

**TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN THE TEA  
GARDENS OF DARJEELING HILLS**

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE  
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## PREFACE

The trade unions are found almost in all forms of economy. Existence of Trade Union is a natural phenomenon in all-modern industrial economies.

For satisfactory expansion of industry and for rapid economic development, trade unions are inevitable. Trade Unions in different countries have developed on different lines, depending on social and economic compulsions of industrialization and historical factors of the respective society.

The tea industry is inalienably associated with the Trade Unions and their movement launched both for the uplift of tea industry and the welfare of workers. The present thesis seeks to study on the fundamentals of the growth of trade unions without losing sight of the recent changes. The workers' issues such as wages, nutrition, housing, water, sanitation, health services, and childcare, prenatal and postnatal facilities, education, etc. will be its corollary thrust. It is, on the whole, an attempt to present an academic insight of an area so far unexploited.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

|        |   |  |
|--------|---|--|
| AEA    | - | ASSAM EMIGRATION ACT.                              |
| AICPI  | - | ALL INDIA CONSUMERS' PRICE INDEX.                  |
| AIGL   | - | ALL INDIA GORKHA LEAGUE.                           |
| AITUC  | - | ALL INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS.                    |
| ALC    | - | ASSISTANT LABOUR COMMISSIONERS.                    |
| CCTPW  | - | CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE OF TEA PLANTATION WORKERS. |
| CITU   | - | CENTRE FOR INDIAN TRADE UNION.                     |
| CPI    | - | COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA.                          |
| CPI(M) | - | COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA(MARXIST).                 |
| DBITA  | - | DARJEELING BRANCH INDIA TEA ASSOCIATION.           |
| DCBW   | - | DOOARS CHA BAGAN WORKERS' UNION.                   |
| DCKSS  | - | DARJEELING CHIA KAMAN SHRAMIK SANGH.               |
| DPA    | - | DARJEELING PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION.                  |
| DPA    | - | DOOARS PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION.                      |
| DTDCMU | - | DARJEELING TERAJ DOOARS CHIA KAMAN MAZDOOR UNION.  |
| DTGWU  | - | DARJEELING TEA GARDEN WORKERS' UNION.              |
| FERA   | - | FOREIGN EXCHANGE REGULATION ACT.                   |
| GNLF   | - | GORKHA NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT.                  |
| HMS    | - | HIND MAZDOOR SABHA.                                |
| HPWU   | - | HIMALAYAN PLANTATION WORKERS' UNION.               |
| ICP    | - | INDUSTRIAL COMMITTEE ON PLANTATIONS.               |
| IFTU   | - | INDIAN FEDERATION OF TRADE UNION.                  |
| ILO    | - | INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION.                 |

INC - INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

INTUC - INDIAN NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONGRESS.

ITA - INDIAN TEA ASSOCIATION.

ITA - INTERNATIONAL TEA AGREEMENT.

ITC - INTERNATIONAL TEA COMMITTEE.

ITPA - INDIAN TEA PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION.

JPTU - JANASHAKTI PLANTATION TRADE UNION.

LIC - LABOUR INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE.

NABARD - NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL BANK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

NCL - NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

NUPW - NATIONAL UNION OF PLANTATION WORKERS.

PLA - PLANTATION LABOUR ACT.

PWD - PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

SAC - STRIKE ACTION COMMITTEE.

TAI - TEA ASSOCIATION OF INDIA.

TDELA - TEA DISTRICT EMIGRANT LABOUR ACT.

TM & MC - TEA MANUFACTURING AND MARKETING CONSULTANT.

UTUC - UNITED TRADE UNION CONGRESS.

UTUC - UNITED TRADE UNION CONGRESS.

VDU - VARIABLE DEARNESS ALLOWANCE.

WBCSU - WEST BENGAL CHA SHRAMIK UNION.

WBTDCC - WEST BENGAL TEA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION.

ZCBWU - ZILLA CHA BAGAN WORKERS' UNION.

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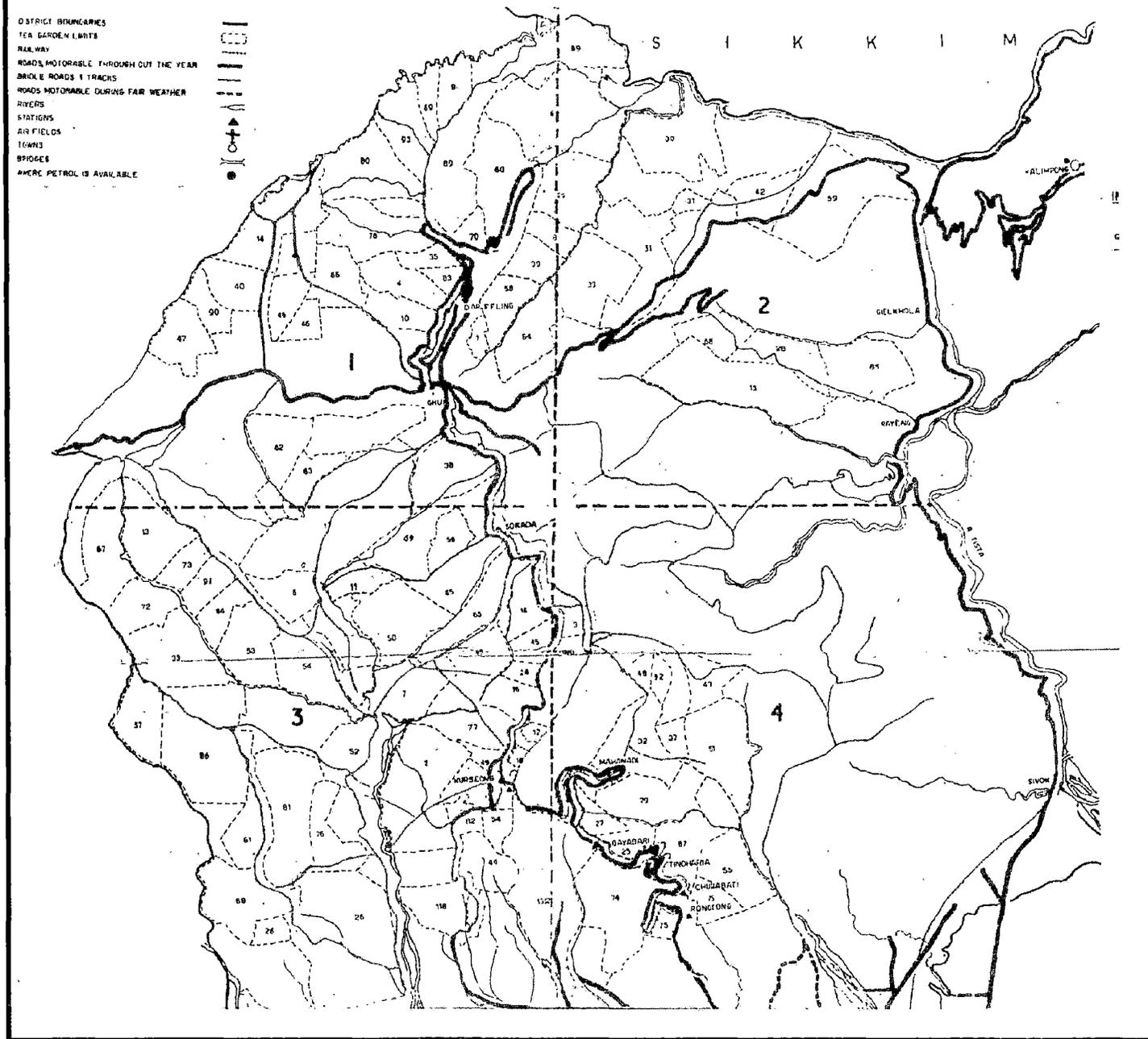
# MAP OF THE TEA GROWING HILL AREAS DAREELING (NOT TO SCALE)

## INDEX OF REGISTERED TEA GARDENS IN DARJEELING

| GRID No. | SERIAL No. | TEA GARDEN                        |
|----------|------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1        | 1          | ALGOBARI                          |
| 3        | 2          | ARBOODIA                          |
| 4        | 3          | ARSEL LOUNGE                      |
| 1        | 4          | ARYA                              |
| 3        | 5          | AVONGROVE                         |
| 1        | 6          | BADAMTAN                          |
| 1        | 7          | NAI ASIM                          |
| 1        | 8          | BANMOCKBURN                       |
| 1        | 9          | BARNE SWEG                        |
| 10       | 10         | BLOOMFIELD                        |
| 5        | 11         | CEORAN                            |
| 3        | 12         | CHAITAPAMI                        |
| 1        | 13         | CHAMBERG                          |
| 1        | 14         | CHOROTONG                         |
| 2        | 15         | DARJEELING TEA & CHANDRA (NAMING) |
| 1        | 16         | DILARAH                           |
| 3        | 17         | DODCEYHAI                         |
| 3        | 18         | DOW HILL                          |
| 3        | 19         | DUMSORG                           |
| 3        | 20         | DUMSORG                           |
| 3        | 21         | DUMSORG                           |
| 3        | 22         | DUMSORG                           |
| 3        | 23         | DUMSORG                           |
| 3        | 24         | DEER VALLE                        |
| 4        | 25         | JOGAHATA                          |
| 3        | 25         | GYABAR & NALATHONG                |
| 3        | 27         | GIDOPPHAR                         |
| 4        | 28         | GIELLE                            |
| 2        | 29         | GIMC                              |
| 2        | 30         | GLENBURN                          |
| 2        | 31         | GLENBURN LODGE & TORDAN           |
| 4        | 32         | GOODMEE                           |
| 4        | 33         | GOPAL DHARA                       |
| 4        | 34         | GOPALSARAI                        |
| 4        | 35         | HAPPY VALLEY                      |
| 1        | 36         | IL'AM & SHOOKTEAM                 |
| 1        | 37         | JUNGHARA                          |
| 1        | 38         | KALE J VALLEY                     |
| 2        | 39         | LEBONG & MINERAL SPRING           |
| 1        | 40         | LINGIA                            |
| 1        | 41         | LIZA HILL                         |
| 2        | 42         | LOPEHU                            |
| 3        | 43         | MAHALDERAH                        |
| 3        | 44         | MAKIBAR                           |
| 3        | 45         | MARGARET'S HOPE & NAHARAMEE       |
| 4        | 46         | MARYBONG & KYEL                   |
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| 3        | 56         | OAKS                              |
| 3        | 57         | ORAYTI                            |
| 3        | 58         | PANGAN                            |
| 2        | 59         | PASHOK                            |
| 6        | 60         | PHOOSERING                        |
| 1        | 61         | PHOOSERING                        |
| 1        | 62         | POOBONG                           |
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| 3        | 76         | SINGBULLI                         |
| 3        | 77         | SINGELL                           |
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| 3        | 80         | SOOH                              |
| 3        | 81         | SOURENI                           |
| 3        | 82         | SPRINGSIDE                        |
| 3        | 83         | STEINHAL                          |
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| 3        | 88         | TINGLING                          |
| 3        | 89         | TURVAL NORTH                      |
| 3        | 90         | TUMSUNG                           |
| 3        | 91         | TUMZUM                            |
| 3        | 92         | UNITED MAJHUA (NARADA MAJHUA)     |
| 1        | 93         | VAH TUKVAR                        |

### REFERENCES

- DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
- TEA GARDEN LIMITS
- RAILWAY
- ROADS, MOTORABLE THROUGH OUT THE YEAR
- BRICK E ROADS & TRACKS
- ROADS MOTORABLE DURING FAIR WEATHER
- RIVERS
- STATIONS
- AIR FIELDS
- TOWNS
- BRIDGES
- WHERE PETROL IS AVAILABLE



## INTRODUCTION

Situated in the North of the State of West Bengal, Darjeeling district comprises Darjeeling Sadar and three subdivisions, viz. (1) Kurseong, (2) Kalimpong, and (3) Siliguri. The district has two distinct topographical features. Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong, and Kalimpong occupy the hilly tracts of the district and Siliguri at the foothills has plain stretches of land. Tea plantations over the hilly tracts of the district are popularly known as Darjeeling plantations, which are within the ambit of the study.

The district Darjeeling lies between  $26^{\circ} 31'$  and  $27^{\circ} 13'$  North latitude and between  $87^{\circ} 59'$  and  $88^{\circ} 53'$  East longitude. The shape of the district is triangular surrounded on the East by Bhutan, on the North by Sikkim and on the West by Nepal. The Northwestern boundary commences from a height of 12,000 feet with Nepal.

### THE RIVER SYSTEM

Teesta, the most important river of Darjeeling rises in North Sikkim and flows through the district till it reaches Sevoke. River Teesta is often called the "River of Sorrow", as it creates havoc and destruction during the rains. Other rivers of significance are Rungeet, Balasun, Mahanadi and Mechi. Mahanadi has its source near Mahalderam, east of Kurseong. Balasun takes its source near Lepchajagat in the Ghoom-Simana ridge of west of Kurseong. Mechi has its source from the western hill areas.

### PHYSIOGRAPHY AND SOIL

The hill areas of Darjeeling district consist of the unaltered sedimentary rocks confined to the hills on the south and different grades of metamorphic rocks over the rest

of the area. The mountains are made of folded rocks piled one over another by a series of north-south horizontal compressions movements and tangential thrusts.

In the hills there are three kinds of soil: white, red, and black. The white is often found among the large rocks and is suitable for dry crops owing to its rich vegetable mould. The greater portion of the hill areas lies on the Darjeeling gneiss, which most often gives stiff red clay. Generally, the soil throughout the district is deficient in lime. Tea is grown along the gentler slopes and terraced surfaces

The origin of Tea is shrouded in the mists of legends and history of doubtful voracity. Tea finds a definite mention in ancient Chinese history as far back as 2700 B.C. In India tea cultivation was introduced initially to meet the demand of the British consumers who had for a long time been obtaining their entire requirement of tea from China. Major Robert Bruce discovered tea bushes in Assam in 1823. Tea cultivation in Darjeeling district commenced on a trial basis in 1840 and now it occupies a place of pride in the economy of the hill areas of Darjeeling.

Darjeeling tea derived its importance from the qualitative excellence and high exportability. In 1972, hill areas of Darjeeling district claimed 21 percent of West Bengal tea hectareage and 10 percent of tea produced with an average per hectare yield measuring half of that for West Bengal. Tea industry makes valuable contribution to both Central and State Government coffers by way of different Central and State taxes like income tax, super tax, Excise Duty, Export duty and agricultural income tax.

Tea industry has played an important role in opening up and developing uninhabited jungles and forests for producing plantation products, commercial crops and inviting human settlements centering on them. Tea plantations and human settlements have used land resources after having denuded of its forest and jungle coverings. What is

then the impact of tea plantations on food supplies and soil erosion?. It is claimed that the land recovered from jungles and forests and developed into thriving tea gardens were not areas where food grains could ordinarily have been grown in those days. Hence there was no question of tea usurping land required for the production of more essential food crops.

Tea is a perennial crop grown under shade trees. Tea bushes touch and completely cover the soil, and their roots fully occupy the available soil. The result is that the replacement of forests and jungles by tea bushes does not result in soil erosion or other evils, which are often associated with the felling of trees and the clearing of jungles. Kurseong, Jore Bunglow and Darjeeling together claim 65 percent of the total number of tea gardens and 70 percent of total area under occupation of tea gardens. Rangli-Rangliot, Sukhiapokhri, and Mirik jointly claim another 22 percent of gardens and 26 percent of area under occupation of tea gardens. Gorubathan, Pulbazar and Kalimpong together claim 13 percent of tea gardens and four percent of total area under occupation of tea gardens. Thus of the total area claimed by Kurseong, Jore Bunglow and Darjeeling together the share of Kurseong alone was 50 percent, which is equivalent to 36.67 percent of the total tea garden land in the hill areas of the district. On the other extreme, Kalimpong Blocks claim only six small gardens covering 0.06 percent of the total area under tea gardens. This is an outcome of Government policy, which reserved Kalimpong for native cultivation. An important reason for the choice of Darjeeling hills for tea plantation was the belief that tea should be planted on slopes. Later experiences have, however, shown that gardens located on flat land have greater competitive advantage than gardens situated on the hills. In spite of the superb tea produced in small quantities in Darjeeling gardens today, the economic conditions of the industry in the district

support the view that tea gardens on the hills with low yield cannot compete with tea gardens on the flat land, where yield is high and cultivation has many other advantages. In present days the possibility of a high yield is becoming a more appropriate criterion in choosing a location for a tea garden. While tea can be grown in almost any place where it is wet and warm, the cost of labour is such that outstanding quality and flavour may not suffice to compensate for the low yield.

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## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The Darjeeling Tea industry has a pride of place in West Bengal in view of its contribution to building state economy. Employing over two and half lakhs workers it has earned a niche in generating employment opportunities and lessening unemployment problems.

The present study deals with following objectives.

1. To study the problems of labour and Management relations in the tea gardens of Darjeeling and Kurseong in the district of Darjeeling.
2. To analyse the efforts of Trade Unions in improving the wage levels, Wage structures, and Employment.
3. To understand the role of Trade Unions in improving the Existing working conditions and arrest labour turn over, and
4. To ascertain the situation regarding workers employed directly through management, and the Sardars and make a comparative analysis in terms of wages and employment.

It is indisputable that the workers will have some impact or the other over the changes in ownership of the gardens. The change in ownership pattern affected the continuity of garden management and the rights of the workers were always denied. A study of such an impact is also within the scope of this thesis. The Gorkha National Liberation Front movement was a movement, which encompassed the entire hills necessitating, if not, enforcing changes big or small in the erstwhile organisations. The

trade union movement also had its share of the impact, so its incorporation in the present study is considered all the more justifiable.

#### SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY.

The areas selected for the purpose of study in Darjeeling District are Kurseong and Darjeeling subdivisions. There are mainly four unions working in the Tea gardens, and almost all are affiliated to the Central organisations viz, INTUC, CITU, Gorkha League, and Himalayan Plantation Workers' Union. No study had so far been made on the Trade Unions in the Tea Industry. A study on this would therefore help policy makers to understanding the labour management relations in the tea industry. The study would also be helpful to Government and management and other executives to do their best to improve the labour management relations in the Tea industry.

## IDENTIFICATION OF VARIABLES

The main objective of the thesis is to analyse the efforts of union. The dependent variables are wages, employment and independent variables are collective Bargaining power, Union leadership and membership.

## METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE DESIGN

The study is exploratory in nature. The informations will be collected through primary data and secondary data.

For the purposes of collecting primary data, the respondent leaders and union members will be approached either residence, if unions do not have separate office buildings. For collecting primary data, a comprehensive schedule will be prepared and administered to the union members, their leaders and management.

The secondary data will be collected through official records for information relating to the members of unions, the names of office bearers, the size of the membership will be collected. If official records are not sufficient, the same will be collected from the union files and records.

With a view to removing bias, the following gardens are randomly selected from Darjeeling and Kurseong with diverse patterns of ownership, i.e. proprietary, partnership, private limited and public limited companies. The sample pattern is representative of the universe.

### The Name Of The Gardens Selected

1. Makaibari Tea Garden
2. Ambootia T.E.
3. Spring Side T.E.

4. Longview T.E.
5. Singell T.E.
6. Happy Vally T.E.
7. Vah-Tukvar T.E.
8. Singtam T.E.
9. Moondakhoti T.E.
10. Bloomfield T.E.

The size of the sample respondents to be interviewed would be decided on the basis of stratified sampling method which is related to interviewing sample respondent with the help of structured schedules. The number of unions, the size of the membership and the length of the union's existence will be considered for selection of sample.

#### Methods Of Data Processing And Statistical Tools Used

The collected data will be processed by using statistical tools like averages, percentages, ratios, Arithmetic Means, Further, necessary graphs, diagrams, will be used whenever possible and necessary.

#### RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

1. Why it took such a long time to start trade union movements in the hill?
2. How far the Trade Unions have been successful in securing fair wages to the workers?
3. What is the nature and pattern of leadership?
4. Why the 'outsiders' have taken the leaderships?
5. What is the impact of change of ownership on the trade union movement?
6. What is the attitude of the labourers towards their leaders?
7. Whether the unions have been successful in protecting the interests of the members, viz: social security benefits as guaranteed by the Labour laws.

## A BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature related to the subject under consideration is virtually non-existent so far as the hill areas of the district of Darjeeling are concerned, barring a few articles in the local journals, manuals, gazetteers and some references in the Committee Reports, no serious studies are available on the subject relating to the hill areas. Some recent studies undertaken by some of the scholars of the North Bengal University relate to the sociological, anthropological and economic aspects. This study, therefore, is a modest attempt to fill the research gap in this regard and could be considered as a path-breaking enterprise in an unexplored field.

Dr. R. L. Sarkar: In his study entitled, "Trade Unions: Origin and early Development, pointed out, Trade unionism in the Darjeeling's tea estates is a recent phenomenon. That there was no organised labour movement till the eve of independence.

Rage Committee 1944: pointed out that the tea garden workers had no organizations at all, they were all unorganised and helpless.

National Commission on Labour 1969: pointed out that the main reason for the lack of trade union movement was that access into the plantation was difficult, it not impossible and attempts to form trade unions before independence was seldom successful (page 65)

Dr. Manas Dasgupta in his study entitled Are Labour Productivity and Cost of Production really to be blamed for Sickness of the Darjeeling Tea industry? Pointed out that 'Very often the workers are not paid properly. At the slightest pretext the gardens are declared closed. The P.F. of the workers is looted. But unfortunately the trade unions have failed to accept the challenge posed by the new owners who do not have any commitment to the gardens.'

Mr. K. A. Khan and Mr. D. Biswas in their paper entitled 'Problems and Prospects of Darjeeling Tea Industry have pointed out that' Change in the ownership of the company has affected the production to a large extent. In fact of a total 97 gardens in the hills, 54 changed hands during 1947 -76, which comprises more than 56% of the total? (Tea International Nov.91-pp.43)

Tushar Kanti Ghosh, in his book *Tea Gardens of West Bengal*, a critical study has presented details about the history of plantation of tea in West Bengal with special reference to the two main tea centres in the state, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts. The land management policies, rules, regulations etc. and the problems existing therein have been studied in detail.

Dr. Manas Dasgupta in his book *Labour in Tea Gardens* has focused upon continuity and change in the condition of the labourers of Darjeeling, Duars and Terai tea gardens. The changes of the economic condition have been as important as the continuities in shaping style and substance of the labourers in the 1990s.

Henk Thomas (Editor) in *Globalisation and Third World Trade Unions*, the challenge of Rapid Economic Change has highlighted the deep crisis in which the organised labour movement in the South is facing. The crisis is the result of several factors; changes in the global economy that have eroded trade union membership, structural adjustment policies that have reduced the capacity of the state to address inequality, and a decline in public acceptance of unions, effectiveness in protecting the interests of working people.

Amalendu Guha in his book *Planter Raj to Swaraj, Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1820-1947* has examined the nationalist activities from the early days of tactical collaboration to the later phase of mature anti-imperialism. The

peoples' assemblies, the beginnings of the Pradesh Congress, the revolts in the plantations, the emergence of the Left, the scramble for office and power, the communalism of creed, language and domicile have been discussed, in relation especially to the legislative processes. The question of bonded labour have been analysed with exposing the dominance of planters in the Administration of Assam.

Sukomal Sen in his well documented book titled Working Class of India, History of Emergence and Movement 1830-1970, has depicted the history of labour movement discussing intricacies of the social, economic and political processes beginning from its birth in 1830 to 1947, including a sweeping reference to the events thereafter.

Dr. Kumar Pradhan, in his well-documented book, The Gorkha Conquests the Process and consequences of the unification of Nepal, with particular reference to Eastern Nepal has dwelt on the origins of Gorkha state consolidation in Nepal. The book represents his findings on the historical origins of cultural diversity in the region, and on the way in which the Gorkha political lineage came to rear itself out of this, to create a new political pattern in conflict and compromise with British Indian imperialism, with far reaching consequences of homogenisation for Eastern Nepal. A quite different socio-political, cultural and enclaved plantation economy grew in British Indian Darjeeling. He has focused on the microcosmic aspect of changes in Nepali state and society itself.

Purushottam Bhandari, in his book Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese 1800-1950, has highlighted the first entry of the Nepalese into India. The Nepali youths were enrolled in the British Army in the name of Gurkha Regiment after the popular Sugowlee Treaty of 1815. The book covers the whole history of the involvement of civilian and military personnel in the National Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi, the contribution of Nepalese in the historical Dandi March and Quit India

Movement, the joining of Gurkhas in the Indian National Army at Singapore led by Subash Chandra Bose and lastly the role of the Nepalese in Royal Indian Mutiny of 1946.

James Riordan in *The Working Class in Socialist Society* (translation from Russian) has described the major trends and issues concerning the development of the working class in socialist society.

Dr. Tanka Bahadur Subba in his book *Ethnicity, State and Development*, 'A case study of Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling has highlighted the Gorkhaland movement for a separate statehood within the Indian Union. He has discussed the political, ethnic and economic histories of Darjeeling with special reference to some of the biggest controversies between the state and the pro-Gorkhaland people. He has also traced the origin and evolution of Gorkha identity, discussing the changing boundaries of this identity. He has discussed briefly the various ethnic movements in Darjeeling in a chronological order beginning in 1907 and ending in the statehood demand of 1980.

Sarath Davala in his article, *Independent Trade Unionism in West Bengal*, in the *Economic and Political Weekly* has discussed the growth of independent trade unions as a reflection of the inability of the political trade unions to meet workers' needs. He has examined the growth of 'independent' trade unionism in West Bengal where centralised party unionism continues to be the dominant form.

Vidya Bir Singh Kansakar in his thought provoking article on *Indo Nepal Migration*, some facets, in *Himalaya Today* has traced the history of Nepalese migration into India, and its impact on the economy of Darjeeling.

Late Dr. C.B.Mamoria and Dr. Satish Mamoria, in their book, *Dynamics of Industrial Relations* have dealt with a highly complex, ever changing and expanding field of industrial relations and is based upon theory, principles and practices developed in

India and elsewhere. It throws a flood of light on different aspects of the subject, which is divided, in six parts. Part I deals with growth of the industrial work force. Part II is devoted to trade unions and covers their organisation, structure, origin, functions, approaches, growth and problems and the role of workers' education in fostering their interest in unions. Part III to VI deals with concept and organisation of industrial relations, to preventive techniques of industrial conflicts, various legislative enactments bearing on industrial disputes.

V.P. Michael in his book *Industrial Relations in India and Workers' involvement in Management* has extensively dealt with the cordial worker-management relations and unveils the relevant areas in which harmonious relations deserve special attention.

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## PLAN OF THE STUDY

The study is arranged in seven broad chapters. Each chapter is again divided into several sections covering the specific dimensions of the study.

First chapter deals with the historical background of Darjeeling. Prior to the year 1816 the whole of the territory known as British Sikkim belonged to Nepal, which had won it by conquest from the Sikkimese. By a treaty signed between Nepal and the British at Sugauli at the end of 1816, Nepal ceded the 4000 square miles of territory to the British, which in turn by a treaty signed at Titaliya in 1817, was handed over to the Raja of Sikkim.

Later in 1835, the Sikkim-putti, the aged Raja unconditionally handed over a strip of hill territory to the British. About fifteen years after this the relation between Sikkim and the British Government had been far from satisfactory..

The British Policy regarding the administration of territories of India did not provide a uniform system of administration. The District was made a scheduled District by the Act of 1874. The scheduled districts were not place within the ambit of the general laws and were applied only with modification or in part. The Government of India Act 1919, brought all the scheduled districts under the Backward tract, and as such, Darjeeling District was declared a partially excluded area till the end of British rule in India.

The Administrative history of the district reveals that the rulers never allowed the district to come within the national mainstream and within the purview of general administration. It becomes quite evident that the British government followed a policy of segregating the district from the administrative, legislative, and judicial system of Bengal.

Chapter 2 deals with the recruitment of labourers in tea gardens and its impact on the economy.

Availability of Cheap labour and relatively easy access of land for cultivation have contributed largely to the phenomenal growth of tea industry in Darjeeling.

The Large-scale migration of workers from eastern Nepal provided cheap labour and in the absence of any organization and leaders, the labourers depended completely on the mercy of the garden managers. The liberal land policy also favoured the tea industry to settle and develop.

European settlers like Dr. Grant, the Barnes Brothers, Capt. Mason, Capt. Samler, Mr. Smith, Dr. Brougham, Mr. Martin, Mr. James White, Mr. George Watt Christison, Mr. W.O. Brien Ansell were instrumental in enhancing the growth of Darjeeling tea industry.

Between 1870-1890, the pattern of garden management began changing, which affected the production to a large extent. From the pioneer planters the garden came under the hands of well-organised limited companies or tea "managing agents". This severely affected the management as the gardens changed hands from one set of speculative owners to another set of owners. After the British left most of the new planters came to business by accumulation of profit either in wholesale trade or in speculative business. An analysis of 27 elected joint stock companies of Darjeeling reveals that between 1940 to 1970 while the number of non-Indian directors decline from 112 to only 11, the number Indian directors showed a corresponding increase from 5 to 85 in the period. However, of these Indian directors with a merchant background shot up from 2 in 1940 to 53 in 1965. In any case the directors with this background completely changed the nature of management.

Apart from quick profit tendency there had been a new phenomenon in the area. Very often there is a quick change of gardens from one set of directors to another set of directors. The frequency of change of ownership in Darjeeling hill area is much higher than in Dooars, or in Terai. For example, in between 1965, 55, 67% of Darjeeling tea gardens were affected by this change of owners, whereas in Doors it is 36.54% and in Terai 22.72%. Gardens have changed hands from one set of speculative owners to another set of owners. In the meantime the odd owners have stripped the gardens of leaves and vitality. It is very often stated that Governments, both Central and State, are more interested to take the surplus of the gardens in the form of various taxes. Governments never cared to look to the health of the gardens. The Government for replantation of tea bushes through different schemes of the tea Board took some half hearted measures. But according to its own admission money given to the planters were not used in the gardens and were siphoned off to other speculative industries. The money or subsidies given to the fertilizers were either misused or sold in open markets or not utilised at all. In fact Tea Board is mainly a lobby of the big planters.

The Darjeeling tea industry suffered two major setbacks during and after the two World wars. Most of the experienced British planters enrolled to fight for the crown. The planters from Assam, who were unaware of the peculiar characteristics of the Darjeeling plantations, filled in the void. The Assam planters the China jat plantation too congested and planted out vast areas at all elevations with Assam seeds like Betjan, Khoribari, and Dangri Manipuri. Even in some cases, alternate lines of bushes in the China tea sections were uprooted for easy movement of the pluckers and supervisors. Thus, the Darjeeling Tea plantations suffered considerably at the hands of inexperienced Assam planters.

After the Second World War, the British Ministry of Food Purchases, stopped buying tea, leading to a major marketing problems and barring Calcutta/London auctions, there was no other outlet for Darjeeling tea. The Darjeeling tea industry suffered its second set back with the slump of 1952 when the prices knocked at the London Auctions and could not even cover the chipping costs. In the Calcutta auctions teas were withdrawn, without any bids, resulting in heavy financial losses. Subsequently with the independence of the country, the Parliament and State Legislature passed a number of Labour Welfare Measures, such as Minimum Wages Act, Plantation Labour Act that escalated costs making the condition worst. This had an adverse effect as because a Large section of the British owners felt that their properties were no longer economically viable and by 1956, a large number of gardens changed hands to local Indian entrepreneurs who were inexperienced and had never seen tea bushes previously. They were in dilemma and faced an uphill task in running gardens.

The Nepalese who flocked to Darjeeling in considerable numbers were offered many job opportunities in the expanding tea industry and the British Indian Army. Many of these immigrants cleared and brought under cultivation lands that remained waste or were covered by forest. The land between Teesta and Relli, were reclaimed and brought under cultivation.

Tea plantation being an agro-based industry, industrial and agricultural working environment co-exists. The striking feature of all tea plantations is the employment of women and children in large numbers. The British advocated the employment of families rather than individuals. 'The Royal Commission recognised that the system of recruiting families rather than individuals and the practice of granting lands for spare-time

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cultivation meant that the life of a tea-garden labourer resembled that of the villager and avoided the worst features of town life.

Individual gardens sent 'Sardars' annually to recruit labourers and were paid a commission for bringing people from his own village. Recruitment through garden sardars proved to be the best and cheapest way of importing labourers for they brought the whole families. The women and children could supplement the incomes of the family by plucking excess leaf, more than double their pay. The women folk were employs for plucking leaves as they were considered to be better pluckers. In Darjeeling hills, no recruitment problem existed. The economic pressure in Nepal compelled the people to find an outlet.

The sardars were sent to their villages in Eastern Nepal in the recruiting season, which generally began in October and November, and ended in February. The Nepalese flocked in large numbers as they were lured by the garden sardars of better work and money they come to the Darjeeling hills with a hope of plucking 'money' from 'two leaves and a bud'. The sardars were given the responsibility of maintaining peace and harmony in their respective inhabitation but also to ensure that there was regular turnover of the labour of his group for work in the tea estates. The welfare of the workers were entrusted upon respective sardar- the workers under a 'sardar' developed a feeling of closeness.

Chapter 3 deals with the economic condition of the tea garden labourers in the early phase in the absence of strong trade union. Wages form the pivot around which most labour problems revolve. The questions related to standards of living, the economic well being of the workers, in general –all pertain to this problem. In the early days the managers were the rulers of the land. There was no scope for ventilation of their

grievances as the workers were denied to form trade unions for proper channelisation of the interest of the workers. In contrast, the planters were organized into Darjeeling Branch Indian Tea Association since 1873. Labour welfare programmes like Maternity allowance, welfare housing, sanitation, safe drinking water supply, sick haziras were nil in existence upon 1934. The International Labour Organization passed one recommendation and two conventions regarding sickness allowance. This had no impact on tea gardens. 'In the absence of collective bargaining agency the labourers could not dictate their terms and hence they failed to get even a portion of large profits which the tea companies annually earned in those days. The British Government was found apparently sympathetic to the cause of the garden labourers. But in practice enacted special laws, one after another, protecting the financial interest of the employers pressurized by influential members having vested of the interests in the tea enterprise.

The Royal Commission on labour in 1931 recommended the establishment of wage fixing machinery in the tea industry. It recognised that it would be impossible to lay down piece rates or to specify tasks in view of the variation of tasks from one season to another and from garden to garden. Wage fixation as envisaged by the Royal Commission meant that "the employers themselves would fix the rate for the tasks after determining the capacity to yield a worker of ordinary skill and diligence at least the amount determined by the wage fixing body. In other words such a worker, as opposed to slow or inexperienced workers should be sure of a minimum amount for the performance of a given task.

The workers were completely at the mercy of the managers. They were treated as commodities, which could be purchased and sold. They had to work hard and were treated as human machines. Even after a hard day's work, the workers were deprived of

fair wages. The practice of Pro-rata was in practice in the case of weightment of leaves. This was against the interest of workers as the system seriously affected their earnings. The planters used to deduct from the actual weights of tea leaves, moisture content in it. These deductions variations from 5 percent to 15 percents and such variations were in the discretion of the managers.

During the period 1939 and 1955, in some gardens in Darjeeling, payment was made for plucking at a flat rate of 3 pies per pound. While they use to pay on the hazira basis. The task was usually 20 to 40 pounds, for men, and 16 to 20 pounds for women, and 12 to 16 pounds for children. For the extra leaf plucked over and above the task, payment was made at the rate of 3 pies per pounds. Plucking was largely done by women and it was in plucking and it plucking that high wages were earned.

The tea garden labourers usually purchased their necessary items from the shops of 'Kaiyas' or 'Mahajans', situated within the garden at exorbitant rates. At the time of weekly payments, usually Saturday, market of the peddlers took place. These peddlers cheated the poor labourers as much as the 'kaiyas' did.

A major portion of the wages earned by the labourers was spent on the purchase of food grains to the labourers on the basis of ration quota was much less. In 1952, for the first time, statutory minimum wages were fixed for the plantation workers in West Bengal. The daily wage rate at that time was Rs. 1.9 paise for male, Rs.1.06 paise for female and Rs. 0.62 paise for children. Low wages have always been the distinctive feature of the plantation industry. The West Bengal Government set up the Minimum Wages Advisory Committee for Tea Plantation in March 1950, known as the Modak Committee. The Modak Committee recommended that the minimum wage must not be merely a subsistence wage. Besides providing for his food, it should also help the worker

preserve his efficiency by education, medical, and other amenities. In other words, the concept of minimum wage should not be restricted to just a cash wage but should also cover certain welfare benefits. Even the Committee fixed the minimum wages at a fairly low level which can be considered as 'subsistence' wage on the basis of 1952 Consumer Price Index level.

The entire pre-independence period can be called the 'unregulated' period. Where the relation between the planters and the workers were not formalized. The post-independence period formalized the relationship between the two, with the passing of various laws.

Serious discontentment had already been brewing among the workers on the long standing and unsettled problems, insufficiency of wages, rejection of the demands for minimum wages and above all humiliation of the workers by the British planters and their managers. This unbearable condition of the workers aggravated by the colonial labour policy of the imperialist government caused among the workers a smouldering discontent which in no time blazed out in massive strikes and struggles.

The settlement of wage rate is indicators of change in the working class in this area. An analysis of the wage structure explains that the trend is from subsistence wage to a living wage. Living wage means a wage, which enables the workers to obtain something slightly more than his day-to-day existence. A change in the working class has brought about a change in the wage – rate structure. Coercion, which was one of the important component of plantation system, decreased during the post – independence period. A qualitative change is witnessed as collective bargaining took shape as the workers become organized with the passing of laws safe - guarding the interest of the workers.

Chapter 4 deals with the early phase of trade union movement and the role of political parties in the Darjeeling Hills. As the freedom movement gathered momentum and the independence of the country was becoming almost a certainty in the forties, the apprehension of the hill men about their fate in free India was growing. This period saw the formation of the two important political parties, 1) the All India Gorkha League and 2) the Darjeeling District Committee of the Communist Party of India. The policies and activities of these two political parties shaped the politics of the hill areas. Even the Darjeeling Branch of Indian National Congress, which was formed after independence, followed the path taken by these political parties so far as the hill question was concerned.

Despite their difference in ideology and policies, both the All India Gorkha League and Communist Party of India, Darjeeling Unit, shared the common feeling of apprehension regarding the fate of the Indian Gorkhas. The primary concern of the two political parties was to protect the socio-economic and political interests and the survival of the Nepali community as a distinct Indian community. The issue of Indian Nepalese asking for some special attention and treatment had become a sensitive issue in the hill areas by that time that no political parties could ignore it. The survival as viable political parties, and to extend their mass bases, these political parties had to present themselves as representatives of the Gorkha interests.

The origin of hill areas trade unions – the Darjeeling Tea Garden Workers Union, the Darjeeling Chia Kaman Shramik Sangh and National Union of Plantation Workers' has been initiated and their growth and development influenced by three political parties, the Communist Party of India, Gorkha League and the Indian National Congress. All trade unions mentioned are mainly concerned with the Darjeeling Tea Industry.

Communist Party of India mainly dominates the All India Trade Union Congress. This political party was the first to come into the picture of tea estate. The Gorkha League is a regional political party and the Darjeeling Chia Kaman Shramik Sangh is affiliated to it. The National Union of Plantation Workers' affiliated to the Indian National Trade Union Congress was established by Indian National Congress. Political Unionism has been a factor of paramount importance in the historical growth of Trade Unionism in tea estate. They have played a decisive role in the origin, growth and development of trade unions for tea plantation workers'. The division of the trade union movement in hill areas is along ideological lines. Operational strategies of each of trade union a group is determined by the political party it represents.

The trade union movement in the tea gardens of Darjeeling Hills passed through many ups and downs. The evolutionary process was a long – drawn one. 'From 1969 a trend is discernible as because in all important wage negotiations the trade unions jointly met the employers' associations like Indian Tea Association, Indian Tea Planters' Association, and Tea Association of India. The movement achieved its objective in making workers better aware of their intrinsic rights and succeeded in generating an all pervasive class consciousness. The labourers were represented by different associations like Indian National Trade Union Congress, All India Trade Union Congress, United Trade Union Congress, Zilla Cha Bagan Workers' Union, National Union of Plantation Workers, Dooars Cha Bagan Workers' Union, and the West Bengal Cha Sramik Union etc.

The trend which started in 1969, regarding important issues were the holding of Tripartite Conference in Calcutta wherein the important problems of shrinkage of employment, contract labour, extra leaf rate, fixation of Thika and closed gardens were

discussed. It was decided in the conference that the contractors' labour shall not be employed for work of a perennial nature, such as plucking, pruning, sickling, hoeing and plantation of new tea. It was decided that temporary labourers might be employed if permanent labourers are not available for these works. It was also agreed upon not to employ temporary workers for more than six months in a year. Further, these temporary workers would be employed on the same wages and paid variable dearness allowance and given the same task as applicable to the permanent workers. They should be entitled to any national and festival holidays, which might fall during the period of their employment. They were entitled to get the same medical facilities as the permanent workers.

A similar Tripartite Agreement was reached in a conference held in 1970, and rules regarding casual leave, annual leave with pay etc. were discussed. Further quota regarding firewood and fuels was increased.

In 1971, it was decided by the government of India that a uniform scheme of retirement benefit for employees and workers should be enacted. The tea garden employers were not keen to accept the compulsory gratuity Act of 1971. The result was serious disturbances in many gardens. The issue was settled in a tripartite settlement in the year 1971. The trade unions raised issues like building houses in the gardens. With regard to Kutcha houses the employers assured proper and adequate repairs. After a protracted discussion the strike notice served by the coordination committee was withdrawn.

The trade union activities became very important during the whole of the sixties and the seventies. Consequently the planters have been forced to give bonus and fulfill some of the statutory obligations. Bonus issues led to strikes and lock-outs in various

gardens. However in respect to construction of houses, the trade unions in the Darjeeling hills have not shown the aggressiveness that was found in some of the industries in West Bengal.

With the emergence of political unionism in the hill areas, the trade union movement received further fillip. The earlier political parties, the Communist, Gorkha League, and the Congress as of now, discovered in the tea workers their vote bank. Their viewing with one another in the game of political - upmanship through their respective Trade unions and movement - the welfare of the workers being the sole objective, notwithstanding has formed an interesting part of the study. Legislation of Trade Union in the early fifties and the emergence of militant trade unionism from 1955-69 has received due attention forming as they are the inevitable series of the on-going movement. The trade union movement was a movement, which encompassed the entire hills necessitating if not enforcing changes, big or small, in the erstwhile organizations. The leaders of the unions were not of working class origin. These leaders normally came from the political parties as because the workers were not capable of handling trade union activities on their own. The unions negotiated their ways into field of wage fixation, social welfare, bringing innovations and vitality. Leadership will continue to play a dominant role in the future of the labour movement of the tea gardens. Strikes and lockouts in Darjeeling tea gardens have not been alarming in terms of production loss. Such strikes are principally sympathetic response to their political parties. For a healthy environment in Darjeeling hills, management should come forward in motivating the working class and explore participative management to do away with the simmering mistrust of the workers towards the management. Participative management is especially suitable at the sick unit level when existing managerial systems have either disintegrated or collapsed. Trade unions

have important role in preparing the ground for workers' participation in management, as this can lead to development of human potential and the greatest impetus to improvement of quality of life. Trade unions should work for elimination of inter-union rivalry and set up an ideal and act as a model in hill areas.

Chapter 5 deals with the change of ownership of tea gardens and its impact on the health of the tea industry in the hills. The frequent changes of ownership had an adverse effect on the workers too, as the grievances of the workers could not be properly ventilated. The industry received sudden setback during the first world war of 1904. However, the situation changed after the end of the war owing to rapid expansion of export market. The transition from war to peace was marked by a short-lived but serious depression in the tea industry.

The onset of Second World War altered the whole pattern of demand and supply. The transfer of ownership from foreign to Indian companies started during the Second World War. Changes in ownership pattern received further impetus after the termination of II world war, when the government set up a number of reconstruction committees to plan for post war development. After independence, the socialistic concept of mixed came into existence characterised by planning and control of the economy and the gradual Indianisation of foreign investment in the country. The mixed economy also led to a plethora of legislations and controls affecting all aspect of tea industry. The introduction of the government's five year plans led the agency houses to believe that they would no longer be free to pursue their self interests unfettered, rather they would have to abide by the government policies and programmes. The most crippling of regulations came in the form of provisions of Indian Companies Act 1956 and its 1960

amendment, particularly the sections relating to managing agency. The foreign owned tea companies were compelled to sell the gardens to the Indians. The proposed action of Indianisation of sterling companies took into effect from December 1976 onwards. This led to significant changes in structure and organisation of Darjeeling tea industry. There was a smooth switchover from British to Indian management. The frequent changes of ownership resulted in complete stagnation of the industry, and gradually sickness enveloped the entire industry. Sickness in gardens became a common phenomenon owing to a combination of factors like, Old Age of bushes, speculative character of merchant background planters, Bank finance and Liquidity crisis, and labour unrest.

Chapter 6 deals with the recent changes in trade union after the Gorkha National Liberation Front movement and its impact on the tea gardens. The Gorkha National Liberation Front movement in Darjeeling began in April 1986 and continued till September 1988, when it was finally called off after a tripartite agreement between the Centre, West Bengal Government and the Gorkha National Liberation Front, to form the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. For nearly two years, the Gorkha National Liberation Front movement rocked the hills. The movement affected the life and economy of Darjeeling in various ways. An overwhelming majority of tea garden labourers had joined the Gorkha National Liberation Front from Communist Party of India (Marxist). The Communist Party of India (Marxist) openly admitted that it had ceased to be a political force not only in the towns, but in some of the tea gardens as well, where authority had passed on to the Gorkha National Liberation Front.

The Gorkha National Liberation Front felt the need for an organised trade union to channelise the representations of the majority body of workers in the tea estates.

There have been rapid re-emergence of the Mazdoor union with the return of normalcy, and the glimpse of the rainbow after the storm. Many changes have been witnessed in the Trade Union Front, and new Unions have come in the picture after the agitation. They are 1)Himalayan Plantation workers Union, 2) Darjeeling Terai Dooars Chia kaman Mazdoor Union, 3) Darjeeling Terai Dooars Chia kaman Staff and sub-staff Association, 4) Janashakti Plantation Trade Union, 5) Darjeeling Dooars Shramik Sangathan, 6) Darjeeling Pahari Chiyabari Karmachari Sangathan.

The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, the Planters' Association and the Trade Unions have much in common by way of aspirations of the glory of Darjeeling. It is in transitional phase and definitely moving in the right direction.

The summary of findings of the present study and some concluding observations and futuristic projections are presented in Chapter seven, which is the final and the concluding chapter. Appendices and select Bibliography follow this chapter.

