

# **CHAPTER 3**

## Chapter – 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is devoted to development of framework for conducting and analysis of the study. The aspects studied in this chapter have been divided under the following sub-headings:

1. The Statement of the Problem
2. Objectives of the Study
3. Study Area and Justification
4. Research Design and Sampling procedure
5. Tools of Data collection and statistical analysis of the data
6. Limitations of the Study
7. Organisation of the Study
8. Conceptual definitions

#### **Statement of the Problem**

With the advent of building booms in the urban areas, brick-making in India has become a significant industry of the unorganised sector confined mainly to rural and semi-urban areas. Nearly half of the workers in this industry are women. The state of working conditions of the brick kiln workers is miserable. They are neither provided with minimum wages for their work nor do they get health care facilities and welfare amenities at their place of work. As a result, they bear the burden of health related expenditure and at times they borrow the required money from the contractor or brick kiln owner and repay with interest. They are not protected by any government labour legislations. The working environment of brick kiln industry is subjected to the uncertainties of nature and climatic conditions like rains, extreme heat, of cold weather, which is arduous and hazardous for the workers. This results in the direct impact on the workers i.e. attack of diseases while the indirect impact is sustained mental pressures culminating in health deterioration.

Although there is an increasing number of women in paid occupations, this does not seem to ensure their well being and an improvement of quality of life. Women are being used only as a source of cheap labour. In these new types of employment, the burden on the women gets multiplied as she finds it difficult to ignore the traditional role expected of women in the family because of paid work outside the home. Stress at the work site and manual work has compounded the problem of women's health. With increasing participation of women in work, she is spending more time at the work site. The patriarchal attitude, gender discrimination, work nature and other problem faced at work place may contribute to her low self-image in her mind.

Health, Work place and family are the three components, which play a significant role in the life of a woman. Each sector of the industry has its own characteristics which has its impact on the above three components. It is necessary to study these components and condition of women brick kiln labourers.

Keeping in view of the above, the present study attempts to explore the problems faced by the women both at house and at place of work. The present study is an attempt to examine the problems of women in brick kiln industry in a regional context. It is hoped that the study may stimulate further research on wider canvas, and also it may help the Employers, NGOs and Social Work Practitioners to evolve the intervention strategies furthering the socio-economic status of women.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the division of labour by sex in the organisation of work in the brick kiln industry,
2. To investigate the push and pull factors for women engaged in brick kiln and migration pattern,
3. To understand the impact of work environment and unpaid work on the health of women labourers,
4. To study the extent of awareness among women labourers regarding their rights and legislative provisions,
5. To understand the role played by the brick kiln owners and NGOs in improving the conditions of women labourers and Social Work Intervention.

## **Research Questions**

The proposed study is exploratory in nature and raises the following research questions:

1. How and why women enter into this work?
2. Were they from marginal land owning families?
3. Are they the first generation workers?
4. Whether there is any substantial change in the historical linkages between caste and occupation in the world of unorganised labour?

The present piece of research attempts to examine these questions in a regional context by studying this phenomenon in Assam with special reference to Barak Valley. Hence, no hypothesis was proposed.

## **Research Methodology**

### **(A) Study Area and Justification**

Assam is a large state consisting of 23 districts and is covered by high mountains, valley and plain area. Ethnically, it is composed with hill tribes and plain tribes. In this given complexities it is difficult to cover entire area and other parts of Assam specially hilly areas are prone to insurgency problems. Therefore, the study is confined to selected villages of Barak Valley in Assam. Brick-making is a lucrative business in Barak Valley. With the increasing pace of building construction, the outskirts of these towns has witnessed mushrooming brick kilns. An estimated 150 brick kilns are running in this region. Every year people from Bihar, Jharkhand and Western Assam primarily landless labourers and poor and marginal farmers migrate before November to work in the brick kilns located in the three districts of Barak Valley. During this period these three districts witness a large influx of people with families. They prefer to work in Barak Valley because of the fact that this region is free from insurgency problem. They would return only at the beginning of monsoon after spending about six months in the brick kilns, to work in their own lands or as labour in

other's land. When the agricultural season ends it's time to migrate again. The process of migration began almost 15 to 20 years back, is still going on.

