

## CHAPTER – 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Sadri:

Sadri or Sedan is the mother tongue of the Sedans, an Aryan group amongst the Non-Aryans in Chota Nagpur Plateau (Nawrang, 1965:5). It evolved as a link language of the Adivasis living mainly in and around Chota Nagpur Plateau that spreads over present day Bihar, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and parts of West Bengal and Odisha. About 97 or so heterogeneous communities like Munda, Kharia, Ho, Oraons etc. come under the umbrella term Sadri. The Sadri speakers are popularly known as Adivasis. The Sadri spoken in the tea gardens of Upper Assam is commonly known as Sadri or Bagania Bhasa.

The Adivasi communities, mostly belonging to three language families namely, Austro-Asiatic, Indo-Aryan and Dravidian use Sadri as their link language or it is used as a lingua franca for inter and intra community communication. From pidgin, Sadri gradually evolved as a creole, primarily due to inter community marriages between the various linguistic groups amongst them. The offsprings of these bilingual parents adopted this link language as their mother tongue or the first language. But, the Sadri spoken in the tea gardens of Upper Assam is different to the one spoken in Chota Nagpur region as it is heavily influenced by the Bengali and Assamese language. When the British tea planters brought the Adivasis or tea tribe community to Assam as labourers, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sadri as a link language came along with them. Santhali, Mundari, Kurukh, Oriya, Saora and Kharia are also spoken by few segments of the community.

Goswami (1976:15) gives a list of such groups who use Sadri as a second language and those who use it as their mother tongue. According to the 2001 Census Report, there are 2,044,776 Sadri speakers in India.

## **1.2. Historical Background of Tea in Assam:**

Assam is the biggest producer of quality tea in India, contributing about 55 per cent to the country's total tea production. It is generally believed that the people of Bodo tribe brought tea into Assam (India line, 2008). But they produced for themselves and hardly took it outside Assam. As pointed out by Bhuyan (1974), the tea plant was discovered in 1823 by Robert Bruce during his visit to Rongpur, where he was imprisoned by the Burmese. A Singpho chief furnished Bruce with some plants. In 1824, Robert Bruce gave some plants to his brother C. A. Bruce who handed them over to David Scott. Scott in turn, gave a few specimens to the Botanical Garden, Calcutta. The discovery of tea plant in Assam enabled the East India Company to develop a trade, which China had hitherto monopolized. Bruce was appointed superintendent of the government tea forest, who in 1837 sent 46 boxes of Assam tea to the tea committee. When, in 1824, Dr. N. Wallich of Botanical Garden identified these specimens and it was the beginning of the scientific study of tea in India. Dr. Wallich visited Assam in 1834 and submitted his report in 1835. The Assam Company was accordingly formed in England in 1839 with a capital of Rs. 5 lakh. The Assam Company with its headquarters in Nazira is the oldest commercial tea company of Assam which is still functioning. The second company was formed in 1859 as the Jorhat Tea Company and even today its central office is at Jorhat. The first consignment of 12 boxes of tea manufactured by the Singpho chiefs was shipped from Calcutta to London in 1835. The first auction of tea

took place in London on May 26, 1841, which was conducted by Ms McKenzie Lyll & Company. 35 chests of tea made by the Singphos and 95 chests from the government plantation of Assam were offered (North East Enquirer, 2002). The biggest research centre of tea in the world, now situated in Jorhat, was started in Calcutta in 1900 by the India Tea Association. In 1904, a laboratory was started at Heelea-kah Tea Estate near Mariani. In 1912, the laboratory was shifted to Tocklai (Jorhat) and was renamed as Tocklai Experimental Station. In 1964, the experimental station became Tea Research Association (TRA). The first Indian to start planting of tea was an Assamese nobleman Maniram Dutta Barma, popularly known as Maniram Dewan. He was a Dewan of Assam Company until he resigned in 1841 to start his own tea estate. He had two gardens at Jorhat and near Sonari. But the British hanged him in 1858 for taking part in mutiny in 1857. After Maniram Dewan's pioneering efforts, many others, mostly Assamese, came forward to plant tea. Someswar Sharma became the first Indian superintendent of the tea industry of the Manband Tea Company. Things started changing after independence. The British dominated industry changed hands. Although the Jalans, Saharias, Ahmeds, Kanois, Darshan Lalls and few others were already there, the reputed industrialists of India like the Birla, Poddar, Paul, Shetia, Rhuia and Tata amongst other became the biggest producers of Assam tea. From 1823, the tea industry in Assam valley came a long way. Today, there are about six lakh tea garden workers engaged in 850 tea gardens (North East Enquirer, 2002). Cinnamora tea Estate was the first Tea Garden of Assam established by Maniram Dewan in 1850. According to a report (North East Enquirer, 2002), in the year 2000, the total area of Assam under tea production was 26,739 hectares and total production of tea was 451,236 thousand kilograms, thus showing a yield

(kg/hectare) of 1,688. However, in 2001, the production of tea dipped to 450,132 thousand kilograms, thus falling by 1,104 thousand kgs from the previous year's production. The 2001 figures of Indian tea export (in million kgs) show a total figure of 164.19. The main countries to which the tea is going are CIS countries (including Russia and Kazakhstan) — 77.46 million kgs; UK — 15.41 million kgs; UAE — 19.65 million kgs; Iraq — 14.14 million kgs; Poland — 7.59 million kgs and the USA — 5.35 million kgs. According to the Directorate of Tea, Govt. of Assam, there are about 28,000 small tea gardens in the State producing about 70 million kgs tea annually (cf. 451 million kgs mentioned above). According to another report, Assam has over 800 tea plantations that are of medium to large size. There are also over 200,000 small-scale cooperative and individual tea farms. On an average, Assam produces over 480 million kilograms of tea per year, making it the largest tea growing region in the world (North East Enquirer, 2002). The State Government is thinking of registering the small tea gardens with the labour department. The Tea Board has opened a cell at the Assam Agricultural University to train small tea growers with the aim of improving the quality of Assam tea. A similar training session for small growers would also be started at Tocklai Research Station. According to the Tea Board, a cooperative of small growers was floated in Assam and the Tea Board would help it to purchase a factory of its own which in turn would help to produce quality tea. Recently, a group of tea makers of small tea growers from Assam visited Kangra valley of Himachal Pradesh to learn about mechanized plucking and new methods of pruning tea bushes. Kangra valley is known for producing orthodox tea of a high quality. The group that was sponsored by the Tea Board returned with a wealth of information. The Tea Board will also introduce an export rating system soon to control

the quality of Assam tea. The tea research association is also taking measures in Tocklai (Jorhat) for producing quality tea. According to Toppo (1999), there are about 845 tea gardens in Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Nagaon, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Sonitpur and Kokrajhar districts of Assam.

### **1.3. A Brief Background of Tea Tribe or Adivasi:**

The Adivasi community of Assam informally and locally known as Tea-Tribe is the descendents of tribal people who were brought by the British Colonial Planters as labourers from the Chota Nagpur Plateau region into Assam during 1980-90s in multiple phases for the purpose of being employed in the tea garden industry as laborers. The Adivasi people were brought mainly because they proved to be efficient and were paid lower wages compared to the local laborers. These labourers were brought for an indentured period. When the period was over, the laborers had to leave the gardens. Instead of going back to their original homelands after the indentured period, they settled down in villages outside the tea garden and took to cultivation and some other professions. In due course of time, the laborers employed by the tea gardens were called 'tea tribes' and those who worked as the cultivators outside the tea gardens were called 'ex-tea tribes'. The Tea Laborer Appointment Policies led to the emergence of these two groups. Today, the 'tea tribes' and the 'ex-tea tribes' have come together on one platform. They now call themselves Adivasis. The names 'tea tribes' and 'ex-tea tribes', according to them are derogatory.

They are found mainly in the districts of Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Sonitpur, Nagaon, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and almost all districts of Assam in

India. The total population of the community is estimated to be around 6 millions or about 18% of the total population of Assam. Santhali speakers are also found in parts of Kokrajhar, Baksa and almost all districts of Assam in India. The population of Santhali speakers is over 300,000 and Oriya speakers are about 290,000. They generally use Sadri as lingua-franca among themselves. They have their own dance form. Within the community, Munda tribe is the largest in terms of numbers followed by Santhals, Kurukh, Gonds, Kharia, Bhumij and Saora.

#### **1.4. Demographics of tea - tribe:**

As an ethno-linguistic minority, the population of the Adivasi community is rural in nature and estimated to be near 6 million or 18% of Assam's total population as of 2011.

They live in almost every district of Assam but their density varies according to the number of tea plantations in different regions of Assam. They are more numerous in Upper Assam and Central Assam than lower Assam. Many tribes (most notably Santhal, Kurukh and Munda people) were forcibly displaced by the British from Chota Nagpur region due to their rebellion against the British regime. They were dumped into Lower Assam regions of then undivided Goalpara and undivided Darrang districts as a punishment for their uprising against their regime.

The community dominates the districts of Upper Assam including Sonitpur district due to high density of tea gardens and plantations in this region. Districts of North Lakhimpur, Darrang, Barak Valley areas and Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD)

areas of Assam also have significant population of the community. They form nearly 17% and 11% of the total population in BTAD and Barak valley region respectively.

Different political parties appeal to them during election seasons in Assam as their demographic numbers always influence politics in Assam. They are not a single ethnic tribe but are the people of various origins, composed of dozens of tribes who have now got intermixed and are interdependent to each other and are closely knitted. Major tribes among them are the Munda tribe followed by Santhals, Kurukh, Gonds, Kharia, Saora, Bhumij, Ho and Chik Baraik.

