

Chapter VI

Summary and Conclusion

The Sociological study on Cinchona plantation is very rare in so far as the plantation industry in the hill areas of Darjeeling district is concerned. Whatever the studies have been conducted so far in the region are either travellers' notes or village monographs. The present study is a shift in emphasis from such studies to the micro level analytical attempt of the socio-economic life of Cinchona plantation workers of Mungpoo. More specifically, the present piece of research work is designated to comprehend the changing socio-economic life of Cinchona plantation workers in Mungpoo and their nature of adaptation to the semi-industrial way of plantation system after migration from a poor peasant cultural background.

I

The Cinchona plantation workers had peasant background of Nepal and Sikkim. Traditionally, the various castes and tribes had to dwell on the various works of the agrarian society for their livelihood. Carrying out the agrarian jobs, they could hardly expect job security and mobility across the village.

Each village was understood to be a respective caste village which could maintain its exclusiveness from another caste village in terms of its socio-economic relationship. In the process, broadly the Nepali society was divided into Tagadharis,

Matwalis and Untouchables. Excepting untouchables such as Kami, Damai and Sarki, all other castes and tribes were conceptualised to be the touchable castes.

The caste exclusiveness could be maintained through the network of joint families in which the roles of family members were strictly compartmentalised in terms of age, sex and marital status. Females had been assigned with the specific household works only. Such village exclusiveness was further sustained by the system of endogamy which strictly prescribed for intra-caste marriages only.

In the agrarian society, only Bahuns, the custodians of Hindu religion and Brahmanical rites, had the right to Sanskrit education. All other castes and tribes were either animists or Buddhists. Ideally as Hindus, Bahuns, Chhetris and Thakuris were supposed to be vegetarians in their food habits while other castes and tribes were non-vegetarians. Unlike Bahuns, Chhetris and Thakuris, other castes and tribes used to believe in Jhankris as the only means to cure diseases.

At the political parlence, the village and national life were headed by Thakuri, Chhetri and Bahun leaders while the leadership cadres hailing from other castes and tribes were hardly recognised by the traditional Nepali society.

Linguistically, all the Nepali castes and tribes were corporately known as Nepali speaking people though every caste

had its own dialect. Broadly speaking, they belonged to two groups, viz, Tibeto-Burman and Aryan stocks. Excepting Bahun, Chhetri, Thakuri (Tagadharis), Kami, Damai and Sarki (Untouchables), all other castes and tribes such as Rai, Limbu, Mangar, Gurung, Tamang, Thami, Sunuwar, Newar, Lepcha, Sherpa and Dukpa immigrated to the plantation in the early 19th century. The Tagadharis and untouchables immigrated here during 1940's of the present century. As regards to the Matwali immigration, it seems that a good number of factors have affected considerably together and complementing one another. They have immigrated to the plantation because they wanted to get rid of the problem of poverty, scarcity of land for cultivation, population pressure and above all the imposition of rigid Hindu Brahmanical rites which was strongly patronised by the law of the land in Nepal. Socially, the Tibeto-Burman people (Matwalis) being beef eaters were looked down upon by the ruling castes of Nepal.

The Tagadhari immigration was caused by the changing political situation of Nepal during the forties of the present century when they along with other Matwali castes and tribes began to be treated equals in the eye of law in terms of socio-economic relationship. However, it is also found that they immigrated here because they got white colour jobs in the plantation. Similarly, Kamis, Damais, and Sarkis immigrated here considering the facilities provided by the government of India for backward scheduled castes and scheduled tribes after the

independence of the country. While Lepchas and Dukpas immigrated to the plantation after the Indo-Bhutan war, 1864 when Kalimpong came within the jurisdiction of Darjeeling District.

The massive immigration of the Matwalis in the plantation during its formative period was due to their occupational background. They were unskilled landless toiling class of Nepal. The Cinchona plantation as agro-based industry having low level of technology required such unskilled workers who were accommodated here with its industrial incentives such as wages, housing, Khetland and permanent settlement.

