

Chapter 7

SUBALTERN CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE ADIVASISIN ORAL KNOWLEDGE

Adivasi is a labour class to be termed as 'proletariat' in Marxian languages, who are working in the tea gardens. These labourers constitute the extreme subaltern of the society in Gramsci's language. Adivasi (labourers) always thought themselves as oppressed class because they are always forced by the oppressor, i.e., the tea garden authorities and also due to their low economic status. Here, one can see the relationship of the Adivasi tea garden labourers and the owner as oppressed and oppressor. Owners are the ruling class in the tea garden. Though the labourers can be a dominant class (Srinivas) as the numerical strength is higher than the authority, i.e., the bourgeoisie or owners but due to their economic backwardness and attitude towards the authorities, they have remained as the oppressed class in the tea garden. The attitude can be understood from one of the tea garden labourers' narrative, *'Government is nothing because they do not pay us. But Government can only give order to the garden authority to increase the salary and give other better facility for us/labouers but ultimate decision can be taken only by the authority. If the authorities think to solve all the problems of the tea garden labouers, they can do it but they never do it'*, said Antapriya Bhumij. She also narrates and explains about 'Jhumur', songs related to their pathetic life in the tea gardens. Through the Jhumur songs the Adivasis have expressed their voice of sorrows and sufferings of tea garden's life, also articulate the history of migration and transition to the contemporary life practices. In these songs, it reflects on certain aspects of their conditions as subaltern attitude. Each and every word of songs, subaltern consciousness is

in the narrations about their daily struggle to survive in the gardens. Therefore, the following cases of Jhumur songs are analyzed to identify the subaltern consciousness in the tea garden labourers of Assam.

CHEATING, MIGRATION AND BETRAYAL

Migration is the movement by people from one place to another with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location. The movement is typically over long distances and from one country to another and migrants may be individuals, family units or in large groups. In the nineteenth century the tea garden owners as well as the Britishers 'forcefully migrated' the labourers as well as Adivasis from the regions of Bihar, Bengal, Orrisa and Jharkhand who moved out due to various natural or environmental disasters and famines in their settings. One of the tea garden labourer, Dayamoy Munda, said, 'The Britishers employed, infamously called 'Arkati' who came to us and stayed in our villages for 3 to 4 days and visited each and every household, telling us that he was coming from Assam - the place where money was abundant. He persuaded me if I went with him I would realize how much money was there. He asked whether I wanted to go there. He further said that if I decided to go there, I would be the happiest man of the world'. Furthermore, 'Arkati assured that they would provide me a big house, large cultivable landholding and huge amount of rice, dal, vegetables, fish, meat and even so many cloths I would get; there was no scarcity; we could live a long life. To this my grandfather agreed to come with them in Assam. Within a week Arkati arranged the rail for us and over thousands of villagers came to Assam. When we reached in Assam, we saw there is nothing except forest (jungle). They were introduced to the Britishers. The sad story started from the time when the Britishers ordered us to clear all the forest area, to cut hills and to grow tea gardens. Arkati had told us that after reaching Assam we would become rich men but in reality he betrayed us and we were made the labourers'. These are reflected in following song:

Chal Mini Assam jabo
Deshe baro dukh re
Assam deshe jabo Mini
Cha bagan ghuriye

(Source: Dayamoy Munda, 71, a retired labour of the Doloo Tea Garden)

(Oh Mini, come, let's go to Assam, life is so tough in our native land. We will go to Assam and enjoy life in the tea gardens).

And after coming from their homeland to join the tea gardens they felt that the Britishers brought them here for their own interest and they gave them false promises.

Another related song is as follows:

Ki nistur Dhaniram
Phaki diya anili Assam

(Source: Antapriya Bhumij, age 82, a retired labour of Kalain Tea garden)

(Oh, hard minded Dhaniram. You have cheated us and brought us to Assam).

One more song reveals the sad story of their life:

Thoke kore niye elore Mini Assamer bagane,
chal bole paisha pabi chara gachh hilale
British shaheb chale gelo hamaderke thoke
Ekhon amra pore achhi maliker jale.

(Source: Antapriya Bhumij, age 82, a retired labour of Kalain Tea garden)

(British Saheb invited us in Assam, saying that money tree is here. He (the Arkati) befooled us and left here. We are still in the trap of garden owners).

The above mentions songs reveal that the Britishers brought the Adivasis to Assam to develop their tea gardens. Dayamoy Munda, a tea garden labour, of Doolo told:

'Now we are living as bonded labour as they treat us like slaves. We are tortured. At any time, garden manager asks for doing work in his Bungalow. Rupak Santhal (26 years old Adivasi boy who is still working in their Bungalow) told that 'I am a waiter, I go on my duty in the morning at 5.30 A.M in the summer and in the winter at 6 A.M and it continues upto 6 P.M. We do so many outrageous type of works'. When the manager comes to Bungalow, then, he orders me, 'Rupak come here. Open my shoes, clean and keep these in the shoerake'. We did other works like cleaning the toilets, bathrooms and floors of the house and washing cloths. On the other hand, sometimes we catch fish or kill hen and prepare and cook as per their wish. We help them in shopping and other external works also. After finishing all kinds of work, at the end of the day, our daily routine includes is to massage head, hands, legs, thighs and even occasionally the whole of the body of many of the family members. If they found any wrong then the whole families of the manager abuse us calling bastard, labourer bachha (child of the labour), Suyorer bachha (child of the pig) and even they cut monthly salary provided by the garden owners. Sometimes we pay fine also and we are still in the trap of garden owners. We never got any kind of good behaviour or respect from them. We could not do anything without the permission of the tea garden authority.

