

Locating National Economic Identity

Tea plantation industry in India was originally initiated and developed by European enterprises¹. While quite a large number of rupee companies were registered in India, the majority of the tea companies were Sterling companies². But that did not mean that all of the resources of these companies were brought from Britain, sometime the bulk of capital was also collected from India out of the earning firms managed and controlled by the Europeans³. For instance, we can mention the history of Hansqua and Gayaganga Tea Estate in Darjeeling Terai and Ellenbarrie and Manabarrie Tea Estate in Jalpaiguri Duars. The first two tea estates in Darjeeling Terai mentioned above were established by a British Planter. The Hansqua Tea Estate was established by Arthur Currie in the 1865. In the same year the Sannyasisthan Tea Estate was also opened. Section No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the Hansqua Tea Estate were initially planted out with some hybrid tea seeds which comprised of 165.75 acres. These areas had since been replanted in between the years 1913 and 1959. Mr. Currie sold this property to Messrs R.D. Hamilton and C. F. A. Denev in 1913. D. F. Clive was the manager of this garden from 1913 to 1917. During 1930 to 1920 the area was further extended by 350.98 acres. Following some misunderstanding, tea planter Denev sold his interest to Hamilton in 1916 and left to his own country England in the very next year. Hamilton also established another Tea Estate namely Gayaganga Tea Estate in the year 1916 and appointed his nephew A. Robertson as the manager of the garden. Since then Hamilton along with his nephew continued to reside at Gayaganga Tea Estate. The green leaves of both the garden were manufactured at the old Hansqua factory which was situated at present side until new factories were constructed at both the garden in the year 1926. Duncan brothers formed the Hansqua Tea Co. Ltd. and purchased the Hansqua Tea Estate garden from A. Robertson in 1934 along with the Gayaganga Tea Estate⁴. Ellenbarrie and Manabarrie Tea Estate in Jalpaiguri Duars were established by a Calcutta Bank manager, a Darjeeling planter and a sub – manager of the Land Mortgage Bank. This two tea estates later came to be managed by Duncan Brothers. Hope Tea Estate was also started by the manager of a Darjeeling garden⁵.

Along with the European enterprise in the tea plantation industry in Himalayan and sub – Himalayan region of Bengal, side by side the Bengali entrepreneurs came from various parts of undivided Bengal also played an important role in this field indeed⁶. The bright prospects of employment in the tea gardens in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri welcomed large number of immigrant educated Bengali from various parts of Eastern and Southern Bengal⁷. Some of them later transform them as tea planter. However, within just four years of the inception of the tea plantation enterprise in Duars, a Bengali Muslim namely Munshi Rahim Baksh came from Noakhali district of undivided Bengal and working as a peshkar or head assistant at the Deputy Commissioner's office took a grant of 728 acres and established the first Indian garden namely the Jaldhacca Tea Estate⁸. Moreover, under the patronage of Bhagban Chandra Bose, the then Deputy Magistrate of Jalpaiguri along with the initiatives taken by some immigrant Bengali lawyers and resourceful persons the first Indian joint stock tea company, Jalpaiguri Tea Co. Ltd., was started in 1879⁹. At this point, it will not be out of relevance to allude to the episode of struggle of Jagadish Chandra Bose, a few years later, to get due recognition in the World of Science against the ill motives of the colonial administrators. In this battle Sir J. C. Bose obtained the support from the Indian newspapers and Indian thinkers. In fact it is worthy to mention that this phenomenon add a new dimension in propagating the national feelings this struggle is known in history as 'Bose War'. Rabindranath, Nivedita and R.C. Dutt considered Bose's unique success as glory of the Indian nation. Swami Vivekananda had great respect for Sir J. C. Bose. We can get this from a letter written by Swamiji himself. The saga of Jagadish Chandra Bose may be contextualised with that feeling of senior Bose that the Indians should come forward in the tea plantation industry side by side with the white tea planters. This feeling obviously inspired his son in evolving a sense of national pride since his childhood. Amazingly historical events may sometimes be circumscribed by unusual instances like this¹⁰. However, the high watermark of Indian entrepreneurship in Duars was a period which roughly stretched from 1910 till about 1930. Most of the Indian – owned companies had their offices in Jalpaiguri town, some a few outside the district like Siliguri, Darjeeling hill and Alipurduar town¹¹.

