interview was conducted from 25th of February to 20th March 2019. Copies of Interview schedule is attached as Annexure I and Annexure II, one in English and the other in Assamese. Assamese language is used as a lingua-franca in Assam. I have used this language for easier communication with the help of the informant.

3.1 Description of the Study Area

Chabua is a small town located in Dibrugarh district; Upper Assam. The natives identify tea as “cha” and planting as “bua”. Therefore, the Tea Estate was named as “Chubua Tea Estate”. The first successful tea plantation in India was done in Chabua in 1836. Chabua has hot and humid climate with 200 to 250 cm average annual

rainfall. The climatic condition of Chabua encourages producing good quality tea. The Chabua Tea Company Ltd. in 1836 established this tea estate. Later, in March 1983, it was handed over to Tata Finlay. Finally, Amalgamated Plantations Private Ltd. took over on March, 2007.

Chubua Tea Estate covers 1309.76 hectares and 777.28 hectares cultivation area. In Chabua plucking season begins from March and continues till December. This Tea Estate has the capacity to produce both CTC (Crush, tear, curl) and Orthodox tea. The processed tea is manually sorted.

Chubua Tea Estate has total about 1711 permanent employees and during peak seasons they have enrol additional about 1300 temporary workers. The accommodations are provided to 1022 labourers by the Tea Estate. The accommodation includes Health Care, Education, Housing & Other welfare provisions. (Chubuwa Tea Estate)

Arvind Kapoor, Senior Manager (2018) of Chabua Tea Estate states that the Chubua Tea Estate (Upper Assam) initially was established as a commercial tea estate in the year 1836. There was a gentleman in a British army office named Robert Bruce. He liked a cup of tea and he wanted to grow it on a commercial basis. So, Robert Bruce planted the tea plants in several places all over Assam and it was found that those tea plants were doing very well only in this part of the state. The British decided to start a commercial tea estate by the name of Chubua from this place. So, this is the first commercial tea estate of the country and the as the name suggests also Cha Bua which means that, “tea was planted here”....A typical day in a planter’s life starts at six o’clock in the morning and does not end. By that I mean even if physically we are not involved in working at least mentally, we are always preoccupied with what is

happening in the estate. During season time the factory is running 24x7. So, we are always, either physically or mentally, involved in the working of the factory. This is where the Indian Tea story started (Kapoor, 2018).³¹

3.2 Sample Size of the Study

For this research, Focus group discussion method was also used to draw the respondents. Later, 30 women respondents per household were selected using purposive sampling, due to their busy work schedule and as per their availability. The additional method used was the observation method. There are 1711 permanent workers in the Chabua Tea Estate; only 1022 labour quarters were provided as accommodations. Therefore, considering 1022, I have approximately covered approximately 3 percent of the total household working and residing inside the garden. Given the limited time frame to complete this dissertation, I could cover approximately 3 percent of the total households.

The collected data were systematically arranged. The frequency and cross-tabulation was done using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science). During the period of data collection, I have also visited various libraries like Dibrugarh University, University of Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University to look at the existing literature.

3.3 Research Questions

1. What is the socio-economic status of women workers in Chabua Tea Estate?
2. Is there any gender discrimination among the tea workers in Chabua Tea Estate?

³¹ [Social| Teabox].(2018, September 6). *Chabua Tea Estate, Assam*[Video Clip] Retrieved from www.facebook.com/teabox.tea/videos/498863363909354/

Both Chabua and Chubwa are used interchangeably in this paper.

3. Are the workers satisfied with the welfare provisions provided to them to look after their socio-economic needs by the Chabua Tea Estate?
4. What are the different roles played by the women workers?

3.4 Research Objectives

1. To understand women's role in Chabua Tea Estate.
2. To Study socio-economic status of women tea plantation labourers in Assam.

3.5 Field Note

I perceived a sense of pride while walking through the tea gardens that are gems of my native land. I had some acquaintances residing in the tea estate. I carried out the interview with 30 respondents with their help and assistance.

Initially, they considered me as a government employee, conducting survey for government report. Later, when I introduced myself to the workers about my research and Dissertation, one of my respondents said, *Accha, baideo a dictionary nicina kiba likhibo. English translation Ma'am would write something like a dictionary about us.*

I had to conduct my field work during the night time and Sundays as they were busy with their work at other times.

Image No. 4: House of a Worker



Source:

Personal collection from the fieldwork.