Immigrating to the plantation, the workers found themselves in a new type of colonial economy characterised by regular work schedule and cash payment in terms of wages as per the formalities of an industrial organisation. Besides wages, they were also provided with certain other welfare incentives. Thus, the new situation, not only invited changes in the economic life of the workers but it also enhanced changes in the socio-cultural relationship.

Now, all the workers are simply the daily rated toiling mass of the plantation. This has in turn encouraged for the occupational mobility and new life style among the workers.

The change in economic life has also affected changes in socio-cultural life of the workers. Such changes are reflected in the family type, marriage pattern, caste and commensal relations,

religious practices, political system, health, behaviour, etc. Unlike in Nepal, since all castes and tribes have been accommodated in the same habitation, the socio-economic interactions among the 19 different castes and tribes with varied cultural heritages appear to be completely different. The common dwelling, isolation from urban towns such as Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Kurseong and Siliguri and "Kamane Culture" of the plantation have facilitated the inter-caste marriages, formation of dominant Matwali group with persistence of non-Brahmanical animistic rites in their social relationship, death rituals, religious practices, festivals, health practices, trade unionism, caste associations etc.

However, inspite of such Matwali dominance comprising of more than 19 different caste and tribal heritages, the Nepali society is heterogeneous in nature. The heterogeneous universe of the Nepali society of Mungpoo Government Cinchona plantation with its homogeneous industrial life is the new situation in which the present investigation has been conducted. Among other Cinchona plantations situated in Darjeeling hills, viz, Latpencher, Munsong and Rongo, Mungpoo is selected for the present study because of its industrial features and existence of multiple caste and tribal groups which are not found in other Cinchona plantations.

Hence, the purpose of the present analytical study is to investigate the factors responsible for the plantation workers to enter into labour force and to find out how the industrial

employment affects their socio-cultural life. Since the study covers the general socio-economic life of the workers as a whole, the factors affecting changes in occupational patterns, material aspect of life, attitude towards the agro-industry, its nature of work organisation, wages, housing, Khetland, medical facilities, education, landholding, income, trade unionism etc form the focus of the present investigation. Further, the study reveals that such economic changes have also brought about changes in regard to family types, interpersonal relationship, marriage types, caste and commensal relations, health and religious practices.

It may relevently be noted that the process of change however does not at all eliminate certain aspects of the society which are inherited from the past. So, analysing the changes in the socio-economic life of the workers, the persistence of certain socio-cultural aspects have also been incorporated in the present study.

II

Like any other organised industry, Cinchona plantation also occupies a unique position due to its agro-industrial features. The employment of people is on the increase in the plantation. It is found that there were 1,149 workers in 1960-67 at Mungpoo while the number of them increased considerably to 1,160ⁱⁿ 1969-70. After the reorganisation of Cinchona plantation

industry in 1984, the number of plantation workers has been reached upto 1,172 today. Besides this, there are more than twelve hundred casual workers in the plantation. Similarly, there are 60 factory workers. The total population of the workers is 6354 of 19 different castes and tribes. Thus, unlike in Nepal, the plantation is a multi caste oriented society.

Similar to any other industrial organisation, the Cinchona plantation has also an organisation of work and a hierarchy of staff. This hierarchy includes the Director, Deputy Directors, Administrative Officer, Research and Development Officer, Accounts Officer, Quinologist, Chief Chemist, Managers, Assistant Managers, Botanist, Agronomist and Plant Pathologist who form the top management category. They are locally known as Sahibs. Below them, there are Gangmen, Fieldmen, Head Carpenter and Workshop Supervisor. They are known as Kaman Babus. Below the supervisory staff, there are establishment staff who are simply known as Babus. Among the Sahibs, there are a few Bara Sahibs and others are Chota Sahibs. Similarly, among the supervisory staff also, there are Chota Babus and Bara Babus. The plantation workers and factory workers occupy the lowest position in the hierarchy. They are known as non-establishment daily rated Mazdcors. While the management cadres, supervisory staff, and office Babus are known as establishment staff. The hospital staff are also included in the category of office Babus. Excepting a few Sahibs and a Doctor, all the management cadres, supervisory staff and office

Babus are Nepalis by ethnic background. Among the establishment staff (169), only 20 (9.3%) are Tagadharis and rest belong to the Matwali group (90.7%). It is however observed that women are not appointed as supervisory staff rather they are selected for clerical staff in the establishment section. Among the daily rated workers, factory workers are considered superior in comparison to the plantation workers because the former is considered as literate and semi-skilled workers while the later are illiterate unskilled toiling mass.

