

CHAPTER - II

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2.1 Tea Industry of West Bengal:

Tea is the only major industry in the Northern part of West Bengal comprises Darjeeling Hilly area, the plains of Darjeeling district, known as Terai region and the Dooars region of Jalpaiguri district. Apart from these, during the period of recent past some area of Cooch Behar district, adjacent to Dooars region and in some parts of West Dinajpur which is considered now as Terai region have been included in the tea map of West Bengal where small cultivators have been established tea gardens (Tea statistics, 2005-06).

In North Bengal two types of Tea gardens are established, the first one which are recognized as “organized tea estates” where they have a factory and the workers are protected by the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. In these tea estates the workers are generally resided at labour colony which is situated within the garden area.

Another type of gardens are known as small tea sectors. These un-organized sectors do not follow Plantation Labour Act, 1951 and the workers are generally temporary. They plucked tea leave are sold mainly either to Bout Leaf Factories or to the organized tea estates. These sectors have been gradually occupying importance in tea industry of West Bengal.¹

2.2 About Tea Producing Zone of West Bengal:-

Darjeeling:- The district of Darjeeling lies between 26° 3’ and 27° 13’ North latitude and between 87° 59’ and 88° 53’ East longitude. It contains a total area of 1.164 square miles. The history of Darjeeling dates to the era, when, the present area of Darjeeling was buffer state between Nepal and Bhutan.

In; shape the district resembles an irregular triangle of which the apex projects into British territory, while the base rests on Sikkim. It is a frontier district, running up between Nepal and Bhutan and stretching from the plains of Bengal on the south to the state of Sikkim on the north. The most important factors in the production of tea of good quality are soil, weather, blights and management. Being



a mountainous district Darjeeling contains many varieties of soil including the most suitable loamy soil, full of nitrogen for the growth of tea. Darjeeling tea is famous for its excellent flavour and charming golden colour. But the quality produced varies greatly in different parts of the district and varies also remarkably at different seasons of the year on the same estates.

Terai Region: The tea growing belt of Terai is situated at 26° 28' N latitude and 88° 48' E longitude. It is a narrow strip of land lying below the Himalayan foothills and extends up to Bihar boarder. The north Terai is situated at the base of Himalayan range and the topography is that of foothills with steep radiant, while the south and western Terai is plain. The region receives an annual average rainfall of more than 3000 mm, which is unevenly distributed. The soil in north Terai is sandy loam with stony patches. In south and west Terai the soils are sandy loam in texture.

So the entire foothills of North Eastern part of Himalayan range is popularly known as Terai, which includes Siliguri Sub-division and the surrounding plain areas of Darjeeling district. In Terai both kinds of 'tea, Orthodox and C.T.C. are produced.²

Dooars Region:- The Dooars region of Jalpaiguri district is situated at the feet of the Himalayas in the sub-mountain region. This word owes its origin to the Hindustani word "Dwar", meaning gateway, as this area is the gateway of Bhutan. This area was formerly a part of Bhutan before being annexed by the British in 1864 – 65. (Hunter 1872:224). The area annexed consisted of the Western Dooars in Jalpaiguri district. At present Eastern Dooars has no existence because it is now a part of Goalpara district in Assam. The Dooars region now comprises that area which runs along the foot of the Bhutan hills bounded by the river Teesta on the west and the river Sankos on the east. It is a flat strip of land about 22 miles broad and nearly 200 miles long, bounded by Bhutan and Darjeeling district in the North and Cooch Behar district and Baikunthapur forest in the South.³

2.3. Growth and Development of Tea Industry in West Bengal:-

In West Bengal the cultivation of tea started to develop during the late 19th century by the European Planters. Realizing the suitable geographical conditions the British planters selected Darjeeling hill area for cultivation of tea. Dr. Campbell, the

then superintendent of Darjeeling planted tea seeds, probably China variety around his bungalow compound on experimental basis during 1840. This step of Dr. Campbell got success and opened the avenues and opportunities for interested planters for cultivation of tea. Government at that time also took proper initiatives and inspired the desired persons by distributing seeds and by allotting lands on easy conditions for the development of tea industry. As a result, other prominent figures of that time, such as, Dr. Withecombe, the Civil Surgeon and Major Crommelin. One of the Engineers also came forward with great care and interest for the success of this industry, by cultivating tea plants in Darjeeling.

