

Chapter6

SUBALTERN CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE ADIVASISIN LITERARY KNOWLEDGE

The literature based on written documents like books, articles and news articles and written form of various historical texts etc on tea gardens started from in the last part of 18th century in India. In 19th century literature, various scholars described the situation of tea garden labour. There are found many written documents on tea gardens. In 1980 Amalendu Guha wrote 'Formation of a working class in Assam plantations: A study in retrospect' in 1981. Sukomal Sen wrote 'Working class of India, history of emergence movements 1830-1970'. Sanat Bose wrote 'Tea garden labour movement in Assam (1920-21): Studies in the History of North- East India' in 1986. Achinta Bhattacharjee wrote 'History of tea garden labour in Assam: struggle and problem' in 1995. Sanat Kumar Kairi (2010) wrote his book on *Tea Industry and History of Tea Labour Union*. From this literature, the present study analyzes the history and genesis, migratory history, movements and life struggle of the tea garden labourers.

ACHINTA BHATTACHARJEE

Mr. Achinta Bhattacharjee was a communist leader. He highlighted about History and Genesis of the tea gardens and also the problems and struggle of the tea garden labourers in both the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys in Assam. In the article 'problem and struggle of the tea garden labourers in Assam' he wrote how indigenous tea plant was discovered by Shingpho chief, known as Visaguoamain north Assam. After getting the plant, he brings it innocently to the Robert Bruce during his visit in 1823 A.D. During that time Robert Bruce, his brother C.A. Bruce and East India Company prepared for tea

cultivation in Assam. On other hand, Robert Bruce and company murdered 'Visaguoama' in the Jorhat jail and 'discovery of the Assam tea plant' was credited to Robert Bruce. This is the first incident that took place with indigenous people of Assam during the establishment of tea garden. Instead, his brother C.A. Bruce who was in charge of the British Gunboat Division in the war with the Burmese who had occupied Assam in 1824 was posted at Sadiya. He met the Singphow chief and received some tea plants and seeds. Most of these seeds were planted in Bruce's garden at Sadiya and some of those were sent to the Commissioner Jenkins at Guwahati. A few leaves of these plants were sent to Botanical Gardens in Calcutta. Dr. N. Wallich, the then Superintendent of Botanical Gardens, identified the leaves and certified that the leaves belonged to the camellia family, but did not consider them as to be of the same species as the China tea Plant ([http://www.fmltea.com/tea info/tea-cultivation.htm](http://www.fmltea.com/tea%20info/tea-cultivation.htm)).

In 1834, the Governor General of India, Lord William Bentinck, constituted a tea committee to advice on feasibility of commercial tea cultivation in India. The committee in a circular sought information on areas suitable for tea cultivation and asked its secretary, Mr. G. Gordon, to procure tea seeds, plants and workers from China. In response to the circular the Commissioner of Assam, Major F Jenkins, made a strong case in favour of tea cultivation in Assam where tea plants were growing wild in forest. He also collected complete specimens of the local plants and forwarded them to the Government as well as Botanical Gardens in Calcutta. On this occasion Dr. Wallich had identified the specimens of tea and found the plants not different from tea plants of China. Upon this, the tea committee recommended that the indigenous plants under proper management be cultivated with complete success for commercial purpose. In 1835

A.D. a scientific commission was constituted of Dr. N. Wallich, Dr. W.Griffith and Dr. J. Mc Clelland to report on the Indian indigenous tea plants and to advise on the most favourable localities for starting experimental tea gardens. The scientific commission visited Assam in early 1836. Mr. C.A.Bruce, acting as guide, took the members to a number of tracts at the foot of the Naga and Patkai hills as well as to a few in the river valleys where the indigenous tea plant was growing in clumps. Mr. Gordon was sent again to China in 1836 and, for many years, China tea seeds were imported regularly to India. The experimental site at Saikhowa near Sadiya in upper Assam was not suitable and therefore many plants died. The surviving plants were shifted to a new site near Chabua, about 25 kms east of Dibrugarh. In the Himalayan region, tea seedlings were planted near Bhimtal and Almora. Later on, experimental gardens were successfully established with China plants in Kumaon, Garhwal and Kangra districts on the Himalayan foot hills. After being appointed as the Superintendent of Government Tea Plantations, he explored a large part of territory from Sadiya to Gabru Purbat in upper Assam and discovered numerous tea tracts inside forests. Some of these tea tracts were cleared, and the leaves gathered from the bushes were manufactured with the help of workmen brought from China. The first experimental samples of tea from the indigenous plants were sent to Calcutta in 1836 and in Assam 1837 tea cultivation was started professionally by the East India Company. The sample received favourable comments, whereupon an invoice of eight chests of Assam tea was consigned to London in 1838, which was auctioned on 10th January 1839. This was a momentous occasion because not only did it establish the worth of the Assam tea plant but determined the future course of

tea cultivation throughout the world. Today, more tea is made the Assam type plant than from the China type (<http://www.fml tea.com/tea info/tea-cultivation.htm>).

According to Bhattacharjee, Maniram Dewan, was a famous landlord who later worked in the Assam Company for some time. He wanted to invest his capital for the better development of indigenous tea industry in Assam. He started struggle against the company for the reason of monopolistic business which surrounded the tea garden. That's why Britishers proclaimed Maniram as a terrorist, but after few days some incident happened with Maniram Dewan and he was hanged by the Britishers as well as the company. After the death of Maniram Dewan, his supporter Modhuram Cooch and others started agitation against the company but they failed and Modhuram Cooch was arrested by British administrator(<http://www.fml tea.com/tea info/tea-cultivation.htm>).

Proletarianization of the Labour

In 1837 when tea cultivation started in Assam, then there was some labour crisis. On the other hand, planters did not know how to cultivated tea, for that reason the Company brought labourers from China. At the same time in Assam, the British Government implemented a rule, compelling the local labourers to work in the tea garden but this was failed. Then, planters moved to Central India, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orrisa and West Benga for indent labour (Bhattacharjee 1995).

In this year (1837) British Govt. made another rule for labourers called 'breach of contract' by which all indentured labour became 'slaves', 'Coolie' or 'bonded labour' under the company but nobody knew about the rule. Hence, shameful epic started with the tea cultivation and terrific system 'Girmit'(black laws) also originated with the labour act. The planters appointed 'Arkatis' as agents to recruit labourers. The Government

supported the planters with the black laws under the Breach of Contract Act 1859. Agents were sent to collect labourers from different parts of the country. The agents forced the innocent tribals to sign contract agreement. First batch of Adivasis came to Assam in 1841. In 1858 to 1859 about 400 labourers were brought to Assam. This increased to 84,995 on May 1863. But during this time large numbers of Adivasis (around 30,000) died due to famine and diseases (Bhattacharjee 1995).