Four tribes namely Munda, Santhal, Kurukh and Gonds alone form about 40 lakhs or 70% of the total Adivasi population in Assam according to estimation by Joshua project.

### **1.5. Languages of Tea-Tribes:**

Sadri is their first language and this language works as a lingua franca among them. But, it is different from the one spoken in Chota Nagpur region because the Sadri spoken in Assam is heavily influenced by the Bengali and Assamese languages. Santhali, Mundari, Kurukh, Oriya, Saora and Kharia are also spoken by few segments of the community. With steady rise in literacy level, newer generations are becoming fluent in Hindi, Assamese and English.

### **1.6. Religion of Tea-Tribes:**

The majority of the population of the Adivasi community follows folk Hinduism and Sarna while Christianity is followed by about 20% of the population. Hindus worship

different deities during different seasons of a year. Most of the Hindus are animist in nature and worship tribal gods. The influence of mainstream Vedic Hinduism is minimal.

The ancient tribal religion Sarnaism is also deeply rooted among them. They believe in a universal supreme God called Dharmesh and worship him/ her in different names like Marangburu, Mahadeo and Singbonga. Sarhul puja and Karam puja are the prominent festivals of Sarnaism.

Vaishnavism is also steadily gaining footholds among the Hindu population of the community. They are very religious-minded people and love to worship nature. Many trees are considered sacred and are worshipped. Nearly, every village has religious temples and sacred ground for community worship.

However, increasing conversions into Christianity have led many of them into adapting Christianity and many churches have been built, as a result. Nearly, one million adivasis are now Christians in the state. Kurukh, Santhals and Mundas are among the major tribes who have mostly converted by the Christian Missionaries. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are the major denomination among the Adivasi Christians. Adivasi Christians are most economically well – off and well – organized than their majority Hindu counterparts in the state.

### **1. 7. Festivals of Tea-Tribes:**

Festivals are an important component of the Adivasi community. Their music is usually collectively performed for a variety of occasions like weddings, festivals, arrivals of seasons, ushering of new life and harvests. The community is rich in a variety of music and dances. Through the folk music and dance, they try to convey their perspective on



social issues and define their daily life styles and their history in some dance forms. Martial arts are displayed to convey their age-old rebellion against the British.

Dhol, Manjira, Madar, Kartal, Tamak, Nagara, Nishan, Banshuri are some of the musical instruments used by them. 'Jhumur dance' is a famous folk dance form of the Adivasi community through which they are identified within Assam. But, they also possess other numerous dance forms like Santhali dance, Chau dance, Karam naach, and Kharia dance which are performed during different occasions.

Among these, Jhumur is a form of dance performed by girls and boys together or sometimes by the girls alone, with precision of foot work while clasping tightly each other's waist. This dance form has its origin in the Central Indian Tribal dance forms prevalent in Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal and brought by the Adivasis into Assam. Dhol, Mandar and Kartal are the traditional musical instruments used during the dance. Usually, traditional red – bordered white sarees are adorned by female dancers along with jewelry and ornaments before performing the dance. Male dancers wore Dhoti and Kurta with a white turban in their head.

### **1.8. Socio - Economic Condition of Tea-Tribes:**

The tea garden labourers were brought to Assam by the Britishers from midland Indian states to work in the extensive tea plantations in Assam. They cleared the jungles, tilted the land and planted the tea. However, they were denied of the promises while they were being brought to Assam. They survived with meager rations and payments, in the hope that someday the situation would change. India won freedom in 1947 and become a republic in 1950; 67 years have gone by since then. Now, the tea garden labourers of

Assam constitute around 20 percent or 45 lacs of the total population of the state. They are landless workers employed in the tea estates spread out in entire Assam. These communities have remained underdeveloped. Their socio-economic condition is utterly pitiable. Their score on health and education indicators is hardly satisfactory. They are deprived and denied of their basic rights and entitlements. They are engulfed by a situation of extreme marginalization.

### **1.9. Lively hood of the Tea Tribe in Assam:**

The economical status of the tea tribe community is very low. The livelihood activities of the community are mainly two types-

1. Tea Garden dependent families are mainly daily wage earners and 2. In Bastis (villages), the communities are mainly dependent on agriculture. The farmers of the community are mainly small farmers. An N.G.O. named PAD made a survey on this issue and presents its findings in some tables. Below is given such a table-

Quantity of Land	Distribution of respondents	
	Frequency	Percent
No land	49	61.3
1 to 3 bigha	15	18.8
Above 4 bigha	16	20.0
Total	80	

In the above table, the NGO PAD shows the land acquired by the people of Doolahat cluster and the figure says that 61.3 percent of the community has no land and

the figure also says that 18.8 percent of respondents have 1 to 3 bighas of land and 20 percent of respondents have above four bighas of land.

In another table, PAD presents the wage rate of respondents of Doolahat cluster and the figure shows that 35 percent of respondents get the wage between Rs. 78 to Rs. 111. The table also shows that 40 percent of respondents get wage below Rs. 77.

Wage rate	Frequency	Percent
Low (below Rs. 77)	32	40.00
Medium (Rs. 78 to Rs. 111)	28	35.00
High (above Rs. 112)	20	25.00
Total	80	100.00

The NGO also discusses on the annual income of these families. They show that 27.5% percent of the families have annual income less than Rs. 22,057.00 and 47.5 percent of people in the cluster's family income are medium that is between Rs. 22,057.00 to Rs. 45,750.00. Only 25% percent of family in the cluster earns above Rs. 45,751.00.

All in all, the economical condition of the tea community people is very poor. The poverty driven community has limited capacity to improve in the field of education to children and avail health facilities. Because of low income, there are very limited chances for business and commerce for the community and thus development is slow.

### **1.10. Education of the Tea Tribe:**

The education of the tea tribe community has remained almost stagnant since long. In the tea gardens, the education is either a challenge or choice of the children but not a right. The successful implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 seems to remain a far distant dream to be accomplished in the tea gardens. The parents are kept busy working in the tea gardens from early morning till evening and the children are left at home with no one to either pursue or persuade them for going to school. Apart from that, most of the children are kept busy looking after their younger siblings and doing other household chores. Majority of them are either forced, bound or lured to work in the tea gardens to either support their family or to make an earning of their own and become not self dependent but self independent so as to indulge into gambling, alcoholism and other forms of addiction which are highly prevalent in almost all the tea gardens of Assam, thus indirectly but successfully exploiting them. The silent role of the Government and the tea garden Management are –a) suppression and b) exploitation. The wages given to them are comparatively very low and the facilities provided are inadequate and nominal. Thus, the parents fail to send their children to even local schools for quality education remains just a dream. Gradually, in this highly challenging and competitive world, the children are left with no better options rather than to work as labourers for tea gardens. It is also set up in such a way that even the interested and brilliant students are lured to discontinue their studies and starts to work in the tea gardens. It is thus found that majority of the Tea tribe community or Adivasi children are either school drop-outs or illiterate. The main reasons behind their poor educational status or school dropouts or being illiterate are as follows-

- . Poverty and limited income restricts the parents to properly provide their children with the basic needs, especially the needs with regard to education. This, in return bounds the children to both stop going to the school and start supporting their parents by joining them in their labour works or not going to school at all.
- . Lack of awareness among the parents with regard to the importance and value of education or educating a child.
- . Lack of proper guidance and motivation from the parents, teachers and other socially responsible individuals/ groups/ organizations.
- . The teacher student ratio also becomes a major factor because majority of the schools consist of just one or at the most two teachers against 150-200 students.
- . Left out of purview of the 'Education Department, Govt. of Assam'.
- . Non commitment, negligence or non-adherence of the Tea Garden Management towards implementing the plantation Labour Act (PLA) with regard to education and other aspects.
- . The poor living condition and the non-competitive environment.
- . Medium of instruction completely differs from their mother tongue or the Sadri language or their respective mother tongues like Santhali, Munda etc.
- . Peer pressure
- . No proper communication and good roads leading to schools. The students of the Tea Tribe Community or Adivasi become the worst sufferer during the rainy

season. Bus services or other forms of transportation are not available from the tea gardens/ villages.

. Distance also becomes one of the major factors/ barriers as the high schools mostly located at a far distance from the tea gardens/ villages.

. No proper functioning of the Anganabadi centers in the tea gardens/ villages. Since the families are poor, they become bound to send their children to other places as bonded labourers or as maid servants.

. No proper care with regard to health and hygiene.

. Recruitment of the child labours by the Tea Garden Management.

. Low self esteem/ image or pattern of mindset, which has convinced them that this is their life and they cannot expect or think of a better life. This is due to the 200 years of slavery (in the tea gardens) since the British rule.

. The elder children, especially the girls are kept away from the school to look after their younger siblings and help in household works.

. The schools have no basic facilities and proper infrastructures. The school buildings are in dilapidated condition.

. The children have no ambitions and are de-motivated due to huge drop outs as well as lack of employment opportunities.