### **(B) Research Design**

For the proposed study exploratory design is considered suitable. The study aims to explore the working condition of women engaged in brick kilns and their related problems. The problems of women will be highlighted through detailed case stories.

### **(C) Sampling Design**

#### **The Universe:**

The universe of the present study consists of all the women labourers engaged in brick kilns in Barak Valley. The workers population is floating and their names are not registered in the payrolls. Since records were unavailable it was difficult to make an estimate of the total strength of women brick kiln labourers.

#### **Sample Size:**

The sample design consist of one category of respondents. The subjects for the current study constitute 300 women brick kiln workers drawn from 30 selected brick kiln industries situated in the three districts of Barak Valley.

#### **Sampling Technique:**

A multi stage stratified random sampling technique was used to select brick kiln industries. 10 brick kiln industries were selected from each district of Barak Valley randomly. From each industry 10 women workers were selected purposively. Thus a total of  $30 \times 10 = 300$  women respondents were studied. Further, from each district, 10 employers, 10 supervisors and 5 NGO personnel were interviewed for the purpose of exploring their attitude and perception towards improving the condition of women in brick kilns.

<b>District</b>	<b>No. of Brick kiln industries</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>
Cachar	10	100
Hailakandi	10	100
Karimganj	10	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>300</b>

**Sampling criteria for section of Brick Kilns:**

The brick kilns were selected based on the following criteria:

1. The brick kiln industry where women are engaged.
2. The brick kilns with sufficient number of women i.e. at least 25 per cent of the total workers.

**(D) Tools of Data Collection**

The tools of data collection include Interview Schedule and Interview Guide.

**Interview Schedule:**

The method of applying interview schedule is to establish direct contact with the respondents. The interview schedule is comprising of five sections. The first section deals with the personal and family background of the respondents. The second section deal with the division of labour in the organisation of work in the brick kiln industry. The third section focuses on the work security and work opportunities for women labourers. The fourth section of the interview schedule deals with impact of working environment and domestic responsibility on the health of women. The last section is developed for collecting information regarding the extent of awareness among women labourers regarding their rights and legislative provisions.

**Interview Guide:**

An interview guide was used to elicit qualitative information from the

Employers, Supervisors and NGOs. This guide mainly focused on the role of brick kiln owners and NGOs in improving the working condition of women brick kiln labourers. All these information were collected through discussion with the brick kiln owners and NGO personnel.

### **Pre-testing:**

After the draft preparation of the schedules, it was pre-tested. On the basis of the experiences gained in pre-testing, necessary modifications were made and the final draft of the schedule was prepared. The schedules have been given in Appendix –I

### **Data Collection:**

The data were collected by personally interviewing the respondents and through observation technique. The schedules were filled in by the investigator himself. The data collection work was done thoroughly by the investigator; he spent long hours in the brick kilns in order to observe the phenomena going in and around the both the brick kilns and the households to make a realistic and in-depth analysis of the situation.

Besides the Interview Schedule, the *methodology of sectoral study* involved focus group interviews, interviews with opinion leaders and study of articles, books and technical papers on the subject. Women workers were interviewed in the absence of their owners and contractors with a view to eliciting correct response from them. Focused group discussions with women workers were also held.

### **Period of Data Collection:**

The data were collected during the years November 2006 to March 2007. One month was spent for informal discussions with the proposed respondents. Two months were spent for collecting quantitative and qualitative data from the respondents. One month spend with the owners and the contractors for qualitative data regarding the industry structure and operation.

### **(E) Data Analysis**

The primary and secondary data collected from the different sources were feed to the computer and processed by SPSS package. Chi-square Goodness of fit techniques was used to find out the statistical difference between the variable under the preview. Apart from frequency tables, the bivariate tables are used to do further statistical calculations for establishing the relationship between the two variables. This is used to substantiate the theoretical inferences with statistical interpretations. The inferences drawn from the study are compared with the inferences drawn by other researchers who had conducted similar studies in India and in different parts of the world.

### **Problems encountered:**

During data collection, the researcher encountered difficulties in getting information from the respondents. The researcher personally visited the brick kiln work sites and conducted direct interview with the women. Initially the owners of the kilns were furious about my visit. They did not allow the researcher to talk to the labourers. With great convince they allowed the researcher to proceed with interviewing the workers. Getting proper time for the interview was the main problem. The researcher used to gather all the women workers together to convey them the purpose of the visit and ask them to go for their work. The researcher used to interview one worker in the presence of another women. On certain occasions interviews was conducted either during lunch break or after the completion of work. Once the areas were identified the remaining workers were interviewed at their place of residence.

