

# A Theoretical Frame of Reference on the Model of Sustainable Development through Youth Engagement in the Tea garden Community in Assam

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**Abstract:-** This study is a theoretical framework of reference on the model of sustainable development through youth engagement in tea gardens of Assam. In recent years, youth engagement has been recognized as a major concern in developing the status of youth. They have been discriminated against in all aspects like social, political, economic, education, access to rights, health, etc. In Assam's tea estates, young people are the main labour supply and support in creation of space in the local tea industry. In Assam's tea sector, young employees constitute the most probable labor force. Youth initiatives may assist to reduce gender-based violence by ensuring that young people have access to correct information about the issue and advocating for changes in laws and policies. Inequality between men and women extends to unequal job mobility, wage rates, occupational and social status in almost every walk of life. Education, growing unemployment, and socio-economic backwardness are the most pressing challenges that may provide a healthy working environment for Assam's tea fields. Youth are socialized in such a way that social institutions force them to accept their exploitation. Because of this, young people are needed to witness a change in tea gardens. This necessitates the exercise of some authority. According to this study, Assam's young labourers are socio-economically underdeveloped.

**Keywords:-** Sustainable Development, Assam, Tea Estate, Youth Engagement, Tea Garden Community, Model of Sustainable Development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Aromatic Assam teas are highly sought after by tea enthusiasts worldwide. Assam produces 51 percent of India's tea and 6 percent of the world's total tea output, according to the World Tea Organization. The tea industry employs around 17 percent of the total workforce in Assam. Assam is home to more than 850 tea estates and more than 2500 tea gardens spread over hundreds of acres of land. On an average day, the tea business in Assam employs over six million people, more than half of the total employed in the nation [1]. Moreover, the tea sector directly employs 500,000 Assamese, most of whom are young, making it a considerable contribution to the state's economy. This industry employs 531 thousand individuals every day in Assam, compared to 789 thousand people nationwide. The tea business in Assam employs around 66.6 percent of North Indians and 54.8 percent of Indians overall. Making tea requires a lot of physical labour. Every day, over 65,000 Assam workers are

engaged on tea plantations in the state of Assam. This represents almost half of the entire number of persons engaged in the country's tea industry [2].

Historically, British plantation owners discovered that there was a scarcity of qualified local labor to work on their plantations, so they attempted to import skilled Chinese employees. Nonetheless, since this was not a very cost-effective solution, they turned to the use of migrant labor from other regions of India, particularly Bihar [3]. As a result of their employment on the plantations, many laborers gradually resided in and around the plantations. In Assam, the tea industry still employs a large number of Bihari migrant workers. Workers in the tea sector may be divided into three major groups, which are as follows: Picking, field maintenance, and capital development are all part of their job description. The plucking process, which accounts for the vast majority of labor inclusion, accounts for as much as 70% of total workdays, according to some estimates. Females typically pluck tea leaves. During busy seasons, males are sometimes hired for this position. Generally speaking, males are engaged in the fields of field maintenance and capital project development. Fertilization, weeding, trimming, mulching, pesticide spraying, and irrigation are all part of the duty of field maintenance workers. Female workers are sometimes hired in these chores, notably in the areas of fertilization, weeding, and pruning. Language, religious, and cultural barriers made it impossible to integrate with the local community on a social level [4]. They had no other options for work, and they were illiterate, which was intentionally maintained so that they would be completely reliant on their employers for their subsistence and survival. The colonial administration made it easier to maintain control over immigrant plantation labor via the passage of laws. Plantation labor was imported from India, and laws and regulations aimed to regulate and keep control over the trafficking and maintenance of that labor. Children and adolescents are also becoming an illiterate since their family members are unable to produce enough money to support their households. Globalization and economic liberalization have forged a connection between labor standards and trade policy. Because tea planting is a labor-intensive industry, this also contributed significantly to the growing cost. As a result, for the tea plantation to stay competitive in the global market, labor standards become more vital. It has been discovered that, in addition to technological advancements and skills training, labor productivity itself is reliant on the preservation of fair labor standards in areas such as working conditions, pay, health and nutrition status, housing, and educational facilities, among others [5].

Education is one of the most important measures of a population's progress in terms of literacy. The rate of literacy is inversely proportional to the overall quality of life. Literacy is the litmus test for a community's progress in terms of socioeconomic and cultural improvement. A higher proportion of literacy is one of the greatest markers of a person's intellect and sense of social standing in the culture. A community's socioeconomic status, as well as its geographical location, is reflected in its architecture [6]. Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write with comprehension in any language at the age of seven or older. The Plantation Labor Act, 1951, Section 14, provides that where the number of children aged six to twelve years who are employed on a plantation exceeds 25; The State Government may enact regulations requiring every employer to offer educational facilities for children from kindergarten through primary school in a manner and to a standard that the State Government may specify. This can lead to the sustainable development of youth who are working in tea estate of Assam.