Concerning this issue, he expresses his agony in the following song:

Ki bolibo Britisher kotha,
Bolile je lage batha
Moder chalan korilo Assame
Rail garilgo chole ghane ghone,
Desh chere aili Assam,
Bhulaligo desher nam,

Assam ashe khuloli bagan,
banai dili hamrar sonar Assam
 jangol jhar katoli,
 duthu mutha taroli,
 gara dhipa karli saman
banai dili hamrar sonar Assam
 Haire bidhi ki likhile
 dukh bina shukh na bujhile
 faki diya anili Assam
banai dili hamrar sonar Assam

(Source: Dayamoy Munda, age 71, a retired labour of Doloo Tea garden)

(Britishers transported us from our homeland to Assam by train. We became the labourers and did all the odd jobs of clearing the forests, cutting hills and growing tea gardens. We have converted Assam into a golden one. No one understands the pain that Britishers have given to us).

From the above songs one can feel the agony and pain of the indentured labour which migrated to the tea plantations in the 19th century. The lyrics go on to describe how their dream was shattered by backbone breaking work in the tea gardens and bungalows of managers.

OPPRESSION, DAILY LIFE AND CONSCIOUSNESS OF EXISTENCE

This song represents their daily life in the tea gardens communicating how they have to start work every day in the morning at 6 a.m. The long deafening siren has just sounded at the Doloo Tea Estate in the Cahar District of Assam. Like thousands of other workers, Antopriya Bhumij also leaves home hurriedly. She remembered that the *Line Chaukidar* (in-charge of the labourers settlement) had announced two hours ago, even

before it was sunrise: “Parmet motachalan(permanent listed male workers) will go for plucking to the Line No. 7 *Bagan* (plot of plantation bearing No.7); the *faltu maiki chalan* (temporary women workers) will go for *Kolom Kata* (*pruning*) at the No. 8 Bagan; the *Chhokra Chalan* (adolescent boys) will go for *nalakora* (deepening of drains) and the *Chhokri Chalan* (adolescent girls) will do *Thonga Bhora* (filling soil in the plastic packets for nursery) at the Line No. 7 Bagan”.

Antopriya Bhumij lives with her husband and children at the Tila Line No. 12 of the Doloo Tea Estate. She wakes up before 4.30 a.m., and she walks for 45 -50 minutes to the tea plantation for defecation. Many other women like her have to rise up before it is bright, as later all men wake up and use the same plantation area for that purpose. She quickly sweeps the house; boils some rice and vegetables and serves food to her husband who also has to leave for work. As she expected, the *Sardar* (supervisor) uses so many abusive words and does not allow her to work because she arrived 15 minutes late. He shouts: “*Go back home, why did you come here? Why did you come late? Have you now come to show your body to us?*” She pleads him to allow her to work. Loss of a day’s wage is loss of food for the family. She is finally allowed. After she pruned some 40 tea bushes, her energy drains out. The *Sardar* again hurl abuses. If she is unable to complete the quantum of the task given to her, the wage for that day is sliced down to half. Back home in the evening, her children collect fire wood and she cooks food and feeds the family. It is time to retire at 10-11 p.m. Since there is no electricity, and no other task to do, she is happy to retire to bed. She has to wake up before it is bright which takes place by 4.30 a.m. in the garden there. The labourers have expressed this condition of theirs in song:

Sairon sairon bajalo offisetelo
Uthlo Minir ma
kame jate hobe,
Akashete uthe rabi
phul phothe bane bane
dale dale pakhi gan kore lo,
phule phule moumachhi ure
Chokidarar hak sona jay
jate hobe sat nombare,
Sairon sairon bajalo offisetelo
Uthlo Minir ma
kame jate hobe,
noita bajle ghuraye dibe,
sharakete shaheb ache,
nambarete bejan pati achhelo,
bela hale gali lutaye jabe,
Sairon sairon bajalo offisetelo
Uthlo Minir ma
kame jate hobe.

(Source: Krishna Teli, 16, nephew of Mukunda Teli and student of Doloo Higher Secondary School)

(Mini's mother wakes up in the morning with the office siren reminding them of the garden duty. She notices the morning sun's, coolness birds' chirruping and eye-catching green trees and honey bees collecting nectar. Watchman announces the venue for the day's work. She has to reach in time, otherwise the British official waiting on the way will not let her pluck tea leafs for the day and replace her with someone else)

The above song reveals that labourers go to work in the tea garden for plucking tea leafs with the office siren and anybody reaching late is not allowed to join the work and resultantly one has to lose even the job.

