

# **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN TEA PLANTATIONS**

**A Case Study of Terai Tea Gardens since Independence**

**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL  
FOR**

**THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
1994**

**BY  
Sukhendra Narayan Saha**

**NORTH BENGAL  
University Library  
Raja Rammohunpur**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

**RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR, DARJEELING.  
WEST BENGAL-734430**

STOCK TAKING - 2011

Ref.

338.17372  
S 131i

114053

24 AUG 1996

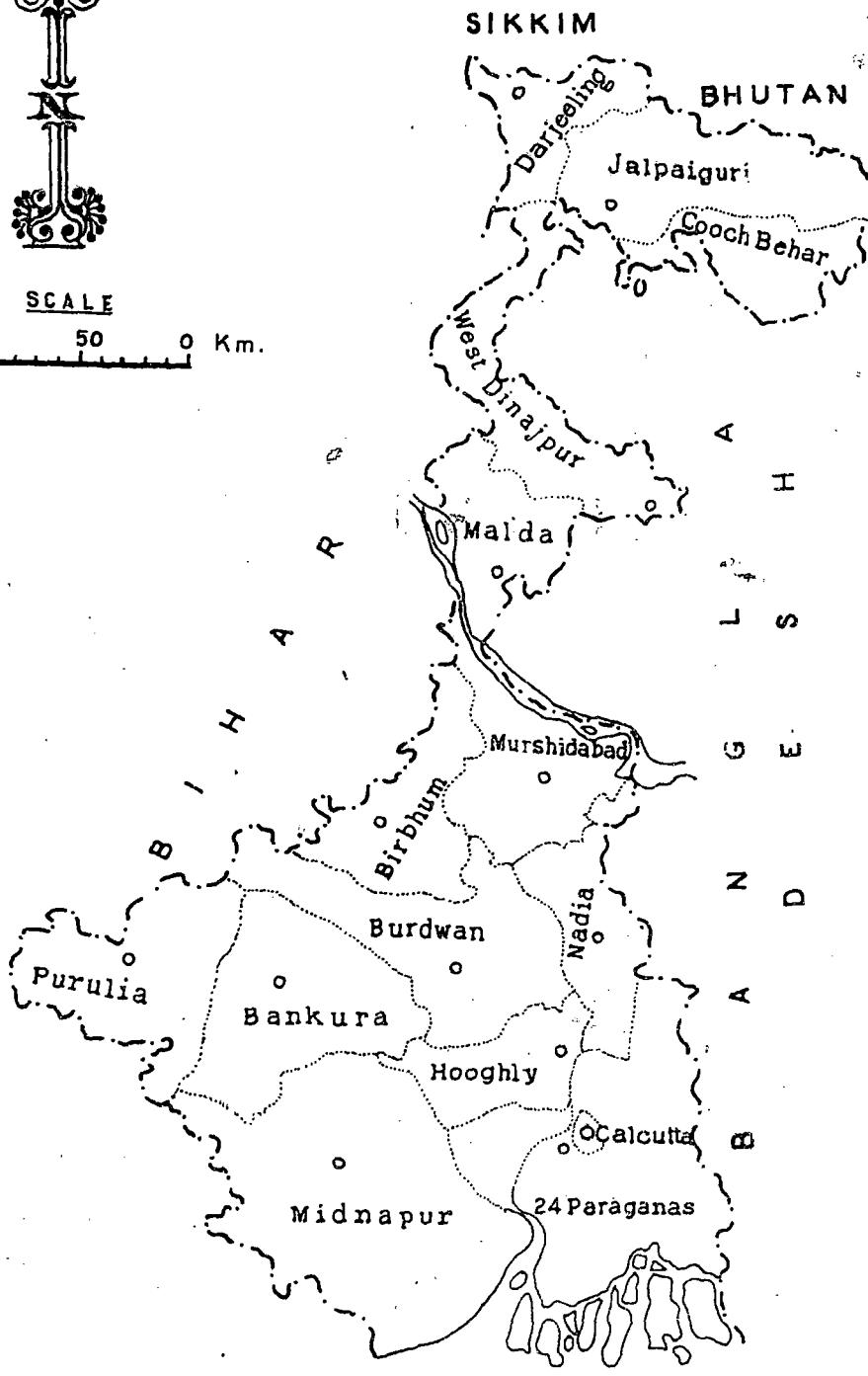
ALFA LIAZ  
JAKARTA INDONESIA  
DISTRIBUTOR ALFA LIAZ  
INDONESIA

# MAP OF WEST BENGAL



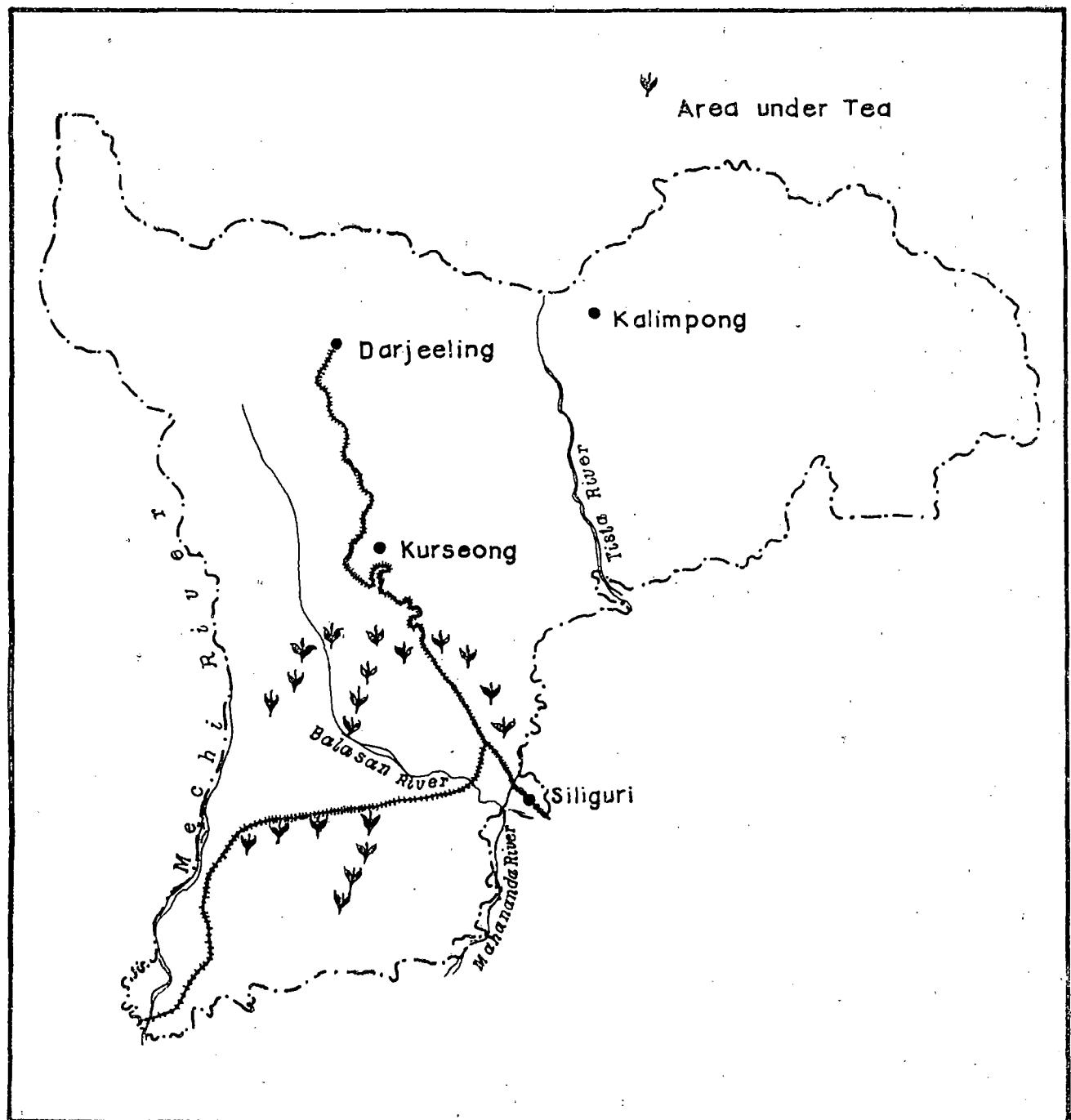
SCALE

100 50 0 Km.



B A Y O F B E N G A L

# TEA MAP OF TERAI



### Acknowledgement

I record my deep sense of esteem and gratitude to my research guide Dr. Manas Dasgupta, Professor, Deptt. of Economics, North Bengal University, whose valuable guidance, supervision and encouragement at every stage resulted in completion of this work.

I wish to record my sincere thanks to my Teacher, Professor Bikash Ghosh, Siliguri College of Commerce, Siliguri, for his constant encouragement and timely advice.

I owe my deep allegiance to Dr. Samirendra Nath Dhar and Mr. Debasish Bhattacharya, Lecturers, Deptt. of Commerce, North Bengal University, who freely gave their invaluable and timely suggestions on many facets of this study.

Dr. Chaturbhuj Kundu, Librarian, Siliguri College of Commerce and Part-Time Lecturer, Deptt. of Lib. & Inf. Science, North Bengal University helped me in formulating my ideas and made suggestions on my draft. I express my deep gratitude to him.

I also take my opportunity to express my deep gratitude to Smt. Kakuli Dutta for her constant support, encouragement and consolation at the time of my utter frustration which ultimately resulted in completion of this study. Her role will remain a source of enduring inspiration to me throughout my life.

I owe my deep allegiance to different political and trade union leaders, Mr. Biren Bose (CITU), Mr. Ajit Sarkar (CITU), Mr. Kanu Sanyal (C.P.I.M.L), Mr. Ranjit Ghosh (R.C.M.C), Mr. Swapan Bikash Roy (UTUC), Mr. Harisadhan Ghosh (C.P.I), Mr. Nripen Bose (C.P.I.M) who freely gave their valuable time for discussions with me.

I am indebted to Mr. C.R.Nayak, System Engineer, Computer Science Department and Mr. Arindam Roy, Research Assistant of Economics Department, North Bengal University who helped me a lot by giving valuable suggestions in the course of data analysis. Furthermore, I wish to record my thanks to Sri Chanchal Pal, Typist, North Bengal University who helped me to make this work presentable.

Mr. Mridul Paul and Mr. Arijit Chatterjee, my colleagues at the Siliguri Municipal Corporation, were always with me in the course of collection and interpretation of data. I express my gratefulness to both of them.

I specially thanks to Mr. Ashit Ghatak, Mr. Samir Bose and Mr. Pradeep Adhikari, who helped me in the course of field survey.

I am also grateful to Mr. Atul Behari Das my teacher for his wholetime support and encouragement to carry on the present study.

I wish to thank all the teachers of Siliguri College of Commerce for encouraging me to complete the study.

Lastly, I feel that I could not have finished my work without the immense help from my mother and other members of my family.

Department of Commerce  
North Bengal University  
Raja Rammohunpur  
Dated : August 31 1994.

Sukhendru Narayan Saha  
( SUKHENDRA NARAYAN SAHA )

List of Tables

|  | <u>Page No.</u> |
|--|-----------------|
| 2.1 Statistics of Tea in Darjeeling,<br>1861-1951              | ... 17          |
| 2.2 Statistics of Tea in Jalpaiguri,<br>1874-1951              | ... 20          |
| 2.3 Number of Tea Gardens in India,<br>1951-1990               | ... 23          |
| 2.4 Size Wise Classification of Tea<br>Gardens, 1990           | ... 24          |
| 2.5 Area Under Tea in India, 1951-1990                         | ... 26          |
| 2.6 Annual Growth Rate of Area, 1951-1990                      | ... 27          |
| 2.7 Area Available Under the Cultivation<br>of Tea             | ... 28          |
| 2.8 Production of Tea in India,<br>1951-1990                   | ... 29          |
| 2.9 Annual Growth Rate of Production,<br>1951-1990             | ... 30          |
| 2.10 Average Yield per Hectare (in kg.),<br>1951-1990          | ... 31          |
| 2.11 Annual Growth Rate of Yield,<br>1951-1990                 | ... 32          |
| <br>   |                 |
| 3.1 Immigration to Jalpaiguri<br>- 1891-1951                   | ... 44          |
| 3.2 Immigration to Darjeeling<br>- 1891-1951                   | ... 45          |
| 3.3 Labourers Recruited by Sardars<br>- 1918-19 to 1928-29     | ... 49          |
| 3.4 Labour Force in Tea Industry - 1990                        | ... 53          |
| 3.5 Resident and Non-resident Labour in<br>Tea Industry - 1990 | ... 56          |
| 3.6 Organization Structurer in a tea<br>garden                 | ... 58          |

|   | <u>Page No.</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| 4.1 Total Labour Force in Tea Gardens<br>(Darjeeling and All West Bengal) -<br>1901-1941  | ... 68          |
| 4.2 Annual Growth Rate of Labour<br>Employment and Area - 1901-1941   | ... 69          |
| 4.3 Gross Employment Area Elasticity  | ... 70          |
| 4.4 Labour Force in West Bengal Tea<br>Garden - 1951-1960   | ... 72          |
| 4.5 Production and Production Per<br>Labour in West Bengal Tea Gardens<br>- 1951-1960   | ... 73          |
| 4.6 Labour Force in the Tea Gardens<br>of West Bengal and Terai - 1961-1990   | ... 74          |
| 4.7 Annual Growth Rate of Labour  | ... 77          |
| 4.8 Employment Trend in Tea Plantations<br>in India   | ... 78          |
| 4.9 Labour Per Hectare in Tea Plantations<br>in India - 1990  | ... 81          |
| 4.10 Possible Additional Employment in<br>Tea Plantations in India  | ... 83          |
| 4.11 Average Annual Growth Rates in Pro-<br>duction, Employment and Gross<br>Employment Output Elasticities,<br>1961-1990                     | ... 85          |
| 4.12 Average Annual Growth Rates in Area<br>Under the Cultivation of Tea,<br>Employment and Gross Employment Area<br>Elasticities - 1961-1990 | ... 86          |
| 4.13 Average Annual Growth Rates in<br>Average Price of Tea, Employment<br>and Gross Employment Price<br>Elasticities - 1961-1990             | ... 88          |
| 5.1 Permanent and Temporary Labour Force<br>in Tea Gardens - 1901-1941  | ... 95          |

|   | <u>Page No.</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| 5.2 Permanent and Casual Labour Employed in Terai Tea Gardens (in percentage) | ... 97          |
| 5.3 Distribution of Permanent and Casual Labour by Size-Group (in percentage) | ... 98          |
| 6.1 Distribution of Child Labour in Tea Industry - 1990                       | ... 107         |
| 6.2 Child Labour in the Tea Gardens of West Bengal and Terai - 1961-1990      | ... 109         |
| 6.3 Annual Growth Rate of Child and Adult Labour - 1961-1990                  | ... 110         |
| 7.1 Distribution of Male and Female Workers in Tea Industry - 1990            | ... 119         |
| 7.2 Females Per 1000 Males  | ... 121         |
| 7.3 Wages Differences Between Male and Female                                 | ... 122         |
| 8.1 Industrial Disputes in Terai Tea Gardens - 1966-1970                      | ... 157         |
| 8.2 Key to Unions in Terai Tea Gardens  | ... 174         |
| 9.1 Daily Wage Rate in Terai - 1948   | ... 185         |
| 9.2 Dearness Allowance - 1944 to 1948   | ... 186         |
| 9.3 Distribution of Dearness Allowance - 1948                                 | ... 187         |
| 9.4 Daily Wage Rate in Terai - 1948   | ... 187         |
| 9.5 Increment to Daily Wage Rate 1.7.79 to 30.6.82                            | ... 196         |
| 9.6 Increment to Daily Wage Rate 1.7.83 to 1.7.85                             | ... 197         |

|   | <u>Page No.</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| 9.7 Increment to Daily Wage Rate<br>1.6.87 to 31.5.90   | ... 198         |
| 9.8 Increment to Daily Wage Rate<br>1.6.90 to 1.6.92  | ... 199         |
| 9.9 Money Wages in the Terai Tea<br>Gardens - 1952-1992   | ... 199         |
| 9.10 Regression Analysis of Money Wages in<br>Tea Industry - 1961-1989  | ... 208         |
| 9.11 Partial Correlation Coefficients   | ... 208         |
| 9.12 Annual Rate of Bonus in Terai<br>Tea Gardens - 1980-1990   | ... 210         |
| <br>  |                 |
| 10.1 Construction of New House in West<br>Bengal Tea Gardens - 1985-1989  | ... 217         |
| 10.2 Construction Progress of Standard<br>Labour Houses of 273 Tea Estates of<br>West Bengal - 1991                         | ... 219         |
| 10.3 Construction of 100 Per cent Houses<br>on Total Requirement - 1991   | ... 220         |
| 10.4 Medical Facilities Available in<br>Per 1000 in the Terai Tea Gardens<br>- 1985-1989                                    | ... 222         |
| 10.5 Medical Facilities Available in per<br>1000 Population in the West Bengal<br>Tea Gardens - 1985-1989                   | ... 222         |
| 10.6 Scale of Weekly Ration - 1991  | ... 225         |
| 10.7 Organizational Set-Up for the<br>Purpose of Enforcement of the<br>Plantation Labour Act and rules<br>Framed Thereunder | ... 227         |
| 10.8 Prosecutions Under the Plantation<br>Labour Act - 1972-1990  | ... 228         |
| <br>  |                 |
| 11.1 Trends in intensity of<br>Work-Stoppages - 1972-1990   | ... 237         |

|  | <u>Page No.</u> |
|--|-----------------|
| 11.2 Measures of Workers' Participation in Work-Stoppages During 1972-1990                     | ... 239         |
| 11.3 Relative Position of Strikes and Lock-outs in Work-Stoppages during 1972-1990             | ... 242         |
| 11.4 Percentage Distribution of Work -Stoppages by Major Industries in West Bengal - 1981-1990 | ... 247         |
| 11.5 Average Annual Rate of Absenteeism by Industries - 1974-1989                              | ... 250         |
| 11.6 Annual Rate of Absenteeism in Tea Industry by Cause - 1974-1989                           | ... 253         |
| 12.1 Adult and Minor Members   | ... 263         |
| 12.2 Permanent and Casual Workers  | ... 263         |
| 12.3 Adult and Minor Employment and Dependents   | ... 264         |
| 12.4 No. of Children Goes to School  | ... 265         |
| 12.5 Level of Literacy   | ... 266         |
| 12.6 Break-up of Union Membership  | ... 267         |
| 12.7 Position in the Tea Garden Unit   | ... 269         |
| 12.8 Reasons for Joining Unions  | ... 270         |
| 12.9 Workers' Participation in Union Activities (Meetings, Processions, etc.).                 | ... 271         |
| 12.10 Extent of Change of Union  | ... 272         |
| 12.11 Sexwise Distribution of Union Leaders  | ... 273         |
| 12.12 Level of Literacy of Union Leaders   | ... 274         |
| 12.13 Contribution of Leaders for Trade Union Success  | ... 276         |

|  | <u>Page No.</u> |
|--|-----------------|
| 12.14      Problems Faced by Leaders in<br>Achieving the Targets                                 | ...      277    |
| 12.15      Workers' Attitude Towards Work<br>-schedule, Wages, Welfare, Ration<br>and Management | ...      279    |
| 12.16      Level of Literacy of Women<br>Workers   | ...      281    |
| 12.17      Participation of Women Workers in<br>Union Activities                                 | ...      282    |
| 12.18      Change of Unions by Women<br>Workers  | ...      283    |

Abbreviations

- AITUC - All India Trade Union Congress
- CCTPW - Co-ordination Committee of Tea Plantation Workers
- CITU - Centre of Indian Trade Unions
- CPI - Communist Party of India
- CPI (M) - Communist Party of India (Marxist)
- CPI (ML) - Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
- DCBWU - Darjeeling Cha Bagan Workers' Unions
- DCKMS - Darjeeling Cha Kaman Mazdoor Sangha
- DDCKMU - Darjeeling District Chiya Kaman Mazdoor Union
- DZCMKU - Darjeeling Zilla Cha Mazdoor Karmachari Union
- HMS - Hind Mazdoor Sabha
- INTUC - Indian National Trade Union Congress
- ITA - Indian Tea Association
- NFITU - National Front of Indian Trade Unions
- NUPW - National Union of Plantation Workers
- CCCR - Organization Committee for Communist Revolutionaries
- RCMC - Rashtriya Cha Mazdoor Congress
- RSP - Revolutionary Socialist Party
- TBITA - Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association
- TIPA - Terai Indian Planters' Association
- TPA - Terai Planters' Association
- TPWU - Terai Plantation Workers' Union
- UTUC - United Trade Union Congress

CONTENTS

|   | <u>Page No.</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| Acknowledgement   | ... i-iii       |
| List of Tables  | ... iv- ix      |
| Abbreviations   | ... x           |
| <br>CHAPTER I : Introduction  | ... 1-11        |
| 1.1 Purpose of the Study  | ... 2           |
| 1.2 Scope of Study  | ... 4           |
| 1.3 Brief Review of Literature  | ... 5           |
| 1.4 Period of Study   | ... 8           |
| 1.5 Sources of Data   | ... 8           |
| 1.6 Research Methodology  | ... 9           |
| 1.7 Limitation of Data  | ... 9           |
| <br>CHAPTER II : History Growth and Development<br>of Tea Industry in West Bengal ... | 12-34           |
| 2.1 A Short History of Tea<br>Industry in India                                       | ... 13          |
| 2.2 History of Tea Industry in<br>West Bengal   | ... 15          |
| 2.2.1 Tea Industry in Jalpaiguri<br>District  | ... 19          |
| 2.3 Growth & Development of Tea<br>Industry in West Bengal<br>- 1951-1990             | ... 21          |
| 2.3.1 No. of Tea Gardens  | ... 22          |
| 2.3.2 Area Under Tea  | ... 25          |
| 2.3.3 Production of Tea   | ... 28          |
| 2.4 Summary   | ... 33          |
| Notes & References  | ... 34          |

|                    |          |  | <u>Page No.</u> |
|--------------------|----------|--|-----------------|
| <b>CHAPTER III</b> | <b>:</b> | Problems of Recruitment and Organization of Labour in Tea Industry | ... 35-66       |
| 3.1                |          | Recruitment System   | ... 35          |
| 3.2                |          | Recruitment Legislation  | ... 46          |
| 3.3                |          | Category of Workers  | ... 52          |
| 3.4                |          | Organization Hierarchy   | ... 56          |
| 3.5                |          | Summary  | ... 60          |
|                    |          | Notes & References   | ... 64          |
| <b>CHAPTER IV</b>  | <b>:</b> | Employment and Production in Tea Industry                          | ... 67-93       |
| 4.1                |          | Employment Trends  | ... 67          |
| 4.2                |          | Land-Labour Ratio  | ... 79          |
| 4.3                |          | Production and Employment  | ... 84          |
| 4.4                |          | Area and Employment  | ... 86          |
| 4.5                |          | Average Price of Tea and Employment                                | ... 88          |
| 4.6                |          | Summary  | ... 90          |
|                    |          | Notes & References   | ... 93          |
| <b>CHAPTER V</b>   | <b>:</b> | Casual Labour in Tea Industry                                      | ... 94-102      |
| 5.1                |          | Casual Labour  | ... 94          |
| 5.2                |          | Size and Casualization   | ... 97          |
| 5.3                |          | Causes of Casualization  | ... 98          |
| 5.4                |          | Summary  | ... 101         |

|                     | <u>Page No.</u>   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>CHAPTER VI</b>   | : Child Labour in Tea Industry ... 103-114                    |
| 6.1                 | Child Workers ... 103   |
| 6.2                 | Wages to Child Workers ... 104                                |
| 6.3                 | Type of Work of Child Labour ... 105                          |
| 6.4                 | Distribution of Child Labour ... 106                          |
| 6.5                 | Growth of Child Labour ... 108                                |
| 6.6                 | Education to Children ... 111                                 |
| 6.7                 | Summary ... 112   |
| <b>CHAPTER VII</b>  | : Women Workers in Tea Industry ... 115-131                   |
| 7.1                 | Early Condition of Women ... 116                              |
| 7.2                 | Employment of Women Workers ... 119                           |
| 7.3                 | Women's Wages ... 121   |
| 7.4                 | Women in Plantation Hierarchy ... 123                         |
| 7.5                 | Creches ... 124   |
| 7.6                 | Type of Work of Women ... 127                                 |
| 7.7                 | Various Reasons for Employing Women in Tea Plantation ... 128 |
| 7.8                 | Summary ... 129   |
|                     | Notes & References ... 131                                    |
| <b>CHAPTER VIII</b> | : Trade Unionism in Tea Industry ... 132-183                  |
| 8.1                 | History of Trade-Union Movement in Tea Industry ... 132       |
| 8.2                 | Growth and Development of Trade Union Movement ... 138        |

|  | <u>Page No.</u>  |
|--|------------------|
| 8.3      Multiple Trade Unionism                             | ...      169     |
| 8.4      Collective Bargaining<br>Strength of Trade Unions   | ...      174     |
| 8.5      Summary   | ...      177     |
| Notes & References   | ...      181     |
| <br><b>CHAPTER IX</b>  |                  |
| : Remuneration in Tea Industry ...                           | 184-213          |
| 9.1      Money Wages   | ...      184     |
| 9.2      Extra Leaf Price (E.L.P)                            | ...      204     |
| 9.3      Earnings Gap Between Men<br>and Women               | ...      205     |
| 9.4      Determinants of Money Wages                         | ...      207     |
| 9.5      Bonus   | ...      209     |
| 9.6      Summary   | ...      211     |
| Notes & References   | ...      213     |
| <br><b>CHAPTER X</b>   |                  |
| : Labour Welfare in Tea<br>Industry                          | ...      214-233 |
| 10.1     Welfare Provisions in<br>Plantation Labour Act 1951 | ...      214     |
| 10.2     Enforcement of Plantation<br>Labour Act, 1951       | ...      226     |
| 10.3     Summary   | ...      230     |
| Notes & References   | ...      233     |
| <br><b>CHAPTER XI</b>  |                  |
| : Industrial Disputes in<br>Tea Industry                     | ...      234-260 |
| 11.1     Intensity of Industrial<br>Conflicts and Trends     | ...      236     |
| 11.2     Workers' Participation<br>in Conflicts              | ...      238     |

|   | <u>Page No.</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| 11.3      Relative Position of Strikes<br>& Lock-outs in Work Stoppages...      | 241             |
| 11.4      Distribution of Work<br>-Stoppages                    ...             | 246             |
| 11.5      Absenteeism                    ...                                    | 249             |
| 11.6      Causes of Absenteeism        ...                                      | 252             |
| 11.7      Remedial Measures to Combat<br>Labour Absenteeism            ...      | 256             |
| 11.8      Summary                        ...                                    | 257             |
| Notes & References        ...   | 260             |
| <br>CHAPTER XII : Micro Study in Some Tea<br>Gardens                        ... | <br>261-285     |
| 12.1      Family Members                ...                                     | 262             |
| 12.2      Employment                    ...                                     | 263             |
| 12.3      School Going Children      ...  | 265             |
| 12.4      Literacy                      ...                                     | 265             |
| 12.5      Trade Union Membership     ...  | 267             |
| 12.6      Position in Trade Union    ...  | 268             |
| 12.7      Reasons for Joining Union    ...                                      | 269             |
| 12.8      Workers' Participation in<br>Union Activities                ...      | 270             |
| 12.9      Change of Unions             ...                                      | 272             |
| 12.10     Sex-wise Distribution of<br>Union Leaders                 ...         | 273             |
| 12.11     Literacy of Union Leaders    ...                                      | 274             |
| 12.12     Contribution of Leaders for<br>Trade Union Success            ...     | 275             |
| 12.13     Problems Faced by the Leaders<br>in Achieving the Targets     ...     | 278             |

|   | <u>Page No.</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| 12.14      Workers' Attitude Towards<br>Work-Schedule, Wages,<br>Welfare, Ration and<br>Management      ... | 278             |
| 12.15      Impact of Trade Unionism<br>on Women Workers      ...  | 280             |
| 12.15.1      Women Literacy      ...  | 280             |
| 12.15.2      Women's Participation in<br>Union Activities      ...  | 281             |
| 12.15.3      Change of Unions by Women<br>Workers      ...  | 282             |
| 12.16      Summary      ...   | 283             |
| <br>CHAPTER XIII      : Summary and Conclusion      ...   | <br>286-305     |
| <br>Bibliography      ...   | <br>306-314     |
| <br>Appendixes      ...   | <br>I-XVI       |

## CHAPTER I : Introduction

### Content :

- 1.1 Purpose of the Study.
- 1.2 Scope of Study.
- 1.3 Brief Review of Literature.
- 1.4 Period of Study.
- 1.5 Sources of Data.
- 1.6 Research Methodology.
- 1.7 Limitation of Data.

Tea is one of the major industries in India. India is the world's largest producer and exporter of tea. Every year it produces more than 700 million kg. of tea and exports about 200 million kg. India earns more than one thousand crores of rupees annually from the export of tea. Tea contributes about 3.25% of the total export earnings of India. India contributes about 18% of the world's total exports.

Tea is produced in India in the regions of North and South India. The major tea producing states of North India are Assam, West Bengal and Tripura. In South India tea is produced in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

Tea industry also employs the largest number of labourers in India. The industry employs about one million labourers. The tea industry is a large agro-based and labour-intensive industry. It largely depends on manual labour than technological input, consequently harmony in labour relations is an essential pre-requisite for the prosperity and efficiency of tea industry.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The concept of industrial relations in tea plantations has developed after independence. Prior to this, a semi-feudal type of production relation existed in the tea plantations and the relations between the planter and worker was less like that between employer and employee and more like between master and servant. The worker was looked upon as a commodity. The planter was in a dominating situation, he dictated both the wages as well as the conditions of service of the workers resulting in many industrial and social ills such as low wages, unduly long hours of works, poor working conditions and persecution of labour leaders. Besides bullying, flogging and other forms of brutality were quite common for disciplining erring workers. The plight of the workers was miserable, and they had no other ways but to tolerate the tyrannies and naked exploitation of planters, because they had no organization at all and at the same time planters were highly organized and powerful. Trade union leaders had no access to the gardens and they were persecuted and victimized by the planters.

After independence, the Government of India enacted various laws to regulate the relationship between the worker and the planter. The Plantation Labour Act (PLA) 1951 includes several statutory welfare provisions for labour, such as, housing, sanitation, schooling facilities for the children of workers, medical facilities, drinking water, creches etc.

In March 1950 the State Government appointed the Minimum Wages Advisory Committee for Tea Plantations. The recommendations of this committee came into effect in early 1952. This guarantee of a minimum wage provided some economic protection to the workers. Subsequently, other acts were passed granting some facilities to the workers. Some of these acts, such as the payment of Bonus Act, and the Acts providing for Provident Fund and Gratuity, etc. affected the working class in the country. There were other acts too which had been passed earlier like the Industrial Disputes Act 1947 and its standing orders, minimum wage Act of 1948, Factories Act 1948, which provided for some security of workers in general. These were initially ignored by the planters as there was no check on them. The state apparatus to enforce their application did not exist. In early 1950s the State Government set up the Labour Bureau which appointed Assistant Labour Commissioners and Labour Officers to look into the implementation of the acts. Labour Tribunals were also set up to decide disputes.

Thus, we see that the after independence the relationship between the worker and the planter became more formalised. The existing master and servant relationship was replaced by employer and employee relationship. The planter started losing the grip over the workers, which they had maintained formerly. The worker here was not wholly dependent on the mercies of the planter. He was given some legal protection. Consequently,

the loosening of the tight grip of the planters on the workers gave more scope to the workers to form associations and Trade Unions gained momentum and became well entrenched among the garden workers.

A new awakening among the garden workers was brought about the entrance of trade unions and the industrial relations took a new turn. Workers began to take retaliatory action to help themselves get a new deal. They began to resort to strike. In their turn, the planters retaliated by declaring lock-outs and the "industrial war" began in tea plantations.

Despite various laws, the intervention of trade unions and measured by the government, industrial relations in the tea gardens of West Bengal have been deteriorating over the years. The present study has examined the changing pattern of industrial relations in the tea industry of West Bengal and the role of trade unions there to, with special reference to the tea gardens of Terai area. For this purpose the study has taken into account, growth of tea industry, recruitment procedures, employment, remuneration, growth of trade union movement in different periods, labour welfare and the industrial conflicts (strikes and lock-outs).

#### 1.2 Scope of Study

We find that the number of industrial conflicts (strikes & lock-outs) in tea industry of West Bengal considerably

decreased since the seventies for the development of negotiation processes. Though the negotiation processes have brought peaceful industrial relations in tea industry but they could not bring healthy industrial relations. So the present study has made an assessment of the causes of unhealthy industrial relations in tea industry of West Bengal with special reference to its tea gardens in the Terai region.

### 1.3 Brief Review of Literature

\* There have been several studies of various aspect of tea industry. These are mainly on financial management, and geographical aspects of tea industry. A few studies partially dealt with labour relations. A brief review of those studies are made below :

Dr. Sharit Bhowmik made a study on 'Class Formation in the Plantation System' in 1981. This study attempts to investigate into the different aspects of class formation among tribal workers engaged in the Dooars tea gardens of West Bengal. The study reflects how class consciousness emerged among garden workers. Since the study based on sociological theories, less focus is given to the aspects of industrial relations and greater effort is made to show how social relations of tribal workers changed with the change in organization of production.

The study of Sri Umanand Phukan on 'The Ex-Tea Garden Labour Population in Assam', in 1984, attempts to recall how labourers from different parts of the country entered into the various tea plantations of Assam during the nineteenth century, and how their number naturally grew with the passage of time which ultimately constituted a sizeable segment of the rural population of Assam. It is a socio-economic study of the Labourers of Assam tea plantations. It analyses the historical circumstances under which the immigrant tea garden labourers left their regular employment on the tea plantations and chose to settle in villages.

The study on 'Economics of Tea Industry in India' of R.C.Awasthi, in 1975, is a study of gamut problems in the tea industry. With other matters like finance, supplies, transport, marketing etc, the study has also gone through the matters relating to labour in one chapter. The study partially dealt with labour relations. Important indices of industrial relations such as industrial disputes, role of Government and unions have not taken place significantly in the study. Moreover the entire study is based on the tea gardens of Assam.

'The History of Indian Tea Industry' of Sir Percival Griffiths, in 1967, is completely a study of the historical growth of Indian tea industry. While describing the evolution passage of the growth of tea industry in India, the study also describes origin of plantation labourers, recruitment system

and the state of planters' oppression on which the workers had to undergo during the pre-independence period. The study has not separately discussed the labour relations in tea plantations.

"Tea Gardens of West Bengal" of Tushar Kanti Ghosh in 1987, is a study on the land management policies of tea gardens. The study covers the history of tea industry in West Bengal, land management policies, rules, regulations etc. The study made a correlation between the problems of sick and closed gardens with the improper land management policies.

A number of thesis on tea industry has been submitted by scholars in North Bengal University for Ph.D degree. Here also the scholars have not provided full effort on labour relations. Most of the studies related to Financial management, sickness and historic growth of tea industry. However, the thesis of Dr. Mita Bhadra on 'Life and Labour of Plantation Women Workers' has provided focus on the Labourers of tea Plantations. It is again a sociological study on women which deals with the life and labour of women workers in a tea plantation of Darjeeling district in West Bengal. It reflects the changes in the status and roles of women employed in the tea industry.

The thesis of Dr. Kanchan Sarkar on "study of trade union organization among the tea workers in Terai and Dooars regions", has discussed the trade union movement in tea industry in different period. But the study does not provide the reaction of employers with the growth of trade union

movement in tea industry. Moreover the study does not present statistically the trends of conflicts (strikes & lock-outs) in tea industry.

So far there has been very little effort to study in depth the labour relations in the tea gardens of West Bengal. The existing research works on the labourers of tea industry have been made by the scholars of sociology and social anthropology. They have given much emphasis on the changing social relations of workers than industrial relations. But these studies have helped us to frame out the objectives of the present study.

#### 1.4 Period of Study

Our study covers a period of 40 years, 1951 to 1990 to get a representative picture of changing pattern of industrial relations in the tea industry of West Bengal.

#### 1.5 Sources of Data

We have used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data have been collected from different sources, viz. Reports on annual general meetings of Terai Planters' Association (TPA), Reports on annual general meetings of Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association (TRITA), Tea Statistics - Published by Tea Board, Calcutta. Tea Statistics - Published by J.Thomas & Pvt. Company Ltd., Calcutta, Labour in West Bengal, Published by the Ministry of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal.

Besides the above a number of leading journals of tea, viz. Tea Journal, Calcutta, Assam Review & Tea News, Calcutta etc. have also been consulted for secondary data.

Primary data have been collected through field survey in the three tea gardens of Terai, viz., Mohurgong & Gulma, Kiran Chandra and Sanyasisthan Tea Estate during the period March, 1994 to June, 1994.

#### 1.5 Research Methodology

The present study is an empirical investigation of a macro-nature to interpret the labour relations in tea plantations of West Bengal with special reference to its tea gardens of Terai region. For this purpose both secondary and primary data have been used. The broad inference is also drawn from analysis of discussions with the trade union leaders, management personnel, government officials and the labourers. Data have been analysed by different methods, like compound growth rate, elasticity, arithmetic mean, correlation regression etc.

#### 1.7 Limitation of Data

The secondary data was mainly collected from Tea Statistics of Tea Board and Labour Statistics of the Govt. of West Bengal. The data on labour employed in Tea industry of West Bengal

regionwise presented in Tea Statistics since 1961. Thus, in Chapter IV, we could not show the employment in Terai tea gardens during the period 1950 to 1960. Tea Statistics also does not present the exact number of casual workers in tea industry. It only presents outside temporary workers. But there are large number of resident casual workers are employed in tea gardens. Thus, in Chapter V, to estimate the proportion of permanent and casual workers in tea industry; we have based on the results of some surveys made by the scholars time to time.

In order to estimate the intensity of industrial conflicts (strikes & lock-outs) in tea industry over the period we have based on 'Labour in West Bengal', published by the Ministry of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal. But unfortunately the Directorate of Labour, Calcutta and National Library, Calcutta have not maintained the 'Labour in West Bengal' of the periods 1950 to 1970. So, in Chapter XI, we have presented the trends of conflicts (strikes & lock-outs) in tea industry for the period 1972 to 1990. The labour management conflicts in tea industry during the fifties and sixties have been analysed in Chapter VIII. Interpretations have been made from the proceedings of annual general meetings of Terai Planters' Association (T.P.A) and Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association (TBITA).

'Labour in West Bengal' also does not present the data on industrial conflicts in tea industry of West Bengal separately for Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling Hills. It presents the figures of conflicts (strikes & lock-outs) in West Bengal Tea Industry. As such, in Chapter XI, we could not present the position of strikes and lock-outs in the Terai tea gardens. Data on labour absenteeism in 'Labour in West Bengal' is also available only since 1974.

## CHAPTER II : History Growth and Development of Tea Industry in West Bengal.

### Content :

- 2.1 A Short History of Tea Industry in India.
- 2.2 History of Tea Industry in West Bengal.
  - 2.2.1 Tea Industry in Jalpaiguri District.
- 2.3 Growth & Development of Tea Industry in West Bengal
  - 1951-1990.
- 2.3.1 No. of Tea Gardens.
- 2.3.2 Area Under Tea.
- 2.3.3 Production of Tea.
- 2.4 Summary.

Next to Assam, the second largest tea growing state in India is West Bengal. The state accounts for 24 per cent of total area under tea and contributes 21 per cent to the total production of India.

The tea gardens in West Bengal are located in the two northern districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. In terms of tea growing areas, West Bengal has three tea growing zones, viz. Darjeeling, Terai and Dooars. Darjeeling produces the most distinctive and the finest tea in the world though its annual production has been to a little over 14 million kg.