A list of Bengali entrepreneurs shows that the Indian entrepreneurship was much a Muslim entrepreneurship as a Hindu entrepreneurship. There was no sectarian

community component in this entrepreneurship. Many of the Indian ventures such as Anjuman Tea Co. (1889), Ramjhora Tea Co. (1907) were sponsored both by some of the leading Bengali Hindu and Muslim planters¹². In this respect it is important to mention that we have used the term Indian, in the little, though in practice we find only the Bengali community. In this field of entrepreneurial activity at least, in the absence of other Indian communities, the Bengalis alone pioneered. Hence the two terms Indian and Bengali are to be taken as identical in this study. However, they started with very small capitals which they could gather. Practically it was an association of poor men determined to do a big thing¹³. The people who had cash money at hand to start a tea garden did not hesitate to enter into this venture. The early Bengali entrepreneurs were inspired by a sort of adventurous feeling or sometime by national spirit. An additional factor, it seems probable, had acted in favour of the enterprise by the natives was the problem of getting service of the Indian people, more specifically of the Bengali people. There happened so many incidents of humiliation, suspension and discharge of some of the dignified personalities of the then Bengal. Those incidents, it may be assumed, had functioned as an eye opener of the educated and sensitive people of that province and let them find out new ways and means¹⁴. Rangalal Bandopadhyay, the well – known poet was suspended from his service for trivial reason by the Governor Campbell in 1873¹⁵. Another victim of anti – Bengali feeling of the later was poet Satish Chandra Dutta who had resigned from his post due to humiliation. So, many incidents revealing the real intention of the Imperial Government did occur in those years that the educated Bengali young men could hardly conceive of getting a satisfactory assignment in the government service. Satish Chandra Dutta published a series of writings on this issue under the title “Reminiscences of a Kerani’s Life” in the Mookenje’s Magazine’s of Sambhu Chandra Mukhopadhyay in between June 1873 to June 1874¹⁶.

The dazzling appearance of the Bengali entrepreneurs in this economic venture was challenged by the European planter’s tumultuously¹⁷. “ The dominance of modern industry by European business houses before the First World War was supported and reinforced by a whole set of administrative, economic and political arrangements within India. The European businessmen very consciously set themselves apart from native businessmen; they claimed a cultural and racial affinity with the British rulers of India which was denied to the Indians who might compete

with them.”¹⁸ All this afforded European businessmen a substantial and systematic advantage over their Indian rivals in India. This position was also same in Jalpaiguri tea enterprise. It is true that since the beginning of the twentieth century the Indian tea gardens were enrolled as members of the monopolistic “Dooars Planters’ Association (DPA)” because during the period it was not easy for a native planter to avail the privilege of the War time profit market without taking the membership of this Association. With the outbreak of the First World War in Europe there was a rapid expansion of the market as the war office in Britain began making large purchases. This situation was surely culminated in the process of unprecedented augmentation of Indian membership in “Dooars Planters’ Association (DPA)”. Since then the number of Indian planters as a member began to rise surprisingly. In the year 1917 it was rose up to ten. A.C. Sen was the first Indian who was allowed to be elected as the representative of the Indian members of this Association. In a letter written by notable tea planter Moulavi Rahaman in October 1917 he expressed his regret that “in the past not a single tender from the Indian planters were accepted by the War office” and hence he requested the Chairman of DPA that “Indian people may not be deprived from Government patronage” when the Government brought tea in future for the civil population or for the War office. In spite of that cordial behaviour approached from the Indian planters, the white tea planters always maintained a racial difference with the Indian planters to a large extent. Till 1915 the membership in “Dooars Planters Association” (DPA) was not made open as a whole to their Indian counterparts. There was a proverb prevailed that “Indians and Dogs are not allowed”¹⁹. A formidable hurdle faced by the Indian entrepreneurs was the difficulty in getting lands for the plantation. By 1910 all the lands were leased out only to the Europeans. Under the circumstances, the Indian planters had to seek jote lands for plantation. These lands were left uncultivated because of unsuitability for paddy or jute cultivation. But in 1914 the provincial Government under the pressure received from the British planters prohibited clubbing of Jote lands in a ring fence for the purpose of tea plantation. It meant that no land was available for the Indians for opening up new tea gardens²⁰. Another major hurdle was that under the European – controlled financial and banking system, institutional finance was not available to the Indian planters. As a result, they sometime procured money by pawning family ornaments. The family – centred management of the Indian companies was often of help in tiding over difficulties. This resulted in the introduction of the Indians owned financial institutions namely the

Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation and Bengal Dooars Bank a few years later. The policy in regard to statutory cess introduced by the Government in the early years of the century for tea propaganda purposes also bore the marks of discrimination²¹. In short, the socio – political and economic environment was not suitable for the growth of Indian entrepreneurship. On the other hand the whole of India was then under the flame of independence movement; old and young every one being deeply moved with the Swadeshi emotion and sentiment, called for quieting India out of the British crown. Now the Indian planters began to be intimately associated with the Indian independence movement along with the greater society from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean. They felt a strong desire to be identified with their own social exclusiveness blended with Indian heritage, nationalistic ethos and Indianisation of the trade. The ‘Divide and Rule Policy’ of the British Raj always endeavoured to frustrate the Indian planters. Thus the Indian planters suffered a long way and at least, their undaunted will force surpassed the articulated hindrance and got them united with national consolidation. It resulted in the formation of various Associations owned by the Indian planters only during the British – Raj²².

It was in the year 1915 when the red letter day came out after a long wait, when the “Indian Tea Planters’ Association” (ITPA) took birth under the earnest patronage of several renowned Indian tea planters like Tarini Prasad Ray, Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, Aminur Rahaman, Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, Rai Jay Govinda Guha Bahadur, Rai Bahadur Joy Chandra Saha and several others. In this context, however, it is important to mention here that Sir Rajendra Nath Mukharjee, Kt., Senior Partner of Messrs. Martin, Burn Ltd. Calcutta was the brainchild behind the formation of this Association. He was said to have requested the Bengali tea planters of Jalpaiguri town to constitute a council of their own which would safeguard their interests in future. The first signboard of the ITPA was hanged by Jyotish Chandra Sanyal on the building of the Gopalpur Tea Company.

Indian Tea Planters’ Association (ITPA) was an organisation of Indian section for the growers of tea in North – East India. With the establishment of ITPA as a trade umbrella the Indian planters received a formidable momentum both in terms of bargaining power, group cohesion on the one hand and growth of the Indianised tea industry with rapidity on the other. Its establishment and development synchronises with the expansion of Indian capital and management in an industry which was

wholly non – Indian in its inception and which notwithstanding steadily increasing Indianisation for about a century still continues to be predominantly non – Indian. Once ITPA started functioning, the subsequent expansion of Indian section in tea was phenomenal and it was very largely influenced by the strength and solidarity of the Indian growers united in the association ²³.

In 1915 Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, a pleader of Jalpaiguri who was connected with a few companies made a proposal that Indian managed tea companies should form their own association for safeguarding the legitimate interests of Indian planters. Sri Sanyal's proposal received enthusiastic support from the planters of Jalpaiguri many of whom were the pioneers in Indian tea industry. The first formal meeting of these leaders was held at the residence of planter Tarini Prasad Ray where discussion regarding the formation of this body took place for the first time. The second meeting took place at the residence of Nawab Khan Bahadur Rahim Baksh where the association was registered under the Section 2 of Act XXI of 1860. The first chairman of the Indian Tea Planters' Association was Tarini Prasad Ray; Aminur Rahaman as the vice – chairman and Jyotish Chandra Sanyal as the Honourable Secretary. Next and subsequent annual general meetings till the year 1945 were held in the hall of Jalpaiguri Institute. In between the years 1946 to 1949 meetings were held in the Arya Natya Samaj Hall and in the Jalpaiguri Club. The Association's office was shifted to its own building on 26th January, 1950; since that year the annual general meetings have been held in the Jogesh memorial Hall of this building. The first meeting of the Association consisted of members mentioned below –

Ray Joy Govinda Guha Bahadur, kumud Nath Karmakar, Annada Charan Sen, Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, Trailokya Nath Moulik, Sureswar Sanyal, Purna Chandra Ray, Moulavi Waliur Rahaman ²⁴.