Literacy rate in Assam has seen upward trend and is 72.19percent as per 2011 population census. Of that, male literacy stands at 77.85 percent while female literacy is

at 63.00 percent. On the contrary, the survey conducted by an NGO *PAD* reveals a different picture within the Adivasi or tea tribe communities. The literacy rate within these communities stands at a nominal 21%. The survey clearly shows that the educational status of the present generation (children) has not improved but decreased by (1.46%) when compared with the educational status of the previous generations (parents). This indicates a very negative and dark future of the Tea Tribe Communities or Adivasis. It seems that the present trends and the highly modernized and technologically advanced world which demands a highly competitive, qualified and experienced degree holders has no place for these communities as all the above mentioned qualities and degrees still remains a far distant dream for these people.

With the aim of ensuring 'Education for All' and zero dropouts from school by 2010, the Government of India initiated the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) across the country in 2001. The SSA is being implemented in partnership with state governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations. The campaign seeks to provide quality elementary education to the children including life skills. It lays a special focus on the education of girls and children with special needs. It also seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide between children who have access to such education and those who do not.

A survey commissioned by the Assam Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Mission (ASSAM) during 2002 has shown that 25 per cent of the children in the age group of 6-14 years are out of school in the entire state of Assam, while the corresponding figure for children in the tea gardens is about 43 per cent. The ASSAM has also constituted Tea Garden Education Committees (TGEC) for better implementation of ASSAM. According to the

Assam Human Development Report, an estimated 1,000 Tea Garden Education Committees were set up by 2003. Section 14 of the PLA stipulates that the state government may make rules requiring every employer to provide educational facilities for 6-12 year-old children of the workers employed in any plantation where the workforce exceeds 25 in number. The Assam Plantation Labour Rules, 1956 (Rule 52), also stipulate that every employer shall provide and maintain a primary school or schools for imparting primary education to the children of the plantation workers. Further, as per Rule 55 of the said rules, the employer of the plantation shall appoint one teacher for every group of 40 children. Rule 57 stipulates that no fee shall be charged from the workers' children attending the primary school. An official of the SSA of the State Education Department claims that the tea garden management is generally reluctant to allow the tea garden schools to participate in the literacy campaign. However, after the Central Government instructions to implement the SSA in all schools were conveyed through the Deputy Commissioner, the tea garden management is now allowing SSA activities to take place in the schools located in the tea garden areas. At present, the state government is managing two schools in the Barak Valley and the Golaghat district in the Brahmaputra Valley, respectively. The remaining schools are managed by the management companies. Among the government schools in the tea garden areas, 11.82 per cent of the workers' children reportedly received educational facilities in the Barak Valley, while the corresponding figure is only 2.04 per cent in the Brahmaputra Valley. These figures show the poor condition of educational amenities available to the workers' children in the tea gardens, particularly in the management-controlled schools in the state.



The report of the Tea Garden Education Committee (GoI, 2007) highlights the following constraints in the implementation of the literacy campaign in the tea garden areas:

(i) The quality of the infrastructure is very poor. A majority of the tea gardens have only lower primary schools with the capacity to educate 100-250 students.

(ii) Classes are held in dilapidated buildings that are not even equipped with adequate desks for the students.

(iii) Usually, only one or at the most two teachers are available for four classes with 100-250 students.

(iv) In a majority of the schools, the teachers work half the time in the tea garden and the rest half of the time in the school.

(v) A majority of schools are closed during the plucking time since both the teachers and students work in the tea garden during that time.

(vi) As the teacher is paid by the management, the latter is liable for managing the school.

(vii) With the prevalence of child labour being rampant in the tea gardens, most of the children leave school to work in the tea garden for earning a nominal amount of money.

(viii) Teachers are paid very nominal salaries as they are not involved in the production process. The management pays for both the salaries of the teachers as well as the infrastructure costs like the school building, students' desks and basic stationery. After the introduction of the SSA in the tea gardens, however, the management has arranged for the supply of free textbooks to the tea garden schools, provision of mid-day meals to

the students as well as the initiation of compulsory teacher training. According to information provided by an official of the SSA in the State Education Department, there has been a decline in the school drop-out rate after the introduction of the SSA. At the same time, it is believed that this decline could also be due to the mid- day meal scheme, which encourages children to enroll in and stay on in schools in the tea gardens of the state.

### **1. 11. Health of the Tea Tribe:**

The Tea Tribe Communities or Adivasis do not have proper access to health and medical facilities. The hospitals in the tea gardens do not function properly. Most of them run without any doctor and only a few nurses with inadequate knowledge are found to be functioning and that too with either a very limited or no medicines at all. Thus, majority of the patients are either asked to buy the medicines from outside or are referred to hospitals outside the tea gardens which become one of the most critical situation for the whole family with a very limited resource in hand on one side and the loss and affect caused from not being able to earn or get any payments for the missing days of work on the other. Majority of them are impoverished and thus malnourished and cannot afford to go for proper and better treatments. Most of them, thus, abort from going for better treatment and either take medicines directly from the pharmacists without any proper consultation or divert to traditional form of treatments which sometimes turn out to be disastrous. Thus, the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) as well as the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is found to be highest within tea tribe communities. Today, if the IMR and MMR of the state are high, it is mainly because of the ignorance of providing basic health amenities and facilities towards these communities. Accordingly, the state's IMR (58 per

1,000 live births) and MMR ( 351 per one lakh live deliveries) are among the highest in the country. It is highly alarming to notice as well as find out that the temporary workers, who form the major work force in tea gardens as laborers, are being deprived from almost all forms of health and medical facilities. It is quite surprising as well as a matter of great concern that even the pregnant women are not properly granted any maternity leave, thus affecting both the mother as well as the child's health. Due to poverty and lack of money, the mothers are found to join their work from the second or the third day of their delivery to both support the family as well as to take care of their new born babies. This also badly affects mother's health and consecutively, the child too. It is found that neither the government nor the tea garden management does really care or bother to improve the health conditions of this disadvantaged community, thus silently but successfully affecting their overall health status. The main reasons behind their poor health condition are as follows-

- . Lack of awareness with regard to health, hygiene and sanitation.
- . Whole day long hard labour; exposed to heat and rain.
- . No proper and regular doctors for the Tea Garden Hospitals.
- . No proper and sufficient medicines in the Tea Garden Hospitals.
- . Lack of sufficient staffs and nurses in the Tea Garden Hospitals.
- . No proper treatment in the local Hospitals. Limited income restricts them from going for proper and better treatment.

- . Non consumption of balanced diets and nutritious foods due to lack of knowledge as well as lack of money.
- . getting addicted to local wine and tobaccos.
- . No health and medical facilities for the temporary labourers.
- . No maternity leave for temporary women labourers.
- . No safety measures for the labourers engaged in spraying medicinal liquids.
- . Lack of safe drinking water.
- . Small thatch houses and congested living rooms.
- . Lack of a proper and planned drainage around the labour quarters, which results in storage of highly dirty and contaminated stagnant water near the quarters.
- . Lack of sufficient well-constructed toilets leads to open air defecation, which in turn pollutes the environment and affects the health.

A study on Health Problems and Nutritional Status of Tea Garden Population of Assam (GoI, 2007) concludes that there is a high incidence of under-nutrition and infectious diseases among the tea garden population of Assam. Nutritional problems like under-weight children (59.9 per cent), thinness among adults (69.8 per cent) and micronutrient deficiency disorders like anaemia (72 per cent) are widespread. The common infectious diseases prevalent among the tea garden population are worm infestation (affecting 65.4 per cent), respiratory problems (6.7 per cent), diarrhoea (1.7 per cent), skin infections, filariasis (0.6 per cent) and pulmonary tuberculosis (11.7 per cent).

cent). This study also shows the prevalence of hypertension (affecting 45.9 per cent of the population), senile cataract (25.3 per cent), epilepsy (7.3 per cent) and back pain (8.7 per cent). Thus, the study indicates the existence of acute health problems among the tea garden labourers in Assam.

In response to a recent survey carried out in ten tea gardens in the Barak Valley, 58.79 per cent of the respondents said that they have access to some kind of medical facility while 41.21 per cent do not receive any medical facility. The existing primary health units in the tea gardens are often under-staffed, never fully equipped, and do not store all the required medicine stock. For medical emergencies, the respondents claim that they have to travel long distances to reach the government Primary Health Centre (PHC) (Saikia, 2006).

Section 10 of the PLA (Plantation Labour Act), 1951 stipulates that for every plantation, readily available medical facilities shall be provided and maintained for the workers and their families. Rule 35 of the Assam Plantation Labour Rules, 1956, also requires that there shall be two types of hospitals in plantations, viz. garden hospitals and group hospitals. However, health facilities as per the PLA are provided only to 6.43 per cent of the total workforce among the tea garden labourers in the state, largely because of the poor conditions prevalent in the Brahmaputra Valley, with the corresponding individual figures being only 3.83 per cent in the Assam Valley and 26.82 per cent in Cachar (GoI, 2007). Tea gardens owned by the big tea companies generally have one hospital each with adequate facilities. On many occasions, these hospitals also refer patients to the neighbouring district hospitals. However, as discussed earlier, only a limited number of large tea companies are running tea gardens in the state, and a majority

of the tea garden workers belong to single- owned tea gardens, as a result of which the prevalent health conditions in the tea gardens are generally pathetic. Secondly, these hospitals treat only permanent or casual workers employed in the tea gardens. Thus during the lean season, when casual workers are out of work, they are not permitted to receive medical facilities. The state government has taken a special initiative to implement the pulse polio campaign in the tea garden. Initially, the tea garden management was reluctant to implement this campaign due to the large staff required for it, but they eventually agreed to do so.