The tea gardens located at the foot hills of the Himalaya, in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts constitute the Terai and Dooars tea growing districts in West Bengal. Some estates in West Dinajpur have been grouped with Terai and a small tea growing area in Cooch Bihar with the Dooars.

## 2.1 A Short History of the Tea Industry in India

Tea had its genesis in China centuries ago and almost throughout the 19th Century she had virtual monopoly of tea production. China was the only supplier of tea to Europe up to the end of the 18th century. <sup>The city of</sup> Canton was the only port open to foreign ships.<sup>1</sup>

The East India Company or John Company, as it was often called, had been granted a monopoly of oriental trade in 1660 and it was the greatest trading monopoly that had ever been granted in the world.<sup>2</sup>

The first recorded tea plantation in India was in 1780, when a few bushes from Canton in China were planted in Calcutta. These did not survive long, either for want of culture or due to weather or soil conditions. Serious thoughts were given in 1788 to the cultivation of tea as a commercial proposition in India to replace the expired monopoly of tea trade in China. Bihar and Cooch Bihar were found to be suitable for tea cultivation. Assam still then, did not come under the administration of the East India Company. It was not, however, until the annexation of Assam in 1826 that earnest attention was given to this direction.

The East India Company lost its trading monopoly of China in 1833. This sudden alteration of the situation made it indispensable for the Government of the U.K and British India to establish tea plantation industry in India. But as

regards tea industry in China the company was simply a buyer, it knew very little about where and how tea was grown and prepared. Actually tea was collected by the Chinese merchants from the distant villages. The Company was buying tea and silk from the merchants in exchange of tea and silk.<sup>3</sup>

To overcome this situation, in 1833 Lord William Bentick, the then Governor General of British India, appointed a Tea Committee to consider the question of introducing tea plants to be supplied from China, and to decide the most suitable place in India where to grow it. Subsequently, a Government experimental farm was opened at Sadiya with seeds brought from China. Later, another experimental garden was opened at Chabua planted with Assam indigenous seed which was discovered during the Burma expedition.

In the beginning, tea production in India had been carried out under Government auspices and mostly on an experimental basis. Assam Tea Company was formed in 1839. Tea cultivation in India advanced from the experimental to a more extensive and commercial ground by the formation of Assam Tea Company. By 1860 there were more than 50 private enterprises engaged in the production of tea. The cultivation of tea soon spread from the confines of the Brahmaputra Valley to Darjeeling in 1850 and to Chachar and Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) in 1865. Dooars saw its first tea estate in 1876. Tea cultivation started in Chittagong (now in Bangladesh) and

Chattanagpur during the period 1862-67. The tea cultivation was also started in many districts in India, whereever there was little hope of success. The lure of tea and dreams of quickly acquired fortunes thereafter attracted a mixed bag of adventures, with little tenacity or commitment to nurse this industry. After a decade of rough weather prudently established enterprises consolidated the foundations of an industry that was meant to last.

## 2.2 History of Tea Industry in West Bengal

Among the three tea growing regions of West Bengal, viz. Darjeeling Hills, Terai and Dooars, the cultivation of tea started first in <sup>the</sup> Darjeeling Hills. The China plants which reached Darjeeling about the end of 1835 were later added to by indigenous Assam Plants and were in the gardens of Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent, and Dr. Withecombe, the Civil Surgeon. Some were also grown at Lebong by Major Crammelin of the Engineers. In 1852 a Mr. Jackson reported that these first experiments were doing well.<sup>4</sup>

By 1856 the industry had advanced from the experimental to a more extensive and commercial stage. In that year the Alubari tea garden was opened by the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company, and another on the Lebong Spur by the Darjeeling Land Mortgage Bank. In 1859 the Dhutaria garden was started

114053

22 AUG 1996

NORTH BENGAL  
University Library  
Raja Rammohun Roy

by Dr. Brougham and between 1860 and 1864 four gardens, at Ging, Ambutia, Takdah and Phubsering were established by the Darjeeling Tea Company, and the gardens at Takvar and Badamtam by the Leong Tea Company. Other gardens which were started at this early period were those now known as Makaibari, Pandam and Steinthal Tea Estates. All these estates are situated in the hills, but about the same time the Planters began to turn their attention to the Terai, where experimental plantations had already been started. Here, in 1862, the first garden was opened out at Champta, near Khaprail by Mr. James White, who had previously started the Single estate near Kurseong. By the end of 1866 more gardens had been opened at Terai.<sup>5</sup>

By 1861, on the eve of the International Exhibition in London of 1862, 22 tea estates sprang up. They received a total grant of 21,865 acres, of which 3251 were under tea, and already 43,03,000 tea plants had been planted, 42,600 lbs. of tea and 20,000 lbs. of coffee manufactured and 2,534 labourers employed.<sup>6</sup>

The Table 2.1 shows the progress of tea in Darjeeling between 1861 and 1951.

Table 2.1 shows how rapidly tea gardens in Darjeeling improved in yield per acre and total production. By the end of 1866, i.e., only ten years after the establishment of the industry on a commercial basis, there were 39 gardens with a

Table 2.1  
Statistics of tea in Darjeeling, 1861-1951

| Year | No. of tea gardens | Total area in acres under tea | Approx. yield in lbs. | Average yield in lbs. per acre |
|------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1861 | 22                 | 3251                          | 42600                 | 13                             |
| 1866 | 39                 | 10392                         | 433715                | 42                             |
| 1867 | 40                 | 9214                          | 582640                | 63                             |
| 1968 | 44                 | 10067                         | 851549                | 85                             |
| 1969 | 55                 | 10769                         | 1278869               | 119                            |
| 1970 | 56                 | 11046                         | 1689186               | 153                            |
| 1972 | 74                 | 14503                         | 2938626               | 203                            |
| 1973 | 87                 | 15695                         | 2956710               | 188                            |
| 1974 | 113                | 18888                         | 3927911               | 208                            |
| 1981 | 155                | 28367                         | 5160316               | 182                            |
| 1985 | 175                | 38499                         | 9090500               | 236                            |
| 1891 | 177                | 45585                         | 10910487              | 239                            |
| 1895 | 186                | 48692                         | 11714500              | 241                            |
| 1901 | 170                | 51724                         | 13535537              | 262                            |
| 1911 | 156                | 51488                         | 14250615              | 277                            |
| 1921 | 158                | 59005                         | 14080946              | 239                            |
| 1931 | 169                | 61178                         | 20496481              | 335                            |
| 1941 | 136                | 63173                         | 24815216              | 393                            |
| 1951 | 138                | 62580                         | 29283499              | 468                            |

Source : Data compiled from Hunter, W.W. 'A Statistical Account of Bengal', Vol.X (Reprint in India) Delhi, 1974, p.165, Dash, A.J. Bengal Gazetteers, Darjeeling 1947, p.114, Mitra, A.K. Census of India 1951, Vol.VI, Part IA (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore) Report, Calcutta, 1953, p.266.

little over 10,000 acres under cultivation, and production of over 433,000 lbs. of tea. In 1870, there were 56 gardens with 11,000 acres under cultivation yielding nearly 17,00,000 lbs. and in 1874 the number of gardens increased to 113, the area under cultivation to 18,888 acres, the production to 39,28,000 lbs. In other words between 1866 and 1874 the number of gardens under tea was almost exactly trebled, the area under cultivation increased by 82 per cent, while the production of tea multiplied nearly ten times and yield-rate per acre increased by nearly five times.

Since then the industry progressed steadily at least up to 1895. By the end of 1895 there was 186 gardens with 48692 acres under cultivation and production of 11,714,500 lbs of tea. Thus between 1874 and 1895 the area under cultivation of tea increased by 158 per cent and production by 198 per cent.

Prices fell greatly between 1896 and 1901 and many gardens were no longer able to work at a profit. A few gardens were closed and some gardens merged with others. By the end of 1901 the number of gardens were reduced to 170 and further to 156 by the end of 1911. Between the period 1901 and 1911 the total area under the cultivation of tea decreased to 51488 acres from 51724 in 1901, but the total production of tea showed a little upswing tendency as the per acre yield rate improved a little bit during that period.

Data on growth of tea industry in Darjeeling district shows that during the last 30 years period, 1921 to 1951, the growth rate was very much less than in the preceding 30 years period. Between the period 1921 to 1951, the area under tea increased by only 6 per cent and production increased by nearly 108 per cent. Thus during this period in spite of slow rate of expansion in the area under tea the total production was doubled. This is due to impressive growth in rate of yield per hectare, which increased by nearly 69 per cent during that period.

#### 2.2.1 Tea Industry in Jalpaiguri District

Jalpaiguri District was formed in 1869 after the annexation of Bhutan Dooars from the Bhutia in 1864-65. This portion of the Dooars within the district of Jalpaiguri was called Western Dooars. The portion of the Dooars in Assam annexed earlier was called Eastern Dooars. The western Dooars is about twenty two miles in width and about seventy miles in length from the Teesta to the Sankosh Rivers from the East to the West. It is a flatland traversed by numerous streams and full of forests with patches of cultivated areas in between.<sup>7</sup>

According to the District Gazetteer and Gruning's report the first garden was opened at Gazaldoba in Western Dooars by Mr. R. Haughton in 1876, who was one of the pioneers of tea

industry in the Darjeeling district. The district record shows that Dr. H.P.Brougham took the first lease of 996 acres in Mazal Doba on 16.2.1876. He opened a tea garden in this area employing one Tichard Haughton who appears to be the Pioneer tea Planter in the Jalpaiguri district.<sup>8</sup>

Subsequently, many gardens were established at Fulbari and Bagrakote, and by 1876 thirteen gardens were started. The China type of bush was first planted and it was not until some time later that the greater merits of an Assam -China hybrid of Assam and Manipur indigenous varieties were realized.

The progress of tea industry in Jalpaiguri district during the period between 1874 to 1951 is illustrated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2  
Statistics of tea in Jalpaiguri, 1874-1951

| Year | No. of tea gardens | Total area in acres under tea | Approx. Yield in lbs. | Average yield in lbs per acre |
|------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1874 | 1                  | -                             | -                     | -                             |
| 1881 | 47                 | 5,637                         | -                     | -                             |
| 1891 | 79                 | 35,683                        | -                     | -                             |
| 1901 | 235                | 76,403                        | 31,087,537            | 407                           |
| 1911 | 191                | 90,859                        | 48,820,637            | 537                           |
| 1921 | 131                | 1,12,688                      | 43,287,187            | 384                           |
| 1931 | 151                | 1,32,074                      | 66,447,715            | 503                           |
| 1941 | 189                | 1,31,770                      | 94,604,450            | 718                           |
| 1951 | 158                | 1,34,473                      | 1,37,194,660          | 1,020                         |

Source : Mitra, A.K. Census of India 1951, Vol.VI, Part 1A (West Bengal Sikkim and Chandernagore), Report, Calcutta, 1953, p.263.

Table 2.2 shows that soon after a tea estate had developed to a certain extent it was likely to be absorbed in a bigger limited Company, so that although the acreage increase the number of separate tea estates was remained low to improve efficiency of organisation and economy of costs. The average yield per acre had progressively increased during the period 1901 to 1951, except in 1921.

Between the period 1901 to 1931 area under cultivation of tea increased by nearly 73 per cent and production increased by nearly 114 per cent. After 1931 there had been very little increase in the acreage under tea indicating that almost all exploitable land had already been utilised and plantation was approaching optimum level. However, in spite of little expansion in area between the period 1931 to 1951, the production was doubled, this was due to improvement in average yield per acre by dint of good management and organisation.

### 2.3 Growth & Development of tea industry in West Bengal, 1951-1990.

So far, we have discussed the progress of tea industry in the two districts of West Bengal viz. Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri during the pre-independence period. Due to non-availability of data we could not present separately

progress of tea in the Terai. The figures of Terai is included in the figures of Darjeeling.

Now we have attempted to present the growth and development of tea industry in West Bengal during the post-independence period. The growth pattern is measured in terms of number of tea gardens, area under tea, production and average yield per hectare. We have also compared the position of West Bengal with other tea growing regions of India.

#### 2.3.1 Number of Tea Gardens

The number of tea gardens established in West Bengal and other tea growing regions of India is presented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 shows that during the last 40 years period, (1951 to 1990), the number of tea gardens in West Bengal increased by 51, out of which the maximum number of new tea gardens established in the Terai, very few new tea gardens were established in Darjeeling hills and Dooars.

In contrast to this, the number of tea gardens in Assam increased by 63 during the same period of time. The highest number of tea gardens were established in South India during the post-independence period. Over the past 40 years period (1951 to 1990), 7019 new tea gardens were established in South India. Out of which major gardens established were of

Table 2.3  
Number of Tea gardens in India, 1951-1990

| District/<br>State/Region | 1951  | 1961  | 1971   | 1980   | 1984   | 1985   | 1986   | 1987   | 1988   | 1989   | 1990*  |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Darjeeling                | -     | 99    | 97     | 103    | 102    | 102    | 102    | 102    | 102    | 102    | 102    |
| Terai (a)                 | -     | 47    | 48     | 48     | 53     | 63     | 62     | 69     | 73     | 82     | 82     |
| Dooars (b)                | -     | 155   | 151    | 154    | 156    | 158    | 158    | 159    | 162    | 163    | 163    |
| West Bengal               | 296   | 301   | 296    | 305    | 311    | 323    | 322    | 330    | 337    | 347    | 347    |
| Assam Valley              | 785   | 744   | 750    | 777    | 808    | 844    | 844    | 845    | 848    | 848    | 848    |
| North India **            | 2,305 | 2,521 | 2,517  | 2,561  | 2,594  | 2,650  | 2,927  | 2,937  | 2,948  | 2,936  | 2,933  |
| South India ***           | 3,909 | 6,978 | 9,498  | 10,829 | 10,879 | 10,887 | 10,894 | 10,902 | 10,905 | 10,920 | 10,928 |
| All India ****            | 6,214 | 9,499 | 12,015 | 13,390 | 13,473 | 13,537 | 13,821 | 13,839 | 13,853 | 13,856 | 13,861 |

(a) Including West Dinajpur.

(b) Including Cooch Behar.

\* Figures are provisional.

\*\* Including all tea growing areas in North India.

\*\*\* Including all tea growing areas in South India.

\*\*\*\* Including all tea growing areas in India.

Source : Tea Statistics - 1990-91, Published by Tea Board, Calcutta, p.4.

small size. The sizewise classification of the tea gardens in West Bengal, Assam and South India is given in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4

| District/<br>State/<br>Region | Sizewise classification of tea gardens<br>1990           |                          |                        |                         |                         |                         | (Figures in<br>hectars) |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                               | Up to<br>8.09<br>hec-<br>tares<br>up to<br>50<br>hectars | Above<br>8.09<br>hectars | Above<br>50<br>hectars | Above<br>100<br>hectars | Above<br>200<br>hectars | Above<br>400<br>hectars |                         |
| Darjeeling                    | -  | 3                        | 12                     | 36                      | 31                      | 7                       | 89                      |
| Terai                         | 10   | 2                        | 5                      | 13                      | 18                      | 11                      | 59                      |
| Dooars                        | 5  | 5                        | 4                      | 13                      | 47                      | 83                      | 157                     |
| West Bengal                   | 15   | 10                       | 21                     | 62                      | 96                      | 101                     | 305                     |
| Assam Valley                  | 12   | 61                       | 90                     | 136                     | 186                     | 203                     | 688                     |
| South India                   | 10,488   | 188                      | 43                     | 57                      | 108                     | 35                      | 10,919                  |

Note : The figures for tea estates will not tally with the no. of tea estates in Table 2.3 because of nonexistence/non-reporting of the tea estates still being registered with tea board.

Source : Tea Statistics - 1990-91, Published by Tea Board, Calcutta, pp.18-19.

It can be seen from the above table that 96 per cent of the estates in South India is of the size group of up to 8.90 hectares. 33 per cent of the tea estates in West Bengal and 30 per cent in Assam are of above 400 hectares.

### 2.3.2 Area Under Tea

The growth of area under tea in different tea growing regions of India over the past 40 years, with 1951 as a base year, is presented in Table 2.5 and Table 2.6.

It can be immediately seen from the table 2.5 and 2.6 that the increase in area under tea in West Bengal is much lower than that in Assam and also below the all India average except in Terai. The area under cultivation of tea in West Bengal rose by 27.13 per cent over a period of 40 years, 1951 to 1990. i.e., 0.62 per cent annually. The increase is 47.98 per cent i.e., one per cent annually in Assam and 31.47 per cent or 0.70 per cent annually in the whole of India during the same period.\*

The area under cultivation of tea in South India expanded at a very slow rate. The increase recorded is 10.71 per cent or 0.26 per cent annually over the period, 1951 to 1990.

In contrast to this, the area under cultivation in the Terai region rose by 58.83 per cent, i.e., 1.19 per cent annually over the same period of time.

Data on annual growth rate in area as shown in Table 2.6 reveals that during the sub-period, 1971-1980, the rate of expansion under the cultivation of tea decreased in all tea growing regions of India except in Darjeeling and South India. This is due to the depression of tea in international market,

Table 2.5

## Area under Tea in India-1951-1990

(Figures in hectars)

| District/<br>State/Region | 1951     | 1961     | 1971     | 1981     | 1985     | 1987     | 1990     | % Increase<br>over 1951 |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------------|
| Dooars                    | 54,609   | 54,756   | 59,485   | 63,418   | 65,816   | 66,422   | 67,760   | 24.00                   |
| Darjeeling                | 16,569   | 18,605   | 18,245   | 19,239   | 19,804   | 20,012   | 20,065   | 21.00                   |
| Terai                     | 8,402    | 9,344    | 10,769   | 11,314   | 12,395   | 13,096   | 13,345   | 58.83                   |
| West Bengal               | 79,580   | 82,705   | 88,499   | 93,971   | 98,015   | 99,530   | 1,01,170 | 27.13                   |
| Assam Valley              | 1,55,674 | 1,62,367 | 1,82,325 | 2,03,038 | 2,15,117 | 2,25,783 | 2,30,363 | 47.98                   |
| North India *             | 2,48,593 | 2,56,928 | 2,82,729 | 3,09,066 | 3,25,290 | 3,36,570 | 3,41,004 | 37.17                   |
| South India **            | 68,247   | 24,301   | 73,787   | 74,563   | 73,676   | 74,765   | 75,559   | 10.71                   |
| All India ***             | 3,16,840 | 3,31,229 | 3,56,516 | 3,83,629 | 3,98,966 | 4,11,335 | 4,16,563 | 31.47                   |

\* Includes all tea growing areas in North India

\*\* Includes all tea growing areas in South India

\*\*\* Includes all tea growing areas in India.

Source : Appendix-I.

Table 2.6

Annual growth rate of area  
1951-1990 (in percentage)

| District/<br>State/Region | 1951-'60 | 1961-'70 | 1971-'80 | 1981-'90 | 1951-'90 |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Dooars                    | -0.02    | 0.79     | 0.54     | 0.66     | 0.55     |
| Darjeeling                | 1.14     | -0.29    | 0.53     | 0.42     | 0.49     |
| Terai                     | 0.96     | 1.48     | 0.64     | 1.66     | 1.19     |
| West Bengal               | 0.34     | 0.67     | 0.55     | 0.74     | 0.62     |
| Assam Valley              | 0.40     | 1.04     | 0.96     | 1.27     | 1.00     |
| North India               | 0.32     | 0.87     | 0.80     | 0.99     | 0.81     |
| South India               | 0.81     | -0.04    | 0.17     | 0.13     | 0.26     |
| All India                 | 0.43     | 0.67     | 0.67     | 0.83     | 0.70     |

Source : Appendix-I.

prices fell down and many gardens were closed down. However, the position to some extent was recovered in the next sub-period i.e., 1981 to 1990. But apparently the growth rate in area under the cultivation of tea in all tea growing regions of India is more or less stagnant and it was less than one per cent annually in every decade over the past 40 years period 1951 to 1990.

In short, when compared, the rate of expansion of area under the cultivation of tea West Bengal lagged behind that of Assam and all India average. One Important reason for this poor rate of expansion possibly was the impact of the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 under section 6(3) of the

Act, about 29,000 hectares of land belonging to tea estates and constituting 29 per cent of the total area under tea cultivation in the state was vested with the State Government. An analysis of the seven year development plans submitted by the tea gardens indicates that the estate are left with very little suitable land for the extension plantation. The estimated area currently available with the estates is as under :

Table 2.7  
Area available under the cultivation of Tea

| District    | Area available |      |       | % to the current area under tea |     |       |
|-------------|----------------|------|-------|---------------------------------|-----|-------|
|             | A              | B    | A + B | A                               | B   | A + B |
| Darjeeling  | 1360           | 1273 | 2633  | 7.0                             | 6.0 | 13%   |
| Terai       | 868            | 836  | 1704  | 7.0                             | 6.0 | 13%   |
| Dooars      | 3164           | 3659 | 6823  | 4.7                             | 5.4 | 10%   |
| West Bengal | 5392           | 5768 | 11160 | 5.4                             | 5.8 | 11%   |

Note : A = Area immediately available.  
B = Area that would be made available after reclamation & development.

Source : North Bengal Yellow Pages, 1991, published by 'BIRDS EYE' Publication Division, Siliguri, p.38.

### 2.3.3 Production of Tea

The growth of production of tea in different tea growing regions of India over the past 40 years, 1951 to 1990 is presented in Table 2.8 and 2.9.

Table 2.8

Production of Tea in India  
1951-1990

(Quantity in thousand kg.)

| District/<br>State/Region | 1951    | 1961    | 1971    | 1981    | 1985    | 1987    | 1990    | % increase<br>over 1951 |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------------|
| Dooars                    | 63,994  | 66,898  | 80,840  | 100,251 | 121,956 | 116,229 | 114,124 | 78.34                   |
| Darjeeling                | 7,639   | 10,107  | 10,293  | 12,226  | 12,921  | 12,099  | 14,499  | 84.96                   |
| Terai                     | 6,376   | 9,253   | 12,954  | 15,782  | 22,494  | 21,289  | 21,130  | 231.40                  |
| West Bengal               | 78,158  | 86,258  | 104,087 | 128,259 | 157,371 | 149,617 | 149,735 | 91.58                   |
| Assam Valley              | 150,370 | 182,311 | 223,665 | 305,130 | 352,538 | 363,739 | 388,181 | 158.15                  |
| North India *             | 233,525 | 273,305 | 332,331 | 437,790 | 514,295 | 518,373 | 545,106 | 133.43                  |
| South India **            | 51,874  | 81,092  | 103,137 | 122,637 | 141,867 | 146,878 | 175,232 | 237.80                  |
| All India ***             | 285,399 | 354,397 | 435,468 | 560,427 | 656,162 | 665,251 | 720,338 | 152.40                  |

\* Includes all tea growing areas in North India.

\*\* Includes all tea growing areas in South India.

\*\*\* Includes all tea growing areas in India.

Source : Appendix I.

Table 2.9

Annual Growth Rate of Production  
1951-1990

( in percentage)

| District/<br>State/ Region | 1951-'60 | 1961-'70 | 1971-'80 | 1981-'90 | 1951-'90 |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Dooars                     | -0.11    | 1.70     | 2.61     | 1.30     | 1.49     |
| Darjeeling                 | 2.57     | -0.05    | 2.11     | 1.72     | 1.59     |
| Terai                      | 3.79     | 2.61     | 2.05     | 2.96     | 3.12     |
| West Bengal                | 0.99     | 1.61     | 2.50     | 1.56     | 1.68     |
| Assam Valley               | 1.94     | 1.52     | 3.00     | 2.44     | 2.46     |
| North India                | 1.58     | 1.50     | 2.81     | 2.22     | 2.20     |
| South India                | 4.57     | 2.24     | 2.43     | 3.63     | 3.17     |
| All India                  | 2.19     | 1.68     | 2.72     | 2.54     | 2.40     |

Source : Appendix I

It can be seen from the above two tables that the production of tea in West Bengal has moved up by 91.58 per cent, i.e., 1.68 per cent annually over the last 40 years period, i.e., from 1951 to 1990. When compared, this growth rate with that of other tea growing regions of India, it is found that West Bengal lagged behind Assam, South India and also the all India average. The growth in production was recorded 158.15 per cent i.e., 2.46 per cent annually in Assam and 152.40 per cent, i.e., 2.40 per cent annually in the whole of India over the same period of time.\*

The tea gardens of South India recorded the highest rate of growth in production. It was 237.80 per cent, i.e., 3.17 per cent annually over the period from 1951 to 1990.

Although in respect of growth in production, West Bengal lagged behind Assam, South India and all India average, Terai tea growing region however is ahead of Assam and all India average both in terms of absolute growth and annual growth rate in production. Production of tea in the Terai rose by 231.40 percent i.e., 3.72 per cent annually over the period, 1951 to 1990. This due to higher yield rate in the Terai compared to that in Assam and all India.

The movement of the yield per hectare in different tea growing regions of India is presented in Table 2.10 and 2.11.

Table 2.10  
Average yield per hectare (in kg.)  
1951-1990

| District/<br>State/Region | 1951 | 1961 | 1971 | 1981 | 1985 | 1987 | 1990 | % incre-<br>ase over<br>1951 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------------------|
| Dooars                    | 1172 | 1222 | 1354 | 1581 | 1853 | 1750 | 1684 | 43.69                        |
| Darjeeling                | 473  | 543  | 564  | 635  | 652  | 605  | 723  | 52.85                        |
| Terai                     | 759  | 990  | 1203 | 1395 | 1815 | 1626 | 1583 | 108.56                       |
| West Bengal               | 982  | 1043 | 1176 | 1365 | 1606 | 1503 | 1480 | 50.71                        |
| Assam Valley*             | 966  | 1123 | 1227 | 1503 | 1631 | 1611 | 1685 | 74.43                        |
| North India**             | 939  | 1064 | 1175 | 1416 | 1576 | 1540 | 1599 | 70.29                        |
| All India***              | 901  | 1070 | 1221 | 1461 | 1641 | 1617 | 1729 | 91.90                        |

\* Includes all tea growing areas in North India.

\*\* Includes all tea growing areas in South India.

\*\*\* Includes all tea growing areas in India.

Source : Appendix I

Table 2.11

Annual Growth Rate of Yield  
1951-1990

| District/<br>State/Region | 1951-'60 | 1961-'70 | 1971-'80 | 1981-'90 | 1951-'90 |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Dooars                    | -0.09    | 0.90     | 2.05     | 0.63     | 0.93     |
| Darjeeling                | 1.45     | 0.25     | 1.57     | 1.31     | 1.09     |
| Terai                     | 1.47     | 1.21     | 1.40     | 1.27     | 1.90     |
| West Bengal               | 0.08     | 0.98     | 1.93     | 0.81     | 1.06     |
| Assam Valley              | 0.07     | 0.48     | 2.02     | 1.15     | 1.44     |
| North India               | 0.09     | 0.63     | 2.00     | 0.91     | 1.37     |
| South India               | 3.29     | 2.28     | 2.25     | 3.49     | 2.90     |
| All India                 | 0.75     | 1.00     | 2.03     | 1.70     | 1.69     |

Source : Appendix I

It can be immediately seen from the above two tables that the yield rate in the Terai has recorded a modest rise. It rose by 108.56 per cent, i.e., 1.90 per cent annually over the last 40 years period from 1951 to 1990. This growth rate of yield is above the all West Bengal average, Assam and all India average but below the South India average. The increase in yield rate was 50.71 per cent, i.e., 1.06 per cent annually in West Bengal, 74.43 per cent i.e., 1.44 per cent annually in Assam and 91.90 per cent i.e., 1.69 per cent annually in all India over the same period of time.\*

In contrast to this, the yield rate in South India increased by 205.13 per cent, i.e., 2.90 per cent annually over the period 1951 to 1990.

Thus, although area under the cultivation of tea in South India did not expand significantly, production growth rate recorded a modest rise because of higher yield rate compared to that of any other tea growing regions of India.

#### 2.4 Summary

The progress of tea industry in West Bengal during the post independence period is more or less stagnant. In respect of production of tea in West Bengal lagged behind other tea growing regions of India. Availability of land for extension of tea area in West Bengal having been identified as a major constraint, it would not be out of place to mention that the loss of planted areas in estates bordering rivers due to erosion is no less a significant constraint and demands urgent preventive measures. Moreover, in view of the very perceptible changes in the climatic pattern and recurring phenomenon of draught in the Terai and Dooars regions, it is imperative to establish an irrigation grid through the harnessing of numerous rivers and streams flowing through the tea growing areas of North Bengal.

Notes & References

1. Scott, J.M., The Tea Story, Published by Heineman, London, 1964, p.44.
2. Ibid., p.44.
3. Awasthi, R.C., Economics of Tea Industry of India, Published by United Publisher, Gauhati, Assam, 1975, p.33.
4. Dash, A.J., Bengal Gazetteers, Darjeeling, 1947, p.114.
5. O'Malley, L.S.S., Bengal Gazetteers, Darjeeling, 1911, pp.73-74.
6. Mitra, A.K., Census of India, 1951, Vol.VI, Part 1A (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chander Nagore), Report, Calcutta, 1953, p.266.
7. Ghosh, B.C., "The Development of the Tea Industry in the District of Jalpaiguri", Jalpaiguri District Centenary Souvenir 1869-1968, p.283.
8. Ibid., p.283.

\* We have used the following formula to find out the annual growth rate of area under tea, production and yield per hectare.

$$g = \left( \sqrt[n]{\frac{A}{P}} - 1 \right) \times 100$$

Where,

A = Value of variable in final year.

P = Value of variable in initial year.

n = Number of years.

g = Compound annual rate of growth (percentage).

**CHAPTER III : Problems of Recruitment and Organization of  
Labour in Tea Industry.**

**Content :**

- 3.1 Recruitment System.**
- 3.2 Recruitment Legislation.**
- 3.3 Category of Workers.**
- 3.4 Organization Hierarchy.**
- 3.5 Summary.**

In the early days the planters found considerable difficulties in procuring adequate labour force for their gardens. Plantations areas were situated in far-off and unpopulated lands largely in jungles and hilly range with a damp climate and unhealthy surroundings. The places were abodes of snakes, tigers, elephants and other wild animals and were diseases like Malaria and Kala-zar were widely prevalent. People used to tremble in the name of working in the tea gardens situated far away from their villages. There was a feeling in the country that it would be "better to go to Andamans than to a tea garden".<sup>1</sup> Under such a state of working condition the recruitment of labourers presented a serious problem in the beginning of the industry.

### 3.1 Recruitment System

Recruitment is the first step in the employment of labour and the methods through which labourer is brought into industry has much to do with the ultimate success or failure

of such employment. In the beginning low wages and hazardous conditions of work provided strong disincentives for the local population to work in the tea plantations. Thus the industry had to depend entirely on various sources of agencies for recruitment of workers from outside. There were some recruiting agents in Assam, Sardars were in north-east India and Kanganiyas were in South India.<sup>2</sup>

The tea industry in Assam was started by colonial planters in 1839. As local labourers did not like to give up their easy going lives to do regular tea garden work, the bulk of the labour force required for the industry had to be imported. The British planters were aware of the fact that indentured labourers were recruited from the labour surplus areas of India and were sent to the plantations in Malaya, West Indies and other colonies. Thus, they looked for imported labour from the labour surplus areas to keep the industry growing as far as possible.<sup>3</sup>

The Assam Company recruited the first batch of labourers from Chotonagpur division in Bihar in 1841.<sup>4</sup> Later bulk of the labour force was also recruited from Raigarh of Madhya Pradesh and from several feudatory States of Orissa. Experienced planters suggested recruitment of aboriginal tribes because such tribals were hardy and the rate of mortality was lower among them. Santals, Mundas, Oroans, Kharias, Gonds, Khonds, Kisang and Nagesians were the important tribals who were recruited.<sup>5</sup>

Tea plantations in Dooars started by 1876 when the population of the Dooars was very thin. The local people had plenty of land and were engaged in cereal food cultivation. They lived an easy life. So local men were not available for the arduous job of tea plantation and these people did not like to experience the life of a labourer in an industry. So like Assam, labour force had to be recruited from outside. Both the European and India tea planters had to do this. Within a short period the number of tribal people from Chotonagpur (Bihar), Madhya Pradesh, Madras began to increase and their number was considerable. Formerly, the labourers were supposed to go home after the expiry of the term of "contract", but mostly they settled in the Dooars permanently and were not in a position to go back to their villages.<sup>6</sup>

Darjeeling plantations was begun in 1835 on experimental basis and by 1856 development had advanced from the experimental to a more extensive and commercial stage.<sup>7</sup> During the beginning of the industry the only human inhabitants of the District were a few hundred Lepchas and Sherpas. The Lepchas were known as the 'Rongpa' or 'ravine' folk, who are probably of Indo-Chinese in origin. These people lived in small isolated settlements and their main occupation was hunting and fishing. They did not like to give up their easy-going lives to do regular tea garden work. Besides they were not tillers of the soil, and preferred hunting and fishing to cultivation and plucking the tea leaves. Sherpas were not used to

agriculture or settled cultivation. Thus, the solution was in the recruitment of the Nepalese, but they were very shy; besides they had their own villages and land in Eastern Nepal or Southern Sikkim.<sup>8</sup> But very soon the population of Nepal was rising rapidly and the economic pressure forced them to come out. Thus, a good number of Nepalis were compelled to migrate from Nepal and settled in Darjeeling district, and planters recruited all these labourers without formalities.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in the hilly regions majority workers were Nepali immigrants.

In the Terai the population was mixed with a low proportion of tribal immigrants from Chotonagpur. The local people like Meches, Rajbansis etc. rarely worked in the tea plantations.

There were no specific legislation under which labourers could be recruited and forced to work in tea gardens until 1859. Recruitment was done in an unsystematic manner. Planters in most cases, have no more connection with recruitment than was involved in paying for the labour.

Before the legalisation of Sardari System of recruitment, the recruitment of labourers in Assam was done mainly through arkatis who employed dubious means to recruit unsuspecting tribals.<sup>10</sup> The arkatis were mainly Baraiks or Ghasis who were landless craftsmen living in the villages, some of them were also Hindus and Muslims.<sup>11</sup> They tempted the workers with promises of high wages and other facilities and were taken to

the plantation areas. Some used very questionable methods, like intoxicating the workers or kidnapping the minors. Some wives were kidnapped from their husbands, and husbands from their families, leaving the members destitute and poverty stricken.<sup>12</sup>

The recruited workers were then sent off on a hazardous journey to the tea gardens. There was practically no roads or transport facilities in north-east India. It was about 6 to 10 weeks journey in those days from Calcutta to different regions of Assam and North Bengal where tea plantations had been taken up. In some cases recruits had to be taken by boats and steamers and they had to cover on foot 100 to 150 miles or so from the point of embarkation to reach the plantation areas; some were missing and deaths occurred on the ways.<sup>13</sup> The mortality of labour in transit was very appalling. Griffiths stated that some 84,915 labourers landed in Assam between 1863 and 1866 of which over 30,000 died by January 1866.<sup>14</sup> Again in tea gardens the recruits suffered from several cruelty and hardship. Housing facilities, medical facilities and food supply in the gardens were utterly inadequate. The result was that labourers died even after reaching the tea gardens. But once the labourers reached there, they were not allowed to return or even to communicate with the members of their families.

In 1962-63 a research was conducted by the Cultural Research Institute under the Ministry of Tribal Welfare of

the Govt. of West Bengal and published a bulletin, "Impact of tea industry on the life of the tribals of West Bengal" in 1964. We get the following description from this bulletin regarding recruitment of labourers and their subsequent settlement in the tea gardens :

"... Since the middle of the 18th Century i.e., at the initial stage of this industry, a huge number of natural labourers from different tribal belts of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa need to be collected every season by simply alluring them with the help of the 'brokers'. Only those tribals who did not have secured economy, e.g., the landless labourers were tempted to participate in this sort of migration although not voluntarily and only very few of them could manage to come back. The rest of them were either forced or tempted to settle down in the tea garden areas thereby keeping the manpower secured for the industry. Some settled voluntarily being very much attracted by the care-free life far away from the binding of their traditional way of life and also by the security of service in the gardens".<sup>15</sup>

From the above statement we get two main causes of migration to the tea gardens, viz, economic and noneconomic. Economic causes arised out of inclease of population and consequent pressure on the soil. This leaded Junior member of the families go out to earn when the ancestral holding became insufficient to support all. Besides indebtness was

another great stimulant to migration to the tea gardens. Non economic causes which sometimes operated were love of travel and change, domestic disagreements, hopes of obtaining lucrative employment as sardars.

The recruitment of labourers was very expensive, so the planters forced them to settle down in the tea garden areas for keeping the manpower secured for the industry. The planters also prevented the desertion of workers by Workmen's Breach of Contract Act, 1859. Under this Act the worker had to sign a contract agreeing to work in the tea gardens for a specified number of years. Criminal penalties of imprisonment or fine could be imposed on workers breaking their contract. The Act did not give the workers any protection against the planters. But this act was not applied to Bengal and only reserved for Assam.

In this respect we may mention the Statement of Darokanath Gangopadhyaya, a Social Scientist", Tea Cultivation in Assam is a grand industry and it has largely contributed to the material prosperity of the produce . . . . If, in securing these advantages the immigrant labourers were subjected to such hardships as were not beyond human endurance, we would probably not have raise our voice ..."<sup>16</sup>

Recruitment to the Dooars and Terai was mainly done by the garden Sardars, i.e., men employed as labourers in the tea estates and sent back to their country with their employer's certificate countersigned by a magistrate authorising

them to recruit from their own country. The Sardar told his relations and friends of the wages, and life and conditions upon the tea gardens. Everything was discussed in details. The young people, those whom the land cannot support, listen to the accounts of the new life which is to be theirs, and finally finally they decided to accompany some recruiters, generally a relation or connection to Assam or to Bhutan, as they still called the Dooars. They were taken to adopt where the agent of the recruiting organisation examined them and enquired. No married girl was accepted unless her husband was with her. No minor was accepted without the approval of his parents.

The Sardars were paid Rs. 3/- to Rs. 5/- for every recruit obtained by them who works for a year. Recruits, on being recruited are given a settling allowance of Rs. 5/- to Rs. 10/-.<sup>17</sup> The Sardars were usually accompanied by a garden Supervisor who supervised the recruitment and also kept an eye on the Sardars. This is because that the planters feared that if the Sardar was sent alone he would never return.<sup>18</sup>

The recruited workers of Dooars and Terai had always been free and under no contract or agreement.

In Darjeeling hills the vast majority of the present workers were born on the tea estates, and may be regarded as a permanently settled population, engaged in a hereditary and congenial occupation. No organised recruitment in Nepal for

employment in this district was permitted by the Nepal Durbar, and any fresh additions to the labour force employed in tea, for many years past, have consisted of quite voluntary immigrants of Nepal or Sikkim, generally relations of those already in tea; and such additions from a very small percentage of the numbers employed, which are really kept up by the natural reproduction of the settled labourers. As practically all immigration from Nepal has been by complete families, there has been no disturbance of family life, and families have settled complete on a tea estate, and they are multiplied and prospered and in many cases have been subsequently joined by other families and relations from the same village in Nepal.

Although the Nepal Durbar was opposed to further immigration from that country, there was a certain drift (especially in seasons of scarcity) into the Darjeeling district for work on tea estates. This may be taken to indicate that conditions of life on the tea gardens were considered preferable to those in their native villages. Families once settled in tea very rarely return to Nepal.

Thus it is apparent that the economic hardship in the native land was the prime cause of migration of tea labourers. It is not possible to state the exact number of men and women workers separately during the different stages of migration of tea labourers in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts as no such systematic data are available. However, the total number

of immigration to Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts at different stages is available in 1951 census of Ashoke Mitra. This is presented in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2. This mainly relates to migration in tea estates of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts.