Among the plantation workers, there are 586 (47.6%) males, 284 females (23.1%) and 302 (24.5%) child workers. It is interestingly noted that 57.6% of the plantation workers are either women or child workers. It is also found that 77.1% of the plantation workers belong to Matwali group while only 22.9% of them belong to Tagadhari castes. It shows that Matwalis form the dominant majority in the working force of the industry.

In the past, plantation workers were recruited by the Sardars and Callawalas from Nepal and Sikkim by following the policy of enticement. This was materialised by the Sardars who recruited workers from among their own castes. The process continued undisturbed till 1950. With the passing of Plantation Labour Act, 1951, the recruitment procedure also undergone change. Only local Nepalis were to be recruited. Now, with the increase of population in the plantation, only Badli (Substitute) recruitment

has been done by which the new appointment is to be done from among the dependent members of the retiring workers. Again, unlike in the past, casual works are also to be given to the dependents of the workers for 87 days at a stretch after conducting an annual survey of labour households. It is observed that thirty percent job creation as accorded by the management is extended to the regular daily rated workers only and in the process quite a good number of people have not been provided with the regular jobs even after serving as casual labours for a couple of years in the plantation. It is also observed that not a single daily rated worker is promoted to managerial posts as in the case he or she must have requisite educational qualification and experience as outlined by the West Bengal Civil Service Rules.

With the establishment of Minimum Wages Board, the wages of the workers are revised regularly at the interval of every two years. After 1987, all the workers irrespective of Adult, Adolescent and Child categories, are getting a uniform wage of Rs. 30.18 per day per worker. The wages are paid for both type of works such as Hazira and Thiccka. These days, Thiccka has become very popular than the Hazira because former type of work takes less time to accomplish the specific piece of work assigned to a worker. By doing so, they are able to devote rest of their time in agricultural cultivation.

In every week, each worker is provided with 3 Kg and 250 grams ration at a subsidised rate. Free quarters are provided to

the workers. Only 16.7% of the quarters are Kuccha while 83.3% of the quarters are Puccka type. As per the provision of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, they are provided with the drinking water facilities through a water reservoir made at the plantation. But the facility seems to be inadequate since many workers have found carrying drinking water from springs and Jhoras. Again, a 16 bedded hospital has also been made in the plantation. Besides, a total of two beds has been reserved at Kurseong T.B. Sanatorium for the plantation workers. Every year, 14 days casual leave, 14 days medical leave, six week pre-natal and six week post-natal maternity leave are also granted to the workers.

It is found that each worker used to get one acre of Khetland upto the eighties of the present century but now due to the increase of population, only 25 decimals are given to each worker to cultivate vegetables for their daily consumption. Besides Khetland, every worker is given a blanket costing Rs. 200/- at the interval of every two years. Rs. 115/- as Winter Allowance, tent facility to the kids of the workers, Chiawala, Dabaiwala, Bonus, firewood facilities, recreational facilities, labour welfare centre etc. are also provided to the workers. A total of eight primary schools and a Higher Secondary School are running in the plantation for the education of the workers. A Provident Fund scheme has also been implemented in the plantation. Finally, every worker is provided Gratuity at the time of retirement.

