EARNINGS, EDUCATION AND HEALTH OF WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF EX TEA GARDEN AND TEA GARDEN LABOUR COMMUNITIES OF CACHAR DISTRICT

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CHAPTER- VI

GENERAL DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Research at a glance

The colonial British administration took up tea plantation in the Indian subcontinent at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since then, the sub-continent's tea industry has slowly established its position as a major producer of tea in the world. The tea gardens of Assam play a significant role in shaping the Assam. Women workers are the most potential labour force in the Tea industry of Assam. They are the victim of circumstances and they are struggling for their existences. Tea garden women workers are mostly illiterate and they are not aware of the minimum standard of living.

 "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its Women"-

Jawaharlal Nehru.

The above statement made by the first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru can be called in the sense that women constitute half of the entire population of a country. Since ancient times, women in India are making financial contributions for the betterment of their families. Similarly half of the labour force of tea gardens in Assam also constitute of women. Since the tea gardens of Assam depend mainly on the women labor force, women plays a remarkable role in upliftment of tea gardens. Hence, to highlight the condition of tea garden, it is necessary to look at the status of its women labour force.

In the present research work, an attempt has been made to study the state of being of women in tea garden and ex tea garden labour communities of Cachar district. The study focuses mainly on the three basic dimensions of life such as earnings, education and health- the dimensions which have been emphasized as the basic and most important need of life for anyone by UNDP for construction of Human Development Index(HDI). As the women are more disadvantaged community as a whole everywhere and the tea garden of Assam offer largest job opportunities for the women in Cachar district, the study concentrated mainly on the women of reproductive age

group (15-49 years). They are deprived in almost all basic needs like income, education and health both from the company as well as from government side.

Here the state of being of women of reproductive age group in the ex tea garden and tea garden of labour communities is measured with the help of several indicators representing earning, education, health and other demographic characteristics. Each of the indicators is examined by the set of the attributes for the construction of the analysis. The indicators are examined by the data pertaining to the study collected with the help of a well designed schedule. Further the study tries to find casual connection amongst earnings, education and health of women in ex tea garden and tea garden areas and the determinants that have impact on the dimensions of livings. At the end the study made a comparative analysis of these aspects of attributes between two groups ex teagarden and tea garden labour communities of Cachar district.

Thus the study reveals a clear picture about the level of living standard of women of reproductive age in ex tea garden and tea labour communities in Cachar district. This is a pioneering research work in the sense that it has covered almost all the attributes of the living condition of women of tea garden communities. The study helps to judge whether women of reproductive age are severely deprived or not in ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities of Cachar district and answers the question of whether there are any distinguishable differences between ex tea garden and tea garden women of reproductive age in concerned of living dimensions.

The research work pointed out with number of details conclusive aspects and end with the number of recommendations in respect of earnings, education and health of women of reproductive age between ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities of Cachar district. Hence the study shall be helpful to the government and the policy makers to formulate, implement and execute proper policies. This research work shall also be helpful for preparing schemes by the higher authority for the development of the women of ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities of Cachar district. The policy makers of other similar background areas of the country shall be benefited in formulating plan and policies for the upliftment of the women section of the society. The objectives specified in the study for research work are as follows:

a) To examine the earnings pattern, earned and unearned income, including occupational diversification of women of reproductive age of two groups namely, ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities.

b) To examine the educational status of women of reproductive age belonging to two groups namely ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities.

c) To examine the health status of women belonging to two groups namely ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities.

d) To examine interconnection amongst earnings, education and health of women of reproductive age and to identify factors that have impact on these.

e) And lastly, to carry out a comparative analysis of these aspects between the two groups namely ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities.

The following research questions are also answered to highlight the inside problems as raised by the objectives stated above:

(i) Are women of reproductive age severely deprived (as per standard norms) in all three basic dimensions of life namely earnings, education and health?

(ii) Are there any distinguishable differences between ex tea garden and tea garden women of reproductive age in concerned dimensions of living? Is deprivation more acute in case of tea garden women labourer than ex tea garden women?

(iii) Is there any common set of factors that have similar causation with deprivation in both tea garden and ex tea garden categories of women?

As stated earlier, the geographical area for the research study selected is Cachar District of Assam. Reason behind the selection of Cachar district is as follows-

Cachar is one the most backward district in Assam. As per HDR of Assam 2013, rank of Cachar district is 24 out of 27 districts of the state with 0.463. Further rank of living standard is poor. The position of Cachar district in living standard is 13. The gender development index of Cachar district (as per HDR of Assam 2013) is 0.796- shows the prevalence of high gender disparity in the society. The female literacy rate

of Cachar is 74.62 % as per 2011 census and density is 459 sq km. In Barak Valley (southern region of Assam), Cachar is the district where maximum number of tea garden is found. Out of the 118 tea gardens situated in Barak valley 61 tea gardens are in Cachar district and hence tea garden population is also more than other two districts (Hailakandi &Karimganj). Keeping all these aspects in view, a sample size of 400 women of reproductive age is collected from the ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities of Cachar district. The woman is interviewed from all aspects of dimension related to UNDP with the help of schedule. The multistage sampling technique is followed for the selection of sample and the sample units. The target group of the population is women of reproductive age (15-49years) belongings to ex tea and tea garden labour communities of Cachar district. The information collected with the help of well organized schedule, are analyzed with the help of table, diagram and statistical tools like correlation, correlation matrix, paired t-test, regression, logistic regression etc.