#### **1. 12. Woman Empowerment of the Tea Tribe:**

The most labour-intensive function in a tea garden, viz. plucking, is a delicate operation that is often viewed as women's work. Given the availability of few childcare alternatives, women who pluck tea leaves often bring their young children with them into the fields. No maternity benefit schemes are available for these women tea garden labourers. It has generally been seen that these women undertake physically strenuous work in the gardens even during their pregnancies and post-delivery periods. Further, there are no facilities to provide pre-nursing care and mandatory leave during the post-delivery period to these women workers.

According to the Ministry of woman and child development, Government of India from the report 'The working group on empowerment of woman for the XI plan', the extent of empowerment of women in the national hierarchy is determined largely by the three factors- her economic, social and political identity. These factors are deeply intertwined and interlinked with many linkages which imply that if efforts in even one

dimension remain absent or weak, outcomes and momentum generated by the other components cannot be sustained as they will not be able to make any changes. It is only when all the three factors are simultaneously addressed and made compatible with each other then the woman can be truly empowered. Therefore, for the holistic empowerment of the woman to happen – social, economic and political aspects impacting a woman's life must cover effectively. Women as an independent group constitute 48% of the country's total population as per the 2001 census. The importance of women as an important human resource was recognized by the Constitution of India which not only accorded equality to women but also empowered the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in their favour. As per the Eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established in the Millennium Declaration at the General Assembly of the United Nations in the year 2000, these include promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and improving maternal health. Though only these two are clearly gender specific, gender equality is at the core of achievement of MDGs.

The status of women in the tea tribe community is always inferior to men and the women are always controlled by her spouse. As a result, the women cannot get sufficient freedom. Majority of tea garden women have no choices to live her life in her own way. The women in the tea garden areas get very less opportunities to be part of any social event because of their daily heavy duties in the tea garden and household activities. The women forum has highlighted the women of the tea gardens and Adivasi women living in the villages who are often neglected in the various sectors. The number of adivasi women in the gardens and villages are unaware of their rights and do not get platform to empower themselves because of ignorance in the mainstream society. With the emerging

issues in different parts of the world, the issues of Adivasi women are also the hindrance in the life of Adivasi women. The ignorance of government towards the life of the Adivasi community is also one of the major causes for the empowerment of Adivasi women. The busy life of the Adivasi women in tea garden areas shows that they get very limited sources to engage themselves in the prosperous life.

### **1. 13. Human Development Conditions of the Tea Tribe:**

The Assam Human Development Report was published in 2003 with a picture of tea garden labourers plucking tea leaves, but it does not contain any section on the poor development conditions among the tea garden labourers. The report has only incorporated the Tea Board of India estimates on tea production in the state, while avoiding inclusion of the human development index of the tea labour community. The tea labour community, which accounts for an estimated 20 per cent of the total population in the state, thus lives and works in very poor human development conditions, which also affects the development index of the entire state.

According to the Assam Human Development Report, Assam is ranked 12th among 16 states when put in the descending order of the Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Development Index (GDI). Life expectancy at birth is 54.1 years in the rural areas of the state as compared to 63.3 years in urban areas. Fifty-two per cent of the children are underweight in the rural areas of the state as compared to 37 per cent in urban areas. Around 10 per cent of the population lives in urban areas. The corresponding figure at the all-India level is 30 per cent. The report claims that though the state has an adequate physical health infrastructure including primary health centres (PHCs) and



hospitals, the quality of service provision is low. There is no specific mention of healthcare facilities or hospital infrastructure available for tea garden labourers in the report. Under the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, each tea garden should have a health centre with adequate facilities because a tea garden is remotely located and does not have proper connectivity with the nearest town in many cases. The Assam Human Development Report, 2003, pointed out that most women workers in the organized sector are employed in the tea gardens in the state, which accounts for the predominance of women workers in large-scale (employing over 25 workers) private sector establishments. But the Field Works Performance Report (FWPR) of women in the tea industry has not empowered women. Although the overall FWPR in Assam is high, a majority of women workers are either unpaid or poorly paid and belong to the category of unskilled labour. The tea garden *coolis* (generally understood as a labour colony) in Assam have a unique identity. Such a unit is neither an urban industrial nor a rural area. It is basically an industrial village cluster and is always kept under-developed so that the tea management company can easily procure cheap labour from here. However, it constitutes a distinct stratum of the economy of the state, which must be accorded high priority for development. In contrast, while the tea business has been growing steadily since Independence, the living standards of the tea garden community have remained virtually stagnant. Although the production and cultivation of tea in Assam have been increasing substantially over a period of time, yet the working conditions of the tea garden labourers have been deteriorating. The welfare schemes for the labourers in the tea gardens are also in a deplorable state. Except in case of a few tea gardens (managed by big multinational companies), the conditions of labourers in the rest of the tea gardens do not even adhere

to the basic levels of decent human existence. A majority of the tea gardens lack proper health facilities, and access to drinking water, sanitation and electricity connections. In recent days, due to the implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), many tea garden labourers have been receiving free mid-day meals and other facilities. But since the *coolie* lines do not fall under the purview of the Panchayati Raj system, the residents here are being deprived of benefits accruing under many Central and State government welfare schemes.

#### **1. 14. Public Distribution System of the Tea Tribe:**

The Public Distribution System (PDS) in the tea gardens is the oldest food distribution system in the country. It was started during the latter part of the nineteenth century by British tea merchants to provide rice and other items to the indentured labourers of the tea gardens. During the twentieth century, the system was rationalized and food items were provided only to those who were employed in the gardens. During the post-Independence period, the term 'ration' was extended to include many items that are now being provided to the workers in the tea gardens.

Although the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, has not made it mandatory to provide rations to the tea labour community, the management has been continuing with this practice, which has been prevalent for the last 100 years. Under the present system, the tea industry is allotted food grains through the PDS quota under the APL Scheme. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) supplies food grains to tea garden employers at a rate fixed by it (the FCI). In addition to this rate, the tea garden employers are required to bear the landed cost of such food grains, which includes transportation and handling charges.

People buy sugar and other government subsidized items from local fair price shops. Thus, two systems of the PDS are running in the tea gardens. According to a survey conducted by the Tea Board, the total value of food grains consumed per worker per week in the state, including by their dependants, worked out to Rs. 66.66 in 1997. This figure increased to Rs. 87.78 in the year 2006 (GoI, 2007). The scale of food grains provided to the tea garden workers in Assam is depicted in the Table below-

#### Food grain Supplied to Tea Garden Workers in Assam

Food grain	Rice (kg/week)	Wheat (kg/week)	Total (kg/week)
Adult workers	1.63	1.63	3.26
Adult dependants	1.22	1.22	2.44
Child	0.61	0.61	1.22

Source: GoI (2007).

Thus, rations are supplied at concessional rates to the tea plantation workers and their dependants in Assam as a part of their negotiated wage package. The food grain component has always been considered as an immutable fixed component of the wage. The basic food items are not distributed by the management to the labourers who merely live in the tea gardens but are not employed in the latter. However, rations are provided to those who are employed as casual workers for four months in a year during the plucking season. Thus, a majority of the labourers, who generally do not work in the tea gardens or work only as casual labourers, are denied rations under the present PDS. Besides, for procuring subsidized items from the local fair price shops, the labourers need to have

ration cards, which they often do not have. Hence there is a need for a unified rationing system for the tea garden labourers, wherein all of them (both workers and ex-workers) should be issued valid PDS cards. In addition, a special scheme should be implemented to identify the tea garden labourers operating under various categories including below the poverty line (BPL), after which an appropriate PDS system can be implemented to benefit all labourers working in the tea gardens.

#### **1. 15. Housing Facilities of the Tea Tribe:**

Section 15 of the PLA stipulates that every employer should provide and maintain the requisite housing accommodation for the workers employed in his tea garden. Further, Rule 65 of the Assam Plantation Labour Rules, 1956, states that houses shall be allotted on the criterion of one house per worker. A similar provision has also been incorporated in the West Bengal Plantation Labour Rules, 1956. As compared to the Barak Valley, which has housing facilities for 77.58 per cent of the population, the Brahmaputra valley is slightly better placed with a corresponding figure of 84.98 per cent. Since there is no provision for providing any housing facilities to the casual workers, the remaining number workers live either in the garden or outside (GoI, 2007).

#### **1. 16. Drinking Water Facilities of the Tea Tribe:**

Section 8 of the PLA stipulates that in every plantation, effective arrangement shall be made by the employer to provide and maintain a sufficient supply of wholesome drinking water for all workers at convenient places. Rule 8 of the Assam Plantation Labour Rules, 1956, stipulates the provision of drinking water in the tea-growing areas of Assam.

However, the state of drinking water facilities in Assam, which generally consist of ring wells and ponds in the *coolli* lines, is dismal, as reflected in the fact that these facilities cover only 3.37 per cent of the worker population in the state, as a whole, with the corresponding figures being only 0.038 per cent in the Assam Valley and 26.82 per cent in the Cachar region (GoI, 2007). The remaining workers, that is, those workers who are deprived of drinking water facilities, have to arrange water on their own without any help from the company management. Thus, the statistics compiled by the Tea Board of India, pertaining to the PLA, too highlight the worrisome situation in the Assam Valley as far as the provision of facilities like education, healthcare and drinking water for the workers is concerned.