Each worker has to remain in duty throughout the year. Every day, he or she has to work for 8 hours or 54 hours a week. Unlike in other organised industries, each worker does all types of works which are related to the plantation. The work starts right at 7 A.M. and continues till 4 P.M. with one hour interval for lunch. Though there is no rigid compartmentalisation of labour in the plantation, normally heavier works are to be done by males. But the delicate works such as sowing seeds, transplanting seeds and barking operations are to be done by females only. Works are generally done in groups but all groups do all type of works in alternative days.

The workers are committed to the plantation works since the jobs are very much akin to their traditional agrarian types which do not require much skill. The attitudes of the workers towards the works is slightly different among young literate workers who think the daily rated work is the stepping stone for higher posts in the plantation or outside. A variation is noted among the male literate workers who think that their jobs are as good as agricultural works since they are regulated by Minimum Wages Board with its Minimum Wages Act, 1948 which provides need based minimum wages to the workers. Being illiterates, most of the workers do not aspire to get higher posts. Still they are assured of jobs for their children. Caste wise, Matwalis have a high level of expectation to the industry than the Tagadharis.

It is seen that 59.4% of the population of the households (1071) are employed in various occupations of the plantation including daily rated Mazdoors. Again, 6.3% of them are engaged in other government services and 0.5% of them are petty businessmen. It is also found that not a single caste has been doing its traditional occupation. But quite interestingly it is observed that 33.1% of the total population are engaged in Khetland and individual owned land cultivation. Unlike in the past, whatever is produced in Khetland and individual owned land is sold out to the market. It is therefore observed that tradition of agricultural economy having peasant background has helped the workers to accumulate money rather than spending as in the past for family consumption only. This has enhanced the occupational mobility among the workers across the caste and creed barriers of the past. Even Bahuns do business which is not found in the traditional Nepali society. The new situation of the plantation industry has enabled to establish the fact that there is no correlation between caste and traditional occupation today among the Nepalis. Another reason to have such phenomenon is that the Tagadharis are not the owners of better resources of the plantation rather they are considered to be the recent settlers (Sukumbasis) while the early

immigrants (Matwalis) are known as Raithaneys who have occupied the better jobs and other resources.

It is interesting to note that the workers although live on the income from semi-industrial plantation works still they cling to their traditional practices of cultivation of land. Almost all families of the plantation possess cultivable lands for cultivation of rice, maize, millet etc. This has combined industrial and peasant occupations in an unique form. The ownership of land outside the plantation is characterised by respective caste traditions. Tagadharis have mainly purchased wet land (Panikhet) at Kalimpong or Bijanbari area of Darjeeling to cultivate rice while Matwalis have mainly purchased dry land (Sukha Khet) to produce maize and millet which are very necessary crops for preparing Jnar for their rituals and festivals. Thus, Matwali dominance is reflected here as 77.9% of land is possessed by them while 22.5% of land is possessed by the Tagadharis.

It is seen that Nepali castes domesticate cattlestock as part and parcel of their economy. Among the Matwalis, pigs are common livestock while most Tagadharis domesticate cows. It shows that pork eating as taboo has still found among the Tagadharis. On the other hand, pork is very popular among the Matwalis.

Migration has brought an impact on the economic life of the workers along with changes in their life style. Possession of valuable articles is one of the criteria to measure their life style. It is observed that 79.4% of the valuable articles such as T.V., Radio, Sofa, Vehicles, Watch etc. are possessed by the Matwalis while 21.6% of the articles are possessed by the Tagadharis. It transpires the fact that the Matwalis are much better off than the Tagadharis.

Again, in the income level, it is observed that Matwalis are far better off than the Tagadharis. On an average, only 24.4% of total income are shared by the Tagadharis while 75.6% of the income are shared by the Matwalis. Historically, it is observed that Tagadharis are latter immigrants who do not have much access to the resources in the plantation. Again, it is seen that Bahun-Chhetris do not have membership in any caste associations which sometimes exert pressures informally on the management for jobs for their members.