6.2 Result and Discussion

The research study is carried out with a sample of size 400. The sample of 400 women of reproductive age (200 women from ex tea garden labour communities and 200 from tea garden labour communities) is drawn from 400 selected households. One women of reproductive age is selected randomly from each household. The systematic analyses of the collected data help in identifying the different determinants to meet the objectives of the study. The study reveals the following socio economic and demographic characteristics of the sample size are assessed.

Socio economic and Demographic Characteristics of the Households

For Tea Garden areas, data is collected from the 15 tea gardens , total number of family members is 1169 from the 200 household selected for the study. Average size of the household in the tea garden areas is 5.84 (approx).). Out of the 15 tea gardens surveyed, in majority cases the average size of family is more than 5(five) members. Binnakandy tea garden is the largest tea garden in terms of average family member (6.80), which is quite high in present day situation. Similarly in case of ex tea garden areas, data is collected from 15 ex tea gardens. Total number of family in ex tea garden is found to be 976 in 200 households selected from the ex tea garden areas for

the study. There are fewer number of family members in ex tea garden areas than the tea garden labour communities associated with tea gardens. As a result the average size of the household in ex tea garden areas is 4.88 (approx.) which is smaller in comparison to that of tea garden areas. The largest family size is observed in ex tea garden Ganganagar (5.35). This picture clearly indicates that ex tea labour community is in better position in respect of average family size. However though average family size is smaller in ex tea garden areas than average family size of tea garden areas, the difference between the two is very small.

Earnings Patterns and Occupational Pattern of Women

It appears from the selected households that the economic condition in terms of income of ex tea gardens families is much better than the tea garden families. The average income of the women of reproductive age is far lower than that of the average household income of tea garden and ex tea garden labour families. Average monthly income of women of reproductive age in tea gardens is Rs.1437 where as the average monthly income of ex tea garden women of reproductive age is Rs 2124.53. Again in case of the average income of households, the study reveals that the average monthly income of ex tea garden households is much higher than that of tea garden households. The average monthly household income of ex tea garden families is Rs.13690.55 where as average monthly household income of tea garden families is only Rs.3182.38. This is probably due to larger occupational opportunities open to ex tea garden families.

In case of earned and unearned income, it is found that women of reproductive age in the ex tea garden labour communities are in a better situation. Total annual earned income of women of reproductive age group in tea gardens is Rs. 3448956 and the total annual unearned income in the same category of group is Rs.444000. But the picture is better in case of ex tea garden women of reproductive age group. Total annual earned income of women of reproductive age group in ex tea garden is Rs. 5098880 and total annual unearned income in the same category of group is Rs.2081700.

Again average annual earned income of women of reproductive age in ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities is Rs 17244.78 and Rs 28232.9 respectively. The

average annual unearned income of women of reproductive age in both the categories of labour communities is Rs 2220 and Rs 10408 respectively. The pictures show that the economic condition of ex tea garden labour communities of Cachar district is far better than the tea garden labour communities of Cachar district.

It is also imperative to access on the group wise income class of the tea garden and ex tea garden labour communities of Cachar district. In case of tea garden women of reproductive age majority of the women falls in the income group Rs (1001-1500) monthly. 130 out of 200 women of reproductive age in tea garden fall in this income group whereas only 1(one) women fall in the group more than Rs.5000 per month income group. Again on the other hand, although majority of women of reproductive age falls in the Rs(0-500) monthly income group, 119(one hundred nineteen) out of 200 women of reproductive age group, there are women who earn more, than the tea garden women in other income groups. There are 15 women of reproductive age group in ex tea garden category who earn more than Rs.5000 per month as against only 1 woman of tea garden category. As such, the above observations point towards the fact that the women of reproductive age group of ex tea garden category is economically in a much better position than their counterparts working in tea gardens. The income distribution curve is more acutely skewed towards left in case of reproductive age group women of tea gardens than that of the reproductive age group women of ex tea garden category.

Occupational diversification is found to be very rare among the tea garden women of reproductive age. Majority of the women of reproductive age in tea garden labour communities is found to work as tea garden worker as their primary source of income. There is very little chance for the women of reproductive age in tea garden to go outside for occupation for secondary work. But a different picture is found in ex tea garden labour communities so far as the case of occupational diversification is concerned. Women are found to be engaged in different occupations. Some of them are housewives, daily wage workers, government servants, private service self employed etc. The present study observed that there is occupational diversification in case of occupations of ex tea garden women of reproductive age which reflects a better economic condition of ex tea garden labour communities. Though 67.5 % women of reproductive age are engaged as housewife as their primary source of

occupation, 13.5% of women of reproductive age are found to be in the government services and 12% women of reproductive age group are found engaged as daily wagers which is their primary occupation. Further, 23.5% women of reproductive age are also found who have engaged themselves in other kinds of occupations like agriculture, bricks industry etc. as their secondary occupation.