SUKOMOL SEN

Sukomal Sen (1977) is an Indian trade union leader. He is the General Secretary of the Trade Union International of Public and Allied Employees, a structure connected to the World Federation of Trade Unions. He is also General Secretary of the All India State Government Employees Federation. He is a Central Committeemember of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Sen was a Rajya Sabhamember 1982-1994. He is the author of two books: (1). *Working Class of India: History of Emergence and Movement 1830-1990* and (2). *May Day and Eight Hours' Struggle in India: A Political History*.

Sukomol Sen was also writing about the conditions and struggle in tea garden labour in Assam. He narrated that the first struggle started with low wage which was provided by the tea garden authority. In that connection, all-India labour leader Sukomal Sen describing in his book '*Working Class of India: History of Emergence and Movement (1830-1990)*', writes: Somprakash, a news paper which was published in 1962, writes: "*in the last year we written something about a tea garden labour who was belonging to very bad condition, in Cachar we met him in this year*". Those who detailed his poor and bad condition – his name is Rupchand Biswas. His native place was Krishnapur in Nadia

district. He said, "The owner and manager, every time beat them. They were promised to give 10/- to 12/- Rs. per month but they received only Rs. 1/- to Rs. 2/- per month. Very bad quality of food they were provided, nobody could eat it, not even animals. But for this reason, owner earned money from their monthly wages. Their living place was also very congested and unhealthy. They did not get proper treatment for ill health that's why that time many of the labourers died. Labourers were oppressed by owners or manager; hence they did not get justice against that oppression.

British Trade Union Congress sent two representatives; namely, Mr. Percel and Halswarth to enquire about the conditions of the tea garden labour. They reported to the government, "*We saw a band of men like women and child working into the tea garden and an assistant of owner standing in front of them with a cane very proudly*". They further said, "*Tea garden labourers made the bonded slave and they were very unfortunate people of civilized world*".

According to district officers of Laksimpur, in the year of 1881 labourers got average wage Rs. 3.50 per month but controversy brought by Sub-Divisional Officers, according to him at that time, labourers got Rs. 3/- less per months whenever 1 mound of rice was Rs. 3/-. On the other hand, it was written by 'Someprakash' that tea garden owners gave Rs. 2/- per month to each and every labourer and in the latter stage it was increased Rs. 4/- per month. Accordingly, it was not enough in comparison to the commodity price. There was a question that they were entitle to get more money for their work while they were made to work with very less money, was it not a kind of exploitation or oppression? After 1910s, there was made some reforms in respect of the

wage by increasing it. But discrimination was practiced among workers as male labourers got Rs. 5.66/- per month whereas female workers got only Rs. 5.30/- per month.

In the time of First World War (1914-19) wage increased to Rs. 8.62/- per month only for male workers whereas female workers got their old wage; the rice price increased per mound by Rs.8/- to 10/-. After First World War, in 1920s wage was decreased as 7.75/- Rs. per months. According to Somprakash that tea garden owners achieved maximum profit.

A situation of 'more production, high commodity price, high profits but fewer wages' compelled the labourers to announce a revolt against the tea garden owners in the year of 1921s. That is known as 'Chorgola Exodus'. After 'Chorgola Exodus' wages were increased again: for male Rs. 11.62, for female Rs. 9.32 and for child Rs. 5.50 per month. In the crisis of world capitalism (1929-1930) wages decreased again: for male Rs.10.20, for female Rs 6.80 and for child very few per month. The wage decreased more in the year of 1939 and new wage started at Rs 7.50/- per month only for a male whereas a female and a child got very few. In the year of 1920 -1942, commodity price was so high but wage rate did not increase accordingly. According to the Rege Committee (1946) in India tea garden labourers suffered a terrible situation. In 1952, wage was fixed for male and female workers as Rs1.12 and Rs 1.06 per day alongwith 3.5 kg rice for one month. But labourers never got more than Rs 30/-Rs per months.

AMALENDU GUHA

Amalendu Guha narrated very largely about *Formation of a working Class in Assam Plantations: A Study in Retrospect* (1981: 73-109). In 1848, the first strike in tea garden was organized by the tribal people in Assam due to pending wage. In 1859,

agitation took place on large scale against arrest of the labour leader Madhuram and the hanging of Maniram Dewan. After that several strikes and lockouts were organized in 50 years that followed. The agitation was very malicious and scattered. Due to this, tea garden owners did profligate over labourers. Chamanmala wrote about an incident: "In the year of 1920s 20th July, a woman tea garden labour, applied to the Deputy Commissioner for discharge certificate to overcome from outraged before expiring her agreement". On this ground, garden manager brought an allegation against her that she was running away to another tea garden and then she was sentenced for six week's rigorous jail by the court". On the other hand, in 15th August 1920, Verala Tilanga a tea garden labour, went to another tea garden. Suddenly he was arrested and an allegation was made against him that he was an active member of the Trade Union Congress if he told the judge that he had never heard about the Trade Union Congress, even then he was sentenced for one month's rigorous jail by the court.

SANAT BOSE

Tea garden labour movement in Assam(1920-21) (1986: 174-184), in this writing he started with the famous Chorgola Valley tea labour exodus in early May 1921 as its climax, is probably the most significant episode in the history of Indian labour movements, at least in Eastern India. The incident occurred on 2nd May, 1921 when some tea garden labourers in Chorgola Valley struck the work demanding a pay increase. The historic labour exodus from Chorgola and Longai Valley in Karimganj Sub-division started with 750 men, women and children, coming out from Anipur tea estate on 3rd May. The simple folk demanded a wage increase that was denied. They had lately heard of the name of Gandhiji and put their faith in all kinds of myths about his powers of

doing well to the oppressed. They, themselves, indulged in all sorts of myth making and accepted Gandhiji as a messiah an Avatar. Their suffering ultimately goaded them to follow the Gandhian path-go back to their village and live a simple and plain life.

In a report to the Government of Bengal (9 April 1886), Lt. Col. Hopkinson, Commissioner of Assam noted, "I was far from supposing that anywhere in the province coolies could be treated with cold-blooded revolting cruelty which the papers herewith forwarded disclose". He then cited an extract from the diary of a government official, Capt. Lamb:

Moved to the Gabroo and inspected the Assam Tea Company's gardens en route, found seven men in one of them, who had the marks of having been mercilessly beaten with a cane on their backs. They stated that short of ration had induced them to abscond, and about a fortnight ago, they had been brought back to the garden, and the assistant in charge of it tied them up and gave each of them a severe beating. One man's wounds were deep into the flesh and still quite raw. From further enquires, I gathered that after these unfortunate men had their backs cut to pieces with a cane, oil and salt had been rubbed into their wounds.