Table 3.1  
Immigration to Jalpaiguri 1891-1951

| Year | Actual population | Immigrants | % of immigrants to actual population |
|------|-------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1891 | 4,33,334          | 44,329     | 10.23                                |
| 1901 | 5,44,906          | 95,899     | 17.60                                |
| 1911 | 6,61,282          | 1,52,174   | 23.01                                |
| 1921 | 6,94,056          | 1,63,024   | 23.48                                |
| 1931 | 7,39,160          | 1,58,757   | 21.48                                |
| 1941 | 8,45,702          | 1,56,765   | 18.54                                |
| 1951 | 9,14,538          | 2,78,842   | 30.49                                |

Source : Mitra, A.K. Census of India, 1951, Vol.VI; Part 1A (West Bengal, SIKKIM and Chandernagore), Report, Calcutta, 1953, p.264.

Table 3.1 shows that immigration to Jalpaiguri district increased continuously up to 1921. The figure of immigration increased by 116.34 per cent during 1891 to 1901 and by 58.18 per cent during 1901 to 1911. After 1911 the rate of increase of immigrants considerably decreased. In 1921 the immigrants composed of near about one fourth of the actual

population. Thereafter the composition of immigrants to the actual population decreased.

Table 3.2

## Immigration to Darjeeling 1891-1951

| Year | Actual population | Immigrants | % of immigrants to actual population |
|------|-------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1891 | 2,23,314          | 1,19,670   | 53.59                                |
| 1901 | 2,49,117          | 1,13,588   | 45.60                                |
| 1911 | 2,65,550          | 1,11,269   | 41.90                                |
| 1921 | 2,82,748          | 1,01,807   | 36.00                                |
| 1931 | 3,19,635          | 1,00,700   | 31.50                                |
| 1941 | 3,76,369          | 95,750     | 25.44                                |
| 1951 | 4,45,260          | 1,00,311   | 22.53                                |

Source : Mitra, A.K. Census of India, 1951, Vol. VI, Part 1A (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore), Report, Calcutta, 1953, p.268.

The figure of immigrants for 1951 includes 98,572 displaced persons. If this figure is excluded the figure of total immigration came to 1,80,270 which is 19.71 per cent of actual population.

Since the data on Table 3.1 mainly relates to migration in tea estates, we may conclude that the dependency of the industry on migrated labour largely relieved by 1921. After 1921 the industry had come to have a settled labour population who were begetting their successors. This had been possible

as the tea estates of the district had never encouraged much of indentured adult male labour, as happened in Assam. The even proportion of male and female immigrants indicates that the tea companies of the district were from the beginning set on a stable labour policy and on acquiring families of labourers instead of many workers without attachment of family ties and therefore without a stake in their jobs.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.2 Recruitment Legislation

There were no specific legislation under which labourers could be recruited and forced to work in the tea gardens. The recruitment of indentured labourers for the plantations in the British Colonies was made from India under the Indian Emigration Act of 1837.<sup>20</sup> This Act was not applicable in case of recruitment of labourers for plantations within India. But the recruitment under the free contractors' system was virtually the indenture system. The recruited labourers were bound by contracts under Section 490 and 492 of the Indian Penal Code (known as penal contracts) and also under workmen's Breach of Contract Act of 1859. The recruits were put under contract to work in the tea gardens in Assam for a term not less than 5 years.

By 1861 the British Government began to concern about labour recruitment policy in tea gardens and in the same year

the Bengal Government appointed a committee to enquire into the emigration of labour to Assam and Cachar which resulted in the passing of the first Inland Emigration Act 1863. The Act provided that all recruiters were to be licensed and every emigrant was to be registered before the district magistrate and his contract of service should not exceed five years. But the Act did not provide any provision regarding wages and conditions of service in tea gardens.

As soon as the labourers arrived they refused to work or leave service because of unfortunate state of relations existed in tea gardens. Punishment for desertion was slight and once punished they got release from all engagements. So the labourers willingly incurred the liability to punishment in the hope of being set free from the contract.<sup>21</sup> Thus the Government amended the Act in 1865. The new Act put more powers in the hands of the tea garden managers to keep the recruited labourers under their control. The Act empowered them to arrest absconding labourers without warrant and indolence and desertion made punishable by law. In a way of concession to labour the Act reduced the period of contract from 5 years to 3 years and provided a clause that the contracts would be voidable in case of unhealthy tea gardens. It also provided fixed monthly wages.<sup>22</sup>

The Act of 1863 and its subsequent amendment in 1865 did not remove the abuses in the recruitment. Workers continued

to be deceived by false promises, now perhaps through licensed contractors. The Government set up another Enquiry Commission in 1868. The Commission reported that recruits were still induced to emigrate by misrepresentation, mortality in transit were high and unfit persons were sent in large numbers. The Commission also observed that many abuses of Contractors system were absent in the recruitment through garden sardars. But the sardari system of recruitment was not included in the Act of 1865. Thus the Act of 1865 was amended in 1870 to legalise recruitment by garden sardars.

The period thereafter saw several amendments of the Act. But no improvement in the condition of recruitment took place upto 1901. The Bengal Government appointed a commission of enquiry in 1895. The Commission criticised abuses in connection with the prevailing system of recruitment and recommended several measures. Assam labour and Emigration Act was passed by the Government of India on the basis of these recommendations in 1901. The Act prohibited the recruitment of labour except through licensed contractors. The Act was amended in 1908 and again in 1915. This amendment put an end to Contractors' system and established what is known as the garden Sardari System of recruitment. The Government of India passed an Act in 1925 <sup>repealing</sup> the workmen's breach of contract Act, 1859. From that time onwards tea gardens labour were not required to enter into contract for employment.<sup>23</sup>

The number of labourers recruited by Sardars during the period 1918-1919 to 1928-1929 is presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

## Labourers recruited by Sardars 1918-19 to 1928-29

| Year    | Authorised Sardars | Labourers |
|---------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1918-19 | 45,112             | 1,72,096  |
| 1919-20 | 28,721             | 53,034    |
| 1920-21 | 6,388              | 16,188    |
| 1921-22 | 14,148             | 16,192    |
| 1922-23 | 19,796             | 20,183    |
| 1923-24 | 30,880             | 36,685    |
| 1924-25 | 26,425             | 22,681    |
| 1925-26 | 26,736             | 29,710    |
| 1926-27 | 30,100             | 32,500    |
| 1927-28 | 30,209             | 35,412    |
| 1928-29 | 35,763             | 60,023    |

Source : Lokashruti - 1992, Published by West Bengal Rajya Loka Sanskriti Parishad, p.23.

The Labour Commission's Report, 1931 resulted in passing of the tea District Emigration Labour Act, 1932. The main objective of the Act are to control recruitment and to forward assisted emigrants from other states to the tea gardens in Assam, and to grant a greater measure of freedom in the system of recruitment than had previously <sup>been</sup> enjoyed by the industry. Employers are prevented from recruiting otherwise than by

means of certified garden Sardars or licensed recruiters. Persons under the age of 16 could not be emigrated unless accompanied by their parents or guardians, and the women could not be recruited without the consent of their husbands. The workers can go back in case of bad health etc. The Act also conferred on the assisted emigrants the right of repatriation at the cost of employer after three year service.

As a result of the act 1932 the planters have established an organisation called the Tea Districts Labour Association with its headquarter in Calcutta for the purpose of recruitment of labour. The Association recruited labour from six recruiting provinces of Bengal, Behar, Orissa, C.P., U.P. and Madras. The machinery of the association includes 19 depots known as the Local Forwarding Agencies. The licenses for recruitment of local forwarding agents are liable to forfeiture if abuse of the law can be proved against them. The overall incharge ship of recruitment was in the hands of Controller of Emigration, appointed by the Government. The Controller, by means of surprise visits to the transit depots at meal times, satisfies himself that the workers are neither ill-fed nor unduly fatigued. Local authorities were also empowered to supervise the recruitment, forwarding and employment of labour in tea gardens. The cost of recruitment through this association came to be about Rs. 95 in 1946-47 and Rs. 107 in 1947-48 and Rs. 124 in 1948-49.<sup>24</sup>

Thus after the enactment of Tea District Emigrant Labour Act of 1932, considerable improvements took place in tea garden labour recruitment system. This is the first time that the Government seriously concerned <sup>itself</sup> with the abuses connected with labour recruitment in tea plantations and actions taken by the Government goes largely to the favour of labourers. The 80 years history of diplorable conditions of labour recruitment ~~was~~ thereby ended. Mortality in transit reduced considerably. Among the 26,000 persons forwarded to Assam during 1937, there were only nine deaths, six of them being children below the age of four.<sup>25</sup>

The Tea District Labour Association was liquidated in 1960. The ninth session of the Industrial Committee on Plantations in August 1960 decided that no fresh recruitment should be made from outside . . . except with the permission of the Government and the movement of labourers, from surplus to deficit areas within Assam should be encouraged with the help of the special Employment Exchange.<sup>26</sup> The Government of Assam was interested in this matter because the position of labour supply in the tea gardens of Assam had revised from shortage to surplus and unemployment in tea gardens appeared in the scene.

Now there are almost settled labour force in North-East India and the planters could recruit labour directly instead of sending agents to distant aboriginal areas. In West Bengal,

at present, planters recruited permanent workers from the members of the families already recruited, and temporary workers during the plucking season from adjoining villages. A distinct feature of recruitment in tea garden is that the unit of recruitment is the family and not the individual.

### 3.3 Category of Workers

There are four categories of workers engaged in tea industry. They are adult male and female, adolescents and children. Adults are those who are 18 years of age and above, while adolescents are those between the age group of 16 to 18, and children are those between the ages of 12 and 16. The number of different categories of workers is given in Table 3.4.

In the Terai there were 18,575 (49.04%) males, 17,140 (45.25%) females, 675 (1.78%) adolescents and 1485 (3.93%) children employed in tea garden in 1990. The male workers were more than 3.78 per cent over female workers.

The total number of female workers is slightly higher than the males at all India level. The two tea growing states of South India, viz. Tamil Nadu and Kerala employed higher proportion of female workers, while the tea gardens of Karnataka employed higher proportion of male workers. The male workers in the tea gardens of Assam were 3.32 per cent more over the

Table 3.4  
Labour Force in Tea Industry  
1990

| District/<br>State/<br>Region | Male              | Female            | Adoles-<br>cent<br>(A) | Child-<br>ren<br>(C) | Total            | Total              |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
|                               |                   |                   |                        |                      | (A+C)            |                    |
| Dooars                        | 77543<br>(50.79)  | 63706<br>(41.73)  | 4706<br>(3.08)         | 6725<br>(4.40)       | 11431<br>(7.48)  | 152680<br>(100.00) |
| Darjeeling                    | 17885<br>(37.17)  | 29043<br>(60.36)  | 440<br>(0.91)          | 748<br>(1.56)        | 1188<br>(2.47)   | 48116<br>(100.00)  |
| Terai                         | 18575<br>(49.04)  | 17140<br>(45.25)  | 675<br>(1.78)          | 1485<br>(3.93)       | 2160<br>(5.71)   | 37875<br>(100.00)  |
| West Bengal                   | 114003<br>(45.84) | 119889<br>(48.21) | 5821<br>(2.34)         | 8958<br>(3.61)       | 14779<br>(5.95)  | 248671<br>(100.00) |
| Assam                         | 251511<br>(46.43) | 233486<br>(43.11) | 15170<br>(2.80)        | 41494<br>(7.66)      | 56664<br>(10.46) | 541661<br>(100.00) |
| Tamil Nadu                    | 44303<br>(43.10)  | 56436<br>(54.91)  | 1877<br>(1.83)         | 170<br>(0.16)        | 2047<br>(1.99)   | 102786<br>(100.00) |
| Karnataka                     | 2252<br>(53.40)   | 1868<br>(44.30)   | 75<br>(1.78)           | 22<br>(0.52)         | 97<br>(2.30)     | 4217<br>(100.00)   |
| Kerala                        | 33539<br>(45.19)  | 39719<br>(53.39)  | 1025<br>(1.38)         | 105<br>(0.14)        | 1130<br>(1.52)   | 74388<br>(100.00)  |
| South India                   | 80094<br>(44.16)  | 98023<br>(54.04)  | 2977<br>(1.64)         | 297<br>(0.16)        | 3274<br>(1.8 )   | 181391<br>(100.00) |
| All India*                    | 453001<br>(45.91) | 458519<br>(46.47) | 24148<br>(2.45)        | 51113<br>(5.17)      | 75261<br>(7.62)  | 986781<br>(100.00) |

Note : Figures in parenthesis are the percentages.

\* Includes all tea growing areas in the country.

Source : Tea statistics - 1990-91, pp.144 & 147.

female workers. In West Bengal tea gardens of Darjeeling hills employed substantially higher proportion of female workers while

in the other two tea growing regions of the state, viz. Dooars and Terai the female workers were outnumbered.

There are 24,148 adolescents and 51,113 children workers employed at all India level in 1990. In terms of percentages, adolescents accounts for 2.45 per cent of the total labour force while children account for 5.17 per cent. Thus the proportion of children workers were higher than adolescents. This was same in the tea gardens of West Bengal and Assam. While the three tea producing states in South India (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala) employed higher percentage of adolescents than the children. The bulk of the children workers lies in Assam. The Tea industry of the state employed 41,494 children workers which accounts for 7.66 per cent of the total labour force.

Most of the workers in tea industry live within the garden area. The employers provided housing to the workers for their own interest. As in the early days the tea industry suffered the problem of labour shortage, the employers always encouraged recruitment by complete families, rather than individual adult male or female. They were housed in the gardens. Gradually the families were multiplied and could secure the man power for the industry. Subsequently the Plantation Labour Act 1951 which came into force in 1955, makes it compulsory for the employers to provide housing for the workers. The tea garden managers also favoured the

settlement of time-expired labourers in the vicinity of the gardens. Because, apart from a regular labour force kept as resident labour all the year round the planters needed extra labour much more than their normal requirements during the peak tea plucking season. If they maintain a regular labour force at the peak level of requirements their financial obligations became greater. So long labour reside under their control in the gardens they were under certain obligations such as supply of rice at concession rates, housing facilities and others. Thus they favoured settlement of the time-expired labourers near the tea gardens, so that they could have a 'reserve' supply of labourers for meeting extra requirements during peak plucking seasons. In fact, some tea garden managers assisted labourers in reclaiming Government waste land near the gardens and even provided some materials to construct houses. Some managers allotted unused garden land which was in their possession much in excess of their own requirements.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the workers permanently settled in the tea growing area, with little or no contract with their places of origin.

The number of resident and non-resident labourers in the tea industry is given in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 shows that the percentage of resident labour in the tea gardens of West Bengal is higher than that of in other tea growing regions of India. In Dooars and Darjeeling

Table 3.5

## Resident and non-resident labour in tea industry-1990

| District/<br>State/Region | Resident<br>labour | Non-resident<br>labour | Percentage of<br>resident labour |
|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Darjeeling                | 47,853             | 4,515                  | 91.38                            |
| Terai (a)                 | 22,482             | 9,388                  | 70.54                            |
| Dooars (b)                | 1,53,148           | 4,788                  | 96.97                            |
| West Bengal               | 2,23,483           | 18,691                 | 92.28                            |
| Assam                     | 3,22,542           | 98,550                 | 76.60                            |
| North India*              | 5,53,012           | 1,22,175               | 81.90                            |
| South India**             | 1,45,234           | 19,813                 | 88.00                            |
| All India***              | 6,98,246           | 1,41,988               | 83.10                            |

(a) Including West Dinajpur.

(b) Including Cooch Behar.

\* Includes all tea growing areas in North India.

\*\* Includes all tea growing areas in South India.

\*\*\* Includes all tea growing areas in India.

Source : Tea Statistics, Published by Tea board, Calcutta,  
1990-91, pp.138-139.

the proportion of Resident labour is above the all West Bengal average while in the Terai it is less.

### 3.4 Organization Hierarchy

The organization of work in a tea garden comprises a hierarchy. The hierarchy evolved during the colonial period by the British Planters and has continued without significant

changes to the present.

At the top of the hierarchy are the manager of the plantation. He is the most important authority in the tea garden. He is assisted by assistant managers and engineer. These people fall under the category of management. These posts which were the exclusive preserves of expatriates are now occupied by well educated Indians usually from urban areas in the country.

Below them are a category generally known in the tea gardens as 'staff'. They generally perform clerical tasks in the tea plantation offices and factory. The staff position in the tea plantations located in north-east India are almost exclusively staffed by Bengali male.

The next to the staff is a category of personnel known as 'Sub-Staff'. They are largely supervisory staff. This category consists of the factory sardar who helps the factory assistant, munshi and chaprasi who perform similar work of carrying orders from the top and keeping an eye on the categories of sub-staff below them. Biodar who takes the attendance of the sub-staff and the workers. After him come the dafadar and the chowkidar. The dafadar makes a link between the workers and the management. He guides the workers at every step in their works. Besides these ranks, there are in this category the paniwala, who supplies water to the workers at their work place, davawala (health assistant),

drivers, cleaners, etc. The sub-staff is the highest position to which tribal males can be promoted to in the tea gardens.

Finally, at the very bottom of the hierarchy are the ordinary workers, who are generally known as coolie. They are the most important because they form the majority of the labour force, and are the ones who are directly involved in the process of production. These people do all the physical labour in the garden-plucking of leaves, hoeing and cleaning the soil of undergrowth, pruning the bushes in winter, digging drains when required and so on.

The organization hierarchy in tea garden is shown in  
Table 3.6

Table 3.6  
Organization structure in a tea garden

| Level               | Composition  |                      |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| <u>Management :</u> |              |                      |
| Manager             | ...          | Educated             |
| Engineer            | ...          | Outsiders            |
| Assistant Managers  | ...          |                      |
| <u>Staff :</u>      |              |                      |
| Garden Assistant    | ...          | Educated Bengalis    |
| Factory Assistant   |              |                      |
| <u>Sub-staff :</u>  |              |                      |
| Factory Sardar      | Boider       | Tribal Male          |
| Munshi              | Dafadar      |                      |
| Chaprasi            | Chowkidar    |                      |
| <u>Workers :</u>    |              |                      |
| Adult Male          | Adult Female | Tribal Males/Females |
| Adolescents         | Children     |                      |

The hierarchy in the tea garden work organisation is thus quite elaborate. There are several intermediaries between the management and the workers. Many of these strata exist for no apparent reason - just to maintain hierarchy. The spectrum of posts between the assistant manager and the dafadar is associated with no specific duty, apart from relaying orders from the top and keeping an eye on those below. This results in duplication of work, besides increasing the wage bill. An elaborate work hierarchy may be necessary in a modern industrial undertaking where the degree of technical skill distinguishes one stratum from the other. But in the tea industry, with its low level of technology and heavy dependence on manual labour, such a top-heavy organization seems unnecessary. In the early days of the tea industry, a hierarchy of this sort was necessary for the planters because they wielded influence over the workers through physical coercion also. At present with the post independent labour legislations, especially the plantation labour act (PLA), 1951 and the West Bengal Plantation Rules, 1956, the relation between the worker and the employer has been formalised and so physical coercion does not find a place in the tea gardens. Moreover, today, when management philosophy emphasises the wisdom of the manager establishing direct contact with labour, the various levels of sub-staff detract from achieving such a purpose.

The organization<sup>of</sup> hierarchy also involves ethnic division, which is very unusual in India. The adivasi workers can rise

upto the level of sub-staff, but rarely beyond. Even educated children of the workers are denied the opportunity. In certain gardens, there is a system of son succeeding father who is a member of the staff, and this practice has given rise to resentment among the workers.

### 3.5 Summary

The early history of recruitment of tea garden workers bears a testimony of cruelty and oppression. Since the tea gardens were situated in jungles and hilly regions infested with Malaria and Kalazar etc. no one wanted to work in the tea gardens. The industry faced acute labour shortage at the stage of its beginning.

The local people did not want to work in tea gardens. Thus, the industry entirely depended upon the migratory labour. Labourers in Terai and Dooars were mainly recruited from the 'aboriginal' areas of Chotonagpur (Bihar). Labourers in Darjeeling hills were recruited from Nepal. The employers caused many abuses and false promises in the course of recruitment of labour.

The recruited workers were sent off on a hazardous journey to the tea gardens. Many died and missed on the ways. In tea gardens the recruits suffered from several cruelty and hardship, unhygienic condition of living, bad and inadequate food,

poor housing conditions etc. But the labourers were not allowed to return or even to communicate with the members of their families. So the free tribal life of the workers transited into semi-feudal life.

There was no specific legislation regarding the recruitment of labourers in tea gardens. By 1861 the British Government began to concern about the policy of recruitment of labour in tea gardens. The first Inland Emigration Act was passed in 1863. The act provided that all recruiters were to be licensed and every emigrant was to be registered before the District Magistrate and his contract of service should not exceed five years. Thereafter the Government passed several acts but all these gave more protection to the employers than the tea garden labourers. This was in 1921, when several legislations had come into being seeking to protect plantation labour.

On early days the employers encouraged families rather than individual to migrate for to tea gardens. This saved the recruitment cost. Again employing a family comprising a man, his wife and two children was preferable to employing four workers of different families. The planter in the later case would not only have to bear the recruiting costs of workers but would also have to provide housing for each of them. By engaging the entire family the planter could cut costs on recruitment as well as on housing.

We have observed that the percentage of immigrations in Jalpaiguri tea gardens continuously increased at least up to 1921, there after the percentage decreased. Thus, after 1921 the industry had come to have a settled labour population who were begetting their successors. In Darjeeling tea gardens all immigration from Nepal has been by complete families, there has been no disturbance of family life, and families have settled complete on a tea estate, and they are multiplied and prospered.

The employers also favoured settlement of the time expired labourers near the tea gardens, so that they could have a 'reserve' supply of labourers for meeting extra requirements during peak plucking seasons. Some employers assisted labourers in reclaiming Government waste land near the gardens and even provided some materials to construct houses. Some employers also allotted unused garden land which was in their possession much in excess of their own requirements. As a result the families have settled complete on a tea estate, and they are multiplied. At present in West Bengal tea gardens more than 92 per cent of the workers are resident labour.

In post-independence period the position of labour supply in the tea gardens of Assam and West Bengal had revised from shortage to surplus and unemployment in tea gardens appeared in the scene.

The organization hierarchy in tea garden evolved during the colonial period by the British planters and has continued without significant changes to the present. This consists of four levels, viz. management, staff, sub-staff, and workers (coolies). The level of management and staff are filled up from outside and they are mostly educated Bengalis. A tribal male worker can hardly be promoted to the level of sub-staff. But this promotion is not available for female workers. So the organization hierarchy in tea garden evolves ethnic crisis as well as sexual crisis.

Notes & References

1. Andamans - Where convicts committing serious crimes and charged with life imprisonment used to be sent, commonly known as 'Kalapani'.
2. Report on the survey of labour conditions in Tea Plantations and Tea Factories in India, 1961-62. Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour Employment and Rehabilitation, Government of India, 1966, p.22.
3. Phukan, Umanand : The Ex-Tea Garden Labour Population in Assam, B.R.Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1984, p.5.
4. Ibid., p.5.
5. Ibid., p.10.
6. Ghosh, B.C : "The Development of the Tea Industry in the District of Jalpaiguri",Jalpaiguri District Centenary Souvenir - 1869-1968, p.293.
7. Dash, A.J : Gazetteer of the Darjeeling District - 1947, p.114.
8. Lt. Col. Hannangan : "Darjeeling Plantations",The Assam Review & Tea News, Vol.76, No.2, April-1987, p.28, and Vol.76, No.3, May-1986, p.7.
9. Bhadra, Mita : Life and Labour of Plantation Woman workers, 1982, p.124. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, North Bengal University under Dr. N.C.Chowdhury, Deptt. of Sociology & Social Anthropology).

10. Bhownik, Sharit : Class Formation in the Plantation System, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981, p.50.
11. Ibid., p.50.
12. Ibid., p.50.
13. Awasthi, R.C : Economics of Tea Industry in India United Publishers, Gauhati, 1975.
14. Griffiths, Pervical : The History of the Indian Tea Industry, Weidenfel and Nicolson, London, 1967, p.270.
15. Lakashruti - 1992, Published by West Bengal Rajya Loka Sanskriti Parshad, p.44.
16. Ibid., p.45.
17. Ibid., p.119.
18. Bhownik, Sharit, Op.cit., p.56.
19. Mitra, A.K : Census of India 1951, Vol.VI, Part IA (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore), Report, Calcutta, 1953, p.265.
20. The Indian Emigrution Act, 1837 was passed after the abolition of Slavery in 1834.
21. Griffiths, Pervical, Op.cit., p.270.
22. Phukan, Umanand, Op.cit., p.7.
23. Awasthi, R.C. Op.cit., p.153 & Phukan Umanand, Op.cit., p.8.
24. Saxena, R.C : Labour Problems and Social Welfare, Published by Jaiprakash Nath & Co., Meerut, 1953, p.33.
25. Rao, B.Shiva : The Industrial Worker in India, Published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1939, p.99.

26. Bhadra, Mita : Op.cit., p.128.
27. Phukan, Umanand, Op.cit., pp.12-13.

## **CHAPTER IV : Employment And Production In Tea Industry.**

### **Content :**

- 4.1 Employment Trends.**
- 4.2 Land-labour Ratio.**
- 4.3 Production and Employment.**
- 4.4 Area and Employment.**
- 4.5 Average Price of Tea and Employment.**
- 4.6 Summary.**

#### 4.1 Employment Trends

The growth in employment is one of the important aspects which directly influences the industrial relation system of any industry. In tea industry it is more important, because most of the tea gardens are located in backward regions and the workers are permanently settled in tea garden areas. They are isolated from urban industrial complex. Moreover, education has not developed among the children of the workers. Consequently, tea gardens are the only source of employment for the new generation. From this point of view, creation of the scope for employment for the new generation is very much important.

In this part of the chapter we have estimated the employment trends in the tea industry of West Bengal under two phases. In the first phase, we have taken 41 years period, 1901 to 1941, data on employment of labourers in the tea gardens of Darjeeling (including Terai) and West Bengal during the period 1901 to 1941 are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Total labour force in tea gardens (Darjeeling and All West Bengal) 1901-9141

| Year                                   | Area<br>(in hectares) |                  | Labour         |                 | Labour per hectare |            |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------|
|  | West<br>Bengal        | Darjee-<br>ling* | West<br>Bengal | Darjee-<br>ling | West<br>Bengal     | Darjeeling |
| 1901                                   | 51,851                | 20,932           | 1,09,070       | 40,451          | 2.10               | 1.93       |
| 1911                                   | 57,620                | 20,836           | 1,14,876       | 39,561          | 1.99               | 1.90       |
| 1921                                   | 69,482                | 23,837           | 1,38,274       | 48,710          | 1.99               | 2.04       |
| 1931                                   | 80,634                | 27,186           | 1,80,518       | 63,665          | 2.24               | 2.34       |
| 1941                                   | 78,890                | 25,565           | 2,11,086       | 69,699          | 2.68               | 2.74       |
| % in-<br>crea-<br>se<br>over -<br>1901 | 52.14                 | 22.13            | 93.53          | 72.30           | 27.62              | 41.97      |

\*Including Terai.

Note : Area has been converted from acres to hectares using  
1 hectare = 2.4710581 acres.

Source : Data compiled from Ashok Mitra, Census of India  
1951, Vol.VI, Part 1A (West Bengal), Sikkim and  
Chandernagore, Report, Government of India, Calcutta,  
1953, pp. 263 and 266.

Table 4.1 shows that in West Bengal area under tea increased by 52.14 per cent and labour force increased by 93.53 per cent during the period 1901 to 1941. While in Darjeeling area under tea and labour force increased by 22.13 per cent and 72.30 per cent, respectively during the same period of time. The labour per hectare also showed an increasing trend. In

West Bengal it increased from 2.10 in 1901 to 2.68 in 1941, while in Darjeeling the same increased from 1.93 to 2.73 during 1901 to 1941.

In order to estimate the growth pattern of employment with respect to area we have first found out the annual growth rate of employment and area.\* Next the gross employment area elasticity (Eg) is computed by dividing the growth rate in employment by growth rate in area under tea during the same periods.

The estimated annual growth rate of employment and area under tea during the period, 1901 to 1941 are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Annual Growth Rate of Labour Employment and Area  
1901-1941

| Year      | Labour      |            | Area        |            |
|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|           | West Bengal | Darjeeling | West Bengal | Darjeeling |
| 1901-1911 | 0.52        | (-)0.22    | 1.06        | (-)0.05    |
| 1911-1921 | 1.87        | 2.10       | 1.89        | 1.37       |
| 1921-1931 | 2.70        | 2.71       | 1.50        | 1.31       |
| 1931-1941 | 1.57        | 0.91       | (-)0.22     | (-)0.62    |
| 1901-1941 | 1.66        | 1.37       | 1.05        | 0.52       |

Source : Mitra, A.K., Census of India, 1951, Vol.VI, Part 1A (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore) Report, Calcutta, 1953, pp.263 and 266.

Table 4.2 shows that the area under tea in West Bengal as a whole has grown at the rate of 1.05 per cent per year during the period 1901 to 1941, while employment has grown at the rate of 1.66 per cent per year. In Darjeeling the annual growth rate in area under tea and employment during the same period of time registered at 0.52 per cent and 1.37 per cent per year respectively.

With the help of the growth rates as presented in Table 4.2. we have computed the gross employment area elasticity (\*\* (Eg) and the results are presented in Table 4.3

Table 4.3

## Gross Employment area elasticity (Eg)

| Year      | West Bengal | Darjeeling |
|-----------|-------------|------------|
| 1901-1911 | 0.49        | 4.4        |
| 1911-1921 | 0.98        | 1.53       |
| 1921-1931 | 1.80        | 2.06       |
| 1931-1941 | (-) 7.80    | (-) 1.46   |
| 1901-1941 | 1.58        | 2.74       |

Table 4.3 shows that the gross employment area elasticity (Eg) is computed at 1.58 for West Bengal and 2.74 for Darjeeling for the period 1901 to 1941. This indicates that a 10 per cent rate of growth in area resulted in 15.8 per cent growth in employment in West Bengal tea gardens during 1901-1941.

while in Darjeeling a 10 per cent rate of growth in area resulted in 27.4 per cent growth in employment during the same period of time. This indicates that labour absorption rate in per hectare of area under tea in the Darjeeling tea gardens was higher than all West Bengal average.

The employment trends in the second phase have been estimated for 40 years period, 1951 to 1990. But data on labour in the Terai tea gardens are not available separately in Tea Statistics till 1960. Only after 1960 the districtwise data on number of labour force are available in Tea Statistics.

Thus, we have analysed the employment trends in the second phase under two divisions. First 1951 to 1960, which shows the employment trends in the tea gardens of West Bengal and then 1961 to 1990, which shows the employment trends both in the tea gardens of West Bengal and Terai. Employment trends have been estimated on the basis of average daily number of labour employed.

The labour force in the tea gardens of West Bengal during the period, 1951 to 1960 is shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 shows a clear trend of decreasing both the average daily number of labour and labour per hectare in West Bengal tea gardens during the period 1951 to 1960. Labour force sharply decreased between 1952 and 1953, where the labour force was reduced by around 56,000. In 1954 labour force

Table 4.4

Labour force in West Bengal tea garden  
1951-1960

| Year | Area under tea<br>(in hectares) | Average daily<br>no. of labour | Labour per hectare |
|------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1951 | 79,580                          | 2,65,064                       | 3.38               |
| 1952 | 79,581                          | 3,22,679                       | 4.05               |
| 1953 | 79,456                          | 2,55,753                       | 3.35               |
| 1954 | 79,563                          | 2,83,593                       | 3.56               |
| 1955 | 79,483                          | 2,73,163                       | 3.43               |
| 1956 | 79,235                          | 2,68,671                       | 3.39               |
| 1957 | 81,312                          | 2,61,384                       | 3.21               |
| 1958 | 81,636                          | 2,51,145                       | 3.07               |
| 1959 | 81,949                          | 2,36,574                       | 2.89               |
| 1960 | 82,331                          | 1,97,165                       | 2.39               |

Source : Data compiled from Tea Statistics 1963, p.65 and 1963 p.66 published by Tea Board, Calcutta.

increased by around 17,000 over the previous year. But thereafter it continued to decrease up to 1960. Again between 1959 and 1960 labour force reduced by nearly 40,000. Around 1,25,000 labour force reduced in West Bengal tea gardens within a period of 9 years between 1952 to 1960. The labour force has reduced at the rate of 5.33 per cent per year, on an average, during the period 1952 to 1960.

The root cause of such sharp decreasing of labour force in West Bengal tea gardens is the enactment of plantation

Labour Act (PLA) 1951. The Act made obligatory for the employers to provide several welfare measures to the workers. Consequently, the employers reduced the permanent labour forces, who are entitled to get the welfare benefits under the plantation labour Act.

With the total labour force the land labour ratio also reduced sharply. In 1952 the land labour ratio was estimated at 1:4.05 for every hectare of area under tea. The employers continued to decrease the land labour ratio and brought down to 1:2.39 by 1960. At the same time they increased the work load per labour to maintain the production. Thus, in spite of reducing labour force the industry could maintain its production. This had been possible due to continuous increase of production per labour. This is reflected in Table 4.5, which

Table 4.5

Production and production per labour in West Bengal tea gardens- 1951 to 1960

| Year | Production<br>(in thousand kg.) | Production per labour<br>(in kg.) |
|------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1951 | 78,158                          | 295                               |
| 1952 | 71,962                          | 223                               |
| 1953 | 72,782                          | 273                               |
| 1954 | 75,758                          | 267                               |
| 1955 | 74,433                          | 272                               |
| 1956 | 76,361                          | 284                               |
| 1957 | 75,397                          | 288                               |
| 1958 | 76,193                          | 303                               |
| 1959 | 80,107                          | 338                               |
| 1960 | 81,523                          | 413                               |

Source : Data compiled from Tea Statistics, 1962, p.65, 1963, p.36, and 1965-66, p.4, published by Tea Board, Calcutta.

shows a clear trend of increasing of production per labour during the period 1952 to 1960. It has been almost doubled during the 9 years period, 1952 to 1960.

Now we will observe the employment trends during the second part of the second phase, i.e., 1961 to 1990. We have presented data on labour force in the tea gardens of West Bengal and Terai during the period, 1961 to 1990 in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Labour force in the tea gardens of West Bengal and Terai  
1961-1990

| Year | West Bengal              |                                   |                          | Terai                     |                                   |                          |
|------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
|      | Area<br>(in<br>hectares) | Average<br>daily no.<br>of labour | Labour<br>per<br>hectare | Area<br>(in hec-<br>tare) | Average<br>daily no.<br>of labour | Labour<br>per<br>hectare |
| 1961 | 82,705                   | 1,93,511                          | 2.34                     | 9,344                     | 17,122                            | 1.83                     |
| 1962 | 82,864                   | 1,89,968                          | 2.29                     | 9,233                     | 17,311                            | 1.87                     |
| 1963 | 83,615                   | 1,96,404                          | 2.35                     | 9,328                     | 19,472                            | 2.08                     |
| 1964 | 84,830                   | 1,95,404                          | 2.30                     | 9,616                     | 19,559                            | 2.03                     |
| 1965 | 85,031                   | 1,91,764                          | 2.26                     | 9,857                     | 18,112                            | 1.84                     |
| 1966 | 85,648                   | 1,91,672                          | 2.24                     | 10,021                    | 17,688                            | 1.77                     |
| 1967 | 86,393                   | 1,87,612                          | 2.17                     | 10,215                    | 20,130                            | 1.97                     |
| 1968 | 87,475                   | 1,89,745                          | 2.17                     | 10,510                    | 18,837                            | 1.79                     |
| 1969 | 87,568                   | 1,87,860                          | 2.15                     | 10,590                    | 19,376                            | 1.83                     |
| 1970 | 87,989                   | 2,00,280                          | 2.28                     | 10,712                    | 19,177                            | 1.79                     |
| 1971 | 88,499                   | 1,98,020                          | 2.24                     | 10,769                    | 19,714                            | 1.83                     |
| 1972 | 88,556                   | 1,94,901                          | 2.20                     | 10,822                    | 18,295                            | 1.58                     |

contd ...

Table 4.6 contd...

|      |          |          |      |        |         |      |
|------|----------|----------|------|--------|---------|------|
| 1973 | 89,025   | 1,96,129 | 2.20 | 10,864 | 19,175  | 1.77 |
| 1974 | 88,224   | 1,99,793 | 2.26 | 10,893 | 20,153  | 1.85 |
| 1975 | 88,784   | 2,00,131 | 2.25 | 10,983 | 20,050  | 1.84 |
| 1976 | 88,799   | 2,00,049 | 2.25 | 11,040 | 20,055  | 1.82 |
| 1977 | 89,253   | 2,05,466 | 2.30 | 11,020 | 20,204  | 1.83 |
| 1978 | 89,954   | 2,09,989 | 2.33 | 11,064 | 21,478  | 1.94 |
| 1979 | 91,003   | 2,13,300 | 2.34 | 11,472 | 21,861  | 1.91 |
| 1980 | 93,497   | 2,18,848 | 2.34 | 11,474 | 23,290  | 2.03 |
| 1981 | 93,971   | 2,13,670 | 2.27 | 11,314 | 22,240  | 1.97 |
| 1982 | 96,613   | 2,16,995 | 2.25 | 12,055 | 23,210  | 1.93 |
| 1983 | 97,170   | 2,21,060 | 2.27 | 12,166 | 23,451  | 1.93 |
| 1984 | 97,788   | 2,24,661 | 2.30 | 12,301 | 23,548  | 1.91 |
| 1985 | 98,015   | 2,32,553 | 2.37 | 12,395 | 24,893  | 2.00 |
| 1986 | 1,00,129 | 2,31,360 | 2.31 | 12,905 | 24,222  | 1.88 |
| 1987 | 1,00,530 | 2,38,967 | 2.38 | 13,096 | 26,387  | 2.01 |
| 1988 | 1,00,616 | 2,52,080 | 2.51 | 13,280 | 32,733) | 2.46 |
| 1989 | 1,01,000 | 2,49,307 | 2.47 | 13,325 | 35,992  | 2.70 |
| 1990 | 1,01,170 | 2,48,671 | 2.46 | 13,345 | 37,875  | 2.83 |

Source : Data compiled from Appendix I and II.

Table 4.6 shows that the labour force in West Bengal tea gardens continuously decreased upto 1969. In 1970 labour force increased by 12,420 , but thereafter it continued to decrease up to 1980. The labour force in West Bengal tea gardens showed continuous increasing trend after 1981. But during the last two years of the study period

(1989 and 1990) it registers a declining trend. 3409 labour forces were reduced during the same period.

The number of laboures in the Terai tea gardens was more or less stagnant up to 1973. After 1973 it showed continuous increasing trend.

Between the year 1961 to 1990, the labour force in the West Bengal tea gardens increased by 28.50 per cent while area recorded an increase of 22.33 per cent during the same period of time. In Terai labour force and area under tea increased by 121.21 per cent and 42.82 per cent respectively. Thus we can safely conclude that in the Terai, labour absorption rate in per hectare area under tea is much higher than the all West Bengal average.

Now we have attempted to make a comparative analysis of annual growth rate of labour in the tea gardens of West Bengal and Terai.\* For this purpose we have divided the total study period of 30 years into three sub-periods viz. 1961-1970, 1971-1980 and 1981-1990.

The calculated annual growth rates of labour are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 shows that the labour force in the tea gardens of all West Bengal and Terai increased at a very slow rate during the first two sub-periods, viz. 1961-1970 and 1971-1980.