Once, I started the Focused Group discussion, the residents of Chabua tea estate flooded me with complaints. They tried their best to introduce their experiences. Reena(name changed) said *Baideo pura dom ot likhibo, tetia ha kiba hobo sage amar*. English Translation *Ma'am do write about our problems with intensity, only then something good might happen here.*

The photographs clearly show the social and economic conditions of the workers in Chabua Tea Estate. When asked about the medical facilities, Nita (name changed) said *whenever we go to the hospital; the doctor generally says that due to water deficiency in the body we are suffering from illness. She further added but we do drink adequate amount of water throughout the day and also bathe twice a day, how then*

there is water shortage in our bodies. There are many such innocent replies which bring a smile on my face making me cherish my field work days.

Image No. 5: The drainage during Rainy days



Source: Personal collection from the fieldwork.

During rainy days the roads get blocked with dirty water and this causes diseases. Throughout the interview Jyoti(name changed) stated, *“In this tea estate, some 15 years ago, many workers died from Diarrhea. They died because there was no proper drainage facility inside the garden. The situation became worse during the rainy season. This catastrophic situation created awareness among the people as well as the Company. The company assigned Line Chokidar(Line Watchman) to take care of*

the Cleanliness”. Still there is no accomplishment in the cleanliness and proper drainage system in the Chabua Tea Estate.

Image No.6: Type of House of the Respondent.



Source: Personal collection from the fieldwork.

The condition of the houses in the Chabua Tea Estate is miserable and the lady in the photo above complained that *in summer's snakes sneak into the house, as there are holes in the walls.*

Image No. 7: Fire Wood Collected for Cooking Purpose.



Source: Personal collection from the fieldwork.

The man in the photo below specially invited me to take a photograph of his house along with his family. He misunderstood me as a government employee. He said *Ma'am you missed out my house, please come and take a picture of my house and the washroom.* He further added *Ma'am try to do something for us.* I just smiled.

Image No: 8: Toilet with Broken Door.



Source: Personal collection from the fieldwork.

One of my respondents said *when welfare departments come for inquiry; they never come close to our bathroom to verify its condition. They visit our place just for the sake of doing it as a part of their job. They never take it seriously.*

Image No. 9: Tube Well in the Resident



Source: Personal collection from the fieldwork.

The tube well in the picture is their only source of water for drinking, bathing, washing clothes and so on.

Image No. 10: With Tea Garden Workers



Source: Personal collection from the fieldwork.

When respondents were asked about the doctors in the hospital, one of my respondents said, *Ma'am doctor never examine us with Compass (Stethoscopes), they just send us back giving some medicines.*

The management pay no heed to provide better provisions to the workers. The workers are becoming strangers to themselves due to burden of workloads. Therefore, the workers are not satisfied and happy with what they have.

Image No. 11: Focus Group Discussion with the Workers



Source: Personal collection from the fieldwork.

Women in the picture tried to convey their opinions. They Co-operated very well throughout the discussion. Group discussion was more fruitful than personal interview as women were more expressive in group.

Image No. 12: With the Respondents



Source: Personal collection from the fieldwork.

Interviewing during their working hours gave me different experience than interviewing in their house. As during working hours they were guarded by the higher authorities and they seemed to be very careful while responding. They were not open regarding their issues and problems.

Image No. 13: With the Respondents



Source: Personal collection from the fieldwork.

Women in the picture, despite of being tired working for the entire day in the garden, they collaborated with me for three hours to reach my desired research result by articulating their attitude on Chabua Tea Estate. The interview would have been more intensive, but they were having other important engagements at their home like preparing dinner for their family, so I wind up the interview early.

In my survey, two residents of the Chabua tea estate named Anirudh Tanti (Anchalik Panchayat Member of Pulunga Anchalik Panchayat) and Sraban Kumar (Asst. Teacher, Chabua Tea Estate Lower Primary School) helped me to conduct the interview. I sought their help because I was having problem in interacting with the workers. The main barrier was of the language. The workers of Chabua tea estate use Creole language³² that is Sadani or Sadri (Mixture of their native dialect, Assamese,

³² A Creole language is a mixture of several languages.

Hindi and Bengali language). I also prepared Assamese Interview Schedule (it has been attached as annexure II), which helped me out throughout the interview.

This area has been chosen, as I grew up among tea garden workers. Every morning the sound of the gong marked another busy day for the tea garden workers. The women would be seen flocking to the gardens with the baskets hanged from their heads. I would pass them by as I would go to School. Again in the afternoon as I return, I would see them busy plucking the tea leaves. I was amazed at their capability to work so hard. I knew they had to go home and cater to their families. I feel as I am part of it.

The next chapter deals with the Socio-economic conditions of the women workers in Chabua Tea Estate.