Economists often refer to savings as the 'seed-corn' of the economy in any society. Savings are the primary source of capital, which is the lifeblood of an economy. Hence savings is an important indicator to examine the economic condition of any community. The average existing savings of women of reproductive age in tea garden is Rs 1002.74 whereas the average existing savings of women of reproductive age in ex tea garden is Rs 11202.8. Saving status is evident from the picture that 44.5 percent of women of reproductive age don't have any existing saving in post office, bank, other financial institute, cash in hand or in any other institution whereas 29.5 percent women of reproductive in the ex tea garden areas don't have any existing saving in post office, bank, other financial institute, cash in hand or in any other institution. The respondents from the ex tea garden labour communities show better saving position than the respondents of tea garden labour communities. Only 0.5% of women of reproductive age in tea garden have existing savings more than Rs 5000 in post office, bank, other financial institute, and cash in hand or in any other institution. The situation is different in case of ex tea garden women of reproductive age. 23.5 percent women of reproductive age in ex tea garden is found to have existing savings more than Rs 5000. This shows that the reproductive age women of tea gardens have very little ability to save money which make them more vulnerable to face future economic uncertainties.

Due to low income of women of reproductive age in tea garden labour communities it is also found that respondents are unable to manage their livelihood smoothly. They are forced to take debt from the different sources. It is found that average existing debt of the women of reproductive stage in tea garden is Rs2113.85 where as the average existing debt of women of reproductive age in ex tea garden areas is Rs 834 only.

It is clear from the above discussion that economic condition of women of reproduction age in ex tea garden labour communities is better situation than that of women of reproductive age in tea garden labour communities in Cachar district.

Educational Status of Women

In the modern world, education is a basic human right. Education is the most important element for the development and for the improvement of the lives of people globally. It is widely acknowledged that education has an important role to achieve a greater degree of social justice. In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". Education is one of the basic fundamental rights and important tools that can help marginalized section of the society to fight against vulnerabilities. Education is a good indicator of the of the socio economic progress of a country. It is the crucial social factor that initiates the process of social, economic and cultural development of a society. The results of the study selected show very poor educational status of women of tea garden labour communities. The average family education and the average education of the respondents in the ex tea garden areas is much higher than that in the tea gardens. Average education of family of reproductive age of tea garden is 3.60 years where as average family education in the ex tea garden is 7.26 years. Again on the other hand, average education of respondents in ex tea garden is also showing revealing a better picture of educational attainments than the respondents in tea garden. The average education of the women of reproductive age of the ex tea garden areas is much higher than that of the tea gardens. Average education of reproductive age of tea garden is 1.53 years where as average education of the women of reproductive age in the ex teagarden is 7.19 years.

Further it is also found that 55.5 percent (i.e. more than half) women of reproductive age in tea garden do not know how to read or write their name, 38 percent of women of reproductive age is literate with educational attainments up to primary level and only 5 percent of women of reproductive age group attained upper primary level of education. However the scenery is different in case of ex tea garden labour community. It is found that only 12 percent respondents do not know how to read & write, 23.5 percent respondents attained up to primary level of education i.e. classes I to Class V, 23.5 percent respondents have up to secondary level of education whereas

12.5 percent respondents have education up to higher secondary level in ex tea gardens. However percentage of women having higher education among the women of reproductive age in ex tea garden labour communities is very low.

School dropout ratio also reveals the picture that dropout ratio is much higher among the women of reproductive age in tea garden labour communities of Cachar district than that of ex tea garden labour communities. The problem of absenteeism and dropout rates are considered as important indicators of the degree of the student's motivation towards and commitment in the formal education system. During the present study, the educational profile clearly reveals that women respondents of ex tea garden areas are far ahead of their counterparts in tea gardens in respect to educational attainments. 76.13% women of reproductive age dropped school at lower primary (L.P) level, 12.5 % respondents in tea garden dropped their schooling at M.E level& 11.36 % of women of reproductive age dropped their schooling at high school level. But in case of ex tea women of reproductive age, it is clear that majority of woman of reproductive age among ex tea garden labour communities dropped schooling at above the high school level. More than 50% women among the respondents in ex tea garden dropped their schooling at high school or above level. It is also found that out of them 20.93% women of reproductive age women is there who dropped out at the college level. The high rate of dropout ratio in school among ex tea garden labour community in Cachar district left behind the question about the awareness among the parents towards the level of education and their effectiveness among their children in society. The high dropout ratio among the tea garden labour is mainly due to the responsibilities such as siblings' care, children support to their families in rearing domestic animals, help in fetching fire wood, water etc. It is also found that willingness to send their daughters for higher studies among the tea garden labour communities is lower (35%) than the willingness in the ex tea garden (76%) areas. But as soon as the preference of daughter's marriage over education is concerned, the willingness in respect of daughter's marriage increases. 70.5% tea garden women of reproductive age preferred their daughter's marriage over education. It is matter of serious concern.