#### **1. 17. Insurance of the Tea Tribe:**

In Assam, a special Act, viz. the Assam Tea Plantation Provident Fund and Pension Scheme, has been enacted to provide pension and provident fund to the permanent employees of tea gardens. However, it is estimated that presently, 316 tea gardens have to pay dues to the state government as provident fund contribution amounting to Rs. 71,92,11,967 (PIB, 2003). Apart from these provident fund and pension schemes, there are no other social security schemes like insurance for either permanent or casual labourers and their families. Even the tea management company never pays any compensation to the family of a deceased worker who dies due to an occasional accident in the tea factories. The state government too has not introduced any insurance system for the tea garden labourer nor does any management social security system exist for the tea garden labourer. The recently introduced joint group insurance policy of the state government of Assam and ICICI Lombard has not yet covered the tea garden labourers.

There is also no initiative to assess the possibility of implementation of micro-insurance schemes, while the tea garden labourers enjoy neither a proper salary structure nor even a proof of residence to confirm their status as tea garden workers.

#### **1. 18. Electricity of the Tea Tribe:**

The tea garden *coolis* are considered as neither urban nor rural areas, as mentioned earlier. They have not even been declared as habitat villages within the tea gardens while the labourers residing here are not recognized as Below the Poverty Line (BPL) despite their obvious poverty and poor living conditions. They have thus not received any ration card-cum-identification card mentioning their BPL status. Consequently, the *coolis* in the tea gardens in the state have no rural electricity connections nor are they covered by any subsidized rural electrification schemes for the BPL population. After consistent demands by tea labour organisations, a few tea garden managements owned by big tea companies have initiated the electrification process in the *coolis*. The Directorate of Assam Tea Labour and Ex-Tea Labour have also initiated rural electrification in the *coolis* by installing grid connections and metering in a few tea gardens in Upper Assam.

#### **1. 19. Status of Children of the Tea Tribe:**

Child labour in the tea industry is allegedly used in the functions of plucking, weeding, hoeing, and nursery work. Some claim that children make good pluckers because of their 'nimble fingers', while others argue that plucking is too arduous a task for children to perform. The children are also given the job of removing shrubs that are harmful to the tea plants from the gardens. As there is extensive use of pesticides in the

tea gardens, the removal of shrubs with naked hands generally affects the health of the children. A 1992 report on child labour in tea plantations in North-east India described the employment of children as follows: “Most of the child workers are employed as casuals. Children are found to do such strenuous work as plucking under very severe climatic conditions; they are assigned to nursery work, fertilization, carrying of heavy loads and household work. They are also made to work in the factories, against established law” (Raman, 1992).

The Plantation Labour Act of 1951 prohibited the employment of children under the age of 12 years on any plantation, but permitted and regulated the employment of children of ages 12-14 years as well as adolescents, defined as those between the ages of 15 and 17 years. The Act requires both children and adolescents wishing to work in the tea gardens to obtain a ‘certificate of fitness’ from a certified surgeon. In addition, they may not work more than 27 hours a week, or at night. The Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act of 1986 amended certain portions of the Plantation Labour Act of 1951 by raising the minimum age for employment from 12 to 14 years of age. In 1990, the Government of Assam estimated that there were 96,535 children employed in the tea gardens in Assam, constituting over 14 per cent of the total workforce.

### **1. 20. Government Initiatives for Welfare of the Tea Tribe:**

There are three types of institutions that monitor the functioning of the tea industry and oversee the welfare of labourers in the tea gardens in Assam. The Tea Board, which has been constituted by an Act of Parliament, is the organization which deals with the development of tea business in the country; the Directorate for Welfare of

Tea Garden Tribes (including ex-Tea Garden people) implements schemes for the welfare of the tea gardens' tribe population; and the Assam Tea Labour Welfare Board looks after the general welfare activities of the tea garden community. There are also many private organizations dealing mainly with the development of the tea business in Assam. Among them are many Chambers of Commerce and Industries dealing with tea industry development. These organizations work collectively with the state industry department and deals with various issues like the subsidization in transportation, and reduction of excise duty on processed tea as well as on the import of technology for factories.

#### **1.20.1. Tea Board of India:**

The Tea Board of India has its head office in Kolkata as well as three divisions in Assam. It coordinates the development of tea gardens and oversees upgradation of quality through the modernization of tea factories and extension of services to tea growers. While implementing measures for popularizing Indian Tea, the Board also monitors the regulation of various statutory provisions for the control of the tea industry and trade, collects data and disseminates information on tea periodically to various stakeholders for effective policy intervention and initiatives, ensures the welfare of labour in the form of the efforts of various agencies involved in welfare activities among tea garden workers through project-specific grants and financial assistance for schemes and grants to institutions for carrying out research in tea science and technology, and development projects. Thus, the role of the Tea Board is that of a catalyst for facilitating acceleration of the production and growth rate of the tea industry, but in the process, it has failed to ensure the general welfare of the tea labour community in the state.



### **1.20.2. Directorate for Welfare of Tea Garden Tribes:**

The Directorate for the Welfare of Tea Garden Tribes (including ex-tea garden people), which was established in the state in 1983 for overseeing welfare projects for the tea tribe community, implements a number of schemes in keeping with its objective. The Directorate provides scholarship awards and grants-in-aid for the promotion of education. It also supports welfare works and cultural activities carried out by NGOs. For the economic development of the community, the Directorate provides grants-in-aid under the 'Family-oriented Income Generating Schemes' to BPL persons. The main objective of the scheme is to provide assistance in the form of government grants-in-aid to the ex-tea tribe families living below the poverty line outside the tea garden area in order to enable these families to enhance their annual incomes. The Directorate procures funds for its welfare schemes from the funds allocated under the planned assistance of the development of plain tribes by the Central Government even though the state government has not yet recognized the tea garden labour community as STs under the state schedule. The Directorate receives 50 percent of its funds from the Central budget and the remaining 50 per cent from the state government's Plan allocation.

### **1.20.3. Assam Tea Labour Welfare Board:**

The Assam Tea Labour Welfare Board was set up after the enactment of the Assam Tea Plantation Labour Welfare Fund Act, 1959. Since then the Board has been working for the tea labour welfare in Assam through various schemes. These schemes include skill development training in labour welfare centres in 18 places in Assam; provision of boys' hostel facility to children of tea garden labourers studying in colleges;

provision of one- time scholarship for buying textbooks to students studying from class VIII to the university level; and facilitation of nursing training for the educated children of tea garden labourers. The officials of the Board claim that they are facing a shortage of funds for implementing all these schemes, and that therefore, the board is slated to suspend all its activities if regular funding is not made available urgently. They also point out that as tea garden *coolis* are situated inside the tea garden and that the tea garden is a private leased property, therefore, no government schemes can be extended to these *coolis*. No schemes are available for these *coolis* even under the Panchayati Raj system. The estimated budget of the Board is approximately Rs.5 crore per year. The Commissioner of the Assam Tea Labour Welfare Board stated that the Board was not able to meet even its salary component with the given allocation from the state government, thus leaving no money for welfare schemes.

#### **1.20.4. Various Schemes under Bharat Nirman:**

Under the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY), no initiatives have been taken for the erstwhile tea garden labourers who no longer have any job in the tea gardens and are compelled to work as manual workers in other places for a nominal wage. The DRDA directorate in Assam, which coordinates the works of PMRY, has revealed that there is no programme or project under this scheme to cover the tea gardens in the state. In recent years, many educated youth of the community have been opting for jobs outside the tea gardens but since there are no schemes for people living in the tea gardens but working outside, these youth are unable to receive any benefit under the PMRY.

Under the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), many special programmes are implemented in each state of the country for the holistic development of rural India. Among the schemes is the Sampurna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY for rural shelters), and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). A substantial amount of money has been spent since 2002 for the implementation of these schemes in the country.

None of the above schemes, however, is implemented in the *coolli* lines of the tea gardens in Assam. The reason cited by politicians, bureaucrats, policy-makers and academicians for the non-implementation of schemes for tea garden labourers is that the *coolli* lines are considered as part of the private land of the tea garden and do not fall under the Panchayati Raj system. Welfare schemes for tea garden labourers are not implemented even under special packages for SCs and STs as these labourers are not included in the SC and ST lists of the state government.

The state government is willing to implement these schemes in the tea gardens under the DRDA, and has asked the management to provide a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for allowing the local DRDA to initiate the IAY and PMGSY, among others. However, due to the reluctance of the management to undertake welfare measures of any kind for tea garden labourers, the benefits of these schemes have not reached tea garden labourers. It has also been observed that in some of the tea gardens which have even given NOCs for initiating these programmes, the Panchayat leaders are allocating funds to construct houses for outsiders (non-tea garden labourers) in the tea garden *coolli* lines, leading to social conflicts in the latter. There is thus an urgent need for the proper

regulation of these schemes if these schemes need to be implemented in the tea garden *cooli* lines.

### **1.21. Trade Unions in Tea Plantation:**

The tea plantation industry is considered as one of the largest organized industries in India, employing the largest workforce. The tea labour community is represented by several tea labour organizations, namely INTUC, CITU, ACMS, etc. Among them, the ACMS has a wider base and both the government and the tea companies' management have negotiated with these trade unions for wage restructuring. In Assam, the ACMS has been representing the workers for the last 50 years, and is the only recognized union, though there are some more registered unions, with some of them even being affiliated to the central trade unions. As of 1998, there were 144 unions, which submitted returns to the Government in the plantation sector of which 111 were involved in tea plantation, and of the total registered membership of 6, 09,000 and about 5, 84,000 were engaged in the tea plantation sector. The INTUC has about 1, 73,000 members in the plantation sector, of which 54 per cent are located in Assam. The CITU has a membership of about 38,000 in the plantation sector, of which 11 per cent is concentrated in Assam. The BMS has about one lakh members in the plantation sector, of which about 90 per cent are based in Assam. Although many tea labour organizations exist in the tea gardens of Assam, yet the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, is not being fully implemented in the state since the last 55 years, probably due to some underlying dynamics. Trade union politics in the tea gardens have contributed to the rise of many leaders affiliated to many political organizations in the state during the post-Independence period and the state has elected 12 members belonging to the tea garden community to the Legislative Assembly on a general seat.