Such incidents were a regular feature in the gardens in the past when in the given situation there it was not possible for workers to hit back collectively, though resistance from individual worker was not unknown. But half a century later, things became different. For instance, in the case of same garden, the superintendent of Jhansi Tea Company in his deposition before the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1921 (ALEC) stated:

At Gabroo there was a riot on the 24th February (1921) and strike on 25th February. Before that date, there was no trouble whatsoever- never a word and not a grumble about their pay. As to the cause we are not in a position to give very much away about it because it is difficult to get evidence. If there is anything said, the people would be warned and efforts in getting further evidence would be unsuccessful. But Mr. S tells me there are 2 leaders from outside; one is a darzi (tailor) and another villager.

In the famous Web Case (May 1884), Charles Webb, Agent for the India General Steam Navigation Company at Kokilamookh (Jorhat Sub-division), once attempted to ravish a married coolie woman, named Sukumoni. The woman resisted and in the scuffle that ensued she was seriously injured. Webb had his lust satisfied and the unfortunate woman died. This heinous crime (there are hundreds of such examples) could not be legally established for lack of satisfactory evidence and so Webb could get away by merely paying a fine of Rs 100. As a class, tea garden labourers were too weak to protect their womenfolk from such barbarous acts of a large section of planters who cared little about the honour and dignity of a human being if that human being happened to be a garden labourer. It is not difficult to appreciate the feelings of helpless labourers in such circumstances. But during the period one finds a totally inverted scenario: labourers belonging to Phulcherra garden (Consolidated Tea Company) demanded among other things, that "no European should speak to the women, that no babu should speak directly to them and that everything should be done through their own Sirdars, a demand which the Manager thought, was absurd and yet dared not to repeat what his predecessors like Smith or the Gabroo planter or even the Khoreal planter of a more contemporary time

could do, without any fear of serious repercussion. Now, the planter had to think twice before he would take any disciplinary action against a worker, as we shall see later on.

That this spirit of defiance of planter's authority was not confined to a few isolated gardens only but was a general feature noticeable in almost all the tea gardens of Assam. It can be seen from the following sketchy account of labour movement in the Assam tea gardens in 1920-21:

Strike at Hansaa garden (Lakhimpur district) of the Doom Dooma Tea Company on 6 September 1920 set off a chain of reactions which ultimately engulfed the entire Assam tea belt.

Different sections of the labour force refused to turn up for work, complaining that the rice issued at Rs. 3/- a maund was insufficient and of bad quality. On the 15th of September at Raidang, a neighbourhood garden of the same company, the coolies struck work, a garden jamadar was beaten and two European Assistants were attacked.

The Pabhojan Tea Estate disturbance was of a more militant nature: a jamadar was severely beaten and the manager's bungalow was attacked by workers (21 September 1920). Next day, "a serious riot" occurred in the adjoining garden of the Dhoedaam Tea Estate, where the Superintendent of Police was severely injured, a constable badly beaten, a European Assistant seriously assaulted and bungalow property destroyed. The main demands at Dhoedaam were that the allowance of the rice sold at Rs. 3/- a maund be raised from 6 to 8 seers a week and pay be increased from Rs. 6/- to Rs. 8/-.

Supply of bad or insufficient quantity of rice along with low wage, was a regular grievance of workers but previously planters never took up these complaints seriously, they just dismissed them as of no consequence. But this complacency now gave way to

serious thinking on the part of the planter. The manager of Doom Dooma Tea Company admitted before the ALEC that a large amount of rice supplied by the garden contractor (Jaynarain Phuchand) was actually unfit for human consumption. For this reason payment to the contractor was withheld. The case was referred to the Court for decision. The Dhoedaam workers also complained that an absence of an approach road for taking their cattle from the lines to the garden's grazing ground their cattle were impounded and released only on payment of fines if they wandered into the tea.

On 25th September, workers struck work at Sanding, which also belonged to the Doom Dooma Tea Estate. The workers' age old anger was against traders who took every advantage to cheat them. This anger led them to loot three Kaiyas' shops. Two days later, workers of Hukanguri, a garden adjoining Pabhojan, raided the weekly hat at Bara Hapjan. They took away cloth and rice. In a fray, some traders and also some coolies were injured.

As labour strikes forced them to admit, planters and by government officials almost unanimously admitted that wages in the Dibrugarh subdivision were not only low but these had gone down over the years. On the other hand, though prices and dividends had gone up. Thus while the average wage in 1911-12 was Rs. 10-10-9, it had been reduced to Rs. 8-8-1 in 1918-19, whereas (in the Doom Dooma Circle) between 1913 and 1919, prices (per maund) of rice, pulse, mustard oil, kerosene (per gallon) and salt increased from Rs. 3-12-0 to Rs. 9-0-0, Rs. 4-12-0 to Rs. 12-8-0, Rs. 18-10-0 to Rs. 45-8-0, Rs. 0-4-0 to Rs. 0-10-0 and Rs. 3-2-0 to Rs. 5-0-0 respectively. As for dividends, Pabhojan Tea Company paid 35 per cent and 25 percent in 1918 -19 and 1920

respectively, while Doom Dooma Tea Company paid 15 per cent and 10 per cent in 1918-19 and 1920 respectively.

Regarding demand for higher wage in this circle, there is an element of truth in the feeling shared generally by Doom Dooma planters (and supported by government officials) that workers were encouraged to raise this demand by the success achieved by workers of Dibru-Sadiya Railways who had struck work two months earlier (in July 1920) with a demand for wage increase.

Impact of Dibru-Sadiya Railway strike on neighbouring tea garden labour prods one to probe into the question of workers' sources of information and the mode of transmitting them. In this case a large section of workers of the above railway were ex-tea garden labourers. Their interaction and intercourse with garden labourers in the locality could not be totally prevented. Through planters might have attempted to do so. In spite of strong protective measure taken by garden authorities to keep their gardens socially isolated, such attempts could not be totally successful, especially in times of mass upheavals. One may see in-built system of communication inherent in the very nature of the relationship between capital and labour in particular and the oppressor and the oppressed in general. This in built system operates even in the absence of organizations like trade unions or workers' political parties. That is the reason that as so as a strike breaks out in a factory, the news quickly spreads to neighbourhood factories even without active support from outside agencies. This aspect of labour movement however needs more support from outside agencies. This aspect of labour movement however needs more attention than it has received uptill now.

Widespread strikes in the Doom Dooma tea district, demanding among other things, wage increase, compelled the authorities to shed off their complacency and face the realities of the situation. The Deputy Commissioner also admitted that a reappraisal of the situation was very much needed. In this background a meeting of the subcommittee of the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association was held at Doom Dooma on 30th September 1920, where the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

Resolved that an increase of Rs. 3 extra per mensem, i.e., Rs. 9 and Rs. 8 in lieu of the present Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 should be given to all labourers who were willing to purchase on their own rice and that an increase of only Rs. 1/- should be given to those who still desire to take their rice from the factory go-down.

Thus, Doom Dooma labourers gained some wage increase although simultaneously they had to face a reign of terror loosened to identify and punish leaders of the movement: "a large number of persons were imprisoned in connection with the Doom Dooma riots."