Education commentators often point to lack of resources such as availability of educational institution as affecting factor for the education of students. It is a well

recognized fact that educational achievement of any society depends on availability of educational institution and that too within a reasonable reach. The study finds that availability of educational institution is not satisfactory both in ex tea garden and tea garden labour areas. In order to get admission into high school and for higher studies the children of tea garden and ex tea labour communities have to travel more than 5K.M. It is found in the study that mean number of LP school and M.E school in tea garden is only 2.75 and 1.13 respectively.

Health Status of Women

Safety and health are the key concern of any business. Even though the tea industry in Assam is playing important role in providing livelihood to over one million people directly and is a significant source of foreign exchange to the state exchequer, it faces challenges in ensuring workplace safety to its workers mainly for two reasons. Firstly, lack of management's attitude towards the safety of workers' health and, secondly, the lack of safety awareness amongst the workers. It is observed that the labourers of tea garden are suffering from various disorders like fever, cough, anemia, hypertension, gastric problems, skin problems, etc. Further, the laborers do not show any interest to go to hospital for treatment. The study finds that women of the tea garden area mainly suffer from diarrhoea with allied diseases. Almost 12 percent women are found suffering from diarrhoea in tea gardens whereas, in ex tea garden area, only 4% women is found to suffer from diarrhoea. Out of different diseases, it is found that Fever (8.5%), Malaria (6%), Pressure and Allied (6%), T.B (3.5%), Anemia (1.5) happens to be maximum in tea garden. It is observed during the survey that the labourers of the tea garden in general don't like to get admitted and stay for long time in hospital as they want early release due to their poor economic condition. But the ex tea garden women of reproductive age is found little conscious than tea garden women in respect of health. Fever (8%), Pressure and allied (4.5%), Malaria (4%), Back Pain (2.5%), Sugar (1.5%) etc. are prevalent among the women of ex tea garden areas. In respect of suffering from diseases, the study reveals that 47% women of reproductive age in tea garden labour communities suffered from either this or that kind of disease in last one year at the time of survey whereas 43% women of reproductive age of ex tea garden areas responded positively in this regard. 58.5 percent makes positive response regarding allopathy treatment received in tea garden

whereas 77.9% women of reproductive age in ex tea garden obtained allopathy treatment.

Marriage is also an important key indicator that has impact on the health of the women of reproductive age. Social scientists have argued that early marriage prevents women from attaining their rightful education, accessing employment and training opportunities, developing social relationships with peers, and participating in civic life. From the survey it is found that 52.5% i.e. more than half of the women of reproductive age are married below the age of legal sanction i.e.,18 years among tea garden women, the corresponding figure is 11% among ex tea garden women of reproductive age. The study presents the picture that 88% percent women of reproductive age get married at age above 18 years whereas only 46 % women of reproductive age get married at age above that level. An early age at marriage and of childbearing has adverse health consequences to mothers and to their offspring, which include malnutrition and high rates of morbidity and mortality. It is found that 61.5 % and 7.5% women of reproductive age delivered her first child while in the age group 18- 21 and 21-24 age group respectively in tea garden labour communities but the corresponding figures for ex tea garden respondents reveal better figure. It reveals that 41% and 38 % women of reproductive age delivered their first birth at the age group 18-21 and 21-24 age groups respectively in ex tea gardens. Further women of reproductive age in ex tea gardens have larger stay in hospital and availed trained delivery facilities than the tea garden women of reproductive age in Cachar district. The result is reflected in the living child and death child data in the survey. From the survey it is clear that 199 child deaths out of 781 deliveries among tea garden women of reproductive age whereas only 78 child deaths are there out of 482 deliveries among ex tea garden women of reproductive age.

Regarding the availability of sanitation facilities (kachha and open defecation) in case of tea garden women of reproductive age group laboures 137 respondents admits that they use kachha sanitation and 41 respondents admits about open defecations and respondents who admits that they use 'pakka' sanitation is very few (22). But in ex tea garden areas, only 5 respondents admit that they use open defecation. Besides the survey also reveals that only 7% women of reproductive age have source of drinking water within house campus in tea garden areas while 29.5 % women have source of

drinking water within house campus in ex tea garden areas. Though the data is not satisfactory in respect of the communities concerned, comparatively a better situation prevails in ex tea garden areas

In case of Body Mass Index (BMI) , it is found that Body Mass Index (BMI) of the target group women is just above the range of malnutrition(Less than equal to 18.5) in each and every age group. Though the body mass index (BMI) of women of reproductive age of tea garden labourer does not fall in malnutrition stage age group wise in an average, but the same is not satisfactory at just above the malnutrition level. But the Body Mass Index of the ex tea garden labourer is well within the normal range (18.5-24.99). It is found that 51 percent women of reproductive age in tea garden have normal BMI and 44 % women have malnutrition, 5 percent women are also there among the tea garden women of labour community who are underweight. On the other hand, 67% of the women of reproductive age are found to be having normal BMI and 22 % women are found to be suffering from malnutrition. However 10% and 1% women of reproductive age group are also found to be in overweight and obesity category respectively.