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## CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF DARJEELING

The whole of the district of Darjeeling was part of the dominions of Raja of Sikkim upto the beginning of the 18th century. The Gorkhalis invaded Sikkim in 1788. (1) However it was not really 'nine years after the first rupture' as claimed. This mistake was probably due to a wrong calculation of date in the twelve-year cyclical method of Tibetan reckoning. A conquest of hilly Sikkim was not for the sake of conquest per se. It was to be a corollary to Nepal's rupture with Tibet in 1788. The date of 'the last rupture' given in the Sikkim chronicle is 'the tenth day of the first month of the chag-ji (that is Iron hen year) or 1780. It was in all probability the misrepresentation of Sa-ji (Earth hen year) or 1789. The latter would then mean either late February or March 1789, which, as will be seen, is fully confirmed by Hamilton. The confusion in the Sikkim chronicle is removed when we recognized the total resemblance of the descriptions of the events both of 1779-80 and 1789. (2) Sikkim was attacked from two points, namely from Ilam and Vijaypur, Purna Ale, a Magar commander of the Gorkhalis force crossed Choyabhanjyang and advanced up to Reling and karmi, now in Darjeeling, and Chyakhung in Sikkim. Another Gorkha force led by Jahar Singh, son of renowned Gorkhali commander, Kehar Singh Basnet moved from Vijaypur (3) Jahar Singh crossed the Khatetchu, an affluent of the Great Rangit to the north of Darjeeling. He made a surprise attack on the palace of Rabdantse (capital) and captured it. When the war broke out between Nepal and the company, Sikkim a sufferer at Nepalese hands and sided with the British. This diplomacy proved a very good result for Sikkim for the war ended in

favour of the British. The Sikkim ruler requested that the boundary between Sikkim and the Gorkha territory be laid at Timer chorten (the Tamar river) if possible, but the best would be the 'Arun river' and the least of all Milighu, Dhankote as middle, shadijong down to the Kannika Tarai... All the country east of these is Sikkim territory, and I pray: he implored, that these might be restored to Sikkim. In other words, Sikkim claimed not only the territory east of the Singalila range but also a large part of Eastern Nepal. The Sikkimese are said to have even crossed the Mechi and 'occupied the abandoned Gorkha posts at Ilam and Phae'. (4)

'The territory lying between Mechi and Teesta was restored to Sikkim by a separate treaty signed at Titalia between Sikkim and the Company on February 10, 1817. Under this treaty the Raja was bound to refer to the arbitration of the British Government all disputes between his subjects and those of neighbouring states. The treaty thus established a complete British influence in Sikkim. In the year 1827, a border dispute arose between Sikkim and Nepal, and Sikkim referred the matter, in accordance with the treaty of Titaliya, to the Company. Two officers Captain Lloyd and the then Commercial Resident G.W. Grant were deputed in 1828 to deal with the disputes and they penetrated into the hills as far north as Rinchingpong. Lloyd spent six days in February 1829 in 'the old Gorkha station of Darjeeling and was deeply attracted by its advantages as a site for a sanatorium. (5) Not only this, he went on further to write that this would be important from the military viewpoint because of its location., Darjeeling was at the time a large village and the residence of one of the Principal Kazis. Approximately, two thirds of Sikkim's population, mainly the Lepchas fled the area and migrated to Nepal because of the tyranny of the Raja of Sikkim. The Governor General deputed Captain Herbert; the Deputy Surveyor General to examine the area with Mr. Grant and in due course the

project was approved by the court of Directors. The East India Company thus became confident of acquiring Darjeeling in 1833. It was this year when the trade monopoly licence of the company with China was abolished. General Lloyd was directed to open negotiation with the Raja, and this transferred when Lloyd was deputed to enquire into the causes of an incursion from Nepal of Lepchas who had taken refuge there from Sikkim. He succeeded in obtaining the execution of a deed of grant by the Raja of Sikkim on the 1st Feb 1835. The deed ran as follows:

“The Governor General, having expressed his desire for the possession of the hill of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government I the Sikkim putte Rajah, out of friendship for the said Governor - General hereby present Darjeeling to East India Company, that is, all the land south of the Great Rangit river, East of the Balasun, Kahail and little Rangit rivers and west of Rungno and Mahanadi rivers.”

This was an unconditional cession of what was then an uninhabited mountain. After the cession, General Lloyd and Dr. Chapman were sent in 1836 to explore and investigate the climate and capabilities of the place. They spent the winter of 1836 and part of 1837, exploring and investigating the possibilities for developing the site as a sanatorium. General Lloyd was appointed a local agent to deal with applications for land, which began to pour in from residents of Calcutta. Progress was rapid, whereas in 1836 General Lloyd and Chapman found only a few huts erected by the Rajah of Sikkim, by 1840, a road had been made from Pankhabari, there was a staging bungalow there and at Mahaldiram, a hotel had been started at Kurseong and another at Darjeeling, and at Darjeeling 30 private houses had been erected and nearly as many ‘locations’ or buildings sites had been taken up at Lebong.

In 1839, Dr. Campbell of the Indian Medical service, British Resident in Nepal, was transferred to Darjeeling as Superintendent. In this capacity he was in charge not only of the civil, criminal and fiscal administration of the District but also of Political relations with Sikkim. Dr. Campbell gave much encouragement to immigrant cultivators and population rose from about 100 in 1839 to about 10,000 in 1849. "Whatever has been done here" wrote N.B. Jackson, and Inspecting Officer in 1852, has been done by Dr. Campbell alone. He found Darjeeling an inaccessible tract of forest, with a very scanty population, by his exertions an excellent sanatorium has been established for troops and others, a Hill Corps has been established for the maintenance of order and improvement of communications, no less than 70 European houses have been built, with a bazar, jail and buildings for the accommodation of the sick in the depot, a revenue of Rs. 50,000 has been raised and is collected punctually and without balance, a simple system of administration of Justice has been introduced, the system of forced labour formerly in use has been abolished and labour with all other valuables has been left to find its own price in an open market, roads have been made, experimental cultivation of tea and coffee has been introduced and various European fruits and grapes, and this has been effected at the same time that the various tribes of inhabitants have been conciliated and their habits and prejudices treated with a caution and forbearance which will render further progress in the same direction an easy task. (6)

In the meantime relations with Sikkim deteriorated. The increasing importance of Darjeeling under free institutions was a source of loss and frustration to the Lamas and leading men of Sikkim, headed by the Dewan Namguay, who were sharers in a monopoly of all trade in Sikkim and lost their rights over those slaves who settled as free men and British subjects in the Darjeeling territory. Frequent kidnapping and demands for return

of slaves took place and the climax was reached when in 1848 Sir Joseph Hooker and Dr. Campbell were made prisoners, while traveling in Sikkim with the permission of the Raja and the British Government by Pagla Dewan. (7) To punish Sikkim after Hooker Campbell incident, a small punitive force entered Sikkim in 1850 and the portion of the Sikkim hills bounded by the Rammam and the Great Rangit on the North, by the Teesta on the East and by the Nepal frontier on the West, including Terai was annexed. The area annexed was 640 sq miles in extent. Immediately after annexation of the Terai in 1850, the Southern portion was placed under the Purnea district, but later had to be tagged with Darjeeling owing to the resentments of the inhabitants. At the time of annexation there were Bangalee officers in the Terai, called Chaudharis who exercised civil and criminal powers.

The Superintendent who was later called the Deputy Commissioner managed the Terai and the hill territory annexed from Sikkim. The inhabitants welcomed the change, as they had to pay only small fixed sums into the Treasury in Darjeeling instead of having to meet certain amounts and demands in kind for personal service made by the Raja and Dewan.

The annexation brought about a remarkable change in the relations between Sikkim and the British. After the annexation British territory in Darjeeling was continuously with the British districts of Purnea and Rangpur in the plains and the Sikkim Raja was cut off from access to the plains except through British territory.

For some years after the annexations relations with Sikkim were not disturbed but periodical raids on British territory had taken place later on by Sikkimese for carrying off slaves for trade. Negotiations proved fruitless and it was thereafter decided by the British to take possession of the portion of Sikkim north of Rammam and west of the great

Rangit until British subjects were released. Offenders handed over and security obtained against recurrence of similar offences.

Dr. Campbell with a small force of 160 rank and files crossed the Rammam in November 1860 and advanced as far as Rinchingpong. He was attacked and forced to fall back on Darjeeling. Late. Col. Gawler with Sir Ashley Eden as Envoy and special commissioner moved with artillery and a force of 2600 men entered Tumlong, the capital of Sikkim, in March 1861. The Raja abdicated in favour of his son after the Dewan had fled and a treaty was made on the 28<sup>th</sup> March. It finally put to an end to frontier troubles with Sikkim and secured full freedom for commerce across the Sikkim border. (8)

The Bhutanese were responsible for a series of incursions and properties were plundered along the long frontier with India. In 1862 news came that the Bhutanese were preparing to make an attack on Darjeeling and troops were sent from Dinajpur to restore confidence.

Subsequently Sir. A. Eden led a special mission to Bhutan to settle difference and to restore the plundered property, but he failed as he was compelled by threats to sign a document giving up all claims to the Bhutan duars on the Assam frontier. He was treated with indignity and with much difficulty left Punakha by night and reached Darjeeling.

In order to prevent Bhutanese incursions in Darjeeling District or the plains south of Bhutan, the Government of India decided to annex the Bengal duars and such hill territories. Small expeditions were sent into Bhutan in 1864. These expeditions met with very oppositions and the operations terminated when, in November 1865, the treaty extorted from Sir. A. Eden was replaced by a fresh one by which what is now the Kalimpong sub-division as well as the Bhutan. Duars and passes leading into the Bhutan

hills were ceded to the British in return for an annual subsidy. The Kalimpong area was first notified as a sub-division under the Deputy Commissioner of the Western Duars District but in 1866 it was transferred to the District of Darjeeling.

The district was divided into two sub-divisions after Kalimpong had been brought under British Administration, i.e, the Headquarters sub-division and Terai sub-division. The Headquarter sub-division covered an area of 960 sq. miles including all the hills on both the side of the Teesta and the Terai sub-division covered an area of 274 sq. miles which included the whole of the country at the foot of hills. The Headquarter of the Terai sub-division was at Hanskhawa near Phansidewa from 1864 to 1880 when they were transferred to Siliguri. Then the metre gange railway of the North Bengal State Railway had been extended to Siliguri, which was then part of Jalpaiguri district and was now transferred to Darjeeling district with a small surrounding area and made the headquarters of the Terai sub- division.

In the meantime, Kurseong had begun to develop and in 1891 was made the Headquarters of a new sub-division, which included both the Terai and the lower hills west of the Teesta. Later in 1907, Siliguri was made a Sub-division, which in 1891 had been absorbed into the Kurseong sub-division. Up to 1907, there had been a Deputy Magistrate at Siliguri working under the sub-divisional officers Kurseong and managing the Terai Government Estate under the Deputy Commissioner. Kalimpong in the meantime had been in the sadar sub-division with a Manager of the Khas Mahals working at Kalimpong under the Deputy Commissioner. In 1916, the Kalimpong sub-division was created as a preliminary to working out development schemes in Kalimpong.

The district was included in the Rajshahi Division until October 1905 when it was transferred to the Bhagalpur Division with the re-arrangement of the provinces it was re-transferred to the Rajshahi Division in March 1912 (9).

### 1.1 STATUS OF DARJEELING DISTRICT

The district being non-regulated district, the land laws of Bengal were not applicable here. The tenancy system was governed by the waste land Rules 1859, Most of the gardens held the land for tea under two tenures (1) Hold in grant under Old Rules (2) Hold in Fee – simple under New Rules Land given for tea in the former case was about 18,89,88 acres and about 12308 acres in the latter case (in between 1866 and 1874).

Dr. Campbell reserved the right to use discretion under Old Rule. Dr. Campbell himself asserted that lands given to Nepali farmers were purchased by the Europeans for conversion of tea gardens. There was a heavy demand for land to start tea gardens in Darjeeling. Even the lands given for exclusive purpose of agriculture was converted to tea. The Act passed in 1859 replaced the ‘discretionary grant’ by Campbell. The most important provisions were, the grants of waste land should be put upto auction at an ‘upset price’ of Rs. 10(£1) per acre, that the sale at such auction should convey a free hold title, that existing lease hold grants might be commuted to freehold under the rules at the option of the grantee and that building locations might be commuted at the rate of twenty years purchase of the annual rent. About 9172 acres of land were sold by public auction at an average rate of Rs. 12. These lands were mainly for tea cultivation in the area.

The provisions under which the lands were put up to auction created much resentments and attempts were constantly made to evade them. Many European

speculators took land and sold it to the planters, Later on amendments were made to the original waste land Rule of 1859 in order to stop the anomalies. There was a Fee Simple Rule of 1862, which allowed commutation of all farming leases given previous to the introduction of the Free Simple Rules in August 1862. The area of the lands commuted under the orders of 1862 is 1342 acres, which together with the area by commutation under the Rules of 1859 makes a total of 21,287 acres in the old hill territory commuted to freehold without being put up to auction. These rules were changed in 1864.

The demand for land was confined only to the west of Teesta of Darjeeling and Kurseong area. Kalimpong area came under the British very late and was inhabited by Bhutias and Lepchas, who were mostly farmers.

The British Policy regarding the administration of territories of India did not provide a uniform system of administration. The District was made a scheduled District by the Act of 1874(10). The scheduled Districts were not placed within the ambit of the general laws and were applied only with modification or in part. The Indian Council Act 1909 also did not bring about any change in the district.

The Government of India Act 1919, brought all the scheduled districts under the Backward tract, and as such, Darjeeling district was declared a partially excluded area till the end of British rule in India.

The Government of India Act 1935 made provisions for an Elected Tea Garden Labour Seat in the Legislative Assembly and was allowed to form constituencies in rotation. The first opportunity of making such a representation went to the Bengal Dooars (west) constituency. The Darjeeling Sardar Division, the Bengal Dooars (eastern) constituency and the Kurseong sub-division were to make the representation second, third and fourth respectively. (11) The 1937 election saw three independent candidates in the

fray (Sri S.W.S.Laden La, Sri J.Sitling and Sri Damber Singh Gurung) and returned Sri Gurung to represent the three subdivisions.

## 1.2. AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The passing of the constitution of 1950 brought to an end the administrative segregation of the district. This abolished all the privileges of the Deputy Commissioner. A uniform administrative pattern was established in the hill areas of the district as in the rest of Bengal.

The treatment of the District in a special way under a separate administrative arrangements like Non Regulated Area, Scheduled District, 'Backward Tract', Partially Excluded Area' gave rise to serious doubts in some quarters as to the genuineness of the grounds of separation in view of the equally backwardness of the people of the rest of the areas general or regulation system of administration. (12)

The non-regulation system first of all emphasised that the people living in territories under it were comparatively backward and mostly ignorant tribal population. 'The separation of the district from the rest of Bengal either as a backward tract under the government of India Act, 1919 or as a partially excluded Area under the Act of 1935 may be properly understood as a sequel to the British imperial Policy'. (13) It was this imperial policy, which compelled the farmers to sell their plots at an average rate of Rs. 12 per acre through public auctions in the year 1859. Majority of the investors were from the European Countries. The Britishers and other citizens from European countries acquired about 9172 acres, of such lands by 1872. (14)

The Administrative history of the district reveals that the rulers never allowed the district to come within the national mainstream and within the purview of general

administration. It becomes quite evident that the British government followed a policy of segregating the district from the administrative, legislative and Judicial system of Bengal.

Economic and social insecurity were the two strong factors, which induced the people of the district to have a separate administrative arrangement specially made for them. The European Association, the Planter's Association and the Hillman's Association, which stood for exclusion of the district. They opened that the real welfare of the district rested on its exclusion from Bengal. Doubts were raised that the exclusion was not actually done for developing the areas declared as non-regulator scheduled Districts but for placing the border areas on the north under direct management of the rulers of the north.

The British government failed to fulfil the aspirations of the hill people and remove economic difficulties. This made the Hillmen quite averse to any political reforms and stressed upon economic upliftment rather than on political of the province with which they had little or no concern at all.

### 1.3. TEA IN INDIA

Sir P.Griffith in the history of the Indian Tea industry observes: -

Amongst much that is confused in the history of tea in China, three color facts have emerged- it was indigenious to the country, it was discovered and used at a very early date, and the simplicity of the technique required for its manufacture led to the establishment of the almost universal habit of tea-drinking in China many centuries before the British thought of growing tea in India. (15)

Tea was used as a luxury drink by the rich British at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which became the worlds cheapest and most widely, used drink

among the common people by 1880. (16) The soil and climatic conditions in the U.K. were quite unfavorable for tea cultivation. Since Tea formed such an important item in the British consumption, the British Government and traders took more direct interest than in the case of most other products. (17) Tea played an important role in the British balance of payments; the government of Great Britain and British India rendered all sorts of direct help for the promotion of tea industry in India. The court of directors of the East India Company made all efforts to develop tea industry in India. (19) The first consignments of 488 lbs. of Indian Tea to the U.K. was highly praised and received much attention. (20) The number of gardens and land under cultivation began to increase only after 1854, when the existing restrictions on leasing out of land to European planters were relaxed by the promulgation of the Wasteland Rule 1854. This attracted many big sterling and rupee companies, and during the following five years the tea industry in India made a steady progress. (21) The success and the nominal rents charged for the wastelands gave rise to speculation. The speculation and the rapid extension of cultivation between 1863 and 1865 led to a depression during 1865-75. (22)

Thereafter the industry took a favourable turn and by the 1880s the drinking of Indian black tea was firmly established in the UK and displaced Chinese black tea and became a leading exporter and producer in the world market. (23) A high level of demand for tea, a very low price of land for gardens, low initial capital requirement, cheap labour and public patronage were the important factors which favoured the development and prosperity of tea industry in India. (24)

#### 1.4. DARJEELING TEA INDUSTRY- AN EARLY HISTORY

##### Beginning of the Tea Gardens in Darjeeling Hills: - The early history

The Darjeeling Tea Industry has a pride of place in West Bengal in view of its contribution to building state economy. Employing over two and half lakhs workers it has earned a niche in generating employment opportunities and lessening unemployment problems. The Darjeeling Tea is famous throughout the world for its fine flavour and aroma. There are 45 countries in the world, which are producing tea, but apart from China no other country in the world has been able to produce the delicately flavored teas except Darjeeling. This is mainly due to its geographical location (between 20 31' and 27 13' North latitude and between 87 59' and 88 53' East longitude), proximately to Himalayas, China Jat (25) (variety) of plants, elevations, soil, rainfall etc. Besides, the flavors produced by different tea gardens, numbering 72 vary from garden to garden. This is owing to the Jat of the bushes, elevation, the aspects of the tea bearing hills, rainfall and also the field practices coupled with the special techniques adopted in manufacturing the teas.

The majority of the population is Gorkha/Nepali. The backbone of the economy of the hills is the famous three, Tea, Timber, and Tourism. The discovery of tea in Bengal dates from 1826, when Major Bruce brought some plants and seeds from Assam. In the British Administrative circles, a serious attention was given to the possibility of starting and developing the cultivation and manufacturing of tea in Darjeeling and else where in the territories under the East India Company. O'Malley has correctly remarked that 'the establishment of the tea industry in Darjeeling is due to the enterprise of Dr. Campbell'. (26) The trade monopoly license of East India Company with China was abolished in 1833, and then Governor General of British India, Lord William Bentinck, supported the

proposal of Dr, Campbell to introduce tea in India. He appointed a committee in 1834 to formulate a plan for the introduction of tea plantations. Mr. Garden a botanist was sent to China to procure seeds and seedlings. He returned in 1835 with the tea seedlings and were distributed in the hilly region of the Country including Darjeeling. The original experiment of planting tea in Darjeeling was carried out by Dr. Campbell who planted tea seeds in 1841 at his residence at an elevation of 7,000 ft near Jalpahar and Alooari areas, but the seeds and plants were continually injured by hail, fog, frost, but the experimental nursery raised by Major Cronemelin at Lebong proved a great success. Hence immediate steps were undertaken to shift the plantations at lower elevation. Major Crommelin was entrusted with the task of shifting plantations. After 17 years of hard work, the first successful nursery was started at Aleboong. Thus by 1856, tea industry was firmly established in the district as a commercial enterprise.

The Alubari Tea garden was opened by the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company in 1856, the Dhotre garden was started by Dr. Brougham in 1859 and four gardens namely, Ging, Ambote, Takdawh and Phubsering were established by the Darjeeling tea Company, and the gardens at Takvar and Badamtam by the Lebong Tea Company. Other gardens, which were started at this early period, were Makaibari, Pandam, and steinthal tea estates. By the end of 1866, there were no less than 39 gardens with 10,000 acres under cultivation, and an outturn of over 433000 lbs of tea. In 1870, there were 56 gardens with 11,000 acres under cultivation employing 8000 labourers and yielding nearly 1700,000 lbs. and in 1874 the number of gardens had increased to 113, the area under cultivation to 18,888 acres the outturn to 3928000 lbs. Between 1866 and 1874 the number of gardens under tea almost trebled, the area under cultivation increased by 82% while the production multiplied nearly ten times. (27)

Table I. 01: The development of tea industry since 1874

| Year | No. of garden | Area under<br>Tea (in Acres) | Outturn of<br>Tea in lbs | No, of labourers<br>employed |
|------|---------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1874 | 113           | 18,888                       | 3927,911                 | 19424.                       |
| 1885 | 175           | 38,499                       | 9090,298                 | N.A.                         |
| 1895 | 186           | 48,692                       | 1,1714,500               | N.A.                         |
| 1905 | 148           | 50,618                       | 1,2447,500               | N.A.                         |
| 1935 | 148           | 59,356                       | 2,1026,000               | N.A.                         |
| 1940 | 142           | 63,059                       | 2,3721,500               | N.A.                         |
| 1950 | N.A.          | N.A.                         | 7838000                  | N.A.                         |
| 1960 | 99            | 40925.43                     | 10107000                 | N.A.                         |
| 1971 | 97            | 45954.35                     | 10293000                 | 42763                        |
| 1980 | 103           | 45065.15                     | 1268900                  | 45987                        |
| 1990 | 102           | 47525.27                     | 1449900                  | 48116                        |
| 1994 | N.A.          | 49560.56                     | N.A.                     | N.A.                         |

From the above table it will be seen that there has been but little extension of cultivation owing to the fact that all the land available and suitable for tea within the area reserved for it had been taken up, while the number of gardens were reduced in consequence of the amalgamation of several estates. (28)

The development of tea after 1907 is available in the District Gazetteer published by A.J.Dash CIE in 1947.

Table I.02: The distribution of tea gardens under the different thana area

| Thane           | No.of Tea Gardens |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Darjeeling      | 19                |
| Jorebunglow     | 16                |
| Sukhia Pokhari  | 09                |
| Pulbazar        | 02                |
| Rangli Rangliot | 09                |
| Kurseong        | 25                |
| Mirik           | 05                |
| Siliguri        | 27                |
| Kharibari       | 11                |
| Phansidewa      | 13                |
| Kalimpong       | 00                |
| Gorubathan      | 06                |
| Total           | 142               |

Mr. Dash points out that the total area under tea leases was 1, 23,853 acres of which 51,281 acres were under tea. In 1920, these areas had increased to 142152 and 59356 and in 1940 to 167972 and 63059. The area under tea rose to a maximum in 1943 when it was 63,227 acres, in that year the total area under lease was 165680 acres. (29)

Table I. 03: A summary of position of the tea gardens in the District of Darjeeling as per district census handbook, 1951

|                                        |               |
|----------------------------------------|---------------|
| Total area of the district             | 1192 sq.miles |
| Area under lease                       | 259 sq.miles  |
| Ordinary cultivated area in tea garden | 80 sq.miles   |
| Hill east of Teesta Area under Tea     | 21 sq.miles   |
| Hill west of Teesta under Tea          | 35 sq.miles   |
| Tarai                                  | 66 sq.miles   |

Availability of Cheap labour and relatively easy access of land for cultivation have contributed largely to the phenomenal growth of tea industry in Darjeeling.

The Large-scale migration of workers from eastern Nepal provided cheap labour and in the absence of any organization and leaders, the labourers depended completely on the mercy of the garden managers.

The liberal land policy also favoured the tea industry to settle and develop.

European settlers like Dr. Grant, the Barnes Brothers, Capt. Mason, Capt. Samler, Mr. Smith, Dr. Brougham, Mr. Martin, Mr. James White, Mr. George Watt Christison, Mr. W.O. Brien Ansell were instrumental in enhancing the growth of Darjeeling tea industry.

Between 1870-1890, the pattern of garden management began changing, which affected the production to a large extent. From the pioneer planters the garden came under the hands of well-organised limited companies or tea "managing agents". This severely affected the management as the gardens changed hands from one set of speculative owners to another set of owners. M.Dasgupta's remarks on garden

managements and its impact on the health of tea industry is worth adding. He has noted thus, After the British left most of the new planters came to business by accumulation of profit either in wholesale trade or in speculative business. An analysis of 27 elected joint stock companies of Darjeeling reveals that between 1940 to 1970 while the number of non-Indian directors decline from 112 to only 11, the number Indian directors showed a corresponding increase from 5 to 85 in the period. However, of these Indian directors with a merchant background shot up from 2 in 1940 to 53 in 1965. In any case the directors with this background completely changed the nature of management.

Apart from quick profit tendency there had been a new phenomenon in the area. Very often there is a quick change of gardens from one set of directors to another set of directors. The frequency of change of ownership in Darjeeling hill area is much higher than in dooars, or in terai. For example, in between 1965, 55, 67% of Darjeeling tea gardens were affected by this change of owners, whereas in Doors it is 36.54% and in Terai 22.72%. Gardens have changed hands from one set of speculative owners to another set of owners. In the meantime the odd owners have stripped the gardens of leaves and vitality. It is very often stated that Governments, both Central and State, are more interested to take the surplus of the gardens in the form of various taxes. Governments never cared to look to the health of the gardens. Some half hearted measures were taken by the Government for replantation of tea bushes through different schemes of the tea Board. But according to its own admission money given to the planters was not used in the gardens and were siphoned off to other speculative industries. The money or subsidies given to the fertilizers were either misused or sold in open markets or not utilised at all. In fact Tea Board is mainly a lobby of the big planters.' (30)

The Darjeeling tea industry suffered two major setbacks during and after the two World wars. Most of the experienced British planters enrolled to fight for the crown. The planters from Assam, who were unaware of the peculiar characteristics of the Darjeeling plantations, filled in the void. The Assam planters found the China Jat plantation too congested and planted out vast areas at all elevations with Assam seeds like Betjan, Khoribari, and Dangri Manipuri. Even in some cases, alternate lines of bushes in the China tea sections were uprooted for easy movement of the pluckers and supervisors. Thus, the Darjeeling Tea plantations suffered considerably at the hands of inexperienced Assam planters.

After the Second World War, the British Ministry of Food Purchases, stopped buying tea, leading to a major marketing problems and barring Calcutta/London auctions, there was no other outlet for Darjeeling tea. The Darjeeling tea industry suffered its second set back with the slump of 1952 when the prices knocked at the London Auctions and could not even cover the chipping costs. In the Calcutta auctions teas were withdrawn, without any bids, resulting in heavy financial losses. Subsequently with the independence of the country, the Parliament and State Legislature passed a number of Labour Welfare Measures, such as Minimum Wages Act, Plantation Labour Act that escalated costs making the condition worst. This had an adverse effect as because a Large section of the British owners felt that their properties were no longer economically viable and by 1956, a large number of gardens changed hands to local Indian entrepreneurs who were inexperienced and had never seen tea bushes previously. They were in dilemma and faced an uphill task in running gardens.

Table I.04: Prof. M DasGupta of North Bengal University in his article on ownership changes has given good picture for period from 1947 to 1970 (31)

| Ownership Categories | Ownership in 1947 |             | Ownership in 1970 |            |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------|
|                      | Indian            | Non –Indian | Indian            | Non-Indian |
| Proprietary          | 31                | 08          | 32                | -          |
| Private Limited      | 01                | -           | 12                | -          |
| Public Limited       | 21                | 10          | 41                | -          |
| Sterling             | -                 | 30          | -                 | 16         |
|                      | 53                | 48          | 85                | 16         |

The Proprietary estates have declined giving place to private and public limited companies. The British Proprietary estates virtually disappeared and Indian proprietors occupy the position. Thus the environment was complete for the transfer of ownership along with independence. Initially, Indianisation took place in agency, brokering and legal aspects of the tea industry. The decision of the Government of India to fill top and middle position of management by Indians made it possible to complete the process.

Dr. B.Bhattacharya has stated that altogether 122 gardens were put on sale between 1947 and 1976 for all the North Bengal gardens, which in effect means that over 41% of the total number of tea gardens of this particular region have changed hands during this period. The position of Darjeeling hill is as follows. (32)

|                                                    |                      |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| No. of Tea Gardens                                 | 97                   |
| No. of Tea Gardens affected by change of ownership | 54                   |
| Percentage of total number                         | 55.67 %(years 1976). |

It is revealed that in barely 30 years the ownership of more than half of the tea gardens in the district has changed. This reflects the unrest of the industry. The frequency of changes brought in instability in tea industry resulting in the neglect of tea bushes. As per CMPO study in 1972-73, 73% of the total hectareage was with bushes over 50 years. Another 15% was in the category of 31 years or 50 years. Thus of late, more than 88% of the total bushes have crossed their economic life.

The history of Darjeeling tea garden is conspicuous of adventurism of the British planters who braved the natural odds and started the industry in a forlorn place. The European settlers were the torchbearers of the industry followed by few Indian entrepreneurs. The depression had its immediate impact on pattern of ownership management. After independence, the local traders took keen interest and this in effect started Indianisation of tea industry. The long-term concept of Tea Industry was eclipsed by quick-profit tendency. The ownership also changed at a quick rate which severely affected the stability of the industry. Tea is a long-term solution. It involves a long chain of activity and any dislocation at any of the joints in the chain is bound to throw the whole operation out of gear. At present the situation of Darjeeling tea industry is indeed very grave and solely dependent on the high sale prices-which is beyond the industry's control and solely dependent on the buyers. Since 80% of Darjeeling teas are exported and if the foreign buyers decide to pay less than Rs. 100.00 per kgs then the whole Darjeeling tea industry will collapse. Priority is to be given to rehabilitate the tea bushes. This can be tackled by two methods viz (1) Short term and (2) Long term.

Short term- each tea estate should undertake rejuvenation pruning with interplanting at the rate of approximately 3 to 5 % of their tea bearing area. This will enable the tea estates to get the return much earlier than uprooting and replanting. Under

the Long-term method, each tea estate should uproot and replant at the rate of approximately 2.5 % of their total area under tea annually so that by about 40 years all their tea areas will be completely renovated. There is no short cut to revive this vital industry of the Darjeeling Hill area and the government, state well as the centre, must take immediate action before it is too late.

### 1.5. SUMMARY

The district of Darjeeling lies in the northernmost part of West Bengal. The district came to be what it is from a very obscure origin Prior to the year 1816 the whole of the territory known as British Sikkim belonged to Nepal, which had won it by conquest from the Sikkimese. By a treaty signed between Nepal and the British at Sugauli at the end of 1816 Nepal ceded the 4,000 square miles of territory to the British, which in turn by a treaty signed at Titaliya in 1817, was handed over to the Raja of Sikkim.

Later, in 1828, when G.A. Lloyd and J.W. Grant found their way into the west of Darjeeling they were very much impressed with the possibilities of the station as a sanatorium. Grant and J.D. Herbert visited shortly after who reported favourably on the situation of the hill of Darjeeling. Lloyd was deputed to start negotiations with the Sikkim Raja for a cession of the hill either for an equivalent money or land. The Sikkim Raja unconditionally handed over a strip of hill territory, 24 miles long and about 5 to 6 miles wide, covering approximately 138 sq.miles in area, which included the villages of Darjeeling and Kurseong, for the establishment of a sanatorium.

About fifteen years after this the relations between Sikkim and the British Government had been far from satisfactory. The Raja had allowed his Prime Minister

Diwan Namguay, to administer the state. He became jealous and annoyed at the increasing importance of Darjeeling under the British. He was joined by the Lamas and other notabilities for a rebellion as they lost their rights over slaves settling as British subjects in Darjeeling. The climax was reached in 1849, when Hooker and Campbell were seized and made prisoners while travelling in Sikkim. A punitive expedition was sent by the British in 1850, which resulted in the annexation of the Terai and the portion of Sikkim Hills bounded by the Rammam and the Great Rangit rivers on the north, by the Tista on the east and by Nepal frontier on the west, covering an area of 640 sq.miles. The Terai and hill territory thus annexed were managed by the Superintendent.

The year 1866 may be taken as marking an epoch in the history of Darjeeling. After Kalimpong had been brought under British administration the district was divided into two sub-divisions: the headquarters sub-division with an area of 960 sq.miles including all the hills on both sides of the Tista river and the Terai sub-division with an area of 274 sq.miles which included the whole of the country at the foot of the hills. In 1891, the sub-division of Kurseong was formed and in 1907, the sub-division of Siliguri, Kalimpong had been in the Sadar division then: and only in 1916, the Kalimpong sub-division was created as a preliminary to working and development schemes.

The district was formerly a Non-Regulation district, and it had no representative in the Legislative Council constituted under the Government of India Act, 1919. It was excluded and declared a backward tract. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the district was made a partially excluded area till the end of British rule in India. The passing of the constitution of 1950 brought to an end the administrative segregation of the district. This abolished all the privileges of the Deputy Commissioner. A uniform

administrative pattern was established in the hill areas of the district as in the rest of Bengal.

The treatment of the District in a special way under a separate administrative arrangements like Non Regulated Area, Scheduled District, 'Backward Tract', Partially Excluded Area' gave rise to serious doubts in some quarters as to the genuineness of the grounds of separation in view of the equally backwardness of the people of the rest of the areas general or regulation system of administration.

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## CHAPTER 2

RÉCRUITMENT OF LABOURERS FOR THE TEA GARDENSTHE SARDARI SYSTEM AND ITS IMPACT OF DARJEELING ECONOMY:

The tea industry is the largest organised industry of Darjeeling. Most of the workers who were employed in the tea gardens in the early phase of expansion were immigrants from Nepal. The special feature of this industry is that it not only employs the male member of the family but also women members and children above the age of 12 years. Women are considered to be superior in the field operation because they are better pluckers.

Before going into the details of recruitment, the present paper seeks to answer some of the causes of migration, which are important 'push' factors from Nepal and 'pull' factors from India. 'The cession of Darjeeling to the British from the Raja of Sikkim in 1834 was an invitation to the Nepalese immigration into India. The British started deforestation and plantation of tea simultaneously'. (1) 'It brought in its train two large immigration in the hills, of Nepalese who were more useful as labourers in tea gardens and thrifty as cultivators than the aboriginal Lepcha. (2) After the annexations of Kalimpong to British India, the hillmen from Nepal flocked in large numbers, much to the displeasure of the earlier settlers. 'The population of Kalimpong area at the time of annexation in 1865 was estimated to be 3536, which reached to 12683 in the year 1881. Thus immigration was maximum between 1865 and 1881'. (3) The heavy influx of immigrants from Nepal who had cleared and brought into cultivation the waste lands, especially on the hillside between the Teesta and Relli, brought them into direct confrontations with the Bhutias and Lepchas, who were early inhabitants of the tract.'

They complained of intrusion of the Nepalese immigrants and feared that the immigrants would soon outnumber them. Mr. Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling said in 1874, 'There has been in the interval a very large influx of Pahariya immigrants from Nepal who have cleared and brought into cultivation a great deal of land, especially on the hill side between the Teesta and Relli. He further added, '... there is a struggle between the Bhutia and Lepcha races going on, which would require very careful attention when a settlement was being made. (4)

C.F. Magarh's District Compilation of Darjeeling in 1872 states that 'the total number of persons in the district were 94712'. (5) Dr. Campbell noted that 'by the year 1850, the number of inhabitants reached 10,000. Hooker noted the rapid influx when he visited Darjeeling about that time. When a rough census was taken of the inhabitants of this tract, the total was found to be over 22,000. (6) The population had rapidly increased to 94712 by the time of First Census of India. However it is revealed that the census of 1872 was considered defective. There was an immense concealment of females in 1881. Many of them fled on the census night over the frontier into Nepal. Labourers absconded from tea gardens from panic and other causes. (7) The inaccuracy and incompleteness of the First Census led to a large increase of population in 1881. It was believed that the Census of 1891 for the first time took a satisfactory turn (8) and by the turn of the century in 1901 it was 249117. This increase was mainly connected with the development of tea industry, improvement in communication due to the building of railways and roads, and last, but not the least the importance of Darjeeling as a centre of educational activity for Europeans. 'The missionaries have been the pioneers of education among the native population'. (9) Between 1870 and 1895, the number of gardens increased from 56 to 186 and the area under tea cultivation was 48,692 acres (10), which led to a labour crisis in

the Darjeeling Hills. This indicated that gardens had an important role to play in changing the demographic structure of Darjeeling hills.<sup>11</sup> 'The census of 1911,1921, and 1931 reported Nepalese immigrants into India as 200217,273932 and 327828 respectively. (11)

'Between 1872 and 1881, the population had increased by 63.8% and during the next decade by 43.9%. The growth rate registered a drop to 11.6% during 1891-1901 and a further drop to 6.5% during 1901-11, which remained almost the same in the following decade. During 1901-11 most of the population growth took place in Kalimpong Sub-division, which recorded a 19.3% rise in population. It appears that during this decade, the growth of population by immigration was caused more by bringing wastelands into cultivation than by expansion of industry'. (12) During 1941-51, the district population increased by 18.3%.

'Indo-Nepal migration is a unique type of international migration, not to be found elsewhere in the world, notes Dr. V. B. Singh Kansakar'. He goes on further to add that 'such migration are comparable neither with the migration of Tamils to Sri Lanka, nor with that of Bangladesh to India :( 13)

'A.J. Dash has noted that actual population on tea gardens according to 1941 census was 1, 46508. (14) Distribution of population is given as follows:

Table II.01: Distribution of population in tea gardens according to 1941 census

| Sub-Division           | Thana                 | Number |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------|
| Sardar Sub-Division    | Darjeeling Thana      | 24,048 |
|                        | Jorebungalow Thana    | 21,594 |
|                        | Sukhia Pokhari Thana  | 14,358 |
|                        | Pulbazar Thana        | 3321   |
|                        | Rangle Rangliot Thana | 13,202 |
| Kurseong Sub-Division  | Kurseong Thana        | 20,596 |
|                        | Mirik Thana           | 14,710 |
| Kalimpong Sub-Division | Kalimpong Thana       | 0      |
|                        | Gorubathan Thana      | 6,094  |
| Siliguri Sub-Division  | Siliguri Thana        | 13,867 |
|                        | Kharibari Thana       | 5,999  |
|                        | Phansidewa Thana      | 8,719  |

Prof. M. Dasgupta and A. Samad have given a tabular picture of composition different ethnic groups in Darjeeling Hill area from 1901-1951. (15)

Table II.02. Composition of different ethnic groups in Darjeeling hill areas

|                               | 1901   | 1911   | 1921   | 1931   | 1941   |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Kiratis (Rais, Subba, Limbus) | 32.50  | 34.70  | 32.41  | 33.87  | 32.57  |
| Tamang                        | 18.68  | 17.07  | 17.80  | 20.34  | 21.61  |
| Gurungs, Mangars              | 5.84   | 6.05   | 5.67   | 5.85   | 6.67   |
| Newars                        | 3.86   | 4.34   | 5.11   | 5.40   | 5.28   |
| Khamis, Damais, Sarkis        | 10.96  | 10.90  | 11.46  | 10.13  | 11.75  |
| Upper Caste Bhahmins          | 4.33   | 3.88   | 4.78   | 4.61   | 2.88   |
| Other Nepali groups           | 10.93  | 10.23  | 10.89  | 10.67  | 9.58   |
| Lepchas                       | 6.67   | 6.08   | 5.65   | 6.34   | 5.38   |
| Bhutias                       | 6.33   | 6.75   | 6.23   | 2.79   | 3.28   |
|                               | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

(Other Nepali Groups: - 1) Sunwars, 2) Thapas 3) Yakhas and other smaller groups like  
Giri)

They have pointed out that 'almost all the migrants were of Nepalese origin, and belonged to the diverse ethnic groups, and a very few belonged to the upper Hindu castes like Brahmins. (16) The Kiratis formed the bulk of the migrants. The percentage of such migrants being 32 percent in 1901, which reached to 33 percent in 1951.

Magarth's compilation of Darjeeling District has shown ethnical division of 'Nepalese' under 41 different heads, and they numbered 25,781 in 1872. (17) The classification has not included Murmis or Tamangs, who numbered 6570. The Murmis were placed among the aboriginal tribes. (18) 'Hunter has noted that including the Murmis; the number of Nepalese in Darjeeling would be raised to 32,338. When we add Syangden Moktan and Tamang, numbering 3, 3, and 4 respectively the figure is raised to 32348. (19)

The Compilation of Magarth does not include Brahmins and Chettris under the ethnical division of 'Nepalese'.(20) Hunter has noted that out of 1002 Brahmans 98 were from Terai, and 904 were shown as high caste Brahmins who were mainly cultivators'.(21) Similarly out of 145 shown as 'Kshatriyas' 117 were from the hills and 1754 hill Rajputs out of a total of 8972 Rajputs.(22) 'The Kirats (shown under different heads) including the Dewan, Dilpali, Yakha, Jimdar, Khambu and other of Rai-Limbu group number 13692. In fact Darjeeling alone had 20 percent of Nepal's Kirat population in 1870. If the bulk of that population emigrated during 1840-60, as the British records suggested, about 12 to 15 percent of the Kirats moved out of their land to Darjeeling. (23)

## 2.1. CAUSES OF MIGRATION

Tea cultivation in Darjeeling was made possible with the large-scale migration of Nepalese from Eastern Nepal. Dr. Campbell of the Indian Medical services was

transferred from Kathmandu to Darjeeling as Superintendent of the new territory acquired under negotiations with government of Sikkim in 1835. His foremost task was to attract settlers and in this he was successful. It is said that at this time, Sri Dakman Rai had come to Darjeeling with a caravan of twenty pack ponies with foodstuffs and other essentials and few servants for a pilgrimage to 'Mahakal Baba' a very important shrine. Dr. Campbell on hearing about the visitor requested him for help by indenting labourers from Nepal to develop Darjeeling. By the end of the year, Sri Dakman Rai came back to Darjeeling with thousand of immigrants. In recognition of the helpful work done, he was given the grants of Freehold lands presently known as Soureni, Phuguri and Samirpani. (24) By 1849, about 10,000 immigrants had come from Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Sir Joseph Hooker visited Darjeeling about that time and he also noted the rapid influx of population from outside. A rough census taken in 1869 showed the inhabitants of the area to be over 22,000. (25)

Few questions arise as to a) why was this high rate of immigration from Nepal into India b) why the district of Darjeeling became the centre of highest concentration of such migrants c) why most of them were non-Brahmins non-upper caste groups?

Economic reasons assisted by certain other conditions are perhaps very important in explaining this phenomenon. Nepal's economy was stagnant and offered little scope of employment to its population.

Before the establishment of Shah kingdom all ethnic groups in Nepal held land under a system known as 'Kipat', in which the ownership of land was vested collectively in the entire ethnic group. (26) This system was later converted to 'Raikar' by the Shah rulers with an objective of consolidating their political power. The peasants were subjected to heavy taxation and impositions. 'They were forced to pay 'Saune-Fagu' tax,

payable in cash or kind and collected in June-July and February-March. At the time of marriage of Princes, taxes such as 'Goddhuwa' and 'Gadimubarak' collected at the time of coronation, or 'godan' collected to finance the royal gifts of cows to the Brahmans added considerably to the high incidence of rural indebtedness'. (27) Failure to repay loans led to slavery and bondage. (28) The political unification had a negative impact on the tribals as this completely derailed their socio-economic structure. (29)

Through Prithvinarayan Shah's Gorkha conquest succeeded in creating a 'unified kingdom' it failed to create a unified society, (30) as unification meant the control of the state power by high caste families. The unification of Eastern Nepal gave birth to a feudal class of 'jagir' and 'birta' owners. (31) Thus Caplan's remark is worth noting. He has remarked 'Kipat' was nibbled at, not swallowed whole. (32)

The continued slavery in Nepal was an important 'push factor' causing Nepalese immigration into British India. Slavery, as an institution continued till the second decade of the present century. G.B.Fraser has reported that during Gorkha rule, a total of 20,000 people had been enslaved. (33)

Raper, has given an account of slaves at a Gorkhali post in a pass leading to Har-ka-Pir. He has focused on the slave trade that prevailed during 1808. Even the children of three years old were not spared and were sold for Rs. 10/- (Ten) to settle loans advanced to their parents. (34) These slaves were treated as cattles and exported to India through Hardwar. These slaves were left with no other alternatives but to migrate to other places. The hilly areas of Darjeeling offered to the immigrants an agreeable and cultural environment. People escaped from feudal exploitation in Nepal to the colonial exploitation in British India. Thus we find that the Kiratis from Eastern Nepal were the

first immigrants to Darjeeling, who in due courses, i.e. from 1901 to 1951 formed the major ethnic group in the composition of hill population.

Darjeeling district became a great recruiting centre for the British army, by the middle of the last century. The British Army was impressed by the sterling quality of the Gorkhas in the Anglo-Gorkha war (1814-16) and was looking forward for opportunities of picking up the Gorkhas with the prospect of strengthening the British Indian Army. The raising of the Gorkha forces into His Majesty's Gorkha Regiment Rifles, Kashmir Imperial Service Troops, Assam Rifles, Burma Rifles, and Eastern Frontier Rifles. The Military Police Battalions, the armed section of the Police Forces, Kumaon Regiment speaks itself of the immense immigration of the Nepalese into India. 'According to Major Nicolay of the Gorkha Rifles, in January 1913, there were 18142 Gorkhas in the Indian Army, 1028 in the Imperial Service troops, 5135 in the Military Police of Assam, Bengal and Burma making a total of 24,305. Out of this, 22,348 men were from Nepal. (35) 'In addition, there was a reserve of 100 men per Battalion of the Gorkha Regiments of Indian Army, sanctioned after the experimental Reserve Training at Gorakhpur in 1909-10.(36) It is noted that a total of 27428 men from Nepal were recruited during the period 1886-87 to 1903-04.(37)

Many of the Gorkhas, even after their retirement settled in India, and their generation too, never thought of going back to their homeland. This added to the already preponderant Gorkha population. The large-scale emigration of Nepalese to India for recruitment in the Indian Army was the result of feudal social and political structure and the deteriorating economic condition of the people.

The historical processes have played dominant role in shaping the economy of the hill areas of Darjeeling. Apart from tea industry and the recruitment of Nepalese in the

British Indian Army, the migrants were employed in cinchona plantations, which was introduced at Mungpoo region of Darjeeling hills in 1862. Many cinchona plantations came up at later stages at Munsong in 1901, Rongo in 1938. There was rapid demand for manual labour as the work grew considerably. Beside cinchona plantations, the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, the Public Works Department work of construction and maintenance of roads, management of forests opened up many avenues of employment to the immigrants.

Agriculture too played an important role in encouraging large-scale immigration besides tea. Dr. Campbell gave the early settlers every encouragement to reclaim forestlands and settle there. 'Kalimpong' or 'Daling Cote' had a very nominal population of Bhutia and Lepcha races at the time of annexation. (1865). In the ensuing decades, there was a pretty large immigration from Nepal into Kalimpong area. In the western side of Teesta, i.e. Darjeeling and Kurseong sub-division, most of the tea gardens are located and attracted most of the immigrants. The eastern side of Teesta had a different type of land - tenure system and considered as a 'Khasmahal' area having cultivation as the main economy. Thus Darjeeling district having similar ecological background produced dualistic economy - the unorganized sector and organised sector. The Organised sector represented by tea cultivation and unorganized sector by agriculture. The migration pattern was influenced by the dualistic economy.

Land was withheld from development under tea in the Kalimpong areas, because of Government policy to reserve the areas for forest and ordinary cultivation. 'According to the Settlement Report of C.A. Bell.I.C.S. (1901-03) There were only four tea estates in the sub-division, 1) Sama Beong 2) Ambiok 3) Fagu 4) Kumai. (38) The Nepalese immigrants who flocked into Kalimpong were the pioneers of agriculture J.A.Graham has

described Dhanbir Gurung Mandal as one of the early such pioneers. Dhanbir Gurung was popularly known as 'Bheriwala Mandal'. (39)

It is rather strange that despite obvious avenues of prosperity, the British did not find the areas worth settling down. Thus the British exploitation was mainly in the development of tea, trade and education and did not result in any appreciable permanent British population.

'The large scale emigration of the Nepalese from hill areas to India and the preference for employment in activities requiring no skill at all, such as army and police services, watchman, household servants, and security guards have been governed by availability of these jobs in Indian cities and towns to a greater extent'.(40) Nepalese migration to India, permanent as well as seasonal, has virtually stopped since 1951, which had reached about 70% in the same year.

## 2.2. THE SARDARI SYSTEM

The Nepalese who flocked to Darjeeling in considerable numbers were offered many jobs opportunities in the expanding tea industry and the British Indian Army. Many of these immigrants cleared and brought under cultivation lands that remained waste or were covered by forest. The land between Teesta and Relli, were reclaimed and brought under cultivation.

Tea plantation being an agro-based industry, industrial and agricultural working environment co-exists. The striking feature of all tea plantations is the employment of women and children in large numbers. The British advocated the employment of families rather than individuals. 'The Royal Commission recognised that the system of recruiting families rather than individuals and the practice of granting lands for spare-time

cultivation meant that the life of a tea-garden labourer resembled that of the villager and avoided the worst features of town life.(41)

Individual gardens sent 'Sardars' annually to recruit labourers and were paid a commission for bringing people from his own village. Recruitment through garden sardars proved to be the best and cheapest way of importing labourers for they brought the whole families. The women and children could supplement the incomes of the family by plucking excess leaf, more than double their pay. The women folk were employs for plucking leaves as they were considered to be better pluckers. In Darjeeling hills, no recruitment problem existed. The economic pressure in Nepal compelled the people to find an outlet.

The sardars were sent to their villages in Eastern Nepal in the recruiting season, which generally began in October and November, and ended in February. The Nepalese flocked in large numbers as they were lured by the garden sardars of better work and money they come to the Darjeeling hills with a hope of plucking 'money' from 'two leaves and a bud'. The sardars were given the responsibility of maintaining peace and harmony in their respective inhabitation but also to ensure that there was regular turnover of the labour of his group for work in the tea estates. The welfare of the workers were entrusted upon respective sardar- the workers under a 'sardar' developed a feeling of closeness.