With growing discontent against the trade unions of tea garden labourers, the newly established student organizations among the labour community are beginning to exercise control over the vital issues concerning the welfare of the tea garden community in Assam. The issues they have taken up recently include disbursement of yearly bonus, granting of tribal status to the tea garden community, creation of a separate department for the tea garden labour community, and the provision of electricity, drinking water and housing, proper education system among other things, to the tea garden labourers. As regards to the Provident Fund schemes and dues to be paid to the individual members, the student organizations are also seriously taking up these issues and conveying them to the government. Further, these organizations are demanding the amendment of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, to include appropriate measures for the welfare of the community. Although under the Act, there are several provisions related to the human development of the tea community, these are not accorded any importance either in the state government policies or in the negotiations that take place among the state government–management–trade unions. No substantial plan has been announced so far for promoting the human development of the tea garden labourers. Thus, unless the state government recognizes the existence of the tea garden labour community in the *coolie* lines and its inclusion under the Panchayati Raj institutions, it will be impossible to implement various welfare schemes initiated by the Central and state governments for the community, without the permission of the management. The rally that took place in Guwahati on November 24, 2007, and which was attended by the community in large numbers, was the outcome of these grievances that the community has been facing for the last hundred years. The growing predominance of student politics in the tea gardens and the decline of trade

unions are the major reasons for such upheavals that have taken place against the state in the recent past. On March 5, 2008, again hundreds of tea garden labourers, representing various student organizations, staged a dharna in Dispur, at the same place where the unfortunate incident of November 24, 2007 had occurred, with the rallyists demanding the immediate implementation of the Plantation Labour Act and the Minimum Wage Act. The protestors' main grievance was that all these years, they have merely been receiving assurances from the government regarding welfare measures for them, and little else. The Plantation Labour Act has not been implemented properly. Even the Minimum Daily Wage Act, as per which a minimum wage of Rs. 84 per day for the tea garden labourers was fixed in 2007, has not yet been implemented,. Besides, the student organizations also alleged that the workers were not being provided adequate facilities for education, drinking water and sanitation.

### **1.22. Departments of Tea:**

The tea industry is an integral part of Assam's economy, and the second largest after the oil and gas industry in the state but no single institution has been managing this industry during the last 150 years. The state government never looks at the tea industry as a part of Assam's economy. The tea industry has a huge management system controlled from Kolkata. Although the Tea Board of India is exclusively responsible for the development of the tea industry in the entire country, it has consistently ignored the tea industry in Assam. In most states in India, where an organized plantation industry is dominating the state's economic activities, the particular state has constituted a specific department for the development of both the industry as well as the workers. This is so particularly in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, where rubber and sugarcane constitute the major

plantation industries respectively. Both the state governments have thus constituted special departments to monitor, manage, and prepare policy documents for the future development of the rubber and sugarcane industries, respectively. Even in West Bengal, the state government has set up a jute development department, which is the apex organization for monitoring both the jute industry as well as the labour engaged in it. In Assam, however, there is neither any department nor any other institution at the state government level to oversee the management of the industry or the welfare of the labour engaged in the industry. Recently, the Chief Minister of Assam announced the creation of a new department exclusively for tea labourer welfare, a move which was welcomed by every quarter. But the setting up of the proposed department can be justified only by ensuring the development of both the industry as well as the labour community. The proposed department could regulate all the tea gardens in Assam (including the small tea growers) by bringing in new legal provisions for the promotion of tea productivity, ensuring the quality of tea for export purposes, conducting research for adapting new technologies as well as sensitizing the growers to undertake organic tea production. The creation of new auction centers (in Silchar, Dibrugarh and Tezpur, for instance) could herald a new initiative by the department for promoting increased global trade of tea from Assam. The above cities have been suggested for the purpose of setting up these centers as they have the required infrastructure to facilitate links with all parts of the world through road, railways, airways, and river ways, while they can also act as telecommunication hubs. The department also needs to provide facilities under the Plantation Labour Act (with a new amendment) to implement Central and the state government welfare schemes at the *coolie* lines in the tea gardens. Various schemes for the

social security of the tea garden labourer by providing insurance, post-retirement policies, etc., also need to be implemented by the department. Further, the department should also initiate special economic packages in consultation with the Government of India to increase literacy among the workers, and ensure a proper health system and drinking water, housing and sanitation facilities for them. The department needs to prepare welfare schemes for the labourers, and negotiate with the management of the tea companies for boosting the company's production of tea by investing more funds for both medium and small tea growers, providing them new technology, facilitating more research as well as regulating and managing their activities. The state government should also constitute a tea garden development committee with representations from the local population, management, and trade union leaders including student leaders to monitor and initiate development works in each tea garden. Secondly, a strict provision should be made that only people belonging to the tea community family would be allowed to stay in the tea garden *coolli* lines. It must also be ensured that a person, who establishes a link with the tea community members through a matrimonial relation, does not receive a job or housing facilities in the *coolli* lines. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the welfare of both the labourers as well as the economy of the state if the state government sets up a separate department of tea. Since a majority of the tea gardens in the state are under the private sector, such a monitoring as well as regulating agency is necessary for preparing a uniform policy to facilitate the growth of both the tea industry as well as the tea garden labour community.



### **1.23. Different Communities of Assam under the Umbrella “Adivasi” or “Tea-Tribe”:**

As stated earlier, there are a lot of communities in the tea gardens of Assam who speak Sadri to each other. Some of the communities use Sadri as their first language and some communities use it as their second language. Let us get a glimpse of these communities in the tea gardens of Assam who speaks Sadri for their communication-

#### **1.23.1. Munda:**

The Munda are an ethnic tribal group of people of Chota Nagpur Plateau region speaking Mundari which belongs to the Munda sub group of the Austro-Asiatic language family. They are found across much of Jharkhand state as well as in Assam, Odisha, West Bengal, Chattisgarh, Bihar and in some parts of Bangladesh. This tribal ethnic group is one of the largest tea tribal groups in India. There were estimated 9,000,000 Munda people in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (from [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) on 9 th March, 2015)

##### **1.23.1.1. Custom, law and tradition:**

Although, they have preserved their pre-Christian Mundari culture and traditions, many Christian influences have been absorbed. They still retain many of the practices of the of pre Christian tradition. The Munda people have a rich range of folk songs, dances and tales as well as traditional musical instruments. Both men and women participate in dances which are performed at social events and festivals. Mandar, Nagara and Kartal are the main musical instruments. Unlike various communities across the world, Munda people have enormous rituals to celebrate birth, death, engagement, marriage etc.

- . Birth of baby boy is celebrated as an earning hand to the family.
- . Birth of baby girl is celebrated as a care taker to the family.
- . ‘Lota – Pani’ is the engagement ceremony for the fiancée and fiancé.
- . Clan exogamy is the rule among Mundari people.
- . The bride price is generally paid before the marriage.
- . Marriage is considered as one of the main rituals of life which is a week –long festivity time for both the family.
- . Ointment with scented oil and turmeric is applied to the face and body after death so as to give a last decoration as last ritual.
- . the practice of widow marriage and divorce is common.
- . the family of Munda tribe is patriarchal.

#### **1.23.1.2. Seasonal Festival:**

Munda people are involved in Agriculture. For this reason, Munda people continue to show respect to the seasonal festival of Mage, Phagu, Karam, Sarhul, Sohrai etc. Over time, some seasonal festivals have come to coincide with religious festivals but the original meaning of the festivals has not been lost.

#### **1.23. 2. Santhal:**

The third largest tribes of India are the Santhal tribes. The tribe’s habitation is mainly in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand and Assam. They belong

to the Pre Aryan period and were the greatest fighters during the British regime in India. A bantam bunch comprising of the Santhals can also be traced back to Bangladesh. Santhals were brave courageous people who waged war against permanent settlement of Lord Cornwallis in 1855.

#### **1.23.2.1. Culture:**

Santhals enjoy and love dancing. Dancing is one activity which is in their blood. It forms an important part of the Santhal's fair and festivals. Santhals relax themselves with the light music and dance after the long day hard work. Santhal women dress up themselves in the red bordered white saree and dance in the line sequence which is called 'Jhumur'. Apart from dance, Santhals have fun and enjoy and also play great music using the Tirio (bamboo flute with the seven holes). Santhal tribal community has no temples of their own and they even do not worship any idol.

#### **1.23.2.2 Religion:**

Santhals follow the Sarna religion. Their God and Goddess are Marangburu, Jaheraera and Manjhi. The most amazing fact about Santhal is that they pay respect to the ghost and spirits like Kal Sing, Lakchera and Beudarang etc. santhals have village priests known as the Naiki and Shaman Ujha. In this community, animal sacrifices to gods are common to appease the gods and goddesses. ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) on 12/ 4/ 2014)

### **1.23. 3. Bhumij:**

Bhumij are tribal people living primarily in the Indian states of Assam, West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand. They speak the Mundari language of the Austro-Asiatic language

family and Sadri language for inter group communication in Assam Tea states.