Although this severe repressive measure succeeded in quelling labour "disturbances" and restoring 'peace' in the gardens, such peace was short lived. Strikes broke out again in the Dibrugarh subdivision from March 1921. When strike broke out in the Kachujan Tea Estate (near Tinsukia) lasting for a week, the manager sent a telegram (25 March) to the Deputy Commissioner, requesting the latter to visit the garden and prevent breach of peace. An armed force was accordingly sent to the garden, though the Deputy Commissioner also admitted that the "coolies had some causes for complaint." He even anticipated the possibilities of such an event because 'Hukanpukri out garden of Kachujan adjoins the Frontier Company's garden of Chota Hapjan and these coolies were

bound to know that the Doom Dooma garden coolies had recently received an increase in their pay." It may be noted here that while other gardens in the Doom Dooma Circle were forced to increase wages in September 1920, Balmer Lawrie & Co., Agent to Jokai Tea Company, owning Kachujan and Tipphuk Tea Estate, refused to sanction any wage increase in spite of the Deputy Commissioner's advice. But the Deputy Commissioner as representative of the Raj was duty bound to stand by the planters' in their moments of crisis and take steps to punish the guilty and restore "law and order." This time the main guilty they considered was an Assamese Head Mohuer. He was dismissed by the garden authorities immediately.

The Kachujan strike led to a long series of movements in the tea gardens between Tinsuika and Dibrugarh. In April 1921 there broke out strikes among others, in the gardens like Kachujan, Berbari, Greenwood, Rangagora, Gellapukuri, Nakhroy, Woodbine, Dinjan, Nahartoli, Muttack, Singlijan, Rangliting, Limbuguri.

Official report has mentioned the causes and nature of the disturbances that occurred in some of these gardens: "It was remarkable that no violence was used in any of these strikes. A technical riot occurred on the Nahartoli T.E. owing to the injudicious conduct of an Assamese garden jamadar who beat a coolie woman just when the coolies were returning to work." The use of the word "injudicious" is significant, because normally such actions (i.e., "Judicious") had a tacit sanction of authorities. But now labour movement had reached a stage where the authorities were forced to re-orient even though temporarily, some of their value judgments however to continue with the official report, as per the Deputy Commissioner's deposition.

It was not asked to intervene in any of these strikes but there was sent armed police to Hazelbank and Nahartoli at the manager's requests. In one case at any rate, i.e. Greenwood T.E., the acting Manager Mr. Boyle told me that he was convinced that the coolies had substantial grievances especially as regards the distribution of rice by the Indian staff that did the work after dark. The only of the gardens in which I think the strike was due in some measure to agitators (i.e., non-cooperators) was Nahatoli T.E. which adjoins the Dikomhat and Dikom Railway station to which agitators sometimes went on Sundays. I issued a warning notice against one agitor, Devendranath Das, who was reported to have made an objectionable speech at Dikmhat..."

In the Nahartoli garden police had to be sent on three occasions of strike in the Deputy Commissioner's view regarding the causes of strike were economic rather than political was typical in the sense that most of the people who are interested in analyzing mass movements always try, even today, to differentiate categorically between economic and political grievances or demands. Even a large section of historians has subscribed to this sort of simplistic and mechanic mode of analysis. They failed to observe and understand each historical event as a unique phenomenon which occurs in a specific objective situation and is brought about by a complex combination of various actions and interactions where the result as a whole is observable but its individual components are not observable.

It is only to be expected therefore that one of the terms of reference framed for the ALEC was to find out whether labour unrest during the period resulted from economic grievances (of labourers) or it was due to active incitement fomented from outsiders i.e., non-cooperators to destroy the government itself.

On these two counts, views of the planters and government officials were not always lacked unanimity. Unanimity did not exist even among planters themselves or their superior agents who operated from Calcutta and London as already noted earlier in one example where the Agent had turned down the garden manager's recommendation regarding wage increase.

This lack of unanimity may be due to their futile attempt to locate the individual components mentioned earlier. They are not aware of the fact that the same cause may not lead to the same result. For example while the successful Dibru-Sadiya Railway strike encouraged Doom Dooma labourers to fight for higher wages, it lacked such impact on yet another chain of gardens adjoining the scene of the railway strike. The Itakhooli garden, only 2.5 miles from Tinsukia, saw no labour trouble on this score. "The Dibru Sadiya Railway strike had no effect on my garden", proudly boasted its manager. For a similar reason, in spite of a broad trend of unanimity on some issues relating to labour, manager also often expressed their own individual reactions (to events) which at times bordered on absurdity. Thus, during a minor strike at Gillapuki garden (close to Tinsukia, which was visited by Gandhi in September 1921) the acting manager got panicky, and sent a letter to the Deputy Commissioner by a special messenger. The letter reads that "the coolies were determined to set up a Bolshevik Government" while writing later on the same day that "they had returned to work!".

Being in close and regular contact with the garden labourers, the managers could often feel their pulse much more realistically than their agents. Thus anticipating fresh labour trouble in the region, members of the Dibrugarh Subcommittee of the Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association called a general meeting of managers of Dibrugarh Circle

at the Dibrugarh Club on 27th April, 1921 to consider steps to be taken to prevent future labour unrest. A resolution was adopted by a large majority, recommending a wage rise of Rs 1 per day with effect from 1st May. But the Calcutta Agent (James Finlay) of Nahartoli Tea Estate did not accept the aforementioned resolution on the ground that any concession made to the labourers at that point of time would further strengthen the spirit of defiance among them. It can't be said whether any wage increase at that specific moment would have turned the tide in favour of the management but the agent's decision certainly did not work in favour of the management. Again strikes broke out in a number of gardens in the locality including Nahartoli.

Under the circumstance, the Naharatoli manager took the only step that was available to him to tackle the restive labour. He requested the Deputy Commissioner to come to his help. Though the Deputy Commissioner obliged by sending successively armed and reserved police, Assam Rifles and Civil Police, to the garden, he had his own reservations about the outcome of this action, stating that:

“I finally informed the Manager Mr. Stevenson, that I cannot keep police force indefinitely on his garden because his agents refused to fall into line with other Agents. I reported confidentially to the Chief Secretary (May 25) that James Finlay & Cowas asking for trouble if they did not raise the coolies' wages at Nahartoli TE.”

On 16 October 1920, strikes broke out at Monabari estate and its outgarden at Katonibari. About 2000 workers were involved in these strikes. After declaring strike, they looted some shops and assaulted Indian members of the garden staff. The Deputy Commissioner (Darrang) pointed out: "The rate of wages in force has remained unchanged for a quarter of a century. Further, in view of the enormous increase in the

cost of all food stuffs and of all articles of wearing apparel, I think no further comment is necessary. Even when full allowance is made for ticca earnings and for the fact that paddy rations are supplied at a rate considerably below cost price, the total pay earned by the labour force in this garden (as well as in some other gardens in this district) is not sufficient...." He also stated that in some cases, instead of wage increase, wages had gone down, as shown in the following table of comparative wage rates which existed between 1919 and 1920:

Type of Labour	September 1919 (in Rs)	September 1920 (in Rs)
Men	11	7
Women	9	7
Children	6	4

Source: Sanat Bose, *Tea garden labour movement in Assam (1920-21)* (1986 :Pp.174-184)

Such reduction was of course not a general feature as there are enough evidences to show that even where some wage increase had been granted, it was far short of the price rise of necessary commodities, in view of the cost of living having gone up, on an average, to 50 per cent, within a period of about seven years.