Table 4.7

Annual growth rate of labour  
(in percentage)

| Year      | West Bengal | Terai |
|-----------|-------------|-------|
| 1961-1970 | 0.34        | 1.14  |
| 1971-1980 | 1.00        | 1.68  |
| 1981-1990 | 1.53        | 5.47  |
| 1961-1990 | 0.84        | 2.68  |

Source : Appendix II.

It increased significantly during the sub-period, 1981-1990. The labour in all West Bengal tea gardens increased by 1.53 per cent annually during 1981-1990, while in the Terai it increased by 5.47 per cent annually during the same period of time. On an average, in all West Bengal tea gardens employment has grown at the rate of 0.84 per cent per year during 1961-1990, while in the Terai tea gardens it has grown at the rate of 2.68 per cent per year. This further establishes our earlier conclusion that the labour absorption rate in the Terai tea gardens is much higher than that of all West Bengal average. This has been possible due to additional employment of 15635 workers in the Terai during the last 10 years period, 1981-1990. Moreover, the employment in the tea gardens depends on the area under the cultivation of tea. During the post independence period the area under tea in the Terai expanded at higher rate than the other two tea growing

regions of the state, viz. Dooars and Darjeeling. Consequently the labour absorption rate in the Terai was much higher than the all West Bengal average.

In Table 4.8, we have presented the employment trend in all major tea growing regions of India during the last 10 years (1981-1990).

Table 4.8

## Employment trend in tea plantations in India

| District/<br>State/Region | Average daily no.<br>of labour | 1980     | 1990 | % increase<br>over 1980 | Annual growth<br>rate |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Dooars                    | 1,49,571                       | 1,62,680 |      | 8.76                    | 0.77                  |
| Darjeeling                | 45,987                         | 48,116   |      | 4.63                    | 0.41                  |
| Terai                     | 23,290                         | 37,875   |      | 62.62                   | 4.52                  |
| West Bengal               | 2,18,848                       | 2,48,671 |      | 13.63                   | 1.17                  |
| Assam                     | 4,48,949                       | 5,41,661 |      | 20.65                   | 1.72                  |
| Tamil Nadu                | 86,359                         | 1,02,786 |      | 19.02                   | 1.60                  |
| Kerala                    | 71,086                         | 74,388   |      | 4.65                    | 0.41                  |
| Karnataka                 | 4,000                          | 4,217    |      | 5.43                    | 0.48                  |
| South India               | 1,61,445                       | 1,81,391 |      | 12.35                   | 1.06                  |
| All India*                | 8,46,659                       | 9,86,781 |      | 16.55                   | 1.40                  |

\* Includes all tea growing areas in the country.

Source : Tea Statistics, pp.140-141, Published by Tea Board, Calcutta. 1990-91

Table 4.8 shows that during the last 11 years (1980-1990) labour force in the Terai increased by nearly 63 per cent,

i.e., 4.52 per cent annually. While in the other two tea growing regions of West Bengal, viz., Dooars and Darjeeling hills the labour force has grown at the rate of 0.77 per cent and 0.41 per cent per year respectively during 1980 to 1990. In all tea gardens of West Bengal and India the labour force has grown at the rate of 1.17 per cent and 1.40 per cent annually during the same period of time. Thus the annual rate of increase in labour force in Dooars and Darjeeling hills is much lower than that of all West Bengal average and also below the all India average. But the annual growth rate of employment in the Terai tea gardens is much higher than that of the averages of all West Bengal and all India.

Increase in labour in South Indian tea gardens is very insignificant. The labour force has moved up by only 1.06 per cent annually during the last 11 years 1980 to 1990. In Tamil Nadu the labour force has grown at the rate of 1.60 per cent per year during 1980 to 1990. While in the other two tea growing regions of the state, viz. Kerala and Karnataka the annual growth rate in labour was less than one per cent.

#### 4.2 Land Labour Ratio

The land labour ratio has been estimated on the basis of average daily number of labour employed in per hectare.

We have already stated that the land labour ratio in West Bengal tea gardens showed a sharp decreasing trend during the fifties (Table 4.4). The trend in the sixties, seventies and eighties reveal that it was more or less stagnant. Between 1961 to 1990 the labour per hectare was always less than 2.5 except in 1988 when it was 2.51 (Table 4.6).

In Terai tea gardens the land labour ratio was always less than the all West Bengal average throughout the period, 1961 to 1988. Table 4.6 also reveals that the land labour ratio in the Terai tea gardens was more or less stagnant at least upto 1984. Since 1985 the ratio showed an upswing trend and reached to 1:2.83 by the end of 1990.

Thus, though we <sup>have</sup> observed in Table 4.7 that the rate of annual increment in labour in Terai was always higher than the all West Bengal average during 1961 to 1990, but the labour per hectare improved significantly only after 1984. Since then it increased at much faster rate and at present (1990) the labour per hectare in Terai is much higher than the all West Bengal average and also above the all India average as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 shows that at present (1990) among the major tea growing state the land-labour ratio is the highest in West Bengal tea gardens with 2.46 labour in per hectare followed by the South Indian tea gardens with 2.40 labour in per hectare and Assam with 2.35 labour in per hectare.

Table 4.9

Labour per hectare in Tea Plantations in India  
1990

| District/<br>State/Region | Area<br>(in hectare) | Average daily<br>no. of labour | Labour per<br>hectare |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Darjeeling                | 20,065               | 48,116                         | 2.40                  |
| Terai                     | 13,345               | 37,875                         | 2.84                  |
| Dooars                    | 67,760               | 1,62,680                       | 2.40                  |
| West Bengal               | 1,01,170             | 2,48,671                       | 2.46                  |
| Assam                     | 2,30,363             | 5,41,661                       | 2.35                  |
| Tamil Nadu                | 38,874               | 1,02,786                       | 2.64                  |
| Kerala                    | 34,612               | 74,388                         | 2.15                  |
| Karnataka                 | 2,073                | 4,217                          | 2.03                  |
| South India               | 75,559               | 1,81,391                       | 2.40                  |
| All India*                | 4,16,563             | 9,86,781                       | 2.37                  |

\* Includes all tea growing areas in the country.

Source : Tea Statistics, 1990-91, Published by Tea Board,  
Calcutta, pp.5 to 6 and pp.140-141.

Among the three tea growing districts of West Bengal Terai estimated the highest land labour ratio with 2.84 labour in per hectare followed by Dooars and Darjeeling Hills both with 2.40 labour in per hectare. Thus, the land-labour ratio in Terai is not only higher than other two tea growing districts of West Bengal but also higher than that of all tea growing regions of India.

The concept of land labour ratio still remains a controversial aspect in the labour management relations in tea industry.

In 1969, when the Second United Front Ministry, led by CPI (M) was voted to power, the Co-ordination Committee on Tea Plantation Workers (CCTPW) decided to launch an agitation for increase in the labour force. An industry wide strike was launched on 18th August 1969 which lasted for sixteen days. The CCTPW demanded that a land labour ratio of 1:5 workers for every acre under the production of tea be enforced. It means 3.70 workers in per hectare. (Taking one hectare = 2.4710581 acres.) The employers maintained that the existing ratio of 0.90 workers per acre or 2.22 workers per hectare was ideal. After the strike was called off the State Government appointed a committee headed by the Joint Labour Commissioner to look into the matter. This committee recommended that a new land labour ratio of 1:1.5 workers in per acre be maintained. The Co-ordination Committee of Planters' Association (CCPA) refused to accept the recommendations but finally agreed to maintain a ratio of 1:11 converted to the metric system this means 2.72 workers for every hectare under tea. But in fact it exists more as a notion than a reality.

Table 4.9 shows that except Terai in no other tea growing regions of India this agreement has been fulfilled. If this agreement is fulfilled the possible additional employment in the tea gardens of different regions of India has been shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Possible additional employment in tea plantations in India

| District/<br>State/Region | Area under<br>tea (in<br>hectares)<br>(1990) | Existing<br>labour<br>force<br>(1990) | Labour force<br>at 2.72 in<br>per hectare | Additional<br>employment |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| (1)                       | (2)  | (3)                                   | (4)                                       | (5)<br>5 = (4) - (3)     |
| Dooars                    | 67,760                                       | 1,62,680                              | 1,84,307                                  | 21,627                   |
| Darjeeling                | 20,065                                       | 48,116                                | 54,577                                    | 6,461                    |
| Terai                     | 13,345                                       | 37,875                                | 36,298                                    | -                        |
| West Bengal               | 1,01,170                                     | 2,48,671                              | 2,75,182                                  | 26,511                   |
| Assam                     | 2,30,363                                     | 5,41,661                              | 6,26,587                                  | 84,926                   |
| Tamil Nadu                | 38,874                                       | 1,02,786                              | 1,05,737                                  | 2,951                    |
| Kerala                    | 34,612                                       | 74,388                                | 94,145                                    | 19,757                   |
| Karnataka                 | 2,063  | 4,217                                 | 5,639                                     | 1,422                    |
| South India               | 75,559                                       | 1,81,391                              | 2,05,520                                  | 24,129                   |
| All India*                | 4,16,563                                     | 9,86,781                              | 11,33,051                                 | 1,46,270                 |

\* Includes all tea growing areas in the country.

Source : Tea Statistics, 1990-91, Published by Tea Board,  
Calcutta, pp.5-6 and pp.140-141.

Table 4.10 shows that if the agreement of 2.72 labour per hectare is executed more than 26,000 additional workers can be employed in West Bengal tea gardens. except in the Terai, where no additional employment is possible as per this agreement, as the existing land-labour ratio in Terai is already 2.84. In all tea gardens of India more than 1,46,000

additional employment can be generated through the execution of this agreement. So the trade unions should exert pressure on management to give immediate effect to the agreement. This will relieve the present unemployment problems in tea gardens to some extent. But this is not the permanent solution to resolve the growing unemployment problems in the tea garden area.

#### 4.3 Production and Employment

The relationship between production and employment has been measured by gross employment output elasticity ( $E_g$ ).<sup>\*\*</sup> The  $E_g$  is computed by dividing the growth rate in employment by growth rate in output. For this purpose the 30 years period (1961 to 1990) is divided into three sub-periods, viz. 1961 to 1970, 1971 to 1980 and 1981 to 1990. The results of the value of gross employment output elasticity ( $E_g$ ) in the different periods is shown in Table 4.11

Table 4.11 shows that production in all tea gardens of West Bengal as a whole has grown at the rate of 1.86 per cent per year during the period 1961-1990, while employment has grown at the rate of 0.84 per cent per year. This suggests that the rate of growth of employment was more than half of the rate of the growth of output. These growth rates give the gross employment output elasticity ( $E_g$ ) as 0.451. This

Table 4.11

Average annual growth rates in production, employment and gross employment output elasticities 1961-1990

| Year      | West Bengal |      |       | Terai |      |       |
|-----------|-------------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|
|           | RP          | RL   | Eg    | RP    | RL   | Eg    |
| 1961-1970 | 1.61        | 0.34 | 0.211 | 2.44  | 1.14 | 0.467 |
| 1971-1980 | 2.50        | 1.00 | 0.400 | 2.05  | 1.68 | 0.819 |
| 1981-1990 | 1.56        | 1.53 | 0.980 | 2.96  | 5.47 | 1.847 |
| 1961-1990 | 1.86        | 0.84 | 0.451 | 2.79  | 2.68 | 0.960 |

Note : RP., RL and Eg. stand, respectively for rate of growth in production of made tea, employment and gross employment output elasticity.

Source : Appendix I and II.

indicates that a 10 per cent rate of growth in output resulted in around 4.5 per cent rate of growth of employment during 1961 to 1990.

In Terai tea gardens output as a whole has grown at the rate of 2.79 per cent per year during the period 1961 to 1990, while employment has grown at the rate of 2.68 per cent per year during the same period of time. It indicates that the rate of growth of employment was nearly equal to the rate of the growth of output. The value of gross employment output elasticity is computed 0.96 for the period 1961 to 1990. This indicates that a 10 per cent rate of growth in output resulted in around 9.6 per cent rate of growth of employment during 1961 to 1990.

This comparative analysis of the results of gross employment output elasticity ( $E_g$ ) clearly indicates with respect to production labour force in the Terai is absorbed at a much higher rate than the all West Bengal average.

#### 4.4 Area and Employment

The relationship between the area under the cultivation of tea and employment has been measured by the gross employment area elasticity ( $E_g$ ). In Table 4.12, we have presented the values of gross employment area elasticity in different periods in the tea gardens of all West Bengal and Terai.

Table 4.12

Average annual growth rates in Area under the cultivation of tea, employment and gross employment area elasticities  
1961-1990

| Year      | West Bengal |      |       | Terai |      |      |       |
|-----------|-------------|------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|
|           | RA          | RL   | Eg    | RA    | RL   | Eg   |       |
| 1961-1978 | 0.57        | 0.34 | 0.507 |       | 1.48 | 1.14 | 0.770 |
| 1971-1980 | 0.55        | 1.00 | 1.818 |       | 0.64 | 1.68 | 2.625 |
| 1981-1990 | 0.74        | 1.53 | 2.067 |       | 1.66 | 5.47 | 3.295 |
| 1961-1990 | 0.67        | 0.84 | 1.253 |       | 1.20 | 2.68 | 2.233 |

Note : RA, RL and Eg stand respectively for rate of growth in area under the cultivation of tea, employment and gross employment area elasticity.

Source : Appendix I and II.

Table 4.12 shows that in all tea gardens of West Bengal area under the cultivation of tea and employment have grown at the rate of 0.67 per cent and 0.84 per cent per year respectively during the period 1961 to 1990. These growth rates give the gross employment area elasticity ( $E_g$ ) as 1.253. This indicates that a 10 per cent rate of growth in area under the cultivation of tea resulted in around 12.53 per cent rate of growth of employment during 1961 to 1990.

In Terai tea gardens area under the cultivation of tea has grown at the rate of 1.20 per cent per year during the period 1961 to 1990. While employment has grown at the rate of 2.68 per cent per year during the same period of time. This suggests that the rate of growth of employment was more than double of the rate of growth of area under the cultivation of tea. The value of gross employment area elasticity is computed as 2.233 for the period 1961 to 1990. This indicates that a 10 per cent rate of growth in area under the cultivation of tea resulted in around 22.33 per cent rate of growth of employment during 1961 to 1990.

Thus, with respect to the area under the cultivation of tea the labour force has absorbed in the Terai tea gardens at a much higher rate than the all West Bengal average.

#### 4.5 Average Price of Tea and Employment

The relationship between the average price of tea and employment has been measured by the gross employment price elasticity (Eg). \*\* The gross employment price elasticity is found out for all West Bengal tea gardens. For this purpose the average price per kg. of tea sold in Indian auctions has been used.

In Table 4.13, we have presented the values of gross employment price elasticity in different periods in the tea gardens of all West Bengal.

Table 4.13

Average annual growth rates in average price of tea, employment and gross employment price elasticities  
1961-1990

| Year      | RAP   | RL   | Eg    |
|-----------|-------|------|-------|
| 1961-1970 | 2.90  | 0.34 | 0.117 |
| 1971-1980 | 7.29  | 1.00 | 0.137 |
| 1981-1990 | 12.38 | 1.53 | 0.123 |
| 1961-1990 | 7.68  | 0.84 | 0.109 |

Note : RAP, RL and Eg. stand respectively for rate of growth in average price of tea, employment and gross price employment elasticity.

Source : Appendix II, Tea Statistics, 1989, published by J.Thomas & Company Pvt. Ltd., pp.4-5 and Tea Statistics, 1990-91 published by Tea Board, Calcutta, p.72.

Table 4.13 shows that the average price of tea and employment have grown at the rate of 7.68 per cent and 0.84 per cent per year respectively during the period 1961 to 1990. These growth rates give the gross employment price elasticity ( $E_p$ ) as 0.109. This indicates that a 10 per cent rate of growth in average price of tea resulted 1.09 per cent rate of growth in employment during 1961 to 1991. This suggests that the rate of growth in employment was only one-tenth of the rate of growth of average price of tea.

Considering separately the elasticity of employment with respect to production, area under tea and average price of tea, we found that the employment in tea gardens is more elastic with respect to area under the cultivation of tea. The correlation coefficient between the area under the cultivation of tea and average daily number of labour employed in the Terai tea gardens during the period 1961 to 1989 comes to 0.85 on the other hand we observed that the labourer per hectare is more or less stagnant. So, the employment in tea industry cannot be much expanded within the existing area under the cultivation of tea. There is very little hope to increase the employment if the new area under the cultivation of tea is not brought in. But during the post independence period the industry did not expand at a faster rate. During the last 40 years period, 1951 to 1990, the area under tea in West Bengal increased annually by 0.62 per cent only. Again due to non expansion of education among the children of the

workers and lack of employment opportunity near the vicinity of the tea gardens, the third generation of the tea garden workers' still depended on the employment in tea gardens.

At present there is very little scope in West Bengal to bringout new area under the cultivation of tea, so the alternative employment scope near the vicinity of the tea gardens should be generated to absorb the surplus population in the tea gardens.

#### 4.6 Summary

The employment of labour in the tea gardens of West Bengal significantly increased during the pre-independence period. The labour force increased by 72% per cent during 1901 to 1941. But during the post independence period the employment of labour in the tea gardens of West Bengal remains more or less stagnant. The employment sharply decreased during the period 1952 to 1960. More than 1,25,000 workers were reduced during that period. It is mainly due to the enactment of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951.

During the period 1961 to 1990 the growth of employment in the tea gardens of West Bengal was more or less stagnant. The rate of growth of employment computed was less than one per cent on an average, during the period 1961 to 1990. However in the Terai tea gardens the growth of employment was

estimated at 2.68 per cent, on an average, during the same period. Again during the last decade (1980 to 1990) the employment of labour force in the Terai has grown at the rate of 4.52 per cent annually, on an average. This was much higher than the annual rate of growth of employment in other tea growing region of India.

The employment in tea gardens is more elastic with respect to area under the cultivation of tea than the other factors like production and average price of tea. Though the employment increased with the increase in area but the labour per hectare was more or less constant. In all tea gardens of West Bengal the labour per hectare lies within 2.5, on an average. However in Terai it exceeded 2.8.

The concept of land labour ratio still remains controversial aspect in the labour management relations in tea industry. After the general strike in 1969 a settlement was reached between the co-ordination committee of Tea Plantation Workers' (CCTPW) and the co-ordination committee of planters' association (CCPA) at the intervention of the State Government regarding the land labour ratio. The CCTPW demanded 3.70 workers per hectare, but the CCPA ultimately agreed to maintain 2.72 workers for every hectare under tea. But in fact it exists more as a notion than in reality. At the end of 1990, except Terai in no other tea growing regions of India this agreement has been fulfilled.

During the post independence period, the labour per hectare in the tea gardens of West Bengal remained more or less stagnant. Area under the cultivation of tea increased at a very slow rate. Moreover due to backwardness of the areas no other employment opportunity is generated in the vicinity of the tea gardens. Education among the children of the workers did not expand. As such they are depended upon the employment of tea industry generation after generation. As a result, at present there is saturation of employment in tea industry. Huge number of surplus population generated in the tea garden areas.

The excessive pressure of employment in the tea industry is to be removed. For this purpose other employment opportunity is to be developed in the vicinity of the tea garden areas. In this juncture we may suggest to connect the tea garden areas with the nearest panchayat. Primary education among the children of the workers is to be expanded. The adolescents are to be imparted some technical skills to make them fit in other employment. For this purpose we may suggest to extend the training scheme of Nehru Rozgar Yojana to the children of the tea garden workers. At present this scheme is only available to the poorer section of Municipal and Panchayat areas.

Notes & References

- \* We have used the following formula to find out the growth rate :

$$g = \left( \sqrt[n]{\frac{A}{P}} - 1 \right) \times 100$$

Where,

A = Value of variable in final year.

P = Value of variable in initial year.

n = Number of years.

g = Compound annual rate of growth (percentage).

- \*\* We have used the following formulas to find out the elasticity of employment with respect to area under tea, production and average price of tea.

i) Gross employment area elasticity =  $\frac{\text{Annual growth rate in employment}}{\text{Annual growth rate in area}}$

ii) Gross employment output elasticity =  $\frac{\text{Annual growth rate in employment}}{\text{Annual growth rate in output}}$

iii) Gross employment price elasticity =  $\frac{\text{Annual growth rate in employment}}{\text{Annual growth rate in average price of tea}}$

## **CHAPTER V : Casual Labour in Tea Industry.**

### **Content :**

- 5.1 Casual Labour.**
- 5.2 Size and Casualization.**
- 5.3 Causes of Casualization.**
- 5.4 Summary.**

### 5.1 Casual Labour

Casual labourers in tea industry are known as bigha. During the pre-independence period the proportion of casual workers in the total labour force was insignificant. In Table 5.1 we have presented the break-up of permanent and casual workers in the tea gardens of Jalpagirui and Darjeeling during the period 1901 to 1941.

Table 5.1 shows that as the total number of workers increased the number of casual workers decreased. The percentage of casual workers in the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri decreased from 30.97 per cent in 1901 to 3.46 per cent by 1941. In Darjeeling tea gardens the percentage of casual workers decreased from 40.03 per cent to 2.67 per cent during the same period of time. Thus, the temporary employment in tea gardens of West Bengal had more and more given way to permanent tenures. The overwhelming majority of permanent labourers indicates a settled labour policy.

Table 5.1

Permanent and temporary labour force in tea gardens  
1901-1941

| Year | Jalpaiguri                   |                   |                      | Darjeeling                   |                   |                    |
|------|------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
|      | Number of labourers employed |                   |                      | Number of labourers employed |                   |                    |
|      | Permanent                    | Temporary         | Total                | Permanent                    | Temporary         | Total              |
| 1901 | 47,365<br>(69.03)            | 21,254<br>(30.97) | 68,619<br>(100.00)   | 24,257<br>(59.97)            | 16,194<br>(40.03) | 40,451<br>(100.00) |
| 1911 | 56,693<br>(75.27)            | 18,622<br>(24.73) | 75,315<br>(100.00)   | 26,510<br>(67.01)            | 13,051<br>(32.99) | 39,561<br>(100.00) |
| 1921 | 86,693<br>(97.89)            | 1,871<br>(2.11)   | 88,564<br>(100.00)   | 45,977<br>(94.39)            | 2,733<br>(5.61)   | 48,710<br>(100.00) |
| 1931 | 1,12,591<br>(96.35)          | 4,262<br>(3.65)   | 1,16,853<br>(100.00) | 61,572<br>(96.71)            | 2,093<br>(3.29)   | 63,665<br>(100.00) |
| 1941 | 1,36,491<br>(96.54)          | 4,896<br>(3.46)   | 1,41,387<br>(100.00) | 67,838<br>(97.33)            | 1,861<br>(2.67)   | 69,699<br>(100.00) |

Note : Figures in parenthesis are the percentages.

Source : Data compiled from Mitra, A.K., Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, Part-IA (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore) Report, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 263 and 266.

But in the post independence period particularly during the few decades the number of casual workers increased significantly. The employers always suppressed the figures of casual workers. There is no published data on casual labourers during the

post-independence period. The Tea Statistics, published by Tea Board, Calcutta only gives the figures of temporary workers drawn from outside the garden. But in fact, a large proportion of resident workers who are related to the permanent workers in the tea garden concerned, worked as casual workers, the figures of which are not presented separately in Tea Statistics. Thus, it is very difficult to get the exact figure on casual workers.

Here, we have consulted three survey reports to get an estimation of casual workers in the Terai tea gardens. They are Techno Economic Survey of Darjeeling Tea Industry of National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi (1977), Techno Economic Survey of Terai Tea Industry of Tea Board, Calcutta (1982) and the survey made by Dr. Sharit Kumar Bhowmik, Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Delhi University. The figures on casual workers obtained by these survey are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 shows that the casualization in the Terai tea gardens increased much significantly during the last decade. At present there is about 37 per cent of the total work force is casual. The employers mainly engaged adults as casual labourers. There are relatively fewer number of children. The sex composition is more or less evenly balanced in the Terai.

Table 5.2

Permanent and casual labour employed in Terai tea gardens  
(in percentage)

| Year | Permanent | Casual | Total  |
|------|-----------|--------|--------|
| 1973 | 75.6      | 24.4   | 100.00 |
| 1981 | 78.8      | 21.2   | 100.00 |
| 1991 | 63.2      | 36.8   | 100.00 |

Source : Figures of 1973 and 1981 are compiled from Techno Economic Survey of Darjeeling Tea Industry, 1977, p.37, published by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) New Delhi and Techno Economic Survey of Terai Tea Industry, 1982, p.54 published by Tea Board, Calcutta. Figures of 1991 are compiled from the article, "Tea Plantations", Bhowmik, Sharit Kumar, 'Employment and Unionisation in Indian Industry' - published by Friedrich Ebert Foundation, New Delhi, 1992, p.37.

### 5.2 Size and Casualization

Table 5.3 gives the break up of permanent and casual labour according to the size groups of tea gardens.

Classifying the labour into permanent and casual according to the size group of the tea gardens, it is found that the percentage of casual labour is highest in the gardens less than 200 hectares and lowest in the gardens of the size group between 200 hectares and 400 hectares. One of the important causes for highest share of casual workers in the tea gardens of less than

Table 5.3

Distribution of permanent and casual labour by size-group  
(in percentage)

| Size-group    | Permanent | Casual | Total  |
|---------------|-----------|--------|--------|
| Less than 200 | 61.24     | 38.76  | 100.00 |
| 200 - 400     | 64.58     | 35.42  | 100.00 |
| More than 400 | 62.45     | 37.55  | 100.00 |
| All sizes     | 63.15     | 36.85  | 100.00 |

Source : "Tea Plantations", Bhowmik, Sharit Kumar, Employment and Unionisation in Indian Industry - Published by Friedrich Ebert Foundations, New Delhi, 1992.

200 hectares is that most of these tea gardens are engaged only in the plucking of tea leaves. They sold the green leaves to the other big tea gardens. So they employ a large number of workers only in the peak season on casual basis to minimize the cost.

### 5.3 Causes of Casualization

The most important cause of increasing share of casual workers in the tea industry is the enactment of the Plantation Labour Act (PLA), 1951 and the Bengal Plantation Labour Rule, 1956, which makes it mandatory for the employers to provide accommodation, food at subsidised rate to the permanent workers. As a result the employers took the policy of employment of casual workers to avoid their statutory obligations,

towards the workers. However after the general strike of 1969, the resident casual (bigha) workers were given the same amount of subsidised rations as permanent workers. But till the tripartite agreement of 1990 this facility is not extended to the nonresident bigha workers. One of the important cause of it is that the employers provided subsidised ration also to the dependants (up to 18 years of old) of adult workers. So they could save the cost of subsidised ration by employing those dependants as casual workers.

The growing rate of unemployment in the tea gardens is the main reason of increasing percentage of casual workers. We have observed in Chapter III that the employers during the early days encouraged the recruitment of family rather than individual. But after independence the industry has not expanded at a faster rate as we have observed in the second chapter. Due to lack of employment opportunities in the vicinity of the tea gardens resulted in a large unemployment. These unemployed people served as casual workers in the tea gardens.

The tea gardens are located in backward regions and the workers are isolated from urban industrial situation. In tea gardens they live amongst their own community with their traditions. Education among the children of the workers has not been widespread. As a result of backwardness of location of tea

gardens and illiteracy of workers the dependence of new generation on the tea gardens increased. But the industry has not expanded much since the 1950 and there was ~~an~~<sup>apparent</sup> saturation of employment. This situation gave the employers wide opportunity to employ casual workers. As most of the casual workers are related to the permanent workers; Permanent workers are beneficial as their family income increases. Thus the reduction of casual labour will directly, affect the permanent labour force.

The law provides that a person can be employed as a casual labourer for a maximum period of six months, after which his or her employment has to be confirmed. The employers, however, are able to circumvent this law by breaking the casual labourer's service by a day on the completion of six months. Sometimes they did not even have to do this. They simply changed the workers' name and for official purposes it was a different person. In most cases this is done without the knowledge of the workers concerned, since the majority of the tea garden workers are illiterate.

We may conclude that the backwardness of the tea garden regions is the prime cause of developing casual labour force in the tea gardens. To overcome this problem we may suggest to develop the tea garden regions for generating other employment opportunities near the vicinity of tea gardens. This could absorb the surplus population of tea gardens. So far

the tea garden area has not developed because of its placement. A tea garden falls neither in municipal area nor in panchayat. It exclusively falls under a tea garden mouza. As a result, it could not be connected with the development schemes of municipality and panchayat. Besides the State Government does not take any separate scheme of development for tea garden areas. As a remedial we may suggest for the inclusion of tea garden areas with Panchayat.

There is need to ensure that the children of the tea garden workers are imparted some technical skills so that they can seek employment outside the tea garden areas. In this connection we may suggest to extend the training scheme of Nehru Rozgar Yozona amongst the children of the tea garden workers. At present the scheme is only available for the poorer section of municipal and panchayat areas. At the same time both the government and trade unions should seriously concern about the expansion of primary education amongst the children of the tea garden workers.

#### 5.4 Summary

The early records show that during the pre-independence period the temporary employment in the tea gardens of West Bengal had more and more given way to permanent tenures. Between the period 1901 to 1941, casualization in the tea gardens of West Bengal dropped to 3.46 per cent from 30.97

per cent and in Darjeeling tea gardens it decreased to 2.67 per cent from 40.03 per cent during the same period of time. But during the post independence period the number of casual workers increased significantly. By 1991, the percentage of casual labour reached to nearly 37 per cent of the total working force.

The growing rate of unemployment in the tea garden areas is the prime cause of increasing percentage of casual workers. Due to backwardness of the tea garden areas other employment opportunity could not be generated in the tea garden areas. Moreover, since 1950 the tea areas expanded at a very slow rate. Thus huge number of unemployed workers here found in the families of tea garden workers. Due to illiteracy they are not fit for other jobs outside the tea gardens. These people served as casual labour in tea industry.

## **CHAPTER VI ; Child Labour in Tea Industry**

### **Content :**

- 6.1      Child Workers.**
- 6.2      Wages to Child Workers.**
- 6.3      Type of Work of Chila Workers.**
- 6.4      Distribution of Child Labour.**
- 6.5      Growth of Child Labour.**
- 6.6      Education to Children.**
- 6.7      Summary.**

### 6.1 Child workers

Employment of adolescent and children in the work structure is a special feature of the tea industry. This is mainly a result of the pre-independence recruitment practices in the tea plantations. In the earlier period the Planters encouraged families rather than individuals to migrate for work to tea gardens. This saved the recruitment cost. As the workers are permanently settled in the industry and as they had no scope for alternative employment the workers were forced to accept the dictated term. Again employing a family comprising a man, his wife and two children was preferable to employing four workers of different families. The planter in the later case would not only have to bear the recruiting costs of these workers but would also have to provide housing for each of them. By engaging the entire family the planter could cut costs on recruitment as well as on housing.

During the post-independence period though the problem of labour shortage was overcome the planters continued the

recruitment of child labour. In 1951, the plantation labour Act (PLA) was passed. The Act legally permits the Plantation industry to employ the children above the age of 12 years. Thus, the plantation industry is the only industry in the organized sector which is legally permitted to employ child labourer. Moreover, the minimum age of employment is two years lower than the stipulated minimum age (14 years) in the unorganized/informal sector such as bidi, cigar, carpet, glass and matches industry.

It may be mentioned here that the International Labour Organization (ILO) defines any non-adult worker as child labour. According to this definition all workers below the age of 18 years can be regarded as child labour. Accordingly, the categories of both adolescents and children in plantations are in fact child labour.

#### 6.2 Wages to Child Workers

Adolescents are given the same wages as adult workers. Children are paid half of the wages of adult workers. In June 1992, the daily wages of a child worker in the Terai stood at Rs. 9.75, against Rs. 19.24 of adult male, female and adolescent workers. A child worker is allowed half the wages of adults, but the hours of work prescribed by the act is more than half of that of adults. The 1982 amendment of the Plantation Labour

Act (PLA) lays down that the minimum working hours of adults is 48 hours a week whereas it is 27 hours a week for children.

In the early period of tea plantation there was wage differences between adult male and female in industry. In 1975 the Government of India passed Equal Remuneration Act abolishing wage difference between male and female in all industries. This Equal Remuneration Act cover only wage difference between the sexes and does not cover the child labour. The trade unions also ignored the subject of wages of child labourer. They never demanded for equal wages for child workers.

### 6.3 Type of Work of Child Workers

The Plantation Labour Act (PLA) in its present form does not contain any provision regarding the type of work for the various categories of workers. Most of the employers use the non-adult workers in spraying of pesticides, weedicides and chemical fertilizers. This is because in most cases these child workers are yet to acquire the skills for plucking tea leaves; and therefore they cannot be engaged in heavy agricultural work expected of the adult male workers. The present Act does not contain any provision dealing with safety of workers as regards to health hazards connected with the spraying of chemical fertilisers.

The Government has recently introduced a Bill to amend the Plantation Labour Act of 1951 to deal with the problem of safety and health in plantations arising out of the increasing use of agro-chemicals in plantations.

The Bill seeks to enable the Government to prohibit, restrict or provide regular employment of women and non-adult workers for using or handling hazardous chemicals in plantations. Such a provision will ensure uniformity of rules regarding plantations in the country. The Bill also seeks to prohibit the employment of children aged below 14 years in plantations.

#### 6.4 Distribution of Child Labour

The distribution of Adolescent and Child labour in tea plantations is given in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 shows that there was 75,261 child labourers in the tea industry of India in 1990, out of these 51,113 were children and 24,148 were adolescents. The bulk of the child labourer is in Assam where the total number of child labourer was 56,664 followed by West Bengal with 14,779 child labourers. Thus, we see that nearly 95 per cent child labourers is employed in the tea plantations of north-east India. The proportion of children is higher than adolescents in the tea plantations of both Assam and West Bengal.

Table 6.1

## Distribution of child labour in tea industry 1990

| District/State/<br>Region | Adolescent<br>(A) | Children<br>(C) | Total<br>(A+C)   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Dooars                    | 4706<br>(3.08)    | 6725<br>(4.40)  | 11431<br>(7.48)  |
| Darjeeling                | 440<br>(0.91)     | 748<br>(1.56)   | 1188<br>(2.47)   |
| Terai                     | 675<br>(1.78)     | 1485<br>(3.93)  | 2160<br>(5.71)   |
| West Bengal               | 5821<br>(2.34)    | 8958<br>(3.61)  | 14779<br>(5.95)  |
| Assam                     | 15170<br>(2.80)   | 41494<br>(7.66) | 56664<br>(10.46) |
| Tamil Nadu                | 1877<br>(1.83)    | 170<br>(0.16)   | 2047<br>(1.99)   |
| Karnataka                 | 75<br>(1.78)      | 22<br>(0.52)    | 97<br>(2.30)     |
| Kerala                    | 1025<br>(1.38)    | 105<br>(0.14)   | 1130<br>(1.52)   |
| South India               | 2977<br>(1.64)    | 297<br>(0.16)   | 3274<br>(1.8)    |
| All India*                | 24148<br>(2.45)   | 51113<br>(5.17) | 75261<br>(7.62)  |

Note : Figures in parenthesis are the percentages.

\*Includes all tea growing areas in the country.

Source : Tea Statistics, Published by Tea Board, Calcutta,  
1990-91, pp.144 and 147.

The tea growing states of South India have few child labourer. They collectively employ 3274 child labourers out of which 2977 are adolescents and 297 are children. The adolescents outnumber the child workers.

In terms of percentages, in all tea gardens of India child labourers (Adolescents and child) account for 7.62 per cent. In West Bengal they account for 5.71 per cent while in Assam the child workers account for 10.46 per cent. In tea plantations of South India child labourers account for only 1.8 per cent. Thus, in tea plantations of Assam the number of child labourer is highest both in absolute term as well as in percentage term.

Among the three tea growing regions of West Bengal the highest percentage of child labourer is employed in Dooars. They are 7.48 per cent of total working force followed by Terai with 5.71 per cent and Darjeeling with 2.47 per cent.

#### 6.5 Growth of Child Labour

The growth of child labour in the tea gardens of West Bengal and Terai is presented in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 shows that the child labour in the Terai tea gardens increased by nearly 227 per cent over the last 30 years period from 1961 to 1990; but in all tea gardens of West Bengal

Table 6.2

Child labour in the tea gardens of West Bengal and Terai  
1961-1990

| State/Region | 1961  | 1971  | 1981  | 1990  | % increase<br>over 1961 |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------------|
| Terai        | 661   | 1235  | 1670  | 2160  | 226.78                  |
| West Bengal  | 13372 | 17990 | 19052 | 14779 | 10.52                   |

Note : Number of child labour includes both adolescent and children.

Source : Appendix II.

it increased by only 10.52 per cent during the same period of time. Since 1981 the child labour in all tea gardens of West Bengal showed decreasing trend. But in the Terai they showed increasing trend throughout the period from 1961 to 1990.

In Table 6.3 we <sup>have</sup> presented the annual growth rate of child labour in the Terai and all West Bengal tea gardens and compare the same with that of adult (male and female) labour.

Table 6.3 shows that the child labour in Terai has grown at the rate of 4.03 per cent per year during the period from 1961 to 1990; whereas in all tea gardens of West Bengal the child labourer has grown at the rate of 0.33 per cent per year during the same period of time. So the rate of absorption of child labourer in Terai is much higher than the all West Bengal average. Another special feature of employment practices in the tea gardens as revealed by Table 6.3 that the child labour

Table 6.3

Annual growth rate of child and adult labour  
1961-1990

| Year      | West Bengal |         | Terai |       |
|-----------|-------------|---------|-------|-------|
|           | Adult       | Child   | Adult | Child |
| 1961-1970 | 0.06        | 3.60    | 0.83  | 6.96  |
| 1971-1980 | 0.94        | 1.60    | 1.37  | 5.55  |
| 1981-1990 | 1.86        | (-)2.50 | 5.67  | 2.61  |
| 1961-1990 | 0.87        | 0.33    | 2.62  | 4-03  |

Note : i) Adult includes both male and female.  
ii) Child includes both adolescents and children.

Source : Appendix II.

is employed at a much higher rate than the adult male and female. This is because the employers get some benefits by employing the children. Normally the children are those whose parents are also employed in the same tea gardens. So the employer <sup>have</sup> does not <sup>have</sup> to provide any additional housing to them. Besides the lower daily wage rates of children encouraged the employers to employ large number of child workers.

All the trade union leaders interviewed confessed the existence of child labourer in the tea gardens. But they are not making any effort to stop the employment of child labour. They supported the issue on the ground of family income. So, economic reason is one of the important causes on the part

of the workers to send their children to work. On the other hand, the employers also deliberately ignore the aspect of imparting education to the children. This is perhaps, to keep a steady supply of the future labour force for the industry.

#### 6.6 Education to Children

According to the provision of the Plantation Labour Act the employers have to run Primary Schools within the plantation when there are twenty five or more children between the ages of six and twelve years. At the same time, by permitting employment of children, above the age of 12 the act implied that children above this age should not be given any facilities for school. Besides the act also provides that the employers need not provide for a school if there is already one maintained by the State within a distance of one mile from the place of residence of the workers. The children in plantations in the hills or terai have to walk more than one mile or even more for the school, run by the government. They have to leave early morning, and have to return late in the evening. Unless special efforts are made, the education of the boys or girls are bound to suffer.

At present the State Government is collecting 'education cess' from the employers. This policy of the State Government has created a controversy about the responsibility of the

education of the children of the workers. The employers are of the view that as they are paying education cess to the State Government, it should take the full responsibility of the education of the children of the workers. Thus, the aspect of education of the children has been affected by the education cess.

Regarding the education of the children the trade unions have a vital role to play. So far they have accepted the employment of child labourers on the issue of family income. Their present views should be changed. They should encourage the workers to send out their children to schools. The employment of children is a temporary solution of economic crisis of the tea garden workers. The present bulk of the illiterate children will make pressure on the employment of tea industry in future. This will lead to surplus labour force in the industry in future. In this respect, the trade unions should exercise special effort to prevent the employment of child labourer and all efforts should be made to educate them.