If the labourers do not get wages fully they not survive. Without permission how to pluck the leaves for their survival. Antopriya Bhumij, a retired tea garden labourer of the Kalain Tea Garden expresses the following song:

Cha gachhete phul phutechhe re dhala dhala

Ore dekho bhaya

Shei gachhete modhu ache

Bache hamder pran

Ore dekho bhaya

Rode puri, jale bhiji

tobu-o pata tuli

ore jhaki jhaki

sirish gacher tale goli dhor

tobu-o pata tuli

ore jhaki jhaki

(Source: Antapriya Bhumij, 82, a retired labour of Kalain Tea garden)

(The tea plants are full of white flowers; have honey which saves our lives. We keep on plucking tea leaves in abundance without worrying about sun heat and downpouring rains. The Shirish trees indicate our path in the garden).

She details about it, narrating: *After having plucked tea leaves when we come back to the quarter; sometimes we are suffering from fever, stomachache, diarrhoea etc. But nobody sees and feels about our sufferings in daily life. How do we survive in the tea garden? When we live with free hand, then we collect honey from tea trees and sell it in the local market and after getting the money we buy rice, dal, oil and sometime fish as well.*

And she also described history of tea garden saying it was established in the 19th century. The following song inform about when the tea garden owner as well as the Britishers brought them here and started their oppression:

Assam deshe kacha sona chai ke bagan re
Kato naro nari dekhi rakhilo pran
Seito sabai jane,
Bagane janmili jakhon
dukkho achhe sarakkhan
chal bhaja cha pani rakhilo pran
Seito sabai jane,
Bina kheyeye rakhilo pran
Seito sabai jane.

(Source: Antapriya Bhumij, 82, a retired labour of Kalain Tea garden)

(Tea is a green gold of Assam. But so many tea labourers have starved to death. Only black tea and roasted rice is there to save the life).

The Britishers indentured them to the tea gardens of Assam. After coming from their homeland the tea garden owner engaged them for the making of tea garden with very low wages. On the other hand, the labourers could not purchase the necessary commodities to survive due to unaffordably high prices. In that time, they ate only black tea and roasted rice. And that is why so many tea labourers lost lives in that time. According to her, 'This is our daily life; we are accustomed to it since our childhood'. Therefore, she sang a song to highlight the life of the garden labourers in the case that follows:

The adivasi labourers are conscious of their existence in the given situation and the life they live. As it reflects in the following song expressing love:

jokon fulti kali chhilo takhon vramora ailo gelo
ebe vramor kon fule mojilo
purana pirit chere vromor natune mojilo
nabo nabo tarulata, kusume sajilo
emon samoye shakha bideshe rohilo
purana pirit chere vromor natune mojilo
pirit pirit bisama pirit, piritike bolego valo
bideshi sange prem koriye, hamar vabite pran gelo
purana pirit chere vromor natune mojilo
antore jala dilohe, hamar panjorai sel dilo
purana pirit chere vromor natune mojilo

(Source: Haren Bhumij, 18, a student of Achabam tea Garden in Dibrugarh)

Above song states that love is the common factor of human being. Tea garden labourers also fall in love. Haren Bhumij said, an Adivasi boy changes his lover every time when the new one comes to him. He explains again change is universal phenomena. Without change life becomes sluggish (boar).

Another song reveals the feelings of the folks after marriage:

Pita mata diye biday,
Kanya swami grihe jay
Mitir kutumb sabaike kadai
Hai grihe udash bohe jai
Bidhir bidhan eikhan chalite je tai
Swami grihe tui chole jabi,
Swami sathe sukhe sangsar garibi
Swami prabhuke deva sama gayan karibi
Pita matakhe na volaibi
Hamder katha sada mone rakhibi

(Source: Himangsu Baraik, 18, a student of Achabam Tea garden)

In the Adivasi society, marriage is one of the holy rituals. At the day of marriage Adivasi women collectively perform dances with song. The above song reveals that husband is the pravu like God. After completing the rituals bride goes to the husband's house. After the bride leaves the family members miss her much.

SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN AND PERSISTENCE OF 'LABOUR STATUS'

Socialization is the process by which human infants begin to acquire the skills necessary to perform as functioning members of their society, and it is the most influential learning process one can experience. Unlike many other living species, whose behavior is biologically set, humans need social experiences to learn their culture and to survive. Although cultural variability manifests in the actions, customs, and behaviours of the different social groups (societies), the most fundamental expression of culture is found at the individual level. This expression can only occur after an individual has been socialized by his or her parents, family, extended family, and extended social networks. Sociologists and all other social scientists say that socialization essentially represents the entire process of learning taking place throughout the life course and it is a central influence on the behaviour, beliefs and actions of children and adults. In this respect Antopriya Bhumij said, *we are born and brought up here. We are growing in the pathetic condition. Everyday we are struggling with unhappiness. Money and power whatever we do not have. We have only the crises and sorrows in our life. She expresses the plight in the following song:*

Sabuj pata sabuj dale
kato rango khela
Cha bagichay cha sabuj ranger meye chheler mela

haigo meye chheler mela
Hamra joto Assam basi cha patay mora
cha bagichay cha sabuj ranger meye chheler mela
haigo meye chheler mela
Kine de ma hamke chhopi chhata,
hamke chhopi chhata
Tor sange jabo mago thika pata
mago thika pata.