Brindaban Chandra Karmakar, Secretary of Dheklapara Tea Co. Ltd was appointed as clerk. He served in an honorary capacity for the first three years of his appointment. The association started with only ten tea companies. These are as follows –

Gopalpur Tea Co. Ltd., Jalpaiguri Tea Co. Ltd, Anjuman Tea Co. Ltd., Atiabari Tea Co. Ltd., Northern Bengal Tea Corporation Ltd., Katalguri Tea Co.

Ltd., Debpara Tea Co. Ltd., Dheklapara Tea Co. Ltd., Ramjhora Tea Co. Ltd., Palashbari Tea Co. Ltd.

It is interesting to say that in those days there were at least 24 tea companies in Jalpaiguri town but only 10 became the founder member of the association. Even the companies run under the management of Nawab Musharruf Hossain hesitated to join in the initial stages, though they all joined years afterwards. In this respect the main credit went to Jogesh Chandra Ghosh who always endeavoured to bring new tea companies into this body. However, at first the rate of subscription of the new association in 1915 was Rs. 5 per one hundred acres only. In the third annual general meeting of the association held on 3rd October, 1918 the rules and memorandum of the association drawn up by a sub – committee were accepted. The association was registered under the Societies Registration Act (Act xxi of 1860) on 21st January 1919. The office was at first located at Gopalpur House; later to suit the convenience of the clerk – in – charge, B.C. Karmakar, the office was shifted to a room of the building of Jotedar’s Banking and Trading Corporation Ltd., where the office of the Dheklapara Tea Co. Ltd was housed ²⁵.

The Association came into limelight in Indian tea industry in 1922. In that year the association submitted a memorandum and directly represented its case before the Royal Commission on Labour as Whitley Commission. Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, Biraj Kumar Banarjee, Bhaba Kinkar Banarjee met the commission at Debpara Tea Estate. The commission was highly impressed with the representations made by the association as well as by the welfare arrangements for workers which they saw at Debpara Tea Estate ²⁶. Moreover, due to the outstanding personality of Joghsh Chandra Ghosh a seat was awarded to ITPA in Royal Tea Estate Commission and Ambika Charan Majumder, the then manager of Ambari Tea Estate joined as member in ‘X’ committee of the “Dooars Planters’ Association” ²⁷.

Under the care of Dr. G.N. Dey, the arrangement of health and sanitation of the medical Board formed at Debpara tea estate under the leadership of Tarini Prasad Ray and Jay Govinda Guha. The Whitley Commission highly complemented the Association for its labour welfare activities. An achievement that raised the prestige of the association was the establishment of a medical school at Jalpaiguri. It was the brainchild of Jyotish Chandra Sanyal. It was soon felt that the help of the non

– Indian planters was essential for the fruition of the project. Jogesh Chandra Ghosh was friendly with Sir Lancelot Travers, a member of Dooars Planter's Association (D.P.A.). In 1921 Lord Ronaldshay, Governor of Bengal visited Gopalpur Tea Estate. This was first visit of a British Governor to an Indian Tea Estate and this incident brought Sir Lancelot into more intimate touch with Jogesh Chandra Ghosh who succeeded in interesting Sir Lancelot in the project of a medical school. The main objective was not only to give better service to the public of Jalpaiguri district and other districts of the then Rajshahi division but also remove the dearth of doctors in tea areas. It resulted in the formation of Jackson Medical School in Jalpaiguri in 1930. This association had three medical groups having headquarters at Atiabari, Gopalpur and Kalabari tea estates²⁸.

ITPA also protested against the order issued in 1914 that stopped the formation of new estates in Government Khas Mahal in Jalpaiguri; when K.C. Dey, I.C.S. Board of Revenue visited Dooars in 1924 ITPA presented him a memorandum protesting against the order. The apparent justification of the ban was that the extension of tea would lead shrinkage of paddy and jute acreages and also to deforestation, but the real objective was to prevent Indians having an increasing number of tea gardens. K.C. Dey was satisfied with the contention of ITPA which resulted in withdrawal of the band. This was a great achievement of I.T.P.A. and the immediate result was the opening of Batabari Tea Co. Ltd sponsored by Khan Bahadur Mukhlesur Rahaman and Jadavpur Tea Co. Ltd by Makhan Lal Chakrabarty in 1925. The Association came into prominence in 1931 when a conference for improvement of industries was held at Simla where the Association was represented by Jogesh Chandra Ghosh²⁹.