2.3.1. Development of Tea Industry in Darjeeling Hill and Terai Region:-

After passing over the considerable period of time by the year 1856, the industry began to develop on an extensive scale and from experimental stage it gradually started to shift as a commercial enterprise. In that year the Aluabari Tea Estate was opened by the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company and another one on the Lebong Spur by the Darjeeling Land Mortgage Bank.

In the year 1859 Dr. Brougham started the Dhutaria Garden and between 1860 and 1964 four gardens were established by the Darjeeling Tea Company at Ging, Ambutia, Takdah and Phubsering, Lebong Tea Company established two tea gardens at Takvar and Badamtam. The other estates, such as, Pandam, Steinthal and famous Makaibari were also started operation in the early period of history of tea industry in West Bengal and the tea industry in Darjeeling had flourished from one corner to another. Having realized the bright future of the industry the planters started to turn their attention to the plain area of Darjeeling district and the tea industry began to grow in Terai region in the plains of Darjeeling. In 1862, the first tea garden of Terai was established at Champta, near Khaprail, by Mr. James White, who had previously planted out the Singel Estate near Kurseong, which is still one of the important tea gardens of Darjeeling. Tea industry started in the hilly area of Darjeeling in 1856 and by the end of 1866, within the period of 10 years; there were at least 39 tea estates under the cultivation area of 10,000 acres and an output of 433000 lbs. of tea. ⁴

Table No. 2.1, present the picture of growth and development of tea industry in Darjeeling district during the period of 1861 to 1951.

Table No. 2.1

Year	No. of Tea Gardens	Total area in acres	Approx., Yield (in lbs)	Average yield (in lbs/acre).
1861	22	3251	42600	13
1869	55	10769	1278869	119
1874	113	18888	3927911	208
1885	175	38499	9090298	236
1891	177	45585	10910487	239
1895	186	48692	11714500	241
1901	170	51724	13535537	262
1905	148	50618	12447471	246
1911	156	51488	14250615	277
1921	168	59005	14080946	239
1931	169	61178	20496481	335
1941	136	63173	24815216	393
1951	138	62580	29238499	468

Source:

1. Data compiled from Hunter, W. W. "A Statistical Account of Bengal" Vol. X (Re-print in India) New Delhi, 1974, P.165.
2. Dash, A.J., Bengal Gazetteers, Darjeeling, 1947, Page-114.
3. O'Malley, L.S.S. – Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling 1907 Logos Press, New Delhi, P-74.
4. Mitra, A.I K. Census of India, 1951, Vol. VI, Part! A (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagar), Report, Calcutta 1953, P. 266.

Table No. 2.1 reveals that in 1861 there were 22 tea gardens in Darjeeling district covering an area of 3251 acres and produced 42600 lbs. of tea, in the year 1869 the number of tea gardens increased to 55 under the production area of 10769 acres and the quantity of production increased to 1278869 lbs. Since then till the year 1895 there had been an increasing trend in the number of tea estates, area under tea and quantity of production. In 1901 the number of tea estates reduced to

170 though the area under cultivation increased to 51724 acres though the area under cultivation increased to 51724 acres. In 1905 the number of tea estates came down to 148 and the area under tea also reduced by 1106 acres. It is evident from the table that between the period of 1895 and 1965 there had been little extension of cultivation area. It may be due to the fact that all the suitable land available for tea had already taken up, while the number of garden had been reduced due to amalgamation of several estates. Out of 148 estates, 116 estates were established in Darjeeling Thana, which includes Kalimpong hill and Kurseong Thana and the remaining 32 estates were located in Terai region under the jurisdiction of Siliguri Thana.⁵

2.3.2. Beginning of the Tea Industry in Dooars:-

After the Dooars was annexed from Bhutan in 1865, the tea planters of Darjeeling turned their attention to explore possibilities of growing tea in this region of Jalpaiguri district. Though the planters knew about the disease of malaria and 'Black Water Fever' (Kalazar) in that region, they realized the great potentiality about the production of tea in the Dooars region.