Interconnection amongst earnings, education and health with factors that have impact on these

It is important to discuss the interconnection amongst earnings, education and health of women of reproductive age of two group's viz. ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities. For this, correlation matrix and regression model have been used for estimating the degree of association and connection amongst earnings, education and health of the respondents of two groups.. Same set of explanatory variables with data pertaining to reproductive age women of ex-tea garden areas and tea garden area are used to estimate the regression model with income as the dependent variable. In case of the income, health and education of the women of reproductive age group of tea gardens, there is statistically significant association between 'income and BMI' and 'income and education' variables. The degree of association between income and health of this category of women is very low at 0.12 where health is represented by the BMI value of the women. Similarly, the degree of association between income and education is also very low at 0.038. On the other hand, the study reveals a statistically significant association between variables income and education of

reproductive age group women of ex tea garden areas and the degree of association is also observed to be at the higher side with value 0.349. However, there is no statistically significant association between the income and the health of women of this category. The regression is constructed with 'income' as dependent variable. BMI (Body Mass Index), EDN (Completed Years of Education), HHA (Households Assets), LH (Size of the land Holdings), DWH (Duration of Works Hours) and AGE (Age in Years) appeared as independent variables in the regression model. The result from the study states that there is positive impact of health and household asset on the income of the tea garden reproductive age group women. However, size of land holding of the household has a negative statistically significant impact on the income of this category of women. Other important variables viz., education, daily working hours and age of women has no statistically significant impact on the income of the women although they have expected causal connection with income. But in case of the women of reproductive age group of the ex tea garden areas, the variable education of women and size of land holding of the household of the women are found to have positive impact on the income of women. The other variables viz., health, household asset, duration of working hours and age has statistically insignificant impact on the income of the women. As BMI is binary in nature, logistic regression model is used with same set of explanatory variables to identify the factors that has impact on health. In case of Health of the reproductive age group women of Tea Gardens, it is found that with an increase in their education level , the probability of having normal BMI decreases. As the duration of working hours of women of tea gardens increases, the probability of having normal BMI increases. The observed impact of education on having normal BMI of the women is in an unexpected line. This may be due to low level of educational achievement of women in ex tea garden areas. However, in regard to the health of the reproductive age group women of Ex-Tea Gardens, the result reveals that with an increase in their level of household asset, the probability of having normal BMI increases. The observed impact of household assets and age on having normal BMI of the women is in an expected line.

Comparative Analysis amongst Earnings, Education and Health

To test the comparison amongst earnings education and health, the t-test of Paired Two Sample for Means on the stated dimensions has been applied to understand the

interconnection. The t- test of comparing between two mean income (paired t-test) shows that the estimated t value is 6.68 which is greater than the critical t value. The test rejects the null hypothesis and accepts that the mean income of ex tea garden group is different (and greater) than the mean income of tea garden group. It implies that ex tea garden have higher income than the tea garden women of reproductive age. In case of mean BMI between two communities is concerned estimated t value is 5.87 which is greater than the critical t value. This rejects the null hypothesis and implies that on an average ex tea garden respondents are having higher BMI than the tea garden respondents. On the other hand, it rejects the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the average Education of Ex Tea Garden and the Tea Garden Respondents. Rather accept the fact that there is better education amongst women of reproductive age in the ex tea garden areas.

1.3   Research Questions of the Study Answered

The first research question set in the thesis was whether women of reproductive age severely deprived (as per standard norms) in all three basic dimensions of life namely earnings, education and health. It is found from the study that women of reproductive age are severely deprived (as per standard norms) in all three basic dimensions of life namely earnings, education and health. It is seen that women of reproductive age both in ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities are fail to achieve all the three basic dimension of life at the best level. In the previous chapter it is found that level of income, sources of income and standard of living of women of reproductive age is very poor. It is also seen education level is also very poor both among the ex tea garden and tea garden compared to household average educational attainment level. MDG-3 targeted to achieve universal primary education. But both the ex tea garden and tea garden women of reproductive age fails to achieve the goal. Women reproductive age is deprived in the sense that they are fail to achieve the Women and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-3)-"Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages". MDG-7 targeted to ensure environmental sustainability. It is seen that the tea garden women workers are living in poor environments. Kachha sanitation, or open defecation is common.

The second research question relates to distinguishable differences between ex tea garden and tea garden women of reproductive age in concerned dimensions of living

and to check whether deprivation is more acute in case of tea garden women labourer than ex tea garden women. The study observed that there is distinguishable difference between the ex tea garden and tea garden women of reproductive age in concerned of earnings, education and health- three dimensions of living. Ex tea garden women of reproductive age group has more eanings oppourtunities than the women of tea garden labour communities. as explained in the data analysis chapter, it is seen that ex tea garden women of reproductive enjoys multiple occupational oppourtunities to earn. As a results, average income of women of reproductive is more than the tea garden labour, which has direct impact on standard of living. Further, in case of education is concerned, educational achievement level is high in ex tea women of reproductive age than their counterpart.