### **Limitations of the Study:**

The present study mainly focud on the working conditions and related problems of women labourers engaged in brick kilns of Barak valley. The present study specifically deals with nature of work in which women engage, problems faced by the women both at work place and at home. However, the climatic condition and cultural characteristics of Barak Valley is different from other areas. It may possible that their



impact on working conditions is also important to study in this region. This study doesn't explore their cultural background and value systems.

The related problems in this study mainly deals with the problems at the household level and work place. It could be possible that women are facing other problems too. But in the present study it is not possible for the researcher to cover so many aspects.

### **Conceptual Definitions:**

- a) **Accident:** Due to hazardous working condition workers who suffer from physical disabilities during the course of employment.
- b) **Contractor/ Sardar:** A person who undertakes contract labour or who supplies contract labour for any work of the brick kiln industry and also perform the role as a supervisory authority.
- c) **Economic Status:** This term includes factors like occupation, income, possession of ration card, BPL card and electricity meter, house etc.
- d) **Education (Self):** Education is the individual's ability to read and write, and the amount of formal education she possesses will affect the manner in which the individual gathers data and relates himself/herself to his/her environment (Beal and Sibley, 1967)<sup>1</sup>. In the present study, it refers to the extent of formal schooling and training successfully undergone by the women respondents.
- e) **Employer:** This term is used in relation to the owner of the brick kiln industry who is taking all decisions in relation to the recruitment, wages, rules and nature of work allotment.
- f) **Family size:** Family size refers to the number of individuals of all ages and both the sexes living in the same house and sharing a common kitchen.

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1. Beal G.M. and Sibley, D.N. (1967): Adoption of agricultural technology by the Indian Guatemala: Rural Sociology Report No. 62. Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Iowa State University. Ames, Iowa.

- g) **Family type:** According to Sahay (1969)<sup>2</sup>, a family may be nuclear or joint. Nuclear family is the social group consisting of married man and woman with their children living together under the same roof and sharing a common wealth and joint family is a social group, consisting of several related individual families, especially those of a man and his sons (in case of patrilineal) or of a woman and her daughter (inc case of matrilineal), residing in a single large dwelling. Operationally, for the purpose of the present study the term nuclear was applied to family units consisting primarily of husband, wife and their children and the term joint is to the families, having at least two married couples, living in common residence, and where the males were related as father and sons as brother-brother and earnings from all sources were pooled together and managed by one family-head.
- h) **Health:** It is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing not merely absence of disease/infirmity.
- i) **House:** It refers to the type of dwelling one lives-in. In the present study; houses were classified into the categories of *Kachcha*, Assam type, *Puccha* etc.
- j) **Household:** House hold is defined as a small group of persons who share the same living accommodation, but pool some of all of their income and wealth and who consume certain types of goods and services collectively, mainly housing and food. In general each member of the household should have some claim upon the collective resources of the household.
- k) **Legal awareness:** This term is used to refer to the respondents being aware of the laws applicable to the workers.
- l) **Legal Provisions:** This term is used in relation to those laws which are applicable to unorganised labourers/ brick kiln labourers.

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2. Sahay, B.N. (1969): *Pragmatism in Development: Application of Anthropology*. Book-hive Publishers and Book Sellers. New Delhi. p.89.

- m) **Occupation:** The main source of livelihood has been considered as the occupation.
- n) **Related problems:** This term is used in regards to the problems which are occupied due to the nature of work they are in house hold activity, at work place, related to children, work related illness, mental state.
- o) **Size of land holding:** Size of land holding denotes actual area owned by an individual family.
- p) **Unorganized Sector Worker:** Unorganized Sector Worker means a person who works for wages or income; directly or through any agency or contractor; or who works on his own or her own account or is self employed; in any place of work including his or her home, field or any public place.
- q) **Women worker:** For the purpose of this study the term has been used to refer to women working in the brick kiln industry and getting paid for it.
- r) **Working conditions:** This term includes aspects related to working hours, rest hours, supervision, authority, holidays, payment of wages etc.