#### 6.7 Summary

The practice of employment of child labour in the work structure of tea industry has been continued since independence. After independence, the plantation Labour Act of 1951, legally

permits the employment of child labourer. At present there is 75,000 child labourer working in the tea gardens of different regions of India. In terms of percentage it is 8% of the total labour force. The highest number of child labourer is employed in the tea gardens of Assam and followed by West Bengal. Only 5% of total child labourer is employed in the tea gardens of South India. The tea gardens of West Bengal employed nearly 20% of the total child labourer.

As regards growth of child labourer, we observed that the number of child labourer in West Bengal tea gardens significantly decreased between the period 1981 to 1990. But its tea growing region of Terai showed increasing trend of child labourer throughout the period 1961 to 1990.

By employing children in the work structure the employer gets economic benefit. As a child worker is allowed half the wages of adults, but they work more than half of the period of that of adults. So far the employer deliberately ignore the education of the children of the workers to keep secure the supply of future labour force in the industry. On the other hand, due to economic crisis in family the workers send their children to work. The trade union leaders also ignore the aspect of child labourer on the ground of family income. So the children have been employed to fulfil the needs of both the workers and employers.

Due to lack of educational facilities and employment of child labourer the population in the tea gardens have been depended on the tea gardens generation after generation. Thus, huge number of surplus population is generated in tea industry. In order to prevent employment of child labour and to reduce employment pressure in tea gardens all efforts should be made to educate the children. For this purpose a tripartite effort is essential from the ends of Government, trade unions and employers.

## CHAPTER VII : Women Workers in Tea Industry

### Content :

- 7.1 Early Condition of Women.
- 7.2 Employment of Women Workers.
- 7.3 Women's Wages.
- 7.4 Women in Plantation Hierarchy.
- 7.5 Creches.
- 7.6 Type of Work of Women.
- 7.7 Various Reasons for Employing Women in  
Tea Plantations.
- 7.8 Summary.

Tea industry in the South and North employs a substantial share of women workers who account for nearly 47 per cent of the total employment of 10 lakhs workers in tea plantations in the country. It is true, when women have been thrown out from Jute, Textile, Tobacco etc. on a large scale due to various reasons, in plantation industry women are still on a large scale. The reason for large employment in tea plantation is that the two leaves and a bud have to be plucked from the tree and this job is better done by the women. Women are able to perform better due to their nimble fingers as is viewed by the owners. These are hardly convincing reasons, because men are also engaged in plucking alongside they also carry out tasks related to maintenance of the bushes and plantations.

In reality, the division of labour between the sexes is more a matter of convention or perhaps belief, rather than a scientific reality. Employing women in tea was more profitable for the employer for many years since the equal Remuneration Act, maternity Benefit Act, provision of creche etc. were not applied. Whereever they are applied now, the tendency to

escape these rules and Acts is very prominent. The whole family including the children work in the gardens with different wages.

#### 7.1 Early Condition of Women

The early history of women in the labouring communities of tea gardens in Assam and North Bengal is marked by the customary absence of inscriptions other than signs of violence and oppression. Women remain below the level of perception which orders visible history. Plantation labour itself was not always an important object of knowledge in historical discourse, public gaze turned towards them only when something out of the ordinary happened, like general strike or mass violence or exodus or revolt. Within this community woman occupies an ever smaller space, for she was assiduously pushed into the spare of domesticity and supportive labours, always expected to be docile and inarticulate. It is not as though women did not speak out or act against consignment to the margins of visible existence, what happened was that the logic of patriarchy, often internalised by women themselves, worked both in the hierarchical ordering of labouring communities and in the apparatus of violence and terror on which plantation economics thrived for a long time. No wonder, then the women received only marginal attention in the minor chronologies

offered by record and representation for the history of plantations. Neither historiography nor journalism considered women in this sector to be of more than passing interest. The history of women in the tea gardens therefore, is prolonged order of silence broken by eruptions of oppressive terror, when women were taken away, humiliated, beaten up and sexually assaulted did they become unwilling objects of social gaze.

Early information available from official reports, newspaper accounts, court cases and so on make it clear that fear and false promises of money and security were responsible for large migrations of labour to the tea gardens. Women and children very often accompanied their men, of it was a more or less radical uprooting which lay at the basis of migration. Labour contractors acted as planters' agents because it would be men of same community or at least those speaking the same language, who would be trusted by emigrants. For women this was a transition from the tribal or feudal community to the coolie lives of the dank malaria-infested valleys of Assam and North Bengal. This was also a transition from the system of community protection to the helplessness of servile bondage.

The plantation machinery of exploitation demanded a purposive spread of personalised terror in order to keep the labouring population quiet. Colonial commercialism exploited in an intensified form the customary feudal exaction of services. Not only labour which produced the commercial crop but also

personal services and personal homage were demanded and forcibly exacted. This intensification of feudal terror, the sign of absolute authority over a community isolated from its social moorings, set up an entire order to coercive subordination. A language is constructed by the oppressive apparatus, system of address, channel of authority, spatial distance separating the slave from his master, arbitrary exaction of personal labour services, deliberate irrationality of subjective brutality enforced regimentation of labour and leisure. The sexual abuse of women is part of this machinery of terror.

This was in 1921, when several legislations had come into being seeking to protect plantation labour. But the planter was acquitted. Till the end of the colonial era cases of rape, forcible seduction buying and selling of women and decoying young women by various artifices are rampant. Sometimes cases were brought to the notice of government authorities and reported in newspapers, but the criminals almost never received any punishment worth the name. Accompanying the systemic reduction of labouring community to a state of object surrender of subjectivity there was a process of degradation and humiliation which sought to rob these men and women of their social identity. Their values, rituals and traditional ties were subjected to tremendous pressure. Young tribal women would be invited to the planter's bungalow to stage a dance performance; they would be piled with liquor in the course of the evening

and taken advantage of by the white man, the baboo and the sardar. When families and communities are subjected to such habitual degradation, their values will very often be corrupted and the community ethos will disintegrate. The oppression of women was a crucial ingredient of the colonial system of easy exaction of profitable labour.

## 7.2 Employment of women workers

The extent of employment of women workers is given in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1

Distribution of male and female workers in tea industry-1990.

| District/State/Region | Male              | Female            |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Dooars                | 77543<br>(50.79)  | 63706<br>(41.73)  |
| Darjeeling            | 17885<br>(37.17)  | 29043<br>(60.36)  |
| Terai                 | 18575<br>(49.04)  | 17140<br>(45.25)  |
| West Bengal           | 114003<br>(45.84) | 119889<br>(48.21) |
| Assam                 | 251511<br>(46.43) | 233486<br>(43.11) |
| Tamil Nadu            | 44303<br>(43.10)  | 56436<br>(54.91)  |

contd...

Table 7.1 contd ...

|             |                   |                   |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Karnataka   | 2252<br>(53.40)   | 1868<br>(44.30)   |
| Kerala      | 33539<br>(45.19)  | 39719<br>(53.39)  |
| South India | 80094<br>(44.16)  | 98023<br>(54.04)  |
| All India*  | 453001<br>(45.91) | 458519<br>(46.47) |

Note : Figures in parenthesis are the percentages to total.

\*Including all tea growing areas in the country.

Source : Tea Statistics 1990-91, Published by Tea Board,  
Calcutta, pp.144 and 147.

Table 7.1 shows that the total number of female workers is slightly higher than the males at All India level. The two tea growing states of South India, Viz. Tamil Nadu and Kerala employed higher proportion of male workers. The male workers in the tea gardens of Assam were 3.32 per cent more than the female workers. In West Bengal tea gardens of Darjeeling hills employed substantially higher proportion of female workers while in the other two tea growing regions of the state viz. Dooars and Terai the female workers were outnumbered.

In Table 7.2 we have presented the number of female workers in per 1000 males in the tea gardens of Terai and West Bengal.

Table 7.2

## Females per 1000 males

|             | 1961 | 1971 | 1981 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| West Bengal | 975  | 1101 | 1034 | 973  | 990  | 1024 | 991  | 1026 | 1052 |
| Terai       | 1068 | 1085 | 1024 | 963  | 937  | 1034 | 932  | 933  | 933  |

Source : Appendix II.

The male/female ratios as depicted in Table 7.2 clearly shows a decreasing proportion of females during the decades eighties. This is perhaps due to the implementation of Equal Remuneration Act, and Maternity Benefit Act etc. Though these Acts were passed before the eighties, but in tea gardens the employers did not give the immediate effect of the Acts. After the trade unions had intervened by way of struggles the employers gave effect of the Acts from the eighties.

### 7.3 Women's Wages

Wages differentials between men and women existed in the tea plantations from their inception. Before India's independence in 1947 women generally earned a wage which was three-fourths of the wage paid to men. The differences narrowed after the post independence legislation regulating payment of

Minimum wages was passed. The wages in this period in Terai Tea gardens showed the following trend :

Table 7.3

## Wages differences between male and female

| Year | Rupees per day |        | Differences |
|------|----------------|--------|-------------|
|      | Male           | Female |             |
| 1952 | 1.16           | 1.03   | 0.13        |
| 1953 | 1.50           | 1.36   | 0.14        |
| 1966 | 2.08           | 1.91   | 0.17        |
| 1976 | 4.24           | 4.07   | 0.17        |
| 1978 | 6.24           | 6.07   | 0.17        |
| 1980 | 8.04           | 7.87   | 0.17        |
| 1983 | 9.69           | 9.52   | 0.17        |
| 1984 | 10.44          | 10.44  | -           |

Source : Data compiled from different years' Tea Statistics, published by Tea Board, Calcutta and Memorandum of Settlements, 1966 to 1991, published by Tea Association of India (North Bengal Branch, Siliguri).

Table 7.3 shows that in 1952, the women got daily wage 13 paise less than that of males. In 1953 the difference increased to 14 paise. The wage difference remained same till 1966. After the final recommendation of Central Wage Board the wage difference rose to 17 paise and it remained same throughout the period so long the difference existed in the tea industry.

In 1975, the Govt. of India passed Equal Remuneration Act abolishing wage differences among sexes in all industries. Even after the enactment was in force the employers refused to pay equal wages to male and female workers.

After the trade unions intervened by way of struggles the employers agreed to pay equal wages. As the data on daily wage rate of the workers presented by Tea Statistics (Official Publication of Tea Board) revealed the equal wages for male and female in Terai tea gardens was not implemented till 1983.

#### 7.4 Women in Plantation Hierarchy

We presented the organisation structure in tea gardens in Chapter III (Table 3.6). This shows that there are four levels in the organization structure of a tea garden, viz. management, staff sub-staff and workers (Coolies). A male tribal worker can hardly be promoted from the level of cooly to the sub-staff. But this promotion scope is not available for the women. A women works at the level of cooly throughout of her life. Thus the organization hierarchy also involves sexual division along side with ethinic division, which is very undesirable for the women. The principal work of them is tea plucking and weeding. The working day is from morning till 5 P.M., with a midday break of about an hour. The women cannot take any leisure in break period because of her household work. The fatigue took

its tool of the women's health. Absenteeism is high, particularly in the hot season, and very few women could continue working beyond 55 years.

#### 7.5 Creches

Section 12 of the Plantation Labour Act, 1952 provides "The predominant share of women workers in the total workers in the total work force makes it obligatory on the part of the employers to provide certain facilities to women one of which is a creche for the children of workers".<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, "There should be enough space for children in the creche, children should be looked after by trained women ... The employers are also required to provide fresh or prepares milk for the children refreshment ... clothes for everyone, oil and soap."<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the statutory obligation of the employers to provide creches and its proper maintenance, the actual conditions prevailing in tea gardens with regard to creche is miserable. In most of the tea gardens in the Terai creche as such do not exist. Whenever they exist they exist in paper, or in a tent or in a room. One may not even find children there. Milk supply is rare, clothes cradles do not exist, the trained aya has not employed. It therefore quite a common

sight to find women working with children strapped to their backs.

The Indian Labour Journal October, 1984 stages, "For instance most of the creches in the Northern and North-Eastern Plantations were found to be not only below the prescribed standard of construction but also were found wanting in sanitation and cleanliness. In almost 88 per cent of the cases, creches were being looked after by untrained staff. In some cases creches existed only in the "form of tents" with the result only about 23% of the eligible children actually attending creches ...".<sup>3</sup>

So it is fact, that in tea gardens the creches are very few and where they are existed they are badly maintained. Thus, it will be good if the social welfare department of State Govts consider running a scheme to train the attendants to improve the running of creches. At present the demand for creches is voiced by working women in tea gardens and government should seriously consider it.

It was the women, in waves and waves of migration, who had to bear the brunt of adjustment to strange and inhospitable surroundings. In pre-independence period she was humiliated, beaten up and sexually assaulted by the Colonial British Planters. After independence though the humiliation and sexual assaultation has been stopped the exploitation of women continued to many other directions. Women received a lower

wage at least up to 1980 though the work was back-breaking as that of men. Leaf-Picking, weeding, ditch-digging, cleaning etc. were the province of women. They worked long hours just as the men did but the added burden of cooking, cleaning, fetching and gathering, child minding and so on made life an unending round of torment for the women.

From the very beginning, women workers have been actively involved in trade union activity. They have, however been mostly used as 'Cannon fodder' in agitational activity like strikes organized by trade unions. In several cases, trade unions have deliberately kept women in the frontline while, confining the managerial staff in tactic known as 'gherao' and while confronting the police. The agitational activity did yield results.

But in spite of participation of the women's in the early struggle of trade unionism still she is out of trade union leadership. Moreover the present trade unions are not making effort for the social conditions of women. In course of promotion from the level of cooly, to sub-staff women have been the victimized of sexual division. Due to absence of creches she has to strapp her baby to her back along with 25 kg./30 kg. plucked tea.

The unhygienic condition of living, the bad and inadequate food, bouts of infections diseases, lack of proper clothing and

lodging against the weather and absence of medical and child care are bad enough, particularly for the women who has to cope with these conditions most of all for the sake of the family. But what must have been particularly oppressive is the social isolation in which they have to face unending rounds of oppression. The fact that even under such conditions strong social identity is preserved can be attributed principally to the tenacity and the discipline of women.

#### 7.6 Type of Work of Women

The women in tea plantations mainly engaged in plucking of tea leaf. Men are engaged in agricultural work like hoeing, cleaning the base of the tea bushes, spraying pesticides etc. They seldom pluck tea leaf. In slack season women are also employed in light hoeing and light and medium pruning. Only young, efficient and able bodied women are employed in such pruning as it needs some skill. In plantation women are also employed in forking and hoeing and they also do hand weeding. Women are not generally employed in tea factories, only aged and sick women are employed in factory for sweeping and picking out the tea stalks from finished tea. Apart from plucking it is seen that in many other jobs in the plantation women are as efficient as men. Plucking required patience and dexterity of fingers which the women can provide better than men.

Though there is no right compartmentalisation of work for male and female workers some sort of division of labour exists. Women are given more manual and relatively unskilled jobs on the ground that they are not "qualified for higher and skilled job" as the management often says.

#### 7.7 Various Reasons for Employing Women in Tea Plantation

The women workers consider their work as a part of their life. The inclusion of Adivasi women in the work system of the plantation is an important criteria to determine their status whereas as the exclusion from all economic and intellectual activities are the criteria of status among the higher caste women. The majority of women who had already worked in a plantation before marriage continue to work after marriage. In many cases the women workers are the primary bread winners.

Thus, the women workers of plantation work are basically propelled by their economic motivation. Such economic motivation is a result of obligations towards their family and other dependents. The major part of the income goes towards the purchase of daily foods, just as a part of the man's income goes towards the purchase of liquor and tobacco.

The participation of women in plantation work does not adversely affect interpersonal relationships between husband

and wife. It does not create a situation of conflict in the family. However, their husbands and in-laws show positive attitudes towards their employment. Their positive attitude is often equated with their active support. The male support their wives' work simply because it brings in money for them and the family.

#### 7.8 Summary

The women workers along with their men counterpart, directly involve themselves in the productive system of the plantation. In this sense, with men workers, are the actual producers in the mode of production of the plantation system, who sell their labour to earn a livelihood. But in tea gardens the women are the subject of exploitation for a long period of time. Till the end of colonial era cases of rape, forcible seduction, buying and selling of women and decoying young women by various artifices were rampant. After independence though her sexual assaultation has been stopped, but she was exploited in many other ways. Women got less wages than males for a long period of time. Even after the enactment of Equal Remuneration Act, 1975, the employers paid less wages in the tea gardens of North East India at least upto 1983. Creches are very few in the tea gardens of north east India and where they are existed they are badly maintained. So she has to strapped baby to her back along with 25 kg./30 kg. plucked tea.

Women workers do not join the trade unions but hardly take active part in them. It is not because they are incapable of doing so but because of male dominance in this field. Inequality between men and women has been fully carried over into the trade union organization. Hardly there is any trade union leader in tea gardens from among the women workers. Even in the local committees of the trade unions there are a very few women members. But if a procession or a demonstration is staged they are placed at the front.

In organization hierarchy she does not get promotion to the sub-staff position along with male tribal workers. Thus, she is victim of sexual division. But neither the trade unions nor the Government raise voice against such exploitation of women in the tea gardens.

Notes & References

1. Ranadive, Vimal - "Women Workers in Plantation Industry", Published in Souvenir - 1992 of All India Plantation Workers' Federation. 6th All India Conference, 1st - 3rd March, 1992, held in Parimal Mitra Nagar Banarhat, Jalpaiguri.
2. ibid.
3. ibid.

## CHAPTER VIII : Trade Unionism in Tea Industry

### Content :

- 8.1 History of Trade-Union Movement in Tea Industry.
- 8.2 Growth and Development of Trade Union Movement.
- 8.3 Multiple Trade Unionism.
- 8.4 Collective Bargaining Strength of Trade Unions.
- 8.5 Summary.

### 8.1 History of Trade Union Movement in Tea Industry

A study of the working class movement in India revealed that the climate of labour movement changed by 1918. The organised working class in most parts of the country was involved in a struggle against colonialism under the leadership of the nationalists. Some significant strikes had taken place in the Textile mills of Bombay and Kanpur and in the Jute mills of Calcutta. But the working class of the tea industry of West Bengal did not respond to this movement. The tea gardens of West Bengal were almost entirely insulated from the nationalist movement which swept the country prior to independence. Trade Union movement in Assam tea gardens, however, started since 1921 under the leadership of nationalists and it became more pronounced after 1935. By 1939 tea gardens in Assam started witnessing widespread strikes.<sup>1</sup>

On the contrary trade union movement could not develop in the tea gardens of West Bengal till the eve of independence, as conditions for the growth of trade unions did not exist. The

workers were too poor and weak and they had no bargaining strength. But the planters were highly organised and powerful. They were in dominating positions and dictated both the wages as well as the conditions of service of the workers resulting in many industrial and social ills such as low wages, unduly long hours of work, poor working conditions. Thus the plight of the workers was miserable, and they had no other ways but to tolerate the tyrannies and naked exploitation of the planters.

During the pre-independence period the tea gardens of West Bengal were like a fort of <sup>the</sup> feudals. Trade union leaders had no access to the gardens and they were persecuted and victimised by the planters. Planters appointed chowkider to keep watchful eyes on the movement of the workers. So the workers could not go outside the garden to meet the trade union leaders. Moreover, the planters maintained a private armed force known as the 'North Bengal Mounted Rifles' in tea areas. Apart from military exercises and sporting activities this force could supplement the colonial police in overawing unruly labour.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the planters made every possible effort to isolate the tea gardens of West Bengal from the waves of labour agitation which were sweeping through the country prior to independence under the leadership of <sup>the</sup> nationalists. As a result trade unions had a late start in the tea gardens of West Bengal.

It is often stated that the communists were the first to introduce trade unions in tea gardens of West Bengal around the time of independence. They struggled against all odds to bring a consciousness among tea garden workers. Ratanlal Brahman was the nominee of the Communist Party of India (C.P.I) from the tea garden constituency of Darjeeling in the Bengal provincial Assembly election held in April, 1946. The election provided an opportunity to communists to enter into the gardens. Ratanlal Brahman and Sushil Chakraborty together with their Communist fellows began to hold meeting with red flags. This was the first time that the workers saw red flags inside the gardens. The first trade union in the tea industry of West Bengal was formed in Darjeeling by this election campaign at the end of 1945. It was Darjeeling District Tea Workers' Union. Ratanlal Brahman and Bhadra Bahadur Hamal became its first President and General Secretary respectively. Later it was renamed as Darjeeling District Chia Camman Mazdur Union in 1952.

It is alleged that the planters tried in every way to defeat Ratanlal Brahman in the election. It is also alleged that they also took the help of Government and non-communist party (Congress) for this purpose.\* The managers of twelve tea gardens including Fubsiring, Ragnit, Happyvelly Soom etc. issued a letter to Ratanlal Brahman that he would not be allowed to meet the workers during the course of election campaign. But inspite of all these obstacles Ratanlal Brahman

\* Roy Manoranjan - Samrajyababu Bidrohi Sangram O Shramik Andolan (Bengali) (1987) Published by National Book Agency, p.135.

continued his election campaign and ultimately elected by massive votes.<sup>3</sup>

The win of Ratanlal Brahman in the Assembly election was a land mark in the beginning of trade union movement in the tea industry of West Bengal. This brought a new awakening among the garden workers. Under the leadership of Communists they got a new deal to organize themselves against the tyrannies of British planters. The workers who tolerated the naked oppression of planters during the last hundred years now began to protest. On the other hand planters were also aggressive towards the workers. In their turn, they retaliated by retrenching large number of workers involved in trade unionism. They also provided cruel punishment like 'Hattalahaar' to the workers. Under this system of punishment the manager sent out an erring worker along with his family to deep forest in the mid night. Thus, the employers tried in every way to resist the organized movement of the workers.

During 1945-46 Darjeeling tea gardens had witnessed of several labour agitations. On May 31st, 1946, Ratanlal Brahman was persecuted and arrested by the police when he entered into Soom tea estate to hold a meeting. Subsequently the arrest was followed by a large scale labour agitation demanding the release of Ratanlal Brahman. A woman worker, Lumbini snatched rifle from the police. The agitation became uncontrollable and the police released Ratanlal Brahman.

On 2nd June, 1946, the police shoot fire on the agitated workers at Fubsiring Tea Estate. On 16th June, 1946 the management of Ambutia Tea Estate retrenched six workers for the offence of unionism. In July of the same year forty workers who were in the leadership role of trade unions were retrenched from the tea gardens of Pandam, Fubsiring, Sider, Soom and Ambutia. On 18th June, 1946, the Chia Camman Majdur Union gave 'strike notice' to the management of 13 tea gardens for their seven points demand which included wage raise, ration at cheaper rate, dearness allowance @ 25% of total wage, abolition of 'Hattabahar', medical facilities, and recognition of trade unions etc. This is the first time that the workers of 13 tea gardens went on a general strike for a day.

The waves of trade unionism also reached in the Terai tea gardens around the same period. Here also the first initiative was taken by the communists. The two distinguished Communist trade unionist, Biren Bose and Bhupen Bhowmick made an attempt to form trade union in Merry View tea garden in 1946. The tea gardens of Terai region were also unaccessible to outsiders. But Bhupen Bhowmick was a fire wood supplier of Merry view tea garden, so he had easy access to the garden. Under this privilege he first communicated with Jaladhar, a labour sardar of the garden. They hold secret meeting with few workers in the hut of Jaladhar at night. An adivasi muslim worker, Sarbati Mia, played a distinguished role in forming workers' union. But this initiative to form union could not last for a

long. The manager became aware of the fact that some of his workers holding secret meeting to form labour union under the leadership of Sarbati Mia. He soon retrenched Sarbati and ceased Jaladhar's sardari. Latter in 1954 labour unions were formed in Kharibari, Kamala, Fulbari and Merryview tea gardens under the leadership of communists. This time major initiative was taken by Bhupen Bhowmick.

Trade unions in Dooars were formed at the initiative of the communists and Bengal Dooars Railway workers. The Bengal Dooars Railway Workers' Union (BDRWU) was a non political union but a majority of its members supported the communist party of India (C.P.I.). The members of the Communist Party made an attempt to organise the workers of Dooars tea gardens through the gangmen and pointsmen, who had also the adivasi background like the tea garden workers. They performed their activities under the cover of night as the railwaymen could be arrested or even shot by the managers for trespass.<sup>4</sup>

The first tea garden came under the influence of BDRWU is Haihaipathar (now renamed Rapali) near Mal. The other tea gardens like Denguajhar, situated near Jalpaiguri town, Bagrakote and Lakhaipara situated near Bagrakote and Banarhat railway station respectively also came under the influence of <sup>the</sup> communists around this time.<sup>5</sup>

In July 1946, the first central trade union for the tea garden workers of Dooars was formed with the workers of nearly

thirty gardens. It was Zilla Cha Bagan Mazdur Union. Ratanlal Brahman and Debprasad Ghosh became its first President and Secretary respectively. The union was latter affiliated to the AITUC.

This is the history of early stage of development of trade union movement in tea industry of West Bengal. The history bears testimony of the tremendous struggle of communist trade unionists, and they had to fight both against the Government and the planters to form the workers' association. Their sincerity and dedication ultimately gave the birth of trade unions in the tea industry.

#### 8.2 Growth of Trade Union Movement in Tea Industry

The organized labour movement in tea industry started after the advent of trade unionism. Before that no significant labour movement could take place in the industry. In the previous part of this chapter we found that the trade union in Dooars tea gardens ~~started~~ around 1946, and well organized just after its advent. Trade unionism in Dooars tea gardens was greatly helped by the Bengal Dooars Railway Workers' Union (BDRWU) which was at that time a well organized trade union. But the trade unionism in Terai tea gardens did not get any support from such organized trade union. It was started at the individual initiative of Communists like Biren

Bose and Bhupen Bhownick. As a result though the attempt was made to form labour union in Terai tea gardens during the same period but it could not successful. The unionism in Terai tea gardens began to organize only after 1951, i.e., after passing of the plantation Labour Act, consequently the tea garden workers of Terai did not participate in the early fifties labour movement.

The growth of trade union movement is co-related with the socio-political environment of the country. Thus the socio political changes in West Bengal had considerable impact on the growth of trade union movement in its tea industry. It would be more acceptable to trace the growth of trade union movement in tea industry in terms of some phases carved around both certain landmarks and set backs. These are like the 'Tebhaga Movement, Food movement, India's independence, Bonus agitation, United front regime, Emergency and the Left Front regime are all socio political in nature and hold a vast significance in the context of the growth of trade union movement in tea industry.

1. Initial phase (1946-47)
2. Set back period (1948-1951)
3. Trade Union Movement during the period 1961 to 1970.
4. Trade Union Movement in present day 1971 to onwards -

Initial phase (1946-47) : During 1946-47 the tea garden

workers of Dooars joined in two major labour movements, viz. 'Food Movement' and 'Tebhaga Movement'. In spite of the non-involvement of the Terai tea garden workers in these two movements the discussion of these movements is relevant here as the struggle of tea garden workers started by these movements.

By the middle of 1946, the Communist Party of India (C.P.I) had started 'Food movement' all over Bengal as a protest against the general shortage of food grains in the state. They also involved the tea garden workers of Dooars in the movement to stand them against the planters who did not supply them quota of food rations. Labour unrest increased in the Dooars tea gardens during this period.

The next major movement took place in early 1947, when the tea garden workers of Dooars joined with share croppers in the 'Tebhaga Movement'. The movement was launched at the initiative of the Communist Party to ensure a one third share of the produce to the share cropper. This was a landmark in the history of working class movements in India as it was one of the earliest united actions by peasants and workers in the country. During the movement a large number of workers left the gardens in a massive scale and joined with the neighbouring agitated peasants as a protest against the tyrannical attitude of planters to them. It is to be noted here that the agitated peasants had the same origins as the adivasi tea garden workers and the

cause of their migration from Chotonagpur was also the same. Caste and Community of the workers had an influence in the movement. The non tribal workers like the Mech and Rajbanshi did not support the movement.

The planters tried in every way to resist the rebel workers. They prevented communists from holding meeting on tea garden lands. They also involved catholic priests and nuns for this purpose. A nun at Oodlabari tea garden implored the workers, "My children, don't go that way, you will only cause grief to yourselves".<sup>6</sup> But inspite of all efforts the planters could not alienate the communists from workers rather more the workers expressed their support in favour of communists and they were continuously leaving the gardens. On the contrary planters and jotedar became more aggressive and they put pressure on the Government to restrain the movement. In February, '47 the Government sent armed force to the tea areas of Dooars to restrain the peasants' movement.

Police opened fire on 1st March, 1947, at a group of agitated farmers at Mathachulkar village, when they breaking granary of Ataharuddin, a jotedar. Five farmers were killed in the incident.

Again on 4th April, 1947, police opened fire at a group of granary breaker at Mahabari village near Metali. This time nine persons including two workers of Oodlabari tea garden were killed.

Thus, we see that the 'Tebhaga movement' is the testimony of a bloody revolution and the tea garden workers were also the victim of that bloodshed. Though the movement was not initiated for the tea garden workers yet large number of tea garden workers involved in it. The involvement of the tea garden workers in 'Tebhaga Movement' can be marked as a landmark of the beginning of the workers' struggle. This is the first time that the workers protested against the oppression of planters by leaving the tea gardens in a massive way. The consciousness grew among the workers greatly contributed towards the future trade union movement in the tea industry.

Though the 'Tebhaga movement' was largely found in Dooars but it had no impact on the share croppers of Terai. The main cause of it was that the share croppers of Dooars were organised by the communists from the beginning of the forties. Bengal Dooars Railway Workers Union (BDRWU) took major initiative to organize them. On the contrary communists built up their influence on the share croppers of Terai only after 1954. Thus, because of lack of farmers' organization the 'Tebhaga movement' could not widespread in Terai. However, one very unorganized movement took place at Patharghata near Matigara police station in 1946. Near about hundred farmers gathered at the granary of Nabin Roy, a jotedar, under the

leadership of a Communist, Nripen Bose. Unlike in Dooars farmers' caste and community had no influence in the movement. In Terai, local farmers like Rajbanshi and Mache also joined with Adivasi farmers in the movement. The farmers broke out the granary and shared three parts of crops among them. One Adivasi landless farmer, Bandhan Orao, played important role in the movement. Latter police arrested Nripen Bose and other six farmers. They were jailed for three weeks.

Subsequently Nripen Bose took initiative to break out the granary of Matigara jotedar in December 1947. There was a small inhabitants of some adivasi landless farmers near the Panchanan river at Matigara. In order to organize the movement Nripen Bose first communicated with them and fixed up a day in December 1947 to break out the granary of the jotedar. But this time police was informed much earlier and it could not progress much.

Besides these two initiatives no other progress was made regarding 'Tebhaga movement' in the Terai. Again these initiatives were not made in an organized manner and were made at the individual initiative of Nripen Bose. So it could not widespread in the Terai. Further the tea garden workers of Terai also did not respond to this movement, as there was no trade unions in Terai tea gardens during that period.

2. Set back period (1948-1951) : All the trade union activity in tea industry was done in the beginning by Communists

and they had a good hold over the garden workers. Soon the Communist made their entry in the tea gardens the workers became much organized. The consciousness of the workers grew and they began to protest against the tyrannies of the planters. But the trade union activity in the tea industry did not last for a long. It got a sudden set back when the Government imposed ban on the Communist Party of India (C.P.I) in 1948. Most of the Communist leaders were either jailed or gone under ground. The trade unionism in Terai tea gardens was suffered more due to the arrest of both Biren Bose and Bhupen Bhowmick. Who were then struggling to form trade unions in Terai tea gardens after their failure in the Merry View Tea Garden. During this period Congress and Gorkha League arranged trade union in the Dooars tea gardens. However, no non communist trade unions entered in the Terai tea gardens during this period. Terai tea gardens had no trade unions till 1953. Dr. Bhowmik says that the non-communist trade unions in Dooars tea gardens worked much closer and co-operation with managements and the Government.\* As a result, inspite of the oppression on the workers no labour movement took place in the tea industry during 1948 to 1951.

In 1951, High court declared that the ban on Communist party was illegal, and after the General election of 1952, the Communist leaders were freed from jail and warrant on all under ground Communist leaders were withdrawn. After being freed from jail the Communist trade unionists again devoted themselves

---

\*Bhowmik, Sharit, Class Formation in Tea Plantation System, 1981, New Delhi People's Publishing House, p.149.

in the trade unionism in tea industry. They regained support from the large number of workers. How they organised the workers and lead them to the future trade union movement in tea industry has been discussed in the subsequent phase.

3. Trade unions during the fifties (1951-1960) : The organized trade union movement in tea industry started during the fifties. The enactment of various labour laws by the independent Government much facilitated to the growth of trade union movement in tea gardens. The Plantation Labour Act was passed in 1951. The act includes several statutory provision for labour, such as, housing, sanitation, schooling facilities for the children of the workers, medical facilities, drinking water, creches etc. The act makes it mandatory for the employers to provide these facilities.

In March, 1950 the State Government appointed the Minimum Wages Advisory Committee for tea plantations. The recommendation of the committee came into effect in early 1952. This guarantee of a minimum wage provided some economic protection to the workers. Subsequently, other acts were passed granting some facilities to the workers. Such as the payment of Bonus Act, and the acts providing for Provident Fund and Gratuity etc. affected the working class in the country. There were other acts too which had been passed earlier like the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, and its standing orders, Minimum Wage Act 1948, which provided for some security of workers in general.

These were initially ignored by the planters as there was no state check on them. The State apparatus to enforce their application did not exist. In early 1950s the State Government set up the Labour Bureau which appointed Assistant Labour Commissioners and Labour officers to look into the implementation of the acts. Labour Tribunals were also set up to decide disputes.

Thus, during the fifties the planters started losing the grip over the workers. The loosening of the tight grip of the planters on the workers gave more scope to the trade unions to gain momentum.

The legislative measures of the independent Government specially the plantation Labour Act formalised the relationship between the workers and employees. The earlier master and servant relationship is replaced by the employer and employee relation. But the post second world war depression, which continued till 1953, further deteriorated the labour management relation in tea industry. Industrialists in different industries retrenched large number of workers. Tea industry was also no exception. Near about one lakh workers were retrenched from the tea gardens of Assam, Bengal and Tripura in 1952-53. In 1952 tea prices in North India decreased abnormally. Various measures of economy were introduced in tea industry on account of the crisis, which ultimately resulted in labour having to accept reduction in their earnings. Planters

resorted to wage cut. They also resorted to close down the gardens in non-plucking season. In 1952, twelve gardens in North East India were closed causing unemployment of one lakh workers. The workers suffered more economic hardship when their weekly working days reduced to five from seven. Moreover, the Banerjee Committee (Second Minimum Wage Committee) curtailed all the benefits received by the workers in kind. Food grains which were being supplied to the workers at a concessional rate of Rs. 5.00 per maund was increased to Rs. 15.00 per maund.

Thus, the workers had to go through with much grief and hardship during 1952-53. In the name of economic measures the planters exercised the utmost economic oppression on the workers. Under such circumstances the Communist trade unionists awakened the tea garden workers of Dooars. Workers began to resort to strike. Labour unrest intensified in Dooars tea gardens. In their turn, the planters retaliated by retrenching large number of workers.

But the tea garden workers of Terai did not raise any protest against the curtailment of wages and benefits. Rather they accepted the planters' measures of economy in a much disciplinary manner. The Chairman of TPA, J.A.Mason, in his speech at the annual meeting of the Association in 1954, highly appreciated the workers for maintaining peace and harmony in the industry during the crisis period. "... I am pleased to

record that no major troubles or stoppage were experienced throughout the year. During January & February of last year various measures of economy were being introduced on account of the crisis which ultimately resulted in labour having to accept some reduction in their earnings during this period, which could have been difficult passed off without incident and it is at this juncture that I would record a work of praise to our labour forces and India staff in the Terai for the manner in which they accepted and the discipline maintained, during the period, these measure were being implemented".<sup>7</sup>

Thus, during the recession in tea industry (1952-53) no labour agitation grew in the Terai tea gardens, and labour management relation was much cordial. The labour unrest which swept in the Dooars during that period could not influence the workers of Terai. This is due to the non existence of trade union in the Terai tea gardens.

Trade unions had a late start in the Terai tea gardens. The communists formed first trade unions in Karibari, Kamala, Fulbari and Merry view tea gardens in 1954. The TPA described this unionism as outside influences on the workers. But at the same time expressed their support for the trade unions which would run at constitutional lines. "... we are all aware outside influences; are at work, and whether their aims be political or otherwise such activities do have an unsettling effect on our labour. ... We are in the Terai have no objection to union for labour which is run on constitutional lines".<sup>8</sup>

The Terai tea gardens had its first experience of labour unrest in August 1955. On the 29th August, 1955, near about 2.5 lacs workers of Dooars and Terai jointly struck for work on the issue of payment of Bonus for 1953-54. In Terai the strike was organized by the Communist Control Darjeeling Zilla Chia Bagan Mazdur Union (Terai Branch), and the congress sponsored Terai Cha Bagan Sramik Sangha. The sudden spurt in the prices of tea in 1954 had secured huge profits to the planters. The unions therefore, demanded for their workers a rightful share in the profits in the form of bonus. In Dooars the strike was launched for eighteen days but in Terai it was launched for nine days.

The issue of bonus was included in agenda for the Delhi conference of Industrial Committee on Plantations (ICP) due to be held on 31st August, 1955.<sup>9</sup> But the employers had already taken a hard line on the bonus question, and the trade unions felt that neither the union Government nor the ICP would be able to persuade them into a softer position.<sup>10</sup> So the trade unions had not awaited for the outcome of the discussion of Delhi Conference and went on strike from 29th August. TPA described the activity of the trade unions as a most 'rush' and 'unjustifiable' action on the part of the workers.<sup>11</sup>

On the 2nd September when the strike had entered its 5th day a message was received from Delhi which informed that a committee had been formed to discuss the question of bonus.

The employers than induced the workers to call off the strike, but the workers continued their struggle.

The Chairman of the ICP directed both sides to come to an agreement within three months or else the case would be referred to the tribunal. The strike in Dooars then called off and from 16th September, 1955. In Terai, however, the workers joined in work on 7th September, when the strike had entered its 9th day.

Thus, we see though the workers of Terai responded with the workers of Dooars in bonus agitation, but they came out of struggle in much earlier. As we have already mentioned that the trade unions in Terai tea gardens entered only in 1954, and the bonus agitation took place in the very next year, in 1955. The influence of trade union leaders on the workers was yet to be achieved which they already had on the workers of Dooars. Moreover, the workers of Terai had no past experience of struggle as they were not involved in the previous two major labour agitations. Viz. 'Food movement' and 'Tebhaga Movement'. As a result a feeling of 'individuality' easily grew among the majority of the workers after a short period struggle. The trade union leaders failed to break out the individuality of the workers as they had no strong hold on them. So the leaders instructed, the workers to join work after 9 days of struggle.

The resultant loss on strike as gathered by the TPA from the reports of its member gardens is given below :

|              |     |            |
|--------------|-----|------------|
| Mandays lost | ... | 36,118     |
| Wage lost    | ... | Rs. 56,613 |
| Crop lost    | ... | 2,820 mds. |

Source : Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of TPA 1956, p.4.