A list of 'garden sardars' along with their recruits is appended below, for Nagri Farm Tea Estate. Information gathered from their office records revealed that the descendants of these sardars still receive a 'commission' from the garden.

Table II.03: List of garden sardars of Nagri Farm Tea Estate

| Sl.No. | Name of Sardar      | Labourers (Male/Female) |
|--------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1.     | Akardhoj Gurung     | 42                      |
| 2.     | Bahadur Mangar      | 53                      |
| 3.     | Biroo Pradhan       | 14                      |
| 4.     | Chandralal Sanyasi  | 57                      |
| 5.     | Dharamlal Giri      | 22                      |
| 6.     | Dhandrabir Sunwar   | 07                      |
| 7.     | Dikbir Tamang       | 27                      |
| 8.     | Dalamardhan Rai     | 30                      |
| 9.     | Gakul               | 36                      |
| 10.    | Jitman Moktan       | 154                     |
| 11.    | Kaziman Pradhan     | 12                      |
| 12.    | Kaloo Rai           | 87                      |
| 13.    | Lachhuman Tamang    | 24                      |
| 14.    | Lal Bahadur Chettri | 27                      |
| 15.    | Gopilal Khawas      | 14                      |
| 16.    | Setu Chettri        | N.A.                    |
| 17.    | Tiring Lepcha       | 23                      |
| 18.    | Woozir Singh Khawas | 53                      |

Source: Office records - Nagri Farm T.E.

The sardars were instrumental in the recruitment of workers, and enjoyed a hereditary leadership among the tea garden workers. The Labourers in Darjeeling tea gardens were always 'free' in the sense that the labourers were not placed under any kind

of contract and could leave whenever they pleased. The reasons for the difference between Darjeeling and Assam systems are nowhere explicitly stated, but it was perhaps mainly due to the fact that Darjeeling hills was much nearer than Assam to its principal recruiting ground. The labourers who went from other parts of India to Assam were indeed going to foreign parts, only too anxious to run back home if he felt homesick. But the labourers who migrated from Sikkim and Nepal into Darjeeling found close affinities in religion, culture and language. The migrant labourers, thus never thought of returning back home.

Expansion of tea industry has been found to be the potent factor contributing to the growth of population. This is evident from the fact that 'according to 1901 census, the tea gardens labourers and their dependents accounted for more than two thirds of total population of the district'.(42) The number of gardens increased from 74 in 1872 to 153 in 1881. The area under tea increased from 14,000 acres to 30,000 acres during the corresponding period. Ten years later, the number of gardens reached 177 and the area under tea considerably increased to 45,000 acres. This rapid expansion made the supply of local labour unequal - the result was an unexampled immigration.(43)

From later accounts based on census from 1869 onwards it appears that in the tea gardens nine-tenths of the Labourers were Nepalese in origin.(44)

( With the passing of Tea District Emigrant Labour Act in 1933, the 'Sardari' system was abolished subjecting all recruitment to official review. The tea industry in Darjeeling district was expanding till 1950s. After 1950s, The industry stopped employment of migrants. The passing of Plantation Labour Act 1951 formalised the relationship between planter and plantation worker. )

### 2.3. IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

The growth of Darjeeling District is mainly due to the growth of tea plantation. It is an interesting job to study the changing plantation situation and its impact on agrarian environment. Tea gardens remained isolated from the neighbourhood despite social, cultural, ethnic similarities. The neighbourhood in Darjeeling initially represented what Munsif called 'coolie settlements'. (45) 'The neighbourhood' in its real sense is referred to the sub-divisions of Darjeeling Sardar and Kurseong. 'Most of the neighbourhood developed chiefly out of the coolie settlement partly after the labour needs of the gardens reached the saturation point and partly because the people found other sources of livelihood more lucrative and gave up the garden work. The plantation system had no direct economic relationship with the agricultural sector but had significant economic and social relationship with the coolie settlements. (46)

The economy of Darjeeling has a dualistic structure - plantation in Darjeeling - Kurseong area, and agriculture in Kalimpong - Gorubathan areas. River Teesta is the dividing line between two types of structure. This type of 'dualism' is found everywhere in most of the underdeveloped areas but now there are certain characteristics, which are not easily found everywhere. (47)

It is pointed out in some of the writings on plantation economy it has no impact on the surrounding areas. One aspect of the 'enclave theory is that growth of tea or coffee plantations result in pauperisation of agriculture, Nawaz Dawood, in his paper 'Pauperisation of the peasantry' argues that in Sri Lanka the growth of plantation economy result in lack of growth of agriculture. (48) Certain features of plantation economy become clear to us from the study of above paper. They can be summarized as follows:

1. With the growth of plantation agriculture suffered in Sri Lanka.
2. Plantation labourers were ethnically and culturally different from the agriculturist.
3. There is hardly any interconnection between agriculture and plantation and plantation remained an 'enclave' economy in Sri Lanka.

The 'enclave' theory needs modification in the context of Darjeeling hill area. 'There are various 'forward' links between plantation and agriculture in Darjeeling hill areas. The tea plantations led to growth of agriculture, rural settlements and other small scale ancillary industries the growth of populations with a heavy dose of migration led to certain 'demographic transformation. The growth of monetisation of the economy and opening up of Darjeeling to the demand of international trade and commerce led to new type of relations of production. (49)

It may be mentioned here that though some tea gardens had started falling sick even before the Independence, occupational diversification was significantly a post independence phenomenon.

There are some significant differences in the above relationship in this region and elsewhere. Firstly, while in the plains and terais of India the neighbourhood did already exist and the plantations were imposed on them, while in Darjeeling hills, both these sectors developed almost simultaneously. Secondly, while in the former case the neighbourhood represented the local or former settlers and plantation by the immigrants from far off places in Darjeeling, almost all the people in both the sectors consisted of the immigrants. Thirdly, the plantation system represented a heterogeneity of caste and ethnicity drawn from different places, the same in Darjeeling hills had a homogeneity of population with same background of place and occupations. Finally, Darjeeling being a tourist resort since the very beginning was more urbanised and the spread of education

and urbanisation was also more extensive than the plains, terais of India where such plantation took place. All these differences led to a slightly different mode of relationship between the tea gardens and neighbourhood in Darjeeling hills from the same existing elsewhere. As such, going for a theorisation of such a relationship is rather difficult until further studies are conducted in this field.

In this context, the “enclave” theory of Asim Choudhari may be briefly analysed. An “enclave” is understood here to mean a small area of prosperity surrounded by a vast area of backwardness in all respects—wage, levels of productivity literacy, attitude to life and labour etc. or a capitalist nucleus in a subsistence sector. Choudhari has taken the tea plantations as the nucleus and the agricultural sector as the hinterland with pre-capitalist features, in the context of Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. He notes that this nucleus has not spread its prosperity over the hinterland or rather, has kept it undeveloped.

One may ask here, “are the tea plantations really more prosperous than the agricultural sector”? In any case, are they the capitalist nuclei—supposed to bring about any development in the subsistence sector?

The idea that tea plantations have not spread development around or kept the agricultural sector undeveloped is based on the belief that the farmers are more developed. But if ‘development’ is taken here, as he has accepted, to mean higher wages, higher productivity, higher levels of literacy and modern attitude to life and labour then his belief is misfounded. It is well known that the labourers were brought from far –off places and paid wages much lower than their counterparts in the agricultural sector. Moreover, about ‘wage’ one must take into account the various non-wage factors such as the hour and nature of work, working conditions and facilities, etc. About ‘productivity’ one cannot really compare the plantation and non –plantation areas because the mode

of production or the organisation of it is totally different in these two sectors. However, the agricultural production, like tea production, was very high at the initial stage because the land was fertile and soil erosion or infertility had not taken place.

About literacy also, one can fairly assume that the rate of literacy was higher in the agricultural areas than in the plantation system. Since the spread of education was believed to hamper garden work they were virtually denied of any education. In agricultural areas on the other hand, there was no such barrier and the Christian missionaries had started the spread of education soon after the annexation of this region. The attitude to life and labour can be really classified as 'traditional' for the agricultural sector and 'modern' for the plantation sector because these two sectors have totally different organisation of work. The actually prosperous were the planters themselves or the people belonging to the managerial class.

Now, even if one takes it for granted that such 'nuclei' are more advanced, my humble submission is that they are not supposed to bring about development in the surrounding areas. The tea plantations had been set up by British merchant capitalists at various pockets of the country with a narrow, limited objective, i.e. to enrich their exchequer through tea, which was a promising industry and is so even today. To achieve this goal, they deliberately brought the bulk of labourers from outside and kept them isolated from the agricultural area, paid them low wages and deprived them of education. If these were not done, the profit would have thinned down and their purpose would have failed. Therefore, it is probably a mistake to expect the tea plantations to develop the non-plantation areas.

It should be remembered here terrace cultivation, which was introduced in Darjeeling hills at the time when tea plantation started, was a new and improved method

of cultivation for this region in those days. The agricultural implements introduced then were also new to this region and new implements have been introduced after that. Since mechanisation is ecologically not viable it is difficult to expect any new implement to be introduced in future either. Thus, the plantation system had hardly any scope to bring about any innovation in the agricultural sides; even it wanted to do so.

The nucleus-periphery syndrome is still welcome in the geographical context of the relationship between tea gardens and neighbourhood in Darjeeling hills. Moreover, from a sociological perspective, one should not probably make any sweeping generalisation on this relationship. This relationship is very intricate and varies from region to region depending upon its history, ecology and social structure.

Darjeeling Hill area has certain marked differences as compared to Ceylon and other places, where 'enclave' theory has been developed. These can be summarized as follows:

1. The plantation as well as the agrarian sectors represented homogeneity of caste and ethnicity, this background made different experience. There is a continuous social interaction between the plantation workers and agriculturists. This is an important feature, which was not found in Sri Lanka. Moreover, the British policy was to settle excess Nepalese population of plantation in agriculture, hence the relationship between the farmers and a plantation worker was direct.
2. Plantation and agriculture, more or less started simultaneously in Darjeeling Hill areas.
3. Growth of plantation industry and agriculture was supplementary and complementary to each other. There was no evidence to show that with the rapid growth of plantation, agriculture declined in Darjeeling.

However, it may be mentioned that with the heavy influx of plantation labourers from Nepal, the immigrants have outnumbered the Lepchas, who were the aboriginal tribes. But steps were taken to prohibit transfer of Lepchas land to Nepalese.

Hence, the 'enclave' theory, which states that with the growth of plantation, agriculture declines, is not borne out by the facts in Darjeeling hills. This is mainly due to the fact that the British adopted a clear policy in the respect. Almost all the tea gardens were set-up in the territories occupied from Sikkim and the agricultural plots in the territories occupied from Bhutan. More than 90% of the tea gardens are found in the western side of Teesta and the areas east of Teesta was reserved mainly for agriculture. Under the circumstances, the 'enclave' theory needs substantial modification in the context of Darjeeling hill areas.

#### 2.4. SUMMARY

From the 1860s, tea plantations in the Dooars and Assam developed as a new opportunity. In 1870, 8,000 labourers were employed in Darjeeling district, and in 1901 this figure had increased to 64,000. Two main streams of migration developed, one from Nepal to Darjeeling, and the other from Chota Nagpur and the Central Provinces to the Dooars. In the first decades of the century, recruitment from Nepal declined comparatively, and was extended into areas further into Central India. The method of recruitment for tea plantations was similar to the indentured system in restraining freedom of movement of the labourers. Indentured recruitment for the plantations started in 1859 with the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act, which modified but remained in operation till 1926. A labourer was bound by a penal contract, varying from three to five years, and liable to be arrested by the planter if he or she absconded from work. From the

1870s, unregulated migration became more common, but this was again not without meddlers, and the system of sardari recruitment developed. The most important feature is that all the migrants in Darjeeling hill areas were of Nepali origin. Another noteworthy feature is that bulk of these Nepali migrants belonged to diverse ethnic groups, and very small number of migrants belonged to the upper castes like Brahmins. Economic and social conditions were the prime causes that led to large-scale migration. Nepal's economy in the nineteenth century was stagnant and backward and thus could not absorb the rising population in gainful employment. Besides tea, these migrants were offered employment in Gorkha Regiment, Cinchona Plantations, Darjeeling Himalayan Railways, construction and maintenance of roads. It is important to mention that 'Darjeeling Sebundy Corps of Sapers and Miners' was set up in 1839 for the purpose of road construction, which was almost entirely composed of Nepalese.

Thus Darjeeling became the land of attraction. The Waste Land Act regulated the land. This Act and its subsequent modifications made the land abundant. Each acre of land was as cheap as Rs. 10/-. Under the circumstances the growth of tea plantation was fast and remarkable.

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## CHAPTER 3

ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE TEA GARDEN LABOURERS IN THE EARLY  
PHASE AND ABSENCE OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The history of tea garden industry unfolds the 160-year-old history of Darjeeling, The whole part of the dominion of Raja of Sikkim upto the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Prior to 1816, the whole of the territory belonged to Nepal, which had won it by conquest from the Sikkimise. When the war broke out between Nepal and the company, Sikkim a sufferer at the Nepalese hands sided with the British, 'Nagri' in Darjeeling became the eastern theatre of the Anglo-Nepal war. When Nepal lost the war, the British had not been able to dislodge the Gorkhalese from Darjeeling areas. In pursuance of the treaty of Sugauli in 1815, Nepal had to cede in perpetuity many territories to the East India Company. The British kept the area under them till 1817, when by a separate treaty with Sikkim, the treaty of Titaliya (Art.1) they handed it over to Sikkim on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 1817.

In the year 1827, a border dispute arose between Sikkim and Nepal, and Sikkim referred the matter, in accordance with the Treaty of Titaliya, to the Company. Two officers, Captain Lloyd and the then Commercial Resident G.W Grant were deputed in 1828 to deal with the disputes and they penetrated into the hills as far as Rinchinpong, and was deeply attracted by its advantages as a site for sanatorium and also from military viewpoint. The East India Company became confident of "acquiring Darjeeling in 1833". Ultimately in 1835, they succeeded in obtaining the execution of a deed of grant by the Raja of Sikkim.

The land 'presented' to the East India Company in 1835 did not comprise the whole of Darjeeling. It was a narrow enclave of 138 sq miles about 30 miles long and 6

miles wide. It was entirely surrounded by the Sikkim ruler's dominions, entry and exit being restricted to a narrow path, which included sites of Darjeeling and Kurseong towns and touched the plains near Pankhabari.

'Damsang' the name by which Kalimpong was known then, had been wrested by Bhutan in 1806. Kalimpong sub-division was ceded to the British after the Anglo-Bhutan war 1864-65. The Darjeeling district can be said to have assumed its present shape and size in 1866. The British occupied 138 square miles in 1835, 640 sq. miles more in 1851, now the district has a total of 1234 sq. miles.

The establishment of tea industry in Darjeeling is due to the enterprise of Dr. Campbell in 1839. A huge investment was made for bringing tea plants and seeds from China. Chinese experts were also imported to teach the local resident for imparting teachings on the methods of tea planting. By 1856, tea industry was firmly established in the district on a commercial basis.

The Alubari Tea Garden was opened by the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company in 1856 the 'Dhotre' garden was started by Dr. Brougham in 1859 and in 1960, Mrs. H.C. Taylor and Dr. Roberts started Rangmuk-Cedars. Gardens like Ging, Ambote, Takdah, Phubsering, Tukvar, Badamtam by 1864. By 1861 the number of gardens had reached 22, which increased to 148 by 1905. There were maximum number of gardens in 1895, when the number had reached 186. Tea was lately introduced in Kalimpong sub-division. According to report of C.A. Bell (1901-1903), there were total of 4 gardens, namely Ambiyok, Fagu, Kumai and Mission Hill. During 1940, the number of gardens were 142.

The Britishers found Darjeeling as virgin soil for exploitation where starvation and deficiency had been the characteristics of the hills. Tea cultivation was 'Green gold

'for the Britishers and Darjeeling "Gold Mine". The workers used to get fairly low wages, which were also at times deducted under the dictates of management. The wages were fixed as 5 annas, 4 annas and 1 annas 6pies(approx) for an adult male, female and child respectively.

The various acts, namely, Trade Union Act 1926, Workmen's Compensation Act were never enforced in the tea gardens of Darjeeling hills.

When compared to other industries, trade union in the tea plantations of North East India has been late starters. The growth of trade unions here is mainly a post-independence phenomenon. Whereas in other sections of the working class, trade unions were mainly responsible for retarding this process. Plantations were isolated from the rest of the country and from each other; hence it was difficult for plantation workers to form organizations for collective bargaining. The planters had the full support of the colonial government and they were effectively able to keep their workers unorganized by stalling any attempts of outside trade union organizer in influencing plantation worker. (1)

Samir Roy, General Secretary of Cha 'Mazdoor Sabha has traced the nature of labour problems in the past. His remarks give us idea about the poverty of the tea garden labourers during the British Raj'. The British set up the tea plantations with an objective of enriching their exchequer through the sale of tea, which had a good market in England. They deliberately brought the bulk of labourers from out side and kept them isolated from agricultural areas. They deprived them of fair wages and education and many other basic amenities.

Poverty, large-scale illiteracy ignorance and many other social evils were prevalent amongst the labourers. It is seen that the distribution of income was always in favour of capital at the expense of labour. This was a part of the colonial philosophy in

which the economic features of the plantation industry was created. The workers were denied social and natural justice and were treated as door-mates, and inflicted upon them untold suffering and pain. (2)

The planters extorted a fabulous fortune through brutal exploitation of the labourers. (3) It is observed that the planters or their 'Sardars' resorted to all sorts of heinous method in securing torturing and exploiting the labourers – whether male, female or tender aged child. As a matter of fact they did not show any sense of exploitation was excessive in spheres of wage, working hours, education, employment of child labour, housing, maternity benefits and others social security measures.

Since wages are directly related to the economic condition of worker, an insight into the wage structure of the workers in tea gardens of Darjeeling hills would highlight the poor living conditions of workers during the British raj. The policy of *Laissez – Faire* adopted by the government greatly influenced the British planters in fixing wages of the workers, wage fixation was left to the dictates of the Planters' Association in Darjeeling. The effect of this irrational wage policy had an adverse effect on the revision of wages at later stages in absence of wage fixing criterion. "The *Laissez – Faire* policy of the British Government and the Royal Commissions specific colonial labour policy had their indirect effect on the fixation of wages for tea plantation labourers in hill areas without due consideration of any principle of criterion". (4)

It was only in 1948, the labourers came to know for the first time about 'minimum wages' through the Minimum wages Act 1948.

Table III .01: The increment in wages of tea garden labours from 1939 to 1954

| YEAR | MALE   | FEMALE | CHILD  |
|------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1934 | 0-5-0  | 0-4-0  | 0-2-6  |
| 1941 | 0-5-6  | 0-4-6  | 0-2-9  |
| 1944 | 0-6-0  | 0-5-0  | 0-3-0  |
| 1946 | 0-9-0  | 0-8-0  | 0-4-0  |
| 1947 | 0-10-0 | 0-9-0  | 0-5-0  |
| 1948 | 0-13-0 | 0-12-0 | 0-7-0  |
| 1951 | 0-15-0 | 0-14-0 | 0-8-0  |
| 1954 | 1-2-6  | 1-1-6  | 0-10-0 |

(1 ANNA = 6 PIES)

SOURCE (WEST BENGAL – FORTNIGHTLY – SAT 1/5/54 – CAL)

The following table shows the increase in dearness allowance from 1941 to 1948. It is seen that the basic wages were left unaltered but dearness allowance was raised from 2 annas to 5 annas per day for adults during 47 – 48.

Table III .02: Increase in dearness allowance from 1941 to 1948

|              | 1941  | 1944  | 1947  | 1948  |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ADULT MALE   | 0-0-6 | 0-1-0 | 0-2-0 | 0-5-0 |
| ADULT FEMALE | 0-0-6 | 0-1-0 | 0-2-0 | 0-5-0 |
| CHILDREN     | 0-0-3 | 0-0-6 | 0-1-0 | 0-3-0 |

Source (Mazdoor Haru Ko Tai Yatra – Pub. By W.B. Government 1951)

The figures of Basic wages and dearness allowance of different categories of workers in the hill areas of Darjeeling district during 1951.

Table III. 03: The figures of Basic wages and dearness allowance

|             | MALE  |         | FEMALE |         | CHILD |         |
|-------------|-------|---------|--------|---------|-------|---------|
|             | Field | Factory | Field  | Factory | Field | Factory |
| Basic Wages | 0.50  | 0.56    | 0.44   | 0.50    | 0.25  | 0.31    |
| D.A         | 0.44  | 0.44    | 0.44   | 0.44    | 0.25  | 0.25    |
| Total       | 0.94  | 1.00    | 0.88   | 0.94    | 0.50  | 0.56    |

(Source: West Bengal District Gazetter-1950)

The abnormally low wage rates and the consequential economic miseries ultimately encumbered the workers with recurring debts, and appallingly degraded living condition of the workers. The workers were in the grip of vicious circle of poverty. Poverty was not only acute but a chronic malady. Rural indebtedness was another factor, which the workers had to face – as a matter of fact, the figures revealed that the tea garden labourers were born in debt, they lived in debt, and also died in debt. The burden was further aggravated out of all proportions by the high rate of interest, which had to be paid by the labourers on loans taken to make their both ends meet.

Many folk poems, folk songs and other literary works tell about the high interest rates on which businessmen gave loans to labourers “Hazairmam Rai’s poem written in 1990 gives us an idea about the object poverty of labourers in tea gardens of Darjeeling hills. Describing the poor economic condition of the workers and burden of loans he has thus written: - (5)

दाजु सर्दार बैनी कुल्ली टुपी सम्म रिन

कठैबरी कान्छी नानी कैलै खायो घिन।

The lines explain about the absolute poverty and the extent of their loan. They were neck – deep in loan, which was very difficult for them to repay with their meager wages. (Author’s own translation).

‘The problem was so chronic that in the year 1902. 808 cases of loan repayment were registered in Darjeeling Kutchery. The following table will clearly show the number of cases with corresponding rates of interest charged on the poor labourers. (6)

Table III .04: Interest charged on the poor labourers

| Sl. No | No. Of Cases | Interest Rate |
|--------|--------------|---------------|
| 1      | 97           | 30%           |
| 2      | 458          | 36% - 37%     |
| 3      | 93           | 48%           |
| 4      | 38           | 60%           |
| 5      | 113          | 108%          |
| 6      | 3            | 150%          |
| 7      | 1            | 300%          |

The moneylenders or the Mahajans have been termed as ‘the Shylock of the hill by O. Malley. (7) “These mahajans used to charge 75% interest which was compounded annually. They used to destroy the original hand-notes on loans taken and made them afresh and compelled the ignorant, illiterate labourers to sign on the fresh hand notes, so that they could be produced as evidence whenever cases were field for non-repayment. (8) The Nepali tea garden labourers were known for their extravagance – they used to

indulge in gambling and the women – folk used to spend on the clothings – as a result of which they were in the grip of money – lenders. During 1920 – 30 Swami Sachidananda, an Arya Samajist came forward to save the innocent labourers from the clutches of moneylenders. He did his best to make the labourers socially and politically conscious about this practice of and educated them about the evils of such practices. (9)

The wages earned by the workers were not sufficient to meet even the minimum needs of life and so to take out a bare existence, the children and female members had also to work. The tea pluckers had to pluck tea leaves completely soaked in rainwater. The labourers were not given anything to protect themselves from the rain. There was no minimum hour fixed for their works. The workers used to work 9 hours or even 10 hours at a stretch in one day. The workers were treated as human machines, and there were virtually no social securities for the labourers.

“Dharam Singh Chamling Rai, of Dilaram T.E. wrote another folk poem in 1919 describing the poor economic condition of the tea garden labourers. An extract of his poem is reproduced below which would explain the poverty and unhold suffering inflicted upon the tea garden labourers arising out of low wages paid to the workers and the inhuman conditions under which the labourers had to work. (10)

“ हनुमान बिर त लंकामा गयो सीताको खोजैमा  
रूझी र भिजी पत्ती र टिप्छ्यौ दशू पैसा रोजैमा  
सिरिलाई सिरी बतासै चल्यो सिरीको थुर भाँची  
पाँच पैसा खायौ, तिन पैसा लायौ दुई पैसा फुर्मासी ”

The gist of the poem is that out of 10 paise as a daily wage, 5 paise is spent on food, 3 paise on clothing, and 2 paise on other necessities-which meant that the workers could not save anything for the future-(another's own translation) hence in case of any emergency like-death, marriage in the family, the workers had to look upon the mahajans for loans-which they could never repay during their life time-under the circumstances-they were reduced to the status of beggars.

During the pre-independence period, the amenities (social, economic and health) made available to the workers were kept at the bare minimum level such as housing, medical facilities, food grain subsidy etc.

The payment of wages in tea plantation in hill areas is based on pieces rates-the 'hazira' and 'thika'-The hazira is the daily wage paid to each worker on completion of a particular task which has been allotted to him for the day.'Thika' refers to overtime work as well as to extra plantation work given on contract.

During the British period, payment was made by the garden sardar who usually received a commission from the tea estate. Later on this method was curtailed as sardars indulged in corruption by making those commissions compulsory.

It must be mentioned here that wages were arbitrarily fixed by the planters through their organization i.e. Darjeeling Planters' Association. This is the reason why the Royal Commission strongly recommended, that a wage fixing machinery be established in the tea industry. Later on in 1946, 'The Rege Commission also made a similar recommendation, keeping in view that the workers had developed a spirit of collective bargaining and hence they could not take a unified stand in bargaining for fair wages. (11)

Besides wages, the workers were given Rs.6/- as 'Cloths Bonus' as Puja allowance, during Dasain- (Dusshera).

With regard to the daily average earning to the tea garden workers the Royal Commission on Labour 1931 reports that there were no statistics available prior to 1931, hence, knowledge of wage movements in the tea industry can be obtained only since 1931.

O Malley has written about the wages of tea garden workers in 1907. He stated that 'the wages paid to the tea coolies are considerably higher than such labour would obtain in many plains districts. The average rate is Rs 6/- a month for men, Rs.4.50 for women, and Rs.3/- for children but in addition to the actual sum paid as wages; they received substantial extra in shape of free housing, fuel, medical attendance etc. (12)

Four decades later, Dash gave elaborate information on the wage pattern of different categories of tea plantation labour. He noted that "the basic rates for the Hazira" system of wage payment prevailing then were 31 paise for men, 25 paise for women and 19 paise for children in the hills. He added further that 'these basic rates have been prevalent for a long time and are really task rates. They are split in some hill gardens so that part is paid as bonus for attendance 5 days a week. In other gardens there is a sliding scale of bonus for upwards of 14 days attendance in the month.

Cultivation or winter operations are often paid for on a bigha or piece rate system, in which the task for sickling, pruning hoeing or deep forking is so, arranged that basic hazira can be earned by 5 or 6 hours' work. Since 1939 this daily task has been reduced. In the plucking season, there are two method, of payment --the piece rate and the 'bigha' or task rate. Piece rates are 3 paise per seer of leaf plucked, the task is so fixed that by doing it the worker gets the basic wage. (13)

‘Wages were static in Darjeeling from 1939-1950. The hazira rate in Darjeeling was 0-5-0 for men, 0-4-0 for women and 0-1-6 for children .The Rege Committee has pointed out that in some gardens in Darjeeling, the normal hazira rates were reduced by 0-0-6 but 6 pies a day were given to workers if they were present for at least 5 days a week. (14)

Wages form the pivot around which most labour problems revolve. The questions related to standards of living, the economic well being of the workers, in general –all pertain to this problem. In the early days the managers were the rulers of the land . There was no scope for ventilation of their grievances as the workers were denied to form trade unions for proper channelisation of the interest of the workers. In contrast, the planters were organized into Darjeeling Branch Indian Tea Association since 1873. Labour welfare programmes like Maternity allowance, welfare housing, sanitation, safe drinking water supply, sick haziras were nil in existence upon 1934.The International Labour Organization passed one recommendation and two conventions regarding sickness allowance. This had no impact on tea gardens. ‘In the absence of collective bargaining agency the labourers could not dictate their terms and hence they failed to get even a portion of large profits which the tea companies annually earned in those days. The British Government was found apparently sympathetic to the cause of the garden labourers. But in practice enacted special laws, one after another, protecting the financial interest of the employers pressurized by influential members having vested of the interests in the tea enterprise. (15)

The Royal Commission on labour in 1931 recommended the establishment of wage fixing machinery in the tea industry .It recognised that it would be impossible to lay down piece rates or to specify tasks in view of the variation of tasks from one season to

another and from garden to garden. Wage fixation as envisaged by the Royal Commission meant that “the employers themselves would fix the rate for the tasks after determining the capacity to yield a worker of ordinary skill and diligence at least the amount determined by the wage fixing body. In other words such a worker, as opposed to slow or inexperienced workers should be sure of a minimum amount for the performance of a given task. (16)

The recommendation of the Royal Commission meant that ‘reasonable’s should be defined by an outside body, which should include the representatives of employees as well as of the Government. It was however difficult to set upon as the labourers were an unorganized and the Royal Commission’s advice to the Government to invite proposals from tea industries remained in paper only.

Rege, made a brief reference to the subjects in his report as Chairman of the Labour Investigation Committee in 1932. He remarked thus as the labourers are not likely to develop a spirit of collective bargaining for sometimes, the establishment of wage board is essential on plantations .The Rege Committee never dwelt on detail and the machineries for affecting the same. (17)

Hence, it is evident that there was practically no serious attempt to promote the cause of the labourers.

The British planters even maintained their own army, the North Bengal Mounted Rifles which was unceremoniously disbanded on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947. The planters maintained this regiment mainly to keep law and order in the tea gardens and to prevent the workers from forming any associations, which would go against the interest of planters. Through this regiment the planters succeeded in achieving their objectives of obstructing any organized movement or agitation by garden workers. During the time of

labour crises, mainly before independence period, this army kept strong vigilance on the movement of garden workers from one garden to another. Hence, out of fear of punishment, workers could not leave the gardens without prior approval of the planters.

In the absence of any organization of workers, the relationship between workers and the management was like that of master and servant. As the workers were kept isolated from the town, there was a communication gap and as such the workers were not politically conscious. The tea gardens were legally the private properties of the planters. Without their permission no outsider was allowed to enter the garden. It would amount to 'Criminal Trespass' and he was arrested. The 'Trespasser' was granted bail on the condition that he would not further enter into the garden until the case was settled. Hence it was very difficult to organize the workers. The workers were separated from the organizers by filing cases against them. But this difficulty, somewhat, was removed with the judgements in two cases coming in favour of the union shortly after. Then the subdivisional Judicial Magistrate of Kurseong, Shri Ashok Mitra I.C.S. in his judgement pointed out that any person entering the garden for forming a union was not considered an act of Criminal Trespass.'(18)

The tea industry bears the testimony of unimaginable torture, inhuman treatment and victimization of the workers. 'The most inhuman weapon of the planters 'known as Hattabahar' was in force even after independence. They used this weapon against any worker in case of violation of rules of the gardens and this order led the worker to discontinue his service and expulsion of the whole family from his hereditary land. Once a worker was issued the notice of 'Hattabahar' there was no question of remaining in vogue till April 1959.

The workers were completely at the mercy of the managers. They were treated as commodities, which could be purchased and sold. They had to work hard and were treated as human machines. Even after a hard day's work, the workers were deprived of fair wages. The practice of Pro-rata was in practice in the case of weightment of leaves. This was against the interest of workers as the system seriously affected their earnings. The planters used to deduct from the actual weights of tea leaves, moisture content in it. These deductions variations from 5 percent to 15 percents and such variations were in the discretion of the managers.

“During the period 1939 and 1955, in some gardens in Darjeeling, payment was made for plucking at a flat rate of 3 pies per pound. While they use to pay on the hazira basis. The task was usually 20 to 40 pounds, for men, and 16 to 20 pounds for women, and 12 to 16 pounds for children. For the extra leaf plucked over and above the task, payment was made at the rate of 3 pies per pounds. Plucking was largely done by women and it was in plucking and it plucking that high wages were earned. (20)

The tea garden labourers usually purchased their necessary items from the shops of ‘Kaiyas’ or ‘Mahajans’, situated within the garden at exorbitant rates. At the time of weekly payments, usually Saturday, market of the peddlers took place. These peddlers cheated the poor labourers as much as the ‘kaiyas’ did.

A major portion of the wages earned by the labourers was spent on the purchase of food grains to the labourers on the basis of ration quota was much less.

Table III. 05: The following tables gives an idea of the foodgrains supplied to the labourers and to their dependents during (1951)

| WORKERS |       |        |       | NON-WORKERS |       |        |       |
|---------|-------|--------|-------|-------------|-------|--------|-------|
| ADULTS  |       | MINORS |       | ADULTS      |       | MINORS |       |
| SCALE   | RATE  | SCALE  | RATE  | SCALE       | RATE  | SCALE  | RATE  |
| 3-0     | 0-9-9 | 3-0    | 0-9-9 | 2-0         | 0-6-6 | 1-0    | 0-3-0 |
| 0-12    | 0-2-3 | 0-12   | 0-2-3 | 0-12        | 0-2-3 | 1-0    | 0-1-6 |

(Source – Mazdoor Haru Ko Jaiyatra – (Nepali))

PAGE 3 – (Government of West Bengal – Publication 1951)

The workers in the tea gardens of Darjeeling hill used to get only these two items of food grains, whereas in Dooars and Terai areas, the workers used to get more number of food grains items such as salt, Mustard oil, Grains, Paddy, Jaggery etc. 'The price of subsidized rice was increased with effect from 1953, on the recommendation of the Minimum wage, Advisory Committee keeping in view the deteriorating financial condition of tea gardens. The price of rice was raised from Rs. 8/- to Rs. 17 ½ /-per maund. As partial compensation for the abolition of the concession, the labourers were given an increase of 1 ½ anna per day in D.A.'(21)

### 3.1. WAGES AND EARNINGS

Wages and earning are the two important factors for bringing peace in any industrial undertaking – for they are mainly responsible to a large extent to industrial unrest. 'Wages refer to (a) the settled wages rate per day, week or month (b) the gross earnings for the days worked or (c) take – home wages. Gross earnings may differ from the wage rate. A casual worker may get more or less earning in tea plantations. A gap is

created between the wage rate for a week and the actual earnings in the week, by the extent of absenteeism in the case of permanent workers'. (22) The Indian Tea Association gave the following percentages of absenteeism in the case of 33 tea gardens in Darjeeling for the period between 1938 and 1944.

|          |        |
|----------|--------|
| Men      | 34.0 % |
| Women    | 24.7 % |
| Children | 24.9 % |
| Total    | 27.6 % |

Rege Committee Report on an enquiry into conditions of Labour in Plantations in India has given the following figures of average monthly earnings, Availability of concessions and average per capita monthly concessions in some gardens in Darjeeling.

Table III.06: Average monthly earning in 5 selected gardens in Darjeeling 1939 and 1944

| Estates | 1939   |        |          | 1944   |        |          |
|---------|--------|--------|----------|--------|--------|----------|
|         | Men    | Women  | Children | Men    | Women  | Children |
| A       | 8-5-1  | 6-1-0  | 4-5-0    | 10-9-5 | 7-6-1  | 5-4-4    |
| B       | 8-2-1  | 6-8-0  | 3-4-0    | 9-12-0 | 8-2-1  | 4-1-0    |
| C       | 8-9-5  | 6-9-3  | 3-5-9    | 13-6-1 | 11-8-0 | 6-8-0    |
| D       | 8-7-0  | 6-12-0 | 2-12-10  | 13-8-0 | 10-2-1 | 5-1-0    |
| E       | 6-13-9 | 5-7-6  | 3-5-9    | 8-12-0 | 6-14-7 | 3-13-9   |

Table III .07: Concessions available to the tea garden workers in Darjeeling – 1942 – 1950

| COMMODITY | CATEGORIES | QNTY    | PRICE            |
|-----------|------------|---------|------------------|
| RICE      | MEN        | 6 Seers | Rs. 8/-per Maund |
|           | WOMEN      | 4 Seers |                  |
|           | CHILDREN   | 3 Seers |                  |

Table III .08: Average per capita monthly cost of concessions in certain tea gardens in Darjeeling – 1942 – 1944

| YEAR | DARJEELING |
|------|------------|
| 1942 | 0 – 0 – 6  |
| 1943 | 1 – 12 – 2 |
| 1944 | 1 – 12 – 8 |

It is inferred from the Table A that the weighted average for Darjeeling hills in 1944 were 12 – 4 – 8, 9 – 12 – 10 and 4 – 9 – 1 for men, women and children respectively, For several years, the average earnings of the labour force increased even when there has been no change either in the wage rates for particular jobs or in the volume of work handled. (23)

In 1952, for the first time, statutory minimum wages were fixed for the plantation workers in West Bengal. The daily wage rate at that time was Rs. 1.9 paise for male, Rs.1.06 paise for female and Rs. 0.62 paise for children. Low wages have always been the distinctive feature of the plantation industry. The West Bengal Government set up the Minimum Wages Advisory Committee for Tea Plantation in March 1950, known as the Modak Committee. The Modak Committee recommended that the minimum wage must not be merely a subsistence wage. Besides providing for his food, it should also help the worker preserve his efficiency by education, medical, and other amenities. (24) In other

words, the concept of minimum wage should not be restricted to just a cash wage but should also cover certain welfare benefits. Even the Committee fixed the minimum wages at a fairly low level which can be considered as 'subsistence' wage on the basis of 1952 Consumer Price Index level.

### 3.2. SUMMARY

The entire pre-independence period can be called the 'unregulated' period. Where the relation between the planters and the workers were not formalized. The post-independence period formalized the relationship between the two, with the passing of various laws.

Serious discontent had already been brewing among the workers on the long standing and unsettled problems, insufficiency of wages, rejection of the demands for minimum wages and above all humiliation of the workers by the British planters and their managers.' This unbearable condition of the workers aggravated by the colonial labour policy of the imperialist government caused among the workers a smouldering discontent which in no time blazed out in massive strikes and struggles.

The emergence of the tea garden workers organization in the Darjeeling hills took place at a period when India was under the absolute colonial rule. The wave of non-co-operation movement of 1920-21 also touched the hills of Darjeeling district. Many Gorkhas under the leadership of Dal Bahadur Giri and Jangbir Sepkota of Kalimpong took active part in it. Dal Bahadur Giri had a tremendous influence on the labourers. The workers had to confront two basic antagonistic forces –imperialist political rule and economic exploitation both by native and foreign capitalist classes. Thus the trade union movement in the district became intertwined with political movement for independence.

The settlement of wage rate is indicators of change in the working class in this area. An analysis of the wage structure explains that the trend is from subsistence wage to a living wage. Living wage means a wage, which enables the workers to obtain something slightly more than his day-to-day existence. A change in the working class has brought about a change in the wage – rate structure. Coercion, which was one of the important component of plantation system, decreased during the post – independence period. A qualitative change is witnessed as collective bargaining took shape as the workers become organized with the passing of laws safe - guarding the interest of the workers.

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## CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT:-PRE-INDEPENDENCE AND POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD-THE NATURE OF EVOLUTION.4.1. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF TEA INDUSTRY IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Tea had its genesis in China and almost throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century she had virtual monopoly of tea production. China was the only supplier of tea to Europe up to the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The East India Company or John Company as it was often called had been granted a monopoly of oriental trade in 1600 and it was the greatest trading monopoly there. During the period of monopoly though tea developed into a very popular drink in the U.K. and the American colonies, yet the East India Company discounted all possible ideas of developing tea plantation in India in apprehension of losing its monopoly in trading.

The beginning of tea cultivation in India under Government auspices arose when the monopoly trade of East India Company became a closed chapter in 1833. This sudden situation made it indispensable to the Governments of the U.K. and British India to establish tea plantation industry in India. In 1834 Lord William Bentick, the then Governor General of British India, appointed a Tea committee to consider the question of introducing supply of plants from China, and to decide the most suitable place in India in which to grow them. The establishment of Tea Committee fully and more formally explored the possibility of cultivating tea in India. In the beginning, tea production in

India had been carried out under Government auspices and mostly on an experimental basis. In 1840 the Assam Tea Company was formed with the object of purchasing East India Company's plantations in Assam for the purpose of developing tea plantation in India. This was a landmark of the beginning of private entrepreneurship in the field of tea industry.

'The development of tea industry in India had been advanced from the experimental to a more extensive and commercial stage by 1840. From 1840 to 1865, the industry was expanding at a very fast rate. But the success of the industry did not last for a long. Barely twenty five year old tea industry suffered a setback following the slump that overtook during 1865-67 through over-production and speculation of dishonest planters. However, this situation did not continue for long and took a better turn when gardens were purchased for lesser amounts. New companies were formed for taking over these gardens for growing tea as a commercial article. The industry was then placed on a firmer foundation.

After the tea disaster of 1865-67 both the Government and the planters were more awakened about the progress of Indian tea industry. Subsequently both took positive steps to provide a solid foundation of Indian tea in the global market. In 1868 the Government appointed a commission to enquire into all aspects of tea industry. The Commission reported that the industry was basically sound and those gardens which had escaped the effect of wild speculation of previous years were on sound flourishing condition. By 1870 the industry embarked on an era of sound and scientific development.

Due to rapid growth and development of tea industry, the tea planters felt necessary to form an association for promoting their common interest and objectives. In early part of 1876, an attempt was made to organize North Indian tea estate owners into

an association. It was only after five years that a meeting was convened on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1881. The Indian Tea Association was formed with its head office at Calcutta. The other associations were set-up in the beginning of the century in Assam, North Bengal and South India. The momentous establishment, giving a solid foundation to the informal expression of co-operation between tea estates, played a pivotal role towards making the Indian tea industry a force to contend with the world.

By 1880 production of North India touched 44 million pounds and around this time Indian tea began to upstage in exports to U.K. The fear of competition with China was also virtually removed. In 1880-81 the share of Indian tea was 30 percent of the total imports of tea into United Kingdom and share of China was 70 per cent. In 1885-86 the share of India increased to 40 per cent and that of China decline to 50 per cent. By 1903 the share of India increased to 69 per cent.

Thus China once supposed to be an insurmountable obstacle to Indian planter had been gradually vanquished. The drinking of tea was firmly established in the U.K. and by producing better quality with a relatively low price India displaced Chinese black tea and became a leading producer and exporter in the world.

The growth of Indian tea industry during the last fifteen year of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been shown as:

Table IV. 01: Growth of Indian Tea Industry 1885 to 1899

| Year | Area Under Tea (in hectare) | Production (in tones) | Yield per hectare (in kg.) | Export (in tones) | Index of area base 1885=100 | Index of production base 1885=100 | Index of yield per hectare base 1885=100 | Index of export base 1885=100 |
|------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1885 | 114,900                     | 32,444                | 282                        | 30,897            | 100,00                      | 100,00                            | 100,00                                   | 100,00                        |
| 1886 | 120,685                     | 37,388                | 310                        | 35,558            | 105,00                      | 115,24                            | 109,23                                   | 115,09                        |
| 1887 | 126,587                     | 41,485                | 331                        | 39,348            | 110,17                      | 128,97                            | 117,38                                   | 127,35                        |
| 1888 | 131,250                     | 45,265                | 345                        | 44,008            | 114,23                      | 139,52                            | 122,34                                   | 142,43                        |
| 1889 | 135,044                     | 48,554                | 360                        | 47,010            | 117,53                      | 149,67                            | 127,66                                   | 152,15                        |
| 1890 | 139,546                     | 50,819                | 364                        | 47,316            | 121,45                      | 156,66                            | 129,08                                   | 153,14                        |
| 1891 | 146,673                     | 56,186                | 383                        | 53,977            | 127,65                      | 173,20                            | 135,82                                   | 174,70                        |
| 1892 | 151,704                     | 55,336                | 365                        | 50,670            | 132,03                      | 170,58                            | 129,43                                   | 164,00                        |
| 1893 | 160,190                     | 59,987                | 374                        | 56,022            | 139,42                      | 184,92                            | 132,62                                   | 181,32                        |
| 1894 | 162,087                     | 61,105                | 377                        | 56,975            | 141,07                      | 188,36                            | 133,69                                   | 184,40                        |
| 1895 | 168,234                     | 65,049                | 387                        | 61,016            | 146,42                      | 200,52                            | 137,23                                   | 197,48                        |
| 1896 | 175,342                     | 70,954                | 406                        | 68,230            | 152,50                      | 218,72                            | 143,62                                   | 220,83                        |
| 1897 | 190,250                     | 69,754                | 367                        | 69,102            | 165,58                      | 215,02                            | 130,14                                   | 223,65                        |
| 1898 | 203,022                     | 71,430                | 352                        | 71,912            | 176,69                      | 220,19                            | 124,82                                   | 232,75                        |
| 1899 | 208,679                     | 82,462                | 395                        | 80,360            | 181,62                      | 254,20                            | 140,07                                   | 260,09                        |

Table 01. Shows that during the last 15 years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the industry expanded very rapidly. The area under tea cultivation increased from 114.900 hectares in 1885 to 208.679 hectares in 1899. Along with the increase in area the rate of production and exports was also well maintained. Where the planted area increase in production and

exports was the order of 154.20 per cent and 160.09 per cent respectively during the period 1885 to 1899. But the yield per hectare did not improve significantly. Only 40.07 per cent increase was recorded in the yield per hectare through the period.

The average price of tea showed declining tendency during the last 15 years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was due to over production in North East India and to increase in production in China and Ceylon.

Thus by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the cultivation of tea increased rapidly but the rate of productivity was very low. So the industry felt the need for conducting scientific research. In 1900, the Indian Tea Acc. appointed a Scientific Officer to work in the laboratory of the Indian Museum in Calcutta. Later on a Research Station was setup in Upper Assam and subsequently it was shifted to Tocklai (Jorhat) in 1991. Tocklai has adopted a multi-disciplinary approach covering all aspects of agronomy, ranging from fertilizer use and soil chemistry to bush management and plant genetics. The Tocklai Research Station is said to be the best equipped and the biggest Research Station of tea in the world.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century till the independence of the country the tea industry of India had to pass through the worldwide anxieties of the First World War, tea disaster of 1921, world trade depression of 1929 and the Second World War.

The First World War brought in its wake the alarms and anxieties of nations in conflict but the period in general turned to be one of the prosperity for Indian tea. The boom in wartime demand led to an increase of the planted area and production to 274,592 hectares and 172,575 tonnes respectively at the end of 1918. It registering an increase of 8.65 percent and 21.44 percent respectively compared to the figure of 1914.

Apparently the industry was in flourishing condition during the First World War period, but the quality of tea fell. The situation took a worse turn when the British Government released the stock it held after the decontrol of tea in 1919. A serious depression occurred due to decrease in demand from the U.K. the principal importer of India tea.

However before the slump could gather momentum Indian Tea Association directed its members to stop plucking on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1920. Consequently at the end of 1921 production declined to 124,405 tonnes recorded a decrease of 20.58 per cent over the figure in 1920. The decline in production in 1921 helped a speedy recovery. And after the close of 1921 prices were again at a remunerative level and the depression was at its end. In the latter part of 1924 prices rose sharply and up to 1927 prices were high.

The rapid rise in prices induced planting in new areas which began to increase yield from 1928-29. At the end of 1929 area and production increased to 318,892 hectares and 196,336 tonnes respectively. Area recorded an increase of 11.4 percent while production increased by 57.82 per cent compared to the figure of 1921. So after the tea disaster of 1921 the industry was again placed on firmer foundation within a span of eight years.

But prices again started falling due to excess supply over demand. Moreover the world trade depression of 1929 further aggravated the situation and excess production continued to pile up till 1932.

Following the slumps in the international tea trade during the years 1929-1932. India, Ceylon and Indonesia, by an agreement restricted their exports and area under tea. The negotiating countries were responsible for exporting about 97 per cent of black tea and 85 per cent of all teas. The objective of the agreement was to bring a balance between

the supply and demand of tea in the international market. This was the first International Tea Agreement and it was for a period of five years beginning from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1933. Subsequently two more agreements were signed. The second one was signed on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1936 and came into force for a further period of five years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1938 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1943. During the Second World War the agreement was extended until 31<sup>st</sup> March 1948. The representatives of the industry from India signed an interim producers' agreement. Pakistan (Bangladesh), Ceylon and Indonesia, which came into force from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1948 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1950.

The representatives of the above-mentioned countries had signed the last agreement for a period of five years ending on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1955.

Following the first International Tea Agreement, production and exports of Indian tea decreased to 174,033 tonnes and 149,301 tonnes respectively in 1933. It registered a fall of 11.52 per cent and 14.59 per cent respectively over the figure in the previous year.