(Source: Antapriya Bhumij, 82, a retired labour of Kalain Tea Garden)

(In the garden of green tea leaves one looks many other colours coming up; even one looks a collection of green people. We all inhabitants of Assam are wrapped in the green tea leaves. O mother! Buy me a Chhopi Chhata (large hat made of tea leaves). I too as a contractual labour will also accompany you for plucking tea leaves.)

From this song, one comes to know how the children of the tea garden labourers are socialized in to the contractual labour. The infants in the tea garden labour families acquire the skills necessary for a functioning member of their society in order to and survive survived.

EXPLOITATION, SUPPRESSION AND POVERTY

In sociology, the Marxian theory of exploitation refers to the subjection of producers (the proletariat) to work by the passive owners (the bourgeoisie) for fewer wage than the value of the actual amount of the work done. The proletariats are forced to sell rather than a fixed quantity of labour, in order to receive a wage for survival, while the capitalists exploit the work performed by the proletariats by accumulating the surplus value of their labour. Therefore, the capitalists make their living by passively owning a means of production and generating a profit, while the labour entitled to all products. It is sheer exploitation of the labour.

The kind of exploitation described by other theories is usually called ‘super-exploitation’ that goes beyond the normal standards of exploitation common in capitalist society. While other theories emphasize the exploitation of one individual by an organization, the Marxist theory is primarily concerned with the exploitation of an entire segment or class of society by another. This kind of exploitation is seen as being an inherent feature and key element of capitalism. In general, it is argued that the greater the "freedom" of the market, the greater the power of capital, and the greater the scale of exploitation. Because of this as a human-made institution, workers have little or no choice but to pay to the capitalists the surplus-value (profits, interest, and rent) in exchange of their survival. They enter the region of production, where they produce commodities, which allow their employers to realize that surplus-value as profit. They are always threatened by the ‘reserve army of the unemployed’. In brief, the profit gained by the capitalist is the difference between the value of the product made by the worker and the actual wage that the worker receives. In other words, capitalism functions on the basis of paying workers less than the full value product of their labour.

The following song describes the cruelty of the tea garden owners and the Britishers which the founding labour of the tea gardens in Assam faced. The masters extracted their even without providing them fair compensation. Hence, the song relates to the nature of exploitation of the labourers:

Chal Mini Assam jabo
deshe baro dukh re
Assam deshe jabo Mini
cha bagan ghuriye
O dada Dhaniram
Shaheb bale kam kam
Babu bale dhore aan
Shardar bole nibo pihther cham
O dada Dhaniram

Kodal mara baro kathin kam

Ek poysar puthi mach

Kaya gharer tel go

Nonir bape mange jodi

Aaro dibo jhol go

(Source: Antapriya Bhumij, age 82, a retired labour of Kalain Tea garden)

(O Mini.Come, let's go to Assam. Our life is so tough in our native place. We will go to Assam and enjoy the tea gardens. Mini sends message to her brother, Dada Dhaniram: O Dada Dhaniram. Babu orders to work and only to work, Shaheb challenges not let us escape and Sardar threatens to beat us and de-skin our back and Mud cutting with a spade is very tough. Then you will be able to buy a handful of Puthi fish, which you can cook only by borrowing oil from some other's house. And after feeding the whole family only gravy is left for the second serving).

This song clearly highlights the history and enlightens us about the piteous condition earlier tea garden labourers who were physically oppressed by the owners. The labourers were sometimes beaten by the manager, Assistant manager, sardar, tila babu and even by the arkatti (agent). They were always threatened that if they did not work obediently then their entire family would be destroyed. They did not have sufficient food, though the Britishers guaranteed them to provide ration in every household of the labour family in proper way. It was all false.

Another song is recited by Dayamoy Munda to bring out the daily exploitation which they undergo in their daily life:

Sramiker sukher jibone

Ke anilo dukhe bhara

Hamder sukh santi
kere nilo kara
bhai kere nilo kara
Sramik shoshon korlo jara

Chhira jama kapor pore
Sramik roilo bhanga ghare
Hamder sukh santi
kere nilo kara
bhai kere nilo kara
Sramik shoshon korlo jara

British shaheb ke tariye diye
Deser nagorik holo saheb
Dakho! paka building banailo
kara bhai
Sramik shoshon korlo jara

(Source: Dayamoy Munda, 71, a retired labour of Doloo Tea garden)

(The tea labourers lived in a very bad condition. They were exploited to the abyss. Who exploited these labourers? The Britishers started this exploitation and thereafter, our own country men became Shahebs. Our exploitation continues. Till date the exploiters live in the concrete houses; the laboures still live in the broken huts. Now, the exploiters are our own countrymen.)