From the early thirties the association began to play an important role in a wider field. In 1932, Debesh Chandra Ghosh (commonly known as D.C. Ghosh), its honorary secretary, was one of the Indian non – official representatives at the Ottawa Conference. The Association also secured its representation on the Tea Cess Committee and the International Tea Committee. Moreover, the subscription of ITPA was low which attracted the Indian proprietors to join with this association. Thus its membership grew rapidly in the years before the Second World War³⁰.

During the tea crisis of 1932 Mr. T.C. Crawford, chairman of Indian Tea Association held a meeting with the members of ITPA in the hall of Jotedar's Bank building and it was resolved that in that meeting that the tea industry as a whole should limit production and cultivation of tea at least for some years and try to expand the home and external markets. It resulted in the formation of International Tea Committee and Market Expansion Board in 1933 and the passing of Tea Control Act by the Government of India.

In 1942 B.C. Ghosh (Biren Chandra Ghosh), Honourable Additional Secretary of the Association took the initiative for starting the Eastern Dooars and the Western Dooars Branches of ITPA consequently, under the guidance of B.C. Ghosh that by January 1950 the construction of ITPA's building with Jogesh Memorial Hall was completed. For the purpose of general supervision of all the departments and also giving advisory services to members on legal and administrative matters, the post of the chief Stipendiary officer of the Association was created in 1946. Kunjalal Chakrabarty was appointed to this post.

With the expansion of Association's activities, a branch office was set up at 9, Ezra Street, Calcutta in order to give prompt and efficient service to its members. S.K. Banarjee, Hony. Jt. Secretary of the Association played an important role behind its formation. To improve the quality of teas produced in their gardens the association established a Tea Research Centre at Malbazar in the Dooars in 1961 by name "Dooars Tea Research Institute" under the auspicious leadership of B.C. Ghosh. The opening ceremony of the institute was inaugurated by the then Chief Minister of West Bengal DR. B.C. Roy on 8th April 1961. The institute during its long span of two years of existence rendered invaluable service to the member gardens. In the year 1963 under the initiatives of Manubhai Shah, the then Commerce Minister of India the Tea Research association opened up a unit at Nagrakata. It often really difficult for the garden managers to come to Jalpaiguri for taking valuable advises. By thinking so, a branch office of the Association was opened out namely Dooars Branch ITPA in late 1960s and it still dedicating services to its member gardens.

ITPA has also served as a focal centre of cultural advancement of the population of the Jalpaiguri district. Handsome contributions from tea companies canalised through the association led to the establishment of many educational

institutions like Ananda Chandra College, Jalpaiguri Polytechnic College, Jalpaiguri Engineering College³¹. ITPA represented in the minimum Wages Committee constituted under Minimum Wages Act, 1948 and for the first time prescribed the minimum wages for tea garden workers of West Bengal in the year 1951. Its executive members represented the Tea Board both as a member of the same as well as in other respected capacities. Tea industrialist B.C. Ghosh acted as the non – official Chairman of the Tea Board for some time. In the International Tea Committee D. C. Ghosh represented ITPA for two successive terms. Since the formation of Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations a federal structure of the Tea Producer’s Associations of North – Eastern India, ITPA acted as the convener of the Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations West Bengal Branch.

So we may say that though Jalpaiguri appears as tiny speck in the North East corner in the atlas of India, the activities of ITPA have brought this small town into limelight. It is needless to say that ITPA being chronologically the second tea producer’s association and the first of its kind in this part of India but it remained as the sole bargaining agent of the Indian tea interests for quite a number of decade’s altogether.

The next purely Indian Association to be established in the tea districts was the “Terai Indian Planters’ Association”. The birth of the Association was not altogether happy, since it was partly the result of friction between the Indian members and one or more persons prominent in the management of the old Terai Planters’ association. The story of the “Terai Indian Planters’ Association” (commonly known as TIPA) is fascinating. Like the Prince of tales it has suffered much and now finally won the game through courage and self esteem. The carrier and the personality of the Association has been unique since its inception on February 21, 1928, owing as much to the significant period of Indian History in which it was born and sustained as the role it had set for itself³².