The question of bonus was first discussed at the meeting of the sub-committee of the ICP in January, 1956, in Delhi. But their three days meeting could not reach to the final settlement. Ultimately the labour minister and the minister for commerce and industry intervened and laid down a formula for the four years, from 1953 to 1956. As a result the workers got a bonus in excess of their demand. The planters had no other alternatives but to accept it. The TPA expressed their grief on the decision. "We are saddled with this burden for all time. The bonus was a direct result of the 1954 so called prosperity year. It is hoped that we shall never have another such year as there is no knowing for further financial burden the industry might be asked to bear".<sup>12</sup>

The agreement to give a bonus to plantation workers created a record in the plantation industry, for India became the first country to accept the principle of payment of bonus to plantation workers out of profit.<sup>13</sup>

Since 1955 trade unions began to increase their holding on the workers and labour unrest slowly intensified in the Terai. In the beginning the employers did not want to recognize the trade unions and used to play a negative role in dealing with labour. The records of the Terai planters Association (TPA) show that the Chairman of TPA repeatedly alluded to labour trouble in his speeches at the annual general meeting of the Association. He termed the trade union leaders as outside elements and blamed them for inciting the labourers against the management. "The labour had been incited by self interested outside element".<sup>14</sup>

In 1956, the State Government framed the rules under the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. The workers made pressure on the management to fulfill their statutory obligations under the rule. On the other hand the employers frequently revealed their financial inability to discharge the obligations. Conflicts got momentum on the issue. Moreover, due to shortage of food grain in the state the employers resorted to cut workers' quota of ration. The workers, in their protest, resorted to gherao and strike. Thus, the labour management relations had been worsen from the late fifties. On 15th September, 1958 a token strike was called by the trade unions on the issue of basic ration. The strike, however, had not influenced the workers of all tea gardens of Terai. Only three tea gardens observed the strike in which the labourers accepted the alteration in their basic ration to 50% wheat and 50% rice.<sup>15</sup>

Another cause which aggravated the labour management relations during the late fifties in the Terai tea garden is the intervention of multiple trade unions with different political ideology, who vied with each other for making hold on the workers. This had created divisions and fractions in labour. It became a stumbling block to the growth of trade union movement in the Terai. Settlements made with one union were challenged by other unions and the solution of the workers' problem became much complex. TPA annoyed to the incidence and demanded that the trade unions should have necessary qualification certificate from the Government and the persons of high integrity. "The chief cause of labour unrest at present seems to be inter union rivalry, there being no less than eight unions in the small district. It seems unfortunate that this state of affairs would be permitted to exist. The management is always prepared to support trade unionism, should have the necessary qualification from Government, and the persons of high integrity".<sup>16</sup>

In 1959 the Second Minimum Wage Committee declared the second adhoc increments in the daily wage rate of the workers by 12 paise, and at the same time the employers resorted to increase the work load of the workers. But the trade unions did not accept it. Conflict between the labour and management got momentum on the issue of work load. H.E.Whitely, the Chairman of TPA frequently alluded the workers for their lower

productivity in his speech in the annual general meeting of the Association. "Wages continue to increase but the employer can not increase the work-load. When one tries to obtain a slightly higher standard of work for the greater emoluments paid, one invariably meets with the charge that this is an attempt to get an unfair amount of work from the labour. Unless the workers and their leaders are prepared to give little more, rather than continually to ask for more, the prospects of securing a really efficient industry are slight".<sup>17</sup>

Thus, we have seen that trade unionism in Terai tea gardens had a late start and entered only in the middle of the fifties. Unionisation of labour coincided with the rise of militant labour movements during the late fifties. Labour militancy became more pronounced during the sixties, which we shall discuss in the next phase.

3. Trade unions during the period, 1961 to 1970 : In Terai different political parties started tea labour unions with different demands. Hence inter union rivalry was a regular feature. So from the beginning of sixties the trade union leaders tried to bring a unity among different national federations involved in the tea industry with different political ideologies. In 1962, the co-ordination committee of Tea Plantation Workers (CCTPW) was formed by the major trade unions in tea. These were at that time the unions affiliated to AITUC, INTUC, HMS, UTUC, Gorkha League, and the

clerical unions. Its present composition is almost the same except that it also has CITU (which was formed after its split with AITUC) and the IFTU (PCCPI (ML) group). In a sense the CCTPW was a unique body because one can rarely find such diverse unions like INTUC and CITU sharing the same platform.

Though the formation of CCTPW has been abaled to ensure unity among the diverse trade unions at the industrial level but it has failed to bring any unity at the garden level. Interunion rivalry remained as same as before at the garden level.

Regarding trade union movement, during the first half of the sixties, Terai tea gardens had a tendency to resort to 'gheraos' as a democratic movement of the workers against the management. 'Gheraos' often degenerated in violence, confinement and assult of the managerial staff. As a result labour management relations deteriorated. TPA (Terai Planters' Association) expressed its distress at the wrongful confinement and assult of the managerial staff during the course of gheraos". ... It is indeed distressing that the managerial staff should be subjected to assult and wrongly confinement, merely for endeavouring to secure a reasonable standard of work and a modicum of discipline ...".<sup>18</sup>

Slowly labour unrest got momentum and worse forms of coercion like gherao and physical threats of violence were quite common in the Terai tea gardens. The Chairman of the

employers' Association (TPA) repeatedly blamed the trade unions for indulging indiscipline and rowdyism in his speech in the annual general meeting of the Association. He was so annoyed to the militancy of the workers that once he asked the Government to employ an additional inspector to administer the trade unionism in the tea industry. "... we in tea are subjected to a vast number of checks by Excise Inspectors, Plantation Inspectors, Factory Inspectors, Factory Medical Inspectors, Explosive Inspectors, Provident Fund Inspectors and in some case Bioler Inspectors could not the Govt. have just another cadre of Inspectors whose duty would be to see that trade unions are properly administered".<sup>19</sup>

From the middle of the sixties the labour unrest became more explosive in the Terai tea gardens. Workers resorted to strikes along with the gheraos. In consequent workers lost their wages and employers their production.

The incidence of strikes, mandays lost, wage lost and loss of production in the Terai tea gardens during the period 1966 to 1970 has been in Table 8.1.

In August, 1965, there was a one day unofficial strike on the two gardens of Terai. The strike launched by the local unions for the implementation of the projected raise of 40 paise on the minimum wages declared by the State Govt. in May, 1965.<sup>20</sup>

Table 8.1  
Industrial Disputes in Terai Tea Gardens - 1966-1970

| Year | No. of strikes | Mandays lost | Wage lost (in Rs.) | Loss of production (in kg.) | Value of production |
|------|----------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1966 | 4              | 13,282       | 26,526.26          | 77,802.00                   | 3,72,309.60         |
| 1967 | 11             | 10,712       | 21,386.90          | 38,912.50                   | 2,10,175.00         |
| 1968 | 11             | 11,354       | 22,734.42          | 31,121.00                   | 1,64,293.35         |
| 1969 | N.A.           | 2,41,265     | 6,02,963.34        | 9,875.79.00                 | 49,72,742.93        |
| 1970 | Nil            | 9,215        | 25,795.62          | 21,413.00                   | 1,18,665.00         |

Note : N.A = Not available.

Source : Data Compiled from Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of Indian Tea Association (Terai Branch) 1967, p.3, 1968, p.2; 1969, p.3; 1970, p.4; 1971, p.3.

In 1966, four gardens were involved in a 7 day strike which commenced from 22nd September and was organized jointly by the CCTPW. The main issue on which the strike was launched was for increased D.A., based on the minimum wages notification made in 1959 with other issues.<sup>21</sup> This was the first time that the workers struck work under the leadership of CCTPW.

In 1967, the first united front (UF) Government assumed the power of the state. The new Government pledged to recognize the rights of workers with a view to voicing their just demands and grievances, it would not suppress democratic and legitimate struggle of the people. Accordingly the U.F labour Minister

Sri Subodh Banerjee announced a labour policy which "a break through with the past, with the anti-people and bureaucratic policies and approach of the congress".<sup>22</sup> The policy desires to enlist the peoples' co-operation for the implementation of policies rather than depend on the administrative machinery. The police was asked not to interfere in the legitimate democratic trade union movement. Lay off and retrenchment without the sanction of the Government was "discouraged". "Gherao" was also legalised by the Government.

By the new labour policy of U.F. Government trade unions got the Govt. with them in their struggles, which made a filip to militant labour movement in all industries of the state. In Terai tea gardens labour militancy and gheraos rose to its peak and managerial staff fell victim to it. "... the workers in particular had resulted in 'Gheraos' of those in charge of running Industrial Establishment. ... those who have been Gheraos were subjected to insults and inhuman treatments".<sup>23</sup>

Terai tea gardens had witnessed 11 strikes each in the years 1967 and 1968 (Table 8.1). Moreover, in 1967, 7 gheraos were reported in the Terai.<sup>24</sup> In 1968, the labour militancy turned to more violent shape and caused murders in the tea areas. The proprietor of the Bagdogra Tea Estate was brutally murdered by the workers of the garden.<sup>25</sup>

In 1967, the second U.F Ministry led by C.P.I(M), was voted into power. The labour policy of 1967 remained unchanged. There was no improvement of labour unrest in the Terai. Labour management relations further deteriorated due to continuous process of gheraos and confinement of managerial staff. There were confinement on 6 occasions on 5 member gardens of I.T.A., varying from 1 hour to 15 hours at a stretch. Stoppage of work from half a day to one day on 8 gardens.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, during the United Front regime the workers resorted to large number of gheraos to fulfil their demands. This is due to legalisation of gheraos by the United Front Govt. in its new labour policy. But the employers association (ITA) was not willing to recognize 'gheraos' as a weapon of workers' protest. On protesting the tactics of gheraos, the Chairman of ITA (Terai Branch), R.R.Gupta made the following statement in his speech at the annual general meeting of the association in 1970.

"We do not favour to use the expression 'Gheraos' as we were told, or advised that latter usage of expression does not appear to have been included in the English dictionary, yet the usage of this form of expression has found favour with the workers of all the industry, much more so by the press".<sup>27</sup>

In their turn, the employers retaliated by retrenching the workers involved in the gheraos of managerial staff. They also filed criminal cases against the workers for assaulting

the managerial staff in the course of gheraos. But latter they had to withdraw the cases under the instruction from the U.F.Govt.<sup>28</sup>

In two cases of confinement the employers obtained search warrants from the magistrate, but the police who directed to serve these warrants stood as silent spectators and in one case a police official acted as a conciliation officer and instructed the confined manager to negotiate with labour to obtain his own release.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, we see that the U.F.Govt. was at the back of the workers, helping them in their movement against the employers. The police was also kept aloof from the labour agitation in the Terai tea gardens.

The second U.F. Govt. was obligated to help the workers in their struggle for increasing wages, unemployment benefits etc. This encouraged the labour leaders of CCTPW to organize the second major strike from 18th August, 1969. The main issue of the strike was for increased employment and the implementation of plantation Labour Act (PLA). Earlier the CCTPW submitted a charter of demands on 27th July, 1969. A series of tripartite meetings were held at both upcountry and Calcutta to discuss the issues involved. Although a satisfactory settlement was reached on certain issues under dispute, but the main issue on land labour ratio remained unsolved. The employers did not agree to settle the issue of land labour

ratio immediately and demanded same period to study prior to reaching the final settlement to it. But the labour leaders put forward their claim that unless the land labour ratio was decided upon, they were not prepared to negotiate on their issues. In ultimate, the workers went on continuous strike with effect from 18th August, 1969, which continued for 16 days - the longest in the Terai tea gardens. The strike was in all tea gardens of West Bengal.

In the previous phase of trade union movement we observed that in Bonus Agitation of 1955, the workers of Terai did not remain in struggle for full 18 days period of strike, and joined in the work after 9 days. But in the general strike of 1969, they continued their struggle for full 16 days with the workers of Dooars and Darjeeling. Because throughout the sixties trade union leaders involved the workers of Terai in continuous militant agitation. This allowed the leaders to have some sort of hold on the workers.

The 16 days general strike resulted 2,41,265 mandays lost in the Terai. The workers lost their wages amounting to Rs. 6,02,963.34 and employers their production of the value of Rs. 49,72,742.93 (Table 8.1).

During the period of strike, on 28th August, 1969, the workers numbering about five thousand led by five union leaders assembled in front of the I.T.A (Terai branch) head quarters shouting slogans to ventilate their grievances.<sup>30</sup>

After several joint and separate conferences at the intervention of the Labour minister, West Bengal, a settlement was reached on 2nd September, 1969. The chapter of land labour ratio was finally closed by agreeing to fill up all permanent vacancies of workmen which have occurred since 1st January, 1969, and to employ additional heads on the basis of acreage of each gardens as follows :<sup>31</sup>

|    |                             |    |
|----|-----------------------------|----|
| 1) | Estates below 250 acres     | 20 |
| 2) | Estates from 251-500 acres  | 25 |
| 3) | Estates from 501-1000 acres | 30 |
| 4) | Over 1000 acres             | 35 |

In addition to the land labour ratio, agreement on the following issues were also settled between the employers and workers.

The resident temporary workers would be supplied ration at concessional rates or given cash compensation in lieu of thereof at their option. But the non resident workers would be given cash compensation only in lieu of supply of ration to them.

The wage issue was agreed upon to be settled by setting up a suitable machinery in due course. However, the rate of

extra leaf price (E.L.P) increased from 5.5 paise to 7 paise for the tea garden workers of Dooars and Terai.

The employers also assured that there would be no victimization of any workmen for joining the strike. The strike was withdrawn with the immediate effect of agreements. The employers felt that they had been burdened with extra financial load. "This settlement interalia brought in an increase in wages and other benefits which imposed additional burden which majority of the gardens in the Terai just can not afford".<sup>32</sup>

Thus, we see that the general strike of 1969 could wrest a number of concessions from the employers. After 1969 no major strike took place in the tea industry. The CCTPW has given only occassional calls for one day token strike.

Apparently during the sixties labour unrest was much explosive in the tea industry. As regards trade union movement the workers resorted to gheraos and confinement of managerial staff. The movement received a strong support from the left coalition U.F.Govt, as the Government legalised 'gheraos' as a weapon of workers' protest. In consequent, theraos gathered momentum within a few days of the U.F's assumption of office in February, 1967. Between March and October, 1967, there were 52 cases of gheraos for 258 hours in the tea industry of West Bengal.<sup>33</sup> The two leftist trade unions, AITUC and UTUC organized 34 cases of gheraos.<sup>34</sup> Thus, 65% of the cases of gheraos organized by leftist trade unions. This

figure shows that the leftist trade unions gathered much support from the working class of tea industry during the U.F regime. The U.F Government was dismissed in November, 1967, and it remained out of office up to February, 1969. During this period the state was under presidential rule. There was no cases of gherao in tea industry during the presidential rule. In March, 1969, the U.F.Government again returned to power. As soon as it was resorted to power gheraos recurred. After 11 months of regime the second U.F.Government broke out in February, 1970. The state was again put under the presidential rule. Since the fall of the U.F.Government the trade union movement reflecting a changing picture, which we shall discuss in the next phase.

#### 4. Trade union movement in present day - 1971 to onwards :

From the beginning of seventies labour unrest in the Terai tea gardens gradually abated. Employers recognized trade union movement as a democratic right of the workers, and asked trade union leaders for amicable settlement of grievances by bilateral discussion. "... the disputes which arise could be settled amicably and smoothly, and in a manner which would be fair to both employees and employers. Let us hope this request will be accepted by the officials concerned in the spirit that it is given".<sup>35</sup>

Trade unions also responded to the appeal of the employers, gave up their early militant attitudes and demanded to

settle or iron-out differences at the bipartite level than any confrontation. In consequent there had been a significant drop in the number of strike and gheraos.

In 1972, the Congress Government voted into power. Unlike the U.F the labour policy of the new Government did not support gheraos, demonstration, confinement etc. The labour militancy in the Terai tea gardens who considerably reduced and labour management relations became relatively 'cordial' during this period. Employers felt that it had been mainly possible due to change in the Government. "During the course of the year behind us the industrial climate obtaining on the gardens were completely peaceful. Various causes can be attributed to this happy state of affairs, ... one of which may be said to be our having a stable Government. ... it will not be far from the truth in asserting that the year 1972 is the best year in our relationship with both the workers and unions in comparison with the previous five years".<sup>36</sup>

In 1974, the Central Government imposed emergency in India. Industrial unrest became much explosive in the post emergency period. In the year 1974, the figure of mandays

lost in India rose to about 40 million.<sup>37</sup> This was a record figure for one year and for any country in the world. In West Bengal mandays lost due to strike rose to 7,334,715 in 1974 from 2,52,792 in 1973. The figure further rose to 10,785,261 in 1975. The percentage of mandays lost was 70.4 per cent and 79.4 per cent respectively in 1974 and 1975.<sup>38</sup>

The index of mandays lost on account of strike clearly an evidence of explosive labour agitation in West Bengal during the post emergency period. But the tea industry was relatively peaceful. Number of strikes reduced to 11 in 1974 from 17 in 1973 and further to 7 in 1975. Though the figure of mandays lost on account of strike increased to 38,864 in 1974 from 20,321 in 1973, but decreased to 10,120 in 1975.<sup>39</sup> This figure indicate that labour unrest in tea industry was not explosive.

There was also no labour disturbance in the Terai tea gardens during the post emergency period. The Chairman of the I.T.A (Terai Branch) expressed his pleasing at the role of trade union leaders in the annual general meeting of the association. "I am happy to report that with the gradual growth of trade unionism on very healthy lines, labour leaders in the Terai have adopted a more positive view of their responsibilities".<sup>40</sup>

In the context of above data and remarks of the ITA (Terai Branch) we can conclude that the workers of tea

industry did not response to the labour agitation which swept in the state during the post emergency period. This may be due to two factors, firstly, from the beginning of seventies the major trade unions of tea industry had adopted the policy of 'negotiation' than 'confrontation'. Secondly, the second Minimum Wage Fixation Committee declared two consecutive wage rise for the workers of tea industry. First one of 15 paise per day effected from 1st July, 1973 and the second one of 25 paise per day from July, 1974. This wage rise in pre-emergency period reluncted the workers to involve themselves in any major agitation in the post-emergency period.

In 1977, the Left Front Government, led by CPI(M) was voted into power. During the first four years Terai tea gardens had witnessed an increase in agitational activities on the part of the workers, including demonstrations, stoppages of work and gheraos for the settlement of their demands.

A wide spread agitation was launched by the leftist trade unions on the bonus issue in order to secure higher bonus for the workers. The workers did not willing to accept minimum bonus of 8.33% and demanded for maximum rate of bonus of 20 per cent. The employers were not willing to pay bonus more than the minimum rate. As protest, the workers went on the path of strike, dharnas, demonstrations and gheraos, supported by trade unions. In Gaya Ganga T.E., labour indiscipline rose to its peak and gheraos became the order of the day and the

Assistant Manager fell victim to labour militancy and violence in the latest in the series of gheraos which the workers were staging with impunity.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, we see that after assumption of power by the leftists labour militancy in the Terai got momentum. Labour management relations became hostile on the issue of bonus. The workers resorted to gheraos of managerial staff to wrest higher rate of bonus. The employers annoyed at the practices of gheraos on the part of the workers. "We have been pained to notice again a tendency to treat gheraos as a democratic movement of the workers. We have also noticed with concern the reluctance on the part of the law enforcing machinery to intervene in a gherao. But is gherao a democratic movement ? Is it democratic to keep a person wrongful confined for hour without food and drinks and subject him to pressure, intimidation and abuse ? ..."<sup>42</sup>

After three years continuous bonus agitation ultimately the issue was settled by negotiations in 1980.

In 1982, the Left Front Government was again voted into power. This time the Government has changed its attitude towards the employers and persuaded a new labour policy discouraging the strike struggles that would vitiate the atmosphere for investment by the employers. The Chief Minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu asserted that Marxists were in power not to bring about revolution but to do "some good for the people".<sup>43</sup> In fact, he

rebuked trade unionists for violence in industry.

The new labour policy and the statement of the Chief Minister clearly indicate the changing views of leftists towards the employers. This changing attitude may be due to their past experiences of labour movement during the period in 1967 and 1969.

Soon after the announcement of new labour policy CITU, the largest trade union in tea industry, came out of struggle. under the grab of maintaining industrial harmony it has refused to take up any issue which could result in a show down between employers and workers. The second largest trade union, INTUC, is always known for its attitude of co-operation rather than confrontation with the employers. As a result a period from 1982 onwards the tea industry of West Bengal as well as the Terai Tea gardens witnessed a complete shift in the state of trade union movement. There has been a significant drop in the number of strikes by the late eighties. There was no incidence of strike during the last three years (1988 to 1990). Other agitational activities on the part of the workers like gheraos, demonstrations etc. also an isolated incidence in tea industry.

### 8.3 Multiple Trade Union

In the early part of this chapter we observed that communists were the first who took initiative to form the labour union in Terai tea gardens. Some communist leaders like Biren Bose, Bhupen Bhowmick, etc. started to organize the workers since the middle of the forties. But due to imposition of ban on Communist Party of India in 1948, the Communist trade unionism got a sudden set back. During this period most of the communist leaders were either jailed or gone under ground.

From the beginning of the fifties the Congress led unions started trade unionism in Terai. In 1950-51 Darjeeling Cha Kaman Majdoor Sangha (D.C.K.M.S) was established. The union was affiliated to the I.N.T.U.C. The first president of this union was Atulya Ghosh and Theodar Manin was the general secretary. In 1950-51 Kiran Bhattacharya one of the leading Congress leaders of Siliguri asked Iswar Tirky to join the trade union in 1952-53. Iswar Tirky was an army man and he came back home after taking part in the second world war in

1945. After returning home, he started to spread formal education among the tribals and tried to educate them against liquor addiction. In 1947-48 he established a social organization - Terai Adhibasi Welfare Board. In 1952-53 Tirky became the general secretary of D.C.K.M.S. During this period D.C.K.M.S successfully formed unions in New Chamta, Hanskwa, Putinbari, Fulbari (Patan), Tirihana, Manja tea estates etc. In 1957 Assembly election Iswar Tirky contested against Sonam Wangdi the official candidate of the Indian National Congress. He expelled from the Indian National Congress for six years on this ground. This hampered the growth of Congress led unions in Terai.

A number of Congress led unions affiliated to INTUC in Tea Plantation in North Bengal such as Dooars Cha Kaman Majdoor Sangha, Rastriya Cha Majdoor Congress etc. before 1960-61. In 1960-61 Congress decided that there would be one INTUC affiliated union in one industry. Accordingly a new union National Union of Plantation workers was formed in April, 1961 and all the Congress led unions merged with it except Rastriya Cha Majdoor Congress (RCMC).

After the General election of 1952, the Communist trade unionists were freed from jail and they again started to organize the tea workers in Terai. Till 1959, in Terai and in Darjeeling hills the communist trade unionists worked under the banner of Darjeeling District Cha Kaman Majdoor Union. In

1959, the communist trade unionist in Terai formed a separate union - Terai Cha Bagan Majdoor Union. The union was affiliated to the AITUC.

In 1964 C.P.I was divided on the issue of Indo-Chinese war and for some other reasons. A new party, Communist Party of India (Marxist) was formed. But there was no split in trade union organisation till 1971. In 1971 centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was formed which was split from AITUC. Terai Cha Bagan Majdoor Union was controlled by CPI(M) organizers and therefore it was affiliated to CITU. In 1977, the Terai Cha Bagan Majdoor Union was dissolved and in Terai and Darjeeling hill CPI(M) led trade union started work in the name of Darjeeling District Chiya Kaman Majdoor Union (DDCKMU). The union is affiliated to CITU. The CPI led trade union started work under the banner of Darjeeling Tea Workers Union (DTWU). The union got affiliation to AITUC.

Rastriya Cha Majdoor Congress (RCMC) was registered in 1952. The union organized the workers in the tea gardens of Dooars. In 1964, Ranjit Ghosh, a leader of R.C.M.C came to Terai from western Dooars to organize the tea workers in Terai under the banner of RCMC. It built up its first influence in Sukna Tea Estate in June 1966. During this period RCMC also formed unions in Chandmani Tea Estates, Tirihana Tea Estate, Ord Terai, Panighata, Belgachia and Meery View etc.

R.C.M.C was affiliated to INTUC but in 1967 it detached itself from INTUC due to internal conflicts and affiliated itself to National Front of Indian Trade Unions (NFITU). Now

at least in 25 tea gardens of Terai RCMC has its wings.

During the period 1967-68, Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) started trade unionism in Terai under the banner of Darjeeling Cha Bagan Workers Unions (DCBWU) affiliated to the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC). The leadership role was taken by Nani Bhattacharjee and Suresh Talukder. They formed first union in Sanyashithan Tea Estate. An Adivasi worker Zashim Mulla took initiative to form labour union. Subsequently DCBWU also formed union in Gayaganga, Kiran Chandra, Bagdogra Tea Estate. Now DCBWU has extended its influence in a number of tea gardens. In Bagdogra Tea Estate it has sole union. Swapan Bikash Roy, a lawyer of Siliguri town and Badal Mukherjee, an ex-head clerk of a tea garden of Terai are the prominent local leaders of DCBWU.

In 1962 K.T.Chako, a Keralian Christian and ex-employee of Tata was sent to Terai by an INTUC leader of Jamshedpur to organize the workers in Terai. He joined Terai Cha Bagan Sanjukta Majdoor Union and became the General Secretary of this union. This union was formed by Mr. Tensing Wangdi in 1960. Mr. Wangdi was a Congress MLA from Terai and also the minister for tribal development. This union was active in Gangaram, Kamala, Hanskua Tea Estate at that time. This union was not affiliated to any central trade unions. In 1967, Mr. Chako changed its name to Terai Plantation Workers' Union and affiliated it to H.M.S. From 1963 the influence of this union

gradually increased and in 1970 it formed unions in around fifteen gardens in Terai such as Bijolimoni, Pahargumiya, Singhijhora, Sahabad, Gargara, Gayerganga, Hanskua, Bagdogra etc. But at present this union has lost much of its early influence over the workers and exists in a few garden and mostly with christian community.

In 1981, a new Communist trade union - Darjeeling Zilla Cha Majdoor Karmachari Union (D.Z.C.M.K.U) formed by the Organization Committee for Communist Revolutionaries (O.C.C.R) under the leadership of Kanu Sanyal. The union first formed its organization in Azambad Tea Estate. Subsequently it also formed unions in Gangaram, Lohagarh, Kamalpur, Belgachia, Panighata etc. Except in Azambad tea estate DZCMKU has very small amount of holding.

So there are seven major unions working in the tea gardens of Terai. Among them Darjeeling District Chia Kaman Majdoor Union (DDCKMU) has highest number of members followed by N.U.P.W and R.C.M.C. Other unions have marginal influence in the Terai.

Table 8.2 shows the different trade unions working in the Terai tea gardens. The multiplicity of trade unions has been the result of their close links with politics and the disunity among their leaders. This multiplicity has seriously harmed the trade unions by weakening their bargaining power. The multiple trade unions vie with each other to secure the

Table 8.2

## Key to Unions in Terai Tea Gardens

|  |   |
|--|---|
| (1) Darjeeling District Chia Kaman Majdoor Union (DDCKMU)  | Affiliated to the CITU, the union wing of Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI(M).        |
| (2) National Union of Plantation Workers (NUPW)            | Affiliated to the INTUC, the union wing of the Congress Party.                              |
| (3) Darjeeling Tea Workers' Union (DTWU)                   | Affiliated to the AITUC, the union wing of the Communist Party of India (CPI).              |
| (4) Rashtriya Cha Mazdoor Congress (RCMC)                  | Affiliated to the NFITU, the union wing of Congress party.                                  |
| (5) Darjeeling Cha Bagan Workers' Union (DCBWU)            | Affiliated to the UTUC, the union wing the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP).             |
| (6) Darjeeling Zilla Cha Mazdoor Karmachari Union (DZCMKU) | Independent, the union wing of organization Committee for Communist Revolutionaries (OCCR). |
| (7) Terai Plantation Workers' Union (TPWU)                 | Affiliated to the HMS, the union wing of Janata Party.                                      |

backing of workers and the competition among themselves leads to inter union rivalry and internecine quarrels and strifes.

#### 8.4 Collective Bargaining Strength

Collective bargaining is an institutional process of representations. The chief participants in collective bargaining do not act for themselves. They are representatives of their respective institutions. In tea industry the

employers have a number of associations to represent their interests. They are, Indian Tea Association (ITA), which has its head quarter in Calcutta and branches in three tea districts of West Bengal, as well as in Assam, Dooars Planters' Association, Darjeeling Planters Association, Terai Planters' Association etc. The employers' association have a joint forum known as the consultative Committee of Planters' Association (CCPA).

The workers are represented by the Co-ordination Committee of Tea Plantation workers (CCTPW), which is a joint forum of all leading trade unions in tea industry like CITU, AITUC, INTUC, UTUC etc. The CCTPW was formed in 1969. Several of the small splinter unions, especially those owing allegiance to the Congress (but not affiliated to INTUC) and the Janata Dal have formed a joint forum called Committee for Defence of Plantation Workers' Right (CDPWR).

The CCTPW and CCPA are the main fora for negotiations on issues such as wages and bonus. The CCTPW did not allow the CDPWR to join in negotiations, as this is the combination of breakaway unions. However, of late the concurrence of CDPWR is also sought.

The industry had witnessed the first joint action of the workers in 1955 on the bonus issue. This time the union succeeded to introduce the bonus for the tea workers. Thereafter upto 1969 the industry did not witness any joint action

of the unions. The individual unions struggled at the garden level to improve the working conditions of the workers by the implementation of the Plantation Labour Act 1951. The second joint action of the workers in tea industry took place in 1969 on the issue of employment and the implementation of the provisions of Plantation Labour Act, 1951. After 1969, no industrywise joint movement took place in tea industry.

By the end of 1992 the daily wage of an adult tea workers in Terai stood at Rs. 19.24, which is less than an agricultural worker in North East India. The trade unions could not improve the wages over the time. Between the period 1952 to 1992 the daily wage of a male worker increased by only Rs.18.08, i.e., only 45 paise annually, on an average. Trade unions could raise the wages somewhat satisfactory only after 1977, through tripartite negotiation. Between the period 1977 to 1992 the daily wage of a male worker increased by Rs. 14, i.e., 0.93 paise annually, on an average. Thus, wages increased more than three and half times during the last fifteen years. It has been largely possible due to support from the Left Front Govt.

By the end of 1992 the trade unions have been succeeded to wrest 20% bonus for the tea workers.

The other issues relating to work load, work environment, welfare facilities as per Plantation Labour Act etc. are settled at the garden level through bipartite and tripartite

negotiation. The trade unions could not succeed to improve these issues due to weakness of trade union at the garden level. Multiplicity and inter union rivalry is the prime cause of weaking the bargaining strength of trade unions at the garden level. The trade unions are led by the political leaders. The political parties and their leaders held influence over the trade unions so as to utilise their backing for political purpose. As a result when a union submits a Charter of Demands before the management on different issues of the workers, the other unions do not support it rather protest against it on the question of political interest. So it is needed to form a common forum at the garden level also to develop the collective bargaining strength of trade union at the garden level. At the same time CCTPW should also take initiative to improve the welfare facilities at the garden level through joint action.

#### 8.5 Summary

The pace and pitch of the union's activities was high during fifties and sixties. During this periods, the upsurge in the working class movement in tea industry was due to fact that tripartite forums were not developed. It was during 1969 that the negotiation process had started in tea industry and both bipartite and tripartite negotiations were gradually developed. These negotiations succeeded to regulate the two

major economic demands of the workers, viz, wages and bonus. But the other economic issues like provident fund, gratuity etc. yet to be regulated.

Due to lack of proper leadership at the garden level problems are settled through bilateral discussions between the management and the outside trade union leaders. Sometimes these leaders negotiated with management without prior concern of the workers. This caused apathy of the members towards the unions.

So far little interest has been laid on educating trade union leaders. It may be that the education of trade union leaders has been neglected deliberately so that a new leadership within the trade union may not emerge. Workers' Education Centre in Siliguri is already providing one month's special training and the leadership course for the plantation workers. But its impact has been marginal. One of the reasons for this meagre impact is that in many cases the workers selected for such programmes do not have meaningful role either in the trade union management or as representatives of workers in the garden in which they employed. Moreover, the education and basic understanding of such workers is so low that they cannot understand various social, political, and economic aspects of garden management in short term programme. Long duration focussed educational programmes are required to be undertaken.

Trade unions in tea industry have been affiliated to different political ideologies. Among the national federations, CITU with communist ideology commands the largest union affiliation in the tea industry followed by INTUC with Congress ideology. There is always a keen fight among these national federations to gain more membership. This kind of struggle among union leaders has led interunion rivalry in tea industry. It is interesting to note here that though the leftist national federations like CITU, AITUC, and UTUC have same political ideology in the state, but there is no co-operation among their affiliated unions at the garden level.

Alcholism is the most threat to the workers in the industry. Productivity has been declining sharply because of increasing alcholism among the workers. The trade unions should play a leading role in the campaign against alcholism. They should extend all co-operation to de-alcholism efforts.

Population problem in tea industry is very acute to day. It is therefore, imperative that representative bodies like the unions should also join hands with others in popularising the family planning measures amongst the workers. The unions are in a relatively advantageous position to take up family planning activities because as voluntary bodies of the workers, they repose their faith in them and the unions are dealing with some what homogeneous group in terms of educational and income levels.

So far the trade unions have struggled for higher wages and bonus. They should be more concern in providing welfare facilities to the workers like housing, education, medical etc. in addition to hike in wages and bonus. For this purpose a joint forum of all unions to be developed at the garden level.

Notes & References

1. Bhowmik, Sharit - Class Formation in The Plantation System, 1981, New Delhi People's Publishing House, pp.137-138.
2. Balagopal, Gopalan, "Women in Tea Plantations", in Indian Journal of Social Science, Vol.3 (1990), p.431.
3. Roy, Monoranjan - Samrajyabad Birodhi Sangram O Sramik Andolan (Bengali) (1987) Published by National Book Agency, p.136.
4. Bhowmik, Sharit, Op.cit., p.140.
5. ibid., p.141.
6. ibid., p.148.
7. Terai Planters' Association (TPA), 1954, Proceedings of Annual General Meeting, p.3.
8. TPA 1955, Op.cit., p.4.
9. TPA 1956, Op.cit., p.4.
10. Bhowmik, Sharit., Op.cit., p.156.
11. TPA 1956, Op.cit., p.4.
12. ibid., p.4.
13. ITPA (Indian Tea Planters' Association) 1955, p.21.  
quotated by Bhowmik, Op.cit., pp.156-157.
14. TPA 1956, Op.cit., p.4.
15. TPA 1959, Op.cit., p.5.
16. ibid., p.5.
17. TPA 1960, Op.cit., p.3.
18. ibid., p.3.
19. TPA 1961, Op.cit., p.4.

20. Indian Tea Association (Terai branch) (TBITA) 1965,  
Proceedings of Annual General Meeting, p.3.
21. TBITA 1967, Op.cit., p.3.
22. Bhownik, Dhruba Jyoti - Political Movements in India,  
(1987) New Delhi, Anmol Publications, p.209.
23. TBITA 1968, Op.cit., p.2.
24. ibid., p.3.
25. TBITA 1969, Op.cit., p.2.
26. TBITA 1970, Op.cit., p.3.
27. ibid., p.3.
28. ibid., p.3.
29. ibid., p.3.
30. ibid., p.4.
31. Memorandum of Settlements, Published by Tea Association  
of India (North Bengal Branch), Siliguri, p.8.
32. ibid., p.3.
33. Dr. R.Nitish, "Gherao as a Technique For Social Intervention", Agarwal R.D (Ed), 1979.  
Dynamics of Labour Relations in India, New Delhi, Tata  
McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.Ltd., (1979) p.48.
34. ibid., p.48.
35. TBITA 1974, Op.cit., p.7.
36. TBITA 1973, Op.cit., p.3.
37. Davar, R.S. - Personnel Management and Industrial  
Relations, (1983) New Delhi, Vikash Publishing House (P)  
Ltd., p.303.

38. Labour in West Bengal, 1976, p.10.
39. Labour in West Bengal, 1978, p.12.
40. TBITA 1975, Op.cit., p.5.
41. TBITA 1978, Op.cit., p.4.
42. ibid., p.4.
43. Bhowmik Dhrubajyoti, Op.cit., p.191.

## CHAPTER IX : Remuneration in Tea Industry.

### Content :

- 9.1 Money Wages
- 9.2 Extra Leaf Price (E.L.P)
- 9.3 Earnings Gap Between Men and Women
- 9.4 Determinants of Money Wages
- 9.5 Bonus
- 9.6 Summary

### 9.1 Money Wage

During the pre-independence period low wage was a common phenomenon in all the industries of India. The wage rates in fact depended on the principles of demand and supply. With an increase in the number of personnels even from the rural economy seeking employment in our industry, the demand for labour became much less than its supply. Labour thus began to be exploited and low levels of wages prevailed. But in tea industry inspite of actual labour shortage, wages were extremely low. A tea garden worker earned wage less than an agriculturer labour. Due to absence of trade union no collective bargaining power could create consciousness among the tea plantation workers. The planters were in dominating situation and dictated both the wages as well as the conditions of service of the workers. The Rage Commission (1946) in it's report stated that, the workers had not developed a spirit of collective bargaining and hence could not take a unified stand in bargaining for fair wages. The same view was also put by the Royal Commission (1931) and

recommended for setting up a wage fixing machinery in tea industry. But the planters did not care for these recommendations and maintained their absolute dominance in wage fixing till independence.

Early records reveal that the payment in Bengal plantations was generally on the 'hazira' and 'thika' system. By the former system the worker is required to complete a certain task without any reference to time, for which he is entitled to one hazira and after that, if the worker so likes, he may be given a second task for which he earns another hazira called 'doubli'. Doubli was smaller than hazira but was paid at the same rate as hazira.

The rates<sup>of</sup> wages in the tea plantations of Terai in 1948 were as follows.

Table 9.1

## Daily wage rate in Terai - 1948

|              | Per Hazira |      |
|--------------|------------|------|
|              | Rs.        | anna |
| Adult Male   | 0          | 6    |
| Adult Female | 0          | 5    |
| Children     | 0          | 3    |

Source : Halder Committee's Report - 1948, p.5.

the

The rise in wages that had been allowed to workers since 1947 was in the form of allowance. Only one kind of cash allowance as at Dooars and Darjeeling, namely, Dearness allowance, besides certain concessions in the prices of food stuffs and other articles of necessities, were given to the plantation workers of Terai. It was first introduced in 1944 when the rate was 1 anna per day for adults both male and female and 6 pies for children. The Industrial Committee on plantations at their conference at Delhi in 1947-48 increased the Dearness allowance without making any alteration in the then structure of basic wage. In 1948 the committee fixed Dearness allowance as 5 annas 6 pies per day for adult male and female and 3 annas per day for children. The gradual change in the rate of Dearness allowance is shown in the table below :

Table 9.2

## Dearness allowance - 1944 to 1948

|              | 1944 |      |      | 1947 |      |      | 1948 |      |      |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|              | Rs.  | Anna | Pies | Rs.  | Anna | Pies | Rs.  | Anna | Pies |
| Adult male   | 0    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 2    | 0    | 0    | 5    | 6    |
| Adult female | 0    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 2    | 0    | 0    | 5    | 6    |
| Children     | 0    | 0    | 6    | 0    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 3    | 0    |

Source : Halder Committee's Report, 1948, p.6.

After the recommendations of the Industrial Committee on plantations a difficulty arose regarding the allotment of the

total amount of Dearness allowance to hazira and 'Doubli'. The matter was subsequently decided in a tripartite conference when it was decided that the total cash Dearness allowance would be divided between the first and second hazira in the following way :

Table 9.3  
Distribution of Dearness allowance - 1948

|              | First hazira |      |      | Second hazira |      |      |
|--------------|--------------|------|------|---------------|------|------|
|              | Rs.          | anna | pies | Rs.           | anna | pies |
| Adult male   | 0            | 4    | 0    | 0             | 1    | 6    |
| Adult female | 0            | 4    | 0    | 0             | 1    | 6    |
| Children     | 0            | 2    | 3    | 0             | 0    | 9    |

Source : Halder Committee's Report, 1948, p.6.