While narrating this song Dayamoy Munda says: *‘Tea garden labourers have been exploited in every way of life. When their forefathers came in the tea gardens in 150 years ago, they thought that Assam was very nice place. If they go there, then they would be able to bring happiness to their families. But it was a lie. They decided to work hard*

yet they did not get the wage, food, house and clothes they were entitled to. So, they were put into a very bad condition. At the time of Independence in August 1947, when the Britishers left, the labourers thought of to be salvaged from their pathetic world but nothing happened to meet their expectation. Situation did not change as our own countryman have become the managers and the owner'. How the managers and other officials oppress the tea garden labourers is stated Naresh Bhumij through the following song:

Ek nambore pata tula,
Dui nambore ojon
Pati tulogo Mini tin patar niche
Gali pahi dharo age age,
Ailo ojoner gari
Bar hobigo दौरा दौरि,
Babur kolomgo Mini ghore rai rai
Kiba ojon sale,
Bhalo kore re babu ojon saribi
Gariber hok na maribi.

(Source: Naresh Bhumij, 58, a carpenter of the Doloo Tea Garden)

(There are specific lines for plucking tea leaves and weighing them. Only three soft leaves have to be plucked from the tea plants. Once the weighing vehicle reaches in the garden, hustle-bustle starts among the leaf pluckers to finish their work and to leave for home. The leaf collectors weigh hurriedly cheating the labourers. The labourers request the leaf collectors to weigh properly, as they are unfortunate and poor people).

This narration reveals that after the plucking; the labourers submitting the tea leaves to the leaf collectors. Each and every labourer plucked 21 kg per day and got Rs 77/- Rs per day. But the leaf collectors cheated or pilferaged the leaves and every day

they faced the said situation. So, the labourers generally lose some part of their daily wage.

After the exploitation and oppression labourers express their feelings and thoughts which is being given under the following case.

After the exploitation and oppression labourers express their feelings and thoughts which is being given under the following song:

Vaisa jok

hami heki vaisa jok

loker deher khun chuse chuse

hamar gat vaki kori

gater boj lite nahi pabe

chuchrai chali hami hamar deha

Roje hamar dusraker

khun chusar dhanda

kintu jobe hamar mukhe gire nimkher chitka
ahedin naikiya hoy hamar vaisa joker ahangkarita

Hamar rakam vaisa joker

aj kal manusher majheo janma hoiche

orao nirdoshi sadaran manusher khun chuse chuse

nijor sampatti briddi kore

Dukhiya janaganer kandoner aoyaj vaisa joker kane nai ghuche

ohe khatir ora oja jai

akh bondho kore

Manusher majher vaisa jokder vi

ekdin moron dasa hobek

ohedin dukhiya, shosit bhai bohin

hasi hasi jibek

(Source: Himangsu Baraik, 18, a student of Achabam Tea garden)

The above mentioned folk songs reveal that the Britishers handed over the tea plantation in Assam to Indian Government as well as private owners at time of Independence and the labourers rejoiced that now Indian Government will understand their problems, sympathetically but actually the situation is totally different. Our Indian owner/ manager compelled us to more work with very less salary. They got more profit from our labour. Now the labourers are more exploited by the owners socially, economically and culturally also. Even though, the labourers expect that all the unhappiness will have to remove from our life. The labourers can punish them (owners/ manager) and another song reflected on Consciousness of Self- protection and existentiality:

Chail geli golaghat
barpathar sarupathar
ar chail geli uriam ghat
dop dop kai jaliche tar ghar
goru bachhru hai gelo char
mor didi ga jalai dilo tor ghar
dui hajar chaidda chane
bar August mahina me
daya maram nai charkarer
sibire tor naiko apan ghar
mor didi ga kandi kandi bohi che lor
kohile koha jay
na kohile pran hil jay
Acham desher janajati chuke kune

kandi ache mone mone
mor didi ga jalai dilo tor ghar

**(Source: Mangal Hembram, 63, a Leader (Mukhiya),
Chemgelijan,Jaipur,Naharkatia Dibrugarh)**

Mangal Hembram dedicated this song for tea tribe those who died in the santhal and Bodo' clashes in lower Assam and he told that the tea garden labourers are very poor, weakest people of the state. All the Adivasi belong to the below the poverty line. They do not have well furnished house. They live in a type of hut which is made of bamboo and mud wall with tin roof and this is the weakness of the Adivasis and other tribes took this advantage. Bodo people smolder their houses in the lower Assam. Bodo and other tribes thought that tea tribe is not indigenous of tribe of Assam, not the 'son of the soil'. They are migrants here, destroying our food and property. Its impact comes to the upper Assam also. But the state govt was silent. They do nothing for Adivasis. Even political leaders did not express any sympathy.

AGONIES AND PAINS OF THE ADIVASIS

Ha mujhe janam leli,
chai bagan majhe re
Baganiya jibon baro dukher jibone
Jingani katali, dhire dhire boro holi

Baganiya dasa dekhi,
Ali pahar gali kinar,
chai bagan ghurali
Bagane janmili jakhon,
dukkh ache sarakkhan
Chal bhaja cha pani rakhilo jibon

seito sabe jane.