In the 2001 census, they numbered among 150000 in Assam. Bhumij means one who is born from the soil. They form one of the Hinduised adivasi group in India.

### **1.23.4 Saora:**

It is a tribe which is originated in Southern Odisha. People of this tribe also come to Assam as tea garden labourers. These people are found not only in Assam's tea gardens, but also in Rayagada, Koraput, Gajapati, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts of Odisha. They are also called Lanja Saoras due to their dress pattern of wearing a loin cloth hanging from behind and which could be mistakenly identified as a tail by a stranger.

They are also known by various names such as Saura, Sabara, Sora, Soura. The Saoras also speak Munda language within their community and in tea gardens of Assam, they used to speak Sadri with members of other communities.

They are endogamous and the clan, although absent is related to Birinda which is an exogamous. Families are nuclear although joint or extended families are also found. Marriages are made by bride capture, elopement and by negotiation.

According to an article in 'Natural History' 'a Saura woman usually serves as an intermediary between the two worlds of the living and the dead. During a trance, her soul is said to climb down terrifying precipices to the underworld, leaving her body for the dead to use as their vehicle for communication. One by one the spirits speak through mouth. Mourners crowd around the Shaman, arguing vehemently with the dead, laughing at their jokes or weeping at their accusation.' ( from [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) on 12th January, 2014)

#### **1.23.4.1. Religious life:**

The Saoras are highly religious with each and every natural phenomenon attributed to the works of some gods, deities or spirits. Therefore, the customary law, values, norms are highly respected by all members of society for the fear of inviting personal or common man.

#### **1.23.4.2. Social Life:**

The Saoras have a traditional political organization at each village and region, having hereditary post of Gomango (secular head), Buyya (religious head), Mondal, Raito, and Barik (messenger). The Saoras have made history in Pre-British and British period and post independence as a community known for their economic, political integrity.

#### **1. 23. 5 Kharia:**

The Kharia is one of the biggest adivasi social groups of India. The Kharia comprises three tribes: Dudh Kharia, Dhelki Kharia and Hill Kharia. The first two speak

the Kharia language which is an Austro Asiatic language within their own community but they use Sadri language with other communities in the tea gardens of Assam.

They are found not only in the tea gardens of Assam but they also inhabit Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal and Andaman islands.

#### **1.23.5.1 Culture:**

The Hill Kharias have preserved their traditional dress pattern and rest of the Kharia have been influenced by the modern contact and changed their dressing style. Traditionally, they wear Dhoti called Bhagwan, woman wear saree falling up to the ankles. A part of the saree covers their bosom. The traditional dress is now a day going out of use. Both men and women wear ornament generally made of Brass, Nickel, Aluminium, Silver and rarely of gold.

Kharias are said to be the great dancers. Youth of both sexes dance together. Sometimes, they form two groups each of males and females and sing one after the other. It is like conversation is going on between boys and girls in the form of the song. The following dance patterns are prevalent among Kharias – Hario, Kinbhar, Halka, Kudhing and Jadhura.

#### **1.23. 6. Gond:**

Another tribe found among the tea communities of Assam is Gond. These people are Dravidian people. People of this community spread over the states of Madhya Pradesh, Eastern Maharastra, Chattisgarh, Uttarpradesh, Telengana and Western Odisha. They are a designated scheduled tribe in Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar,

Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal.

The Gonds are also known as the Raj Gond. The term 'raj Gond' was widely used in 1950s, but has now become almost obsolete, probably because of the political eclipse of the Gond Rajas.

About half of the Gonds speak Gondi language while the Gondi people in the tea gardens of Assam use Sadri language to communicate with other communities of the locality.

According to the 1971 census, their population was 51.54 lakhs. By the 1991 census, this increased to 93.19 lakhs, and by 2001 census, this was nearly 110 lakhs.

### **1.23. 7. Kurukh:**

#### **1.23.7. 1. Origin:**

According to the Indian Anthropological Society, Konkan is said to be the original home of the Kurukh tribes from where they migrated to Northern India. A Kurukh substratum is very prominent in the Konkan or the Konkoni language.

#### **1.23.7.2. People:**

The Kurukh or Oraons are the tribals of Chota Nagpur Plateau. Oraon appears to have been assigned to them as a nick name by their masters, possibly with reference to their many migrations and proneness to roam; however, they prefer to be called Kurukhar.

#### **1.23.7.3. Social Division:**

They live in Chota Nagpur plateau of East Central India like Bihar. In Rajgarh, Surguja, Jashpur districts of Jharkhand, Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, Sundargarh districts of Odisha and also in Bangladesh. A sizeable number of Oraon have migrated to the North-eastern part of India where they are mainly employed in tea-estates of West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. There are about 7 lakhs Oraons residing in Assam.

#### **1.23.7.4. Culture:**

The Oraon people have a rich range of folk songs, dances and tales as well as traditional musical instruments. Both men and women participate in dances which are performed at social events and festivals. Mandar, Nagara and kartal are the main musical instruments. During festival or any occasion of celebration, they consume an alcoholic drink called Handiya, a rice wine made from fermented rice. Handiya is distributed among every person of the village in a bowl of leaves, which is called Dona.

#### **1.23.7.5. Religion:**

The Oraon adivasi followed the 'sarna' dharma which has no tenets similar to Hindu religion. Some of the groups started following saran in Hindu style as Bishnu Bhagats, Bacchinda Bhagats, Karma Bhagats and Tana Bhagats. The Oraons have established several sarna sects. Oraons worship Sunbiri (a name given for Dharmah). Oraons believe everything in nature. It has its own deity or god, an animist philosophy which is less similar to Hindu. Oraon devotees originated when Oraons acquired special powers after making a pilgrimage to kamakhya in Assam to pay respect to Durga. Tan Bhagats were formed by Oraon saints Jatra Bhagat and Turia Bhagat. The Tana Bhagats



opposed to the Taxes imposed on them by the British and they staged a satyagarha even before Gandhi's Satyagarha movement. All the Tana Bhagats were the followers of Mahatma Gandhi during Independence Movement. All the Tana Bhagats were performing puja to Mahadeo and the tricolor with Charkha symbol on it fixed at their courtyard.

### **1.23. 8. Ho:**

Ho people are a tribe of people belonging to the Indian state of Jharkhand. They are the fourth most numerous scheduled tribe in Jharkhand after Santhals, Oraons and Munda and constitutes around 10.5 percent of the total populations of the scheduled tribes, numbering around 700,000 (total in the state) in 2001 census. Although not mentioned in the census, Ho people are found in Odisha and West Bengal also. Ho people came to Assam as tea labourers from Jharkhand and they settled here in the tea gardens of Assam.

#### **1.23.8.1. History:**

Starting from the period between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, copper was melted in many parts of old Singhbhum district. It is believed that many immigrants entered Singhbhum from Manbhum in the 14<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. When the Hos entered old Singhbhum, they overcame the Bhuyas who were then inhabitants of the forest country. In the later half of the eighteenth century, the Hos fought several wars against the Rajas of Chota Nagpur and Mayurbhanj to retain their independence. As far as is known, the Muslims left them alone. Although, the area was formally claimed to be a part of the

Muslim Empire, neither the Mughals nor the Marathas who were active in the surrounding areas during the Mughals, ventured into the area.

In 1765, Chota Nagpur was ceded to the British East India Company as part of Bengal, Bihar and Odisha. The Rajas of Singhbhum asked the British Resident at Midnapore for protection in 1767 but it was not until 1820 that he acknowledged himself as a feudatory of the British. The restless Hos broke the agreement soon and took part in the fierce rebellion of 1831-1833 along with the Mundas. The immediate cause of the Kol uprising in 1831-32 was the oppression of Adivasis by non-advansi contractors. The Hos and Mundas were joined by the Oraons and the houses of many non-Adivasi landlords were burnt and a number of people were killed. It compelled the British to recognize a thorough subjugation of the Hos. The uprising was suppressed with a good deal of trouble by captain Willkinson who had several hundred troops at his disposal while local troops quelled the uprising, another group under Colonel Richards entered Singhbhum in November 1836. Within three months, all the headmen surrendered. In 1857, the Raja of Porahat rose in rebellion and a sizeable section of the Hos joined in the revolt. Troops were sent and that put an end to the disturbance in 1859.

#### **1.23.8.2. Religion:**

In the 2001 census, 91 percent of the Hos declared that they preferred other religions and persuasions. They follow the 'sarna' religion. This means that they did not declare themselves to belong to any of the major religious groups and follow their own religious systems. Religion plays an important part in the life of tribals. Their belief in gods, goddesses and spirits are ingrained in them from childhood. The religion of the Hos

resembles to a great extent that of Santhal, Oraons, Mundas and other tribal people in the region. All the religious rituals are performed by the village priest 'deuri'. However, he is not required to propitiate malevolent spirits or deities. The spirit doctor 'deowa' takes care of this.

#### **1.23.8.3. Festivals:**

There are four main festivals for the Hos namely-

In the months of January-February, a puja called 'Maghe' is performed for the newly harvested crop stored at home.

Ba festival is celebrated in March-April when the first flowers of Sal tree blooms.

The cattle in the household are worshipped in Goma, celebrated in August.

A puja is performed in November before eating the ripened crop. It is the Jomnama festival.