In April 1921, labourers of Lungla Tea Estae struck work for three weeks demanding the same rates of wages as being paid by some neighbourhood gardens. From 3rdMay strikes broke out in the whole of Dholai Valley, spreading out to Kalighat, Phulcherra, Jaycherra and other gardens on 21 September in response to an urgent telegraph from the manager, the sub-divisional officer and the superintendent of Police, Sylhet, along with the government propaganda agent, one Mr Thakur Singh, went to Kaliti garden where a strike was going on. They met the labourers and some Sardars to find out their grievances. But the latter did not at all keen to communicate their views.

The officials however did not fail to observe an exceptionally sullen mood prevailing among them. It was so palpably demonstrated that the SDO dared not arrest or hold any trial in the garden, of the alleged ring leader of the strikers, one Mustan Singh, a Fakir. It was feared that such a step might lead to dangerous consequence in the existing tense situation. Earlier, this Fakir, as deposed by the SDO, had been on run for criminal trespass in Kaliti for going round in June or July and preaching a strike. There was already a case against him but the coolies would not come forward with any evidence."

A common factor in almost all these strikes was the demand for wage increase. But starting from this base, demand is seen to be soaring up, to heights much beyond the level of the so-called trade union demands. It was the soaring of wage increase demand rather than the wage rise demand that created real panic in the minds of the ruling classes. A cursory view of the nature of movement may lead one to conclude that it was essentially a spontaneous upheaval (of workers) without any conscious plan or focus. But looking at the nature of demands and targets of attack, one can notice a typical, heightened class consciousness operating behind all these apparently unconnected events: in defence of dignity and honour of women labour for right to passage of their cattle to grazing ground, fight against corrupt practices of garden staff, particularly relating to illegal deduction of wage, short weight and bad quality of ration supplied in the gardens, refusal to supply evidence against their leaders, fight against enhancement of prices (symbolized by looting of rice and cloth, demanding profit-sharing in some gardens), and protest against various other oppressive practices of both the garden staff and the licensed traders. All these were but symbols of class conscious and hatred against the oppressing classes.

Such widespread and militant movement could not have occurred over such a wide span of time (1919-22), only on the basis of a few usual trade union demands, though initially these demands sparked off the movement. For the ruling classes and also for many historians who had studied this topic earlier, cause and effect were to be looked upon as two sides of a simple mathematical identity. However, such mechanical analysis breaks down in all cases of study of mass movements. In the present instance, an unusual crisis in the tea gardens was brought about by a combination of a series of interlinked events which ultimately gave birth to this massive upheaval. Through long years of experience, planters had acquired a particular method of dragging their feet on labour problems and they were extremely confident of their ability to tackle this upsurge in their traditional way. Up till now, they had no reason to give up their usual method. But this movement upset all their calculations, though for a short period of about three years only. One lamented saying that the labourers were not showing any respect to the erstwhile Ma-Bap relationship; another planter complained that workers were not talking to him as freely they were used to do earlier. Yet another planter said that he had failed to gather any information regarding what his labourers were going to do. They just stopped work, collected all their belongings, and after paying their usual "salaam" to him, left the garden in a body while the Superintendent of Police (Sylhet) rightly thought that a new phase of the movement might have started when the "coolies began to ask questions."

KAMAL KUMAR TANTI

Kamal Kumar Tanti is a promising young voice in contemporary Assamese poetry. He belongs to the Adivasi tea garden labourer community in Assam. His first writing is *Marangburu Amar Pita (Our Father Marangburu)*, published in 2007,

which won him the prestigious Munin Barkotoki Literary Award for 2008. His poems have been included in various anthologies of Assamese poetry and featured in various journals. Tanti's book on prose, *Nimnaborgo Somaaj Oitijya (Subaltern Society's Legacy)* comprised articles on post-colonial theory and subaltern historiography with specific reference to colonial history and culture of Assam and published in September 2007. He also writes fiction. His forthcoming collection is *Uttar-Ouponibeshik Kabita (Postcolonial Poems)*.

History is the undercurrent of his poetry. His poetry always tried to reflect colonial conspiracy; wherein predecessors from the aboriginal greater Adivasi clans were extirpated from the boondocks of Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal and were engaged as tea garden labourers by the British in the fertile land of Assam. He points out that there is a definite lack of historiography of the events leading to absorption of the mainstream Assamese cultural milieu, how much of their identity remains different and so on. He believes that he has not deserted the past- 'where we come from'. Subaltern conventions and culture saturated them and they were in sync with his consciousness, ideologies embedded in his subconscious mind. Subaltern traditions and people were buried deep. Pain and suffering, love and well-being, the indescribable dialectic of conflicts that constitute the flow of life and beyond were their concerns. And poems are only attempts at the exposition of these.

He disagrees to the naming of their community as "Tea-tribe". Is there any community in this world named after a commodity? It is the best example of the colonial (British) domination and later the internal colonialism taken over by the power-hungry, middle-class Assamese. He says it is true that their forefathers migrated or were brought

from different parts of Adivasi-dominated areas of India during the British colonial period but what he believed is that they are an integral part of greater Adivasi nationality of India. The mainstream, middle-class Assamese, is yet to consider them a part of greater Assamese nationality, though from time to time, they claim they are. If they speak Assamese it does not mean that they are Assamese. They have never seen the middle-class Assamese considering them as Assamese. Rather, they always used to call them 'Coolie-Bengali,' just like the minority Muslim community in Assam is called 'Miya' or 'Bangladeshi,' even though they (Adivasis) studied in Assamese medium schools and have adopted Assamese culture. The main question is the identity, and in that, Assamese middle-class never considered that they have a first identity of Adivasi. After that only, we have a second identity 'Assamese,' if they consider them so.

He says that the community I belong to has remained backward, socially and economically, since the British (colonial) period and it has been far from getting what they should get from the state or other agencies. He writes: I think most of us are treated as people who are not capable of any good work other than physical labour; I feel we are not considered by most Assamese people as their own people and we are treated by most of the Assamese people in the manner the upper caste people treat the lower caste people, with a sense of superiority.