However after 1933-34 the trend was towards a recovery. For the operation and administration of tea regulation scheme, the International Tea Committee was formed. On its recommendation 'International Tea Expansion Board' was established on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1935. The Board's main objectives were to supplement the works of the member countries by carrying out propaganda for expansion of tea market in the world. Ultimately Indian tea regrouped to forge a strong position by the eve of the Second World War.

The interventions of the Second World War again worsened the situation. During the wartime the Government of the United Kingdom started the bulk purchase scheme. The main aim of the scheme was to replace the method of selling the Indian and Ceylon tea through auctions. In 1939, the U.K. Government under tea control took over all stock of Indian tea on which duty was not paid and requisitioned in advance all teas to arrive

after that date. The U.K. Government entered into a long-term contract to purchase tea. The payment was to be made on the London auctions held during the week commencing from 21<sup>st</sup> August 1939. The guaranteed market for an agreed quantity irrespective of quality gave a fillip to producers to increase production of inferior quality of tea. The Bulk Purchase Scheme continued until the end of 1946. In 1945 the production touched 246068 tonnes. Thus due to bulk purchase scheme production increased by 19.86 percent over the figure in 1939.

After the withdrawal of the bulk purchase scheme the British Government again started demanding quality teas. As a result, Indian teas faced the adverse situation, because the bulk purchase scheme increased production through generation of excess capacity for medium and cheap varieties of tea.

Table IV. 02: Growth of Indian Tea Industry 1900 to 1950

| Year | Area Under Tea (in hectare) | Production (in tones) | Yield per hectare (in kg.) | Export (in tones) | Index of area base 1900=100 | Index of production base 1900=100 | Index of yield per hectare base 1900=100 | Index of export base 1900=100 |
|------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1)  | (2)                         | (3)                   | (4)                        | (5)               | (6)                         | (7)                               | (8)                                      | (9)                           |
| 1900 | 211,433                     | 89,567                | 424                        | 87,226            | 100,00                      | 100,00                            | 100,00                                   | 100,00                        |
| 1905 | 213,657                     | 100,567               | 471                        | 98,325            | 101,05                      | 112,28                            | 111,08                                   | 112,72                        |
| 1910 | 218,062                     | 119,569               | 524                        | 116,319           | 107,86                      | 133,49                            | 123,58                                   | 133,35                        |
| 1915 | 256,951                     | 168,828               | 657                        | 154,418           | 121,52                      | 188,49                            | 154,95                                   | 177,03                        |
| 1920 | 284,922                     | 156,645               | 550                        | 130,419           | 134,75                      | 174,89                            | 129,72                                   | 149,52                        |
| 1925 | 294,474                     | 164,886               | 560                        | 153,003           | 139,27                      | 184,09                            | 132,08                                   | 175,41                        |

|                                                                                 |         |         |     |         |        |        |        |        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|-----|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1930                                                                            | 325,057 | 177,391 | 546 | 164,243 | 153,73 | 198,05 | 128,77 | 188,30 |
| 1935                                                                            | 336,572 | 178,912 | 532 | 146,926 | 159,18 | 199,75 | 125,47 | 168,44 |
| 1940                                                                            | 337,296 | 210,415 | 624 | 160,664 | 159,52 | 234,92 | 147,17 | 184,19 |
| 1945                                                                            | 308,922 | 229,038 | 741 | 167,638 | 146,10 | 255,72 | 174,76 | 192,19 |
| 1950                                                                            | 314,640 | 275,475 | 876 | 200,780 | 148,08 | 307,56 | 206,60 | 230,18 |
| Source: Tea Statistics, 1990. Published by J. Thomas & Company Private Limited. |         |         |     |         |        |        |        |        |

Table IV.03: Average annual growth area, production, yield and exports 1901 to 1950

| Year      | Area Under Tea | Production | Yield Per Hectare | Exports |
|-----------|----------------|------------|-------------------|---------|
| (1)       | (2)            | (3)        | (4)               | (5)     |
| 1901-1910 | 0.24           | 1.66       | 0.01              | 1.60    |
| 1911-1920 | 0.97           | 1.44       | 0.48              | 1.01    |
| 1921-1930 | 0.65           | 1.27       | 0.94              | 0.92    |
| 1931-1940 | 0.74           | 0.74       | 0.58              | 0.05    |
| 1941-1950 | -0.15          | 0.98       | 0.01              | 0.82    |

Note (I) The above growth rates have been found out by fitting an exponential equation of the form,  $Y_x = AB^x$

When converted in logarithmic form the above equation can be represented as  $\log Y_x = a + b^x$

Where,  $a = \log A$  and  $b = \log s$ .

$b$  represents the rate of growth, which has been shown in percentage by multiplying 100.

(II) (-) indicates negative rate of growth

Source Data compiled from Tea Statistics, 1990, Published by J. Thomas & Co. Private Limited.

The growth pattern of the Indian tea industry during the period 1900 to 1950 has been shown in Table 02. and Table 03.

Table 02. shows that during the fifty years area under tea cultivation increased by nearly 49 per cent while production rose by more than 200 per cent. Yield per hectare increased by nearly 107 percent and 130 per cent raise took place in exports.

Table 03. shows the during the first 10 years (1901 to 1910) area increased at a very slow rate. It registering an annual growth rate of 0.24 per cent only. However, in spite of low yield rate production and exports increased at comparatively faster rate. They registered an annual growth rate of 1.66 percent and 1.60 percent respectively.

Between 1910 to 1920 the annual growth rate of area improved. Throughout the period it increased by 0.97 per cent annually. This fillip in the expansion of area under tea cultivation was due to the increase in demand for India tea during the First World War. But data in Table 01 reveals that production and exports increased speedily only up to 1915 and then sharply declined in 1920. This was because the British Government released the stock it held after the decontrol of tea in 1919. Thus a falling annual growth rate of production and exports was registered during the decade. However the growth rate of yield per hectare improved. (Table 03)

The period 1920 to 1930 was not very prosperous for the tea industry. During this period, the industry was seriously setback by the tea slump of 1921 and the world trade depression of 1929. The annual growth rate of area under tea cultivation, production and exports all declined during this decade. Only the growth pattern of yield per hectare showed improvement.

Table 02. Shows that the declining trend of production and exports was continued up to 1935 and thereafter towards a recovery. Between 1931 to 1940 the annual growth rate of area improved but that of production and exports further deteriorated as revealed by Table 03. This was due to the recommendations of the first International Tea Agreement.

From 1941 to 1950 area under tea cultivation registered a negative annual growth rate of 0.15 per cent. However the annual growth rate of production and exports showed improvement. They increased to 0.98 per cent and 0.82 per cent respectively from 0.74 percent and 0.05 percent respectively during the period 1931 to 1940. This is accounted for the Bulk Purchase Scheme of the British Government during the Second World War Period.

Thus the tea industry of India had been commercially started by 1840 after the formation of the Assam Tea Company. Thereafter unto 1865 the industry made uninterrupted progress. But the tea disaster of 1865-67 had a serious set back to its growth and development. But the positive step taken by the British Government and planters recovered the situation and the industry again established its solid foundation in the global market. Thereafter throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century the industry continued its growth.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the industry passed through the historic events of the First World War. World Trade Depression of 1929 and the Second World War. After the First and Second World War the growth and development of the industry had been seriously setback due to over production during the war. But whatever setback had been suffered by the tea industry. It had neither lost its inherent strength of growth and development nor its lead position in the tea world during the pre-independence period'. (1)

#### 4.2. BEGINNING OF TEA GARDENS IN DARJEELING HILLS- THE EARLY HISTORY

The Darjeeling tea area is a hill district and occupies a unique place in Northeast India. The early history of tea in Darjeeling is bound up with the history of British connection with the province of Assam. O'Malley has rightly remarked that the "establishment of tea industry in Darjeeling is due to the enterprise of Dr. Campbell". (2) 'In 1823 Robert Bruce, an adventurer and trader visited Garhgaon, near Sibsagar for trading purposes. He came to know about the existence of tea plants from a Singhpoo Chief, and made arrangements to obtain some specimens. In the year 1824, he received the specimen and handed them over to his brother C. A. Bruce. Mr. C. A. Bruce sent some of these samples to Captain David Scott, the first commissioner of the newly acquired province of Assam. In 1833, the East India Company was anxious to obtain a rival source of supply under its own control. This was mainly because the East India had lost its monopoly of tea trade with China. The question of tea production in India was not new, as because in 1788, Sir Joseph Banks, at the request of the Company had studied the problems and suggested Bihar and Cooch Behar as suitable areas for tea culture. Lord William Bentick, the Governor-General appointed a committee in 1834 with a view to formulating a plan for the introduction of tea culture into India. At the same time the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. G. J. Gordon of the Calcutta firm of Mackintosh & Company was sent to China to bring back plants and seed and also cultivators who knew how to grow and prepare tea. The conclusions reached by the committee convinced them that the proper places for tea cultivation were in order of suitability -1) the lower hills and valley of Himalayas indicating Mussoree, Dehradun 2) The eastern frontier (Area not denoted) and the 3) Nilgiris and the mountains of Central and South India.

Realising the future prospects of tea industry in India, experimental plantations were started in Upper Assam and the districts of Kumaon and Garwal. It had now been shown that tea could be made in Assam, a number of capitalists approached the Governments, both in London and Calcutta for the transfer of plantations from the Government to their hands. In 1839, a company was formed under the name Bengal Tea Company and in the same year a joint stock company was formed in London. The two companies immediately amalgamated as the Assam Tea Company. In 1840 two thirds of experimental tea were handed over to Assam Tea Company and C. A. Bruce was made Superintendent of the Northern Division with headquarters at Jaipur.

About the same time tea planting began in Darjeeling. Dr. Campbell was "transferred" to Darjeeling in 1840, and he started experimental growth of tea. Dr. Campbell and Major Crommelin in Darjeeling and Lebong opened experimental nurseries respectively. By the end of 1856, tea had been cultivated at Tukvar, at the Canning and Hopetown plantations on the Kurseong flats and between Kurseong and Pankhabari. It was in 1856, Alubari Tea garden was opened by the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company, and in 1859, Dr. Brougham started the Dhotre garden. Between 1860 and 1864 Ging, Ambotia. The Darjeeling Tea Company established Takdah and Lebong Tea Company established Phubtsering and the gardens at Tukvar and Badamtam. Makaibari, Pandam and Steinthal tea estates were also opened during the same period.

It was witnessed that the number of tea gardens rose from 39 in 1866 to 56 by the end of 1870 employing about 8000 labourers and in 1874 the number of gardens increased to 113. The industry made rapid progress and the number of tea gardens increased to 148 by 1905. Of these about 117 tea gardens are located in the Darjeeling and Kurseong area. With the passage of time tea industry became the backbone of the

economy in the hills providing employment opportunities to about 64000 people. (3) There are at present 72 functioning tea gardens covering about 18,000 hectares under tea plantation, employing about 50,000 permanent workers and producing between 10 and 12 million Kilograms of Black Orthodox tea annually. Also most of the approximately 1,50,000 dependents of the workers get casual employment during nine months of the harvesting season.

Apart from the above, the following sections of the people of Darjeeling are indirectly dependent on the tea industry: -

- a) Transport owners for carrying tea, fuels, oils, coal, tea chests, food-grains, miscellaneous stores etc.
- b) Schools, colleges, Hardware suppliers, buses, taxis, restaurants, hospitals, chemists, cinemas etc.

Although area-wise Darjeeling comprises 4.9 % of all India hectareage under tea and the crop is only 0.16% of the national production, the estimated export earning are 12to 15% of India's tea export relation. The estimated revenue earning from Darjeeling tea is around 120 crores annually. Therefore, Darjeeling tea is not only vital for Darjeeling district's economy but is also an asset of the country.

However, the tea production from Darjeeling has been gradually declining. This is mainly due to a number of factors such as age-old bushes, soil erosion etc. No systematic uprooting and replanting programme was undertaken even after independence of our country. Therefore, despite modern and scientific agricultural practices no significant increases in the production has been achieved. Apart from the evils of merchant capitalism drying up the very life of the tea industry, nature also has played foul with it. The 1968 flood damaged about 1,700 hectares of tea are valued about one crore. At the

same time, an extension of tea cultivation was virtually impossible due to the ecological constraints in Darjeeling. Furthermore, the cutting down of the garden trees not only exposed the tea bushes to sun but also helped to accelerate the soil erosion rendering the region less productive.

#### 4.3. LABOURERS IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Many Gorkhas under the leadership of Dal Bahadur Giri, Jangbir Sapkota, Bhagat Bir Tamang took active part in the national movement. They walked from village to village and garden to garden in and around Darjeeling with the objective of creating awareness amongst the tea garden labourers of their rights and raise their voice against the atrocities of the British planters. But their efforts were short lived for want of organised labour front. The planters were organised and had the full support of the administration were as the labourers were scattered and illiterate and under the clutches of the planters.

The history of trade unionism in the hills is certainly not the replica of trade unionism in the plains where workers could muster at one spot. Development of trade consciousness and organization among the tea plantation worker was a comparatively delayed phenomenon in the hills. The factors which were responsible for this delayed process were, horrid isolation far from their homes, their ignorance, illiteracy, and difficulty of contact with the outside of the political and trade union workers, added with revengeful attitude of the employers against any attempt for combination. The different tribes were kept in their respective tribal Dhuras (labour lines) and hence their inter – Dhura movement was highly restricted by the management. The system of recruitment of labour through sardars persisted till the enactment of plantation labour Act, 1951 in the

region. This was further accelerated by the emergence of West Bengal Plantation labour rules, 1956. Plantation labourers were legally forbidden to strike and move out to neighbouring plantations, villages and urban towns. Even at social issues such as marriage, the workers had to seek prior permission from the management. The terms and conditions of work of the workers were as bonded as could be found in any other colonial enclave of British Raj. The workers were completely unorganised as there was no trade union of any sort. The situation started changing after 1947 in the region.

The planters extorted a fabulous fortune through brutal exploitation of the labourers. The British planters maintained their own army the North Bengal Mounted Rifles that was very active in the hill areas and was instrumental in stopping any union activity in and around the gardens of the Darjeeling Hills. This Regiment was disbanded in August 14, 1947. The illiteracy was unbound and the conditions under which they worked remained unfit for human living throughout the pre-independence period. The labourers were employed at wages below normal and with rampant indiscriminatio.

The entire pre-independence period can be called the 'Unregulated' period, where the relation between the planters and the workers were not formalised. The post-independence period formalized the relationship between the two with the passing of various laws. Serious discontent had already been brewing among the workers on the long-standing and unsettled problems, insufficiency of wages, rejection of the demand for minimum wages and above all humiliation of the workers by the British planters and their managers. This unbearable condition of the workers aggravated by the colonial policy of the imperialist government caused among the workers a smoldering discontent which in no time blazed out in massive strikes and struggles.

The planters had the full support of the colonial government and they were effectively able to keep their workers unorganised by stalling any attempts of outside trade union organisers in influencing plantation workers. In case any person entered the garden, it would amount to 'Criminal Trespass' and would be arrested. The trespasser was granted bail on the condition that is he would not further enter into the garden until the case was settled. Hence it was very difficult to organise the workers. On the one hand, the workers were separated from the organisers by filling cases against them, and on the other there was a financial burden on the organisers to run the cases. 'However, the Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate, Kurseong Shri, relived the organisers of this with the passing of judgment. Ashok Mitra, I.C.S. In the judgment he pointed out that any person entering the garden for forming a union, was not considered an act of 'Criminal Trespass'. Secondly, the owners could not oppose any meeting held on the Public Works Department roads which went through the gardens as there roads were beyond the purview of the owners'. (4)

'The most decisive weapon for counter attack by the white planters was a system called 'Hatabahar: (Expulsion from the garden). They used this weapon against any worker in case of violation of rules and this order led the worker to dispense with his service and expulsion from his hereditary land. There was no question of reemployment in any other garden. The planters resorted to all sorts of heinous methods in securing, torturing and exploiting the labourers – whether male, female, or tender-aged child. No public opinion could be formed against this inhuman 'Hatabahar' system, as its application was rare till the organised movement among the labourers. The use of this weapon was frequently against the leaders of the 'Darjeeling Zila Chia Kaman Union.' The owner gave six labourers of Ambotia Tea garden the order of Hatabahar sometimes

in the latter part of 1946. One Kalooram Brahmin, Munshi of Kurbia division of Singell Tea Estate was also given the order of Hatabahar, on the pretext that he was a member of Swadeshi movement. 'One Purna Bahadur Rai' was given the order of Hatabahar on the whimsical ground that he put on shoes and a wristwatch'. (5) Apart from Hatabahar, Police atrocities, arrests continued and more ever, the hired goondas with the help of police exerted brutal torture to break the organised resistance of the tea workers. The labourers were virtually kept imprisoned in the tea gardens and they had to undergo untold miseries. The extent of exploitation was excessive in spheres of wages, working hours, education, and employment of child labour, housing, maternity benefits and other social security measures.

'Since wages are directly related to the economic condition of workers, an insight into the wage structure of the labourers in tea gardens of Darjeeling hills would highlight the poor living condition during the British Raj. Wage fixation was left to the dictates of the Planters Association in Darjeeling. The table below shows the wages of labourers from 1939 to 1944'. (6)

Table IV. 04: The wages of labourers from 1939 to 1944

| Year | Male |      |      | Female |      |      | Child |      |      |
|------|------|------|------|--------|------|------|-------|------|------|
|      | Rs.  | Anna | Pies | Rs.    | Anna | Pies | Rs.   | Anna | Pies |
| 1939 | 0    | 5    | 0    | 0      | 4    | 0    | 0     | 2    | 0    |
| 1941 | 0    | 5    | 6    | 0      | 4    | 6    | 0     | 2    | 9    |
| 1944 | 0    | 6    | 0    | 0      | 5    | 0    | 0     | 3    | 0    |

(Source: West Bengal Fortnightly & Sat 1.5.54 – Calcutta.)

The abnormally low wage rates and the consequential economic miseries ultimately encumbered the workers with recurring debts, and appallingly degraded living

conditions of the workers. The burden was further aggravated out of all proportions by the high rate of interest, which had to be paid by the labourers on loans taken to make both ends meet.

Many folk poems, folk songs, and other literary works tell about the high interest rates on which businessmen gave loans to labourers and forcibly made them repay the same with the help of the administrators. The feeling of economic insecurity coincided with the ethnic insecurity and further strengthened the process of the integration of various groups into one. 'The problem was so chronic that in the year 1902, 808 cases of loan repayment were registered in Darjeeling Kutchery. The Businessmen who were also called 'Mahajans' were also identified as the cunning 'loan givers' or the Kaiyas. These Kaiyas used to charge 75% interest, which was compounded annually. Thus labour relations in the early days of tea industry were conditioned by circumstances of recruitment. The bulk of the labour force constituted emigrants from Nepal. In 1939, Dr. Campbell of the Indian Medical Services was transferred from Kathmandu to Darjeeling as Superintendent of the new territory acquired under negotiation with government of Sikkim in 1835. His first problem was to attract settlers and in this he was successful. By 1849 ten thousand immigrants had come from Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan'. (7) The practice of forced labour for the state and state officials and absence of such practice in India favoured the settlement of Nepalese in Darjeeling. These emigrants never raised their voice in protest against the atrocities perpetrated by the planters. Rather they were content with the situation around in comparison to what they had suffered in Nepal as a result of slavery. As a matter of fact, slavery was abolished only in 1924. These abnormalities stood out as grave problems on the way of plantation labours rising as a definite and independent class. The migration from one country to another and permanent

settlement in an altogether different environment further aggravated the problems in the formation of the workers' union and its movement. The labourers were tied down to the estates by various crude forms of subjugation. Thus the endurance of the labourers was coming to an end. In 1921 when the entire country was being flushed by the wave of non-co-operation movement against the imperialist government, the plantation labourers also decided to get out of this slavery. Consequently the trade union movement in the Darjeeling hills became intertwined with the political movement for national liberation. The dynamics of this intertwining continued till the achievement of independence, and since then a new phase with a higher perspective began in the course of working class struggles in Darjeeling Hills. 'The Non-Cooperation movement of 1921-22 was the first occasion in which hill men showed an interest in politics. It aroused excitement for short time amongst tea garden labourers and there was some boycott of foreign goods.'

'The minimum wages fixed for the Tea plantation labour for the Hill areas of the district of Darjeeling was far too low in comparison to the wages fixed for the Dooars and Terai areas and also in living in the hills. In December 1952 when there was a crisis in Tea market and some of the tea gardens were actually closed during the winter slack season, the labourers showed sympathy towards the garden proprietors by having agreed to sacrifice a cut in their daily wages by accepting to purchase foodstuffs at Rs. 17/8 per maund in place of Rs. 8/- per maund. The Government in their Notification No. 6539Lab/G/2W – 35(A)/52 dated 30-12-52 effected this cut in the wages which was already minimum for two month only and it was expected that the wages cut would be restored after the expiry of two months. The position being reviewed in February 1953 an increase in cash wage of annas -/1/6 was made as a partial restoration of the wage cut. Since then the position of Tea market had improved as a result of which the Dooars and

Tarai gardens had restored the wage cut to the extent of annas  $-\frac{3}{6}$  per day. But in the case of Darjeeling Hills the Plantations owners represented by the I.T.A and the I.T.P.A. showed a very stiff attitude and went so far to remark that their labourers were quite happy with the meagre income they were getting and it were the labour leader who wants more and more. Thus in the Minimum Wages Committee meeting for Tea Plantations, Hill areas the I.T.A. representatives remained adamant not to restore the wage cut even by a farthing although it was admitted by all the members including the Chairman that the cost of living in the Darjeeling Hill Plantation area was much higher than of the Dooars and Tarai areas and that the Tea market had very much improved. It may be quite interesting to give below the rates of wages in Dooars, Tarai area and the Darjeeling Hill areas.

Dooars - Tarai Area: Adult male Rs.  $\frac{1}{6}/6$ , Adult female Rs.  $\frac{1}{4}/6$ , Employable child Rs.  $-\frac{1}{12}/3$ .

Darjeeling Hill Area: Adult male Rs.  $\frac{1}{0}/6$ , Adult female Rs.  $-\frac{1}{5}/6$ , Employable child Rs.  $-\frac{1}{8}/9$ .

Besides the difference in cash wages the labourers in Dooars and Tarai are getting foodstuffs at Rs. 15/- md. whereas in Darjeeling the rate is Rs.  $\frac{17}{8}$  per md.

The above figures indicate what amount of injustice had been done to the labourers of the Hill tea gardens. The attitude of the I.T.A. representatives in the meeting of the Minimum Wages Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> August 1953 was most uncompromising and unsympathetic towards the garden labourers, on account of which the meeting broke without any decision leaving it to the Government to decide the issue under the Minimum Wages Act. The differential treatment meted to the labourers of the

Hill gardens had already created discontentment amongst the garden labourers and a feeling of mistrust arising in the mind of the labourers'. (8)

Though little change occurred in the demographic structure of the nation except in some states like West Bengal, Assam and Punjab, the changes in the class relations within the plantation system were significant. The class relations within the tea gardens were quite different during the British days from what is seen today. Socially, the managerial class belonged to the British with the exception of a few Indian owners as managers. The manager-labour class relationship at times benevolent and in others very exploitative. There were no trade unions till a few years before independence to convey the grievances of the labourers to the owners or managers in a collective way. Even if they had any grievances there was the North Bengal Mounted Rifles till independence to keep their mouths shut or hands tied. The garden people feared this army like anything. As a result, the labourers were quiet and voiceless, obeying the orders of the managers like animals.

It has also been reported in the field interview that the labourers had to work for nine hours a day. Multi-occupation was not allowed because it was thought that it would hamper the work. The wage for labour per day in Darjeeling in 1924 were—marad or male 5 annas, aurat or female 4 annas and 1paise and chokra or children 3 annas. The wages in the agriculture sector were reported to be higher than the wages in tea gardens.

Ram Singh Rai, who started his career as a clerk in Maharani Tea Estate in 1939 and retired in March 1972, as Superintendent of Ringtong Tea Estate and was an advisor to Sipaindhura and Selimhill tea estates during 1974-75, makes the following observations on the tea gardens during the British period. There was proper discipline among the workers. The managerial class being well trained before being recruited had

proper knowledge of tea cultivation as well as management. The Darjeeling Planters' Association was also very strong. There were separate funds like "Reserved Fund" and "Development Fund" to meet any unforeseen crisis in the management of the gardens. The labourers also feared managers. Any unwanted labour during the 1940s were given the 'Hattabahar' order meaning expulsion from garden. The labourers could not afford it because they would not be employed in any other gardens. Bonus, sickness relief and other facilities were not given nor any crest was given to female labourer, she had to carry her baby on her back and go the garden for work. These continued till 1925 after which, under the provisions of the Workmen's Compensation Act 1923 these facilities were granted.

Education could not be provided to the labourers initially due to labour shortage. Since the agricultural sector was opened up at Kalimpong subdivision simultaneously with the tea plantation in other hill subdivisions quite a percentage of immigrant people were absorbed there. At the time of First World War labour shortage was so much acute that the British planters forcefully brought many who had already joined the military services back. An understanding was also arrived at not to recruit any person from the tea gardens in the defence forces during this period. This provision was lifted up at the time of the Second World War.

#### 4.4. EVOLUTION OF UNIONISM IN TEA PLANTATIONS

There was no organized labour movement or trade unions in West Bengal tea gardens till the eve of independence, i.e.1946. The All – India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in 1920 under the Presidentship of Lala Lajpath Rai to co-ordinate the activities of various trade Unions in the country with a definite anti colonial aim. The

nationalists could not grow any labour movement in West Bengal tea gardens like Assam tea Gardens were started since 1921 under the leadership of nationalists and it became more pronounced after 1935. By 1939 tea gardens in Assam started witnessing wide spread strikes.

By the middle of 1946, the Communist Party of India had started movements all over Bengal as a protest against the general shortage of foodgrains the State. During this period Communist trade unionists awakened garden workers to stand against planters who did not supply them quota of food rations. Labour unrest increased in the gardens during this period. The Dooars Planters' Association (DPA), the Indian Tea Planters' Association (ITPA) and Mr. K. A. Hill the then Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi Division; all blamed the communists to create labour unrest among garden workers. But they fully suppressed the oppression of management in the form of non-payment of proper wages, short supply of food grains, excess workload etc.

#### 4.5. THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE EARLY PHASE OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

As the freedom movement gathered momentum and the independence of the country was becoming almost a certainty in the forties, the apprehension of the hill men about their fate in free India was growing. This period saw the formation of the two important political parties, 1) the All India Gorkha League and 2) the Darjeeling District Committee of the Communist Party of India. The policies and activities of these two political parties shaped the politics of the hill areas. Even the Darjeeling Branch of Indian National Congress, which was formed after independence, followed the path taken by these political parties so far as the hill question was concerned.

'Despite their difference in ideology and policies, both the All India Gorkha League and Communist Party of India, Darjeeling Unit, shared the common feeling of apprehension regarding the fate of the Indian Gorkhas. The primary concern of the two political parties was to protect the socio-economic and political interests and the survival of the Nepali community as a distinct Indian community. The issue of Indian Nepalese asking for some special attention and treatment had become a sensitive issue in the hill areas by that time that no political parties could ignore it. The survival as viable political parties, and to extend their mass bases, these political parties had to present themselves as representatives of the Gorkha interests.

Despite their ideological differences, the All India Gorkha League and the Communist Party of India had taken many common stands on the Gorkha question. The All India Gorkha League in May 1947 submitted a memorandum to Congress High Command and also to Lord Mountbatten, the then Governor General of India for providing either special arrangement for the hill people or to exclude the hill areas from Bengal and include them in Assam. During the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Lal Nehru's visit to Kalimpong in 1952, the All India Gorkha League submitted three alternative proposals regarding the hill areas of Darjeeling and adjacent plain in Siliguri and Dooars in Jalpaiguri. These alternatives proposals were 1) separating Darjeeling from Bengal and making it a Union Territory, 2) creating a separate state consisting of the Nepali speaking areas of the Darjeeling District and the Dooars region of the Jalpaiguri District 3) separating Nepali speaking areas of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri Districts from Bengal and including them in Assam'. (9)

'The Darjeeling District Committee of the then undivided Communist Party of India demanded a 'Sovereign State' in memorandum submitted to the Constituent

Assembly on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1947, in the form of single union out of the feudal states of Nepal and Sikkim and British Administered District of Darjeeling known as 'Gorkhasthan' to safeguard the interest of the Gorkhas. The motive behind this may be to create a popular base in hill areas, especially in the formation of trade unions. Mr. Ratan Lal Brahmin was vocal in this separatist demand. Leaders like Charu Mazumdar, Sourin Basu, and Ganeshlal Subba supported him. Some quotations are given from the memorandum: - " In the opinion of the Communist Party of India, the district of Darjeeling belongs to the Gorkhas and its is their homeland."

In the opinion of the Communist Party of India, The only to further the national development of the Gorkha people is by granting them their right of self-determination.

The Communist Party of India therefore demands that after making necessary revisions of the exiting boundaries, the three contiguous areas of Darjeeling District, Souther Sikkim and Nepal be formed into one single zone to be called "Gorkhasthan." From the files of Communist Party of India – Darjeeling District Committee.

The Communists in Darjeeling supported the demand for Gorkha homeland amongst other in line with their idea of national identity. The Communist Party of India used the demand for Gorkhasthan in the 1940's to create a popular base in the hill areas, especially in the formation of trade unions in tea plantions.

The Communists in their eagerness to nurture their support base in the hill went further ahead than the Gorkha League in their demand for Gorkhasthan up to 1951. The split of the Communists in the sixties did not affect the policy of the Communists in the hill areas as because Ratan Lal Brahmin and Ananda Mohan Pathak remained with the Communist Party of India (M). But the Communist Party of India (M) from the late sixties stressed the concept of autonomy rather than separate Gorkhasthan'. (10)

‘Ratan Lal Brahmin, popularly known as Maila Bajey knew how to deal with the tea garden workers or bully the managers while Ganeshlall Subba fulfilled the intellectual needs of the Communist Party of India at the district level. They established a permanent presence of communism in Darjeeling’. (11) Thus under the timely leadership of the Communist Party of India, workers of many garden became conscious of their legitimate rights, which is also duly recognized by leaders of other trade unions.

#### 4.6. FORMATION AND GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONS IN DARJEELING:

The origin of hill areas’ trade unions – the Darjeeling Tea Garden Workers’ Union, the Darjeeling Chia Kaman Shramik Sangh and National Union of Plantation Workers’ has been initiated and their growth and development influenced by three political parties, the Communist Party of India, Gorkha League and the Indian National Congress. All trade unions mentioned are mainly concerned with the Darjeeling Tea Industry.

Communist Party of India mainly dominates the All India Trade Union Congress. This political party was the first to come into the picture of tea estate. The Gorkha League is a regional political party and the Darjeeling Chia Kaman Shramik Sangh is affiliated to it. The National Union of Plantation Workers’ affiliated to the Indian National Trade Union Congress was established by Indian National Congress. Political Unionism has been a factor of paramount importance in the historical growth of Trade Unionism in tea estate. They have played a decisive role in the origin, growth and development of trade unions for tea plantation workers’. The division of the trade union movement in hill areas is along ideological lines. Operational strategies of each of trade union a group is determined by the political party it represents.

'In the 1946 legislative Assembly election Darjeeling too was to join the fray so a climate of political tension was very much on the anvil. The limited electoral seats provided under the then system only two representatives – one labour and the general electorates. For the labour representative only twelve tea gardens were to take part. The twelve tea gardens were Pandam, Harsing, Banneckburn, Phubtsering, Puttabong, Som, Singtam, Rangeet, Happy Valley, Stenthal, Sidrabong and Dali.

The Communist leader Maila Baje was proposed for the Labour constituency. The other rival candidates were the Congress leader Gaga Tshering and Sri S.K. Tshering giving representation to the employers.

The Communists, had, in this election, prepared two important memoranda, one political and the other economical. On the political front, to realise the right of self-determination of the Gorkhas, the demand for Gorkhasthan was raised for the first time. The memorandum, among other, included universal adult suffrage and the security, language, education, culture, and also of employment of the serving Gorkha soldiers.

The tea garden workers and employees had eleven-point charter of demands, they were as follows: -

- 1) The practice of suspension to be stopped
- 2) Increase of wage to be introduced
- 3) Provision of maternity benefit
- 4) Employment of children below 10 years of age to be made illegal
- 5) Make provision for games and sports for the workers
- 6) Provision for education of the children
- 7) Wrestring ownership of tea garden ownership from national foreign companies and make it a national property.

- 8) Establishment of hospitals and provision for free medical benefits.
- 9) Provision for pension of old disabled people
- 10) During festivals monetary benefits (baksis as it is called today) should be provided
- 11) Taxes on family land holdings and cattle should be lifted.

The practice of suspension was prevalent then and Maila Baje stood against this. The tea workers rose in support of the Communist Party. The election fought against labour exploitation turned into a political movement. The same song reverberated across the villages.

‘Vote for Maila Baje to do away with suspension and suppression of the management’.

For some time before there was no organisation. But the workers soon reposed their faith on red banner. The workers fought against the management in one garden after another and gave their all to make Maila Baje’s victory sure once for all. The elections were still due three or four months. It was felt, the workers though united, without any organisation needed to be brought under strong organisation. With this objective, the Darjeeling Tea Gardens’ Workers Union was formed in September 1945’. (12) Maila Baje and Bhadra Bahadur Hamal led it. Its registration number was 707. With the elections drawing near and a strong organisation coming into being, the management were in complete disarray. Ratan Lal Brahmin (Maila Baje) was then accused of dacoity and on 11<sup>th</sup>, January 1946, he was served a notice. The notice disallowed him from entering any of the twelve tea gardens for electioneering. No restriction was imposed on other candidates. They were, instead, receiving all the help from the management.

Brushing aside all these difficulties Ratan Lal Brahmin went from tea garden to tea garden with his honest party stalwarts. His audacity and daredevil attitude stood firm

in good stead to ward off any attempted physical assault. During the campaign, he along with his friends from Phubtsering was arrested. He was involved in three cases. The electorates were threatened and attacked persistently. Police goons and money employed to woo the voters proved unavailing. The Legislative Assembly elections held in March 1946 returned Ratan Lal Brahmin from the Labour constituency. He polled 85% of the total votes. The total votes received were 1118 while his contenders Gaga Tshering and S.K.Tshering got 126 and 176 respectively. The victory of the Communist candidates from areas known for exploitation and repression proved the extreme undercurrent of dissatisfaction and rebellion among the workers.

#### 4.7. NEW WAVE OF ORGANISED REVOLUTION

##### DARJEELING TEA GARDEN WORKERS' UNION – (AFFILIATED TO AITUC)

The first public meeting was organized at Chowrashta in Darjeeling in rallying the workers to greater awareness and a sense of social justice, were about ten thousands people assembled. At the sight of this unprecedented event, the farmers and the tea labourers were greatly moved and it heralded the rise of a new dimension. Indomitable courage shown by the labourers against atrocities and suppressions influenced the other segment of the Nepali-speaking people. 'The leaders of the Darjeeling District Communist Party of India received necessary counseling from a leader, Pachu Gopal Bhaduri who was sent by the state leadership. At his suggestion the newly formed union adopted two fold plan. In one hand, a prior notice to be served by the union for general strikes, and on the other, political campaigning, contact with the Nepali intelligentsia to get their support through dialogue'. (13)

The trade union movement of the Communist Party of India flourished under the active involvement of tea garden workers. 'The names of Maste Rai of Bloomfield Tea Estate, along with Santalachi Raini, Gokul Singh Rai, Bishna Raini, Jethi Limbuni of Som Tea Estate, 'Baje' of Pandam Tea Garden are well recorded in the pages of workers' movement in the Darjeeling hills'. (14) 'Madhumaya is such another brave female labourers who stood against the brokers of owners with 'Khukri' in her hand. Wangdi Lama, a peasant was one of the front ranking leaders in this area. As a member of District Organising Committee, he got involved in the trade union movement. After the Communist Party was declared illegal in 1948, he had to labour very hard to keep contact among different branch organisation of the party. For this, he had to walk almost all day long. He fell seriously ill, and could not be given proper treatment. As a result he died, prematurely'. (15)

The 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1945 is of historical importance as this day witnessed the formation of what was known as the first in the hill areas – Darjeeling Tea Garden Workers' Union. Late Sushil Chatterjee, a veteran trade union leader of Communist Party of India was chiefly responsible for this historical organization of tea plantation workers. Shri. Ratan Lal Brahmin was elected the president and Shri Sushil Chatterjee its Vice-President and Shri. Bhadra Bahadur Hamal its secretary.

After 8 months of the formation of Trade Union and two months following the electoral victory of Ratan Lal Brahmin, the then Secretary Bhadra Bahadur Hamal published a leaflet on 25<sup>th</sup>. June 1946. The leaflet underscored the following:-

'The union has up till now three thousand members (one home: one member) and altogether 20 branch committees were formed. This included the 12-tea gardens- Munda, Niz Kaman (Cedar), Sonada, Ambotia, Pubong Dabaipani (Darjeeling) even had

branches despite their sizes. This was, of course, not an easy task. It is known to everyone that foreign proprietors had an unbridled freedom and they treated the workers like commodities both could be sold and purchased like cattle and treated them akin to the animals. They were had till deprived of the simple right of holding public meeting. Twenty workers were arrested till then and seven were imposed Rs. 30/- fine for trespassing or one month's rigorous imprisonment was in store. Altogether 20-25 workers were rusticated by the managers in Phubtsering, Pandam, Som, Niz and Munda Tea Estate for doing the union's chores.' (16)

The problems among others confronted by the workers was mainly of high price. It seems unbecoming today but then Re 1 per seer of rice was something difficult to fend off. To this effect, the workers' main demand was 5 seers of rice for Rs. 1 for a week and for dependents 3 1/2 seers per week. Some tea gardens got this demand fulfilled. Som Tea estate had, in the course, an event of great magnitude worth recounting. The police were deployed from 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1946, in view of the seemingly unmanageable attitude of the workers. The workers cast a spanner when the union leader, P.D. Mukhia along with 16 others were sought to be apprehended. The police readied their rifles. The workers were unruffled, a tug-of-war for rifles started. When a police officer was about to fire his pistol, one caught hold of it and the attempt came to nought. Thus 500 workers rushed to the jail and gheared it. Mothers with cradles at the back and all men and women dauntlessly took part. A three day strike was observed in Som. The cook, sweeper, all working at the Managers' bungalow abstained from their duty. The factory and the bungalow, which carried an air of glamour and majesty, turned into a virtual crematory.

This must be the first ever-organised labour movement in Darjeeling. After some time the Ambotia tea garden rusticated six workers and to counter-act that six or seven

thousand workers condemned the act in utter detestation. Niz tea garden (Rangmuk Cedar) happened to distribute low-quality ration, this caused widespread movement. The proprietor declared a lockout of the garden.

‘Even in the absence of a union, the movement launched by the workers of Bara Gail (Teesta Valley) in August in opposition of the rustication of the workers was yet another glorious even in which the proprietors and management were brought down to submission. Phipraj Subba, Ransur Thakuri, Patli Thakuri, Khargay Mangar, Raiman Mangar, Antaray Limbu, Khati Bajey, Ramlal Tamang, Gomba Tamang, Asharay Rai, Harkaman Rai, Karnaman Rai, Krishan Dhoj Rai, Kalman Rai, Sipaini Limbuni, Rumdali Rai, were among those who were part of this historic movement. In due course, on 15<sup>th</sup>. June 1946, the Union submitted a list of 12 demands giving them 14 days’ for fulfillment of their demands. (The list had 4 and even 7 demands, thus being irregular). The demands were as follows: -

- 1) Adult workers should get Re. 1/- @ 1 anna for every pound of tea. Females, adolescents, and children should get 12 annas, 9 annas, and 6 annas. This should be implemented throughout the district.
- 2) They should get 25% of Dearness allowance from the wage. For Re 1/-, they should get 4 annas and 3 annas for 12 annas.
- 3) The clerks and Chaprasis should also get an enhancement. The clerks and writers should get Rs. 50/- per month as salary and the guards should get Rs. 30/- per month.
- 4) The workers should get 4 days’ leave per month with full wage. The clerks should get a month’s leave with full salary per annum and an additional leave

of 12 days. The pregnant women should get wage and leave as prescribed by Government rules.

- 5) All the workers and their disabled children and old age people should get 5 seers of ration per week and 31/2 seers of ration for the whole family. Besides, they should get salt, oil according to ration.
- 6) The workers' quarters should be covered by corrugated iron sheets, in their absence a new method has to be applied. Provisions should be made for water connection, latrines, and electricity in every village. The workers should have at least two room quarters.
- 7) Hattabahar should be stopped.
- 8) Every tea garden should have a hospital provided with doctor and for moderately sick people, there should be a dispensary.
- 9) They should have the freedom of holding public meetings.
- 10) Every garden should have a primary school where free education should be imparted to the children.
- 11) Every year all the workers should get a month's bonus and every clerk, worker should get a month's bonus treating it as 'victory bonus'
- 12) The Darjeeling District Tea Garden Workers 'Union (registration number 707) should be taken as a bonafide union of the workers by the company.

On the basis of the memorandum, it could be said that a formal demand for bonus was made for the first time. It was only after the historic movement of 1955 the demand was acknowledged as a matter of principle. Hattabahar was the main issue. It was understood that even registered union got a scant respect from the authority. This was occasion enough for calling a movement. The memorandum clarifies this'. (17)

The other notable feature was that even though the two parties (the Communist Party of India and the Gorkha League), were not united, both the parties sometimes used to oppose the anti-workers policies of the management. This time around, the same thing happened. 'Sri Shiva Kumar Rai, the All India Gorkha League Secretary had clearly said, "The tea garden managers still look the tea garden workers as slaves. The Communist Party by forming union is trying to alleviate the sufferings of the workers. This was cause enough for the managers to further create the sufferings. The Gorkha League is ready to fight along with the Communist Party to fight the injustice'. (18) The Secretary of the District Congress Party gave similar statement. He said, "in spite of several differences among us, we are united to fight the injustice of the managers.

The workers were happy to have this feeling of brotherhood. Preparation for the movement was pervasive .The Government too was shaken. Coupled with this, the national freedom was at its height. Hence, in spite of the vehement opposition of the management, the Assistant Labour Commissioner started dialogue with the Union's representatives. Even though by word of mouth the management consented to agreeing the Trade Union's right. The burden of the police and the management lessened a bit. In the history of tea garden, this was formally the first conference between the British Management and the Trade Union representatives.

It was with the understanding of the great role played by the foremost organisation, the Darjeeling District Tea Garden Workers' Union in rejuvenating the workers from the state of slavery and make them fight for rightful demands a formidable Trade Union leader and a popular Congressman, Sri Punya Prakash Rai termed the Union's birthday as a "historic event"

Being brought up under the aegis of the exploiters, and still wanting to serve them,

Sir Parceival Griffith had given vent to his ire, this way: -

‘Trouble started in Darjeeling when a Communist candidate returned to the Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1946, after which the Communist party organised a tea garden labour union in the Darjeeling district and then proceeded to serve notices in 17 estates. Lack of uniformity in wage and other forms of remuneration between one garden and the other played into the hands of mischief-makers. The Darjeeling planter has always been a sturdy individualist and the independent tradition of the old proprietary gardens still lingered. It was easy, therefore, for the communists to pick up gardens where condition either were or seemed, less favourable to labour and they exploited this technique with considerable skills. It was at one time hoped that the non-communist body known, as Gorkha League would have steadying effect on labour in Darjeeling but the League at this time was badly led. It showed no sense of responsibility and it was often concerned to outfit the Communists in its demands. The Darjeeling Planters’ Association took steps to secure greater uniformity of conditions, but the situation remained uneasy’.

(19)

The domain of India wherein the management alone ruled for 90 to 100 years enjoyed heavenly bliss, the Communist Party led by the awakened workers came to them as devils. But the devil was out of the net webbed to exploit and suppress the workers.

‘Mr. Griffith too agreed the opening up of 17 branches of the Union. The branches opened up till June 1946 were the following: -1) Pandam, 2) Harsingh 3) Baneckburn 4) Phubtshering 5) Patabong 6) Som 7) Singtam 8) Rangneet 9) Happyvalley 10) Steinthal 11) Sidrabong 12) Dali 13) Munda-Dhajay 14) Neez(Rangmuk

– Cedar 15) Singell 16) Ambootia 17) Pubong. Besides Norbong of Kurseong region and Lingay Tea Estate of Darjeeling were understandably active in the union's activities.

It was not known that time that were the leaders of different areas and of the different branches. Facts are not discovered as yet. Yet a brief account can be given from some available resources.

The Annual Conference of the Union was held on 28<sup>th</sup>. June 1946, its elected Executive Committee members were like the following:-

- 1) Convener (it might refer to the President)- Shri Sushil Chatterjee
- 2) Vice-President- Shri Ratan Lal Brahmnin, M.L.A.
- 3) Secretary – Shri Bhadra Bahadur Hamal
- 4) Assistant Secretaries – 1) Shri P.D. Mukhia, 2) Shri Madan Kumar Thapa
- 5) Treasurer – Shri Chandra Bahadur Mukhia

Members: - 1. Kalu Tamang 2. Mustay Rai 3. Karna Singh Sardar, 4. Hari Sharma, Kurseong, 5. Dhanpati Subba 6. Narman Mangar, Kafebari 7. Darap Singh Lama, Singell 8. Janalal Rai, Munda 9. Shamsar – (Cedar) 10. Bhim Bahadur 11. Tek Bahadur, 12. Bhimdal Tamang, 13. Chandra Bir Rai, 14. Man Bahadur Rai, 15. Dal Bahadur Rai,- Som.

The addresses, castes of many others were not known. The following names are found as representatives who attended the said conference. They are, Ranbir Rai, Harka Dhoj Chettri, Jetha Limbu, Kaila Kami, and Kumba Jit Rai from Dhajay, Indrajit Sardar and Chandra Kumar from Phubtsering, Chandraman Rai from Pusumbyang, Man Bahadur Gurung, from Singtam and Chandrabir Rai from Baneckburn.

The branches, which opened till 1946, were Harsing, Puttabong, Rangneet, Steinthal, and Dabaipani. Besides the aforesaid names, Ambersingh Caprenter, and

Baijanath Sharma, Chandralall Sharma, and later on Radha Rai, Saili Mangarni, Tilak Bahadur, and Gaje ko Ama of Ambotia, Buddhasingh, Ranbir Sarki, Padam Bahadur Thapa( Mangar ) of Narboong, and Raijite Rai, Achha Rai of Lingay are worth mentioning in their contribution towards forming the trade union.

Owing to countrywide national movement the British had to quit the country. An Interim Government was formed. Babu Jagjiwan Ram was elected Labour Minister. The movement going on in Darjeeling under the leadership of the Darjeeling District Tea Garden Workers' Union was under Government scrutiny. A Tripartite meeting was held in Delhi on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> January 1947 to discuss the problems of the workers. The Government of India, Bengal Provincial Government proprietors of the tea gardens and the representatives of the Trade union were present. The most important fact was that Shri Sushil Chatterjee was also present as a representative of the Darjeeling Tea Garden Workers' Union. The conference concurred on the enhancement of the wage of the workers. Darjeeling held big conferences all over. The cognizance of the Darjeeling Tea Garden Workers' Union was the only one so far. But the management were not silent. Though they had accepted a few proposals, they were utterly dissatisfied with the presence of the trade union and resembled a wounded tiger. They were; therefore, ready to adopt recalcitrant measures against the union. On the eve of the dawn of independence, according to a Government Order on the 24<sup>th</sup>.June 1947, the General Secretary Bhadra Bahadur Hamal was banned holding of public meeting as also entry in various tea gardens like Dhajay, Moondakothi, Balasan, Dhotray, Ringtang and Phokriabong. Vide orders of 18<sup>th</sup>. and 29<sup>th</sup>. September 1947, Bhadra Bahadur Hamal was prohibited entrance from Moondakhoti, Dhajay Khasmahal, Ringtang, Balasan, Happyvalley, Rangayrung, Dhotray, Pubong, Phubtshering, Pokhray Bong, Khasmahal, Takdah Cantonment,

Mineral Spring(Dabaipani), Coldbell Hatta( old Sonada Bazar within Rangayrung area) and Bloomfield (Dali). He was prohibited going around Rangli-Rangliot.