## II. YOUTH IN THE TEA ESTATE

The youth of a nation are its backbone and its future. They can change the course of a country. The notion of young empowerment is very significant in today's world [7], especially in light of recent events. Assam's intense agro-based business is built on the production of tea. Even though tea production and cultivation have expanded dramatically in Assam over time, working conditions for tea garden employees, especially among the young, have not improved. They have never gotten the required care throughout their growth. The youth in the tea garden areas are confronted with serious issues in every field. They are constantly being exploited across a variety of platforms. In this paper, an effort is made to look at the issues and prospects of the young in the tea garden regions of Assam, as well as to come up with some means and methods of empowering these youths [8]. This research has made use of both primary and secondary sources of information. After taking all of the factors into consideration, the research concludes that youth empowerment is required in the tea garden regions of Assam.

Youth include both young men and women in Assam. Men have a lot of access when compared with young women. Teenage girls who grow up on tea plantations have fewer opportunities for secondary education, which makes them more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. To address this problem and to assist in providing young people with better prospects and a better quality of life, Entrepreneurship Training Programme (ETP) embarked into collaboration with UNICEF at the end of 2014 that is working with 350 communities connected to more than 100 tea plantations to improve their quality of life. In the tea gardens, women account for more than half of all employees [9]. This suggests that the women of the nation have a significant interest in the tea-producing industry of the country. They operate in the tea gardens as regular employees as well as temporary laborers on a contract basis. Women have also benefited from the tea business in Assam, which has provided them with employment possibilities in the tea garden. However, the many measures that have been used to

empower women have not been successful. Hence, many systems and laws are introduced to empower women in tea gardens and restrain their dignity.

In the tea gardens, young workers have said they don't like their jobs. Elder workers have confirmed this. Since ancient times, these indigenous people have been exploited for their resources. Women and children are the most affected, with women suffering the most. Because the tea tribes had always been kept at a safe distance and were prevented from maintaining any kind of relationship with the people from adjacent villages, such exploitation of those workers was unknown to the general public [10]. They manage to live despite having the lowest levels of human development in the state. Youth tea garden workers are obliged to remain out of school or drop out of school to assist support their families as a result of the unrelentingly low socio-economic circumstances in which they live. Research performed by the international child rights NGOs Save the Youngsters found that more than 63 percent of children working in at least 70 tea plantations in seven districts in Assam confessed to dropping out of school to support their families. For the tea tribe community of Assam, exposure to a vulnerable environment, violence and exploitation from childhood, an uncoordinated family system, school dropouts, bonded labor, child labor, low daily wages, social exclusion, a high risk of substance abuse, and other factors have resulted in low health parameters, with mental health aspects of particular concern, particularly in the case of youth and children [11].

Hence, in this paper, the theoretical frame of reference on the model of sustainable development through youth engagement in the tea garden community in Assam has been considered. Since ancient times, tea has been one of the most popular drinks in the world, and Assam tea is a worldwide famous form of tea. Sustainability has been a key worry for the tea industry in Assam for decades. The research primarily focuses on the prioritization of sustainable development in Assam's tea sector, with young participation.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

[12] The author wanted to tell the story of a horrible tea garden community (workers) in Bangladesh. The study employed mixed-methods research. Using a semi-structured questionnaire, two focus groups from two districts were interviewed to learn more about the lives of tea garden workers in Bangladesh. The researchers created a structured questionnaire based on the FGD findings. The authors then questioned 200 tea pickers regarding work-life balance. While the country's economy is growing due to the tea workers' efforts, their economic conditions are deteriorating. The labourers are very poor and vulnerable. Workers are supposed to have basic rights, yet higher authorities have shown a lack of interest in enforcing these rights.

Sarkar (2019) looked at the association between women farmers' participation in the tea gardens that had been changed from traditional agricultural practices and a variety of socioeconomic exogenous characteristics, such as their socioeconomic status, economic vulnerability, and

empowerment. Purposive sampling was used to choose the location, and random sampling was used to select the respondents who had undergone such changes in their farming techniques. The study found that sixty respondents who had undergone such a change in their farming practices were chosen using both purposive and random sample procedures to investigate farm women's involvement in altered tea gardens as a result of numerous exogenous variables. The research found that changes in acreage under cultivation, average garden size, overall revenue, and pesticide usage ratio all had a significant impact on this transformative process. Tea gardens boost women's empowerment by creating demand for women's labour in the altered agricultural sector, thus elevating tea garden employees' status.

