

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE TEA GARDEN TRADE UNIONS: Dooars Tea Workers in Context

ABSTRACT

The Indian society has been a male dominated society where the status and identity of women has been lost since ancient times. Despite the introduction of many reforms not much improvement could be seen as far as the status of women in Indian Society is concerned. the constitution of India provides some constitutional safeguards to give equal status for women. As a result, many women have created their own identity and are working hand in hand with their male counterparts. Yet there are some institutions, for instance trade union which is predominantly male bastion. In many trade unions of tea gardens in West Bengal despite having overwhelmingly large number of women tea workers, their presence and participation in trade union is almost negligible. Worst still women who actively participate in trade unions are not given prominent places in male dominated unions. This paper purports to examine the nature of women workers' participation and representation in the trade unions of their tea gardens in Dooars region. The study which was conducted in eight tea gardens of Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar Districts of Dooars utilized interview schedule and personal interview with key women leaders of each garden. Personal experience of the investigator and field notes during field survey also helped in the study findings. The major finding of the study was that despite a large number of women workers in tea gardens of Dooars and relatively high number of representation in unions, their presence in decision making process of Trade Unions is still negligible. As a result they are still deprived of their power of participation and their voices are still not heard.

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