The trade union was active in Takdah, Phokraybong, Ringtang, Dhotrang-Rangay Rung- this was known from Government activities. In 1947 themselves, a union with red banner was formed in Chungthong under the leadership of Sabut Lama. In 1936, there had been a great rebellion in opposition of the British repression. The manager was brutally manhandled and the kothi(bungalow) and godown were destroyed, the workers went to jail, 15 families were rusticated. The union opened after 11 years. Nandu Rai, Cigarette wala, Baidar Jetha, Impi Rai and his friends were there. Lingay and Mareybong already had its branches, but could not last long owing to managerial opposition. It was after 1946, Ringtang and Phulbari in the Sonada region formed trade union. Jit Bahadur Subba, Sane Thapa, Mangalsingh Subba, Aitarani Limbuni, Harilal Sharma, Prasad Bahun, Indre Rai, Jasraj Poudyal, D.B. Khaling, Bhuwan Singh Rai, Maniraj Subba joined, in addition, Ringtang was under lock-out for two months.

The restriction imposed on the union leaders halted the progress of the union. The workers had suffered under the repression for years so they wanted to fight against the management. The movement was going on in the tea gardens. During the period Ambotia, Som, Okaiti, Baragail, Ringtang, Dhajay, Dali, Norbong, Singtam and Pandam had witnessed strong trade union movement.

The most important movement of the time was of Dhajay. The workers involved in movement to demand their rightful demand since 1946, to give the workers a fitting reply a lock-out was declared on 25<sup>th</sup>. April 1947. The leader of the Union, dauntless Communist leader (1903-1985), Ranbir Rai was a sore in the eyes of the management. The management deployed all the police forces to suppress the movement. Ranbir was

arrested. His house was pulverised the thriving maize plantation was destroyed. The workers reeling under 15 months lockout suffered untold sufferings. Help came from all quarters. 11 were rusticated. But the workers did not submit. Surya Rai, Chandra Rai, Balay Chettri and many other brave workers got on the movement under Ranbir Rai's leadership. K.Singh Thapa, Pupung Rai, Setu Kami, Aisaful Raini, Ambersingh Rai were other active trade union leaders.

Even the British left with the Congress at the helm of affairs, it did not change its attitude over the workers, this was evident from the sufferings the workers of Dhajay was undergoing.

Badamtam, which did not have a union in 1947, had a great tumultuous event. The wages of the workers used to be drastically cut for not finishing the works. The workers being forced to the limit were forced to sell their utensils and even urns used at the alter. The workers lost patience. The manager and the Munshi got the worst beating. The management retaliated by rusticating more than 100 workers. In Lingay also the workers demanded an increase in firewood, but the manager tore away their memorandum. The workers attacked him. Kothi and Factory were attacked, turned the manager's car upside down. The management put 9 workers in jail and 15 to 16 workers were rusticated'. (20)

Ever since the birth of the Communist Party in 1943, till the attainment of independence, the movement of the workers under the Union banner was given a conscious and organised shape. The important Communist leaders then were Sushil Chatterji, Ratan Lal Brahmin, Ganeshlal Subba, Bhadra Bahadur Hamal, Wangdi Lama, Madan Thapa, Satyen Majumdar, Kalusingh Gahatraj, Bhawesh, Nripen Bose and Biren Bose.

#### 4.8. A FIRST OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANISED MOVEMENT - HISTORICAL MOVEMENT OF 1955

'Below Gorabari between Darjeeling and Kurseong there are slopes over which tiny mountains covered with tea bushes, the slopes together are called Margaret's Hope. Below it, there are Nehur tea gardens and the Balasan river, that side and over it, there are Ringtang, Phulbari, Munda, Murma, Singell, Maharani, Dilaram, Beltar and Tung. A writer on epic on tea gardens and a renowned Nepali poet, storywriter, dramatist Sri Nanda Hangkhim was born here. The British also knew this place for its suppression. Time and again, this was where protests and movement started. With the forming of the Communist Party and the union under the red banner, the workers received protection as also courage. A Bengali doctor, Talapatra was already there with communist ideals. On the auspicious day of 'shaving off' the hair of Talapatra's son, the organisation had its first meeting. Hiralal Sardar (Rai) and Mohansingh Rai (Assistant Babu) provided leadership. But before it was ready to take on the management, it confronted onslaught. In 1949, Dr. Talapatra, Tikaram Baidar, Kancha Kami, Saila Bhujel and Mohansingh Rai were rusticated. The workers, however, got more irritated. Birbahadur Rai, Jit Bahadur Rai, Dorjay Dong, Ramjit Rai and Krishna Bahadur Tamang joined the fray.

The tea garden workers in the Darjeeling hills realised that the resolution and redressal of their problems rested on the unified movement. On the one side, there was the organised Tea Garden Workers' Union and on the other the Gorkha League. It made stronger consequent to taking all the four Assembly seats, and had under it the Darjeeling Chia Kaman Shramik Sangha carrying on the movement on its own. In 1951, the Plantation Labour Act was passed for the first time for the tea garden workers. But it was only since 1954, the Act was implemented piecemeal. The tea planters never on their own

implemented any labour welfare scheme. In these circumstances, the price of ration soared by double, this fuelled the fire.

The first instance of joint action by the workers for their own demands took place on 1955 on bonus issue. This was resulted out of continuous struggle of trade unionists since 1951 to 1954'. (21) The year 1955 is very important in the history of labour movement in Darjeeling hill. United action of the workers in the case of bonus agitation in 1955 the workers raised the demand for compulsory minimum bonus. It was argued that the rise in prices of tea in 1954 had secured huge profits for the planters. The workers demanded a rightful share in these profits in the form of bonus jointly organised by Darjeeling Chia Kaman Shramik Sangha led by Deo Prakash Rai, and Darjeeling District Chia Kaman Mazdoor Union under the leadership of Ratan Lal Brahmin. 'A joint statement was issued by them in protest against the philosophical unconcern and indifference on the part of the employers and the Government to the demands repeatedly placed by the Unions for one and half year. They had requested the Government and the employers in May 1955 requesting them to explore avenues for conceding to the vital demands out of their 14 minimum demands by 25 May 1955, failing which it was stated that the workers would be compelled to go on strike. Consequently the two unions held a joint representative meeting on 5<sup>th</sup>. June 1955, under the President ship of Sri N. B. Gurung, M. L. A. one of the members of the Minimum Wages Advisory Committee, to discuss what further steps should be taken. It unanimously decided to go on strike from 22<sup>nd</sup>. June 1955, in the event of failure on the part of the employers to accept the five vital demands namely: -

1. Wages of workers in tea plantation in Darjeeling Hill Section to be increased to Rs. 1/11/6.

2. 3 months' Bonus for workers and staff for 1954, on the basis of profit made in 1954.
3. Amendment of the present Standing Orders.
4. Compensation for the period of closure of tea gardens in 1951 and 1952.
5. Scale of pay for the staff in all tea gardens to be increased.

The Assistant Labour Commissioner, Darjeeling, called the representatives of the two unions on 15 June 1955, for amicable settlement. Workers issued strike notices once the conciliatory proceedings failed to bring settlement. A second meeting was held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1955 in the office of the Assistant Labour Commissioner, wherein the representatives of the two unions were asked to call the strike off. The union representatives replied that the strike could be deferred if any assurance for settlement was given by the Government. The Assistant Labour Commissioner assured the representatives that he would intimate the higher authorities with their stand. Consequently, a letter was received from the Labour Commissioner on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1955 asking the union representatives to submit their suggestions for modification and amendments of the standing orders, which was one of the five vital demands of the workers. The Union representatives submitted specific suggestions for amendments of the Standing Orders on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1954, but the Government observed reticence till the strike notice was served upon the authorities concerned. In the morning of 20 June 1955, the Assistant Labour Commissioner was informed that the Joint Strike Committee would meet in the evening of the same day, where the letter of the Labour Commissioner would be placed for consideration and final decision as to whether the proposed strike should be launched or deferred would be taken. Instead of intervening by way of negotiation or conciliation the Government let loose repressive measures all over the tea gardens and

the towns before the final decision was taken by the Strike Action Committee. The members of the Strike Action Committee as well as other leaders were clapped behind prison bars on 20<sup>th</sup>.June 1955. The Authority in its turn did everything possible to terrorise the people. During the strike period, it is gathered, in many places personnel of the Government Special Department went round the workers' quarters intimidating them various consequences. The police indulged in indiscriminate arrests of the workers, male and female, including many persons having no connection at all with the proposed strike. Arrest warrants were issued in the name of Ratan Lal Brahmin, Bhadra Bahadur Hamal, and Deo Prakash Rai. The leaders of All India Trade Union Congress, Manoranjan Roy, and Anand Mohan Pathak and Vice – President of Chia Kaman Shramik Sangha L. B. Lama were arrested. The strike which had started on 22<sup>nd</sup> June reached its climax on 25<sup>th</sup>.June. The police opened indiscriminate firing on peaceful and unarmed workers in a public road in Margaret's Hope Tea Estate in which the following people were killed: -

- 1) Amrita Kamini – 18 years old
- 2) Mauli Shova Raini- 23 years old
- 3) Kanchha Sunwar – 22 years old
- 4) Padam Bahadur Kami – 25 years old
- 5) Kale Limbu -14 years old
- 6) Jitman Tamang – 45 years old

These people became martyrs in the historical trade union movement in the hills. The struggle for existence of the tea garden workers was no more an isolated factor for the people of Darjeeling. The entire populace supported the cause of the workers without reservation. The fact that about 25 to 30 thousand men, women, children of the town came out of their dwelling in the open street in the teeth of promulgation of section 144

Cr. P. C. to pay their last homage to the martyrs who were shot dead by the police, showed the unstinted support of the people of Darjeeling to the inseparable fight for existence under the leadership of the working class.

The Government morally submitting to the people withdrew warrants of arrest against the leaders in the night of 26 June 1955 and also released Sri N.B. Gurung, M.L.A. on 27 June 1955. Just at this juncture, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling under the pressure of the people and the seriousness of the situation was compelled to meet members of the Peace Committee. The Honourable Deputy Labour Minister and the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling, who were given full power to negotiate and settle the issue by the Government, in presence of nine members of Peace Committee and Sri S.N. Mazumdar, M.P., Sri N. B. Gurung, M.L.A. and the Assistant Labour Commissioner and Labour Officer of Darjeeling, assured that all persons arrested in connection with the strike would be unconditionally released. The five vital demands having been accepted in principle as provided in the terms elaborately discussed in the presence of all those gentlemen including the Deputy Labour Minister and the Deputy Commissioner, the Government also accepted the principle of no victimisation of workers for participating in the strike'. (22)

'Members of Bonus Sub-Committee of the Industrial Committee on Plantations were summoned to New Delhi in the first week of January 1956 to come to a final settlement. Finally the labour Minister and the Minister for Commerce and Industry intervened and laid down a formula for the quantum of bonus for the four years from 1953-56. The agreement created a record in the plantation industry for India became the first country to accept the principal of payment of bonus to workers out of profits'. (23)

The historical movement of 1955 had exploded the years of ire of the tea garden workers. The majority of the tea gardens were directly or indirectly involved in the movement. This had never before happened before.

It was a joint movement of the two frontline parties, the Communist Party of India and the Gorkha League fought for the first time jointly the allegation that the Nepalese were mercenaries and middle class victims of illusion had disapproved by the movement. Forgetting all the small differences and even though with class-consciousness embedded in them, the Nepalese fought against the capitalists, this was proved by the historic movement.

The Gorkhas had shed blood all over the world to conquer. That blood was theirs, but the conquered territory was of others. This time, the Nepalese had promised that the blood shed by them would be theirs alone. This heralded the dawn of a new tradition.

The defeat of the Communist Party in the General Elections of 1952 demoralised the party cadres. But Ratanlal Brahmin was committed towards the objective of the party and tried continuously to boost the sagging morale of the rank and file. When their leaders were being freed from jail, the Darjeeling Tea Garden Workers' Union was reorganised and Ratanlal Brahmin and B.M. Rai were elected the President and the Secretary respectively. The Union got its new registration number 2256'. (24)

#### 4.9. FORMATION OF GORKHA LEAGUE AND BIRTH OF DARJEELING DISTRICT CHIA KAMAN SHRAMIK SANGHA

The frustration and mistrust of the hill people were at their height and out of these was born the realization that they must have something, some organisation or the other of

a political nature to fight the injustice perpetrated on them for years on end. They had groped in the dark for long and had been hoodwinked all along by the imaginary flicker of lights. Now apparently disillusioned and gotten off their years of slumber, they were out for something real and not just imaginary. It is also of importance to go by that so far the hill people had nothing in the name of organisation or the other politically organised, the association of reckoning and that too a social one thus far was the Hillmen's Association which had ever since its formation been voicing the grievances of the hill people. But with the future of 30 lakhs Gorkhas spread all over India still uncertain, there was a firm resolve to form a political organisation beneath that veneer of frustration and disillusion. The possibility if not certainty of a change in the political pattern were as clear as the day. What would be the fate of the Gorkhas under the changed pattern? This complex question haunted the Gorkhas who were rather inclined to stay away from politics. And in fact the disinclination to ether with the sad pecuniary plight had been a stumbling block all along in the formation of a political party. But with pressing problems at hand particularly of the uncertainty of the future, they had obviously overcome their disinclination or apprehension and also had chosen to go along with their pecuniary hardship. "The desire to form a political organization of the 30 lakhs Gorkhas spread all over India was felt right from the break out of the war in 1939."

The actual decision for the formation was taken on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1943 when three young men, Sri Shiv Kumar Rai, Sri D. B. Lama and Sri D.B. Chettri arrived Kalimpong with a resolve to open up a branch of the Kurseong Gorkha Association with which they were associated. A meeting with them came out with resolve to start an ALL INDIA ASSOCIATION OF THE GORKHAS. The meeting also resolved to have a conference for the propose in Darjeeling and the responsibility of convening such a conference was

entrusted to the aforesaid youths from Kurseong. Sri D.S.Gurung, M.L.A., in the meanwhile, had to go to Calcutta to attend the Assembly session. But the proposed conference was not called for even to the 24<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1945. So the notice was issued from Calcutta by Mr. Gurung informing that the proposed conference would be convened at Siliguri at the premises of Sri. G. Manabert Subba. The conference was well attended and representatives of Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepchas numbering 60 had come from all the three Kalimpong, Kurseong and Darjeeling sub-divisions. After a prolong discussion over the fate of the hillmen following the cassation of war, the proposal to form an All India Association was unanimously adopted. For the time being the Association was named the All India Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepchas Association. The necessity of calling a big conference to establish an association of the type and give a worthwhile appellation was felt by one and all in the meeting and so to that effect an Ad-Hoc Committee was constituted. Sri. R.N. Sinha was chosen as the Secretary of Committee. But even with its formation, no conference was summoned for the ensuing three weeks. So Sri. Gurung had to come to Darjeeling once again and arrange the meeting eventually on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1943. This was followed by two or three repeated sittings of the committee. Everything was going on quite smoothly and on lines expected but on unexpectedly something transpired casting a sort of gloom over the members. The Bhutias revoked their association, as they did not want to have any truck with so big an association. The meeting, however, came with the name "ALL INDIA GORKHA LEAGUE" and to mark the formal launching of the party, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1943 was deemed as the auspicious day. The venue selected was the Rink Cinema Hall, Darjeeling and the time agreed upon was 2:30 P.M. Notices for the meetings were then distributed all over. Everyone was looking forward to the 15<sup>th</sup> anxiously. Thus on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the people started pouring in right from

12 noon and within short while, the hall was packed to its capacity. Those coming around 1 P.M. could not get a space to stand on even. So there were people more outside than inside the hall. The Deputy Commissioner had given permission for mike but not without a lot of coaxing and the like. The mike helped people to hear proceedings of the conference even in the bazaar. Even the government employees lent their ears with, of course, doors closed but windows opened again not taking any chance by pulling down the curtains.

‘The conference started as scheduled at 2:30 P.M. Explaining the purpose of convening such a conference, the motion for establishing “ALL INDIA GORKHA LEAGUE” was moved and right at 4 P.M., it was adopted unanimously. 4:30 P.M., 15<sup>th</sup> May 1943. This date, month, year and day ought to be remembered by all the Gorkhas’.

(25)

After the first General election (1951-52) the elected M.L.A. of Gorkha League, namely Shiva Kumar Rai, D.B.S. Gahatraj and George Mahbert addressed the Darjeeling District Labour Conference at Gorkha Dukha Niwarak Sammelan Hall on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1952. The leaders emphasised on organising the labourers of tea gardens to ameliorate the social and economic condition of the labourers. This event was historic in the history of Gorkha League because of the formation of its trade union. The union was named Darjeeling District Chia Kaman Shramik Sangha. Shri Shiva Kumar Rai was elected as Secretary. After him Deo Prakash Rai became its Secretary. He played an instrumental role during Bonus movement of 1955. His leadership added a new dimension to the trade union movement in the hill areas. Regardless of their differences, and inter party rivalry, the Darjeeling District Chia Kaman Shramik Sangha of the Gorkha League and the

National Union of Plantation Workers mainly a congress outfit co-operated in the common struggle concerning the betterment of working and living conditions as well as social securities of the tea plantation workers. Shri J.D. S. Rai and P.T.Lama became the active members of the Darjeeling District Chia Kaman Shramik Sangha after Deo Prakash Rai. (26)

#### 4.10. NATIONAL UNION OF PLANTATION WORKERS (NUPW)

The Congress Party lagged far behind the Communist Party of India and Gorkha League in the hill areas in regard to organisation of workers. As the tea garden workers constitute nearly 60% of the total labour force in the hill areas, this weakness was reflected largely in the General elections of 1951-52. In the early 60's Mrs. Maitrayee Bose, a veteran leader of the Indian National Trade Union Congress took the initiative to organise a labour cell on the Darjeeling hills. Ultimately, a branch unit of the INTUC (NUPW) was established with Mrs. Maitrayee Bose and Laxuman Pradhan as the President and General Secretary respectively. The NUPW in its formative stage was helped by Punya Prakash Rai, some local Congress M.Ps. and the then Municipal Commissioners. The union built up its image slowly and gained popularity. The NUPW challenged the competency of management of Rungneet Tea Estate against its lockout. The union threatened to open garden forcibly. The Government had to interfere. Owing to the intervention of the Labour Minister the lockout was lifted. (27)

'All the three major trade unions, namely, the NUPW, the DDCKMU and the DDCKSS involving tea plantation workers have been close adjunct to political parties. These political dimensions of trade unionism in hill areas and the consequent multiple unionism and inter-union rivalries at the micro-level of each tea estate can be understood

from various inter union clashes. Political unionism in tea gardens has some positive impact. The inter-locking of leadership between various unions has helped the working class in tea gardens, in historical perspectives as well as in the contemporary setting in securing a more favourable labour policy from the Government. Political leadership constitutes a valuable input in the organisational and the developmental aspects of the trade union movement in hill areas'. (28)

#### 4.11. MILESTONES IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT (1969-80)

The trade union movement in the tea gardens of Darjeeling Hills passed through many ups and downs. The evolutionary process was a long – drawn one. 'From 1969 a trend is discernible as because in all important wage negotiations the trade unions jointly met the employers' associations like Indian Tea Association, Indian Tea Planters' Association, and Tea Association of India. The movement achieved its objective in making workers better aware of their intrinsic rights and succeeded in generating an all pervasive class consciousness. The labourers were represented by different associations like Indian National Trade Union Congress, All India Trade Union Congress, United Trade Union Congress, Zilla Cha Bagan Workers' Union, National Union of Plantation Workers, Dooars Cha Bagan Workers' Union, and the West Bengal Cha Sramik Union etc.

The trend which started in 1969, regarding important issues were the holding of Tripartite Conference in Calcutta wherein the important problems of shrinkage of employment, contract labour, extra leaf rate, fixation of Thika and closed gardens were discussed. It was decided in the conference that the contractors' labour shall not be employed for work of a perennial nature, such as plucking, pruning, sickling, hoeing

and plantation of new tea. It was decided that temporary labourers might be employed if permanent labourers are not available for these works. It was also agreed upon not to employ temporary workers for more than six months in a year. Further, these temporary workers would be employed on the same wages and paid variable dearness allowance and given the same task as applicable to the permanent workers. They should be entitled to any national and festival holidays, which might fall during the period of their employment. They were entitled to get the same medical facilities as the permanent workers.

A similar Tripartite Agreement was reached in a conference held in 1970, and rules regarding casual leave, annual leave with pay etc. were discussed. Further quota regarding firewood and fuels was increased.

In 1971, it was decided by the government of India that a uniform scheme of retirement benefit for employees and workers should be enacted. The tea garden employers were not keen to accept the compulsory gratuity Act of 1971. The result was serious disturbances in many gardens. The issue was settled in a Tripartite settlement in the year 1971. The trade unions raised issues like building houses in the gardens. With regard to Kutcha houses the employers assured proper and adequate repairs. After a protracted discussion the strike notice served by the coordination committee was withdrawn.

The representatives of the coordination committee of Tea Plantation Workers, West Bengal raised the demand that all technicians be granted servant allowance like members of the staff in the year 1973. The basic pay and the benefits of the technicians of grade B were raised.

The tea gardens passed through a critical phase from 1975. The Coordination Committee of the Tea Plantation workers, West Bengal adopted a charter of demand in its meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup>. April 1975. For understanding the nature of movement an insight into the memorandum is important. The demands included 1) all closed gardens should be taken over immediately by the government. 2) The wages of tea garden workers should be raised. The female workers should be given the same wages as male workers for the same type of work. 3) The disparity between the wages of the workers of Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling should be removed. 4) The rise in the All India Consumer's Price Index since 1971 should be neutralised at the rate of 1% of the existing wages per point of All India Consumer's Price Index year by year. 5) There have been no recruitment since 1969, though production and acreage of the gardens have increased. Therefore, new recruitment should be made proportionate to the production and size of the garden. 6) The houses should be constructed for the labourers with standard materials. 7) Group Hospitals should be provided as per law. 8) Unemployed dependents over the age of 16 years should be given ration till they get jobs in the garden or outside. 9) In garden primary school teachers should be provided on the basis of the number of linguistic groups of students. 10) The rice component of the ration of the tea garden workers should be restored and it should be atleast 2/3rds of the total quantum.

'The trade union activities became very important during the whole of the sixties and the seventies. Consequently the planters have been forced to give bonus and fulfil some of the statutory obligations. Bonus issues led to strikes and lock-outs in various gardens.' However, in respect to construction of houses, the trade unions in the Darjeeling hills have not shown the aggressiveness that was found in some of the industries in West Bengal.

A meeting was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1976 to discuss the question relating to payment of bonus. The settlement became the 'model' of settlement for subsequent years. The model was as follows: a) Bonus for the accounting year should be paid in accordance with the provisions of the payment of Bonus Act 1965, as amended upto date, b) where bonus for the said accounting year had already been finally determined on the basis of published data and audited balance sheet and profit and loss account and had been paid and there was no dispute, such cases should be treated as closed, c) in cases where Balance-sheet had been published but dispute had been raised over computation, such cases should be referred to the Labour Directorate for processing and scrutiny. d) In cases where balance sheets had not been published or where disputes had been raised about the computation of balance sheet published, an interim payment should be made subject to adjustment after the balance sheets had been published. e) Copies of balance sheets should be made available to the unions functioning at the garden level.

The problems of wages, bonus and employment had always been the bone of contention between the trade unions and the planters. The trade unions insisted on increasing the number of employment in the gardens. The trade union leaders pointed out that there had been regular shrinkage of employment since 1956 by way of casualisation of the permanent labourers.

Equalisation of wages of males and females in the tea gardens is one of the important achievements of the trade union movement. The wages were equalised in 1983 after years of struggle. The upto -date wages of Daily-rated workers enforced since 2.9.69 is highlighted below.

Table IV. 05: Up-to-date wages of daily-rated workers since 2.9.69

| Category | Basic      |         | V.D.A      |         |          |
|----------|------------|---------|------------|---------|----------|
|          | Wage Board | Interim | Wage Board | Interim | Total    |
| Male     | Rs. 2.07   | Nil     | Rs. 0.12   | Nil     | Rs. 2.19 |
| Female   | Rs. 1.90   | Nil     | Rs. 0.12   | Nil     | Rs. 2.02 |
| Children | Rs. 1.13   | Nil     | Rs. 0.06   | Nil     | Rs. 1.19 |

As embodied in the Tripartite Agreement dated 2. 9. 1969, an interim increase of Rs. 0.06 per day in Variable Dearness Allowance (VDA) and Rs. 0.14 per day in Basic were allowed to the adult workers from 2. 9. 69. The children were given half the said increase. Thus, the total daily wages of the tea plantation workers became as follows from 2.9.69.

Table IV. 06: The total daily wages of workers from 2.9.69

|          |          |      |          |      |          |
|----------|----------|------|----------|------|----------|
| Male     | Rs. 2.07 | 0.14 | Rs. 0.12 | 0.06 | Rs. 2.39 |
| Female   | Rs. 1.90 | 0.14 | Rs. 0.12 | 0.06 | Rs. 2.02 |
| Children | Rs. 1.13 | 0.07 | Rs. 0.06 | 0.03 | Rs. 1.29 |

Another Tripartite Agreement dated 31.7.70 was signed before the Deputy Labour Commissioner, North Bengal Region, Siliguri when an interim increase of 0.09 paise per day in basic wages was given to all adult workers with effect from 1.4.70 and the children were allowed half the benefit. Thus the following were the total wages of the plantation workers with effect from 1.4.70.

Table IV. 07: The plantation workers with effect from 1.4.70

|          |          |
|----------|----------|
| Male     | Rs. 2.48 |
| Female   | Rs. 2.31 |
| Children | Rs. 1.33 |

The Government of West Bengal constituted the First Wage Fixing Committee of Tea Plantation workers under the chairmanship of Late P.C. Mullick in 1971. In the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Second Committee held on 19.7.71, an increase of 23 paise per day in wages of the workers was given with effect from 1.7.1971 to 31.5.1972 and thereafter further rise of 23 paise per day in wages was given with effect from 1.6.1972 to 30.6.1973. Thus, upto the end of June 1973 the following were the total daily wages of the tea plantation workers.

Table IV. 08: Daily wages upto the end of June 1973

|          |          |                   |
|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Male     | Rs. 2.94 | (Rs. 2.24 + 0.46) |
| Female   | Rs. 2.77 | (Rs. 2.31 + 0.46) |
| Children | Rs. 1.56 | (Rs. 1.33 + 2.23) |

A Tripartite Agreement was signed on 24.7.1973 under the chairmanship of Mr. Quader Nowaz as Conciliation Officer when an interim increase of 15 paise in wages was given to the plantation workers with effect from 1.7.1973 and as a result the total daily wages of the tea plantation workers stood as follows with effect from 1.7.1973.

Table IV. 09: Daily wages of workers w.e.f.1.7.73

|          |          |                   |
|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Male     | Rs. 3.09 | (Rs. 2.29 + 0.15) |
| Female   | Rs. 2.92 | (Rs. 2.77 + 0.15) |
| Children | Rs. 1.64 | (Rs. 1.56 + 0.07) |

At the 11<sup>th</sup>. Meeting of the Second Wage Fixing Committee held on 25.7.1974 and 26.7.1974 respectively an ad-hoc wage increase of 25 paise per day was given with effect from 1.7.1974 and as a result the total daily wages of the tea plantation workers stood as follows with effect from 1.7.1974.

Table IV. 10: Daily wages w.e.f.1.7.74

|          |          |                   |
|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Male     | Rs. 3.34 | (Rs. 3.09 + 0.25) |
| Female   | Rs. 3.04 | (Rs. 2.31 + 0.12) |
| Children | Rs. 1.76 | (Rs. 1.64+ 0.12)  |

Further, at the 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Second Wage Fixing Committee held on 22.5.1975, further increase in wages of daily- rated workers was given as follows.

Table IV. 11: Increase in wages

|                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| From 7.7.75 to 31.3.76 | 45 paise per day. |
| From 1.4.76 to 30.6.77 | 45 paise per day. |

Child workers were allowed half of the above increase. Thus, the daily-rated wages of the workers till 30.6.1977 were as follows:

Table IV. 12: Wages of the workers till 30.6.1977

|          |          |                          |
|----------|----------|--------------------------|
| Male     | Rs. 4.24 | (Rs. 3.34 + 0.45 + 0.45) |
| Female   | Rs. 5.07 | (Rs. 3.17 + 0.45 + 0.45) |
| Children | Rs. 2.21 | (Rs. 1.76 + 0.22 + 0.22) |

Further, a Tripartite Agreement was signed on 3.8.1977 and the following increase of wages had been given:

Table IV. 13: Increase in wages

|                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| From 1.7.77 to 30.6.78 | Re. 1.00 per day. |
| From 1.7.78 to 30.6.79 | Re. 1.00 per day. |

and the children had been given the following increase:

Table IV. 14: Increase in the wages of child-workers

|                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| From 1.7.77 to 30.6.78 | Rs. 0.50 per day. |
| From 1.7.78 to 30.6.79 | Rs. 0.50 per day. |

Thus, the daily wages of the workers of tea plantation became as follows with effect from 1.7.1977 to 30.6.1978

Table IV. 15. Daily wages of workers w.e.f.1.7.77 to 30.6.78

|          |          |                       |
|----------|----------|-----------------------|
| Male     | Rs. 5.24 | (Rs. 4.24 + Re. 1.00) |
| Female   | Rs. 5.07 | (Rs. 4.07 + Re. 1.00) |
| Children | Rs. 2.27 | (Rs. 2.21 + Re. 0.50) |

Again, the daily wages of the workers of tea plantation as per above agreement-dated 3.8.1977 became as follows with effect from 1.7.1978 to 30.6.1979

Table IV. 16: Wages of workers w.e.f.1.7.78 to 30.6.79

|          |          |                       |
|----------|----------|-----------------------|
| Male     | Rs. 6.24 | (Rs. 5.24 + Re. 1.00) |
| Female   | Rs. 6.07 | (Rs. 5.07 + Re. 1.00) |
| Children | Rs. 2.72 | (Rs. 2.72+ Re. 0.50)  |

Further, as per Tripartite Draft Agreement dated 11.4.80 the following increase of wages had been effected to the daily-rated workers:

Table IV. 17: Increase in wages from 1.7.79 to 30.6.80

|          |          |                       |
|----------|----------|-----------------------|
| Male     | Rs. 7.14 | (Rs. 6.24 + Re. 0.90) |
| Female   | Rs. 6.07 | (Rs. 6.07 + Re. 0.90) |
| Children | Rs. 3.67 | (Rs. 3.22 + Re. 0.45) |

Table IV.18: Increase in wages from 1.7.80 to 30.6.1981

|          |          |                       |
|----------|----------|-----------------------|
| Male     | Rs. 8.94 | (Rs. 8.04 + Re. 0.90) |
| Female   | Rs. 7.87 | (Rs. 6.97 + Re. 0.90) |
| Children | Rs. 4.12 | (Rs. 3.67 + Re. 0.45) |

Table IV.19: Increase in wages from 1.7.81 to 30.6.82

|          |          |                       |
|----------|----------|-----------------------|
| Male     | Rs. 8.94 | (Rs. 8.04 + Re. 0.90) |
| Female   | Rs. 8.77 | (Rs. 7.87 + Re. 0.90) |
| Children | Rs. 4.57 | (Rs. 4.12+ Re. 0.45)  |

Table IV. 20: Increase in wages

|                         | Adult | Child |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|
| With effect from 1.7.83 | 75 p  | 38 p  |
| With effect from 1.7.84 | 75 p  | 38 p  |
| With effect from 1.7.85 | 75 p  | 38 p  |

Since the introduction of wage Board, 1966 the Wage of daily-rated workers of Darjeeling Hill areas was 32 paise less than that of Terai, but the daily-rated wages of Dooars were 6 paise more than that of Terai'. (29)

'In 1951, High Court declared that the ban on the Communist Party was illegal . After the General Election of 1952, the Communist leaders were freed from jail and warrant on all underground communist leaders were withdrawn. But the depression continued in 1952-53. Industrialists retrenched large number of workers in different industries. Tea Plantation was also no exception. During that period near about on lakh workers were retrenched from tea gardens of Assam, Bengal and Tripura. In 1952 tea prices in North India decreased abnormally. In fact it was artificially created by British planters. On the argument of depression of tea prices, Planters made five days a week instead of seven. However, the Banerjee Committee (Second minimum wage committee) curtailed all the benefits received by the workers. Food grains, which were being supplied to the workers at a concessional rate of Rs. 5.00 per maund, was increased to Rs.15/- per maund. Under such circumstances the trade unionist particularly the communists struggled to ensure unity among tea garden workers of Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling. On the contrary, planters tried in every way to keep away the workers from the communists. They put restrictions on holding meeting by Communists in tea gardens. In spite of all efforts planters could not alienate communists from workers rather more the workers expressed their support in favour of communists. Ultimately in 1954 they had to give recognition to the communists to form unions in tea gardens.

In 1962 the Co-ordinated Committee of Tea Plantation Workers was set up which consisted at that time the Union affiliated to AITUC and INTUC, HMS, UTUC Gorkha League and the clerical Unions. Its present composition is almost the same except that it

also has the CITU (which was formed after its split with AITUC) and the IFTU (PCCPI (ML) group). The CCTPW is a unique body and was formed with a view to prevent inter-union rivalry and to initiate a joint movement on the issue of wages, bonus and benefits under the Plantation Labours. Act.

The second indefinite general strike took place on August 18, 1969 at the initiative of co-ordination committee. The major demands of the committee included, increased employment in the tea gardens, revision of wages (since the cost of living index had abnormally increased in 1968) and implementation of Plantation Labour Act, 1951. The strike completely paralyzed work on the tea estates in West Bengal. Since 1969 CCTPW has given occasional calls for one-day token strike.

The CITU has emerged as the most powerful trade union among plantation workers since 1977. It tends to dominate over the others and plays the big brother role in CCTPW. The INTUC comes next. The other constituent Unions in the CCTPW has small pockets of influence.

#### 4.12. INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN TEA PLANTATIONS

Industrial disputes mean both strikes and lockouts, though the two are diametrically opposite things. Whereas strikes mean offensive of the workers against the employers, lockouts mean offensive of employers against workers.

Table IV. 21: Trends in industrial disputes in West Bengal tea plantations, 1977 – 1989

| Year | NO. of disputes<br>(D) | No. of Workers involved<br>(W) | No. of Man days lost<br>(L) | Index of disputes<br>(Base 1983=100) | Index of workers involved<br>(Base 1885=100) | Index of man days lost (Base 1885=100) |
|------|------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| (1)  | (2)                    | (3)                            | (4)                         | (5)                                  | (6)                                          | (7)                                    |
| 1977 | 10                     | 9102                           | 72603                       | 100.0                                | 142.1                                        | 33.6                                   |

|                                      |      |         |          |        |        |        |
|--------------------------------------|------|---------|----------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1978                                 | 20   | 16884   | 64290    | 200.0  | 263.7  | 29.8   |
| 1979                                 | 7    | 6996    | 36346    | 70.00  | 109.2  | 16.8   |
| 1980                                 | 17   | 47113   | 124613   | 170.00 | 735.9  | 57.8   |
| 1981                                 | 6    | 8270    | 287909   | 60.00  | 129.1  | 133.5  |
| 1982                                 | 11   | 6995    | 331245   | 110.00 | 109.2  | 153.7  |
| 1983                                 | 10   | 6402    | 215501   | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |
| 1984                                 | 6    | 4772    | 96778    | 60.00  | 74.5   | 44.9   |
| 1985                                 | 20   | 15890   | 198723   | 200.00 | 248.2  | 92.2   |
| 1986                                 | 15   | 10618   | 313441   | 150.00 | 165.8  | 145.4  |
| 1987                                 | 8    | 5469    | 162599   | 80.00  | 85.4   | 75.4   |
| 1988                                 | 3    | 1975    | 41318    | 30.00  | 29.9   | 19.1   |
| 1989                                 | 2    | 1163    | 25477    | 20.00  | 18.1   | 11.8   |
| Period<br>average<br>1977 to<br>1989 | 10.4 | 10896.0 | 151603.3 | 103.8  | 170.1  | 70.3   |

Note: (1) Figures for 1989 are provisional, Source: Labour in West Bengal.

Table IV. 22: Trends in industrial disputes in West Bengal tea plantations, 1977 – 1989

| Year | NO. of<br>disputes<br>(D) | No. of<br>Workers<br>involved<br>(W) | No. of<br>Man days<br>lost<br>(L) | Index of<br>disputes<br>(Base<br>1983<br>=100) | Index<br>of<br>workers<br>involved<br>(Base<br>1885<br>=100) | Index of<br>man<br>days lost<br>(Base<br>1885<br>=100) | Index of<br>man<br>days lost<br>(Base<br>1885<br>=100) |
|------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| (1)  | (2)                       | (3)                                  | (4)                               | (5)                                            | (6)                                                          | (7)                                                    | (8)                                                    |
| 1977 | 10                        | 15.0                                 | -                                 | -                                              | 100.0                                                        | 8.0                                                    | 7260.3                                                 |

|                                      |      |       |       |         |      |      |         |
|--------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|---------|------|------|---------|
| 1978                                 | 20   | 28.6  | 26.0  | 10866.7 | 85.0 | 2.0  | 1864.1  |
| 1979                                 | 7    | 41.2  | 25.2  | 14500.0 | 71.4 | 1.3  | 1469.2  |
| 1980                                 | 17   | 100.0 | 14.1  | 10270.4 | 58.8 | 1.3  | 5272.0  |
| 1981                                 | 6    | 100.0 | 34.8  | 47984.8 | -    | -    | -       |
| 1982                                 | 11   | 90.0  | 47.6  | 30113.2 | -    | -    | -       |
| 1983                                 | 10   | 16.7  | 35.0  | 23711.2 | 10.0 | 7.0  | 2100.0  |
| 1984                                 | 6    | 60.0  | 99.0  | 89100.0 | 83.3 | 2.0  | 1535.6  |
| 1985                                 | 20   | 100.0 | 19.7  | 15769.5 | 40.0 | 1.5  | 1186.1  |
| 1986                                 | 15   | 62.5  | 29.5  | 20896.1 | -    | -    | -       |
| 1987                                 | 8    | 100.0 | 42.0  | 24499.8 | 37.5 | 15.7 | 13366.1 |
| 1988                                 | 3    | 100.0 | 20.9  | 13772.7 | -    | -    | -       |
| 1989                                 | 2    | -     | 21.9  | 12738.5 | -    | -    | -       |
| Period<br>average<br>1977 to<br>1989 | 10.4 | 62.6  | 31.98 | 24171.0 | 37.4 | 2.98 | 26195   |

Note: (1) Figures for 1989 are provisional,

During the last 13 years (1977 to 1989) on an average, about ten industrial disputes involving around 10.896 workers and 1, 51603 man days lost per year were reported in West Bengal tea industry (Table-21). The data in Table – 21 shows an erratic nature of all indicators of intensity of industrial disputes, no uniform and regular upward or downward trend is noticed up to 1985. Since 1986 disputes showed a decreasing tendency. Another important feature of the industrial disputes in tea Industry of West Bengal, as shown by the data, is that no correlation exists between the figures relating to the number of disputes, workers involved and man-days lost.

The highest number of disputes (14.81%) has been reported twice during the study period, in 1978 and 1985. Tea industry has lower disputes as compared to the other major industries like jute, cotton and engineering. This low conflict prone situation is attributed to two main factors. Firstly, tea gardens are located in backward regions and the workers are isolated from urban industrial situation. In the tea gardens they live amongst their own community with their traditions. They get less opportunity to know their outside world. Secondly, the leading constituent unions of CCTPW are of the view that it necessary to avoid industrial turmoil and prefer to settle any dispute through negotiation.

Table 22. shows increasing tendency of lockouts and decreasing tendency of strikes since the assumption of office by the Left Front in West Bengal.

It is seen that between 1977 and 1989 that the percentage of strike declined, the percentage of lockout increased. In 1977 the percentage of strike to total number of work stoppage was 100% and in 1989 it was nil. But the percentage of lockout had gone up to 100% from 15% during the same period. Moreover in the years 1981, 82, 88 and 1989 there was no incidence of strike in West Bengal Tea Industry. But during 1977 to 1989 lockouts occurred in all the years except in 1977 in which all the 10 disputes were on account of strike. On an average 62.6% of work stoppage was accounted for lockouts during the last 13 years (1977 to 1989).

Man days lost per lockout was also more than the man-days lost per strike during 1977 to 1989. During this period on an average, 24171 man-days were lost in per lockout against 2619.5 days in the case of strike.

During the last 13 years (1977 to 1989) duration of Lockout recorded 32 days, on an average, against only 3 days in case of strike.

Altogether Table 22 shows prominence of lockout over strike in the tea industry of West Bengal. The total Industry relation picture of West Bengal also shows the same phenomenon during the regime of Left Front Government. For example in 1980, the number of strike was 78 and in 1989 it was only 16. But the Lockouts which in 1980 was 130 increased to 211 in 1989. Similarly the mandays lost due to strike decreased to 255421 days in 1989 from 1485399 days in 1980. But during this period mandays lost due to Lockouts increased from 46,95,657 days to 2,81,59,705 days showed an increased of 6 times over a decade.

The main cause of such an overall industrial relation in West Bengal lies in the Left Front Since its assumption of office. From the very beginning it discovered strikes because any unrest among the workers will give the Left Front a bad name and would vitiate the atmosphere for investment by the employers. But this policy of appeasement towards the employers to erect their offensive against working class in different directions like reduction in working complements, wage freeze, increase in work load, reduction and freeze of dearness allowance and curtailment of various benefits previously enjoyed by the Left Front Government has been weakening the collective bargaining power of working class. The policy has failed to prevent the employers from the commitment pf lockouts. Rather they are continuing with the lockouts in the grounds like alleged labour trouble, indiscipline, rowdyism, go slow, violence demonstration etc. Unless the whole problem is seriously considered by the government and its policy is revised, more instances of lockouts would occur in future and the interest of the workers would further deteriorate.

Trade unions have taken root in tea gardens of West Bengal, against tremendous opposition from the planters and there is no denying that over the years they have played

an important role in improving the conditions of the workers. But today's picture of the unions in the tea plantations emerges different from that of the past. The Plantation Labour Act makes its mandatory for the employers, to provide workers facilities like housing, health, sanitation, drinking water, creches etc. They are either poor or non-existent in most of the tea gardens. But trade union leaders have taken very little interest in these needs of workers. They have not organised any movement against the violation of the Plantation Labour Act. They invariably emphasised the wage aspect alone. The leading trade union of CCTPW has brought industrial peace in Tea plantations through concessions to avoid strikes at all cost. It has hindered the development of a mature industrial relation. The concessional attitude of both the Government and unions in the board of industrial harmony strengthened the planters more to deny the workers their legitimate rights. Unless the policy is revised there is little hope for the workers to get all the benefits of the Plantation Labour Act'. (30)

'However, with the growth of trade unions, strikes as weapons for satisfying the workers' demand have increased. 'Tea Statistics' do not give us any figure of strikes, lock-outs or closures of any tea gardens either as a whole or for Darjeeling tea gardens in particular. 'Labour' in West Bengal gives us an aggregate picture of strikes and lockouts or closure of all tea gardens without any break-up of the region. In the issue for the year 1981 it records of closure of 4 units with 1,387 persons involved therein for the year 1978. It further gives the following information for the Tea industry as a whole.

Table: IV. 23: Strike and lockouts

|      | Strike       |                      | Lockouts     |                      |
|------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Year | No. of cases | No. of mandays losts | No. of cases | No. of manday losts. |
|      |              |                      |              |                      |

|      |    |        |    |           |
|------|----|--------|----|-----------|
| 1978 | 16 | 475168 | 26 | 1,766,680 |
| 1979 | 13 | 964018 | 17 | 1,476,496 |
| 1980 | 4  | 195029 | 10 | 763,639   |

Source: Labour, different volumes.

The above figures do not reveal a picture of the state of affairs of Darjeeling gardens but highlight the depth of the unrest over the industry as a whole. In Tea India, Vol. 1 No. 8 we get complete picture for Darjeeling gardens.

Table IV. 24: Strikes in Darjeeling Tea gardens

| Year | Workers involved | Mandays lost | Wages lost | Loss of production (Rs.) |
|------|------------------|--------------|------------|--------------------------|
| 1982 | 15,006           | 15,006       | 1,463875   | 10,200                   |
| 1981 | 21,221           | 21,221       | 203,480    | 37,297                   |
| 1980 | 64,967           | 64,614       | 484,412    | 59,489                   |

Source: Tea India.

Table IV. 25: The same issue also records the causes of strikes

| Year | Wages & rates | Personal | Sympathetic & political agitation | Leave & Hrs. of works | Ration and concessional supplies | Other | Total |
|------|---------------|----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| 1982 | 1             | 1        | 26                                | -                     | -                                | -     | 28    |
| 1981 | -             | 1        | 39                                | -                     | -                                | 1     | 41    |
| 1980 | -             | -        | 77                                | -                     | -                                | 34    | 111   |

Source: Tea India.

The above figures give rise to interesting explanation of the impact of labour unrest. When we compare the West Bengal figure of 1980 we find that out of 7,63,839 man-days lost for all gardens, the figure for Darjeeling is at 64,614. The position is not alarming even with the nature of financial standard of Darjeeling gardens and the particular socio-political environment in which the hill gardens had to work. Moreover, in terms of value of loss of production, the figures of Rs. 59,429, Rs. 37,297 and Rs. 10,200 are not significant enough to contribute in any appreciable extent to financial maladies of Darjeeling tea gardens. The nature and causes of strikes further reveal that for the three calendar years 1980, 1981, and 1982 out of total incidents of 180 strikes, 142 strikes have been occasioned on sympathetic and political grounds. The index of strikes does not indicate any system of labour-management problem. Labour front does not directly contribute to the loss of production in any appreciable extent.

‘This does not, however, mean that labour –management relationship is ideal and the industry does not confront any problem on this account. From conversations with trade union leaders and workers it is found out that they are convinced that the tea gardens are not run properly. They cite various leakages on excise front, provident fund, arrears, and under-the-table arrangement of the ex-garden sales’. (31)

#### 4.13. LEGISLATION OF TRADE UNIONS IN EARLY FIFTIES- GROWTH OF LABOUR LEGISLATION IN INDIA

Legislative measures enacted at a given time reflect the socio-economic needs of a society. Labour legislation represents the community’s attitudes to working class in relation to employers. The basic philosophy of labour legislation is to ensure regulation of employer-employee relations to prevent exploitations of employers. Different labour laws have been

laws have been enacted to mitigate the effects of inequality of opportunity and economic power between employer and employees. Labour legislation has been undertaken as a consequence of the acceptance of the International Labour Organization's conventions and recommendations.

(1) 1837-1918- Labour legislation in India can be traced back to 1837 when recruitment of labour by planters under indenture system was regulated. The plantation industry in Assam was the first, which attracted legislative control. As the recruitment of labour from distant places to Assam by 'arkattis' led to disastrous results, the Central Government and the Bengal Government passed several acts from 1863 onwards to regulate the recruitment. These Acts provided for licencing of recruitment, registration of emigrants and fixation of period of contract. The Assam Emigration Act prevented recruitment by false representation and enticement, and on the other hand, ensures proper arrangements for medical attendance, feeding and rest during their journey to Assam. In 1915, the indenture system was abolished in Assam Tea Plantations.

(2) 1919-1937: -The Government of India Act 1919 empowered the Central legislature to enact labour laws in respect of practically all the labour subjects. The period witnessed the application of the principle of direct State intervention to regulate conditions of industrial labour. The Provincial legislatures were, on the other hand, empowered to legislate in respect of those labour subjects, which were classified as provincial and that too only with the sanction of Governor-General. The Trade Union Act 1926 was one of the enactments, which gave a great fillip to labour legislations in India. The Report of Whitley (Royal) Commission in 1931 recommended valuable suggestions as a result of which Tea District Emigrant Labour Act was enacted in 1932, the Factories Act was

thoroughly revised in 1934 and Payment of Wages Act was enacted in 1936. The Government of India Act 1935 also influenced the course of labour legislation during the period and after.

#### Industrial employment (standing orders) act 1946

This legislation is an important step in the direction of stabilising industrial relations. Prior to the enactment of the Act, the usual practice of the management was to enter into an individual contract (express or implied) of employment with the worker. In many cases, these conditions were not well defined and suffered from ambiguity. The workers were confused in their understanding of what was expected of them and what procedures were to be followed. This led to a great deal of unrests, work stoppage, and unhealthy labour management relationship. The matters covered under the standing orders include holidays, pay days, conditions for granting leave, work stoppages, suspension, dismissal, grievance redressal, classification of workers and definition of misconduct.