(Source: Dayamoy Munda, 71, a retired labour of Doloo Tea garden)

(The tea garden labourers including the Adivasi opine....We are born in the tea gardens and the life here is very pathetic. Gradually, we have grown up in these gardens, roamed around and learnt how tough the life is in this garden. And we have realized that, since we have born in the tea gardens our life is to be very tough. Black tea and roasted rice are all what we survive on).

In the above songit is stated that the life of the tea garden labourers is very painful because they are property less and they do not have anything to live on. All the correct information concealed about and the realities of the gardens were something is continuing by the Britishers from their forefathers and they are born in this pathetic life situation. Nobody listen their voice. Black tea and roasted rice are all what they get and survive on. The riddle stated by Antopriya Bhumij makes the meaning explicit. It is as follows:

Machh maribi khaibi shukhe

Lekha pora korile moribi dukkhe

(Source: Antapriya Bhumij, 82, a retired labour of Kalain Tea garden)

(The tea garden owners try to convince us by saying: Catch fish; eat meal and live in peace. If you start going to school then, your life will be horrible.)

‘The Britishers convinced labourers that if labourers started going to school then their life would become horrible’. It means that they will be happy and comfortable by remaining illiterate only. The actual intention behind such persuasion is that if the simple and credulous labourers started to go to the school then they would come to understand all things about the Britishers. If the labourers got education in a proper way, then, they

would come out from their clutches and never work in the garden. So, anyhow by hook or crook the owners always tried to retain the labourers on the gardens and exploited them.

COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE LABOURERS

Integrity grows up from consciousness and anybody can feel it when a threat comes from an antagonist. The tea garden labourers are the weakest section of the society. They could not express their demands and problems in the gardens controlled by the Britishers. The following song explains their consciousness and integrity:

Bhul bhul kariye
Chhare aili hamder deshke

Hamra roibo na ar
parer kathay bhuliye
jage uthar samoy hoyechhe,
jago jago bhaire

Roibo na ar guman kore
hamra roibo na ar
parer kathay bhuliye,
jage uthar samoy hoyechhe,
jago jago bhaire.

(Source: Gopal Bhumij, 56, a leader of the CPI (M) and official staff of the Doloo Tea Garden)

(The labourers were told by the planters and Arkatis to forget their own native land and the planters brought them here. But now they will no more let others (planters) take advantage out of them. They appeal to their fellow-workers/brothers to wake up and not to allow others to play with their sentiments any more.)

Gopal Bhumij, further narrates the history of the tea garden labour and says how the Britishers forced them to forget their homeland for better fortunes and made them tea garden labour in Assam. The labourer calls upon each and every labourer of realize one's problems and not to allow others to take our advantage from them as they are weaker people and their weakness should not be exploited any more.

Thus, there is appeal for unity and awakening. The following song clearly brings out this spirit of the labourers:

Bhul bhul bhular pathe
Bhabchina kono sromik bhai
Hamra ekotar abhabete,
porechhi sobai hai hai pichhonete
Jati dharmo nirbishesh kari
Chal hamra jege uthi
Hamra ekotar abhabete,
porechhi sobai hai hai pichhonete

(Source: Dayamoy Munda, 71, a retired labour of Doloo Tea Garden)

(No more can we be fooled; let's unite irrespective of caste and religion. Come let's wake up. Until we are united, we will not be able to develop). According to him:

Tea garden labourers are lagging behind on the ground of education, daily wage, medical and housing facilities; labourers always feel identity crisis as they are not given the Schedule Tribe status and they are not ask whether they 'sons of the soil of Assam' or any other state of the country. They are the stateless people in India.

So, he feels that they have to integrate with each other if not united then they will not be able to develop in there. This sense of unity is composed in to the following song:

Hamra anbo natun din
Dui bela dui mutho anno jutte
More achhi bhai ai jibone.
Jibone laguk surjo alo
Phuleri gandhe bharuk pran
Bidhiro bidhane shrame shosone
Uthechhe awaj khane kane
Bejchhe ranadanka
Kaj chay Kaj chay
aath ghanta
Hamra anbo natun din.

(Source: Dayamoy Munda, 71, a retired labour of Doloo Tea Garden)

(We will have better days. Just to manage two morsels of rice twice a day we struggle whole life. May our lives be brightened with new rays of sun and filled with fragrance of flowers. As our destiny has ruled, we are in the vicious circle of exploitation and hard work.

Voice has started rising against the system all around and we are uniting for a revolution to change our life drastically. We will work for eight hours a day only.)

The above statement reveals that if the labourers do not struggle collectively against the exploiters then nobody else will bring the good days for us; that their voice has started rising against the system all around and we are uniting for the revolution of change and we never work more than eight hours a day. Sometimes they want to resist using the following kind of riddle:

Jo hota hai achha
O hota hai sour ka bachha
(Those who live well are the piglets)

(Source: Antapriya Bhumij, 82, a retired labour of Kalain Tea garden)

This is the famous riddle of each and every tea garden in Assam. This is the mythical voice of tea garden labourers to resist or protest against the tea garden authority. The riddle shows how the labourers scorn off the exploiters and refuse to accept their superiority on moral grounds.