According to the District Gazetteer of Jalpaiguri the first tea garden of Dooars was opened at Gazoldoma in 1874 by a Darjeeling Tea Company. By 1876 as many as 13 tea gardens sprang up with an area of 331.03 hectares and production of 13.39 thousand Kg. The year 19\877 was remarkable in the history of Indian tea industry, because for the first time an Indian had taken lease for the purpose of cultivation of tea, and it was Jaldhaka Grant. Five years after the first tea garden was started by the British Planters, a few Bengali lawyers and clerks of Jalpaiguri formed the first Indian tea company in the year 1879. Since then many more Indian owned gardens were established in the district. After the sixties the British owned Sterling Companies started to dispose of their concern to Indians.⁶

From the following table the growth and development of tea industry in Dooars in the early stage may be stated as below:

Table No. 2.2.

Year	No. of Tea Gardens	Area under Tea (Hect)	Quantity of Production (Th. Kg).	Average size of Garden (Hect)	Yield (Kg./Hect).
1874	1	-	-	-	-
1876	13	331.03	13.39	25.46	40
1881	55	2521.19	465.89	45.84	185
1892	182	15613.96	8291.05	85.79	531
1901	235	30919.14	14101.07	131.57	456
1907	180	32916.27	20500.97	182.87	623
1911	191	36769.27	21963.24	192.54	597
1921	131	45603.14	19634.74	348.12	430
1931	151	53448.36	30140.18	353.96	564
1941	189	53325.34	42911.86	282.14	805
1951	158	54609.00	63944.00	345.62	1171
1959	154	52711.41	61554.00	342.28	1187

*All information for the year 1874 has not found.

Source: J. F. Granning's Gazetteer of the District of Jalpaiguri (from the year 1876 to 1907).

For other: Publication by the Tea Board of India (Page 22), (Production of Tea in India, with special reference to Dooars) by H. N. Dwibedi.

It is evident from the table that the tea industry of Dooars experienced a rapid growth between the beginning year and the year 1901, when the number of gardens increased from a single unit to 235. After that the industry witnessed a fluctuating trend. One interesting observation is that there was a decline in the number of the gardens from 235 in 1901 to 180 in 1907 and again from 191 in 1911 to 131 in 1921 with no reduction in area under tea, the reasons behind in 1911 to 131 in 1921 with no reduction in area under tea. The reasons behind this may be due to amalgamation of different small units under a single big unit to enjoy the benefit of greater economy. Another notable point is that between 1931 and 1941, there was a considerable improvement in the number of tea gardens with no increase in area

under tea. The great depressions of 1930s perhaps discourage of the tea planters to expand the production areas and the existing tea areas were fragmented due to entry of new entrepreneurs.⁷

2.3.3. Development and Growth during the period 1951-1990:-

The tea industry in West Bengal had expanded mainly in Terai region during the period 1951 and 1990. In Dooars and Darjeeling hill area the overall development was not significant. From the following information the growth and expansion of tea industry during the said period is presented.

Table No. 2.3

Number of Tea Estates in West Bengal during 1951-1990

Year	1951	1961	1971	1981	1985	1987	1990
Darjeeling	NA	99	97	103	102	102	102
Terai (a)	NA	47	48	48	63	69	82
Dooars (b)	158	155	151	154	158	159	163
Total West Bengal	296	301	296	305	323	330	347

(a) Including West Dinajpur (b) Including Cooch Behar

Source: Tea statistics (1990-1991), Published by Tea Board of India, Calcutta.

It is evident from the Table No. 2.3 that during the period 1951 to 1990 the total number of tea estates increased in West Bengal by a feeble number of 51 with most of it being established in Terai region. In Dooars during this period only 8 new tea gardens were established whereas in Darjeeling hill area it was just 3 in number. The stagnancy in the rise in number of tea gardens may be non-availability of suitable land for cultivation of tea.

Area under Production of Tea:-

Table No. 2.4

Area under Tea gardens during the period 1951 to 1990 in West Bengal

(Area in Hectare)

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1985	1987	1990
Darjeeling	16569	18605	18245	19239	1985	20012	20065
Terai (a)	8402	9344	10769	11314	19804	13096	13345
Dooars (b)	54609	54756	49485	63418	12395	66422	67760
All West Bengal	79580	82705	88499	93971	98015	99530	101170

(a) Including West Dinajpur (b) Including Cooch Behar

Source: Tea Statistics (1990-91), Published by Tea Board of India, Calcutta.