#### Provisions of standing orders act as enforced in tea gardens

‘The joint movement of unions in the year 1955 had raised the issue of revision of standing orders for tea gardens in West Bengal. The matter of revision was agreed upon and agreed that the State government should take steps to deal with the issue. This agreement yielded fruitful results, tripartite discussion took place, and revised Standing Orders were drawn up and certified’. (32)

#### ‘Major provisions

Definition and classification of workmen-

- (i) Workman means any person employed in the Estate to do any skilled or unskilled manual or clerical labour for hire or reward.
- (ii) Workmen shall be classified as follows-
  - (a) Permanent
  - (b) Probationers
  - (c) Temporary
  - (d) Casual
  - (e) Apprentices
- (a) A 'Permanent' workman is a workman who has been engaged on a permanent basis and who has completed a probationary period of six months in the same or other occupation in the Estate
- (b) A 'Probationer' is a workman who is provisionally employed to fill a permanent vacancy and has not completed six months' service.
- (c) A 'Temporary' workman is engaged in a work which is essentially temporary in character.
- (d) A 'Casual' workman is a workman whose employment is of casual nature.
- (e) An 'Apprentice' is a learner who may be paid an allowance during the period of his training.

#### Publication of working time

The periods and hours of work for all classes of workers to be exhibited in English and in the principal languages of workmen employed in the estate on Notice Boards at the office and factory. The commencement and termination of period of work to be intimated by authorised persons preferably by signal.

### Publication of holidays and paydays

Notice specifying the days observed by the Estate as holidays and pay days to be posted in the notice boards.

### Publication of wage rates

The rates of wages payable to all classes of workmen are to be displayed on the notice boards.

### Shift working

Shift working is to be regulated in accordance with Factories Act. Workmen are liable to be transferred from the factory to fieldwork and vice-versa as per the requirement of manufacture or cultivation.

### Attendance and late coming

(i). If any worker is late by more than half –an hour after the prescribed time without sufficient reasons, he shall be liable to be refused work for that day. In the case of daily wage labourers, a deduction may be made from wages proportionate to the time absent.

(ii). If any worker is found to be absent without leave, wages were liable to be deducted in accordance with the provisions of Payment of Wages Act.

### Leave and holidays

The Factories Act 1948 and the Plantation Labour Act 1951 allows leave with pay. Independence Day and Republic Day are paid holidays. In addition in Darjeeling

Hills there are other four paid festival holidays. These holidays are allowed in accordance with the customs of the plantation community. A labourer has to obtain prior permission from the Manager or his authorized representative. If the leave refused or postponed, the fact of such refusal or postponement is entered in a register, and a copy of the entry is given to the worker. Extension of leave also has to be granted by the manager. If any worker remains absent beyond the period of leave originally granted or subsequently extended. 1) he has to give satisfactory reply to the Manager, or 2) return within 8 days of the expiry of the leave. If he fails to do so, he will lose his lien on his appointment.

A worker is allowed casual leave of 10 days in a calendar year, however, such leave shall not be for more than three days at a time. Prior permission is to be obtained from the Manager for such leave.

#### Requirements for entering premises by certain gates and liability to search

All the workers are to enter the factory premises by the specified gates. The Gates may be closed during working hours. No worker is allowed to leave the premises during working hours. While entering and leaving the factory premises, all workers are liable to be searched. Female workers are to be searched by females only in the presence of witnesses.

#### Stoppage of work

In the case of any unforeseen emergencies like fire, natural calamity, breakdown of machinery. civil riots, the employer may stop work in any section of the Estate, and the workmen shall be duly notified by displaying of notices. Reasonable notice shall be given for resumption of work.

### Termination of employment

When a worker is terminated, all wages earned and unpaid shall be paid to him/her at the time of discharge. In case of a permanent workman, probationers and apprentices, a months' notice shall be necessary. However, no notices are required for temporary or a casual workman.

### Suspension or dismissal for misconduct and acts or omissions which constitute misconduct

A fine may be imposed on any workman in accordance with section 8 of the Payment of Wages Act, in respect of misconduct or omissions.

### Legislation regarding Factories

The Factories Act 1948 came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1949. The object of this Act is to secure health, safety, welfare, proper working hours, leave and other benefits for workers employing 10 or more workers where power is used, and where manufacturing process is carried on without the aid of power, the minimum number of workers is limited to 20. The Act prescribes for adults a 48 hours work in a week. Further the daily hours of work have been restricted to nine hour. Every worker is to have an interval for rest of at least half an hour. Under the Act, all factory workers are entitled to a weekly holiday on Sunday. Where the worker is required to work on weekly holiday consequent upon an order made under the provisions of the Act, he must be allowed compensatory holiday of the equal number of the holidays so worked within the month in which the holidays were due to him. When a worker works in factory for more than nine hours in a day or for

more than 48 hours a week, he is entitled to extra wages, which shall be paid as the rate of twice his normal rate of wage.

Employment of women and children in large numbers is a striking feature of plantations. All the members of the family, men, women and children are provided with work. This is especially the case in tea and coffee estates. Thus, plantation industries employ more women than any other organised industry in proportion to men. The more important reasons for this proportionately larger number on plantations can be summed up as follows. In the first place, being akin to agriculture, plantations are more congenial to women than other organised industries, such as mines and factories. In second place, the very fact that the labourers not only work but also generally live in plantations or in the vicinity a chance to work. In the third place the system of labour contracts based on the principle of utilizing every able bodied person in the family for labour and of fixing wage rates compelled the women labourers to seek employment in order to balance family budget.

The Factories Act has placed certain restrictions on the employment of women . No woman is allowed to work for more than nine hours a day. In every factory, where more than thirty women workers are employed a suitable room is to be maintained as creches for the use of children under the age of six years.

Plantations are covered by the definition of the term 'Industry' in the Industrial Disputes Act 1947 which makes provisions for the investigation and settlement of disputes. The Act, as amended upto 1956, provides for conciliation machinery and for a three tier system of original tribunals, viz.-Labour Courts, Industrial Tribunals and National Tribunals for adjudication of disputes'. (33)

‘Accordingly Labour Offices were opened up in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts in 1947. A total of 465 appeals were registered in these two offices between October 1947 and 31<sup>st</sup>.March 1951. Out of these cases registered 431 cases were resolved in the Offices of the Labour Commissioners and 11 were referred to Industrial Tribunals’. (34)

Till the enactment of the Plantation Labour Act 1951, all persons who had not completed 18 years of age were entered in the pay rolls of tea estates as children. The Act prohibited the employment of children below the age of 12, while those between the ages of 15 and 18 were declared to be adolescents. This was done, inter-alia to put an end to such anomalies, as even mothers of less than 18 years being classed as children.

The Plantation Labour Act has made statutory provisions for labour such as housing, sanitation, educational facilities for the children of workers, medical facilities, drinking water, creches. The Royal Commission on Labour in its report in 1931 stressed the need for maximisation of facilities to the workers such as wages, housing, medical facilities. The Plantation Labour Act, which came into effect in 1951, was implemented only from 1955.

‘There is not a single garden which has fulfilled all the Provisions of the Plantation Labour Act’. (35)

#### Housing facility

‘Section 15 of the Act states that it shall be the duty of every employer to provide and maintain for every worker and his family residing in the plantation necessary housing accommodation. The West Bengal Plantation Labour Rules were framed in 1956. All

gardens should have ensured 100 % housing by 1969. Certain problems cropped up and the annual rate of construction was 'officially projected at 8 %'. (36)

'The Central Government allotted funds in the First and Second Five Year Plan, under Labour Housing Scheme to give long term loans to the estates. The planters were hesitant to take the loans and demanded 'subsidy' instead of loans. The Central Government under Plantation Housing Scheme provided a maximum 80% of the total cost and 20% of the cost were supposed to be given by the planters. But even this was not fulfilled by gardens on the plea of unprofitability of gardens. The union leaders insisted on the fulfillment of the demand approached the West Bengal government. The State government came forward in granting loans to companies carrying 4.5% interest repayable in 25 instalments. Even the Central Government directed the banks to stand guarantee against the loan taken by planters for housing construction. The non-fulfilment of the demand led to frequent tensions between the labour and management'. (37)

#### 4.14. SUMMARY

Civilisation dawned over this region with the establishment of Company administration.. The colonial administration with its attendant backwardness and slavery held its sway over the region. The British influence did away with the age-old traditions from their very foundations giving vent to exploitation, repression and subjugation; in the meanwhile, a beginning was made in reconstruction. These aimed at their own benefits to enhance their capitalistic imperial design- with this the door for civilisation opened. Darjeeling was deemed not only as a place for health and sanatorium with resorts but was also deemed as a commercial centre for making large-scale profits. Darjeeling was gifted

over to them and, in no time, they started experimentation on tea. The latter thus became the mainstay of the region.

With the coming of Dr. Campbell in Darjeeling from Nepal in 1839, development in spheres other than tea industry started in right earnest. But tea plantation was started by Major Crommelin as early as 1835, but plantation. it was generally believed, with proper experimentation was started in 1840 by Dr. Campbell.

Hunter in his report in 1876 spoke of two or three gardens in 1835, without naming them, among them, one might be Martin's garden in Pankhabari. With some years of experimentation tea industry was commercially started in a comprehensive way in 1856. In 1856-57, tea industry was started in Makaibari, Alubari, Pandam, Steinthal, Tukvar and Mundakothi. They were followed by Dhoteria and Hopetown started by Dr. Brown and Mrs. H.C. Taylor and Dr. Robertson started their own garden in Rangmuk-Cedar in 1860 and till 1864, Nehur Balasan, Ging, Ambotia, Singell, Margaret's Hope, Tukdah, and others were opened. Soil and climatic condition contributed to the speedy growth of the industry. From 1866 to 1874, the number of the industry trebled. The Government distributed the surplus land @Rs.10/- per acre in a public auction. The previous single ownership gardens now turned into a joint stock company. Till 1867, the number of such companies was 24. One joint stock company was owned by an Indian. Of the 5 gardens owned by individual owners one was owned by Bhuwajit Rai (Dakman) son of Mota Rai, a Nepali. His garden's name was Soureni. With the beginning of the industry, its number multiplied to 186 within 40 years in 1895. It was spread over 48,692 acres with the total production amounting to 1, 17, 14,055 pounds. The 1901 census registered 64,000 workers.

The profit from Tea gardens had invited widespread looting. The workers were not united in the industry. It was from the 4<sup>th</sup>. decade in the 20<sup>th</sup>. Century, the workers got themselves organised but other areas remained unfocussed. The plight of the tea workers in Darjeeling was unknown but the exploitation and repression of the Assam Tea garden workers were inviting attention of others. Trade Union movement in Tea garden started with Assam with initial problems of settlement of the outside labourers. However, in Darjeeling emigration of such labourers from neighbouring Nepal did not create that problem because of ethnic linguistic and cultural homogeneity of the labourers. The planters could not exploit them as much as they possibly could elsewhere where the labour class was heterogeneous ethnically and otherwise. The class relations within the tea gardens were quite different during the British days from what is seen today. Socially, the managerial class belonged to the British with the exception of a few Indian owners or managers.

The trade union movement is a movement born of the lamentable economic condition of the workers. The early history of the exploitation of the workers under the so called Sardari system, an effective agency for suppression and exploitation. It was a history primarily of the two classes, the workers and the management, the latter unabashedly luxuriating at the cost of the former. The early Bonus movement born of the deprivation of the workers of their justified share of the profit also receives equal attention.

With the emergence of political unionism in the hill areas, the trade union movement received further fillip. The earlier political parties, the Communist, Gorkha League, and the Congress as of now, discovered in the tea workers their vote bank. Their viewing with one another in the game of political - upmanship through their respective

Trade unions and movement - the welfare of the workers being the sole objective, notwithstanding has formed an interesting part of the study. Legislation of Trade Union in the early fifties and the emergence of militant trade unionism from 1955-69 has received due attention forming as they are the inevitable series of the on-going movement. The trade union movement was a movement, which encompassed the entire hills necessitating if not enforcing changes, big or small, in the erstwhile organisations. The leaders of the unions were not of working class origin. These leaders normally came from the political parties as because the workers were not capable of handling trade union activities on their own. The unions negotiated their ways into field of wage fixation, social welfare, bringing innovations and vitality. Leadership will continue to play a dominant role in the future of the labour movement of the tea gardens. Strikes and lockouts in Darjeeling tea gardens have not been alarming in terms of production loss. Such strikes are principally sympathetic response to their political parties. For a healthy environment in Darjeeling hills, management should come forward in motivating the working class and explore participative management to do away with the simmering mistrust of the workers towards the management. Participative management is especially suitable at the sick unit level when existing managerial systems have either disintegrated or collapsed. Trade unions have important role in preparing the ground for workers' participation in management, as this can lead to development of human potential and the greatest impetus to improvement of quality of life. Trade unions should work for elimination of inter-union rivalry and set up an ideal and act as a model in hill areas.

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## CHAPTER 5

CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP OF TEA GARDENS - SICKNESS OF GARDENS

The history of tea industry in India was originally associated with British enterprise. They had established sterling companies registered in the United Kingdom. Agents were employed by these companies in Calcutta to implement the policies and programmes formulated by the Board of Directors. Besides these companies had experienced planters who submitted reports regarding the position of tea in India to the members of the board in London. These agents sponsored tea estates registered in India with rupees capital in order to purchase some of the sterling tea estates or to start new ones of their own. "Thus, there grew a large number of rupee companies managed by the same managing agents, who looked after the interests of the sterling estates. With the development of joint stock companies in India, Indian business houses also began to participate in the plantation industry". (1)

5.1 FACTORS OF OWNERSHIP CHANGE

First World War: The industry, which was mainly under the ownership of foreign companies, began to develop. The first world war of 1904 dealt a severe blow. At the end of the war, the industry made rapid progress due to rapid expansion of export market and increase in consumption of tea in India. The situation could not exist for long. In 1919 and 1920, a serious slump occurred owing to excessive supply and steep fall in prices. This compelled the sterling companies to reduce their number of estates by transferring them to the Indian companies. "Between 1911 and 1921, the number of tea estates owned

by foreign public limited companies in India fell from 66% to 55% percent of the total and the number owned privately from 19 percent to 11 percent. (2)

World Trade Depression: The situation was further aggravated when the world trade depression of 1929 reduced consumption of tea. The stocks continued to pile up till 1932. The market was so depressed that it was unremunerative to all who were engaged in tea industry. (3) Some of the foreign tea companies were sold out to Indians.

Second World War: The transfer of ownership from foreign to Indian companies started during the Second World War (1939 - 1945). (4) The heavy demand of skilled personnel in the armed forces siphoned off managerial staff of tea estates. A large number of labourers working in tea gardens of Assam and West Bengal were diverted to the construction of roads, bridges in different parts of North East India. Cost of production rose throughout the years in the early post war periods. Wages rose sharply due to increase in the cost of living, which changed the method of payment to workers. The managers of the estates had to arrange supplies of essential commodities to the workers at concessional prices. Some of the old and small tea estates mainly owned by foreign interests sold out their estates to Indians as they could not maintain large profits and repatriate to the United Kingdom.

Post World War II: The government set up a number of reconstruction committees to plan for post-war development. This prompted changes in ownership patterns from foreign to Indian hands. "A Consultative Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of Sir Ardeshir Dalal in July 1944. The reports on the progress of Reconstruction

Planning 1944 recommended that profit motive maybe harnessed to social needs". (5) It envisaged outright nationalisation of the industry in the interest of co-ordinated development. This led to the fear of nationlisation in the minds of foreign companies and they transferred their ownership. 'A good many tea estates owned by foreigners were purchased by Indians'. (6)

## 5.2. CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The coming of independence in 1947 brought about a change in the ownership pattern and introduced one of the most compelling causes of state intervention and activity. The Capital Issues (Control) Act 1947 imposed restrictions for all companies registered in India or abroad in respect of bonus issues of all types of securities. The Foreign Exchange Regulation Act 1947 and Import Export Control Act of 1947 further affected the foreign tea companies by controlling foreign exchange operation and restricting import of any commodity required for tea processing and manufacturing. The Acts secured the domestic market for local producers and utilised the foreign exchange in national manner. The foreign tea companies experienced difficulties in expanding tea cultivation and had to sell some of their tea estates to Indians."(7) 'The decline of the London Auction Market and coming up of the Calcutta Auction Market in 1947 were interpreted as a warning for the British planters to leave. Thus the post 1947 environment was ripe for the transfer of ownership'. (8) The records available with the Cost Account Section, Tea Board, Calcutta reveals the following information as regards transfer of tea gardens from the foreign ownership to Indian nationals in North Bengal during 1946 - 57. Act of 1947 further affected the foreign tea companies by controlling foreign exchange operation and restricting import of any commodity required for tea processing and

manufacturing. The Acts secured the domestic market for local producers and utilised the foreign exchange in national manner. The foreign tea companies experienced difficulties in expanding tea cultivation and had to sell some of their tea estates to Indians.”(7) ‘The decline of the London Auction Market and coming up of the Calcutta Auction Market in 1947 were interpreted as a warning for the British planters to leave. Thus the post 1947 environment was ripe for the transfer of ownership’. (8) The records available with the Cost Account Section, Tea Board, Calcutta reveals the following information as regards transfer of tea gardens from the foreign ownership to Indian nationals in North Bengal during 1946 - 57.

Table V.01: Transfer of tea gardens from the foreign ownership to Indian nationals in North Bengal during 1946 - 57

| Sl.No. | Name of Estate | Dist | Sub-Div    | Area In Hect | Effective Date<br>of Sale |
|--------|----------------|------|------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1.     | Makaibari      | Dar  | Kurseong   | 312.96       | 1.1.1.1948                |
| 2.     | Goomtee        | Dar  | Kurseong   | 139.51       | 20.3.1950                 |
| 3.     | Moondakothi    | Dar  | Darjeeling | 520.27       | 1.12.1954                 |
| 4.     | Chongtong      | Dar  | Darjeeling | 431.17       | 1.12.1954                 |
| 5.     | Dooteriah      | Dar  | Darjeeling | 525.54       | 1.12.1954                 |
| 6.     | Kalejvalley    | Dar  | Darjeeling | 266.60       | 1.12.1954                 |
| 7.     | Ambootia       | Dar  | Kurseong   | 309.91       | 12.3.1954                 |
| 8.     | Phuguri        | Dar  | Kurseong   | 240.29       | 1/12.1954                 |
| 9.     | Kumai          | Dar  | Kalimpong  | 287.05       | 1.1.1954                  |
| 10.    | Goodhope       | Jalp | Jalpaiguri | 406.47       | 1/1/1954                  |
| 11.    | Rangliot       | Dar  | Darjeeling | 75.22        | 30.6.1956                 |

Altogether 122 gardens were put on sale between 1947 and 1976 for all the North Bengal gardens, which accounts for more than 41 percent of the total number of the tea gardens of North Bengal. The position of Darjeeling Hill is as follows: (9)

Table V.02: The percent of total number of the tea gardens of North Bengal

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| No. of Tea Gardens                             | 97      |
| No. of Gardens affected by change of ownership | 54      |
| Percentage of the total No.                    | 55.67 % |

The table shows that in three decades the ownership of more than half of the tea gardens in the district has changed. This is an indicator of the unrest of the industry.

Dr. Manas Dasgupta has noted the change of ownership from 1949 to 1970. (10)

Table V.03: Change of Ownership from 1949 To 1970

| Categories     | Ownership in 1947 |            | Ownership in 1970 |            |
|----------------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
|                | Indian            | Non Indian | Indian            | Non Indian |
| 1. Proprietary | 31                | 8          | 32                | -          |
| 2. Private     | 1                 | -          | 12                | -          |
| 3. Public Ltd. | 11                | 10         | 41                | -          |
| 4. Sterling    | -                 | 40         | -                 | 16         |
|                | 43                | 58         | 85                | 16         |
|                | Total 101         |            | Total 101         |            |

The proprietary estates declined giving place to the private and public limited companies. The British proprietary virtually disappeared and the position was taken by the Indians. The increasing rate of Indian participation since depression and then after independence became very clear.(11)

Another feature that we come across is the direction of change among various forms of ownership in Darjeeling tea estates. (12)

Table V.04: Direction of change in ownership (1947-70) of Darjeeling tea estates

| From /To            | Indian Proprietary | Rupee pub Ltd | Rupee Pvt.Ltd | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|-------|
| British Proprietary | 6                  | 2             | -             | 8     |
| Indian Proprietary  | 10                 | 1             | 3             | 14    |
| Rupee Pvt.Ltd       | 1                  | -             | -             | 1     |
| Rupee Public Ltd.   | 1                  | -             | 4             | 5     |
| Sterling companies  | 1                  | 2             | 2             | 5     |
| Total               | 19                 | 5             | 9             | 33    |

“Of the 33 estates taken as sample, the direction of change revealed 19 estates have come under Indian proprietors from their British counterpart, Joint Stock companies, both Rupee and Sterling, and from Indian proprietors themselves.

This is the trend of change since 1947”. (13)

The techno - Economic survey of Darjeeling tea industry sponsored by Manufacturing and Marketing Consultant, has given a breakdown of the number of gardens functioning on various forms of ownership. (14)

Table V.05: Ownership pattern of the estates

| Public Ltd.Co.        | No. Of Co | No. Of estate | Hect | Percent hec. | Av.Yield (kg) |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------------|------|--------------|---------------|
| Co. with 1 estates    |           |               |      |              |               |
| Each                  | 18        | 18            | 3702 |              | 64            |
| Co. with 2 estates    |           |               |      |              |               |
| Each                  | 2         | 4             | 342  |              | 929           |
| Co. with 3 estates    |           |               |      |              |               |
| Each                  | 1         | 3             | 690  |              | 645           |
| Co. with 4 estates    |           |               |      |              |               |
| Each                  | 1         | 4             | 951  |              | 952           |
| Total                 | 22        | 29            | 6285 | 36 %         | 745           |
| <b>Private Ltd.Co</b> |           |               |      |              |               |
| Co. with 1 estate     |           |               |      |              |               |
| Each                  | 10        | 10            | 2740 |              | 764           |
| Co. with 2 estate     |           |               |      |              |               |
| Each                  | 1         | 2             | 305  |              | 525           |
| Co. with 3 estate     |           |               |      |              |               |
| Each                  | 2         | 6             | 1333 |              | 774           |
| Total                 | 13        | 18            | 4378 | 24 %         | 750           |

| <u>Proprietary</u>     |              |                 |                         |         |                        |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| <u>/Partnership Co</u> |              |                 |                         |         |                        |
| Co. with 1 estate      |              |                 |                         |         |                        |
| Each                   | 13           | 13              | 2472                    |         | 579                    |
| Co. with 2 estate      |              |                 |                         |         |                        |
| Each                   | 1            | 2               | 420                     |         | 690                    |
| Total                  | 14           | 15              | 2892                    | 15 %    | 595                    |
|                        | No.of<br>Co. | No.of<br>Estate | Area UnderTea<br>(Hect) | Percent | Av. Yield<br>Hect (kg) |
| Fera(Public)Co.Ltd.    |              |                 |                         |         |                        |
| Co. with 1 estate each | 1            | 1               | 260                     |         | 1038                   |
| Co. with 2 estate each | 1            | 2               | 603                     |         | 882                    |
| Co. with 3 estate each | 1            | 3               | 856                     |         | 1028                   |
| Co. with 4 estate each | 1            | 4               | 846                     |         | 809                    |
| Total                  | 4            | 10              | 2565                    | 14 %    | 922                    |

The data suggest that the ownership pattern is perhaps consistently correlated to the yield pattern of the states. Thus FERA companies (earstwhile sterling) show the highest yield, followed by public and private limited companies. The last in the league are the partnership, proprietary firms. There are distinct and marked gaps in yield among these three categories-172kgs.per hectare between FERA and Indian companies, and 150kgs.per hectare between Indian companies and partnership firms. An obvious conclusion flowing from the above yield differentials is that the managerial practices and

methods followed ought to have been progressively better as one moved from partnership firms to Indian companies to FERA companies. (15)

Even as late as 1950 non-Indian ownership accounted for 80 percent of the acreage under tea. The sterling companies claimed 63.93 percent of the acreage and non-Indian owned Rupee companies covered 16.90 percent of total acreage was controlled by the Indian owned companies. Ownership of tea plantation appears to have changed very substantially between 1950 and 1972. In hill areas of Darjeeling even in 1953 the sterling Companies accounted for 32.26 percent of total planted area but in 1972-73 the corresponding percentage was 15.42. (16)

Table V.06: Planted area under Tea by Company Type, 1953 and 1972

| Company Type            | Percentage of under tea |        |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|
|                         | 1953                    | 1972   |
| 1. Sterling Company     | 32.26                   | 15.42  |
| 2. Rupee Company        | 42.98                   | 48.34  |
| 3. Private Ltd. Company | 5.52                    | 20.88  |
| 4. Proprietary          | 19.24                   | 15.36  |
| Total                   | 100.00                  | 100.00 |

The frequent changes of ownership have brought a new class of persons in the gardens. The ownership of tea gardens began to move gradually from the houses of early adopters to moneylenders and speculators. (17) In some cases, the beharees who were the ration suppliers to the gardens became the owners. 'In some cases, the 'Beharees' came up and settled for supply of country made liquors (known in the local parlance as

'Rakshee') which could not be made by the labourers themselves although they were very fond of it. Licences were issued to the 'Beharees' who became very rich and started their own tea plantations especially at Kurseong. Downhill, known as Doomaram was started by Doomram Bharosaylal and Mohan Majhua and Narbada by Gogaram. Mr. Jainarayan Pradhan, who was the Vice-Chairman of Kurseong Municipality, planted the last gardens named chaitaypani in 1920. (18)

It is equally important to understand the composition of owners, as this influenced the policy of management, and how the owners administered the gardens. The labourers had to undergo through a period of uncertainty and change of fortune.

There was a sharp fall in the total number of people employed and quite a large number labourers became surplus. This resulted in the low bargaining power of the labourers. In matters of recruitment for the supervisory and clerical posts, the local people were also given preference by the British Management. But under the new management since Independence, supervisory staff, clerical staff, and all managerial staff were brought more or less from outside the district as a matter of policy. Consequently the doors of employment had been closed for the Nepalese in the garden. The employment of labour in the tea gardens drastically fell in 1971 census in comparison to 1961 census. The total tea plantation labour according to 1971 census was 56990 indicating a fall of 7 percent in comparison to 1961 census. Dr. Dasgupta has highlighted the fall in employment in Darjeeling tea gardens. (19)

Table V.07: Total number of people employed

|                  | 1961  | 1971  | 1981  |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Darjeeling Hills | 60979 | 56990 | 44021 |

The comparative analysis shows that over the period the fall in employment is about 15,000 over the three decades. The community-wise direction of change of ownership of tea gardens in Darjeeling Hills is another feature which has affected the nature of management and the resultant impact on the tea gardens and the economy of the Darjeeling hills.

Table V.08: Community wise direction of change, 1947-70

| From To | Bengali | Marwari | Gujrati | British | Others | Total |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-------|
| Bengali | 5       | 1       | 1       | -       | -      | 7     |
| Marwari | -       | 8       | 1       | -       | -      | 12    |
| Gujrati | -       | 1       | 1       | -       | -      | 2     |
| British | 1       | 10      | -       | -       | 1      | 11    |
| Others  | -       | -       | -       | -       | 1      | 1     |
| Total   | 6       | 20      | 3       | -       | 4      | 33    |

It is revealed that during the period the highest number of estates transferred is from British ownership followed by Marwari ownership. Another important feature is the inter community and intra-community change of ownership. Intra community change is of much greater significance than inter-community change. Tea is an agro-based industry and huge investment is required for maintenance of plant and machinery and crops. The unsteady owner of short duration was hesitant to invest in the long run prospect. "The transitory entrepreneurs sitting on the fence for a better sale price of the garden"<sup>(20)</sup> took little interest in rejuvenation of the garden and siphoned off the income to other parts of the country where they had other business interests.

“An analysis of 27 joint stock companies of Darjeeling reveals that between 1940 and 1970, while the number of non-Indian directors declined from 112 to only 11, the number of Indian directors showed a corresponding increase from 6 to 85 in the same period. Of these Indian directors, the number of directors with ‘merchant’ background shot up from 2 in 1940 to 83 in 1965 and they completely changed the nature of management of tea gardens”.(21) The frequency of changes proved to be disastrous for the tea industry. It is found out that ownership having Marwari background changed more frequently than others.

### 5.3. CHANGES OF OWNERSHIP AND SICKNESS OF THE TEA INDUSTRY IN DARJEELING HILLS:

The Plantation Inquiry Commission in 1956 first stated that the tea estates in India can be broadly classified according to the following types of ownership.

1. Small holding which may be anything from 1 to 100 acres owned by proprietors. These again may be sub-divided into:
  - a) Those where only cultivation of tea is carried on and green leaf is taken to neighboring factory of tea.
  - b) Those where both cultivation and manufacturing of tea are undertaken.
2. Estates over 100 acres which are owned by proprietors (Indian or Non Indian) having facilities for manufacturing of tea.
3. Estates owned by limited liability companies registered in India with rupee capital (controlled by Board of Director whether Indian or Non Indians) this again is sub-divided into public and private limited companies.

4. Estates owned by limited liability companies with rupee capital and managed by managing agents (having mixed board of Indians and Non Indians and shares holding by Indians and Non Indians)
5. Estates owned by limited liability companies registered in United Kingdom with sterling capital. (22)

The tea Board conducted two surveys and classified the selected tea estates according to different types of ownership, viz. Sterling and rupee company. (23)

The coming of Independence brought about a change in the ownership pattern and introduced one of the most compelling causes of state intervention. The Foreign Exchange Regulation Act of 1973 stated that foreign tea companies should be converted into Indian Tea companies with Indian participation not less than 26 percent of the equity of the company. The major objective of numerous legislations and policies were to discipline private enterprise with reasonable profit.

The pattern of management in Industry had undergone significant changes within a period of seventeen years from 1959 to 1975. The percentage to total tea estates controlled by individuals or companies increased during four periods of time except in 1975. This increase was due to decline in share of total tea estates under the management of foreign and Indian agency houses. The share of total tea estates under the management of individuals or companies declined in 1975 because of increase in a large percentage of tea estates under the management of both directors/ managing partners / joint owners and relative fall in the share of total estates controlled by both foreign and Indian agency houses. The percentage increase of total tea estates under the management of individuals was 6.5 percent during the period 1959 to 1965 and 9.7 percent between 1965 and 1969. This is due to decline of tea estates controlled mainly by foreign agency houses to the

extent of 2.3 percent between 1959 and 1965 and 7.8 percent between 1965 and 1969. In terms of area, it was observed that percentage of total tea area under the management of individuals or companies increased by 6.8 percent and 14.4 percent during the period 1959 to 1965 and 1965 to 1969. This is because of decline in area by 5.2 percent and 1.6 percent under the management of foreign and Indian agency houses respectively between 1959 and 1965 and 11.9 percent and 2.5 percent between 1965 and 1969. They are under tea controlled by individuals or companies was reduced by 31 percent during 1969 to 1975 because of increase in area of 46.5 percent under the different management and decline of 15.5 percent under the management of both foreign and Indian agency houses. Thus the share of tea estates under the ownership of foreign companies had diminished in both absolute and relative terms and the major portion of tea estates came under the ownership of Indian companies. (24)

Besides change in ownership from foreign to Indian companies, it was revealed that some of the foreign tea companies merged with stronger tea companies in order to economise the expenditure, reduce cost of production and improve the quality of tea. According to Tea Board, there were fifty companies, which had either been merged with other companies or formed under new names during the period 1955-1975. Some of the foreign companies were formed as holding controlling estates of more than 1000 hectares. These mergers, of course, brought monopolistic tendencies. Some of the tea estates in Assam and West Bengal were taken over by the respective governments and West Bengal Tea Development Corporation was formed to look after these estates.

Indianisation due to Foreign Exchange Regulation Act of 1971 of the sterling companies had introduced radical changes both in structure and organization of industry. The practice of running the tea estates through the agency houses began to decline. Thus

proprietary rupee concerns. There has been a pronounced trend of foreign capital moving out of the Indian tea industry with the abolition of managing agency system and the enactment of Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, Company Act 1956, Industrial Policy resolution 1956 and Monopolies and Restrictive Trade practices Act 1969 since the fifties and sixties. Merchants and financiers who became the new owners of tea estates were primarily interested in quick profits. Gardens passed on from experience planters to traders, contractors, who knew nothing about tea. The British expertise was lost which resulted production. One of the major reasons for sickness in the Darjeeling tea industry was the "disinvestment by British tea companies and disposal of marginal units to local traders who did not possess either managerial or technical skills and were in the main interested in short term gains."(26)

In the case of tea estates containing old age bushes, the new buyers hardly made an attempt to replant, keeping in view the high cost structure. Majority of the tea gardens contains plants belonging to the uneconomic age group of more than seventy years. The tea plants of Darjeeling hill areas have by and large crossed the age of full bearing. (27)

The TM and MC in Techno-Economic Survey of Darjeeling Tea gardens have highlighted the age classification of plant population of sample gardens in the following manner. (28)

Table V.09: Age classification of plant population for the sample gardens

| Age of plants     | Below 10 yrs. | 10-25 yrs. | 26-50 yrs. | 51-70 yrs. | 71-100 yrs |      |
|-------------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------|
| More than 100 yrs |               |            |            |            |            |      |
| Area (%)          | 3.4           | 8.0        | 7.5        | 21.9       | 34.6       | 24.6 |

It can be seen from the above table that nearly 60 percent of the total area under tea for the sample gardens contain plants belonging to the uneconomic age group of more than 70 years. Further, nearly a quarter of the area under tea contains plants, which are more than 100 years old. The average yield for the sample gardens works out to about 700-kgs.per hectare, which is less than half of the all India average yield of 1525 kgs. per hectare.(29) Replantation of bushes with an age of 100 years or more is a matter of considerable urgency for the long term prosperity of Darjeeling tea industry. As is revealed in the table, 80 percent of the bushes belong to the age group of over 50 years or so.

‘Sterling companies have a high percentage of old bushes because they were the first to start the plantations in Darjeeling. Between 1964-65 and 72-73, the proportion of old bushes increased both in the case of private limited companies and the proprietary estates. In the case of private limited companies. The share of hectareage with tea bushes over 50 years increased from 66 percent in 1964-65 to 82 percent in 1972-73. For proprietary gardens, the same proportion increased from 53 percent in 1964-65 to 66 percent in 1972-73.

Area wise, a higher proportion of old tea bushes were found in those blocks, which had an early start in tea plantations than others. These included Darjeeling, Kurseong, Pulbazar, Jore-Bungalow, Rangli-Rangliot and Kalimpong. Between 1964-64 and 1972-73, the proportion of hectareage with tea bushes over 50 years declined only in two blocks, namely Mirik and Gorubathan. (30)

From the thirties till the present day, acreage and employment in tea industry have shown a declining trend. “In the district of Darjeeling alone, there were 20,000 hectares under tea in 1978. But by 1979 acreage under tea had declined to barely 18,000 hectares.

Moreover, given the rising trend of 'vacancy ration' in tea gardens, which today is around 20 percent, not more than 14,000 hectares are actually under tea. About 5600 hectares actually disappeared in the forty year period 1939-40 to 1979-80."(31) Several factors can be attributed to the sickness of the gardens. These are

1. Managerial instability owing to II world war.
2. Heavy losses incurred as a consequence of price slump in the early fifties.
3. Disinvestment by British companies after the enactment of various legislations by the government to reduce concentration of economic power in the hands of few.
4. Sale of marginal units to local traders whose sole motive was short run goal of profit maximisation at the cost of the gardens' health and vitality.
5. Low yields, high cost of planting affecting adversely the developmental activities.
6. Imposition of high rates of direct and indirect taxes dampened the spirit of investors.

The structural changes in the tea industry brought in numerous problems. The Indian companies were indebted to banks for purchase of the foreign tea estates at a high rate of interest. It was alleged that the foreign gardens were sold off one by one on the basis of inflated prices than what had been the book value. The book value, of course, generally showed less than the real value. (32) As a consequence, many estates were faced with strained labour-management relation for want of money to pay better wages to the employees as compared to foreign companies. "Too many changes in managers and subordinate staff of the Indian owned tea estates complicated the problem". (33) "The unstable tenure of the managers affected long term stability of gardens and accountability

became diffused". (34) "The average tenure of a manager of Darjeeling rarely exceeds seven years in the same garden."(35) In many gardens 'munshis' instead of the managers became the real authority who could manipulate accounts". (36)

Indian owners of tea estates, by and large, tended to be more exploitative than their foreign counterparts. 'While most foreign tea companies rarely paid their shareholders dividends not more than twenty percent per annum, some Indian companies were known to pay their shareholders dividends as high as 200 percent a year', (37) and no provision was made for long term development of the gardens. The quick profit tendency of the new planters made many gardens sick or uneconomic. At least twelve gardens have been abandoned by their owners; among them are Rohini, Dumaram, Chaitaypani, Avonggove, Anselgunj, Shivakhola, Simring, Damsang and others.

The new owners of tea gardens systematically stripped off the gardens of their assets, siphoned off the surplus to other industries in other metropolitan cities like Bombay, Delhi, and Rajesthan.

"The Techno-Economic Survey carried out by CMPO in 1975 identified thirty eight gardens as sick and uneconomic gardens, which accounted for 6638 hectares of planted area under tea, representing 38 percent of planted area under tea in the hill areas. The total output of these gardens in 1972-73 was 4 million Kgs, which constituted 36 percent of the total output". (38) 'Out of these 38 uneconomic gardens, ten were small gardens with less than 120 acres under tea.'(39)

Uneconomic size of the garden is regarded as one important cause of economic weakness. 'For hill areas of Darjeeling, the optimum size of a tea garden is regarded to be 122-162 hectres (300-400 acres). Out of the 38 economically weak tea gardens 10 were below 122 hectares and 15 were above 162 hectares in size. Thus 13 gardens within the

size range of 122-166 hectares were also uneconomic. Moreover, there are 15 other tea gardens with size of each below 122 hectares which are not regarded as uneconomic.'(40)

The change of ownership affected the stability of gardens, and management went to the hands of retailers, wholesale traders and hotel proprietors. The poor management gave rise to a centralized policy. The local managers were unable to take decisions regarding replantation, rejuvenation because 'the Indian directors with merchant background were not used to delegating powers to their managers'. (41)

The tea plantation industry from its very inception was under professional management which initiated the development of this industry and thus it reached a high level in respect of area and production. Since Independence, the role played by the professionals, known as the managing agency system began to decline gradually when the government started the socialistic pattern of society as the objective of social and economic pattern of the society. These objectives exercised considerable impact on the pattern of management in the tea plantation industry. The agency house had to be recognised not only to facilitate economic growth but also to satisfy social needs. The socialistic goal is implied in the emphasis on expanding governmental activities in respect of finance and also planning some curbs on the activities of the managing agents. This created financial and liquidity crisis after the end of managing agency system. To control the activities of managing agencies, different regulation were adopted. The liquidity needs of the tea industry arise mainly for short-term and long-term requirements for development finance. As regards finance, the Tea Board, Reserve Bank of India, Agricultural Refinance and Development Corporation and other institutions came forward for the development of the industry. The Techno-Economic Survey CMPO 1975 has recorded that 'Darjeeling tea gardens received long term finance almost entirely from

the Tea Board, The West Bengal State Financial Corporation reportedly being more interested to confine its operation in and around Calcutta than in the hills of Darjeeling.

(42)

Quantum of term loans or subsidy provided by the Tea Board to the Darjeeling tea gardens under different financing schemes is small. This is reflected in the table below:

Table V.10: Long term finance provided by Tea Board to Darjeeling Hill Area Tea Gardens upto 31.3.74

| Scheme Sanctioned (Rs.Lakhs)                 | No. Of Gardens | Amount |
|--|----------------|--------|
| 1.) Tea Machinery under Hira-purchase Scheme | 41             | 82.81  |
| 2.) Tea Plantation finance Scheme            | 10             | 42.60  |
| 3.) Replanting Subsidy Scheme                | 28             | 4.40   |

Tea in Darjeeling is a seasonal crop. Borrowing for tea begins in and around January but the finished products are lifted by the buyers starting from June onwards. The sale proceed flow in by steps and usually the full realisation of the sale proceeds takes place much after the beginning of the borrowing season.

Much of the tea industry need for short-term finance is met by the commercial banks against hypothecation of the crop. The gardens' Title Deeds are also usually required to be deposited with these banks as collateral security. Thereby restricting the gardens to obtain loans from other sources. Many gardens have been deprived of much needed finance for the development of the tea industry. (43)

This together with the fact of 'receiving' sale proceeds long after the plucking creates a shortfall of the needed financial accommodation.

#### 5.4. FINANCING THE DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE

While the pattern of financing the development expenditure could not be obtained from the gardens, a fair idea of this pattern is obtainable from published sources.

Firstly, it is well known that the tea industry had traditionally relied on its own funds for any developmental work rather than on external sources. This was primarily because the normal avenues of long term loan assistance were not open to the tea industry until the late Seventies. Thus banks were usually unwilling to undertake term financing to Tea because of the long gestation period and uncertainties of price and production. Similarly, large-scale financial assistance could not be obtained from such financial institutions as IDBI, ICICI, and IFCI because of the agricultural nature of operations of the tea industry.

Until very recently, the only source, which the tea industry could rely on, was the Tea Board through its Tea Plantation Finance Scheme (1963) and its Tea Machinery and Irrigation Equipment Hire Purchase Scheme (1961-62). The Replantation Subsidy Scheme was introduced only in 1968-69. While the Tea Plantation Finance Scheme was initiated with a corpus of Rs. 5 crores, the Hire Purchase Scheme was introduced with a corpus Rs. 2 crores for tea machinery and Rs. 2 crores for irrigation equipment. The present corpus stands at Rs. 14.60 crores for Tea Plantation Finance and Rs. 35 crores for Hire Purchase. Thus with such limited means of external finance available, it is no wonder after the comparatively recent advent of ARDC (now NABARD) into tea financing that more tea companies have started relying on term borrowings as a means of financing developmental activities. The Debt: Equity ratio figures for the tea industry compared to some other industries and all industries as released by the Reserve Bank of

India in its studies of large and medium companies given below will amply illustrate the position:

Table V. 11: Debt as a Percentage of Equity

| Year    | Tea  | Sugar | Jute  | Engineering | Cotton<br>Textile | Shipping | All<br>Industries |
|---------|------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1970-71 | 7.7  | 25.7  | 32.7  | 35.0        | 50.7              | 99.3     | 38.2              |
| 1971-72 | 7.8  | 21.8  | 24.5  | 34.5        | 57.5              | 97.4     | 36.6              |
| 1972-73 | 8.4  | 20.3  | 30.6  | 33.5        | 60.7              | 113.1    | 35.7              |
| 1973-74 | 9.3  | 30.4  | 25.4  | 39.7        | 49.7              | 123.8    | 41.4              |
| 1974-75 | 8.0  | 34.9  | 19.3  | 39.3        | 53.2              | 118.1    | 38.7              |
| 1975-76 | 9.3  | 39.6  | 22.0  | 39.5        | 59.7              | 144.0    | 40.8              |
| 1976-77 | 11.0 | 44.1  | 32.1  | 45.1        | 73.5              | 171.6    | 46.8              |
| 1977-78 | 13.4 | 47.2  | 81.3  | 47.9        | 89.2              | 194.9    | 48.7              |
| 1978-79 | 19.1 | 71.7  | 306.7 | 49.5        | 81.0              | 283.6    | 48.0              |
| 1979-80 | 24.3 | 93.1  | 65.7  | 48.9        | 90.0              | 256.1    | 51.1              |
| 1980-81 | 48.4 | 81.8  | 51.5  | 51.8        | 101.6             | 179.3    | 57.1              |

(Sources – Tea Board Statistics)

While the above figures may help us in obtaining an understanding of the extent of debt in the tea industry as compared to other industries and the trends over the years, it does not indicate in what proportion the development expenditure as estimated earlier has been financed through external and internal sources.

It has, however, already been indicated that the external finance mainly came from the Tea Board and NABARD. The level of financial assistance, which has been made available from the Tea Board, is as follows:

Table V.12: Tea Board Finance 1971-72 to 1981-82

(Rs. in Lakhs)

| Year    | Tea Board              |               |                      | Total   |
|---------|------------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------|
|         | Tea Plantation Finance | Hire Purchase | Replantation Subsidy |         |
| 1971-72 | 25.88                  | 94.41         | 29.56                | 149.85  |
| 1972-73 | 14.57                  | 142.02        | 29.56                | 186.15  |
| 1973-74 | 17.22                  | 90.71         | 26.91                | 134.84  |
| 1974-75 | 10.23                  | 85.19         | 25.80                | 121.22  |
| 1975-76 | 14.52                  | 102.40        | 28.90                | 145.82  |
| 1976-77 | 30.81                  | 119.80        | 34.19                | 184.80  |
| 1977-78 | 48.25                  | 200.58        | 29.26                | 278.09  |
| 1978-79 | 51.43                  | 276.90        | 48.47                | 376.80  |
| 1979-80 | 55.86                  | 426.89        | 56.86                | 539.61  |
| 1980-81 | 65.73                  | 153.88        | 67.68                | 287.29  |
| 1981-82 | 46.93                  | 326.31        | 61.04                | 434.28  |
| Total   | 381.43                 | 2019.09       | 438.23               | 2838.75 |

(Sources – Tea Board Statistics)

The corresponding year-wise figures of disbursements made by NABARD are unfortunately not available. However, the total disbursement made by ARDC/NABARD upto 1981-82 was Rs. 2, 876, 27 lakhs. The breakdown of funding of total development expenditure between 1971-72 to 1981-82 into its external and internal sources is as follows:

Table V. 13: Total development expenditure: The funding

|                        | Rs. in lakhs | Rs. in lakhs |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. External Sources    |              |              |
| a) Tea Board           | 2838.75      |              |
| b) ARDC/NABARD         | 2876.27      | 5715.02      |
| 2. Internal Generation |              | 23315.42     |
| Total                  |              | 29030.44     |

While there may be some dispute on the above figures since term loans from banks and capital issues have not been considered, it may be reasonably assumed that the amounts raised through these sources could not have been very significant. Therefore, it may be stated approximately 20 percent of financing for development has been through external sources.

While on the subject of financing development through external borrowings, it may be interesting to find out how far it has been feasible for the tea industry to depend on such sources. From the industry-wise figures of debt as a percentage of equity shown earlier, it may be noted that in recent years the tea industry has shown a marked tendency to go in for larger term borrowings. Thus, between 1970-71 and 1980-81 debt proportions in the tea industry, has increased seven times while the increase obtained for other industries (with the exception of sugar) has been less than two fold. Considering the agricultural nature of its operations, the high taxation rate and the inherent instability of prices, there may be some justification for a fear as to whether a permanent debt equity ratio of 1:2 is not already too high. One is only too aware of the Textile industries. These industries have and are able to price their products in line with inflationary trends.

The tea industry has a creditable record of ploughing back internal resources. While it has begun to show an interest in external borrowings, now made available to the industry on a scale not known before, it still has to live with the traditional constraints in committing itself to loans – both production and prices are unpredictable according to the vagaries of nature and market factors beyond its control. Without assured debt servicing capacity, it will be prudent resources to the maximum extent.

Thus, if some Rs. 300 crores was invested over on 11 year period, and the external sources of funding was only 20 percent of the total outlay, one wonders whether Seventh Plan estimate of an external funding of Rs. 600 crores or 67 percent of the total outlay of Rs. 900 crores is not only rather ambitious but also unrealistic and highly risk prone in the sense that it might push large sections of the industry into sickness. (44)

Long-term finance is needed for replanting old bushes, planting and extension, construction of labour and staff quarters, medical facilities. With increasing competition in the world tea market, and steady rise in the costs of production, the need for replanting old bushes, adopting scientific methods of cultivation and modernisation of both field and factory machineries have assumed paramount importance. Hence, the question of finding adequate supplies of long-term finance at reasonable costs is in the forefront.