The problems of the Terai Indian gardens were different from the gardens of Terai Planters’ Association situated at Bengdubi dominated by the British planters. The gardens in Terai which were completely under Indian management were either purchased from the European planters who considered such properties as unprofitable due to high percentage of China bushes or due to drainage difficulties or which were

started from scratch in the year 1923 onwards by buying Jote lands and amalgamating same into a tea grant, a number of gardens were started. The size of the Indian owned gardens were much smaller than the British owned Gardens. Moreover, how much attention was paid by the Colonial Government on the European tea gardens situated in Darjeeling hill and Dooars, in case of Terai it was absolutely nil³³. The unhealthy tract and weather especially Black Fever (Kalazar) was a prime factor behind this scenario. This is the main reason why we find a number of tea estates (near about 20) were established by the Bengali entrepreneurs in Darjeeling Terai instead of the hill area³⁴. Question may be arises why much emphasis have given on the Terai region rather than the Dooars area where maximum number of gardens were established by the Bengali entrepreneurs. The answer is that in Dooars most of the Bengali entrepreneurs were either landlord or pleader whereas in Terai most of them were either tea garden employees (Garden Babus) or merchants, contractors. The Jalpaiguri entrepreneurs had a social and financial base but the Terai entrepreneurs residing in Siliguri or elsewhere had no such bases. The basic ideas gathered from the European gardens helped them to become a planter later on³⁵. It is true that most of the garden in Terai completely run under Indian management were purchased from the European planters as they considered such properties unprofitable due to high percentage of China bushes or due to drainage difficulties but loneliness was also a major reason behind it. No Europeans even Memsahib were ready to come in Terai due to its bad weather. Exceptions were there like Rally Brothers, Andrew Yule & Co., Duncan Brothers who operated their transactions in jute, tea but it was very few in number³⁶. This environment perhaps made the situation so easy to the Bengali people in buying the European controlled tea gardens. In Dooars we could not find out such examples because prior to the growth and development of the tea industry Jalpaiguri became the administrative headquarter in the year 1869. Since 1870's Jalpaiguri became residence to many Europeans on account of its administrative and economic interests like timber business³⁷. That is why we cannot see such a big European Club situated in Jalpaiguri across the whole North – East India. Nevertheless, the Jalpaiguri entrepreneurs had a major role in Freedom struggle movement³⁸ but pertaining to the Bengali entrepreneurs of the Terai region it is really difficult to write a line. This situation, according to the survey carried out by me, helped them to purchase gardens from the European planters. In spite of this cordial relation the white tea planters always maintained a bitter relation with them. This painful situation undoubtedly

provoked some leading Bengali stalwarts of the contemporary tea Plantation industry of the Terai region to survive their identity.

Therefore, Bijay Basanta Bose, Tarapada Banarjee (T.P. Banarjee), Saradindu Bose, Jitendra Mohan Dutta, Abdul Bari Khandakar, Ila Pal Choudhury and Kusum Dutta started an association at first with only eight gardens (Thanjhora T.E., Bijohnagar T.E., Fulbari T.E., Naxalbari T.E., Atal T.E., Ashapur T.E., Domohoni T.E., Chandmoni T.E.) as its members in the year 1928, but more and more Indian managers joined the Association. T.P. Banarjee was its second chairman since its inception until 1949. Its first chairman was Bijoy Basanta Bose, manager of Thanjhora Tea Estate. It was essentially an Association of Tea Garden Managers. The patrons of the Association were Ila Pal Chaudhury of Mohorgaong Gulma T.E., Biren Chandra Ghosh popularly known as B.C. Ghosh, Hon'ble Member of Indian Tea Association (London). The first participating planters of the association were Bijoy Basanta Bose of Thanjhora T.E., Gopal Lal Sanyal of Bijohnagar T.E., Braja Gopal Sinha of Fulbari T.E., Abdul Bari Khandakar of Naxalbari T.E., Jitendra Mohan Dutta of Atal T.E., Aswini Lahiri of Ashapur T.E., Saradhindhu Bose of Domohoni T.E., Sarat Chandra Bose of Chandmoni T.E.) They had their problems also. Responsibilities were thrust on them but they lacked resources of all descriptions. They were determined, however, to overcome all the difficulties and to march ahead side by side with British tea planters³⁹.