[13] The tea business employs roughly 30% of the working population in India's Southern Assam's Barak Valley. To determine the needs and function of ICTs in the Tea Garden Community's capacity building, the author conducted a study in three tea gardens in Barak Valley. Participant observation and an interview schedule were used to collect data for the study. Union officials, executives, and employees were picked on a first-come, first-served basis as respondents. Based on the data, the study looks into the relationship between ICT and development in the tea garden community ICT facilitates communication and supports a variety of activities in their daily lives. The main topic of debate is how to aid the tea garden community in Assam's Barak Valley, as well as how to increase their production and level of living through the use of ICT.

[14] The author investigated a study that attempted to assess parental involvement in their children's academic activity. Parents' engagement in school-related activities, home-based academic activities, parents' academic expectations and aspirations, and intergenerational effect on children's academic socialization were all factors considered while assessing the involvement of parents in the tea community. A total of 100 parents with children in lower primary or secondary school were included in the study. 50 respondents with children in lower elementary school and 50 respondents with children in secondary school were chosen at random from the total 100 samples. Samples were taken from the tea estates of Assam's Jorhat district using stratified random sampling. Data were gathered using the interview schedule. According to the data, parental participation in children's school-based academics does not change across elementary and secondary school levels. During elementary and secondary school, parental engagement in children's academic activities at home and academic objectives and expectations varied.

[15] As a result of the author's proposal, the tea garden community would be exposed to indigenous culture and have a higher quality of life. Interviews and surveys are conducted to understand better the situation. Secondary data sources include articles, books, and publications from various organisations. [16] In addition to a quantitative study, qualitative research will be carried out to determine the causes and circumstances. Interviews and newspaper stories accurately portray the current scenario, with books and

related materials assisting in the analysis of the situation. Tea workers are socially marginalized individuals who are disregarded and considered untouchables. They have the right to reside anywhere in Bangladesh as citizens, but the truth is that the majority of the population has never left the garden. This sort of social exclusion has shaped their lives and culture. As a consequence, individuals suffer, and valuable traditions and conventions are lost. A culture exposure is required to safeguard and preserve their remaining cultures.

[17] The author's presentation of tea garden workers' children's rights in Bangladesh was poor, given the children's vulnerability and unfavorable social status in comparison to their peers in the mainstream population. Children in tea gardens are reported to be denied their human rights owing to a variety of factors including the family's socioeconomic situation, insufficient human rights facilities in terms of education, health, sanitation, and nutrition, job, and social services offered for the betterment of their lives. For data collection and analysis, the study uses a qualitative research approach. The goal of using a qualitative technique is to obtain firsthand accounts from research participants. The study's participants were all children who lived and worked in the tea gardens. Ten tea gardens in Bangladesh were purposefully chosen, one from each form of management, including Duncan, Finlay, Bangladesh Tea Company, Sylhet Tea Company, and other private tea enterprises. According to the study's findings, the most serious abuses of children's rights occur in the areas of education, health, recreation, and child labor. Tea garden employees' pay is insufficient to cover their basic demands. As a result, employees are unable to provide their children with the bare minimum of health and educational protection. Tea garden workers are unable to improve their skills and capacities due to violations of children's rights.

[18] The authors investigated the tea garden laborers' social status, including wage patterns, education, health, housing, family planning activities, and cleanliness, as well as the tea garden laborers' economic conditions, including livelihood patterns and income. The research was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. They reviewed their wage pattern and livelihood with management and the tea laborer union before data collection. A systematic questionnaire was used to perform the research. The study employed a mixed-methods approach. They interviewed 78.99 percent of the total laborers at the research garden for their study. As a result of workers' dissatisfaction with their wages and other advantages, they are less motivated to improve productivity, which is harming the country's economy. Policymakers may improve the status of the pay pattern and life of tea garden workers by following the suggestions of this research. An Appropriate execution of the above recommendation can improve tea laborers' human rights as well as the country's economic prosperity. Bangladesh is the world's ninth-largest tea grower and exporter. Bangladesh's first commercial tea garden opened in 1854. 164 tea plantations are distributed throughout seven districts in Bangladesh. Tea plantations cover 115,757 hectares globally. The tea estate areas employ 89,812 full-time employees and 19,592 part-time workforces. Workers in