At the level of trade union organisations, it is observed that unlike in the past, Matwalis have upper hands. Almost all the

top leaders of both Cinchona Bagan Mazdoor Union (CITU) and Himalayan Plantation Workers Union (GNLF) are hailing from Matwali castes. It is also observed that trade unions are completely new phenomenon for the workers. It is mainly because of the lack of awareness of the trade unionism and non-worker leaders, they appear to be the passive supporters to their trade unions. They seem to be passive because they do not understand the main objectives of procession in which they are attending or paying the subscription to the trade unions. Again, they are passive as hardly they visit trade union offices except in time of emergency. Unlike in the past, there are no caste associations which control everything in the plantation. Whatever the caste associations that have emerged are mainly Matwali cultural organisations to revive their traditional cultural practices only. The traditional village headmen such as Mandal, Karbari, Mukhia etc are not found today. So, whatever the problems arise among the workers are to be solved by the trade unions. The caste associations can not do so as they are not recognised by the management. Neither the leaders of the caste associations are invited by the management to consult regarding the industrial matters. However, excepting in solving disputes arise out of inter-caste marriages, the caste associations do not have any other role in matters like property disputes, land disputes, or any other quarrel which are completely solved by the trade union organisations and management of the plantation industry.

Today, the nature of labour-management relations is of "Mutual Commitment" by which the management tries to consider the problems of the workers amicably. But, in the past, it is enquired that the relation was of "Mutual Compliance" by which the workers had to fight for the safeguard of their interests.

It is interesting to note that the majority of Tagadharis belong to Himalayan Plantation Workers Union (GNLF) while the majority of the Matwalis belong to Cinchona Bagan Mazdoor Union (CITU). Tagadharis support H.P.W.U. because of the historical reason. The term "Gurkha" is associated with the parent body of H.P.W.U. which seems to have affected the Tagadharis who believed that they are the real Gurkha people or the protectors of cows since generations together. The picture is found quite opposite in case of Matwalis who usually support C.I.T.U. led trade union. The ample reason behind this is observed that C.I.T.U. led trade union is supported by the Government of West Bengal and hence they can avail much benefits if they join C.I.T.U. led trade union. In this way, it is found that Cinchona Bagan Mazdoor Union is a Matwali cum management sponsored trade union while Himalayan Plantation Workers Union seems to be the Tagadhari sponsored trade union.

It is also found that due to the stronghold of CITU led trade union, workers as a whole are able to point out the causes of deteriorating conditions of Cinchona plantation which incur a loss of Rs. 8 crore during the last decade. Further, the CITU led trade union has been launching Cinchona Bagan Bachao Abhiyan

(Save Cinchona Movement) in the recent years so that its productivity can be increased by minimising the cost of production involved in the agro-based plantation industry of the country.

III

As regards to the caste system among the Nepalis, it has its varied origin. Bahuns, Thakuris and Chhetris have Indian origin while Matwalis have tribal background of the Nepal Himalayas. Prior to 1769, excepting among the Newars, there was no caste hierarchy in the real sense of the term among the various tribes in Nepal. Following the Indian model, a caste hierarchy was established for the first time in Nepal after 1769. By doing so, a three tier system of caste hierarchy, namely, Tagadhari, Matwali and Untouchable was formed. It was observed that the caste hierarchy was not much appreciated by Matwalis as they were not happy to follow the Brahmanical rites associated with the caste system in Nepal. It was also observed that the discrimination which Tagadharis had to do with untouchables signified no meaning to the Matwalis.

Immigration to the Cinchona plantation brought about a change in the Nepali caste hierarchy. The ascriptive criteria of caste characterised by restriction in commensality and hereditary occupation do not affect the social life of the workers. Above all, the plantation industry does not make any difference between a Bahun and Kami worker in its functional set up.