Although both the section of reproductive are severely deprived in all three dimension still the deprivation level among women of reproductive age in tea garden labour communities is more acute than the ex tea garden labour communities. It is seen that tea garden labour communities are deprived in income. Both earned and unearned income is very low in tea garden labour communities. Tea garden labour communities are not allowed to outside the garden. There is hardly any opportunity of tea garden worker to go outside for secondary source of income. They are not allowed to communicate with outside the garden that hinders on the way in enlighten with the happenings in rest of the world.

Lastly, the third research question is on whether there any common set of factors that have similar causation with deprivation in both tea garden and ex tea garden categories of women. The research has sufficient evidences to comment that the lack of education, poor educational infrastructure facilities, lack of awareness of health, lack of governmental opportunities are the factors that have similar causation with deprivation in both tea garden and ex tea garden categories of women.

6.4 Findings in a Nutshell

The following are the important findings of the study

(i)   The average size of the household in ex tea garden areas is 4.88 (approx.) which is smaller in comparison to that of tea garden areas of Cachar district.

(ii)   Average income of the women belonging to tea labour communities of reproductive age is far lower in tea gardens than that of the average income of women of the ex tea labour communities of reproductive age in ex tea garden areas .

(iii)   Further in case of the average income of households, the data reveals that the average income of ex tea garden households is much higher than that of tea garden households

(iv)   The income distribution curve is more acutely skewed towards left in case of reproductive age group women of tea gardens than that of the reproductive age group women of ex tea garden category.

(v)   Reproductive women of ex tea garden labour communities shows better position both in case of their earned and unearned income is concerned than the women of tea garden reproductive age group in Cachar district.

(vi)   The occupational profile of women of reproductive age in tea garden states that there is hardly any chance for women of tea gardens to work in other fields in Cachar district

(vii)   Occupational diversification is very negligible in case of women of tea garden labour community. But there is occupational diversification in case of occupations of ex tea garden women of reproductive age.

(viii) The average existing savings of women of reproductive age in tea garden is Rs 1002.74 whereas the average existing savings of women of reproductive age in ex tea garden is Rs 11202.8, reflecting better position of ex tea garden women of reproductive age.

(ix)   Only 0.5% women of reproductive age groups have savings more than Rs 5000 in tea garden women, on the other hand 23.5% women of reproductive age groups have savings more than Rs 5000 in ex tea garden women of reproductive age. This clearly reflects comparatively better economic position of women of reproductive age in ex tea garden areas in Cachar district/

(x)   The reproductive age women of tea gardens have very little ability to save money which makes them more vulnerable to face future economic uncertainties.

(xi)   Women of reproductive age in tea garden are forced to be subjected to debt mainly due to low wage rate in tea gardens. They are unable to manage their daily livelihood with low wage rate and hence they depend on debt.

(xii)   In ex tea garden areas also, women of reproductive age are poor and take debt but debt amount is much smaller in their case in comparison to their counter parts living in tea gardens.

(xiii)   The average family education and the average education of the respondents in the ex tea garden areas is much higher than that in the tea gardens of Cachar district.

(xiv)   The educational profile clearly reveals that women respondents of ex tea garden areas are far ahead of their counterparts in tea gardens in respect to educational attainments. Many in ex tea garden areas have completed critical level of schooling of 8th standard while the corresponding numbers in tea gardens are very few.

(xv)   The average level of education completed by women of reproductive age in tea garden is 1.53 whereas in ex tea garden a woman of reproductive age is 7.19

(xvi)   Majority of the women of reproductive age in tea garden is there who unable to only read, only write or both.

(xvii)   More than 55 percent women of reproductive age in ex tea garden women knows all the three ingredients of education- to read write and to understand.

(xviii) Majority of the women of reproductive age in tea gardens discontinue their education at primary level; whereas majority of ex tea garden women dropped out at high school level of education.

(xix) Availability of educational institutions in ex tea garden areas is much better than that in the tea garden areas.

(xx) Within 5Km of range, mean number of LP School is 2.75 in tea garden areas whereas in ex tea garden it is 4.42.

(xxi) However, it is a matter of concern that students of both the tea garden and ex tea gardens have to go more than 5 K.M for their high school and college level education.

(xxii) Wiliness regarding sending their daughter for higher studies in tea garden is lower than that among the ex tea garden women.

(xxiii) 70.5 percent respondents of tea gardens gives more preference in marriage than education while the corresponding percentage is 32.50 percent gives more preference in marriage than education in ex tea garden.

(xxiv) Women of reproductive age of tea garden category suffered from diseases more in number than women of ex tea garden category.

(xxv) Child marriage is rare both in the tea garden and ex tea garden areas in Cachar district. However, though**,** not the child marriage but early marriage is prevalent in tea garden areas.

(xxvi) Majority of the women of tea garden areas gets married at the age range of 15-18 and 18-21 age range. Whereas majority of women of ex tea garden areas gets married at the age range of 18-21 and 21-24.