#### **1.23.8.4. Dance:**

For the Adivasis, dance is the very breath of life rather than a means of entertainment. Their songs are generally accompanied by dances which change with the change of seasons. Most villages have an 'akhra' or dancing floor. It is a clean space of hard ground under a tree. The Hos have their distinctive choreography expressive of their culture, art and traditions.

One of the dancing festivals of the Hos is called Maghe Parab, held in January-February. The festivities are organized on a staggered basis in the villages so that other

villages can participate. The Ho people use musical instruments namely dama, dumeng, rutu etc.

### **1.23. 9. Oriya:**

The Oriya Known classically by various names like Odia, Odri etc. is an ethnic group of Eastern Indo- Aryan stock. They constitute a majority in the eastern central state of Odisha, with minority population in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Assam. In Assam tea gardens, they were brought by British as labourer to work in the tea gardens of Assam.

The vast majorities of the Oriyas are Hindus and are known for their history of Sun worship. Odisha is home to some of the oldest Sun temples in India, including Konark. There are small Christian and Muslim minorities.

The term 'Oriya', while sometimes used to refer to any inhabitant of Odisha, more precisely refers to the ethnic group which natively speaks the Oriya language. Odisha marks the South – Eastern frontier of Aryan expansion and is therefore also home to a large tribal population of Dravidian and Munda origin. While many of them adopted Oriya language, they maintain a distinct identity and there is no discernible admixture between them and the Oriyas. The Oriyas are distinguished by their religious customs as well as the use of the Oriya language. Odisha's relative isolation and the lack of any discernible outside influence have contributed towards preserving a socio-religious structure that has disappeared from most of North India.

#### **1.23.9.1. Etymology:**

The word Oriya comes from ancient Sanskrit 'Odra'. The Odrakas are mentioned as one of the people that fought in the Mahabharata, a testimony to their Aryan roots. Pali literature calls them Oddakas. Ptolemy and Piny the Elder also refers to the Oretas who inhabit India's eastern coast. The modern term Oriya dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century when it was used by the medieval Muslim chroniclers and adopted by the Gajapati king.

#### **1.23.9.2. Demography:**

The Census of India 2001 pegged the population of Odisha at around 36 million. Around 8 million of these people belong to scheduled tribes. Therefore, the Oriyas number around 27 million. Smaller Oriya communities may also be found in West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Assam etc.

#### **1.23.9.3. Culture:**

The Oriya people have a rich indigenous culture that is heavily influenced by the original tribal inhabitants of the land. It is also remarkable for its almost total absence of Islamic influence.

#### **1.23.9.4. Language:**

The Oriya speak the Oriya language, an Eastern Indo-Aryan language that shares a common root with Maithili, Bengali and Assamese. The Oriya people in the tea – gardens of Assam express their feelings in Sadri language with other communities.

### **1.23. 9.5. Religion:**

The Oriya tribe in the tea gardens of Assam has taken Hinduism as well as Christianity as their religion.

### **1.23.9.6. Festivals:**

The Oriya people in the tea gardens of Assam celebrate different festivals mainly Durga Puja, Pana Sankranti or Baisakhi, Nuakhai etc. with great joy and lot of fun.

### **1.23. 10. Chik Baraik:**

Chik Baraik is another community found in the tea gardens of Assam. Chik Baraiks are mainly found in Chattisgarh, but also found in parts of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Port Blair and Odisha. They belong to proto-austoloid group and speak Sadani or Sadri, Nagpuri as their mother tongue. However, with growing interaction between other tribes, they generally communicate in the language of that group or in Hindi.

Chik Baraik mainly resides in harmony with other tribes and Hindus in a village. Most of the cases, there is no separate village for the Chik Baraiks. There are some villages where only a Chik Baraik family lives in the village peacefully. In such villages, this community lives congruously between chief tribes, namely Munda, Oraon and Kharia who also become linked with the culture and customs of these chief tribes.

### **1.24. Evolution of Sadri:**

From the above discussion on the different ethnic tribes living in the tea gardens of Assam, it becomes immediately clear that they did not have a common language when

they were brought to Assam by the British. It seems that upper Assam where most of the tea gardens were situated became an area of diversity not only in terms of culture but also of languages. During British dominion, Assamese was the common language for communication between the locals and the British. The tea garden labourers who were brought by the British in to the tea gardens of Assam spoke mutually unintelligible languages as they belonged to different ethno – linguistic groups as mentioned above. The different groups were, the Mundas and Gonds from Bihar and Jharkhand, Santhals, Tantis and Bhumij from Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand, Oraons from Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha, Goalas from Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and Boyas from Tamilnadu. It is clear that the tea garden labourers represented three major language groups like Munda, Dravidian and Indo-Aryan having no common language at all for the purpose of inter-lingual communication. As going back to their respective native places seems almost impossible, they started living permanently in and around the tea gardens of Assam and they came into day to day contact with the Assamese speaking people. As a result of this kind of contact, the tea garden labourers picked up the Assamese language and started using it in a modified version.

So, it will not be wrong if we say that Sadri must have evolved as a common lingua franca in the tea gardens of Assam due to several types of contact such as migration, trade, services etc. But, the term ‘Sadri’ is uncommon for the Assamese people as they popularly call it as ‘Bagania Bhasa’ which means ‘garden language’ or ‘language of the gardens’. Sadri is the term used by the tea tribes themselves. This is the only language which is understood by all the people of the tea labour community in the tea gardens of Assam. It is also found that the educated ones use Assamese just like a

fluent Assamese native speaker. But, for children and uneducated persons, Sadri is the only language available to them. For this reason also, we find high dropout cases of the children of the tea labour community from school in the tea garden areas as the medium of instruction in those schools is Assamese. Though, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) is trying its best to educate the children of community by using both Assamese and Sadri in the same textbook, its success will be known only after a few years.

In Census of 1901, it is written about the Sadri language spoken by the tea garden labourers who are popularly known as *Cooli* in Assamese society in the tea gardens of Assam in this way “And it is probable that Coolies, who in Upper Assam frequently adopt this tongue (Assamese) as their customary form of speech, have returned it in the schedule.”

In the same way, the 1911 and 1921 Censuses also wrote about the language of the coolies of the tea gardens of Assam -----

‘As a matter of fact, it is difficult to any what language these settlers speak. It is usually a patois made up of Assamese, Hindi and Bengali.

----- Hindi predominates in Lakhimpur, but in other districts, the number of Assamese words increases west words and eventually the dialect becomes Assamese with a mixture of Bangalee or Hindi words.’

“Coolie born in Assam is nearer Assamese than anything else, but this seldom appears in the schedules.



..... Coolie Bat is a mixture of Assamese, Bengalee and Hindustani.... In some parts, however, it was found that the patois spoken by ex-coolies and their children born in Assam contained a greater mixture of Assamese than of other languages; in such cases the entry made was Assamese.”

### **1.25. Methodology:**

The data used in this research were collected from several informants. Some of them are Mansit kendulana, Sunita Kendulana, Monika Nurnia, Ghanakanta Oraon etc. Moreover, the data in this research were collected from written materials such as novels, short stories, weekly journal like Adivasi Awaz etc. The methods of approach to the acquisition of data were both direct and indirect. In the direct approach, the spoken communication like folk song, folk tales, narrative and conversations were recorded from the study area for repetition and closer study as per requirement. The data were cross-checked with other speakers of this lingua franca from different age groups, sexes and occupation. In the indirect approach, some data from journal, riddles, stories and novels were picked out.

### **1.26. Organization of the Study:**

The present work is organized into four chapters excluding bibliography and appendix. The chapters are Introduction, Review of Literature, Phonology and Conclusion.

The Introduction contains about Sadri language, the tea tribe people who speak this language in Assam, their culture, festivals , their different languages, different socio-

economic conditions, different tribes within the umbrella ‘tea tribe’, evolution of the Sadri language etc. These points are discussed thoroughly in the Introduction chapter.

The second chapter contains review of literature. It is found that there are more linguistic works done on Sadri spoken in Jharkhand compared to Assam. Here, we are trying to review some linguistic works on this language done in India including different linguistic research works on the Assam Sadri which are done in Assam.

The third chapter discusses about the phonological analysis of the Sadri language. In this chapter, we find that there are two types of phonemes namely segmental and supra-segmental. In segmental phoneme, we get two types of phonemes – vowel and consonant. In the vocalic analysis, we again find two types of vowel namely oral vowel and nasal vowel. Each type of vowels has six phonemes respectively and it is found that they are contrasted with each other. Along with it, we get seven diphthongs in this language while doing the phonological analysis of the language. In the language, we get twenty nine consonantal phonemes. Except /q<sup>h</sup>/, /w/, /y/ and /ŋ/, all other consonants occur in all the three positions of words namely initial, medial and final. Here, the consonantal phonemes /w/ and /y/ occur only in medial position of words, it never occurs in the initial and final positions of Sadri words. On the other hand, the phoneme /ŋ/ and /q<sup>h</sup>/ occurs in the medial and final positions of words.

Apart from it, we discuss about the supra – segmental feature – word accent. We get two types of word accent – primary ( ´ ) and secondary ( ˘ ).

Subsequently, the other topics we discussed in the chapter are consonant cluster, consonant sequence, geminates, syllables and different morphophonemic processes pertaining to the Phonology of the Sadri language.

The fourth chapter is the concluding chapter. Here, we summarized what we find in the phonological analysis of the language. It also contains a discussion on the importance of the Sadri language in Assam.

The thesis sums up with the lists of bibliography and appendix.