The first concrete step towards providing need-based working capital finance to the tea industry was taken way back in 1971 with the setting up of the Dutt Committee, under the Chairmanship of Shri B.K.Dutta, the then custodian of United Bank of India. The Dutt Committee endeavored to formulate a uniform policy for short term financing. The main features of the Committee's recommendations which were accepted by the Reserve Bank of India and implemented from March 1972, were linking up the cash credit limit with the gross sales turnover and also the cost of production, restriction on

drawal of funds which was to be regulated by monthly drawing schedule and, in case of deficit, sanction of Tera Loan against the deficit amount so as to enable the unit to avail of working capital limit in full. (45)

However, even after the implementation of the Dutt Committee recommendations, different banks continued following different methods and the industry remain dissatisfied on the pattern of financing by banks. The Tandon Committee was set up subsequently, to review the entire system of granting and follow-up of bank credit to the industrial sector in general and not particularly to the tea industry did not come out with any specific recommendations for the improvement in the system of lending to the tea industry. As a result of this and also in view of the continued dissatisfaction of the tea industry over non-uniform implementation of the existing norms by the banks, the Reserve Bank of India set up another committee under the Chairmanship of Shri K.B.Chore in October 1980 to reassess the entire position relating to financing of tea industry. The Committee submitted its report in October 1981 and revised guidelines based on the recommendation of the committee, the Reserve Bank of India issued the recommendation in 1982. The recommendation even today forms the backbone of the system of bank lending to the tea industry. The Chore Committee classified the borrowers into four categories namely, large borrowers, bought leaf factories and tea traders. The committee introduced the concept of margin to be provided by the borrowers. The committee also recommended introduction of monthly cash budget, based on which drawings were to be allowed subject to the overall limit to be determined at the beginning of the season. The committee recommended that cash credit should not exceed 75 percent of peak deficit for large borrowers. They were expected to provide from their long term resources, funds equal to at least 25 percent of the amount of peak deficit. For small

borrowers, the committee recommended working capital limit to be fixed on the basis of per acre scale of finance as may be determined by an area committee. Advances to the bought leaf factories holding registration certificates as small-scale industrial units should be eligible for classification as priority sector advances. (45) The planters complained that the banks followed diverse practices in the implementation of the norms of the Chore Committee. They felt the norms were restrictive in terms of objectives and scope and hence did not fulfil their needs. All these factors led to uncertainty and sickness of gardens. Accordingly, a sub-committee comprising the representatives of Reserve Bank of India, NABARD, Banks, Tea Board and the Tea industry was formed. Following the recommendations of the sub-committee, the Reserve Bank of India, advised the banks in December 1989 to follow a new system of financing, based mainly on the Chore Committee's recommendations with the following modifications:

1. Revenue inflows and outflows are to be shown separately in the Cash budget. The units were expected to meet the capital outflow from the capital inflow.
2. Diversion of short-term fund for long term uses were not permitted except in the cases where permission is obtained from the banks for a temporary period pending release of sanctioned development schemes under NABARD Refinance.
3. Provision for continuous updating/revision of cash budget and allowing drawing based on actual, against the budgeted deficits of inflows and outflows.
4. Provision for charging penal rate of interest in case of non-submission of stipulated reports and returns.
5. Outflows for production should be broadly in conformity with the area-wise standard unit cost to be fixed by a committee comprising of the representatives of Reserve Bank of

India, NABARD, Banks and the tea industry, which will meet every year under the convenorship of Tea Board. (46)

### 5.5. SUMMARY

The beginning of the history of tea in Darjeeling Hills can be credited to the British who endeavoured to nourish and develop the industry into what it is today.

The industry received sudden setback during the first world war of 1904. However, the situation changed after the end of the war owing to rapid expansion of export market. The transition from war to peace was marked by a short-lived but serious depression in the tea industry.

The onset of Second World War altered the whole pattern of demand and supply. The transfer of ownership from foreign to Indian companies started during the Second World War. Changes in ownership pattern received further impetus after the termination of II world war, when the government set up a number of reconstruction committees to plan for post war development. After independence, the socialistic concept of mixed came into existence characterised by planning and control of the economy and the gradual Indianisation of foreign investment in the country. The mixed economy also led to a plethora of legislations and controls affecting all aspect of tea industry. The introduction of the government's five year plans led the agency houses to believe that they would no longer be free to pursue their self interests unfettered, rather they would have to abide by the government policies and programmes. The most crippling of regulations came in the form of provisions of Indian Companies Act 1956 and its 1960 amendment, particularly the sections relating to managing agency. The foreign owned tea

companies were compelled to sell the gardens to the Indians. The proposed action of Indianisation of sterling companies took into effect from December 1976 onwards. This led to significant changes in structure and organisation of Darjeeling tea industry. There was a smooth switchover from British to Indian management. The frequent changes of ownership resulted in complete stagnation of the industry, and gradually sickness enveloped the entire industry. Sickness in gardens become a common phenomenon owing to a combination of factors like, Old Age of bushes, speculative character of merchant background planters, Bank finance and Liquidity crisis, and labour unrest.

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## CHAPTER 6

RECENT CHANGES IN TRADE UNIONS AFTER THE GORKHA NATIONAL  
LIBERATION FRONT MOVEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE TEA GARDENS

The history of the present day Darjeeling begins with the acquisition of a 'hilly tract' by East India Company in 1835 from the Raja of Sikkim. The land presented by Sikkim did not comprise the whole of Darjeeling. It was a narrow enclave of 138 sq miles, which included sites of the present Darjeeling and Kurseong towns and touched the plains near Pankhabari. The additional territory was acquired by the British in 1850-51. It comprised of the entire Sikkim, Morung Terai i.e. the present Siliguri sub-division and the hills of the whole southern part of Sikkim between the great Rangeet and the plains of India and from Nepal on the west to Bhutan frontier and the Teesta River in the East. The British government acquired Dalimkote i.e. present Kalimpong and adjacent plain areas (now in Jalpaiguri district) in 1866 under the Treaty of Sinchulia. With this, the district of Darjeeling assume the present shape and size (1)

The British policy of keeping the district under the separate administrative arrangement and outside the constitutional reform process coupled with regional and ethnic aspects have profoundly influenced the political process and political development of hill areas of Darjeeling. Darjeeling hill areas including Kurseong and later Kalimpong, belonged to the 'non-regulated scheme till 1874. Under the system, the Governor General possessed the power of adopting legislation for the non-regulated province by means of executive orders. The act of 1874 declared the district as 'scheduled district'. It was, therefore, quite clear that the districts, along with other scheduled districts, was not placed within the ambit of the general laws in application over the rest of India, such laws

applied only in part or with modifications. The Indian Council Act of 1909 also did not bring about any change in this respect.

Under the Government of India Act of 1919, the term 'scheduled District, was replaced by a new term backward tract'. So Darjeeling became a backward tract till the passing of the Govt of India Act 1935, which declared the district as a 'partially excluded area'. The district remained a partially excluded area till the attainment of Independence by India.

The district was kept outside the constitutional reforms which the British Government was introducing in the direction of self-government in other parts of the country to allow larger popular participation in the governance of the country. The persistent policy of the British rulers in this century to keep the district of Darjeeling segregated (2) had far-reaching implications in the political process of the hill areas of the district. This has, to significant extent, alienated the people from the mainstream of national polity which ultimately culminated into a feeling of insecurity and separateness.

#### Early Demand For 'Separation'

The Gorkha and agitation claiming separate statehood for the Gorkhas of the Darjeeling Hill areas has seeds rooted deeply in the developments in the turn of this century. (3)

The first recorded instance of the demand for separation of Darjeeling region from Bengal can be traced to the year 1907. In 1917, the Hillman's Association had demanded special safeguards for the Nepalese of Darjeeling. A deputation consisting of S.W.Ladenla, Y.Sitling, K.B.Chettri, Prem Kumar Kumai, Meghbir Singh, Lachman Singh, Nar Prasad Kumai Deonidhi Upadhaya submitted a memorandum to the Montagu-

Chemsford committee demanding the creation of separate administrative set-up for the district of Darjeeling.(4)

“In March 1920, the Darjeeling Planters’ Association, European Association, and the Hillman’s Association resolved in a meeting that the Darjeeling district including the portion of Jalpaiguri district annexed from Bhutan in 1865 should be excluded from Bengal when the 1919 Act will be introduced in India. However, not all people from Hill demanded separation from Bengal. The Kalimpong Samiti under Sardar Bhimdal Dewan and the People Association of Darjeeling opposed the exclusion of Darjeeling from the province of Bengal. (5)

These associations by their opposition to exclusion also gave vent to their resentment of the policy followed by the British Government in respect of Darjeeling district:

1. They emphasise their desire for the fullest measure of the Reforms Act for the district of Darjeeling.
2. They strongly protest against the exclusion of the district from Bengal as well as from the Reforms Act. (6)

They opposed mainly because they found a British plot to protect the commercial interests of the British planters.

The district of Darjeeling despite remaining expressly a non-regulated area or scheduled district for a long time did not make any noticeable advancement in any of the spheres. The difference over the issue of exclusion or inclusion immediately before and after the passing of Government of India Act 1919, among the hillmen and their associations, inclusive of the association of the Europeans, were more or less the sequel of the disillusionment of the sections of hill men over all the previous Act declaring the

district to be a scheduled or a non-regulated area supposedly for giving the district special treatment to ensure its speedy development. (7)

In between 1917 and 1940 there were various demands for separation of Darjeeling Hill area. "The All India Gorkha League, then an emerging political force even demanded the inclusion of Darjeeling and Dooars districts in Assam in 1943.

Against these fervent pleas to remain within India but with its own administrative unit, the Darjeeling District Committee of the then undivided Communist Party of India, demanded a 'sovereign state' in a memorandum submitted to the constituent Assembly on 6 April 1947, in the form of single union out of the feudal states of Nepal and Sikkim and British Administered district of Darjeeling known as 'Gorkhasthan' to safeguard the interest of Gorkhas. The motive behind this movement may be to create a popular base in hill areas, especially in the formation of trade unions - Mr. Ratan Lal Brahmin was vocal in this separatist demand. He was supported by leaders like Charu Mazumdar, Sourin Basu, and Ganesh Lal Subba. Some quotations are given from the memorandum :-

"In the opinion of the Communist party of India, the district of Darjeeling belongs to the Gorkhas and it is their homeland."

'In the opinion of the Communist Party of India, the only way to further the national development of the Gorkha people is by granting them their right of self-determination'.

'The Communist Party of India, therefore, demands that after making necessary revisions of the existing boundaries, the three contiguous areas of Darjeeling District, Southern Sikkim and Nepal be formed into one single zone to be called 'Gorkhasthan'(8).

The All India Gorkha League, and its president N.B.Gurung, submitted a memorandum to Jawaharlal Nehru in 1952 reiterated its demand and added that the

district and its neighbouring areas should be given the status of separate administrative unit, or a separate province.

#### 6.1. AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Independent India did not find much change in the attitude and feeling of the hill people as they continued to remain segregated from the national mainstream. The All India Gorkha League and the Communist Party of India, Darjeeling unit, shared the common feeling of apprehension regarding the fate of the Indian Gorkhas in a free India, despite their ideological differences.

In the initial years that followed Independence, both the All India Gorkha League and Communist Party of India took radical stands on their demand for statehood for the Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri areas and their exclusion from Bengal. The All India Gorkha League appeared to be softer and in league with Communist Party of India, developed the concept of 'Uttarkhand' which was to be created consisting of the Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar district. During the sixties the All India Gorkha League seemed to be further softened up and campaigned for 'Hill Autonomy' within Bengal for the hill areas of the district of Darjeeling and Nepali speaking areas of Dooars.

The communist movement splitted during the sixties, but this did not affect the policy of the communist in the Hill areas. "Ratanlal Brahimin and Ananda Mohan Pathak remained with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) but Bhadra Bahadur Hamal, the important communist leader chose to stay with the Communist Party of India. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) from the late sixties stressed the concept of 'autonomy' rather than separate 'Gorkhasthan'". (9) The district committee of Indian National Congress also developed the concept of 'Hill Autonomy' on the lines suggested

by the 'Nehru Proposal' and the Pataskar Commission Report. Subsequently, the district committee of Indian National Congress, Darjeeling submitted memorandum to the Government for the creation of autonomous council for the hill areas of Darjeeling including the Nepali speaking areas of Dooars of the Jalpaiguri District. (10)

The language movement dominated the centre-stage of politics in the hill areas in the fifties till late seventies. Nepali was made the official language in the hill areas of the district with the passing of official language 1961 Act by the West Bengal Government. 'A significant event in this context was the setting up of the All India Nepali Bhasa Samiti in 1972, mainly to seek constitutional recognition of the Nepali language, which soon started to give economic issues an ethnic connotation.(11) After this, a number of social and political organisations sprang up, seeking separation from West Bengal. This turning point came in the wake of the disenchantment of the hill people with the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai, following his statement-given to the 10<sup>th</sup> delegation of the All India Bhasa Samity that Nepali is a "foreign language". This aggravated the feeling of insecurity and a concern for identity of Indian Gorkhas. A conference was organised in Sukiapokhari in 1979, attended by the representatives of all political parties, intellectuals, trade unions, students and others. As a consequence, Pranta Praishad was born in April 1980. The top ranking leaders of the language movement joined the Pranta Parishad. Gorkha National Liberation front was formed in 1980, which captured the sentiments of the hill people, which the traditional parties had failed to do. Thus many issues have contributed to the volcanic atmosphere. The whole history of Darjeeling since it became a part of British India in 1835 has recorded a chain of protests culminating in the present Gorkha National Liberation Front movement.

The indiscriminate eviction of Nepali-Speaking people from Assam and Meghalaya, Mr. Morarji Desai's dismissal of Indian Gorkhas by describing Nepali as a foreign language had already turned the identity question of India's ethnic Gorkhas into a national issue, hurting the very fabric of the existence and challenging the patriotism of the Gorkhas. The success of Gorkha National Liberation Front to spearhead the Gorkhaland Movement can be attributed to these factors; besides the economic stagnation of the hill areas simmering discontent remained hidden but vibrant.

The hitherto powerful Communist Party of India (Marxist) base was sharply eroded after the death of their veteran leader Ratan Lal Brahmin. The Congress (I) was disintegrated into smaller splinter groups; as such there was a leadership vacuum. The success of the Gorkha National Liberation Front can be attributed to the style and the kind of leadership provided by its leader, Subhas Ghising, who put emphasis on the Gorkha pride for achieving Gorkhaland, which had emotional overtones. Indian Gorkhas remained politically docile, economically exploited and educationally backward, which only helped the propaganda that every Nepali-speaking person in India is from Nepal. Thus the question of distinguishing Indian Gorkhas' identity from the Nepalese of Nepal origin arose. Subhas Ghising raised the issue of citizenship.

The Central Government never condemned the Gorkha National Liberation Front movement as 'anti-national' rather considered it to be the 'law and order' problem, whereas the State Government condemned it as 'anti national movement'. Left Front Government published an Information document on Gorkhaland agitation, and the Gorkha National Liberation Front alleged that the information is politically motivated and contained distortions of historical facts.

The Gorkha National Liberation Front movement in Darjeeling began in April 1986 and continued till September 1988, when it was finally called off after a Tripartite agreement between the Centre, West Bengal Government and the Gorkha National Liberation Front, to form the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. For nearly two years, the Gorkha National Liberation Front movement rocked the hills. The movement affected the life and economy of Darjeeling in various ways. Normal life was completely disrupted due to repeated strike calls for 72 hours, 108 hours, and once even for 40 days had destroyed the already fragile economy of the hills which depended upon tea and tourism. The flow of tourists to Darjeeling declined sharply and many hotels were closed down rendering hundreds of workers jobless. The tourist industry suffered a loss of revenue to the tune of Rs. 45 Crores in 1987. The industry used to earn revenue of around Rs. 60 Crores till the year before the agitation started. (12) The tea Industry suffered a crop loss of 1.1 million Kg. worth Rs. 8 Crores as a result of work stoppage during the 19 day bandh in 1987. (13)

For a later period of the first three months of 1989 the industry received a severe jolt during the bandh in February-March. About 1.5 million mandays had been lost. (14)

According to Darjeeling Planters' Association sources about 3 percent of the annual crop is harvested in March and the 40 day bandh resulted in a loss of 4 million kg. Contrary to these above quoted reports of the Staffman, the Ananda Bazar Patrika published a report stating that not only did the hill areas did not stand to lose, rather they had reaped a considerable profit. There were 75 gardens in the Darjeeling hill areas where 75,000 workers were employed. As daily employment they got Rs. 20/- each including Rs. 12/- as wage and Rs. 8/- as subsidy and other benefits. Owing to the 40 day bandh the owner had saved Rs. 15 lakh daily, which meant that the workers had lost Rs. 6

Crores as wages and the amount was an indirect profit for the owners. Virtually no plucking takes place from mid January to mid March. Normally strikes and lock-cuts occurred during this period and the loss due to non-plucking would be compensated by actual intensive plucking after March 15. (15)

The three sub-divisions, namely, Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong together occupy an area of 2417.3 sq km and has a population of more than 15 lakhs. The pressure on land arising out of an average density of 235 persons per square kilometre (1981 census) is simply distressing. The cultivable land consists of 14 percent of the total area and 24 percent of the area is a permanent waste. This 14 percent of cultivable land against the West Bengal's average of 65 percent supports more than 70 percent of the hill population. (16)

From the very beginning of the agitation, the tea gardens turned out to be the hotbeds of tension. Sporadic clashes and confrontations between the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Gorkha National Liberation Front, and the Gorkha National Liberation Front and security forces took place in various gardens.

An overwhelming majority of tea garden labourers had joined the Gorkha National Liberation Front from Communist Party of India (Marxist). The Communist Party of India (Marxist) openly admitted that it had ceased to be a political force not only in the towns, but in some of the tea gardens as well, where authority had passed on to the Gorkha National Liberation Front. (17)

The Centre for Indian Trade Union, which used to control most of the gardens had, in course of the agitation lost their control on all of them, with the exception of Maribong, Lingia, Chongtong, and Singtam, which were the strongholds of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). There were reports of attacks and counter-attacks between the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Gorkha National Liberation Front

cadres. Some of them were killed in course of such confrontations. Indrajit Pradhan, Head Clerk, Ambotia tea estate was killed in August 1986. This resulted in clashes between Gorkha National Liberation Front and security personals. Many labour houses were burnt down. The figures supplied by Darjeeling Planter's Association, reveal the following information in the various member tea estates, over the 2<sup>1/2</sup> years of violence.

Table VI.01: Report on labour houses damaged/burnt down

| Name of the Tea Estate | Completely Burnt | Major Damage | Minor Damage |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Rungmook&Cedars        | 71               | 20           | 35           |
| Pashok                 | 20               | 10           | 5            |
| Kalej Valley           | 15               | 20           | 40           |
| Happy Valley           | 7                | 10           | 15           |
| Dooteriah              | 25               | 40           | 40           |
| Tukvar                 | 90               | 40           | 100          |
| Tukdah                 | 13               | 20           | 20           |
| Mim                    | 2                | 1            | 1            |
| Margaret's Hope        | 74               | 100          | 100          |
| Poogong                | 3                | -            | -            |
| Arya                   | 6                | 10           | 8            |
| Phoobsering            | 10               | 5            | 4            |
| Risheehat              | 20               | 10           | 8            |
| Soom                   | 5                | 10           | 100          |
| Vah Takvar             | 5                | 5            | 6            |
| North Tukvar           | 6                | 35           | 10           |
| Singtam                | 80               | 40           | 60           |
|                        | 452              | 377          | 564          |

The Darjeeling Planters' Association has given the following estimate of rebuilding / repairing costs per unit of damaged labour houses.

Completely burnt house - Rs. 20,000/-

Major Damage " 5,000/-

Minor Damage " 1,000/-

The total loss is estimated at = Rs 1,14,89,000/-

(i)  $452 \times 20,000 = \text{Rs. } 9,040,000/-$

(ii)  $377 \times 5000 = \text{ " } 18,85,000/-$

(iii)  $564 \times 1000 = \underline{\text{ " } 5,64,000/-}$

1,14,89,000/-

Besides the labour houses burnt and damaged during the agitation even the bungalows of managers, assistant managers of Pashok Tea Estate, Ghaiyabaree Tea Estate, Phuguri Tea Estate and Tukvar were damaged.

The first well planned and successful 72 hour bandh in May 1986 called by Gorkha National Liberation Front came as a big surprise to all political observers. Strike took place in two phases in May and July in 1986. Following continued violence and firing at least 10 gardens had decided to declare lock - out. Badamtam Tea Estate under the proprietorship of Goodricks Company had closed operation following burning of houses by Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Gorkha National Liberation Front cadres. However, the Darjeeling Planters' Association sources contradict the statement by saying that no garden had been closed down due to the agitation.

The industry suffered a considerable loss of crop due to the agitation. "B. Bajoria stated that almost all the 72 gardens excepting 15 had been affected by the strikes.(18) This had caused a direct product loss of 2.3percent. Approximately 1 million kg. was reported to have been lost during the first and second flush". The production in 1986 was 96.07,034 kgs.

The Darjeeling Planters' Association sources reveal the loss due to Gorkha National Liberation Front agitation as under

Table VI.02: Loss due to gnlf agitation

|                    | 1986        | 1987        | 1988        |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Loss of Crop       | 1,000,000kg | 11,00000kgs | 3,30,000kgs |
| Loss of Value      | 5 crores    | 8 crores    | 2.15 crores |
| Houses lost Number | 327         | 189         | 42          |
| Loss of wages      | 41 lakhs    | 77 lakhs    | 1.44 cr     |
| No.of mandays lost | 330000      | 600000      | 11,00000    |

The losses "which could not be quantified were-

- (1) Complete breakdown of discipline,
- (2) Absence of any organised mode of industrial relations
- (3) Total insecurity for both managinal staff and workers"

The situation during the movement led to the impossibility of planning day to day business because of sudden and unscheduled disruptions, phenomenon of ever rising demands, accompanied by threats for large sums of money in the name of Gorkha National Liberation Front and the erosion of long accepted norms and practices.

For an industry that produces only 11 million Kgs. per annum, the loss of production is considerable. The entire region of Darjeeling hills was in a state of grim stress, ever since the Gorkhaland movement started. The towns of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong wore adeserted look and all sections, including shops transport agencies, hotels, Schools, and daily workers suffered a serious economic blow.

The Gorkha National Liberation Front movement entered its third year in 1988 amidst violence, bloody clashes between the security forces and the activists, arrests and large scale destruction of property all over the three hill subdivisions of Darjeeling along with frequent bandh calls given by different organisations from different parts of the district. The disturbances reached its peak in course of the 40-day bandh during February - March (19), which was also, the crucial first flush period.

The calculations of losses made by Darjeeling Planters' Association and different authorities seemed to be varying and contradictory. Tea being a seasonal crop, production depends on weather condition, garden-to-garden, and from section to section even within the same garden. "Prediction of total yield that would have been, had not the strikes taken place is bound to be tentative. These immediate estimates, therefore, seems to give only a rough idea regarding the extent of losses incurred. (20) Production figures of the years of agitation along with those of the years preceding and following are prepared by the Tea Board of India are given below for comparison.

Table VI.03: Monthwise production of Tea in Darjeeling. (In thousand Kg.)

| Months | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 |
|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Jan    | 27   | 18   | 26   | 35   | 26   | 30   | 29   |
| Feb    | 14   | 5    | 50   | 7    | 20   | 26   | 26   |
| Mar    | 315  | 608  | 809  | 395  | 596  | 615  | 606  |
| Apr    | 1760 | 1047 | 1275 | 1377 | 1217 | 1322 | 1353 |
| May    | 1098 | 1438 | 1082 | 1060 | 1178 | 1134 | 1168 |
| June   | 2068 | 1850 | 1664 | 1326 | 1592 | 1565 | 1592 |
| July   | 1982 | 2099 | 1867 | 1538 | 1811 | 1781 | 1806 |
| Aug    | 2427 | 2289 | 1563 | 1756 | 1845 | 1763 | 1788 |
| Sep    | 1931 | 1840 | 1722 | 1372 | 1623 | 1611 | 1589 |
| Oct    | 1526 | 1223 | 1150 | 766  | 1036 | 1008 | 994  |

|     |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|-----|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Nov | 829    | 821    | 890    | 593    | 758    | 731    | 754    |
| Dec | 285    | 253    | 822    | 137    | 397    | 463    | 457    |
|     | 14,262 | 13,491 | 12,921 | 10,362 | 12,099 | 12,049 | 12,162 |

SOURCE: TEA STATISTICS - 1988 - 89

1989 - 90

The production figure of 1986 was the lowest in 1986, when the Gorkha National Liberation Front agitation began, 1986 also was a year of unfavourable weather conditions. The low production during the period was an all India trend, and was due to the drought. Since strikes had taken place in May and July, production also suffered because of unfavourable weather; hence it is difficult to say how much of it was due to the agitation alone. (21)

On the trade union front, Centre for Indian Trade Union, which used to control most of the gardens, was left with only four gardens under their control. These gardens were Maribung, Lingia, Chongtong and Singtam. The Indian National Trade Union Congress and other unions were virtually erased, and Gorkha National Liberation Front controlled most of the gardens.

The rivalry between Communist Party of India (Marxist) controlled Centre for Indian Trade Union and Gorkha National Liberation Front activities were frequent, and there were attacks and counter attacks. The Gorkha National Liberation Front was tactical in making a large number of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) cadres surrender in the middle of 1986, and made them surrender with their flags. The cadres, when they heard of such surrenders, the more they got panicky and surrendered in groups as well as individually. (22) At Som Tea Estate, a garden vehicle was blown up by Gorkha National Liberation Front activists on 5/6/88, killing three persons on the spot.

One of the victims was Rudra Tamang, the leader of Communist Party of India (Marxist) at Som. (23) On September 7 1986, the house of the then Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) Ananda Mohan Pathak at Sonada was completely gutted by the Gorkha National Liberation Front supporters. (24) Among the frequently mentioned gardens were Teesta Valley, Singtam, Tukvar, Arya, Rambuk tea estate and Beechgaon (Sonada), Sepaidhura tea estate. The Soureni tea estate was also badly affected by the turmoil. Heavy exchange of fire took place on 19/1/88 at Manju division of Singbuli where Nabin Tamang, one of the Secretaries of Gorkha National Liberation Front was killed.

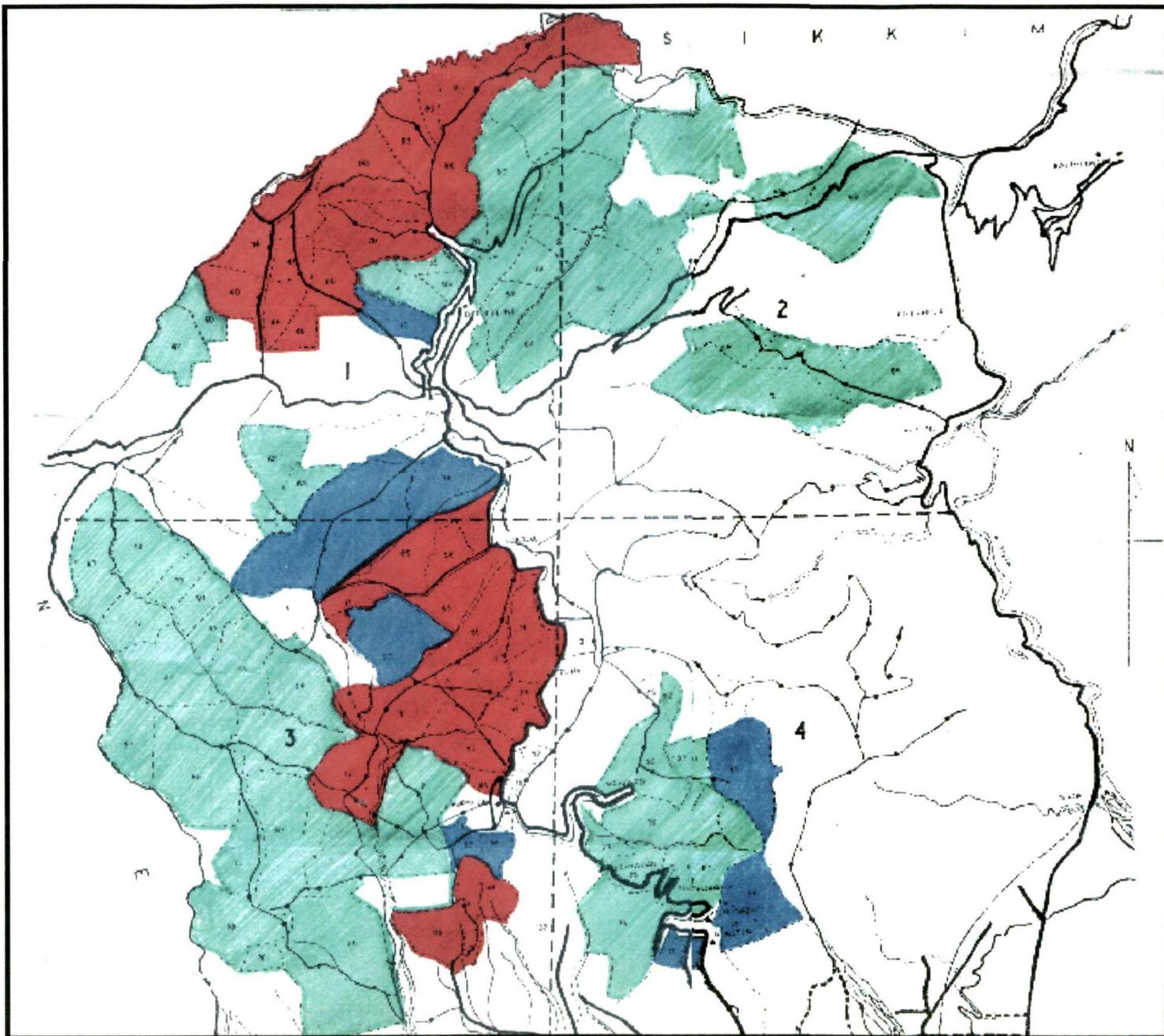
Various gardens like Nagri, Lopchu, Pashok, Teesta Valley, Ghaiyabari, Tukdah, Nagri Spur, were torn in the strife between Gorkha National Liberation Front and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) supporters. Around 40 percent of the labour force deserted the garden and took shelter in Sikkim and Nepal. By December 1987, more than 500 houses were set on fire and over 65 persons killed in violence. (25)

The two and half years of continuous disturbances disrupted social and economic life of the hills so much that peace loving residents of the area, despite their emotional support to the Gorkha National Liberation Front cause became wary of the agitation. Supply of essential commodities had become uncertain, prices of essential consumer goods escalated. Since the regular supply of commodities was affected by frequent bandhs, prices of essential commodities went up exorbitantly, and on the other hand, employment avenues had completely closed down even for unskilled workers. Educations of children were hampered and parents of students studying at residential schools in the Darjeeling hills withdrew their children. Tourism came to a grinding halt. Only 10 out of 200 odd hotels were open. The losses incurred by daily wage earners, shopkeepers and others could not be estimated. Nothing reflects this better than the plight

# MAP OF THE TEA GROWING DISTRICTS DAREELING (NOT TO SCALE)

## INDEX OF REGISTERED TEA GARDENS IN DARJEELING

| GRID No. | SERIAL No. | TEA GARDEN                        | ITL C. REG. No. |
|----------|------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1        | 1          | ALDOORAKI                         | 217             |
| 3        | 2          | AMPOOTAR                          | 2292            |
| 4        | 3          | ANSE LUGUNGE                      | 1580            |
| 1        | 4          | ARYA                              | 2192            |
| 5        | 5          | AYONGROVE                         | 8               |
| 1        | 6          | BADAMTAM                          | B-89            |
| 5        | 7          | BALAJUN                           | P-19            |
| 1        | 8          | BARMOCKBURN                       | F-84            |
| 1        | 9          | BAPNOSBOO                         | B-90            |
| 10       | 10         | B-CWFIELD                         | 4896            |
| 3        | 11         | CEORAS                            | 93              |
| 3        | 12         | CHAITYAPANI                       | 1805            |
| 5        | 13         | CHAMONG                           | D-85            |
| 5        | 14         | CHONGTONG                         | 2313            |
| 5        | 15         | DARJEELING TEA & CHIMONA (NAMING) | C-41            |
| 18       | 16         | DILBAR                            | 2296            |
| 17       | 17         | DODTERIAH                         | 2555            |
| 5        | 18         | DOV HILL                          | 246             |
| 15       | 19         | DUMSONG                           | 953             |
| 20       | 20         | DUMSONG                           | 1995            |
| 21       | 21         | DUMSONG                           | 1996            |
| 22       | 22         | DUMSONG                           | 1997            |
| 24       | 23         | DUMSONG                           | 1998            |
| 3        | 24         | EDIA VILL                         | 7               |
| 3        | 25         | JOGAIVYA                          | 509             |
| 3        | 26         | CFABAR & MILAETHONG               | 2517            |
| 3        | 27         | G-COLPARK                         | 311             |
| 28       | 28         | GELLE                             | P-4             |
| 29       | 29         | GINC                              | P-87            |
| 2        | 30         | GLENJUN                           | D-66            |
| 2        | 31         | G-TAGHREL LODGE & TUNDIA          | F-84            |
| 4        | 32         | GOOMTEE                           | 2157            |
| 3        | 33         | GOPALDHARA                        | 6               |
| 5        | 34         | GURISHANBAR                       | 2624            |
| 5        | 35         | HARPI VALLEY                      | 100             |
| 4        | 36         | HAM & SHOOTKAM                    | 2158            |
| 4        | 37         | JINGPANI                          | 2354            |
| 2        | 38         | KALE & WILLY                      | 1973            |
| 2        | 39         | LEBONG & MINERAL SPRING           | C-87            |
| 4        | 40         | LINGIA                            | D-87            |
| 1        | 41         | LITIA HILL                        | 1954            |
| 2        | 42         | LOPEHU                            | 171             |
| 4        | 43         | MAHALDEBAR                        | 1805            |
| 5        | 44         | MARABARA                          | E-47            |
| 5        | 45         | MARGARET'S HOPE & MAHARANE        | B-36            |
| 1        | 46         | MARBYONG & KYEL                   | M-23            |
| 1        | 47         | MIR                               | 2047            |
| 4        | 48         | MOMA MAJHA                        | 73              |
| 3        | 49         | MONTESIC                          | 237             |
| 3        | 50         | MUNDARPOTE                        | 1555            |
| 4        | 51         | MULLOTAR                          | 2411            |
| 2        | 52         | MURHAN                            | D-69            |
| 3        | 53         | NAGRI                             | 218             |
| 3        | 54         | NAGRI FARM                        | 2054            |
| 5        | 55         | NURBOO                            | 2416            |
| 3        | 56         | OAKS                              | F-105           |
| 3        | 57         | OKATTI                            | 2559            |
| 3        | 58         | PANDAR                            | F-83            |
| 2        | 59         | PASHON                            | 2314            |
| 1        | 60         | PHOOSERING                        | 2279            |
| 3        | 61         | PHUGURI                           | 2513            |
| 3        | 62         | POOBONG                           | 2508            |
| 4        | 63         | PUSUMING                          | 2194            |
| 1        | 64         | BANGAFOON                         | 70              |
| 5        | 65         | RINGTON & HOPE TOWN               | F-41            |
| 3        | 66         | RISHENAR                          | 5               |
| 3        | 67         | ROMBONG                           | 2351            |
| 2        | 68         | RUNGLI & RUNGLIOT                 | 414             |
| 3        | 69         | RUNGLIOT                          | 2357            |
| 5        | 70         | SAMARONG                          | 2434            |
| 3        | 71         | SEE TOI                           | 1938            |
| 3        | 72         | SELHONG                           | 127             |
| 3        | 73         | SELIM HILL                        | P-21            |
| 4        | 74         | SEPOYMOOHAR                       | 87              |
| 4        | 75         | SINGBELLI                         | 2021            |
| 1        | 76         | SINGEL                            | 1555            |
| 1        | 77         | SINGTOM                           | D-70            |
| 4        | 78         | SIVITAR                           | 189             |
| 3        | 79         | SODH                              | 1801            |
| 3        | 80         | SOHRENT                           | 301             |
| 3        | 81         | SPRINGSIDE                        | E-50            |
| 3        | 82         | STEINTHAL                         | P-17            |
| 1        | 83         | SUNONG                            | B-44            |
| 2        | 84         | TEESTAL VALLEY                    | 45              |
| 3        | 85         | THURBO                            | 2318            |
| 4        | 86         | TINDHARIA                         | P-19            |
| 3        | 87         | TINDLING                          | 632             |
| 1        | 88         | TURVAR NORTH                      | 710             |
| 1        | 89         | TURVAR                            | 2421            |
| 3        | 90         | TURSONG                           |                 |
| 3        | 91         | TURZUN                            |                 |
| 4        | 92         | UNITED MAJHA (BARBADA MAJHA)      |                 |
| 1        | 93         | WAN TURVAR                        |                 |



of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railways, which lied neglected in the shades rusting, while the winding track broken and bent at innumerable places.

Violence continued for sometime even after the signing of 'Accord' in 1988. The tea garden labourers, who had taken refuge in Sikkim and Nepal during the violent period, started pouring in. The return of the labourers and their re-entry in their parent unions, led to bloody encounters. The Times of India reported that by January 19, 1988, as many as 126 Gorkha National Liberation Front activists were killed by police forces and 15 policeman were reported to be killed. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) regained the Tukvar valley, Risheehat, Orange valley which was the hot bed of tension between the Gorkha National Liberation Front and Communist Party of India (Marxist) Groups. The re-emergence of Communist Party of India (Marxist) introduced, a renewed phase of turmoil and uncertainty in the tea gardens. The trade unions, which were virtually non-existent during the agitation, slowly emerged. With the rapid emergence of Mazdoor Union, they took over some of the alienated work force. The National Union of Plantation Workers also regained prominence in some areas.

## 6.2. RECENT CHANGES IN TRADE UNIONS:

The Gorkha National Liberation Front felt the need for an organised trade union to channelise the representations of the majority body of workers in the tea estates. Subsequently, Himalayan Plantation Worker's union was formed in 1990 with the Registration Number NB/30 dated 8.6.90.

The union is based on the philosophy of free and democratic trade unionism under its parent body; Gorkha National Liberation Front. It has a four tier administrative set up democratically represented on all levels. The highest body is known as the Central

Committee. The next lower body is Branch Committee in sub-divisional level. Below it is Samasthy Committee (Constituency of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council) and the lowest is the unit committee. Every unit is composed of a President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Members. Elected representatives form the committee. The President and Secretary of each unit automatically become the members of Samasthy Committee. The office bearers of Samasthy Committee are elected representatives. The Samasthy Committee of a sub-division elects the office bearers of Branch Committee. President and Secretary of each Samasthy Committee automatically become the members of Central Committee. The tenure of the Central Committee is three years.

The Himalayan Plantation Worker's Union claim to have a membership of more than 50000 in tea and Medicinal Plantation units numbering 92 in Darjeeling Hills, Terai (partly) and Dooars (partly).

Immediately after the registration of the union, it participated in series of talks for Three-year wage Agreement of the tea garden workers. The Himalayan Plantation Workers' Union basically succeeded in removing disparities in daily wage of labourers of Darjeeling and their counterparts in Terai and Dooars. The daily wagers used to get Rs. 13.42 in Darjeeling, while in Terai and Dooars; it was Rs 13.74 and Rs. 13.48 respectively. The formula of 'One Industry One Wage' was adopted and the wages were paid at par, i.e. Rs. 13.74.

The union has so far handled efficiently 23 Concillatory Bipartite tea garden cases and succeeded in lifting lockouts in 2 gardens, Selim Hill and Okayti tea estates.

The following is the list of office-bearers of the Central Committee of Himalayan Plantation Worker's Union.

Shri - N.K.Kumai - President

Shri - A.B.Thapa - Vice-President

Shri -K.B.Gurung - General Secretary

Shri - S.Prakash Rai - Treasurer

Shri Dipak Gurung Councillor- Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council has been appointed convenor, Darjeeling sadar Branch on 17/12/1992.

The Himalayan Plantation Worker's Union has emerged as one of the strong trade union after independence, and in particular after the Gorkha National Liberation Front movement. The tea garden labourers switched their loyalty from Mazdoor union, to the National Union of Plantation Workers as because the majority of the labour force is Nepalis, and the emergence of Himalayan Plantation Worker's Union is an outcome of ethnic upsurge, which supported the cause of Gorkha National Liberation Front movement.

### 6.3. DARJEELING TERAI DOOARS CHIAKAMAN MAZDOOR UNION: - REGN. NO. 21364

The origin of Darjeeling Terai Dooars Chai Kaman Mazdoor Union has been initiated and its growth and development influenced by its Parents organisation, the communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist, which is a splinter political party of Communist Party of India (Marxist). The leaders of the new political party, which came in the horizon, after the Gorkha National Liberation Front movement, allege that the Communist Party of India (Marxist) central leadership wrongly handled the situation which cost the lives of hundred of workers during the two and half year of turmoil. They allege that a section of the leadership in the district level at the behest of chauvinist Central C.I.T.U leaders resorted to suppressive measures to dilute the essence of their organisation in the name of

discipline, they had no alternative but to form a new Trade Union Organisation named Darjeeling Terai - Doors Chia Kaman Mazdoor Union.

The Union came into existence on 14<sup>th</sup>. Jan.1997 in a meeting held at Kurseong Gorkha Public Library, Representatives, of 73 units elected a twenty-five member central committee, headed by Mr.H.B.Rai. Santosh Moktan and Kala Tamang as Vice-Presidents, and K.B.Subba its General Secretary.

#### 6.4. OBJECTIVES OF DARJEELING - TERAI - DOOARS CHIA KAMAN MAZDOOR UNION

Considering the great potentialities of the working class movement of the Darjeeling hills, the union has taken up the following tasks as its organisational goal.

1. Restoration of democratic rights and strengthening of democratic forces.
2. Protection of the rights of the backward and minority communities, ethnic groups, Tribals and Rajbansis from all sorts of discrimination and suppression.
3. To fight for strict implementation of the statutory provisions, stringent punitive measures like one year's imprisonment, and penalty upto Rs. 1,00,000 against tea garden owners violating Plantation Labour Act.
4. Fight against all anti-working class and anti-people economic policies of the government.
5. Necessary amendments to be made in the five decade old Plantation Labour Act in the interests of the working class.
6. Tea gardens to be brought under Panchayat System and Pattas to be issued to the workers for their homestead and agricultural lands.
7. Ceiling of the workers wage to be raised from Rs. 850/- p.m. to Rs. 1680/- p.m.

8. Tea Auction centre should be set up at Darjeeling to check scandalous marketing of Darjeeling Tea.
9. Immediate steps to be taken to patent Darjeeling tea to preserve its purity.
10. Concrete and comprehensive long term and short term measures should be taken up to recover the health of Darjeeling tea industry from the present condition and to ensure the use of its full potentialities.
11. To persuade the tea garden managements to spend a part of the profit earned from tea garden for setting up small-scale industries for solving the unemployment problem growing menacingly in the tea gardens.
12. To take immediate steps to reopen/dispose off the closed and abandoned tea gardens under the Tea Trading Corporation of India and other private companies. (26)

Amongst others, the union has envisaged two-pronged objectives, first, to fight for the genuine cause of the working class and second, to fight against all sort of discriminations perpetrated on the backward and minority nationalities and wage struggle for their right to self-rule. The union is affiliated to All India Trade Union Congress. They believe, All India Trade Union Congress would champion the cause of minority ethnic groups and tribals in their rightful struggles against all sorts of discriminations, neglect and suppression.

#### Organisation Structure

The union is formed into four-tier set up the central committee, the Regional Committee Zonal committee, and unit committee. The central committee consists of Executive Committee consists of Executive Committee members, consisting of 35 - 45 members, and the general council, consisting of 200 - 250 member. The Regional Committee is constituted of members from hill area, Terai and Dooars, whose membership runs

between 25 - 35 persons. The zonal Committee is formed taking into consideration the topography and organisational facilities. There were 12 such zonal committees in 1997 and 13 in 1988. They have categorised zones in the following manner -

- Zone I - Sonada I  
 II - Sonada II  
 III - Rangbull  
 IV - Pokhriabong  
 V - Tukvar - Lebong  
 VI - Kurseong  
 VII - Rangli Rangliot  
 VIII - Mirik  
 IX - Gorubathan  
 X - Terai Zone  
 XI - Dooars Zone  
 XII - West Zone (Chongtong)

Table VI. 4: A comparative analysis of membership in three different zones during 97-98

| Year | Darj. Hill | Terai | Dooars | Total |
|------|------------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1997 | 6408       | 652   | 491    | 7551  |
| 1998 | 7021       | 618   | 512    | 8151  |

Table VI.5: Member of Darjeeling Terai - Dooars Chia kaman Mazdoor Union, in the different zones for the year 97 - 98

| Sl.No | Zone            | No of Units |    | Total Membership |      |
|-------|-----------------|-------------|----|------------------|------|
|       |                 | 97          | 98 | 97               | 98   |
| 1)    | Sonada          | 8           | 7  | 880              | 868  |
| 2)    | Sonada II       | 2           | 3  | 86               | 266  |
| 3)    | Rungbul         | 4           | 8  | 370              | 643  |
| 4)    | Pokhriabong     | 6           | 4  | 936              | 464  |
| 5)    | Tukvar          | 8           | 8  | 858              | 969  |
| 6)    | Mirik           | 6           | 11 | 368              | 554  |
| 7)    | Kurseong        | 5           | 8  | 333              | 389  |
| 8)    | Chungtong       | 5           | -  | -                | 888  |
| 9)    | Darj. West      | 11          | 6  | 1689             | 1006 |
| 10)   | Gorubathan      | 3           | 3  | 429              | 499  |
| 11)   | Terai           | 5           | 7  | 652              | 618  |
| 12)   | Dooars          | 3           | 2  | 421              | 512  |
| 13)   | Rangli-Rangliot | 5           | 6  | 302              | 448  |
| 14)   | Rangeroon       | 1           | 1  | 96               | 77   |

Source: - General Secretary's Report on the First Convention Dated 16<sup>th</sup> May 1999- Darjeeling.

The table signifies that the Darjeeling Terai Dooars Chia Kaman Mazdoor Union has made rapid strides in strengthening the labour base. The split of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in the post Gorkha National Liberation Front scenario has helped the

Darjeeling Terai - Dooars Chia kaman Mazdoor Union to make inroads into the tea garden belt, which was once known to be Communist Party of India (Marxist) bastion.

#### 6.5. JANASHAKTI PLANTATION TRADE UNION

The Janashakti Plantation Trade Union is inter-locked with Bharatiya Gorkha JanaSakti, a political party that came into existence in 1998. The Registration number is 21438. Its registered Head office is located at 26/2 H.D.Lama Road, Darjeeling. The Janashakti Plantation Trade Union is an outcome of division and redivision in the process of trade union movement after the Gorkha National Liberation Front movement. It is found that the split that occurred into the Communist Party of India (Marxist) had a far-reaching effect in giving rise to multiplicity of trade unions after the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. The Janashakti Plantation Trade Union had been successful in raising its units in Dooteriah tea Estate, Kalejvalley T.E. Pussimbing T.E., Tukvar Ging, Gielle, Sivitar and Nagri. The union is yet to make its inroads in other gardens.

The dissensions within the Communist party, which resulted into a vertical split in the trade union, gave rise to multiple trade unions. It is observed that the Himalayan Plantation Workers' Union and the Darjeeling-Terai-Dooars Chia Kaman Mazdoor Union have practically dominated the tea gardens in the hills. After the signing of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Accord in 1988, and the formation of Himalayan Plantation Workers' Union the Darjeeling-Terai-Dooars Chia Kaman Mazdoor Union, along with National Plantation Workers' Union and Darjeeling Chia Kaman Shramik

Sangha have been actively participating in all the wage negotiations with the representatives of employers the Darjeeling Planters Association in the hills.

#### 6.6. THE FORMATION OF DARJEELING GORKHA HILL COUNCIL

The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was formed by the passing of West Bengal Act XIII of 1988 passed by the West Bengal Legislature, and assented by the President of India. The Act repealed the Hill Area Development Council Act 1976. The Act established the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council for the three sub-division of the hill areas of Darjeeling including thirteen mouzas (each mouza consisting of a number of villages) in the Siliguri sub-division. The mouzas are: -

1. Lohagarh Tea Garden
2. Lohagarh Forest
3. Rangmohan
4. Barachenga
5. Panighata
6. Chota Adalpur
7. Paharu
8. Sukna Forest
9. Sukna Part I
10. Pantapati Forest I
11. Mahanadi Forest
12. Champasari Forest
13. Salbari Chhat Part II

(Section 2 i) Darjeelling Gorkha Hill Council Act

#### 6.7. OBJECTIVE OF THE DARJEELING GORKHA HILL COUNCIL

The objectives for the establishment of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, the Act stated “the social, economic, educational and cultural advancement of the Gorkhas and other sections of the people residing in the hill areas of the district of Darjeeling” (28).

The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council may be regarded as an alternative political and administrative arrangement provided to the hill people of Darjeeling for their demand of a separate state. The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was the result of political conciliation between the Central Government the State Government and the Gorkha National Liberation Front. This agreement may be regarded as a political understanding to end the crisis in the hill areas and an attempt to bring the hill people into the national mainstream.