JHUMUR PANDE

Jhumur pande is a contemporary writer. Her writing basically based on tea garden labourers. Her first writing was *Jibon Jader Vanga Chora* (1975). It was short story on Tea garden people. Then she write *Garam thaner Manushta O Dulia* (1997) was a combination of fourteen short stories in Bengali language. In that particular book the

stories are *Garam Thaner Manushta O Dulia* (Pp 9-17), *Binotiburi, Gachagachhali* (Pp 18-21), *Khharan* (Pp. 22-26), *Daini* (Pp.27-32), *Adhikar* (Pp. 33-37), *Spandan* (Pp.38-45), *Chintai* (Pp. 46-50), *Spriha* (Pp. 51- 55), *Bibarna Diprahar* (Pp.56- 62), *Jogai Buri Uttaran* (Pp.63-67), *Lagan Majhi* (Pp.68-72) *Chetonai Achomka Dalimphool* (Pp.73-78), *Dewal* (Pp.79-86), and *Bonyar Chand* (Pp.87-88). *Shukh Gacher Golpo* (2005) is another collection of short stories which include *Mukkhoda Sundari harano Prapti* (Pp.9-15), *Smriti Chale* (Pp.16-22), *Kanai er Kichhukhan* (Pp.23-28), *Ujjan* (Pp.23-37), *Modhuraboti Satar Kata* (Pp.38-45), *Sukh Gachher Golpo* (Pp.60-66), *Raita Valo Achhe Kintu* (Pp. 67-76) and *Swapner Chobi* (Pp.77-78). Her another book is *Swapnogandhar Khoje*, included sixteen stories. These are *Swapnogandhar Khoje* (Pp.9-16), *Samay* (Pp. 17-23), *Subhodra, Mayeta Sadagari abong* (Pp.24-28), *Aborta* (Pp.29-32), *Ojajseni abong antarnihito* (Pp.33-39), *Belobati* (Pp.40-44), *Lalgolaper Agastya Jatra* (Pp.45-48), *Akaler Rajkanya Shankhyamala ebong ekmutho Bakulphool* (Pp.49-50), *Rupantar* (Pp.51-52), *Bibana Jyotsnay* (Pp.53-57), *Krishnokoli ebong Laltuktuke Pakhi* (Pp.58-61), *Atanker Himaghare Ami O Amar Meye* (Pp.62-63), *Jarul Phuler Mash* (Pp.64-68), *Gangabhorer Alok Jatra* (Pp.69), *Rait Pohaok* (Pp.70-74), *Swarasatir Sukh Dukko* (Pp.75-80). She also wrote two novels, namely; *Ganga Gatha* (2011) and *Alekjander Purer Kathakata* (2007). On the other hand she composed some poetry namely, *Kichhu Bolar Chhilo* (2004) and finally all Jhumur Pande, in her writing basically focus on the condition of tea garden labourers on the ground of Social, Cultural and political life of Assam specially Barak Valley.

Jhumur Pandey in her story *Binti Burir Golpe* depicts the life and tragedies of the life of a female labourer who became a pauper at the end. In her another story

entitled *Kharan* Jhumur Pandey dwells on how the tea labourers started to get organized. She writes, “The day when all of their hands will be clutched”. The same tune could be separated in the story titled *Dewal*. Another story *Daini* depicts the life of the labourers in the grip of the superstitions. In the story *Adhikar*, she writes how a labourer Biren Majhi became while working in the tea garden. She collected a little sum by working for 20 long years as a labourers but his illness made him penniless. As such, Biren Majhi wonders whether he would still enjoy his right to vote or somebody would cast his vote before he could reach the polling booth. Is not it a farce in the name of voting? In this story also, she sketch the life of the tea labourers depicted in sorrow and also the deprivation of female labourers. In the novels of Barak Valley, she again writes the aspect of deprivation and oppression of the tea garden labourers. In a fictional literature entitled *Alokjender Purer Koto Kotha*, she analysed the story of joys and sorrows of the people of the tea garden community and also of interior villages. The story superbly elaborates leading the subtle issues like the birth and death of tea gardens, child marriage, illiteracy, half-literate, superstitions and prejudices. The novel brings forth the power structure prevalent in the tea gardens vis-a-vis the colonial state machinery. In the novel *Alokjender Purer Koto Kotha* she mentioned of the raid by the Lusais, murder of Winchester Sahib, Second World War, dropping of bomb at Derby Tea Estate by the Japanese, appointment at Arkati, the arrival of labourers from outside the valley, set up of railway line at Bhairabi and the evolution of the society of these areas. A description of a love story also flows in its own course in this novel. She also highlighted the routine day to day incidents like the death of Sulochona, marriage of Sumanta, the unfulfilled dream of Subala, the running away of the wife of Pulu etc. All these are parts of a broad canvas

wherein she has portrayed the socio-cultural scene of the tea gardens. Not only in the literature of Barak Valley, but the tea community has also contributed to the growth and development of culture of this region. As the labourers have come from various parts of the country, their own cultural traits have assimilated with the culture of Barak Valley. The language spoken by the tea labourers of Barak valley reflects such an instance of assimilation. The rituals and religious beliefs and practices have also witnessed such assimilation. Those who have migrated from Bengali dominated areas, they have a tendency to do Tusu, Bhadu, Durga Puja, Monosa Puja and the like; whereas those who came from Hindi speaking region observes Chat Puja and other such occasions. In the dramas and play house performances of Barak valley, the culture of the garden has been well depicted. Such play house performances used to take place in the gardens only during certain occasions. Very often the life and its various aspects were depicted in such performances. Apart from this, the *Jhumur Songs* also expressed the everyday events of the life of the tea garden community. They even perform dance to the beats and tune of this *Jhumur Music* which seems like the up and down tides in the life of the labourers. Again, the tea labourers have also molded Durga Puja in their own way. They construct pandals in the garden and do Durga Puja. They also participate in the Durga Puja organized by the Bengalis with much fanfare. Their prolonged stay in this valley have resulted in a change in their habits and customs, dressing, food habits etc., which clearly bears a stamp of the regional influence. The influence of Bengali culture could be found among the tea labourers of Barak Valley, whereas traces of Assamese culture could be discerned among the labourers of Brahmaputra Valley. Apart from this, a multinational version in their residential environment and food habitat could also

beobserved. Another new addition in the cultural tradition of the tea gardens of Barak Valley is Ganghi Puja, Netaji Puja and Bharat Mata Puja. The culture and tradition of the tea garden community has been well depicted by the litterateurs of Barak valley in herworks. She mentions of Poush Parban in *Jol Khaben Bono Durga*. On the day of the festival, BonoDurga went to Dholeswari River before sunrise along with her mother and neighbours to fetch water. After that she went around many houses and had sweets. The silent transformation of the society can be separated in the story titled *Jagai Burir Uttaran*. Jagai Buri was a labourer ina tea garden. She was a skilled person. She lost many of her near ones due to the conspiracy made by the higher officials of the gardens. Jhumur Pandey in most of her stories has depicted the lives of the tea garden labourers, the torture inflicted upon them, their simple life style and the like. The stories *Belbati*, *Rupantar*, *Bibarna Jyotshna* etc is complete with the culture of the tea garden community. That the wind of transformation is blowing over the tea gardens could be found in the story *Sukh Gacher Golpo* in this story, the author has depicted how with the passage of time, the cultural atmosphere of the tea gardens have underwent a change.