Thus, the total cash wage of the workers of Terai tea gardens in 1948 stood as follows :

Table 9.4  
Daily wage rate in Terai 1948

| Category of workers | Basic hazira |   |   | Doubli |   |   | First hazira |   |   | Second hazira (doubli) |   |   | Total cash wage |    |   |
|---------------------|--------------|---|---|--------|---|---|--------------|---|---|------------------------|---|---|-----------------|----|---|
|                     | Rs           | a | p | Rs     | a | p | Rs           | a | p | Rs                     | a | p | Rs              | a  | p |
| Adult male          | 0            | 6 | 0 | 0      | 6 | 0 | 0            | 4 | 0 | 0                      | 1 | 6 | 1               | 1  | 6 |
| Adult female        | 0            | 5 | 0 | 0      | 5 | 0 | 0            | 4 | 0 | 0                      | 1 | 6 | 0               | 15 | 6 |
| Children            | 0            | 3 | 0 | 0      | 3 | 0 | 0            | 2 | 3 | 0                      | 0 | 9 | 0               | 0  | 9 |

Source : Data compiled from Halder Committee's Report, 1948, pp.5-6.

After independence the Govt. of India passed legislations to protect the interest of the workers. Consequently the workers were given an opportunity to organize themselves. The advent of trade unionism helped to improve the collective bargaining strength of workers, and they began to resort to strike for higher wages.

The minimum wage Act was passed in India in 1948. Plantations were include in the schedule employment under this Act. The Act empowered the Central or State Govts. as the case may be to fix minimum rates of wages in respect of schedule employments. For fixing or revision the minimum rates of wages, the appropriate government appoints committees or sub-committees as it deemed necessary.

Accordingly the Govt. of West Bengal set up Minimum Wages Advisory Committee for tea plantations in March, 1950. The recommendations of the Committee came into effect in early 1952. The committee fixed the minimum wage at Rs. 1.16 for males and 1.03 for females in Terai.

In 1952, there was a depression in tea industry and tea prices decreased abnormally. On this argument the planters were not willing to pay wages as fixed up by the Committee. They resorted to a wage cut. To stem the situation the State Govt. set up a second minimum wages Committee in November, 1952. The committee resorted the minimum wages fixed up by the 1st Minimum Wages Committee but suggested to

curtail all other benefits received by the workers in kind. The workers were given an additional 34 paise per day as cash compensation in lieu of curtailment of these benefits. Moreover the cereals which were being supplied to the workers at Rs. 500 per maund increased to Rs. 15.00 per maund from February, 1953.<sup>1</sup> In 1953 wages for males and females rose to Rs. 1.50 and Rs. 1.36 respectively. After this two adhoc increments were made in the daily wage rates. The first was in 1955 of 18 paise and another in 1959 of 13 paise. As a result in 1959, the daily wages rates for male, female and children workers of Terai stood at Rs. 1.81, Rs. 1.67 and Re. 1.00 respectively. Thus, between 1952 to 1959 the daily wage rate of a male worker increased by only 9 paise annually.

The 15th session of the Indian Labour Conference held in July, 1957 agreed that, the workers in all major industries should not only have guaranteed minimum wage but a need based minimum wage. Accordingly, the Central Govt. appointed the Central Wage Board for tea plantation Industry in December 1960. The Board declared it's final recommendation on 1st April, 1966. During this tenure the Board declared two interim increments. The first interim wage increase effected from 27th June, 1962. The workers of Terai were granted an increase of 8 paise, 7 paise and 4 paise respectively for men, women and children workers. The second interim wage increment effected from 10th June, 1964, which granted an increase 6 paise, 5 paise and 3 paise respectively for men, women and children

workers. Thus, before the Board's final recommendations the daily wage rate of men, women and children workers in the Terai stood at Rs. 1.95, Rs. 1.81 and Rs. 1.07 respectively. Finally the Board laid down that the wages of daily rated workers of West Bengal should increase by 13 paise, 10 paise and 7 paise respectively for men, women and children workers from 1st January, 1966. A further increase of 2 paise for men, women and 1 paise for children recommended to be effected from 1st April, 1966. On 1st April 1966, the daily wage rate of men, women and children in the Terai stood at Rs. 2.10, Rs. 1.93 and Rs. 1.15 respectively. Thus, after taking five years and four months time the Central Board increased the daily wage rate of a male and female worker by only 29 paise and 24 paise respectively. Obviously the very objective of the Central Board of providing a need based minimum wage was not fulfilled by its recommendations. The standard formula for fixing a need based minimum wage is to take 3 units of consumption for every adult male worker, but in tea industry 1:5 ratio was taken. The planters argued that since employment is family based the ratio of 1:3 is too high. The Central Wage Board too spelt out its stand against the planters' approach. It mentioned in its report that the extent of family employment was not the same as in earlier days when there was labour scarcity. It further noted that "the family system of employment can not be considered as unique in the tea plantation industry and even it had been so it is a matter of consideration whether it was justified for employers to claim benefit of it by way

of low wages for male earners". However, on the same page where the critical observations were made against low wages, the report stated that, "it was not in a position to recommend wages in keeping with the present cost of living and in terms of the need based wage formula of the 15th Indian Labour Conference" as this would result in a sudden jump in wages.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1966 to 1973, wages increased at a very slow rate either through the recommendations of bipartite meetings or through the demand of the trade unions. The co-ordination committee of the tea plantation workers (CCTPW) went on continuous strike with effect from 18th August, 1969. The main issue of the strike for increased wages and employment and the implementation of plantation Labour Act (PLA). A tripartite settlement was reached at the intervention of the Labour Minister, West Bengal on 2nd September, 1969. This settlement made the following interim increases in the daily rate of wages and VDA of the adult worker w.e.f the date of agreement.<sup>3</sup>

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| i) on a/c of VDA                        | Rs. 0.06            |
| ii) on a/c of interim increase in wages | Rs. 0.14            |
|   | Rs. 0.20<br>per day |

The children will have the increment at half of the rate of adults, i.e., Rs. 0.10 per day. After this increase the

daily wage rate of men, women and children in the Terai stood at Rs. 2.39, Rs. 2.22 and Rs. 1.29 respectively. The employers agreed that another increment in wages would be given from 1st April, 1970. Accordingly, an interim increase of 9 paise in the wages of adult daily rated workers was made from 1st April, 1970. The rate of increase for the child workers was half of this, i.e.,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  paise. Thus, the daily wage rate raised to Rs. 2.48 for men, Rs. 2.31 for women and Rs. 1.335 for children.

In pursuance of a tripartite agreement of the 2nd September, 1969, the Govt. of West Bengal, Labour Department, in their resolution dated the 21st October, 1970 set up a Wage Fixing Committee with representatives from the employer and the employees and Mr. Justice, P.C. Mullick as the chairman. The committee held several sessions and at their meeting on the 9th February, 1972 a settlement was reached. Accordingly wages of all adult daily rated male and female workers in the Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling increased above the existing wages as follows :<sup>4</sup>

- a) from 1.4.71 to 31.5.72 (14 months period) 23p. per day.  
from 1.6.72 to 30.6.73 (13 months period) 23p. per day.
- b) children had the increases at half the rate of the adults i.e.,  $11\frac{1}{2}$  p. per day.

Thus, by June 1973 wages of the daily rates workers in the Terai stood at Rs. 2.94 for men, Rs. 2.77 for women and Rs. 1.565 for children.

The CCTPW submitted 19 point charter of demands including the revision of wages in June, 1973 and gave a threat of continuous strike w.e.f 6th August, 1973 if the demands are not fulfilled. The Minister of State for labour met the parties at Siliguri on 18.6.73 on which date the parties verbally agreed to refer the question of wage increase to a wage fixing machinery. Accordingly, in July 1973, the second Minimum Wage Fixing Committee was set up by the Govt. of West Bengal. It was a tripartite body having equal number of members from the employers and employees side with a Chairman nominated by the Govt. of West Bengal. An Assistant Labour Commissioner acted Secretary of the committee.

The final recommendations of the committee were released in July, 1977. A few interim increments were granted by the committee during its four years term. Soon after its appointment there was an increase of 15 paise for male and female workers and 7 paise for children w.e.f 1st July 1973.

After considering the contentions of the parties several meetings of the second Minimum Wage Fixing Committee it was suggested by the chairman that, in view of the condition prevailing in the industry and elsewhere in the country the

parties should come to a short term settlement on wages of workers to provide them with immediate relief pending finalisation of a new wage structure. Accordingly, at the 11th and 12th meetings of the Wage Fixing Committee the second interim increments of 25 paise for male and female workers and 12½ paise for child workers was made effective from the 1st July, 1974. After this increments the daily wage rate of men, women and children in the Terai stood at Rs. 3.34, Rs. 3.17 and 1.765 respectively.

The second Minimum Wage Fixing Committee held several sessions but it could not come to any decision regarding the new rates of wages of the workers. At the 10th session of the committee it was decided that, Govt. would be informed about the inability of the committee to evolve an agreed wage structure. Subsequently tripartite meetings were held by the Labour Commissioner. At a meeting held in the Labour Commissioner's chamber on the 22nd May, 1975 a consensus was reached. Finally at a meeting of the Wage Fixing Committee held on the 22nd May 1975 an agreement was reached. Accordingly the rates of wages of the daily rated workers increased as follows :<sup>5</sup>

Adult workers :

from 7th July 1975 to 31st March 1976      45 p. per day.

from 1st April 1976 to 30th June 1977      45 p. per day.

Child workers :

from 7th July 1975 to 31st March 1976 - 22½ p. per day.

from 1st April 1976 to 30th June 1977 - 22½ p. per day.

Finally the committee recommended that the rates of all daily rated workers would be increased as follows :<sup>6</sup>

Adult workers :

from 1st July, 1977 to 30th June, 1978 - Re. 1 per day.

from 1st July, 1978 to 30th June, 1979 - Re. 1 per day.

Child workers :

from 1st July, 1977 to 30th June 1978 - Re. 0.50½ per day.

from 1st July, 1978 to 30th June, 1979 - Re. 0.50 per day.

Thus, by the June, 1979 the daily wage rate of men, women, and children in the Terai tea gardens raise to Rs. 6.24, Rs.6.07 and Rs. 3.22 respectively.

When the first agreement expired on June 30, 1979 a tripartite agreement was signed on the 6th May, 1980 which increased the rates of daily wage of the workmen for the next three years as follows :

Table 9.5

Increment to daily wage rate 1.7.79 to 30.6.82

|                        | Adult<br>(increased by) | Child<br>(increased by) |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| from 1.7.79 to 30.6.80 | 90 p. per day           | 45 p. per day           |
| from 1.7.80 to 30.6.81 | 90 p. per day           | 45 p. per day           |
| from 1.7.81 to 30.6.82 | 90 p. per day           | 45 p. per day           |

Source : Memorandum of Settlements - 1966 to 1991, published by Tea Association (North Bengal Branch, Siliguri), p.80.

Further it was also agreed that the arrears accruing out of the above for the period 1.7.79 to 5.5.80 would be paid in three equal instalments as follows :

1st instalment would be paid by July, 1980.

2nd " " " " December, 1980.

3rd " " " " March, 1981.

At the end of the June, 1982, the daily wage rate of men, women and children in the Terai raised to Rs. 8.94, Rs. 8.77 and and 4.57 respectively.

The previous agreement expired on 30th June, 1982 but the next agreement was signed in August, 1983, which increased the daily wages of all daily rated workers as follows :

Table 9.6

## Increment to daily wage rate 1.7.83 to 1.7.85

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

Source : Memorandum of Settlements - 1966 to 1991, Published by Tea Association of India (North Bengal Branch, Siliguri), p.85.

The workers were allowed retrospective benefit for the period 1.4.83 to 3.6.83, though they should have been given for the period 1.7.82 to 30.6.83. Thus, the workers lost their enhanced wages for nine months due to delay in settlement of agreement.

At the end of this agreement the daily wage rate of adult men and women increased to Rs. 11.19 and that of children to Rs. 5.71.

The three year wage agreement of 1983 expired on June 30, 1986, but the next tripartite agreement was signed in June, 1987. The new tripartite agreement increased the daily rate of wages for the next three years as follows :

Table 9.7

Increment to daily wage rate 1.6.87 to 31.5.90

|                        | Adult | Child |
|------------------------|-------|-------|
| from 1.6.87 to 31.5.88 | 85p.  | 43p.  |
| from 1.6.88 to 31.5.89 | 85p.  | 43p.  |
| from 1.6.89 to 31.5.90 | 85p.  | 43p.  |

Source : Memorandum of Settlements - 1966 to 1991, Published by Tea Association (North Bengal Branch, Siliguri), p.105.

As the previous settlement expired and also a few months elapsed the employers agreed to pay a sum equivalent to the retrospective entitlement for the period 14.2.87 to 31.5.87. But the workers were entitled to receive the retrospective benefit from 1.7.86 to 31.5.87. Thus, they lost their enhanced wages for the period of eight and a half month due to delay in the settlement of wage agreement. This shows some amount of weakness of the bargaining strength of trade unions in the tea gardens.

When this agreement expired i.e., 31.5.90, the daily wage rate of adult male and female workers increased to Rs. 13.74 and that of children to Rs. 7.00.

After the expiry of the previous agreement the latest tripartite wage agreement was signed in August, 1989 which granted an enhancement in the daily rate of wages of a daily rated worker as follows :

Table 9.8

Increment to daily wage rate 1.6.90 to 1.6.92.

|              | Adult               | Child               |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| w.e.f 1.6.90 | by Rs. 2.70 per day | by Rs. 1.35 per day |
| w.e.f 1.6.91 | by Rs. 1.40 per day | by Rs. 0.70 per day |
| w.e.f 1.6.92 | by Rs. 1.40 per day | by Rs. 0.70 per day |

Source : Memorandum of Settlements 1966 to 1991, Published by Tea Association of India (North Bengal Branch, Siliguri), p.113.

By the end of May, 1993 the daily wage rate of adult and child workers in the Terai tea gardens stood at Rs. 19.24 and Rs. 9.75 respectively.

Table 9.9

Money wages in the Terai Tea Gardens (1952-1992) (Per day)

| Date/Year | Men  | Women | Children |
|-----------|------|-------|----------|
| 1952      | 1.16 | 1.03  | 0.62     |
| 1953      | 1.50 | 1.36  | 0.83     |
| 1954      | 1.50 | 1.36  | 0.83     |
| 1955      | 1.68 | 1.54  | 0.92     |
| 1956      | 1.58 | 1.54  | 0.92     |
| 1957      | 1.68 | 1.54  | 0.92     |
| 1958      | 1.68 | 1.54  | 0.92     |
| 1959      | 1.81 | 1.67  | 1.00     |
| 1960      | 1.81 | 1.69  | 1.00     |

contd ...

Table 9.9 contd ...

|         |       |       |       |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1961    | 1.81  | 1.69  | 1.00  |
| 27.6.62 | 1.89  | 1.76  | 1.04  |
| 1963    | 1.89  | 1.76  | 1.04  |
| 10.6.64 | 1.95  | 1.81  | 1.07  |
| 1965    | 1.95  | 1.81  | 1.07  |
| 01.1.66 | 2.08  | 1.91  | 1.14  |
| 1967    | 2.10  | 1.93  | 1.15  |
| 1968    | 2.19  | 2.02  | 1.19  |
| 02.9.69 | 2.39  | 2.22  | 1.29  |
| 01.4.70 | 2.48  | 2.31  | 1.335 |
| 01.4.71 | 2.71  | 2.54  | 1.45  |
| 01.6.72 | 2.94  | 2.77  | 1.565 |
| 01.7.73 | 3.09  | 2.92  | 1.64  |
| 01.7.74 | 3.34  | 3.17  | 1.765 |
| 07.7.75 | 3.79  | 3.62  | 1.99  |
| 01.4.76 | 4.24  | 4.07  | 2.215 |
| 01.7.77 | 5.24  | 5.07  | 2.72  |
| 01.7.78 | 6.24  | 6.07  | 3.22  |
| 01.7.79 | 7.14  | 6.97  | 3.67  |
| 01.7.80 | 8.04  | 7.87  | 4.12  |
| 01.7.81 | 8.94  | 8.77  | 4.57  |
| 01.7.82 | 8.94  | 8.77  | 4.57  |
| 01.7.83 | 09.68 | 9.52  | 4.95  |
| 01.7.84 | 10.44 | 10.44 | 5.33  |
| 01.7.85 | 11.19 | 11.19 | 5.71  |

contd ...

Table 9.9 contd ...

|         |       |       |      |
|---------|-------|-------|------|
| 01.7.86 | 11.19 | 11.19 | 5.71 |
| 01.6.87 | 12.04 | 12.04 | 6.14 |
| 01.6.88 | 12.89 | 12.89 | 6.57 |
| 01.6.89 | 13.74 | 13.74 | 7.00 |
| 01.6.90 | 16.44 | 16.44 | 8.35 |
| 01.6.91 | 17.84 | 17.84 | 9.05 |
| 01.6.92 | 19.24 | 19.24 | 9.75 |

Source : Data compiled from Tea Statistics, 1952 to 1990-91, Published by Tea Board Calcutta and Memorandum of Settlements, 1966 to 1991, Published by Tea Association of India (North Bengal Branch, Siliguri).

A close perusal of Table <sup>q.9</sup> reveals that the wage of a tea garden worker increased at a very slow rate. The minimum wage committee (Modak Committee) stated that, the minimum wage of a worker should not be restricted to just a cash wage but should also cover other welfare benefits like accommodation, medical, education of the children etc. But inspite of proclaiming these lofty ideas, the committee fixed the minimum wage of a male worker in the Terai tea gardens at Rs. 1.16 only in 1952.

During the period 1952 to 1960 the daily wage of a male worker increased by only 65p., estimated as annual increase of only 8p.

The Central Wage Board for tea plantation after taking five years and four months time (December 1960 to April 1966)

fixed the daily wage of a male worker finally at Rs. 2.10, i.e., increased by only 29p. During the tenure of the Central Wage Board wages increased by only 6p. annually, on an average.

Between 1966 to 1973 the wages mainly increased by the pressure of the trade unions, including the General Strike 1969. During the period the daily wage of a male worker increased by 99p. The average annual increase was a mere 14 paise.

The second Minimum Wage Fixing Committee took four years time (July 1973 to July 1977) for making its final recommendations. But it also failed to fix up a need based minimum wage for the workers. In July, 1977 the daily wage of a male worker rose to Rs. 5.24. Thus during the four years period of the Second Minimum Wage Fixing Committee annual increase in daily wages was 54p.

Wages increased at a faster pace since 1977. Between the period of 25 years, 1952 to 1977, daily wage rate of a male worker in Terai Tea gardens increased by only Rs. 4.08, the annual increase was less than 17p., on an average. During the last 15 years, 1977-1992, the daily wage of a male worker increased by Rs. 14, estimated an annual increase of 93p. on an average. Since 1977 the wages have increased at a faster pace, but the daily wage of a plantation worker is lower than the statutory minimum wage for agricultural workers in the state.

In spite of organised trade unionism and a co-ordination committee which is a unique body because one can rarely find such diverse unions like INTUC and CITU sharing the same platform. It has also failed to provide a need based minimum wage for the workers. On the argument of the family based employment the employers are not agreed to pay wages to the tea garden workers equal to the wages of the other organized industry. But this argument might be justified during the early days when there was labour scarcity in the tea gardens. At present the picture has changed and all members of a family are not getting employment in the tea gardens. There are large number of unemployed in the tea gardens. But still the employers paying low wages to the workers on their old argument.

Regarding the question of wages, the attitudes of the employers and the Co-ordination committee seem to be directed towards a common goal, i.e., the formation of wage board. The ITPA Chairman's address states that "the whole matter of wage fixation should vest in a wage board which alone can study the need of the workers as also the capacity of the industry in a region".<sup>7</sup> The Co-ordination Committee also presumed to gain need based minimum wages for the workers through tripartite negotiation rather than struggle.

The past performances of Wage Boards and Wage Committees show that they are time consuming and ultimately in a whimper.

These committees are ideal for stalling mass movements by impressing on the workers that their demands can be met, not through struggles but through negotiation. This may help to maintain "industrial peace" which the Left Front Govt. and its constituent trade unions are so keen to maintain, but at the same time it is obviously a tragedy for the trade union movement.

#### 9.2 Extra Leaf Price (ELP)

Besides daily wages the workers are also entitled to get plucking incentive. Every worker engaged in plucking tea leaves is given a fixed minimum quota. This is known as the thika. Any worker plucking beyond his or her thika is given an incentive which is known as Extra Leaf Price (ELP). ELP increased from 5.50 to 7.00 paise per kg. in Dooars and Terai gardens w.e.f 9.6.69 and further to 10p. per kg. w.e.f 1.7.77. <sup>Was</sup> ELP was fixed at 13p. per kg. by a tripartite settlement on 6th May, 1980. The effect of increase was allowed from 11.4.80. It further increased to 16p. per kg. w.e.f 1.7.83 and to 19p. per kg. w.e.f 1.6.87. Finally the tripartite wage agreement in August, 1990 increased the extra leaf price (ELP) in the Dooars and in the Terai tea gardens to 25p. per kg. w.e.f. 1.8.90.

Thus, the ELP was stagnant at 7p. per kg. between the period 1969 to 1977. Since 1977 ELP has increased in every tripartite

wage agreement at a 3 year interval. But the rate of increase is very insignificant. During the last 13 years (1977 to 1990) ELP has increased by only 15p., i.e., by one paise annually, on an average.

### 9.3 Earnings Gap Between Men and Women

Wage differential between male and female workers existed in the tea industry from its inception. During the pre-independence period a woman generally earned three-fourth of the wage of a man. The differences increased after independence. In 1948, the wage difference between a male and female was four paise. After the final recommendations of the first Minimum Wages Advisory Committee in 1952 the wage difference stood at 13 paise. In 1953 the difference increased to 14 paise. The wage difference remained same till 1966. After the final recommendations of Central Wage Board the wage difference rose to 17 paise and it remained same through out the period so long the wage difference existed in the tea industry.

The progress to equality in wages has an interesting history. The employers held out against this demand on the grounds that the differential in the 'thika' justified the wage differences. In 1975 the Govt. of India passed Equal Remuneration Act abolishing wage differences among sexes in all industries.

Even after the enactment was in force, the employers refused to pay equal wages to male and female workers. The Indian Tea Planters' Association (ITPA) stated that giving women the same wages as men, and at the same time maintaining different work loads, would result in discrimination against men. Some tea gardens equalised the wages but increased the work load of women to the same level as that of men. In this process, women in fact suffered a wage cut. While the difference in wages was less than 6 per cent, the increase in work load was of the order of 20 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

In December, 1976 the Ministry of Labour of the Government of India clarified that the Equal Remuneration Act applied to 'equal nature of work' and not to the 'volume' of work. The employers were required to pay the differences in wages retrospective from the date that Act came into force. Here it is interesting to note that Tea Statistics (official publication of the Tea Board) 1976-77 to 1983-84, continues to list separate wages for men and women. It is, therefore, evident that the equal wages were not enforced everywhere in the tea industry at least up to 1983.

There is lot of controversy about the calculation of real wage of the tea garden labourers. Calculation of real wage can be seen in Appendix-III.

#### 9.4 Determinants of Money Wages

An attempt has been made here to ascertain the determinants of Money Wages in tea industry with the help of regression and partial correlation analysis. The money wage rate (A) has been taken as a dependent variable. Independent variables are the consumer price Index (B), Index of unionisation (C) and Productivity of Workers (D). Data for this analysis are taken for the period 1961 to 1989. Detail data have been shown in Appendix-III.

Data on union membership in tea industry are not available in labour in West Bengal, an official publication of the Ministry of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal, so for measuring the degree of trade unionism, the average daily number of labour employed in the industry has been used as a proxy for union activities. We have found that about 100% of the workers in tea industry are the members of the trade unions.

The results of regression analysis have been shown in Table 9.10.

It can be seen from the table 9.10 that the value of  $R^2$  between CPI (B) and money wage (A) is 0.9231 and that of between money wage (A) and unionisation (C) is 0.7129. The value of  $R^2$  between money wage (A) and labour productivity (D) is very minimum, i.e., 0.4441. Thus, the Money wage in tea industry is more related with C.P.I and than the unionisation, and labour productivity seems to have no influence over the money wages.

Table 9.10

Regression Analysis of Money Wages in Tea Industry : 1961-1989

Dependent variable is A  
(t values in parenthesis).

| Independent variables | 1                   | 2                  | 3                   | 4                   |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Constant              | -17660              | -12.078            | -9.1484             | -9.0556             |
| B                     | 0.0301<br>(18.002)* |                    |                     | 0.0188<br>(4.5990)* |
| C                     |                     | 0.1461<br>(0.0178) |                     | 0.0593<br>(3.7027)* |
| D                     |                     |                    | 0.0225<br>(4.6443)* | 0.0043<br>(1.4893)  |
| R <sup>2</sup>        | 0.9231              | 0.7129             | 0.4441              | 0.9525              |
| F.Ratio               | 324.07*             | 67.035*            | 21.570*             | 166.96*             |
| DW                    | 0.8253              | 0.3085             | 0.2814              | 0.5773              |

\* Significant at 1% level.

Table 9.11 presents the results of partial correlation coefficients.

Table 9.11

## Partial Correlation Coefficients

| Variables | Constant variables | Partial correlation coefficients | T.values | D.F |
|-----------|--------------------|----------------------------------|----------|-----|
| AB        | CD                 | 0.6770                           | 4.5990*  | 25  |
| AC        | BD                 | 0.5951                           | 3.7027*  | 25  |
| AD        | BC                 | 0.2855                           | 1.4893   | 25  |

\* Significant at 1% level.

Table 9.11 shows that the partial correlation coefficients between Money Wage (A) and C.P.I (B) keeping constant unionisation (C) and labour productivity becomes 0.6770. The result of the same is 0.5951 between Money Wage (A) and unionisation (C) keeping constant C.P.I (B) and labour productivity (D). The value of partial correlation coefficients between Money Wage (A) and labour productivity (D) keeping constant C.P.I (B) and unionisation (C) is the minimum, or 0.2855. Thus, the results of partial correlation coefficients are not different from that of regression that the Money Wages in tea industry are more related to the C.P.I than the unionisation, and labour productivity seems to have no influence over the determination of Money Wages.

#### 9.5 Bonus

The payment of bonus to tea workers out of profit took place after a widespread industrywise movement by the workers in 1955. Since then the tea workers were getting bonus. But the amount of bonus was fixed at the garden level and it varied from garden to garden. After the Left Front Govt., led by CPI(M) was voted into power the trade unions with the support of the state government started widespread agitation for higher rate of bonus for the workers. After three years continuous bonus agitation ultimately the issue was settled by a tripartite negotiation in 1980. According to this negotiation the tea gardens of Terai, Dooars and Darjeeling hills have been divided into four categories, viz. A, B, C and D, on the basis of area of land under tea. The annual rate of bonus of all these categories in the Terai and Dooars is given in Table 9.12.

Table 9.12

Annual rate of bonus in Terai Tea Gardens 1980-1990

| Year | Annual rate of bonus |         |         |         |
|------|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
|      | Group A              | Group B | Group C | Group D |
| 1980 | 12.50                | 11.00   | 10.00   | 9.00    |
| 1981 | 12.50                | 11.00   | 10.00   | 9.00    |
| 1982 | 14.75                | 12.50   | 11.50   | 10.00   |
| 1983 | 20.00                | 17.00   | 15.00   | 11.00   |
| 1984 | 20.00                | 19.00   | 17.00   | 11.50   |
| 1985 | 18.25                | 17.00   | 15.00   | 10.00   |
| 1986 | 18.25                | 17.00   | 15.00   | 10.00   |
| 1987 | 19.25                | 18.00   | 16.00   | 10.00   |
| 1988 | 20.00                | 19.00   | 17.00   | 11.00   |
| 1989 | 20.00                | 20.00   | 20.00   | 13.00   |
| 1990 | 20.00                | 20.00   | 20.00   | 18.00   |

Note : i) Rate of bonus includes minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent and balance adhoc ex-gratia.

Source : Data personally collected from the office of the Terai Indian Planters Association (TIPA), Siliguri.

In 1980, the tea garden fallen under the categories of A, B, C and D paid bonus at the rate of 12.50%, 11%, 10% and 9% respectively to their workers. Since 1980, the trade unions have been pressurising on the management to pay higher rate of bonus for the workers. By 1990, trade unions have been successful to get 20% bonus for the workers of A, B and C category of

gardens and 18% for the workers of D category of garden. Thus, we see that the rate of bonus has almost doubled in the Terai tea gardens during the last 10 years.

#### 9.6 Summary

Money wage rate of the workers of Terai increased at a very slow rate. Between the period 1952 to 1976, the daily wage of a male worker increased by 12 paise annually, on an average. Money wage increased at a faster rate only after 1977. Between the period 1977 to 1992 the daily wage of a male worker increased 93 paise annually, on an average. But during this period the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for plantation workers increased at a very faster rate. As a result the extra increment to money wage could not increase the real wage rate.

We have seen in Regression analysis that the money wage in tea industry is more related to C.P.I than the unionisation. Labour productivity seems to have no influence over the determination of money wages.

At present a tea garden worker is getting wage less than an agricultural worker in north east India. This is inspite of organized trade union in the tea industry for the last 40 years. The surplus population in tea gardens is the prime cause of low wage rate in tea industry. Due to backwardness of tea garden areas other employment opportunity could not

generate near the vicinity of tea garden areas. As a result the fourth generation of tea workers are also depended in the tea industry. This surplus population kept the wage rate low. Moreover, a large number of dependents of tea workers are working as casual labour in the tea gardens. Thus, when C.C.T.P.W forced the employers to increase the wages of workers at the time of tripartite negotiation, the employers threatened to reduce the number of casual labourers. But a reduction of casual labourers will reduce the family income of workers.

Notes & References

1. Ghosh, B.C., Jalpaiguri District Centenary Souvenir - 1869-1968, p.303.
2. Report of the Central Wage Board for Tea Plantation Industry, New Delhi, 1966, p.68.
3. Memorandum of Settlements, 1966 to 1991, Published by Tea Association of India (North Bengal Branch, Siliguri), p.10.
4. ibid., p.25.
5. ibid., p.45.
6. ibid., p.62.
7. Bhowmik Sharit, "Wages of Tea Garden Workers in West Bengal" in Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XVIII, No.40, p.1600.
8. Bhowmik Sharit, Class Formation in The Plantation System, Published by People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981, p.94.

## **CHAPTER X : Labour Welfare in Tea Industry**

### **Content :**

- 10.1      Welfare Provisions in Plantation Labour Act, 1951**
- 10.2      Enforcement of Plantation Labour Act, 1951**
- 10.3      Summary**

#### 10.1 Welfare Provisions in Plantation Labour Act, 1951

In the early stages of plantation the living conditions of the workers were unhygienic. Medical facilities were very poor. The result is that many workers died after reaching the tea gardens.

The pre-independence legislative measures did not deal with the provisions of labour welfare, and they were more protective of the employers than the workers. The Tea District Emigrant Labour Act of 1932 deals mainly with the regulations of recruitment of workers. The Act does not contain any provision regulating welfare arrangement for plantation workers. It is totally an emigration legislation. The Royal Commission on Labour, in its report published in 1931 revealed that much needed to be done in the sphere of health and welfare for plantation workers. An indirect outcome of the Royal Commission's report was the setting up of the Labour Investigation Committee by the Central Government, in 1946. The Committee too pointed out the wages, housing accommodation and medical services for plantation workers

require substantial improvement and expansion. The Committee suggested the enactment of a separate plantation Labour Act was passed in 1951 which was promulgated largely on the basis of the findings of the labour investigation committee. The Act includes several statutory provisions for labour, such as housing, sanitation, schooling facilities for the children of the plantation workers, medical facilities, drinking water, creches etc. The Act makes it mandatory for the employers to provide facilities. The Act came into effect in 1955. The West Bengal Plantation Labour Rules were framed in 1956.

### Housing

The workers generally resides within the territory of tea gardens. The working hours of tea gardens is such that it requires the workers to reside within the tea garden area. The work starts at 7 a.m and closes after 3 p.m.

In earlier days the planters bore no responsibility to construct the housing for the workers. They only distributed home-stead land to workers through the sardars. The sardars gave the workers the necessary materials to build up the houses. The houses had thatched roofs and bamboo walls.

While giving the description of workers' houses, A.J. Das mentioned, "Floors are kutcha and roofing not more than 10 feet high. Ventilation is inadequate as labourers will not tolerate

windows and there is no out let from smoke. The size of each hut is usually about 20 feet by 10 feet : one half is used for cooking and the other for sleeping although occasionally there is small veranda which is used for cooking. A small plot of land is usually provided by the side of the hut and is used for cultivation, for keeping cattle or as a yard. Estates also give land to their labourers rent free on which they grow food for themselves".<sup>1</sup>

The section 15 of the plantation Labour Act of 1951 makes it mandatory for every employer to provide housing accommodation to the resident permanent workers. The State Government made the Plantation Labour Housing Scheme Rules in 1958. The Rules specified the standard of housing and also provided for loans. The standard specified (except in hill areas) in this scheme was,<sup>2</sup>

- i) two rooms with floor area of 100 sq. ft.
- ii) kitchen and verandah with a total floor area of 100 sq. ft.
- iii) bath and lavatory with floor area of 16 sq. ft. and 12 sq. ft. respectively
- iv) storage space for food and fuel 12 sq. ft. and the houses with ventilation, lighting (if available) drainage and water tap facilities.

The State Government would provide soft loans to the maximum upto 8% of the total cost of construction, but not for acquiring land. The Central Government agreed to help the planters for construction of houses in 1967 through the subsidised Housing Scheme for plantation workers. The Central Government agreed to give 50% soft loan, 37.5% subsidy to the

total cost of a house. The planters had to bear only 12.5% of the total cost. The assistance was closed in 1986.<sup>3</sup>

According to the rule 47 of the West Bengal Plantation Labour Rules, 1956, every year each garden has to build pucca houses for a minimum of 8% of the resident permanent workers. Therefore, by 1969 all workers should have provided with permanent houses. But till the beginning of 1990, 6345 houses were yet to be constructed. At the end of 1989 the figure of construction of houses worked out to be 72% of the required housing accommodation.<sup>4</sup>

In Table 10.2, we have presented the data on construction of new houses in West Bengal Tea gardens.

Table 10.1  
Construction of New Houses in West Bengal Tea Gardens  
1985-1989

| Year | Total requirement<br>of house to be<br>build as per rule | No. of<br>houses<br>const-<br>ructed | No. of old<br>houses<br>adopted | % house constructed to<br>total requirement<br>(including adoption of<br>old houses) |
|------|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1985 | 6848   | 2863                                 | 302                             | 46.22  |
| 1986 | 6839   | 882                                  | 71                              | 13.94  |
| 1987 | 3680   | 1038                                 | 38                              | 29.24  |
| 1988 | 8305   | 1384                                 | 177                             | 18.80  |
| 1989 | 8901   | 2102                                 | 454                             | 28.72  |

Source : Labour in West Bengal, 1986, p.58, 1987, p.87, 1988, p.63, 1989, p.83.

Table 10.1 shows that the employers commitment to build new houses for workers is very poor. Every year near about 75% of the required houses remained unconstructed. Moreover the percentage of house constructed to total requirement shows decreasing trend. In 1985 the employers constructed 46.22% houses of total requirement. The said percentage decreased to 28.72% at the end of 1989.

In table 10.2 we have estimated the progress regarding construction of standard labour houses of 273 tea estates in three different tea growing regions of West Bengal up to 1991. Data for this purpose are obtained from the return submitted by the individual tea garden to the office of the Assistant Labour Commissioner, Siliguri.

Table 10.2 shows that the tea estates in Darjeeling is much ahead regarding construction of standard houses for labour than that of the Dooars and Terai. Out of 64 tea gardens 27 tea gardens (42.19%) completed the construction of houses to the level of 91 to 100% of total requirement. In Dooars 50 tea gardens (32.90%) out of 152 completed the construction to the same level.

Only 15 tea gardens (26.33%) out of 57 in the Terai completed the construction of standard houses for labour to the level of 91 to 100% of total requirement.

Table 10.2

Construction progress of standard labour houses of 273 tea estates of West Bengal  
1991

| Percentage of construction on total requirement | Terai<br>N=57 | Dooars<br>N=152 | Darjeeling<br>N=64 | All West Bengal<br>N=273 |
|---|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 0-10  | 3 (5.26)      | 7 (4.64)        | 2 (3.13)           | 12 (4.40)                |
| 11-20   | 1 (1.75)      | 4 (2.63)        | 1 (1.56)           | 6 (2.20)                 |
| 21-30   | 5 (8.77)      | 4 (2.63)        | 3 (4.69)           | 12 (4.40)                |
| 31-40   | 5 (8.77)      | 5 (3.29)        | 2 (3.13)           | 12 (4.40)                |
| 41-50   | 2 (3.50)      | 9 (5.92)        | 1 (1.56)           | 12 (4.40)                |
| 51-60   | 7 (12.28)     | 13 (8.55)       | 2 (3.13)           | 22 (8.06)                |
| 61-70   | 5 (8.77)      | 21 (13.82)      | 8 (12.5)           | 34 (12.45)               |
| 71-80   | 10 (17.54)    | 12 (7.89)       | 7 (10.62)          | 29 (10.62)               |
| 81-90   | 4 (7.03)      | 27 (17.76)      | 11 (17.94)         | 42 (15.38)               |
| 91-100  | 15 (26.33)    | 50 (32.90)      | 27 (42.19)         | 92 (33.69)               |
| Total   | 57 (100.00)   | 152 (100.00)    | 64 (100.00)        | 273 (100.00)             |

Note : Figures in parenthesis are the percentages.

Source : Data personally collected from the Office of the Assistant Labour Commissioner, Siliguri.

In Table 10.3, we have presented the number of tea estates constructed 100 per cent houses on total requirement.

Table 10.3

Construction of 100 per cent houses on total requirement - 1991

| Region      | No. of tea estates send return | No. of tea estates constructed houses<br>100 per cent on total requirement | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------|
| Darjeeling  | 64                             | 11   | 17.19          |
| Terai       | 57                             | 04   | 7.02           |
| Dooars      | 152                            | 17   | 11.18          |
| West Bengal | 273                            | 32   | 11.72          |

Source : Data personally collected from the office of the Assistant Labour Commissioner, Siliguri.

Both the table 10.2 and 10.3 reflect that the progress of construction of standard labour houses in West Bengal tea industry is not very impressive. Only 32 tea estates out of 273 constructed 100% houses of total requirement. In terms of percentage it is only about 12% of total.

Terai ~~was~~ far lagged behind in the construction of standard houses for workers. Only 4 tea estates out of 57 so far constructed 100% houses on total requirement.

As such we may conclude that the employers commitment to the construction of standard houses for the workers in West Bengal tea industry is very much poor. The result is workers are living in thatched, substandard houses without provision of water or latrines. The subsidy scheme are failure. In many

gardens one can see incomplete labour quarters which have been constructed merely to procure the loan and subsidy.

#### Medical facilities

As the tea plantations are far away from the cities there exist an urgent need for hospitals medical units for the workers. But there are enough cases in tea gardens when workers have died due to non-availability of medical help. Children were born in tea gardens or on the way to hospitals which is far away, with no speedy conveyance to carry the patients. The trade unionists and workers interviewed expressed dissatisfaction over the provision, the chief complaint being non-availability of doctors in time of need. The number of hospitals are less than the minimum prescribed under the Act. In certain cases, dispensaries do not even have certain essential drugs.