The Adivasis express their consciousness of unity through slogans also. Slogan is a memorable motto or phrase used in political, commercial, religious, and other contexts as a repetitive expression of an idea or purpose. Slogans are used to express a message about the demand as well as service. It reflects the consciousness. Slogans are often used to capture the attention of the audience one tries to reach. A slogan can be a few simple words used to form a phrase that can be used in a repetitive manner. In political party or cultural organization a slogan is used as part of their activity. Slogans should catch the audience's attention and influence the thoughts on what they to want. Slogans can also provide information about the aims, objectives and ideology. The language used in the slogans is essential to the message it wants to express. The use of good adjectives makes for an effective slogan; when adjectives are paired with describing nouns, they help bring the meaning of the message out through the words. A slogan's message can include information about the quality of the life. A slogan can be used for a powerful cause where the impact of the message is essential to the cause. The slogan can be used to raise awareness about a current situation. Slogans when combined with action can provide an influential foundation for a cause to be seen by its intended audience. But in sociologically slogan has a different meaning. It is bearing some voice of the society which has some important aims and objectives. Therefore, Tea Garden labourers as well as tea tribes are the most marginal, backward and weaker section of the society. They are minor and inferior in the society. So, labourers could not express their problems like low wage, insufficient ration, and bad qualities of

house, lack of medical facilities. Some slogans are made by leaders and tea garden labourers collectively for their present situation.

The following slogans are followed by the tea garden labourers as well as leaders of the tea garden labourers:

Inqlub jindabad
Sramik aikko jindabad
(Long live labour's unity)

Duniar majdur ek hou
(Appeal for universal unity of labour)

Aamader dabi mante hobe
Naile sangram chachhe chalbe
(Accept our demands, otherwise revolution will continue)

Larai larai larai chai
Ei larai tomar larai aamar larai
Larai kore bachte chai
(We want struggle; this is your struggle, we will struggle for our existence)

Lal jhanda kare pukar
Inqlub jindabad
(Let's unite under the red flag)

Aadha roti pura kam
Nehi chalega
(Half wage for full work will not be acceptable)

Mang hamari pura koro
jaldi karo
Aabhi karo jaldi karo

(Accept what we demand, now and now only)

Shahid swarane apon marone

Rakto rin sodh korun

Shahider rakte ranga lal pataka tule dhorun

(Source: Gopal Bhumij, 56, a leader of the CPI (M) and official staff of the Doloo Tea Garden)

(Come, let's unite and uphold the flag, which soaked in the red colour, i.e., blood.

Let us remember our own martyrs, to whom we are indebted)

From the above statement it is made clear that these are the voices of marginal people who are oppressed and exploited in every way for the last 163 years (Doloo garden) and still it is continued by the native tea owners. The tea garden labourers in Assam never received attention of development agencies of the state. So, the tea garden labourers are raising their voice under the flags of various organizations like AASA, INTUC, ABCMS, etc.

Another song of integrity was narrated by Mangal Hembram is as follows:

Chand mama, chand mama

dudu vatu de

hamar babur ghum parabo

dudu vatu de.

babur mai babur mai

ki kore debo dudu vat?

ato dure acho tora

kemone dibo dudu vat?

sikkha nai dikkha nai

thak adhokare

juge juge andharer majhe

par koro din ar rait.

tai bolchi

e babu mai, e babu mai

sunele hamor kotha
sona chandi, platinum
aru anek dhatu thasathasi kore ache
chand mamar buke,
rasa chaina, koria japan
varat amerika
sabar khatir khola ache chand mamar desh
mamar deshe asbi jodi
tarao gomer ghor
uthau babuke deo sikkha
biggan prajuktir.
toder deshe srihorikotale
ure chandra jan
asbi hole mamar deshe ganer puchhri dhar.

**(Source: Mangal Hembram, 63, a Leader (Mukhiya),
Chemgelijan, Jaipur, Naharkatia Dibrugarh)**

The songs reveals that tea tribe have been suffering from poverty, illiteracy, health problem etc. It is their daily life. 'Below standard living' is common for all the Adivasis in the tea gardens. But the tea garden labourers have different experiences. Adivasis felt that education is necessary for us. Now it is our dream to educate our children with a subject of technology. Without it they could not survive in the new, technological world. The labourers hope that education may remove our poverty. Another song is reflected on Consciousness of protest against oppression and for self protection:

Chowdishe aji hahakar
kone baru koribo protikar
jiyai thakibar babe,
sakoloke lage aji adhikar
amar Assam sonar Assam buli

chhatra jibonat koy sakolore
rajnir patharat name
dur buddhi ku niti khele
apon manuhar sathe
kora annay prabonchana
nijor sarthor babe
tumi danar hobo nowra
nowra bechibo tomar mon magaju
chini pao ami bhadratat arat
lukai thoka prakito chehera
swadhinata biki deowar artho ami bujo
kintu eko koribo noyabo
nisar andhokaro bilin hoe jay
nayor dabi, prappa adhikar
khudra swarthar sagarat
kenekoi paharim amar adhikar
protibador katha
nirbibade herai jay
pratibadkarir nisfal asa
binimoyot matho pao ami
nirasa kebol nirasa.