On one side there was Robertson, the King of Terai and on the other side there was Tarapada Banarjee (Commonly known as T.P. Banarjee) and Kusum Dutta who would not hang down their heads because they were the managers of small Indian gardens. Another factor was responsible for the growth and development of TIPPA was that at that time recruited labourers used to come every year from the Ranchi, Chotanagpur area through one organisation set up by the British planters "Tea District Labour Association". The Bengali tea planters realised that this problem could only be solve if they establish their own association. Here the gap was fulfilled by the Terai Indian Planters' Association. Nevertheless it was to be regretted by the officials of the Darjeeling Branch Indian Tea association that in such a small region like Terai containing only twenty – two tea gardens it was found necessary to have two Associations⁴⁰.

Supply of cereals to the workers on a voluntary basis by the tea industry during the Second World War became gradually a liability of the tea planters. Organised efforts to get these cereals from the Government became another headache for the tea gardens owned by the Indian planters in Terai. The service of TIPA mostly with the assistance of K.N. Chaudhury, the president Chairman of the Siliguri Municipality was really commendable in this respect ⁴¹.

During the time of T.P. Banarjee and Kusum Dutta the idea of a hall of its own came from the members of TIPA. It was given a concrete a by S.K. Sanyal, the then manager of Matigara Tea Estate who held the reigns of the “Terai Indian Planters’ Association” for more than a decade. S. K. Sanyal always thought in terms of revolutionary ideas. It was he who suggested the nationalisation of the export trade and the Government; taking over the entire responsibility of constructing labour houses for plantation workers by imposition of a cess on production and also establishment of a Tea Auction centre at Siliguri ⁴².

What is more interesting is the recognition of the “Terai Indian Planters’ Association” by even the ruling British planters against whom the founder has waged a persistent Jehad right from the moment of its birth against the mechanisation of British influence. They could not deny the popularity of the “Terai Indian Planters’ Association” in spite of their bitter feeling towards it. The then Bengal administration admitted that this organisation was believed by some to have more extensive enrolment of members and extended their recognition on 7th February 1928. The aims and objectives of this Association written down in detail during its birth are given below –

(a) To promote the consideration and discussion of all matters connected with the plantation industry to represent on its behalf to protect and serve its interest;

(b) To represent to the union, state or other Government or bodies on behalf of the industry or its members on any and all matters affecting the industry and its growth and development;

(c) To collect analyse, interpret and circulate statistics and other information of interest to its members so as to promote the interests in and understanding of the industry;

(d) To undertake any activity or establish relation with Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations so as to fulfil the objectives;

(e) To subscribe to any funds, association, institutions or other bodies whereby the objectives and purposes of the “Terai Indian Planters’ Association” may be protected or advanced;

(f) To collect from its members or from other allied sources funds for the purpose of carrying on or furthering the objectives and purposes of the “Terai Indian Planters’ Association”

(g) To a member of any fraternal, professional or other bodies to further the objectives of the “Terai Indian Planters’ Association”

(h) To do all such other things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of all its aforesaid objectives; ⁴³

This Association has passed through many critical times but as a result of its collected efforts they have been able to convert Terai which was traditionally known as poor tea producing area, into some position, if not better than its counterpart in Dooars. Consequently, the Association which the Indian tea planters had established on 21.02.1928 effected right from the beginning a wonderful blending of plantation ethics and patriotism ⁴⁴.

Table 4.1 **List of Chairman of TIPA (1928 – 1978)**

1) Bijay Basanta Bose	7) Satya Roy
2) Tarapada Banarjee	8) Gopal Sengupta
3) Gopal Lal Sanyal	9) R. Ghosh
4) K.K. Dutta	10) B.R. Varman
5) A. Khandekar	11) S.K. Sanyal
6) Bhupendra Bakshi	12) R.Banarjee

(Source: office, Terai Indian planters Association.)