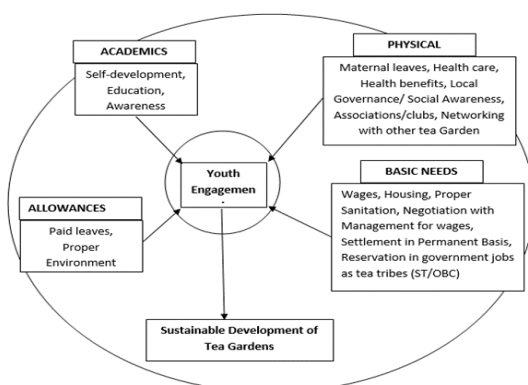
Bangladesh's tea plantations are poor because their earnings are much lower than those in India. As a result, the workers aren't getting enough food and nutrition to stay healthy. [19] There is a poor literacy percentage among the workforce as well. The research employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to update knowledge and empirical information on tea estates employees' working situations. The findings are expected to be valuable in ensuring that tea plantation employees have decent and productive jobs.

#### IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Assam tea is well-known for its taste and aroma around the world. [20] In Assam, the tea business employs more than six lakh people daily, accounting for over half of the country's entire tea sector labor force. In terms of employment, the tea business makes a considerable contribution to Assam's economy; it employs more than half a million people in the state, half of whom are women. [21] Across Assam, this sector employs roughly 531 thousand employees every day, compared to 789 thousand in India. Assam's tea sector employs 66.6 percent of North India's entire labor force and 54.8 percent of India's overall workforce. As can be seen, the tea business in Assam is heavily reliant on women's labor. Women in the tea garden are lower in the functional and social hierarchy. Narayan Borah further claims that they are exposed to all types of ill-treatment and abuse at the hands of management owing to a lack of exposure and understanding about their rights. Assam's tea sector is the state's single biggest, playing a significant role in the state's economy. It not only contributes a larger percentage of state revenue, but it also contributes significantly to the national exchequer each year in the form of foreign currency profits from exports. Assam Tea now has a worldwide reputation and has a considerable portion of the global tea market [22]. Over half of the country's tea-producing land is in Assam. Assam alone accounts for more than half of all tea output in India. Assam tea is a variety of black tea widely renowned for its deep, malty taste and several possible health benefits. Assam tea is a variety of black tea that is cultivated in the Indian state of Assam. This tasty tea has a high concentration of plant components that may improve immunity, as well as heart and brain health. However, its caffeine concentration may not be suitable for everyone.

##### A. The Theoretical framework and conceptual model

The factors that are influencing youth engagement are-



**Academics:** The best education is what every parent wants for their kids today. So, because they want their kids' futures to be great and stable, they try to be more involved in their education [23]. The goal of this study was to find out how willing young people were to help their kids with their schoolwork.

**Physical:** The Tea Garden Authority operates a dispensary to offer medical services in the tea garden. Management provides free treatment and medicine, and gardeners feed the inner patients. The administration also offers patients a 24-hour ambulance service for check-ups. Malnutrition, diarrhea, TB, and other health issues are frequent among tea plantation workers. They must run to the closest Assam in such a situation [24].

**Basic needs:** Sanitary condition is not good in every house. Few of the households of having got pucca bathrooms, but most of the houses don't have their bathroom. Water and sewage facilities are unavailable to the Tea Garden's administration. Direct pit toilets (no water seals) linked to open pits are the most common method of flushing in public facilities.

**Allowances:** Youth workers, according to this study, are denied employment benefits such as paid maternity leave, paid weekly or annual vacation, reasonable working hours, overtime pay, sick time off, social protection schemes, medical benefits, housing allowances, and the right to collective bargaining, as well as advancement possibilities [25].

The inflow of unemployed youth has led to an increase in small-scale tea farmers in upper Assam. Variables affect the quality of Assam tea. Teens in tea gardens benefit greatly from these features, which give them a sense of agency and self-determination.

#### V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A better working environment for young people is essential to the health and well-being of all employees. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned recommendations might essentially lead to well-being. After going through the discussions it can be understood that empowerment is needed as a tool for development. Because employees lack a basic understanding of their rights and benefits, they are the primary victims of exploitation. Because of this, governmental involvement is required. There is an urgent need to remove the hindrances. Women and youth everywhere deserve equal rights and their rights must be protected. To this end, it is essential that the government, management, labour unions, local governments, non-profits, and women's groups work together to protect and promote workers' rights. A very concentrated effort is essential to bring this backward section of the society into the mainstream and uplift them with holistic development. Tea garden workers, whether from a lower or higher caste, should be provided with the necessities of life as well as additional benefits that promote their well-being and give them a sense of an agency. Increasing young participation in the tea garden provides for long-term sustainability.

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