**(Source: Chunka Hambram, 67, a Community leader of Santhal,
Chemgelijan, Jaipur, Naharkatia in Dibrugarh)**

According to Chunka Hembram the labourers have right to protest against corruption in the tea garden and in the government. He says that tea garden manager hides the provident fund money, shoe, hospital medicine, scholarships for poor students of the tea garden schools. On the other hand, govt. did not accord the ST status that's why the labourers did not get facilities like education, job etc from the government. Besides, some of the political leaders cleverly exploit the labourers. When elections come

to the door, leaders also come to us and so many promises are showered upon us but when the elections are over all the promises are belied. For that reason all the labourers are hopeless both from the tea garden managers or the political leaders.

CONSCIOUSNESS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

Till now, the Santhals are practicing mother tongue in their daily life in the tea gardens. They always remember their mother land. They try to forget it but they cannot. That's why they have composed songs in Santhali and have dedicated the song to Siddhu and Kanhu. The Santhal tea garden labourers believe that Siddhu and Kanhu are god fathers or great ideal Sage. Chunka Hambram told that the following this song is a hidden mantra of the Santhal community to inspiring then to assert for what they deserve and to stand united and to proceed towards a new direction:

(i)

Chadan dadataleme

Chadam dada lagayem

Chadam dada madane malin

(O, brothers, unite your horses

Rush to the battle field

We are with pale faces)

(ii)

Chand banga nehrate marang buru joharem

Chand bhayor sanggete

Chidu kanhu chadam chetan re.

(You pray to the god, Marang buru,

march accompanying the brothers of the Moon Dynasty.

Siddu and Kanhu are on the Horseback)

(iii)

De ja boyha delaja bakayha

Hud hud gud gud damanike

British raja lagayeye bon

(Come all our brothers

Come in groups and gather in the same vanue

As we are to drive away the British)

(iv)

Hulaban hulah kaban

Lagah abon lapadh hai

Abowakah disam daban tahadh dahaya

(We will revolt; we will revolt in large gatherings

and will fight to save our motherland)

(v)

Relgarhi paiya chetan khirh khirh

Dah chetan lauka jahaj khad khad

Cherma- re udah jahaj han hanah kan

(Trais are running over us with the sound khir khir

Ships are running with the sound khad khad on the water

Aeroplanes are moving in our sky)

(v)

Ah dada chap pe

char boyha arag pe

Hara buru dharti daban dul dulau-wa

(come with bows and arrows

Shoot with arrows

Blow the war trumpets

So the we can quiver our dharti ma)

(vi)

Hul boyha lagoyen

Bandhuk hou chadeyen
Adi adi mayam dahou bohelen
Sidhu Kanhu karham red char-da parayen-hou boyha
(Movements have passed over
Guns have roared
Rivers of blood have have flowed over us
Arrows penetrated the chests of Sidu Kanhu)

**(Source: Chunka Hambram, 67, a Community leader of Santhal,
Chemgelijan,Jaipur,Naharkatia in Dibrugarh)**

According to him, the Santhals are a Munda tribe, a branch of that aboriginal element which entered India and brought to through North Bengal and the North- East by the British Tea planters. They were basically hunters and jungle dwellers and agriculturalist. The religion is animistic; spirits (bongas) are everywhere around them. The Santhal Parganas is a district, lying about 150 miles north of Calcutta, was formed into a separate administration after the Santhals had risen in rebellion in 1856. Santhali is an agglutinative language of great regularity and complexity but when the Santhals came in contact with the races speaking an Aryan language it is apt to become corrupted with foreign idioms.

The Santhals were scattered in the regions of Jharkhand, Chhotanagpur, Chhatisgarh and other parts of India by the British people. Siddhu and Kanhu, two matyrs of mid nineteenth century, embraced death penalty in the movement against the British policy of land and revenue system and have become a paramount source of inspiration for the followers of later times. Folksongs were composed after those two freedom fighters and these songs are alive in Assam till now.

In sum, the subaltern nature of the labourers is present in the inactiveness of the labourers i.e., they could not manage their affairs without the help of others (leaders) and predominance of the owners that's why Gramsci used the term *hegemony* to denote the predominance of one social class over others (e.g., *bourgeois hegemony*). This represents not only political and economic control, but also the ability of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world so that those who are subordinated accept it as 'common sense' and 'natural'. Commentators stress that this involves willing and active consent and CPI (M) leader Gopal Bhumij said:

The labourers assumed to be predominated and conceived it the only way of life. That is, if manager/owner is happy then we are also happy. The labourers accept the domination of the superior. It is the nature of the labourers. On the other hand, manager/owner is the superior of the society like God or God father and we try to make him happier, which is our duty'.

They thought of being powerless, saying that they do not have any power, it may be economic or political, social and cultural which Gramsci is called hegemony and it is a condition in which subaltern people feel that they do not have the power to carry out their mission. There is a sense of meaninglessness, i.e., a condition in which subaltern labourers find that they cannot foretell the outcomes of their action. They feel social isolation, i.e., the condition of being segregated from normative society at large and live in a state of self-estrangement in the garden setting, i.e., the tendency to act in ways that are opposed to one's self interest.