#### 6.8. ORGANISATION OF THE DARJEELING GORKHA HILL COUNCIL

A general council was formed as per section 3 of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act 1988 comprising the hill areas in the district of Darjeeling. The general council consisted of 42 members of whom two-thirds (i.e. 28) were elected by the people

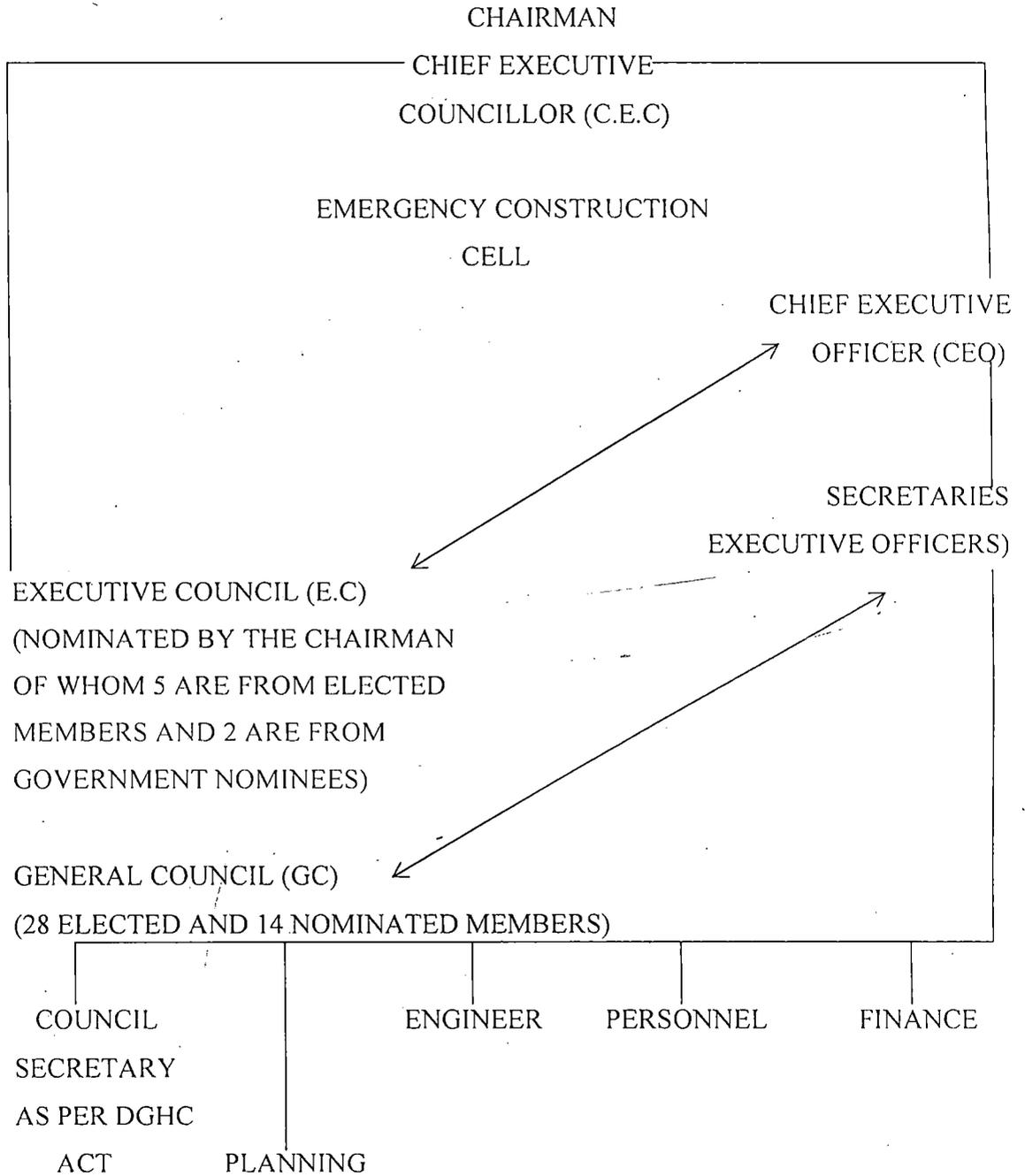
on the basis of adult suffrage, from the territorial constituencies, and one-third (i.e.14) of member nominated by the government.

The nominated members include:

- (I) The three members of the Legislative Assembly of the state of West Bengal elected from the Constituencies of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong and the member elected to the House of the people from the Darjeeling Parliamentary Constituency and
- (II) The chairman of Municipalities within the hill areas and others nominated by the State Government providing due representations of the non-Nepali Communities like Bhutias and Lepchas. (29)

The Chief Executive Councillor or the Chairman with a Vice-Chairman coming next in the hierarchy heads the council. There is an 'Executive Council' consisting of the Chief Executive Councillor and the Vice-Chairman as the ex - officers members and seven other members of the General Council of whom five are to be nominated by the Chief Executive Councillor from amongst the elected members of the General Council and two to be nominated by the Government from amongst the nominated member of the General council. (30)

Table VI.08: The organisation structure of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council.



The Chief Executive Councillor is assisted by the Chief Executive Officer who is the Principal Executive officer of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council

appointed by the State Government in consultation with the Chief Executive Councillor. A secretary has been appointed for the General Council under section 49 of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act, who looks after the establishment section of the Council. (31) Four other Executive officers have been deputed to the Council from the West Bengal Civil Service cadre, to look after various departments. The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council had designated them as 'the Secretaries'. (32)

A careful analysis of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act reveals that there is no structural arrangement for linking the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and the State Government. The District Magistrate is not organisationally linked to the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. If the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council is to discharge its functions under sections 24 and 25 for formulating and implementing integrated development plans, the D.G.H.C. needs to be linked together with the sectoral departments. The transfer of departments from the State to the D.G.H.C. has failed to produce any effective working relationship. Hence there is a linkage gap between the D.G.H.C and the District administration.

The basic concept behind the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was the creation of a viable self-governing institution for providing social, cultural economic and educational advancement with political stability. The Chief Executive Councillor, or the Chairman has hinted on several occasions, that the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council has been a total failure and needed upliftment

“The West Bengal (Panchayat) Amendment Act was also passed in December 1988, dissolving the Zilla Parishad from the hill areas and establishing the Mahakuma Parishad for the Siliguri sub-division.”(33)

The function of the Zilla Parishad were to be taken over by the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in the hill areas and by the Mahakuma Parishad in the Siliguri sub-division.(34)

The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council has also the power to supervise and guide the Panchayat Samiti's, Gram Panchayats and Municipalities in the hill areas. (35)

The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council has replaced the Zilla Parishad and by virtue of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act enjoys the powers of implementing developmental activities under sections 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, and 162 of the West Bengal Panchayati Raj Act 1973.

In the absence of organisational development, the decentralisation of planning and development functions under section 24 and 25 of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act has not been very effective and meaningful. (36) The tea industry has been left out of the Hill Council jurisdiction.

#### 6.9. SUMMARY

The Gorkha National Liberation Front movement in Darjeeling began in April 1986 and continued till September 1988, when it was finally called off after a tripartite agreement between the Centre, the State Government and the Gorkha National Liberation Front to form the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council.

The two and a half years of turmoil involving the labour, and Management, cost heavily on the tea plantations. The labourers have lost two and a half crores of rupees by way of wages alone for the days of bundhs when all work came to a grinding halt. The tea industry suffered total bundhs of 69 days, which accounted for the loss of some 24 lakh Kilograms of tea, which was roughly evaluated at Rs 15 crore or more. Over 800 labour houses which were destroyed during the agitation period, had to be rebuilt by the

management of the concerned gardens at an expense of fourteen to sixteen thousand rupees per unit.

The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council is a model blend of two erstwhile warring factions, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Gorkha National Liberation Front. The combination of these two parties in the chief body shall govern the area no matter what flag they owe their political allegiance to. Peace Committees were formed in various gardens where there are in existence both Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Gorkha National Liberation Front. These 'Peace Committees' have been the main source of strength and goodwill to have encouraged workers who fled as refugees from their homes out of fear of one another, to return to their places of habitation. Not only has their return to their homes been made possible by the efforts of Peace Committees, but also their continued stay on the gardens as well as their security is in large part due to the assurances and strength of the Peace Committees. Terrorism, personal enmity and revenge have given way to commendable task of rebuilding Darjeeling into a place where residents could walk freely. Shri Subash Ghisingh, Chairman, Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council remarked in the third annual general meeting of the Darjeeling Planters' Association, held at Gorkha Rang Manch Bhawan on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1989, that Gorkha National Liberation Front was opposed to aggressive trade unionism and looked forward for the development of the tea industry of Darjeeling.

With the return of normalcy, and the 'glimpse of the rainbow' after the storm, there has been rapid re-emergence of the Mazdoor union. It is certainly a sign of democracy that workers were free to choose the trade union that they wish to follow. Many changes have been witnessed in the Trade Union Front, and new Unions have come in the picture after the agitation. They are 1) Himalayan Plantation workers Union, 2)

Darjeeling Terai Dooars Chia kaman Mazdoor Union, 3) Darjeeling Terai Dooars Chia kaman Staff and sub-staff Association, 4) Janashakti Plantation Trade Union, 5) Darjeeling Dooars Shramik Sangathan, 6) Darjeeling Pahari Chiyabari Karmachari Sangathan.

The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, the Planters' Association and the Trade Unions have much in common by way of aspirations of the glory of Darjeeling. It is in transitional phase and definitely moving in the right direction.

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## CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Tea industry was the engine of growth in the British period. The development of the hill district of Darjeeling owes its origin to the tea industry. During the post-independence period the engine of growth slowed down. There was an all-prevailing stagnation in the tea industry. Due to this, the development of the whole area was stunted. The ills of present Darjeeling area is the result of stagnation of tea industry. The growth of unemployment, pressure on land and pauperisation of the rural masses can all be traced to the stagnation of the tea industry.

When the British started the tea industry, they made provisions for its expansion. But since independence the new owners, who replaced the British planters failed to achieve the use of surplus land. Out of total land area 43 percent is used directly for tea cultivation and as the new owners did not invest in the gardens, land remained unutilised and the acreage under cultivation remained stagnant since the British period. Consequently, the industry faced a problem of surplus labour force on the estate. Factors that have contributed to the creation of surplus labour are natural growth of population in labour families coupled with virtual stagnation in the area under cultivation.

The practice of the British management was to recruit labour from amongst the dependents of the labourers. Recruitment of labour from outside district was not necessary. In matters of recruitment for the supervisory and clerical posts, the local people were also given preference. But under new management since independence, supervisory staff, clerical staff and all managerial staff are brought more or less from

outside the district as a matter of policy. Consequently, the doors of employment had been closed for the Nepalis in the gardens.

One characteristic feature of the tea garden employment is that overwhelming proportion of the garden workers are employed in the fieldwork highlighting the agricultural character of tea plantations. Out of total workers employed 93 percent are field workers and 7 percent are other workers working in the factory or in other capacity. Prior to mechanisation, tea used to be prepared by hand and recruitment of labour for manufacturing operation was relatively high. In early days of tea plantation when the leaf was hand-rolled a man could work only 14-18 kilograms of withered leaf a day, but now a modern tea roller can roll 365-455 kilograms of withered leaf in 1 to 2 hours. Similarly, sorting machine have drastically cut down the labour time required for tea manufacturing.

Whatever may be the reason, the employment of labour in the tea gardens has drastically fallen in 1971 census in comparison to 1961 census. The total tea plantation labour according to 1971 census was 56990 indicating a fall of 7 percent in comparison to 1961 census. The fall in employment in the tea gardens is, however, not uniform.

Predominance of female labour amongst the workers is another distinctive feature in the tea gardens in the hill areas. At the time of recruitment of labour usually a whole family is recruited-including adults, adolescents and children. The wages of women and children are lower than those of the male workers.- Out of total workforce, the adult females constitute 58 percent; adolescents and children constituted 8 percent and adult males are only 34 percent. In the employment in tea gardens women labourers are preferred because they earn less than the male workers.

In 1974, there were nine sick gardens and thirty-eight 'economically weak' gardens. All the sick gardens belonged to the Indian sector of the tea industry. By the

sickness of the gardens nearly 2563 workers were directly affected with nearly 7537 dependents. Out of nine sick gardens only two had plantation area below 122 hectares which is considered to be minimum economic size of a garden in the hill areas. The rest were sick due to lack of proper investment and financial policy. The size of the garden is not necessarily the reason for the uneconomic nature of performance of the gardens. Out of 38 uneconomic gardens only 10 were below 122 hectares. (considered minimum optimum) But there were 15 other tea gardens which were below 122 hectares which were neither sick nor uneconomic. This shows that the size of the garden may not be necessary cause for the economic weakness.

Again the average yield is not the necessary reason for the economic weakness. It is revealed during the study that in Darjeeling and Jorebunglow, the weak gardens had higher yield than the average. It is in this context argued that one of the reasons for sickness of gardens is the change of management of tea gardens after independence.

To what extent has the change in the ownership pattern of tea companies been responsible for the widespread sickness that is today evident in Darjeeling's tea industry.

Since the fifties and the sixties with the abolishing of managing agency system and the enactment of Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, there has been a pronounced trend of foreign (mainly British) capital moving out of the Indian tea industry. Merchants and financiers who became the new owners of tea estates were primarily interested in quick profit even to the detriment of the health of the gardens has today been acknowledged in official documents.

The October 1979, Techno-Economic Survey of the Darjeeling Tea industry prepared by Tea Manufacturing and Marketing Consultants(TM & MC) Pvt. Ltd. under the auspices of Tea Board, noted that one of the major reasons for sickness in the

Darjeeling Tea industry was the “disinvestment by British Tea Companies and disposal of marginal units, to local traders who did not possess either managerial or technical skills and were in the main interested in short-term gains”.

An analysis of 27 selected rupee joint stock companies in the Darjeeling area, revealed that between 1940 and 1970, while the number of non-Indian directors declined from 112 to only 11, the number of Indian directors showed a corresponding increase from 6 to 85 in the period. However, of these Indian directors, the number of directors with merchant background shot up from only 2 in 1940 to 53 in 1965.

There is some evidence to show that the Indian owners of tea estates, by and large, tended to be no less exploitative than their foreign-counterparts. While most foreign tea companies rarely paid their shareholders dividends exceeding 20 percent per annum; some Indian tea companies were known to pay their shareholders dividends as high as 200 percent a year when the goings were good or nothing at all in bad years. The British owners interpret this in some circles as evidence of the “feudal” character of Indian tea garden owners as compared to the “more capitalistic” style of management followed.

In any case, from the thirties till the present day acreage and employment in tea industry have shown a declining trend. In the district of Darjeeling alone, there were more than 20,000 hectares under tea in 1938. But by 1979, acreage under tea had declined to barely 18,000 hectares in Darjeeling. Moreover, given the rising trend of “vacancy ratios” in tea gardens official sources have estimated that not more than 14,000 hectares are actually under tea in Darjeeling. About 5600 hectares under tea disappeared in the forty-year period –1939-40 to 1979-80. (27/8)

The tea industry is highly labour-intensive. It is well known that the industry's potential in providing employment per unit of arable land is far greater than the agricultural sector as a whole. It provides direct employment to about two and half lakh workers in the region with more than 50% of workers being women. Apart from this, the industry provides secondary employment to a large number of persons in chest manufacture, trading firms, transport establishments, warehouses, hotels, schools, hospitals, and agricultural input manufacturing units. The secondary employment generated is estimated to be almost the same as that of the primary employment.

The tea industry in the Darjeeling hill areas is in a serious crisis as it is confronted with a number of problems, which can be briefly stated as under:

1. Darjeeling yield has remained confined to around 550 Kg. per hectare for the last four decades.
2. With hardly any scope to take up new area for extension plantation, the increase in production of Darjeeling tea is possible only through increase in productivity.
3. Darjeeling topography controls the climate. 80% of total rain is accountable in four monsoon months i.e. June-September. Therefore, with the recession of monsoon, the district suffers from water stress; the higher elevation estates more than the lower ones. The temperature in Darjeeling varies both diurnally (within a day) and periodically on successive days. As tea plants have to continuously integrate their responses to temperature over time they find it difficult.
4. Low productivity and high cost of production are barely compensated by the high price of Darjeeling tea, that too only during the quality period. Therefore,

the main thrust of Darjeeling production is for the first and second flush crop. This economic compulsion is perhaps the principal limiting factor which causes other limiting factors.

5. To ensure a better price the industry has resorted to the finest type of plucking. There is also the temptation to low tipping and dipping of hands below the plucking table. This leads to a sharp drop in production.
6. A large proportion of tea bushes are more than fifty years old. At present only 7.15% of the area is of the age group of 0-20 years whereas 72.2% is more than 91 years old. Replanting should be taken up.
7. 90% of Darjeeling gardens have vacancy varying from 2% to 30%. Gardens have also been planted with wider spacing, which accommodate between 4494 and 11960 plants per hectare. With vacancies the plant population is further reduced. To have maximum plucking point density, the plant population should be around 14,000 to 16,000 bushes per hectare.
8. Unfortunately because of leaching losses and soil erosion, the fertility of soil in Darjeeling is on the decline. This is due to inadequate soil conservation in the past.
9. 60% of the tea bushes are China Hybrid type of which the shoot size is small and yield is low. These require to be replaced by clones developed from China Hybrid type that will maximise yield and quality.
10. The economic viability of any Darjeeling garden depends on price realisation. As first and second flush crop fetches better prices, more gardens tend to keep more and more tea under unprune and follow 8-9 years pruning cycle. This causes damage to the bush structure and affects yield in the long run. A

pruning policy befitting to the particular section, considering the elevation aspect, susceptibility to pests and diseases, vulnerability to drought, labour availability of the garden, has to be formulated.

11. Owing to high rainfall and humidity generally the bush frames remain covered with lichen and moss, which penetrate the wood-harboured pests.
12. Weeds hold back yields. Manual weed control has to be improved.
13. High withering time is required for manufacture. Efforts should be made to reduce the withering time and save energy, while accomplishing the typical flavour characteristics.
14. The practice of processing green leaves of non Darjeeling origin such as Nepal etc. in the factories located in Darjeeling and passing it off as Darjeeling teas was reportedly creating a danger to the quality image of Darjeeling teas in both domestic and international markets.

Darjeeling tea will be obsolete in fifty years unless steps are taken immediately. The real problem is that some of the best brands of Chinese tea bushes were planted as early as 1863 and there has been precious little re-planting done. Despite the years of neglect, the old plants are still in fine fettle, but a time will come when these will wither away. England was one of the major markets for Darjeeling tea. The size of this market has dwindled. Consumption exists, but awareness is less. At present the world market is saturated. Darjeeling's annual tea production is between 10-11 million kilograms, whereas about 40 million kilograms of Darjeeling tea is sold worldwide. Where does the additional 30 million come from? Today exotic Darjeeling Tea is fighting for shelf space

in world markets with 'fake' Darjeeling tea from plantations in Sri Lanka and Kenya under brand names such as 'Lanka Darjeeling' and 'Hamburg Darjeeling'.

Tea Board of India made an ambitious effort to prevent the plagiarisation of Darjeeling Tea, which nearly came to nought. The reason being the Board had made it mandatory for all companies that market "Darjeeling Tea" to have the Tea Board's seal of approval and the Darjeeling logo on their packaging. Unfortunately, this was applicable only to those companies operating in India and did not prevent tea from other regions being sold globally as Darjeeling tea.

The following suggestions are put forward for the removal of problems being presently faced by Darjeeling tea gardens: -

1. Public limited companies and Private limited companies may work out necessary programme for extension planting within the grant on a priority basis.
2. An integrated development incentive scheme need be developed in order to boost up the long-term developmental activities namely, extension planting and replanting.
3. Tea estates may avail of Tea Board's Plantation Development Scheme for financial assistance extended in the form of long-term loan and subsidy.
4. Tea estates below and up to 200 hectares may go in for suitable infilling programme in order to reduce the percentage of vacancy and for the growth of yield rate.
5. Infilling programme may be given priority for the estates under Public Sector Undertaking and judicious approach will be required in respect of selection of

sectors to be infilled as almost 70% of the total planted area under all ownerships contained bushes above 70 years of age.

6. Low yielding estates should lay due stress for uprooting and replanting programme immediately or rejuvenation and infilling operation to fill up vacancies together with adoption of proper plucking round and pruning cycle schedules in order to improve the yield rate in future.
7. Rejuvenation and consolidation with inter row planting would be needed in the sections having wider spacing for augmentation of the bush density and productivity of tea.
8. Considering the sloppy topographical position, chemical control of weed in general is not recommended to combat topsoil erosion for tea estates producing Bio-Organic tea. Only judicious application of herbicides is suggested in cases where it is almost unavoidable.
9. In order to ensure substantial enhancement of the labour productivity, identification of unproductive job components, minimisation of idle time, optimum utilisation of resources, modernisation of equipment and motivational approach are to be adopted and Public Sector factories should attach top priority on it.
10. Considering the weak financial status of the Darjeeling tea industry the State Government may consider suitable concession in the rates of agricultural income Tax and Cess on green leaf as applied to Darjeeling teas. It is suggested that considering the poor economy, Darjeeling tea should be exempted from payment of Excise Duty.

11. Improvement of the basic infrastructure like roads, power supply and rural electrification project needs immediate attention by the State Government.

Historically, plantations were a product of colonialism. In the earlier years, planters spared no method to recruit people to work in the plantations. In addition to dangling a package of facilities, which were often, more imaginary than real, coercion and brute force were extensively used to bring labour to the workplace. Another source of labour supply was the villages affected by famines and slavery. The planter who was interested only in accumulating profit gave appallingly low wages to the workers and provided practically no facilities. Ill-fed, ill-housed and ill-treated, workers even died with nobody noticing their deaths. The workers were inextricably caught in the web of perpetual bondage. The planter-capitalist exploitation on the one side and the master-servant feudal relations on the other literally squeezed the workers for a long period. Their outlook began to change when the development of transport and communication facilities gradually improved. They could interact with the world outside. The seething discontent ultimately culminated in organised protests. The increasing labour protests in the plantations also drew considerable inspirations from the agrarian movements in the plains under the leadership of left wing political forces. Consequently, the government was forced to pass laws from time to time conceding some of the demands, such as repeal of earlier anti-labour legislations like Workmen's Breach of Contract Act (1925) and the abolition of the Indenture system of Labour (1915) etc. The Government had also taken some relatively progressive steps such as passing Workmen's Compensation Act (1923) and Trade Union Act (1926) and also set up various Committees and Commissions like Royal Commission on Labour (1929), the Labour Investigation Committee (1946) etc. Nevertheless, the situation did not improve to any appreciable extent till independence.

In fact, it was only in the post-independence period, and more specifically in 1951, that the Plantation Labour Act, the great watershed in the history of plantation labour was brought about with laudable objectives of providing certain welfare facilities for the workers. More than five decades have passed since the Act came into force- a sufficiently long period for effecting the desired improvements in the living conditions of plantation workers. While the Act has undoubtedly conferred certain benefits, the structural changes that had been taking place on the plantations, such as change in ownership pattern, governmental regulations and also the sweeping changes in the larger socio-economic system encompassing the plantations, call for a fresh look at the living conditions of plantation labourers. This helps to understand to what extent the planters have provided the necessary amenities contemplated in the Plantation Labour Act.

Trade unions have taken root in the tea gardens against tremendous opposition from the management and there is no denying that, over the years, they have played an important role in improving the conditions of the workers. But today's picture of the unions in the tea plantations emerges different from that of the past. Majority of union leaders are losing their credibility among the rank and file of their followers. This has been taking place for various reasons. The union leaders have taken very little interest in the various needs of the workers; having invariably emphasised the wage aspect alone. The increase in wages is naturally not sufficient to enable the worker to build a better house, repair his house properly, or enable him to have better medical facilities. There are aspects, which the trade unions, in whom the workers had placed their trust and hopes, should have taken up with zeal and commitment. The unions have failed to make the management implement the various provisions of the Plantation Labour Act, nor have they involved themselves in raising the social consciousness of the workers. Several of

the tea gardens in the Darjeeling hills default in the timely remittance of Provident Fund dues contributed by the workers. Yet the union leaders have not at any time taken up the matter with the management. Traditionally the Nepali labourers are not induced to saving. The unions could have tried to inculcate in their worker members, the positive side of thrift, moderate drinking, family planning etc.

The recent trend of multiplicity of unions has led to greater inter-union rivalry and the workers are caught in its vortex. At times, this has given rise to conflict situation being created for the sake of exhibiting the might of respective unions. Petty squabbles are blown up in the hope of roping in more members or for creating a new union itself. Sometimes, the management too is party to such situations as they favour particular union, which is already existent, or encourage creation of a new union in order to tilt the balance against the union, which they do not like.

Other interests guiding the modus operandi of the unions at the garden level cause further problems. A classic example of such situation is calling of strike by all trade unions in late January 1983 to protest against the delay in wage agreements. Calling a token strike at the end of January virtually amounted to workers donating a day's wage to the employers.

Thus, in the course of field study, it was revealed that some of the union leaders have played into the hands of tea garden management by corrupt practices. This has not escaped the notice of the workers either who are quite bitter about this breach of trust on the part of leaders. The younger generations of workers have started analysing the situation and have reservations about blindly toeing the line of the union leaders. If the union leaders continue to betray the tea garden workers, there are indications that the

workers would overthrow the existing trade unions and take over the responsibility of looking after their interests themselves.

The trade union leaders of the tea plantations are generally non-workers and usually middle-class people drawn from different walks of life like social workers, lawyers, teachers, political leaders etc. It cannot be denied that, if more workers could have been encouraged to accept trade union leadership, this crisis of confidence could have been minimised.

One is left to feel that the theory of workers' participation has not found any favour in the tea plantations—either with the management or with the unions. Management prefers to confine the participative role of workers to areas, which are related to increase in productivity and conflicts between workers and management. They are not keen to involve the workers in other issues of common interests. The trade unions, look upon the participative factor as an erosion of their own role and a threat to their power. In such a situation, unless the state defines the various aspects and areas where the workers can participate and make it mandatory on the management to recognise this new role of the workers, there is little hope of the participative theory succeeding in the tea plantations of the Darjeeling hills.

The picture which emerges is of the indifferent attitude of the managements of the tea companies towards the welfare of their workers; the laxity of the government in protecting the interests of the workers, and the lethargy of the trade unions in taking up in right earnest, the genuine cause of the workers. The resultant helplessness of the workers finds expression in a variety of potentially explosive situations. On looking at the total picture of industrial relations in the tea industry of Darjeeling hills, it is found that the gap between management and labour is fairly wide and may continue to widen. The

management will aim at maximisation of profits and minimisation of costs, in the pursuit of which the workers' interests get a back seat. In these circumstances, the trade unions and the government could effectively intervene in the protection of the legitimate rights of workers, thereby minimising the areas of conflict between labour and management. The government should pass laws carrying more stringent penalties and effectively enforce their implementation.

The current economic and political transformations also imply a different arena of operation. There is clearly the need for broader strategies. On the one hand, unions have to defend the interests of their members, interests that are becoming more and more heterogeneous as a result of a further widening of the gap in skills as well as of a differentiation in the nature of employment contracts (through casualisation). On the other hand, the interests of groups of working people outside the formal, waged sector are coming increasingly into the orbit of the trade unions; women workers, informal-sector workers, rural workers.

Strategies which recognise this differentiation in interests and constituencies will include the building of alliances with other groupings in civic society that articulate these concerns, including consumers, students and women's groups. They will also involve strategic alliances with training and research institutions that can provide the necessary depth of analysis to build viable and above all sustainable bridges. Such a multiple strategic approach would seem to make it possible for a new form of trade union to regain a meaningful position for workingmen and women.

The challenges faced by the trade union movement call for new approaches that may imply institutional renovations, new tasks, and even new ways of cooperation with other societal institutions. New roles for the trade union movement are naturally related

to the old traditions of protecting workers and better equipping people for work, and of struggling for wider emancipation and democratisation. However, given the fast structural changes taking place in labour markets, it appears that so far the trade union movement has been unable to assert itself with respect to both employment conditions and worsening power relations. Even allowing for the numerous problems experienced by trade union movements, including those of leadership and internal democratic functioning, it is clear that the overriding causes of their weakness lie in the changes that have occurred in the broader political and economic environment.

Labour and work formed, and still form, strategic variables as inputs in the various economic sectors. The cheapness of labour was of strategic importance in the early stages; at the present stage its human capital formation calls for close state monitoring. The rights of workers and the level of their earnings are strictly dictated by macro-economic policy making in which there is little scope for organised labour but to play a ceremonial role at the national level. At the enterprise level, management-labour relations are tightly defined by the dictates of competitiveness rather than direct social concern and responsibility for equity and workers' rights. At best, this is an unstable situation politically in the long run.

It took a long time for the labour relations dimensions of structural adjustment to be analysed. While it would be unfair to put the onus only on the trade union movement for this, it is legitimate to expect from it a solidly professional approach in the search for solutions. Only time will tell whether or not there will be scope to provide a viable new orientation to concepts such as industrial democracy and participative management. Trade unions in development are confronted with challenges as great as, if not greater than; the labour movement has faced since the early days of the industrial revolution.

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THE ECONOMIC TIMES

THE STATESMAN

AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA

THE TELEGRAPH

SUNCHARI (IN NEPALI)

APPENDIX-I

TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Interview No. \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Leader. \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Union. \_\_\_\_\_

Designation. \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation. \_\_\_\_\_

1. Personal Data.

a). Residential \_\_\_\_\_

b). Age (Dt. of Birth) \_\_\_\_\_

c). Religion \_\_\_\_\_

d). Caste \_\_\_\_\_

e). Native Place \_\_\_\_\_

Village/City

District

State

Marital Status: Single/Married/Widowed/Separated/Divorced.

2.(a) Educational, Technical & Professional Qualifications.

## (b). Languages

- (i) Mother tongue.
- (ii) Other Language Known.
- (iii) Language Commonly Used for your union activities.

## 3. Occupation:

| Nature of occupation       | Years Period | Earnings per months |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| (i) Main Occupation        |              |                     |
| (ii) Subsidiary Occupation |              |                     |
| (iii) Previous Occupation  |              |                     |

(b) What are the reasons for changing the previous occupation/s?

## 4. What is your monthly income form Trade Union Work?

| University/Inst. | Degree/Diploma<br>Obtained | Principal Sub. | Year of Passing | Class Obtained |
|------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                  |                            |                |                 |                |

1. Nil.

2. Rs..... to .....

3. Rs..... to .....

4. Rs..... to .....

5. Family size and composition.

State the total number of members in your family and yourself & your father? Give details.

| Relationship of the member to the respondent | Occupation | Average monthly income |
|--|------------|------------------------|
|  |            |                        |

6.(a) Expenditure & Savings.

| Food, Clothing fuel | Rent | Edu. | Ent. | Books/Newspaper/<br>Periodical | Remittance to<br>native place | Mis. |
|---------------------|------|------|------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|------|
|                     |      |      |      |                                |                               |      |

(b) Do you save anything from your monthly income?

 Yes

 No

If Yes, in what form and how much?

7.Occupational History.

(a) Please give details of your present association with the Trade Union Organisation.

| Name of the<br>Union you rep. | Strength<br>in figure. | Affiliation | Av. no. of hrs. Devoted to<br>each union per day. | Period (From—<br>to—) In years. |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|---|---------------------------------|
|                               |                        |             |   |                                 |

(b) What offices have you previously held in the Trade Union Organisation?

| Name of the Union. | Affiliation | Designation | Period (From---to---) in years |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
|                    |             |             |                                |

8.(a) How long have you been associated with the Trade Union Movement?

(b) How were you interested in the Trade Union Movement?

(c) What is the reaction of your family members towards your work?

9. What was/were your main consideration/s in joining the Trade Union Movement?

10. (a) Are you an active member of any Political Organisation?

 Yes

 No

(b) If yes, name the Political Party and mention your major Political activities?

11. Do you think that Trade Union Movement in India is Weak/Fairly Strong/Very Strong?

12. What are the causes of weaknesses of Trade Union Movement?

(Number the following in order of importance.)

i) Influence of Politics.

ii) Outside Leadership.

- iii) Inter-union rivalry.                      iv) Financial weakness.  
 v) Reliance on judicial machinery.       vi) Management's attitude.  
 vii) Illiteracy among workers.            viii) Apathy among rank and file.  
 Any other.

13. Here is the list of trade union aims, which do you think should be given priority?

Please mark up to three (mark 1,2,3 in order of preference)

- i) Higher wages and better conditions  
 ii) Effective consultation with management at all levels  
 iii) Creating political consciousness among workers  
 iv) The fullest use by rank and file members of the democratic procedures of the union.  
 v) Any other.

14. (a) Were/Are any of your family members trade unionist?

 Yes

 No

| Relationship | Name of the union | Designation in the Union's Office |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
|              |                   |                                   |

b). Would you like to see your son becoming a trade union leader?

 Yes

 No

Give reasons in either case.

15. (a) What are your leisure time activities ?

 Yes

 No

(b) Are you member of any civic or similar organisation?

 Yes

 No

(c) Do you take any part in the activities of such organisations?

16. (a) Have you contributed articles on the subject of labour

to any magazine or newspaper?

 Yes

 No

If yes, what are the common topics of the article?

17. Have you been invited by Government or public bodies or academic institutions in India or outside to participate in Seminars or discussions, or to attend conferences or to serve on Committee on the subject of Trade Unionism and allied problems?

 Yes

 No

If yes, please give details.

18. What are your major functions as a trade union official? (List them in order of importance)

19. (a) Do you believe that the quality of leadership has a bearing on the strength of a Union?

 Yes

 No

(b) What are the qualities essential for efficient leadership? Place the following in order of importance by giving numbers)

i) Sincerity and integrity

vi) Knowledge of the psychology of

ii) Diplomacy

workers

iii) Oratory

vii) Sound knowledge of legal,

iv) Militancy

economic and social problems.

v) Personality

viii) Knowledge of the industry.

ix) Experience in the field.

20. (a) Do you consider that there is a need for training in trade union leadership in India?

 Yes

 No

(b) Have you received any such training?

 Yes

 No

(c) If not, would you consider that such training would have been helpful to you?

21. Should the trade union officials be:- Full time paid/Full-time honorary/Part time paid/Part time honorary.

22. (a) What kind of person do you consider as an outsider in the trade union movement?

i) One who has never been a worker in any industry?

ii) One who has never been a worker in any factory?

iii) One who is dismissed, victimised or retrenched.

iv) Any other

(b) Do you consider yourself as an outsider in trade union movement?

 Yes

 No

23. Whether outside leadership should be eliminated or substantially reduced

 Yes

 No

Give reasons in either case.

24 In your opinion what is the best method for settling various disputes?

25. Do you consider trade union rivalry as desirable?

 Yes

 No

26. Do you feel that the Code of Discipline and the Code of Conduct, evolved by the Tripartite Labour Conference in 1957, is an instrument in creating a better climate in industrial relations?

 Yes

 No

APPENDIX-II

| Part 1: General Information | Year | Darjeeling | Terai | Dooars | West Bengal |
|-----------------------------|------|------------|-------|--------|-------------|
| I. Production (in tones)    | 1971 | 4348       | 3105  | 39018  | 46471       |
|                             | 1972 | 4558       | 3217  | 40633  | 48408       |
|                             | 1973 | 4998       | 3398  | 40883  | 49279       |
|                             | 1974 | 4929       | 3718  | 45526  | 54173       |
|                             | 1975 | 4615       | 3279  | 44187  | 52081       |
|                             | 1976 | 4996       | 3395  | 46690  | 55081       |
|                             | 1977 | 5046       | 3890  | 52106  | 61042       |
|                             | 1978 | 5156       | 4382  | 52414  | 61952       |
|                             | 1979 | 4491       | 3602  | 48149  | 56242       |
|                             | 1980 | 5135       | 4001  | 53168  | 62304       |
|                             | 1981 | 5066       | 3967  | 52221  | 61254       |

| Part 1: General Information         | Year | Darjeeling | Terai | Dooars | West Bengal |
|-------------------------------------|------|------------|-------|--------|-------------|
| 2. Total Areas (Under Tea (in ha.)) | 1971 | 6581       | 2415  | 20562  | 29558       |
|                                     | 1972 | 6582       | 2400  | 20624  | 29606       |
|                                     | 1973 | 6583       | 2419  | 20701  | 29703       |
|                                     | 1974 | 6577       | 2432  | 20935  | 29944       |
|                                     | 1975 | 6594       | 2453  | 20968  | 30015       |
|                                     | 1976 | 6485       | 2454  | 21054  | 29993       |
|                                     | 1977 | 6691       | 2471  | 21275  | 30437       |
|                                     | 1978 | 6707       | 2498  | 21495  | 30700       |
|                                     | 1979 | 6739       | 2536  | 21657  | 30932       |
|                                     | 1980 | 6733       | 2579  | 21743  | 31055       |
|                                     | 1981 | 6786       | 2580  | 22082  | 31448       |

| Part 2: Activity                              | Year  | Darjeeling | Terai | Dooars | West Bengal |
|---|-------|------------|-------|--------|-------------|
| 3. Area put under extension planting (in ha.) | 1971  | 5          | 17    | 88     | 110         |
|   | 1972  | -          | 8     | 108    | 116         |
|   | 1973  | 2          | 8     | 65     | 75          |
|   | 1974  | 2          | 21    | 85     | 108         |
|   | 1975  | 6          | 3     | 84     | 93          |
|   | 1976  | 18         | 15    | 138    | 171         |
|   | 1977  | 9          | 19    | 213    | 241         |
|   | 1978  | 14         | 30    | 263    | 307         |
|   | 1979  | 13         | 32    | 253    | 298         |
|   | 1980  | 78         | 23    | 159    | 260         |
|   | 1981  | 47         | 19    | 160    | 226         |
|   | Total |            | 194   | 195    | 1616        |

| 4. Area Replanted (in ha.) | Year | Darjeeling | Terai | Dooars | West Bengal |
|----------------------------|------|------------|-------|--------|-------------|
|                            | 1971 | 18         | 06    | 155    | 179         |
|                            | 1972 | 18         | 04    | 117    | 139         |
|                            | 1973 | 04         | 08    | 114    | 126         |
|                            | 1974 | 08         | 17    | 093    | 118         |
|                            | 1975 | 05         | 25    | 119    | 149         |
|                            | 1976 | 06         | 05    | 169    | 180         |
|                            | 1977 | 01         | 13    | 124    | 138         |
|                            | 1978 | 17         | 22    | 172    | 211         |
|                            | 1979 | 16         | 18    | 113    | 147         |
|                            | 1980 | 11         | 03    | 224    | 268         |
|                            | 1981 | 38         | 09    | 106    | 153         |
| Total                      |      | 172        | 130   | 1506   | 1800        |

| 5. Area under infilling (in ha.) | Year | Darjeeling | Terai | Dooars | West Bengal |
|----------------------------------|------|------------|-------|--------|-------------|
|                                  | 1971 | 12         | 12    | 155    | 179         |
|                                  | 1972 | 15         | 13    | 171    | 199         |
|                                  | 1973 | 14         | 15    | 210    | 239         |
|                                  | 1974 | 17         | 17    | 187    | 221         |
|                                  | 1975 | 18         | 15    | 189    | 222         |
|                                  | 1976 | 21         | 18    | 216    | 255         |
|                                  | 1977 | 27         | 21    | 239    | 287         |
|                                  | 1978 | 29         | 19    | 361    | 409         |
|                                  | 1979 | 27         | 22    | 337    | 386         |
|                                  | 1980 | 43         | 25    | 321    | 389         |
|                                  | 1981 | 50         | 28    | 297    | 375         |
| Total                            |      | 273        | 205   | 2683   | 3161        |

| Part III.: Expenditure     | Year | Darjeeling | Terai | Dooars | West Bengal |
|----------------------------|------|------------|-------|--------|-------------|
| 6. Extension (Rs. In lakh) | 1971 | 0.70       | 2.03  | 6.46   | 9.19        |
|                            | 1972 | 0.26       | 1.70  | 7.63   | 9.59        |
|                            | 1973 | 0.64       | 2.45  | 5.40   | 8.49        |
|                            | 1974 | 1.39       | 4.72  | 7.62   | 13.73       |
|                            | 1975 | 2.28       | 2.65  | 8.30   | 13.23       |
|                            | 1976 | 5.32       | 4.97  | 16.92  | 27.21       |
|                            | 1977 | 4.82       | 6.92  | 30.68  | 42.42       |
|                            | 1978 | 6.96       | 10.07 | 42.36  | 59.39       |
|                            | 1979 | 11.02      | 12.91 | 53.88  | 77.81       |
|                            | 1980 | 34.38      | 12.45 | 64.28  | 111.11      |
|                            | 1981 | 26.98      | 11.26 | 52.21  | 90.45       |
| Total                      |      | 94.75      | 72.13 | 295.74 | 462.62      |

| 7. Replanting (Rs. In Lakh) | Year | Darjeeling | Terai | Dooars | West Bengal |
|-----------------------------|------|------------|-------|--------|-------------|
|                             | 1971 | 2.70       | 0.86  | 6.95   | 10.51       |
|                             | 1972 | 4.08       | 0.98  | 7.16   | 12.22       |
|                             | 1973 | 2.66       | 1.88  | 5.71   | 10.25       |
|                             | 1974 | 3.48       | 4.15  | 4.41   | 12.04       |
|                             | 1975 | 2.94       | 5.67  | 8.75   | 17.36       |
|                             | 1976 | 2.51       | 2.97  | 14.21  | 19.69       |
|                             | 1977 | 2.20       | 5.24  | 18.66  | 26.10       |
|                             | 1978 | 6.36       | 9.91  | 32.01  | 47.28       |
|                             | 1979 | 9.12       | 6.90  | 19.07  | 35.09       |
|                             | 1980 | 20.15      | 4.71  | 34.92  | 59.78       |
|                             | 1981 | 20.98      | 5.71  | 15.84  | 42.53       |
| Total                       |      | 77.18      | 47.98 | 167.69 | 292.85      |

| 8. Consolidation/Infilling/(Rs. In Lakh). | Year | Darjeeling | Terai | Dooars | West Bengal |
|---|------|------------|-------|--------|-------------|
|   | 1971 | 0.92       | 0.78  | 5.20   | 6.90        |
|   | 1972 | 1.14       | 0.83  | 4.44   | 6.41        |
|   | 1973 | 1.08       | 1.07  | 4.53   | 6.68        |
|   | 1974 | 1.38       | 1.28  | 5.20   | 7.86        |
|   | 1975 | 1.46       | 1.15  | 5.95   | 8.56        |
|   | 1976 | 1.78       | 1.44  | 8.57   | 11.79       |
|   | 1977 | 2.76       | 1.97  | 12.72  | 17.45       |
|   | 1978 | 2.97       | 1.84  | 16.46  | 21.27       |
|   | 1979 | 2.93       | 2.17  | 16.16  | 21.26       |
|   | 1980 | 5.43       | 2.53  | 18.19  | 26.15       |
|   | 1981 | 5.82       | 2.97  | 17.75  | 26.54       |
| Total                                     |      | 27.67      | 18.03 | 115.17 | 160.87      |

| 9(a) Factory Buildings (Rs. In Lakh) | Year | Darjeeling | Terai | Dooars | West Bengal |
|--------------------------------------|------|------------|-------|--------|-------------|
|                                      | 1971 | 13.37      | 02.26 | 04.20  | 19.83       |
|                                      | 1972 | 10.78      | 02.91 | 10.77  | 24.46       |
|                                      | 1973 | 04.68      | 03.35 | 06.65  | 14.68       |
|                                      | 1974 | 06.87      | 03.83 | 09.32  | 20.02       |
|                                      | 1975 | 07.79      | 04.20 | 14.02  | 25.39       |
|                                      | 1976 | 05.20      | 04.79 | 20.22  | 30.21       |
|                                      | 1977 | 05.16      | 06.12 | 21.87  | 33.15       |
|                                      | 1978 | 09.88      | 07.79 | 42.07  | 59.74       |
|                                      | 1979 | 17.25      | 07.11 | 38.95  | 63.31       |
|                                      | 1980 | 19.42      | 08.20 | 13.27  | 40.89       |
|                                      | 1981 | 11.04      | 09.47 | 38.81  | 29.32       |
| Total                                |      | 110.04     | 60.03 | 190.15 | 361.00      |

| 9(b) Labour Housings (Rs. In Lakh) | Year | Darjeeling | Terai  | Dooars | West Bengal |
|------------------------------------|------|------------|--------|--------|-------------|
|                                    | 1971 | 14.68      | 03.49  | 18.15  | 36.32       |
|                                    | 1972 | 18.98      | 03.18  | 23.16  | 45.74       |
|                                    | 1973 | 16.81      | 08.41  | 18.52  | 43.74       |
|                                    | 1974 | 21.49      | 07.45  | 27.36  | 56.30       |
|                                    | 1975 | 27.77      | 11.62  | 67.61  | 107.00      |
|                                    | 1976 | 26.87      | 16.10  | 90.03  | 133.00      |
|                                    | 1977 | 50.94      | 27.07  | 122.25 | 200.26      |
|                                    | 1978 | 38.57      | 25.88  | 125.48 | 189.93      |
|                                    | 1979 | 46.85      | 24.34  | 242.34 | 313.53      |
|                                    | 1980 | 66.22      | 34.97  | 66.01  | 167.20      |
|                                    | 1981 | 82.29      | 28.34  | 51.31  | 161.94      |
| Total                              |      | 411.47     | 190.85 | 852.22 | 1454.54     |

| 9 (c) Other Buildings (Rs. In Lakh) | Year | Darjeeling | Terai  | Dooars | West Bengal |
|-------------------------------------|------|------------|--------|--------|-------------|
|                                     | 1971 | 10.58      | 04.68  | 10.69  | 25.95       |
|                                     | 1972 | 07.53      | 06.46  | 10.96  | 24.95       |
|                                     | 1973 | 08.49      | 05.91  | 10.16  | 24.56       |
|                                     | 1974 | 05.66      | 07.32  | 13.24  | 26.22       |
|                                     | 1975 | 07.35      | 03.52  | 21.06  | 31.93       |
|                                     | 1976 | 08.23      | 19.21  | 27.61  | 55.05       |
|                                     | 1977 | 08.51      | 28.47  | 65.50  | 102.48      |
|                                     | 1978 | 14.94      | 21.02  | 50.65  | 86.61       |
|                                     | 1979 | 12.19      | 21.30  | 29.97  | 63.46       |
|                                     | 1980 | 20.08      | 17.47  | 33.25  | 70.80       |
|                                     | 1981 | 17.81      | 17.40  | 21.94  | 57.15       |
| Total                               |      | 121.37     | 152.76 | 295.03 | 569.16      |

| 10. Plant & Machinery (Rs. In Lakh) | Year | Darjeeling | Terai  | Dooars  | West Bengal |
|-------------------------------------|------|------------|--------|---------|-------------|
|                                     | 1971 | 18.31      | 20.99  | 37.00   | 76.30       |
|                                     | 1972 | 17.95      | 24.30  | 41.61   | 83.86       |
|                                     | 1973 | 17.95      | 21.30  | 62.50   | 101.75      |
|                                     | 1974 | 26.06      | 63.85  | 70.74   | 160.65      |
|                                     | 1975 | 25.24      | 52.77  | 121.84  | 199.85      |
|                                     | 1976 | 36.12      | 66.90  | 186.35  | 289.37      |
|                                     | 1977 | 22.17      | 117.90 | 322.44  | 462.51      |
|                                     | 1978 | 31.53      | 189.46 | 187.22  | 308.21      |
|                                     | 1979 | 29.50      | 94.17  | 235.76  | 359.43      |
|                                     | 1980 | 41.46      | 80.19  | 183.29  | 304.94      |
|                                     | 1981 | 74.58      | 60.44  | 161.31  | 296.33      |
| Total                               |      | 340.87     | 692.27 | 1610.06 | 2643.20     |

## APPENDIX-III

## THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEA INDUSTRY IN DARJEELING

| Year | No. Of Tea Gardens | Total area under tea (in Area). |
|------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1866 | 39                 | 10,392.00                       |
| 1867 | 40                 | 9,214.00                        |
| 1868 | 44                 | 10,067.00                       |
| 1869 | 55                 | 10,769.00                       |
| 1870 | 56                 | 11,046.00                       |
| 1872 | 74                 | 14,503.00                       |
| 1873 | 87                 | 15,695.00                       |
| 1874 | 113                | 18,888.00                       |
| 1885 | 175                | 38,499.00                       |
| 1895 | 186                | 48,692.00                       |
| 1905 | 148                | 50,618.00                       |
| 1910 | 148                | 51,281.00                       |
| 1915 | 184                | 54,024.00                       |
| 1920 | 148                | 59,356.00                       |
| 1940 | 142                | 63,059.00                       |
| 1951 | 138                | 62,580.00                       |
| 1961 | 153                | 72,948.00                       |
| 1971 | 153                | 76,197.00                       |
| 1978 | 153                | 76,667.00                       |