Table No., 2.4 reveals that the area under tea in West Bengal increased by nearly 27 per cent during the period 1951 and 1990, indicating an annual growth rate of less than one percent. During this period 35 new tea gardens have been established in Terai region. Therefore, area under tea increased by nearly 54 per cent in Terai, indicating an annual average growth rate of 1.6%, Whereas in Dooars between 1951 and 1990 the area under tea increased by almost 24 per cent and in Darjeeling by 21 per cent respectively indicating an annual average growth rate of 0.54 and 0.47 percent only.

Table No. 2.5

Quantity of Production of Tea in West Bengal during the period 1951-1990

(Qt. Th. Kg)

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1985	1987	1990
Darjeeling	7839	10107	10293	12226	12921	12099	14499
Terai (a)	6376	9253	12954	15782	22494	21289	21130
Dooars (b)	63994	66898	80840	100251	121956	116229	114124
Total West Bengal	78158	86258	104087	128259	157371	149617	149735

(a) Including West Dinajpur (b) Including Cooch Behar.

Source:- Tea Statistics (1990-1991), Published by the Tea Board of India, Calcutta.

It is evident from the above table that in Terai region quantity of production decreased between the period 1985 and 1990. On the other hand in Dooars and Darjeeling hill region production increased.

Table No. 2.6
Area under Tea in West Bengal during 1991-1999
(Area in Hectare)

	1991	1994	1996	1999	Growth Rate
Darjeeling	20085	19280	17551	17604	(-)1.63
Terai (a)	13783	12908	15351	20118	4.84
Dooars (b)	68054	67779	69748	69708	0.30
All West Bengal	101922	99967	102650	107430	0.66

(a) Including West Dinajpur (b) Including Cooch Behar

Source: - Tea Statistics (2003-04 and 2005-06), Published by Tea Board of India, Calcutta.

It is evident from the above table that the area under tea had expanded maximum in Terai region indicating an growth rate of 4.84%. But the growth rate of Dooars region was simply negligible. Darjeeling hill area witnessed a negative growth rate during the period 1991-1999.

In India the liberalized economic policy was advocated in the year 1991. So various changes started to take place in economical and social sector. The above table shows huge growth took place in the area under tea in Terai region but in Dooars growth rate was simply negligible and in Darjeeling the growth rate was negative. As a whole there was no considerable expansion of area under tea during 1991 and 1999 in West Bengal.

Table No. 2.7
Number of Tea Estate during 1991 to 1999 in West Bengal

	1991	1994	1996	1999	Growth Rate (%)
Darjeeling	102	88	80	85	(-)2.25
Terai (a)	82	92	182	834	33.63
Dooars (b)	163	168	191	532	15.93
All West Bengal	347	348	453	1451	19.58
All India					

(a) Including Dinajpur (b) Including Cooch Behar

Source:- Tea Statistics (2003-04 and 2005-06), Published by Tea Board of India, Calcutta.

It reveals from the above table that in both the regions of Dooars and Terai number of tea estates increased considerably between 1996 and 1999. It is mainly due to establishment of small tea gardens in the non conventional area of West Dinajpur and Coochbehar districts (Tea Board of India Report ,2003-2004).

Table No. 2.8
Production of Tea during 1991-1999 in West Bengal

(Qt. Th. Kg.)

	1991	1994	1996	1999
Darjeeling	13932	11092	10614	8653
Terai (a)	23391	24636	28901	42521
Dooars (b)	177893	123097	125253	124801
All West Bengal	155216	158825	164768	175975

(a) Including West Dinajpur (b) Including Cooch Behar.

Source:- Tea Statistics (2003-2004 and 2005-2006), Published by Tea Board of India, Calcutta.

During the period between 1991 and 1999 production of tea had increased by a huge percentage of 81.78 in Terai region. But in Dooars the opposite thing happened. It may be due to closure and abandonment of a number of tea estates in the Dooars region the production decreased in that said period.(Reported by DBITA) .

Tea industry plays very important role in the economy of North Bengal. Huge number of labour force are employed in this industry. A large number of people are also indirectly related to this industry to earn their livelihood. The socio- economic conditions of the people of North Bengal are greatly influenced by this industry. After introduction of liberalization and open market economy the tea industry of India as well as the tea industry of West Bengal have been experiencing many changes. In the next chapter we have tried to throw some lights on the problems and prospects on the tea industry of North Bengal as well as on the large number of tea labours.

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