It is seen that all the Nepali castes have been broadly classified into Tagadhari and Matwali groups. Among the Tagadharis, there are Jharra and Thimaha sub-groups. Similarly, among the Matwalis, there are Setho and Kalo sub-groups. As regards to traditional untouchable castes (Kami, Damai and Sarki), it is observed that the dominant Matwalis of the plantation have absorbed them in their socio-economic life. Secondly, it is also observed that nobody can treat them as untouchables due to the legal protection of the Prohibition of Untouchability Act of Government of India. Thirdly, they along with Lepcha, Bhutia, Sherpa and Dukpa (Scheduled Tribes) are backward castes (Scheduled castes). Prior to 1950, they were simply treated as scheduled tribes (Dash:1947:65). Ritually, like other Matwalis, they use wine and do not wear sacred thread. Occupationally, they occupy the higher posts in the plantation. It is also found that most of the Kalo Matwalis are living in Matwali dominated Dhuras. Lexically, the Tagadharis are called Batho Jats while Matwalis are known as Latto Jats.

It is, however, seen that inspite of changes in the Nepali caste system, caste as a social institution is still persisting. Nobody even among the Nepali Christians has been solely able to eliminate caste title against his name. Again, every individual is known by his caste title in day to day socio-economic life.

By careful observations of their commensal relations, it is apparently observed that the traditional concepts of Pani-Chal-Ne-Jats (Chhut) and Pani-Na-Chal-Ne-Jats (Acchut) in regard to water and foods do not carry much meaning among the Nepalis except among the Tagadhari priests. On the other hand, it is also observed that inspite of changes in the commensal relations, certain aspects of traditional commensal relations are still in vogue. Taking of Kaccha foods (boiled Dal and rice) from other castes is still restricted while observing rituals among all castes. Even a Kami also does not take Kuccha food from a Bahun in such occasion. This is the reason why all castes prepared Puccka foods (Shell Roti, Vegetables, meat etc.) only while observing the rituals today so that all irrespective of caste background can be dinned together in the same table. Inspite of remarkable changes that have taken place in the area of commensal relations among the Nepali castes, Tagadharis are accepted by all as the purest castes. But the question of purity-pollution is found to be disputed since even within the Matwalis each caste feels purer than the others.

It has been observed that the types of family has undergone remarkable changes. In the present setting, under the new forces of changed economy, joint family system has been breaking down resulting into the emergence of nuclear families. Traditionally, their peasant economy demanded joint living and organised effort in the agricultural field. In the present industrial setting only

34.8% of the families have been found to live in the joint families. This trend has characterised the Nepali society to be very much individualistic in nature. Preference for nuclear family emerged more particularly due to the policies of the plantation which provides free quarters to the workers as soon as they are married.

People's attitude towards the average size of family has undergone significant changes. It is observed that every caste has accepted the idea to have 6 to 9 members in the family. Most of the workers do not prefer more than 10 members due to the limited size of quarters. Unlike in the past, monogamy is the common feature of family life of the workers.

Mention has already been made of the roles of family members. There is no rigid compartmentalisation of roles as of the past on the basis of age, sex, and marital status. Even the head of the family whether he is earning member or not helps females to cook food. Before taking decision, females are to compulsorily be consulted. The traditional male dominance in regard to the right to ancestral property has also changed. Even a female, if unmarried, is treated as equal partner in enjoying the ancestral property along with the males. Being an industrial society, both male and female are equated in respect of all aspects of life. Unlike in the traditional society, females also participate freely in the various social activities including those of the trade union. Unlike in the past, a widow can marry

another man of her choice. In the economic front also, the contribution of females is at par with males. This is due to the plantation system which prefer more females than males. The socio-economic mobility of the females is accepted by all except in the question of sexual promiscuity with other males.

Traditionally, caste endogamy was restored by intra-caste marriage by which the couples were to be selected by parents and elders. There is a remarkable change in the marriage pattern and type in the plantation. It is observed that marriage by individual choice rather than sacrament is very popular even in case of intra-caste marriages. This happens because of the common dwelling in the plantation. Again, marriage across the religious sects is a common feature. Due to the cash economy, people prefer less financial involvement in the marriages. The increasing inter-caste marriages (27.0%) is highly influenced by the Matwali culture, education, economic condition and impact of Christianity. Marriage with an untouchable does not incur social degradation in the plantation. It is also observed that inter-caste marriages among the Matwalis do not make any difference as they feel that all of them belong to Matwali group. However, it is also noted that there is an upward mobility in marriages among the Matwalis by marrying Tagadharis while it is found that there is a downward mobility among the Tagadharis in regard to marriages with Matwalis. The traditional type of hypergamy and exchange marriages are not at all found today. The traditional system