In the year 1955 yet another association, the Tea Association of India (TAI), came into being. Its most prominent members belonged to the Marwari Community like Jalan, Birla, Goenka, Mintri and this may be the reason for the

formation of a new body. It is, affiliated to the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta ⁴⁵. Since its inception the Marwari traders coming from various parts of Western India and of course after the formation of Bangladesh took place in the year 1971 began to take interest in the tea plantation industry of this region. This Association actually strengthened the hands of these Marwari businessmen (most of them were jute traders) from all angles to advent in the tea plantation industry who were compelled to migrate to this area of North Bengal due to the jeopardous condition caused by the formation of Bangladesh in 1971 ⁴⁶. However this Association have seven branches all over India. In North Bengal this Association have two branches in Ethelbari, Dist - Jalpaiguri and Siliguri, Dist – Darjeeling ⁴⁷. Debesh Chandra Ghosh (popularly known as D.C. Ghosh in the Indian Tea Industry), honorary secretary of ITPA was also the chairman of the Tea Association of India, North Bengal Branch in between 1957 – 58 ⁴⁸.

The Dooars Planters' Association (DPA) was formed in 1878, just four years after the beginning of tea cultivation in the district. Till 1917 the association was purely a European affair – the member gardens were European – owned, the managerial staff was European. But from the annual general meeting of 1911 one or two distinguished Indians of the Jalpaiguri administrative district were always invited to attend as visitors ⁴⁹. In 1917 Mr. Travers invited Indian – owned gardens to join the Association. To avoid the European planters misusing the franchise he also asked the Indian gardens to elect a representative to the Association executive. A.C. Sen was elected that year ⁵⁰. The situation changed in 1950 because the Indian Tea Association (ITA) put it: “whether we like it or not, further legislation will be imposed on us and it is better for your interests to be guided by one parent Association with its various branches as part and parcel of it”. The question of negotiations with trade unions was also referred to.

However, in spite of shortage of European manpower during World War I and II the British – owned gardens did not engage Indian managerial staff. After World War Second especially in 1946 a demobilized emergency commission officer of the Indian Air Force, Ratan Lal Dasgupta was given the post of an assistant manager. Two years later P.K. Roy was taken in and from 1954 Indianisation in a regular way has proceeded. Ratan Lal Dasgupta in 1969 became the first Indian chairman and though there were one or two European Chairmen after him for several

past years the Chairman have been all Indians⁵¹. The Dooars Planter's Association thereupon dissolved itself and became the Dooars Branch Indian Tea Association in 1950. In short the greatest change was the replacement of British planters by Indians. However, the transition was smooth⁵². Now the European elements of DPA are nearly absent, as after the freedom of India, the non – Indian elements have been replaced by Indian industrialists where all members do not live out of India⁵³.

Thus we may say that the Indian tea planters especially the Bengali entrepreneurs played an important role in the atlas of the Indian tea industry in colonial period. The story of the Bengali entrepreneurs, those men of great character and resources, reads almost like a make believe adventure tale. The incessant struggle of the Indian entrepreneurs with the British tea planters in order to set up their own associations indubitably originated a separate national identity in the tea plantation industry in pre – independence days. According to the Survey carried out by me one does not find the Brahmas or Parthana Samaj people among the ranks of the new entrepreneurs though the impact of Brahma Samaj have had in Jalpaiguri town. The enterprising intellectuals, professional men or landlords who had shown courage and patriotism in starting new industrial enterprises were all non – Brahmas whereas the first initiative as a Bengali entrepreneur in Calcutta had come from a Brahma that is Dwarakanath Tagore. It needs deep attention from the erudite scholars doing research in the field of entrepreneurship. However, there is no end of the horizon of the goal – set of such dynamic organisations fully devoted to the service of the tea industry, industrial growth and development of this region.

Now once again looking back to the rhythm wherefrom we started we may possibly conclude that all the Indian tea planters' own associations of North Bengal like ITPA, TIPA, TAI, DBITA enjoying a honourable position in the Indian tea industry with confidence, accuracy and inertia to reach several centuries ahead. What are the tales of the growth and development of the industry and society at large of this region during the last 100 years are the scintillating and enchanting stories of success for the service of the industry and society – stories of self – actualisation from dream to reality. The stewardship of the older patrons passes sober to the newer generation, people who with their dedication and able guidance also carry over the ethos values and sentiments of such historical associations towards a successful goal.

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