ASHOK VARMA

Ashok Varma is also a contemporary writer who is writing on the real life stories of the tea communities, their pains and pathos has often stimulated theemotion and has compelled them to pen down the events relatedwith the lives of tea labourers of Barak Valley. These writings are not mere blackwords, but rather every word is soaked in emotion. The tea gardens have made a placefor themselves in the novels, short stories, poems, drama and songs. That is why thepoet wrote:

Eder Sramsikto Dharitir Upahar ja kichhu
Tar Singhavag oisab swarthapar uchhakangkhi
Bilasi, Dhurta, Lobhira
Niye ney chiniye, Vuliye valiye
Eder Kramer ki habe Brattoy
(Their capability to toil hard is a gift to the earth
However, the lion's share is swallowed by the selfish,
Luxurious, cunning, greedy
They snatch away by cunning lies
Will there be an end to these illegal acts)

Herein shines bright the name of Ashok Verma who has well depicted the story of the toiling masses, as for instance, the story of *Shyam Mamar Goppo* (The Story of Shyam Uncle). In this story, while narrating his memories, Shyam also tells about his experiences of the forest and the garden. His another writing is *Golam*. In this writing he tries to characterize the sense of awareness amongst his fellow men that have reduced them to mere slaves they weep, up till now, abide and have faith in everybody except themselves. He grips that his forefathers responsible for the miseries and the present state of affairs in *Hamare Propitamaha*. His forefather were attracted to the tea gardens with false promises of fast and magical ways to money making and were trapped for ever in this land of no return, toiling hard, clearing jungles and growing tea plant for Britishers profit at the cost of their family's happiness shedding silent tears. They tolerated everything with grin and finally, the writer questions his elders whether submission and humbleness was their only ambition in life.

YOMUNA PRASAD SWARNAKAR

Though the tea labourers came to Barak Valley in the mid of the 19th century, yet almost for a century their literature remained confined to the oral version only. Many opine that Late Yamuna Prasad's *Dinolipi* is the oldest manuscript of the literature of the tea garden community. He has written a number of stories; narratives in both Bengali and Hindi like *Tujhe kiya mila bhagawan*, *Pathik*, *Shiv, jivan*, *pranam tumhe*, *Unki Avilasha*, *Naya Varsh*, *Thandak*, *Kagaj ka kila*, *Kiya Rahe Giya*, *Buddh*, *Brishtiti*, *Kartaybya*, *Cha Rabeti*, *Hara Rani* and *Jagruti* were published in *Chal Pathik*.

SILPI SIKHA DOWERAH

She is lecturer of the general Degree College in Dibrugarh town. Her writing basically highlighted *Health Security facilities Among the Tea Garden Labourers; A Myth or Reality: A Study on the Tea gardens of Dibrugarh District in Assam*. Her writing emphasizes health problems of a population are the basis for formulating health care system to address health needs. India is experiencing a health transition, which is posing a great challenge to its health system due to the changing health needs of the population. With the health transition, communicable and deficiency diseases are gradually receding while non-communicable diseases (NCD) are escalating in India. There is scarcity of health information in many sub-populations in India, which needs to be explored for public health policy needs and the tea garden community is one of these. Tea is an important agro-industry of Assam, which contributes immensely to the state's economy. Tea garden population constitutes approximately 1/5th of state's population. Dibrugarh is the hub of tea industry and situated in the eastern corner of the state comprising a total land area of 3381 square km. Poor socio-economic conditions, ignorance due to illiteracy, over-

crowded and unhygienic living conditions in the residential colonies make tea garden population vulnerable to various communicable diseases and malnutrition. Scattered reports indicate a higher prevalence of under-nutrition and infectious conditions like filariasis in this population. Finally she concludes that health facilities among the tea tribes are still a myth and not a reality. Everyone should take oath to improve their conditions because of whose hardships the golden brew cheers thousands.

RINJU RASAILY

Rinju Rasaily's paper on 'Women's Labour in the Tea Sector: Changing Trajectories and Emerging Challenges' reflectes on the recognition of the changes within the Indian tea industry,one of the oldest industries in India which is an important challenge to addressing of the concerns of labour. It becomes all the more important tounderstand women's agency of labour in the changing plantation landscape when women constitute more than half of the workforce. Among others, the change that the paper highlights is the decline of work participation rate of women in the tea plantation sector. However, their labour as examined in three different spheres; viz; as an estate worker, as a worker in a small tea garden and as a tea grower reflects that they are significant contributors to the industry as well as their household. Situating this dynamics of women losing out in employment on the one hand, and their increasing role in the industry and household, on the other hand, this paper provides an account of their negotiations at multiple spheres of work and life. The paper uses case studies to establish across various contexts that women have negotiated and emerged from the contours of power and authority and their own spaces at work and the household. The paper also attempts to understand the small tea grower sector in terms of their number, gender

dynamics and more specifically the socio-economic conditions of women small growers-cum-workers, which has been a grey area hitherto. A significant proportion of tea growers are also workers; marginal in terms of land holdings coupled with inherent marginalities of caste, ethnicity and gender. This answers the question why there need to incentivise and reorganise women's labour for the industry. Measures beyond the rules and legislative frameworks should address their marginalisation as visible through their inferior social indicators, including literacy levels.

In her particular writing reflecting women, work and employment in Tea Plantations Women's work has traditionally been divided into the area of production (both economic and social) and reproduction from time immemorial. With the intensity of specialisation, women's work became more segregated and sexual division of labour became a dominant agenda. Their participation in the economy and contribution to the household income became more evident. Such participation has however added more to their burden of work with less increase in wages as well as recognition especially in the organised sector. Women's labour is central to the economies of production; more so in the case of production of plantation commodities such as tea and coffee. Employment of women in plantations historically was sought by the planters in order to "contain the male labour force" and to "ensure a steady reproduction of 'cheap' labour" as recruitment costs were expensive. Quite plausibly, planters saw women adapting well to the plantations' most tedious and prolonged labour of tea plucking (Chatterjee 2003). The men workers also pluck tea leaves but generally the quantity and quality of the tea leaves plucked by males is not as high as that of female pluckers (Bhadra 1992). As Engels (1993) notes that the strategy of setting up of 'family units' of single men and women and

conducting ‘depot marriages’ were some of the coercive measures for recruiting men and women that enabled the production and reproduction of labour in the plantations. Thus, one of the important features of tea industry in India is the proportionately higher level of female employment in cultivation and production. Engagement of women’s labour is higher in tea plantations because of their gendered-attributes to the task of picking tea leaves in particular and for maintaining a steady social reproduction of labour. Women in employment across the plantation sector based on the data from the Labour Bureau (2012) reflects that 53.27 percent of women are employed across all plantations (coffee, tea, rubber and others) in 2008. It has been highest for coffee with 62 percent, followed by tea with 53.43 percent during this period. The nature of cultivation of these crops is one of the key reasons for the requirement of female employment. Besides, the reason for women being compelled to join paid labour reflects both the social relations of production within plantation life and intra-household gender dynamics. Although the proportion of women workers in tea plantations has marginally increased from 49.46 to 53.43 percent over a decade (1995 – 2008), but in terms of absolute numbers it has almost halved from 6, 03,640 to 3,81,474 respectively. It appears to be worst hit in the year 2001, the beginning of the crisis period when it engaged only 172,723 women workers.