(xxvii) In case of delivery of first child, 61.5% women of reproductive age in tea garden in   Cachar district delivered at the age of 18-21. On the other hand, 41% and 38% women of reproductive age women gives birth to first child at the age of 18-21and 21-24 respectively

(xxviii)Majority of the women of reproductive age in both ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities of Cachar district preferred home delivery. Untrained and home delivery is common in ex tea and tea garden labour communities. However the situation is slowly improving in ex tea garden

areas. The fact is that in case of 3rd delivery, percentage of home delivery preferred in ex tea garden areas has been decreasing faster than in tea garden areas.

(xxix) Number of deliveries is more in tea garden areas than the ex tea garden areas of Cachar district.

(xxx) Number of children died is more in tea garden areas than that in the ex tea garden areas. It is due to fact that majority of deliveries in tea garden areas takes place at home and through untrained hands.

(xxxi) Sanitation facilities are better in ex tea garden areas than the tea garden areas of Cachar district.

(xxxii) Source of drinking facilities is not at the satisfactory level both in tea and ex tea garden areas. Both the tea and ex tea garden labourer communities depend on outside sources for drinking water.

(xxxiii)Reproductive age women of tea gardens have health problems. They are a shade above the malnutrition level and are vulnerable to different types of communicable as well as non communicable diseases.

(xxxiv) Morbidity and BMI picture of the target group women of ex tea garden labour community (Table-5.19) is much better. The average weight as well as Body Mass Index of the women of reproductive age in ex tea garden labour community is found better than the women of reproductive age in tea garden labour community.

(xxxv) The descriptive statistics reaffirms the fact that ex tea garden women of reproductive age group are having better health than the tea garden women of reproductive age group

6.5 Conclusion

The study is an overall critical in-depth analysis of women of reproductive age of ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities of Cachar district. The study is carried out to understand the earnings pattern, education status and health of women of

reproductive age in ex tea and tea garden areas of Cachar district. An objective analysis of various aspects is discussed and the overall research work bears the conclusion that condition of women of reproductive age in ex tea garden areas are much better than the women of reproductive of tea garden areas of Cachar district.

The study examines the earnings pattern of women of reproductive age in ex tea and tea garden areas. In spite of half of the labour force of the communities being in tea gardens, women of reproductive age are suffering financially. In case of seasonal employment, the management of tea gardens gives priority to children and women but from employee's point of view all the employees are found to be not satisfied with the present wage rate, which is not sufficient to meet their living expenditure. The study reveals that the main contribution to the family income is that of women in tea garden areas but husband & other male members of the family dominates in decision making in household affairs. It is clear that earning pattern of women of of reproductive age in tea garden areas remains static over long period of time. But multiple opportunities of earnings of ex tea garden women leads to more earning for them. It is also necessary to mention that due to lack of multiple employment opportunities in the tea garden areas awareness about the importance of education is almost absent among the tea gardeners women and the households. But the case is a shade different in ex tea garden areas.

The study examined the educational status of both the categories of women in Cachar district. From the survey it is clear that level of education could be a key factor for the socio economic and cultural enhancement of tea garden labour communities. The schooling of women has a socio economic dimension and therefore the researcher has underlined the importance of different socio economic factors that influence the educational attainment. But the tea garden workers fail to achieve minimum education level. Most of the adolescent boys and girls prefer to work instead of going to school. Children are often forced to work for helping the family financially. Non-availability of schools in the premises of the gardens is another reason why children are deprived of education. As it has already been said that children are usually sent to work instead of being sent to school, but the girl children are more discriminated against in education. Deprivation in the area of education, availability of educational institution, opportunity for education resulted in low level of educational attainments of t women

of reproductive age in tea garden areas. Lower mean level of educational attainment in tea gardens than the ex tea garden areas reflects the deprivation level in tea garden areas. It is observed that mean educational level (1.53) of women of tea garden in Cachar district is very low compared to women of ex tea garden areas (7.19). The reason for this low level of educational attainment in tea garden can be attributed to mainly low level of income.

From the study it is found that health of women is a key indicator for the women to attain livelihood. But it is important to note that health status of women of reproductive age is not satisfactory in tea garden areas. Women of reproductive age in tea garden have less employment opportunity to earn higher income and hence they are not able to spend much on health. Further lack of awareness regarding health programmes, women of tea garden fails to achieve highest level of health status as against their counterpart. The responsibility of providing basic health facilities falls with the management of respective tea estates as per the Plantation Act, 1951. However, majority of tea estates do not have their own health centers and other health facilities like ambulance, medicines etc. On the contrary, women of ex tea garden areas are aware of health programmes launched by government. They have the opportunities to be benefited by the government health programme provided by the government. The picture is clear from the figures representing number of deliveries, live children, children died, low BMI of women etc.

6.6 Recommendations

Census Report of 2011 states that women constitute 48.5 percent of total population. Further tea garden industry of Assam is mainly dependent on women labour force. Despite of this huge women strength, women are still considered to be backward segment of the society in all three basic dimension of life such as earnings, education and health, the dimensions that has been emphasized by UNDP for leading a prosperous life. The study concludes by reiterating that there are huge potentials among the women of tea and ex tea gardens labourer communities in Cachar district to take the economy of state to a new height, provided some reasonable policy measures are implemented by the government and the management of tea gardens.