of Jat Dandha is also not popular today. Similarly, the various types of traditional marriages such as Jat Bibaha, Ajat Bibaha and Kujat Bibaha are fastly replaced by Sano Jat Bibaha and Thulo Jat Bibaha. In regard to the marriages, certain traditional aspects have still been found today. No Matwali can dare to visit Tagadhari households to negotiate marriages.

Due to migration to the plantation, the duration of performance of various rituals and festivals has also been shortened considerably due to the lack of enough time. However, the basic procedure of performing rituals and festivals has remained more or less Matwali or tribal in character involving animal sacrifices and use of liquor though majority (77.0%) of them are Hindus. It is however observed that differences are there as they follow respective traditions of Tagadharis and Matwalis in regard to the manner of observance of rituals and festivals. Vegetarian items are to be the ritual and festival foods among the Tagadharis. Unlike in traditional society, all castes and tribes participate in death and marriage rituals. In rest of the household rituals, people do not participate unless they are invited by the host household.

The picture is different in case of certain plantation festivals such as Saraswati Puja, Fagua, Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Dasai, Tiwar, Bhanu Jayanti, Christmas, Budha Purnima, Losar, Republic day, Independence Day etc. in which all participate

irrespective of caste, community, religion, sex, creed and age differences. This is due to the common habitation in the plantation industry where besides Nepalis, Bengalis, Biharis and Marwaris also celebrate these festivals. It is also seen that the plantation observes holidays during such festivals. Among the festivals, Dasai is most popular among all castes and communities in which the elders and respected persons of all castes and communities are honoured by receiving Tika (mark of blessing). While in the traditional society, Dasai festival used to be celebrated within a particular caste hamlet only.

The plantation workers having peasant background, had the knowledge of using various herbal plants to cure the patients. This was to be substantiated by the believe of exorcism of Jhankris. By disease, they used to mean the misfortunes caused by some supernatural beings or demons. The use of herbal plants and Jhankris continued unaverted here even after their migration till 1950. But after 1950, due to deforestation, the herbal plants disappeared. Yet the existence of Jhankris remained in tact among the Nepali castes as Jhankris were considered as the means to cure patients. Unlike in Nepal, use of a particular Jhankri belonged to a caste received severe challenge due to the non-availability of the professional caste Jhankris. Jhankri as profession had no place in the plantation due to industrial character of the plantation and the establishment of multi caste labour Dhuras. Thus all castes employ Jhankri no matter whether he belongs to the same caste

or other castes. The traditional classification of Jhankris based on caste background such as Bijwa, Phedangma, Bongthing, Dhani-Jhankri etc has been simply replaced by a single term "Jhankri".

It is observed that inspite of the establishment of Mungpoo Hospital, the workers first consult Jhankris when the patients are in the initial stage of illness and as soon as the patients become serious they rush up to Darjeeling to consult doctors. Caste wise, it is seen that Tagadharis give more emphasis for doctors than the Matwalis who consult Jhankris first and then to doctors.

Maintenance of sound health and hygiene is very vague among the workers. Though the drinking water is supplied by the plantation, many people take drinking water from streams and jhoras. Again, hardly they take bath everyday. Their trousers are not clean regularly. It is also observed that 50.0% of the income are spent after liquor. Plantation society is characterised by Bhatti Culture in which most of the workers are found edicted to local wine known as Jnar/Rakshi.

The foregoing account thus shows the changes in some aspects of socio-economic life of the Cinchona plantation workers on the one hand and continuity of some traditional cultural traits on the other. However, of the two groups, Matwalis have been found to be better adapted to the plantation system than the Tagadharis. The study paves the way for further empirical investigation on the Tagadhari-Matwali dychotomy in other agro-based industries of the region.