SANAT KAIRI

Sanat Kairi is also the eminent writer and activist of Barak valley. He has written a book on *Cha Sramik O Cha Sramik Unioner Itihas (2010)*. This book basically highlights on the history of the tea garden labourers relating with the various revolt and conflicts in the union bodies of the workers, management-worker conflict and conflict

among the different kinds of labourers also. He analyses various events like Chorgola exoduses. This book also discussed cultural life of the workers and documented some tea garden related photographs which has very significant archival value. On the other hand, at present, he is also the chief editor of the *Sramik Patrika*, a monthly news paper, published by INTUC office, Silchar. This news paper generally writes about the various facts related to tea garden labourers like socio economic-problem, health problems, demands, problems of salary implementation and provident fund and various cultural functions in tea gardens of the valley.

KHEMRAJ SHARMA

Khemraj Sharma who has earned his M.A in Sociology and Social Anthropology, and Ph.D from North Bengal University is at present an Education Officer. He has written the books like *Tea Industry in India: An Introduction (1999)*, *The Himalayan Tea Plantation Workers (2000)*, *Sociology of Indian Tea Industry (2005)*. In his studies he has discussed the broad framework of inter-ethnic relationship between the workers and the management, the workers and workers hailing from various migrant ethnic groups to tea industry, migration of tea plantation coolies from Nepal Himalayas, history of the exploitation of tea garden coolies, occupational mobility, cultural integration. Actually, this is the first sociological study on tea plantation workers of enchanted frontier of Arunachal Pradesh.

PARBIN R. AKHTAR

Parbin R. Akhtar a teacher of cotton college, Guwahati has written an article on '*Need of education among the tea tribe women in the Udalguri district of Assam, India*'. It basically highlights the women's education which has a very important place in

society. Various organizations of the Globe have launched various schemes and programme to promote and educate in each and every corner of the world. Education is fundamental right of human development; hence this study was conducted on education of the tea tribewomen in Udalguri district of Assam, highlighting that the education is lacking among the women tea tribe women in the district but now they have become very much conscious and aware about their educational rights. Education of women among tea tribes plays an important role in the development of the district. They also play their role in the economic development. Tea tribe women play their role in the socio-cultural development also. Tea tribe women and their management have both positive attitudes towards education. Tea tribe women favour Sarva Shiksha Abhijan and its full implementation Mid-day Meal, with free text books and qualitative support. Hence, the author of this paper studied the need of education among the tea tribe women in Udalguri district.

BIJOY KRISHNA PACHANI

Bijoy Krishna Pachani has written on 'Pathetic Plight of the Tea Tribes in Colonial Assam (1826-1947 A.D.): A Brief Study. The article analysed the tea or *Chai* originally a Chinese word used in Amoy language of China. Tea was known to the Chinese people since 2737 B.C. and had been consumed for over twelve centuries. Europeans become familiar with tea through the Portuguese traders in the Orient. By 18th century tea became popular drink in Europe. Though China had monopoly over tea but its political situation forced European nations, especially England and Holland, to search for alternative sources of supply of tea while East India Company was looking for a suitable land and Assam fulfilled the desire. In 1836 a tea garden was set up and the first

successful manufacture of Assam tea was made in December, 1837. In 1859 another tea companies, Jorehaut Tea Company, was formed and more areas were brought under tea cultivation. At first, tea gardens tried to feed labourers from the local people but it couldn't meet the total need. But later planters had to recruit labourers from East India. They were forcibly recruited and transited to Assam in a very inhuman manner. In working place their condition was very pathetic and they were exploited in all forms by the planters. Only after Independence of India their condition became better.

ANGSHUMAN SARMA AND PRITHIRAJ BORAH

Angshuman Sarma and Prithiraj Borah, wrote a paper on *Impact of Informalisation and role of Trade Unions on the Tea Tribe Workers in Assam*. They analysed the tea sector in India in particular the bondage and indenture labour systems, implying varying degrees of unfreedom for the labourers. They also addressed the Adivasi community of Assam. They were brought to Assam by the East India Company from 1830s through 1920s, mostly from Chotanagpur, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. The last 150 years, the tea community in Assam has never received much attention. Their exclusion is a sign of subordination. Their exploitative situation and their low status make them different from both the Jharkhand tribals and their counterparts in North Bengal whose ancestors too came from Jharkhand. The tea tribes in Assam are among the most backward and exploited tribes in India. In the era of globalization these slothfully mobile workforce is facing an increased informalisation of work and even in the tea sector has inversely affected their social security conditions. Notwithstanding the state-initiated efforts to safeguard the constitutionally guaranteed minimal rights of the workers, reorganization of the sector in response to changing market conditions and near-complete

unionisation of the workers in this sector is pushing them towards more difficult and horrible unskilled occupations. There seems to be limited mobility of tea garden workers (or ex-tea garden workers) or their descendants in terms of diversification of sources of earnings and employment and these people are 'locked into' tea garden occupation and are deliberately excluded from others because of implicit and explicit discrimination against them. This study tried to understand the impact of the trade unions on the lives of the tea garden workers in the context of growing informalisation.

In sum, this chapter has highlighted how the writings on working class people who are tea garden labourers happen to belong to 'subaltern classes, in Gramsci's words, 'unconscious classes'. Regarding the tea gardens and labourers particularly social sciences have lot of empirical studies from tea discovery to contemporary socio-cultural and economic problems. These studies do not have any emotion or sentiment because these are purely on based field observations. The studies focus on how the tea leaf was discovered by Shingpho chief Visaguama and how it was handed over to the East India Company, history of the labour immigration in Assam from Chhotanagpur in Jharkhand, Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Central India, Orissa and Bengal those are who mostly belonged Adivasis and low caste Hindus, Chorgola exodus, some British rules regarding tea garden like the 'breach of contract' by which all the indentured labour became 'slave or bonded labour' under East India Company, monthly wages, socio-cultural discriminations like gender discrimination, caste inequalities, religious rites and ceremonies. Lastly it can be said that all of this attempts literature to analyze the exploitation of the tea garden labourers by the past and present tea planters as well as revolts, strikes and day to day resistance of the labourers.