Based on the finding of the present study, the following recommendations have been made for the enhancement of living condition of ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities of Cachar district.

(i)   The first and foremost point is that women of ex tea garden and women of tea garden labour communities are having low level of income (earnings) in comparison to other segments of the society. Step should be taken to increase the income of the women of both the categories of women. Overall and sustainable economic development will definitely lead to the improvement of livelihood among the women of ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities. The government should take special attention to improve the income level of these two groups of the tea labour communities.

(ii)   Occupational diversification is low among the tea garden workers. Urgent efforts should be made for the occupational diversification of the respondents in tea garden areas. It will help to increase the level of earnings in tea garden areas.

(iii)   Strong administrative efforts should be taken for the proper implementation of several employment generation programmes and poverty alleviation programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes (NREGS), Kalpataru scheme for youth, PMAY (Prime Minister Awas Yojna etc. Coverage of such governmental programmes among the ex tea garden and tea garden labourers of Cachar district is dismal.

(iv)   It is seen that despite of the introduction of number of self employment programmes, the government has failed to bring significant changes in the socio economic condition of tea and ex tea garden labourers. Awareness campaign should be organized regarding the benefits of the self employment programmes initiated by the government.

(v)   As it is found in the study that women of tea garden and ex tea garden areas have less opportunities of participating in decision making in the family. Women have to be economically independent and an economically independent woman can take part in the process of decision making of the family.

(vi)   Ex tea garden labourers can be encouraged for skill development with attractive incentives. Further skill development programmes should also be introduced among the tea garden workers.

(vii)   Step should be taken by the government to create opportunities among the women **of** ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities for microfinance through self help group to enhance their economic capacities. Besides, step also should be taken to establish reliable convenient saving institution, insurance facilities to promote the economic help during needs.

(viii)   One of the main hindrances in the development of livelihood is low level of education. Education is a process through which one comes in contact with more enlighten people. Awareness campaign should be organized in respect of well impact of education. Efforts should be made in order to involve the women in the programmes. Government and other agencies including NGOs should take affirmative steps to spread to all. In this regards seminars, meetings, dramas, and audio-visual programme, street dramas can be organized.

(ix)   School dropout rate is very high in tea garden areas. Necessary efforts should be taken to develop on the attitudes of the parents of tea gardens towards child education to foresee the effectiveness of the various schemes meant for the education of the children.

(x)   Availability of education institution is very low in both ex tea garden and tea garden areas of Cachar district. It is the urgent need of the ex tea garden and tea garden labour communities that they have at least one high school in every tea garden district or within the 5 K.M range in ex tea garden areas of Cachar . Government should take necessary step in this regards.

(xi)   The management does not allow the tea garden worker to build permanent house. As the   tea garden labourer live for more than hundred years in the same land holdings, government should take necessary step to provide 'patta' to the tea labourers at least for homestead. On the other hand, though ex tea garden labourer are not under the clutch of tea management & government

allotted land for them with annual patta. Therefore, step should be taken by government for issuing permanent patta (meyadi) for all.

(xii) A healthy and hygienic environment is rights to all. A clean and hygienic environment is essential indicator for high standard of living. Government can play a significant role in providing the basic requirement like safe drinking water, sanitation facilities etc to the tea garden and ex tea garden households. The study found the lack of safe drinking water facilities, sanitation facilities in both ex tea garden and tea garden areas. Therefore government should take necessary step to develop these facilities in ex tea garden and tea garden areas for better quality of life.

(xiii) Governments, inter-governmental agencies and non-government organizations need to broaden their focus on women's health to include NCDs. They need to recognize and adopt a life-course approach while advocating the women health agenda. Else, the ongoing health investments will lead to diminishing returns and will not benefit a majority of women of ex tea garden and tea garden areas.

(xiv) To maintain healthy life of women of reproductive age of these communities, it is necessary to take iron and folic acid tablets along with proper nutritional diet, especially during the pregnancy periods. Although government has implemented lots of health benefited programmes like Janani Suraksha Yojna (JSY), Sanjeevani, ,Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram(JSSK) etc in the state. But the reach of these programmes to the beneficiaries in ex tea garden and tea garden areas are very dismal.

(xv) Both the women of reproductive age in ex tea garden and tea garden areas are ignorant about the family planning methods. Necessary step should be taken to popularized the family planning methods among the ex tea garden and tea garden workers. In this regards Anganwadi worker, ASHA worker shall be helpful.

(xvi) Early marriage is prevalent among the ex tea garden and tea garden worker in Cachar district. Government and NGOs jointly can do motivational work in this regards to stop early marriage.

(xvii)   In order to stop the child labour in tea gardens and motivate them towards the school, government should take necessary step. In this connection local panchyat committee shall be helpful.

(xviii) At present in the Census Report of India, government does not include any exact information regarding the total number of ex tea garden labour communities, sex information, and literacy information. Hence, provision should be made from the government side to include this information in the Census Report.