In Terai there only 18 hospitals and 32 dispensaries are available for total 94,527 tea garden population. 136 hospitals and 88 dispensaries are available for total 7,57,475 tea garden population in West Bengal.<sup>5</sup> These figures indicate that the medical facilities in West Bengal tea gardens are very much low.

In table 10.4 and 10.5 we have estimated the different medical facilities available in per 1000 population in Terai and all West Bengal tea gardens respectively.

Table 10.4

Medical facilities available in per 1000 population in the Terai Tea Gardens 1985-89

| Year | Doctors | Beds | Midwives | Nurses | Compounders | Health Assistants |
|------|---------|------|----------|--------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1985 | 0.61    | 5.35 | 0.44     | 0.40   | 0.50        | 0.17              |
| 1986 | 0.51    | 4.54 | 0.46     | 0.30   | 0.55        | 0.15              |
| 1987 | 0.53    | 4.52 | 0.41     | 0.31   | 0.48        | 0.19              |
| 1988 | 0.51    | 4.12 | 0.32     | 0.31   | 0.46        | 0.20              |
| 1989 | 0.54    | 3.89 | 0.37     | 0.30   | 0.45        | 0.16              |

Note : Doctors including both visiting and residential.

Source : Data computed from Labour in West Bengal, 1987, p.87, 1988, p.65, 1989, p.85, 1990, p.75.

Table 10.5

Medical facilities available in per 1000 population in the West Bengal Tea Gardens 1985-89

| Year | Doctors | Beds | Midwives | Nurses | Compounders | Health Assistants |
|------|---------|------|----------|--------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1985 | 0.29    | 5.64 | 0.35     | 0.37   | 0.32        | 0.16              |
| 1986 | 0.32    | 5.31 | 0.39     | 0.35   | 0.28        | 0.15              |
| 1987 | 0.31    | 5.20 | 0.36     | 0.31   | 0.33        | 0.16              |
| 1988 | 0.30    | 4.98 | 0.32     | 0.31   | 0.31        | 0.17              |
| 1989 | 0.29    | 4.86 | 0.33     | 0.32   | 0.29        | 0.16              |

Note : Doctors including both visiting and residential.

Source : Data computed from Labour in West Bengal, 1987, p.87, 1988, p.65, 1989, p.85, 1990, p.75.

The above two tables show that Doctors, Midwives, Nurses, Compounders and Health Assistants are even less than one for every 1000 population in tea gardens. During the last 5 years (1985-89) the figures do not show any improving condition.

The employers have clearly neglected the medical aspect of the workers. During the course of field survey the workers and trade union representatives alike expressed dissatisfaction over the absence of doctors and medicines. In some estates there is only a compounder. Tea garden areas being far away from the city, the doctors are not keen to stay in the estates as it would limit their career prospects and not all estates can afford them, very attractive salaries. So the employers in many cases employed visiting doctors. They occasionally visit the labour lines. This do not fulfil the actual requirement of the workers. What is needed is the permanent resident doctors in the tea garden. One can not understand, why the doctors can not be paid good salary by the tea garden owners, whose profits are huge, and there is no economic crisis in the industry. Moreover lady doctors are not found in almost all the hospitals where majority of women are employed.

#### Creches

At the end of 1989 it was reported to the labour office 242 tea plantations of West Bengal provided 554 creches in which 611 ayahs were engaged. All most all creches were mobile. Milk

and snacks were supplied free of cost to the children of the working mothers.<sup>6</sup>

The actual condition of creches in the Terai is not satisfactory. They are generally in the form of tent only and are badly maintained. The miserable conditions of creches is already discussed in chapter VI.

#### Other Facilities :

#### Subsidised Ration

During the second world war the entrance of Japan in the war at the end of 1941 brought significant changes. The managerial staff in tea estates was greatly reduced owing to heavy demand in armed forces. A large number of workers who were engaged in tea plantation in Assam and Bengal were diverted for construction of roads, bridges, air fields in various parts of North East India which was the major target of attack by Japan. The work load of managers who remained in the industry, was increased greatly due to shortage of labourers coupled with difficulties in getting transport. Moreover, managers were also faced the problem of making payments to workers. Instead of paying cash for wages alone and leaving the workers to purchase their own requirements of essential commodities from open market, the managers of the estates were compelled to arrange for supply of these commodities to the workers at concessional rates. Since then the tea garden workers have been provided with subsidised ration.<sup>7</sup>

The quantity of weekly ration being supplied is given in Table 10.6.

Table 10.6  
Scale of weekly ration-1991

| Category   | Rice<br>in kg. | Atta<br>in kg. | Total |
|--|----------------|----------------|-------|
| 1. Workers   | 1              | 2.260          | 3.260 |
| 2. Adult dependants (in the age group of 12 years and upto 18 years) | 1              | 1.240          | 2.240 |
| 3. Minor dependents (between age group of 2 years to 12 years)       | .500           | 0.720          | 1.220 |

Source : Memorandum of settlements (1966 to 1991) published by Tea Association of India (North Bengal Branch area) Siliguri, p.120.

Both rice and wheat are supplied at 40 paise per kg. Non resident Bigha workers are given 82 paise daily as cash compensation in lieu of ration. The resident Bigha workers may also be given cash compensation at their option.

As per notification of the State Government 90 paise daily is taken into consideration against the value of concessional ration for calculating provident fund.

The quality of ration is not always good. They have often expressed their dissatisfaction about the quality of ration.

Fire-Wood

A worker is entitled 2.5 pill fire wood, free of cost per year. One pill is approximately equal to 12.5 maunds. This does not fulfil the need of a worker's family. So, they have to collect fire wood from nearby forests or from other sources.

Dry Tea

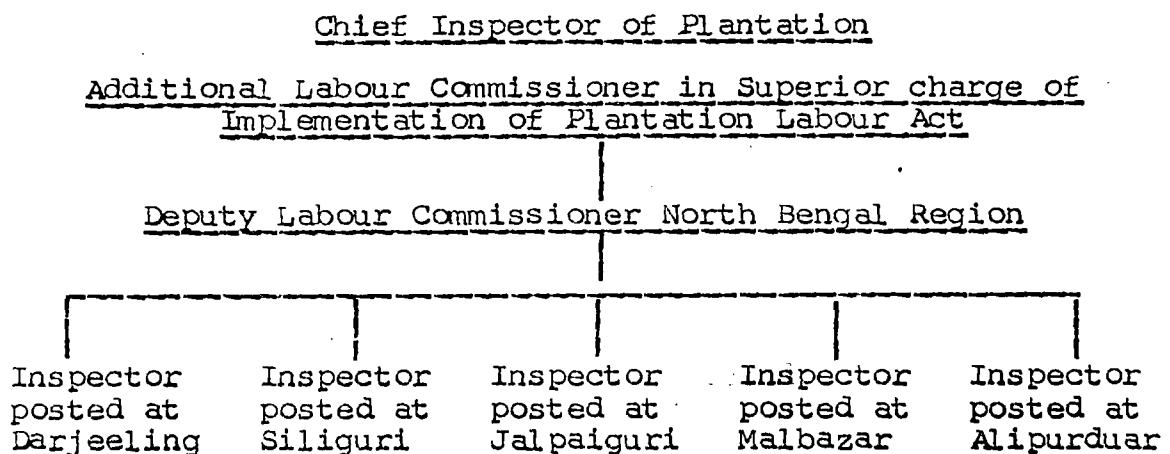
A worker is given 400 gms. of dry tea per head per month.

#### 10.2 Enforcement of Plantation Labour Act (PLA)

The Labour Commissioner is the chief inspector of plantations for the purpose of enforcement of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. Besides five labour commissioners and one Additional Labour Commissioner posted at the head office to assist the chief inspector of plantations in the implementation of the Act and the rules framed there under. A chart of the organisational set up for the administration of the Act is given in Table 10.7.

Table 10.7

Organizational set-up for the purpose of enforcement of the Plantation Labour Act and rules framed there under



The principal function of the Inspecting staff are aimed at ensuring some basic amenities and welfare measures such as medical facilities, creches, adequate drinking water, housing accommodation etc. which are supposed to be provided for the plantation workers. The Inspectors look after certain other provisions of the Act relating to hours and limitations of employment, leave with wages, overtime etc. The main thrust of the Inspectors' activities is however directed at making the employer comply, as much as practicable, with the provisions relating to construction of houses their repair, supply of adequate portable drinking water, medical facilities, maintenance of creches etc.

Table 10.8 shows the number of prosecution cases launched and the amount of fines realised since 1977 from the tea gardens of West Bengal.

Table 10.8

## Prosecutions under the Plantation Labour Act - 1977-1990

| Year | Number of cases | Amount of fine realised (Rs.) |
|------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1977 | 101             | 14,445                        |
| 1978 | 131             | 56,525                        |
| 1979 | 173             | 34,015                        |
| 1980 | 171             | 26,705                        |
| 1981 | 64              | 31,525                        |
| 1982 | 92              | 33,405                        |
| 1983 | 34              | 21,675                        |
| 1984 | 40              | 18,320                        |
| 1985 | 32              | 14,470                        |
| 1986 | 34              | 11,200                        |
| 1987 | 36              | 10,400                        |
| 1988 | 70              | 14,200                        |
| 1989 | 53              | 32,400                        |
| 1990 | 60              | 46,250                        |

Source : Data compiled from Labour in West Bengal, 1979, 1983, 1985 and 1990.

Table 10.8 shows that the prosecutions under the PLA significantly decreased during the eighties. The table also shows that the average fine for each offence is less than Rs. 400/-. So it is cheaper for the management to pay the fines than to comply with the provisions of the PLA. The remedy of this evasion of laws by employers urged for active enforcing

of laws on the part of the Government and the imposition of huge penalties on management against a little violation of the PLA by them. This can only compel the planters to comply with their statutory responsibilities.

It is admitted as to how the rules are flouted in case of housing, medical facilities, creches, drinking water etc. But it is to be noted here that it is not only due to the visits of the inspectors who are not able to travel due to lack of conveyance, who are to travel in the jeeps of the managements and therefore can not give 'surprise visits'. Moreover the Government inspectors in charge of enforcement of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, hardly had any complaint from the workers or the trade unions to attend to in 1988, as the publication "Labour in West Bengal" - 1988 reveals.

It is also fact that the Inspectors are in league with the managements, do not give proper reports on the basis of which inquiries would be made, and the Manager be punished. There is plenty of material published by the Government as to the small number of cases launched in the court against the employers for the breach of the rules of the Act. And therefore the administrative set up for the implementation is not only faulty, but is to be completely overhauled.

### 10.3 Summary

The welfare of the labouring classes must be one of the first careers of every employer. If the labourers are contented, welhoused, well fed and generally well looked after, is not only an asset and advantage to the employer, but serves to raise the standard of both the industry and labour.

The concept of labour welfare in tea industry did not exist during the pre-independence period. The working conditions in the tea gardens were unhygienic and medical facilities were poor. With the coming of independence the Government of India enacted the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. The Act includes several statutory welfare provisions for the workers, such as, housing, medical facilities, creches, drinking water, education for the children of workers etc. But even after 40 years of the Act passed the provisions of the PLA have not been fully implemented by the employers. There is huge laxity on the part of the employers on the implementation of the provisions of the PLA.

We have observed that the employers commitment to the PLA is very poor. Till large number workers are living in kutcha houses. If Rule 47 of the West Bengal Plantation Labour Rule, 1956 had been properly implemented all workers could have been provided with pucca houses by 1969. So far only about 12% tea gardens of West Bengal have constructed 100% houses of total requirements. Escalation of cost of construction, shortage of

cement, lack of sufficient subsidy are all given as reasons by the employers for non construction of houses. The fact remains that, even when the cost of building materials was less and when considerable profit was being made by the owners, there was hardly any inclination among the majority of employers to consider housing important.

The medical aspect is deliberately ignored by the employers. We have observed that the number of Doctors, Midwives, Nurses, Compounders and Health Assistants are less than one in per 1000 population in the tea gardens of West Bengal. Moreover the majority of Doctors are of visiting and they occasionally visit the labour lines. Again the question of Group Hospital has not made much headway. This is obligatory on the part of the employers as per Bengal Plantation Labour Rules 1956.

There are also provisions in the PLA for sanitation and water supply to the labour lines, but usually these are not sufficiently implemented by the management. By focusing only on the provision of housing by the management the other provision get pushed in to the background.

The Adivasi workers are not benefited by the programmes of the State Government for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes which cover education, health and welfare, since the PLA is to cover these. Therefore, in the given situation, the tea garden workers are deprived of both the statutory benefits under the PLA and the Government schemes.

The unions have failed to make the management implement the various provisions of the PLA. 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.

Notes & References

1. Dash, A.J. : Gazetteer of the Darjeeling District - 1947, pp.120 to 121.
2. Sarkar Kanchan : Study of Trade Union Organization Among Tea Workers in Terai and Dooars Regions. Unpublished Ph.D thesis submitted in the Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology, North Bengal University, 1992, p.138.
3. ibid., p.139.
4. Labour in West Bengal - Published by the Ministry of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal - 1990, p.73.
5. ibid., p.75.
6. ibid., p.73.
7. Banerjee G.D., "Structural Changes in Tea Plantation Industry", The Assam Review & Tea News, February 1986, p.4.

## CHAPTER XI : Industrial Disputes in Tea Industry

### Content :

- 11.1 Intensity of Industrial Conflicts and Trends.
- 11.2 Workers Participation in Conflicts.
- 11.3 Relative Position of Strikes and Lock-outs in Work Stoppages.
- 11.4 Distribution of Work-Stoppages.
- 11.5 Absenteeism.
- 11.6 Causes of Absenteeism.
- 11.7 Remedial Measures to Combat Labour Absenteeism.
- 11.8 Summary.

While discussing the trade union movement in tea industry in Chapter IX, we discussed in detail the growth of labour management conflicts in different decades. We observed that during the pre-independence period due to non existence of trade unions the employers were highly organized and powerful. They dictated both the wages and conditions of services of workers. After independence, with the intervention of trade unions the employers started losing the grip over the workers. The labour management conflicts got momentum during the fifties on some major issues like bonus, wages and work load etc. However, the bonus issue was settled in 1956 with the intervention of the Central Government, but the other issues were yet to be settled and industrial disputes gradually increased. It reached to its peak when the first United Front Government came into power in 1967. This time the trade unions got some support from the U.F. Government. Both the strikes and lockouts increased in tea industry. The pace and pitch of industrial disputes in tea industry showed declining trend only after 1969 with the development of process of negotiation. Both bipartite

and tripartite negotiations were gradually developed. These negotiations succeeded to control the number of strikes and lockouts in tea industry significantly.

Data on number of strikes and lockouts in tea industry during the fifties and sixties are not available. Moreover, the 'Labour in West Bengal', the official publication of the Ministry of Labour of West Bengal Govt. are not maintained at the head office of Directorate of Labour, Calcutta and National Library, Calcutta. Thus, we could only consult the 'Labour in West Bengal' since 1970. As a result, statistically we could not measure the trends of industrial disputes (strikes and lockouts) during the fifties and sixties. We have estimated the trends of industrial disputes with the figures of strikes and lockouts during the period 1972 to 1990. Again the 'Labour in West Bengal' does not present the data on industrial disputes separately for Terai, Dooars and Darjeeling hills. It presents statistics on total industrial disputes in tea industry of West Bengal. We approached to the Statistical Deptt. of Directorate of Labour for segregated data, but they could not supply it. We also approached to the TIPA (Terai Indian Planters' Association) and TBITA (Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association) and office of the Assistant Labour Commissioner, Siliguri to get the data on industrial disputes in Terai. But they have also not maintained it. Consequently, we could not present the industrial disputes in Terai tea gardens separately. We have presented the figures on industrial

disputes in Tea industry of West Bengal.

#### 11.1 Intensity of Industrial Conflicts and Trends

The nature of industrial relations prevailing in the tea industry of West Bengal is reflected in the intensity of conflicts. The data on work-stoppages in tea industry are given in Table 11.1 for the period between 1972 to 1990, which enable us to trace trends in the industrial conflicts.

Figures in Table 11.1 show erratic nature of all indicators of intensity of industrial conflicts, no uniform and regular upward or downward trend is discernible. However, number of work-stoppages, number of workers involved and mandays lost showed a downward tendency for the years 1985 to 1990. During this period the share of strikes in work stoppages had reduced considerably. Another significant feature of industrial conflicts in tea industry as revealed by the data in Table 11.1 is that there is no correlation existing between the figures relating to the number of work-stoppages, number of workers involved and the mandays lost. During the last 19 years (1972-90), on an average, about 11 work-stoppages involving around 11852 workers and resulting in loss of more than 1,23,268 mandays lost due to these work-stoppages were registered in the tea industry of West Bengal.

Table 11.1  
Trends in intensity of work-stoppages (1972-1990)

| Year                           | Number of work -stoppages | Number of workers involved | Number of mandays lost | Index of mandays lost<br>(Base 1972=100) |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--|
| 1                              | 2                         | 3                          | 4                      | 5  |
| 1972                           | 20                        | 18,229                     | 2,00,857               | 100.00                                   |
| 1973                           | 20                        | 10,707                     | 49,625                 | 24.71                                    |
| 1974                           | 12                        | 27,835                     | 42,824                 | 21.32                                    |
| 1975                           | 8                         | 6,184                      | 24,656                 | 12.28                                    |
| 1976                           | 4                         | 18,602                     | 24,602                 | 12.25                                    |
| 1977                           | 10                        | 9,102                      | 72,603                 | 36.15                                    |
| 1978                           | 20                        | 16,884                     | 64,290                 | 32.00                                    |
| 1979                           | 7                         | 6,996                      | 36,346                 | 18.10                                    |
| 1980                           | 17                        | 47,113                     | 1,24,613               | 62.04                                    |
| 1981                           | 6                         | 8,270                      | 2,87,909               | 143.34                                   |
| 1982                           | 11                        | 6,995                      | 3,31,245               | 164.92                                   |
| 1983                           | 10                        | 6,402                      | 2,15,501               | 107.29                                   |
| 1984                           | 6                         | 4,772                      | 96,778                 | 48.18                                    |
| 1985                           | 20                        | 15,890                     | 1,98,723               | 98.94                                    |
| 1986                           | 15                        | 10,618                     | 3,13,441               | 156.05                                   |
| 1987                           | 8                         | 5,469                      | 1,62,599               | 80.95                                    |
| 1988                           | 3                         | 1,975                      | 41,318                 | 20.57                                    |
| 1989                           | 2                         | 1,163                      | 25,477                 | 12.68                                    |
| 1990                           | 2                         | 1,965                      | 28,690                 | 14.28                                    |
| Period<br>Average<br>1972-1990 | 10.58                     | 11,852.05                  | 1,23,268.26            | 61.37                                    |

Note : (i) Work-stoppages include both strikes and lock-outs.  
(ii) Figures for 1990 are provisional.

Source : Data compiled from Labour in West Bengal, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1990, Published by Ministry of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal.

## 11.2 workers' Participation in Conflicts

In order to draw an idea about the extent of workers' participation and their involvement in the work-stoppages of tea industry of West Bengal during the year 1972-1990, we have applied the measures which was originally developed by Ross, A.M and Hartman, P.T.<sup>1</sup> In table 11.2 three criteria have been adopted from Ross and Hartman for assessing the extent of workers' participation in industrial conflicts, viz., (A) Dispute Duration Ratio, (B) Dispute Coverage Ratio and (C) Time Loss Ratio.

Due to paucity of data we could not find out the membership involvement ratio. The official statistics of the ministry of labour, Govt. of West Bengal, maintains the total membership of unions of all industries in the state. But it does not maintain industrywise union membership.

(A) Dispute Duration Ratio : Dispute Duration Ratio is a measure of mandays lost per worker. It is evident from Table 11.2 that a worker involved in dispute, on an average, 16.18 days per year, during the period of 1972-1990. The average duration of dispute varied from a low of 1.32 days to a high of 34.81 days. The yearwise performance of dispute duration ratio show an unsystematic behaviour. However, the disputes were relatively for shorter period during the first nine years of the study period, 1972-1980. Annual average duration of disputes were around only 5 days during the same period. During

Table 11.2  
Measures of workers' participation in work-stoppages during  
1972-1990

| Year             | Dispute Duration Ratio | Dispute Coverage Ratio | Time Loss Ratio |
|------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| (1)              | (2)                    | (3)                    | (4)             |
| 1972             | 11.02                  | 911.45                 | 10,042.85       |
| 1973             | 4.64                   | 535.35                 | 2,481.25        |
| 1974             | 1.54                   | 2,319.58               | 3,568.67        |
| 1975             | 3.99                   | 773.00                 | 3,082.00        |
| 1976             | 1.32                   | 4,650.60               | 6,150.50        |
| 1977             | 7.98                   | 910.20                 | 7,260.30        |
| 1978             | 3.81                   | 844.20                 | 3,214.50        |
| 1979             | 5.20                   | 999.43                 | 5,192.29        |
| 1980             | 2.64                   | 2,771.35               | 7,330.18        |
| 1981             | 34.81                  | 1,378.33               | 47,984.83       |
| 1982             | 47.35                  | 635.90                 | 30,113.18       |
| 1983             | 33.66                  | 640.20                 | 21,550.10       |
| 1984             | 20.28                  | 795.33                 | 16,129.67       |
| 1985             | 12.51                  | 794.50                 | 9,936.15        |
| 1986             | 29.52                  | 707.87                 | 20,896.07       |
| 1987             | 29.73                  | 683.63                 | 20,324.88       |
| 1988             | 20.92                  | 658.33                 | 13,772.67       |
| 1989             | 21.91                  | 581.50                 | 12,738.50       |
| 1990             | 14.60                  | 982.50                 | 14,345.00       |
| <b>Period</b>    |                        |                        |                 |
| <b>Average</b>   | 16.18                  | 1,178.17               | 13,479.66       |
| <b>1972-1990</b> |                        |                        |                 |

Source : Data compiled from Labour in West Bengal, 1976, 1981, 1986 & 1990, Published by Ministry of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal.

this period the number of strikes were more than the number of lock-outs and larger number of workers involved in relatively shorter duration period of strike. In 1981, the annual average duration of disputes shoot up to 34.81 days from 2.64 days in 1980, and were relatively for longer period during the remaining ten years of the study period, 1981-1990. Excepting the years 1985 and 1990, a worker was involved in disputes for more than 20 days during the same period. The general upswing tendency of dispute duration ratio during the last ten year of study period was due to the involvement of relatively a small number of workers in lock-outs with long duration period.

(B) Dispute Coverage Ratio : It is a measure of workers' participation in per work-stoppage. Taking the period as a whole from 1972 to 1990, about 1178 workers were involved per work-stoppage per year. The yearwise dispute coverage ratios show that there is no continuous increase or decrease in the trend values of workers involvement in per work-stoppage over the period between 1972 and 1990. It is interesting to note here that excepting the years 1974, 1976, 1980 and 1981, when the dispute coverage ratio was as high as 2319.58, 4650.50, 2771.35 and 1378.33 respectively, during the rest of the years it was less than the average number of workers' involved per work-stoppage between the years 1972-1990. The general upswing in the ratio during these years was due to the involvement of larger number of workers in strike activity.

(C) Time Loss Ratio : It is a measure of average time loss in per work-stoppage. It is seen from column-4 of Table 11.2 that on an average, about 13480 mandays were lost in per work-stoppage. The ratio had ranged from as low as 2481.25 in 1973 to as high as 47984.83 in 1981. Though the ratio does not show a uniform and regular upward or downward trend, but a general upswing tendency was noticed since 1981. In 1981 the ratio had shown an alarming upswing to 47984.83 from 7330.18 in 1980. During the first nine years of the study period, 1972-1980, on an average, about 5369 mandays lost in per work-stoppage were registered against 20779 during the rest of the period, 1981-1990. The general upswing tendency in the ratio during the period from 1981 onwards was due to the occurrence of some long duration of the lock-outs.

#### 11.3 Relative Position of Strikes and Lock-outs in Work-stoppages

The above three measures of workers' participation in the work-stoppages of tea industry clearly indicate a changing pattern from 1981 onwards. This is due to the change in the relative position of strikes and lock-outs in the work-stoppages.

The relative position of strikes and lock-outs in the tea industry of West Bengal is presented in Table 11.3.

Table 11.3

Relative position of strikes and lock-outs in work-stoppages during  
1972-1990

| Year | Number of work stoppage |           | Number of workers involved |                  | Number of workers lost |                   | Mandays per strike (Col. 6/2) | Mandays lost per lock-out (Col. 7/3) | Average duration of strike | Average duration of lock-out |
|------|-------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
|      | Strikes                 | Lock-outs | Strikes                    | Lock-outs        | Strikes                | Lock-outs         |                               |                                      |                            |                              |
| 1    | 2                       | 3         | 4                          | 5                | 6                      | 7                 | 8                             | 9                                    | 10                         | 11                           |
| 1972 | 15                      | 5         | 15,922<br>(87.34)          | 2,307<br>(12.66) | 152,100<br>(75.73)     | 48,757<br>(24.27) | 10,140                        | 9751                                 | 9.5                        | 21.5                         |
| 1973 | 17                      | 3         | 8,931<br>(83.41)           | 1,776<br>(16.59) | 20,321<br>(40.59)      | 29,304<br>(59.05) | 1,195                         | 9768                                 | 2.3                        | 16.5                         |
| 1974 | 11                      | 1         | 27,615<br>(99.21)          | 220<br>(0.79)    | 38,864<br>(90.75)      | 3,960<br>(9.25)   | 3,515                         | 3960                                 | 1.4                        | 18.0                         |
| 1975 | 7                       | 1         | 5,419<br>(87.63)           | 765<br>(12.37)   | 10,120<br>(41.04)      | 14,536<br>(58.96) | 1,446                         | 14536                                | 1.9                        | 19.0                         |
| 1976 | 4                       | -         | 18,602<br>(100.0)          | -                | 24,602<br>(100.0)      | -                 | 6,150                         | -                                    | 1.3                        | -                            |
| 1977 | 10                      | -         | 9,102<br>(100.0)           | -                | 72,603<br>(100.0)      | -                 | 7,206                         | -                                    | 8.0                        | -                            |
| 1978 | 17                      | 3         | 15,630<br>(92.57)          | 1,254<br>(7.43)  | 31,690<br>(49.29)      | 32,600<br>(50.71) | 1,864                         | 10867                                | 2.0                        | 26.0                         |
| 1979 | 5                       | 2         | 5,864<br>(83.82)           | 1,150<br>(16.18) | 7,346<br>(20.21)       | 29,000<br>(79.79) | 1,469                         | 14500                                | 1.3                        | 25.2                         |
| 1980 | 10                      | 7         | 42,010<br>(89.17)          | 5,103<br>(10.83) | 52,720<br>(42.31)      | 71,893<br>(57.69) | 5,272                         | 10270                                | 1.3                        | 14.1                         |

contd ...

Table 11.3 contd ...

|      |   |    |                  |                   |                   |                     |        |        |      |      |
|------|---|----|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|------|------|
| 1981 | - | 6  | -                | 8,270<br>(100.0)  | -                 | 2,87,909<br>(100.0) | -      | 47,985 | -    | 34.8 |
| 1982 | - | 11 | -                | 6,995<br>(100.0)  | -                 | 3,31,245<br>(100.0) | -      | 30,113 | -    | 47.6 |
| 1983 | 1 | 9  | 300<br>(4.69)    | 6,102<br>(95.31)  | 2,100<br>(0.97)   | 2,13,401<br>(99.03) | 2,100  | 23,711 | 7.0  | 35.0 |
| 1984 | 5 | 1  | 3,872<br>(81.14) | 900<br>(18.86)    | 7,678<br>(7.93)   | 89,100<br>(92.07)   | 1,536  | 89,100 | 2.0  | 99.0 |
| 1985 | 8 | 12 | 6,275<br>(39.49) | 9,615<br>(60.51)  | 9,489<br>(4.77)   | 1,89,234<br>(95.23) | 1,186  | 15,769 | 1.5  | 19.7 |
| 1986 | - | 15 | -                | 10,618<br>(100.0) | -                 | 3,13,441<br>(100.0) | -      | 20,896 | -    | 29.5 |
| 1987 | 3 | 5  | 2,550<br>(46.63) | 2,919<br>(53.37)  | 40,100<br>(24.66) | 1,22,499<br>(75.34) | 13,367 | 24,500 | 15.7 | 42.0 |
| 1988 | - | 3  | -                | 1,975<br>(100.0)  | -                 | 41,318<br>(100.0)   | -      | 13,773 | -    | 20.9 |
| 1989 | - | 2  | -                | 1,163<br>(100.0)  | -                 | 25,477<br>(100.0)   | -      | 12,738 | -    | 21.9 |
| 1990 | - | 2  | -                | 1,965<br>(100.0)  | -                 | 28,690<br>(100.0)   | -      | 14,345 | -    | 14.6 |

Annual average 5.95      4.63      8531.16      3320.63      2472.79      98545.47      2970.84      19293.79      2.91      26.59  
1972-1990

Notes (i) Figures for 1990 are provisional. (ii) Figures in parentheses indicate percentages to total.  
(iii) Lock-out is inclusive of cases of strike followed by lock-out.

Source : Data compiled from Labour in West Bengal, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1990, Published by Ministry of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal.

A close perusal of column 2 and 3 of Table 11.3 shows that there is no significant trend as such in the occurrence of strikes and lock-outs between the years 1972-1990. The yearwise incidence of strikes and lock-outs had been uneven. No uniform and regular upward or downward trend was discernible. However, the incidence of strikes was far greater than the incidence of lock-outs between the years 1972-1980, and thereafter the number of lock-outs was more than the number of strikes during the rest of the period (1981-90). On an average, the number of strikes and lock-outs in tea industry were 5.95 and 4.63 per year respectively for the period between 1972 and 1990.

Column 6 and 7 of the table reveal that excepting the years 1972, 74, 76 and 1977 when 75.73 p.c., 90.75 p.c., 100 p.c. and 100 p.c. mandays were lost due to strike action of the workers, lock-outs accounted for much larger number of mandays lost in the remaining 15 years of the study period. On an average, strikes and lock-outs accounted for 4,69,733 and 18,72,364 mandays lost respectively between the years 1972 and 1990. Thus, mandays lost in lock-outs registered four times more than the mandays lost in strikes during the period 1972 to 1990.

Again column 8 and 9 of table 11.3 further points out the fact of high share of lock-outs in mandays lost. The average mandays lost per strike and lock-out show a range of 1186 and

13,367 days in the case of strikes, and a range of 3960 and 89,100 in the case of lock-outs. On an average, 56,446 mandays lost accounted in per strike against 3,66,582 in per lock-out between the years 1972-1990.

Thus, there is a marked increase in the number of mandays lost due to lock-outs in tea industry. In fact this trend had started since 1981. Since lock-out is a form of offensive that the employers can inflict on the workers, it would be interest to study the average number of days a worker was involved in a strike or a lock-out.

From the figures given in table 11.3 column 10 and 11 clearly indicate that average duration of strike was gradually becoming shorter, this proved decline in sustaining power and consequent fall in the bargaining power of the workers of tea industry. Excepting the years 1972, 1977, 1983 and 1987, when the average duration of strike in tea industry was as high 9.5, 8, 7 and 15.7 days respectively, during the rest of the years from 1972 to 1990, it was around 3 days. Whereas the average duration of lock-out was more than 20 days during the same period, excepting the years 1973, 1974, 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1990 when the average duration of lock-out was as low as 16.5, 18, 19, 14.1, 19.7 and 14.6 respectively. On an average a worker was involved in lock-outs for 27 days (approx.) against only 3 days (approx.) in strikes, between the period 1972 and 1990. This might show the unequal strength of the labour and management in the tea gardens.

#### 11.4 Distribution of Work Stoppages

After studying the trends of disputes, workers' participation in disputes and relative position of strikes and lock-outs in the work-stoppages, we may now proceed to analysis the distribution of work-stoppages (both strikes and lock-outs) industry wise in the state, which enable us to trace the relative position of tea industry to total work-stoppages in the state.

In table 11.4 we have shown the percentage distribution of work-stoppages by major industries in West Bengal during the period 1981 to 1990.

It is clear from the table 11.4 that the incidence of disputes was the highest in the "Miscellaneous Industry Group" during the last ten years period, 1981-1990. This is indicated by the highest annual average incidence of work-stoppages, viz. 51.89 per cent. It is because of the largest coverage of this group in the state, viz. Iron & Steel, chemicals, printing press paper etc. As this group comprises of several kind of industries this average percentage can not be compared with the corresponding percentage figure of other industries mentioned in table 11.4 of the other four groups. The position of tea industry is the third in the state, in the incidence of work-stoppages. The Engineering industry is the worst affected group of industries in the state by work-stoppages with an annual average percentage of 28.55 per year. Next to

Table 11.4

Percentage distribution of work-stoppages by major industries in West Bengal - 1981-1990

| Industry      | 1981  | 1982  | 1983  | 1984  | 1985  | 1986  | 1987  | 1988  | 1989  | 1990  | Averages - 1981-1990 |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------------|
| Engineering   | 30.63 | 26.71 | 30.29 | 25.54 | 25.49 | 22.23 | 33.90 | 39.02 | 24.67 | 26.98 | 28.55                |
| Jute          | 14.38 | 16.44 | 12.58 | 7.07  | 10.29 | 10.14 | 11.02 | 8.94  | 10.57 | 11.11 | 11.25                |
| Tea           | 3.75  | 7.53  | 5.71  | 3.26  | 9.80  | 7.24  | 3.39  | 1.22  | 0.88  | 1.06  | 4.38                 |
| Cotton        | 5.00  | 6.16  | 1.14  | 3.26  | 3.43  | 2.90  | 3.81  | 4.88  | 3.96  | 4.76  | 3.93                 |
| Miscellaneous | 46.24 | 43.16 | 50.28 | 60.87 | 50.99 | 57.49 | 47.88 | 45.94 | 59.92 | 56.09 | 51.89                |

Source : Data compiled from Labour in West Bengal, 1986 and 1990, Published by Ministry of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal.

Engineering industries, the Jute industries in the state, comes next with an annual average incidence of work-stoppages of 11.25 per cent per year. The cotton industry is the lowest disputed industry in the state. This is indicated by the lowest annual average incidence of work-stoppages, viz. 3.93 per cent.

Thus, the industry wise distribution of work-stoppages in West Bengal for the period 1981-1990, reveals that the incidence of work-stoppage in tea industry is lower than many industries. This situation is attributed to the following factors :

- i) Tea gardens are located in backward regions and its workers live within their own community with their traditions. Literacy rate is very low among the tea garden workers and hence they are less concerned with the labour movement in the urban areas.
- ii) The trade unions in tea industry have taken the policy of avoiding strikes as far as possible. There have been a growing demand from the trade unions to settle the differences at the bipartite level.
- iii) Tea industry is an agro based industry and if tea leaves are not plucked out in due time, entire leaves are damaged. It harms the employers more than anybody. So there have also been a growing demand on the part of the employers to resolve the disputes, whether minor or major, through the bilateral discussions with the trade unions. It is to be noted

here that the employers show this attitude more in plucking seasons than in the non-plucking season. Thus, tea industry had witnessed more lock-outs generally during the non-plucking period than in the plucking season.

#### 11.5 Absenteeism

Strikes and lock outs can be classified as articulate form of industrial disputes on the ground that they are open and collective expression of 'workers' dissatisfaction with their employer over the terms and conditions of employment, while industrial absenteeism is taken to be evidence of inarticulate form of industrial dispute for, it is mute, unorganized and individual form of workers' protests against their employers.

Absenteeism as a form of industrial disputes is a major labour problem confronting the management because production is often affected, labour costs are increased and efficiency of operations is reduced as a result of frequent and continuous absence of workers.

The term 'Industrial absenteeism' generally means "the failure of a worker to report for work when he is scheduled to work". It is generally defined as the ratio of man-days lost due to the absence of workers to mandays scheduled to work expressed in percentage term. The measurement of absenteeism, i.e., the "Absenteeism rate" is the measure of its severity,

i.e., the quantitative expression of human energy lost.

Table 11.5 has been computed to show the extent of atsen-teeism in some of the major industries of West Bengal for which data is available.

Table 11.5

Average annual rate of absenteeism by industries  
(1974-1989)

| Year               | Tea   | Cotton | Engineering | Chemical |
|--------------------|-------|--------|-------------|----------|
| 1974               | 20.97 | 11.01  | 17.21       | 13.56    |
| 1975               | 19.74 | 13.15  | 15.82       | 15.23    |
| 1976               | 20.96 | 12.21  | 15.24       | 14.18    |
| 1977               | 19.44 | 12.01  | 15.80       | 14.39    |
| 1978               | 18.13 | 10.62  | 16.67       | 14.60    |
| 1979               | 19.85 | 11.80  | 16.15       | 14.39    |
| 1980               | 16.84 | 11.45  | 15.64       | 15.17    |
| 1981               | 19.14 | 13.07  | 16.28       | 14.91    |
| 1982               | 16.97 | 13.80  | 17.03       | 16.13    |
| 1983               | 11.85 | 12.55  | 15.99       | 13.19    |
| 1984               | 12.11 | 13.56  | 17.20       | 16.15    |
| 1985               | 15.40 | 14.67  | 16.19       | 16.00    |
| 1986               | 12.89 | 14.98  | 15.45       | 15.62    |
| 1987               | 14.71 | 13.34  | 13.60       | 15.31    |
| 1988               | 10.36 | 13.90  | 12.43       | 15.28    |
| 1989               | 13.40 | 14.89  | 14.44       | 12.31    |
| Mean               | 16.42 | 12.94  | 15.70       | 14.78    |
| Standard deviation | 3.41  | 1.31   | 1.25        | 1.05     |

Source : Data compiled from Labour in West Bengal, 1974 to 1990, Published by Ministry of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal.

Analysing table 11.5, we find that the annual rate of absenteeism in the four major industries, viz. tea, cotton, engineering and chemical industries of West Bengal is quite considerable. Considering the annual average rate of absenteeism in these four production channels for the period of 16 years from 1974 to 1989, we find that in each of these industries, the rate of absenteeism is very high. The tea industry in the state accounts for the highest rate of absenteeism with 16.42 per cent p.a. over the period mentioned. Next in order of the degree of absenteeism come Engineering, Chemical and Cotton industry with 15.7, 14.78 and 12.94 per cent respectively.

Data in table 11.5 clearly indicates that there have been year to year fluctuations in the rate of absenteeism during the period under review. But, by and large, we can say that the severity of the problem of absenteeism has remained the same throughout. A comparison of standard deviations for the four different industries over the period 1974-1989 indicates that the variation between absenteeism rates is maximum in the case of Tea industry followed by Cotton, Engineering and Chemical industry.

A comparison of annual rate of absenteeism in four major industries of West Bengal clearly indicates that the average annual rate of absenteeism and year to year fluctuations in the rate of absenteeism in tea industry is the highest.

### 11.6 Causes of Absenteeism

The prevalence of high rate of absenteeism in tea industry naturally leads us to the analysis of the cause for industrial absenteeism in tea industry. Generally speaking, industrial absenteeism in any place is a social phenomenon. As it is the case with all social phenomena, industrial absenteeism is the result of a multiplicity of causes - social, political, economic and others. Hence it is not possible to attribute any single cause for industrial absenteeism, nor is it possible to discuss all the causes leading to the problem in industry. The official statistics of absenteeism collected by the Department of labour, Government of West Bengal, give the following classification of the causes of absenteeism. Sickness and accidents, social or religious and other causes. Adopting the following classification given by the Department of Labour of the Government of West Bengal, we have attempted here to analyse trends of the causes of industrial absenteeism in tea industry during the period covering about 16 years beginning from 1974 to 1989.

The cause wise analysis of annual rate of absenteeism in tea industry is shown in table 11.6.

It can be seen from the table 11.6 that the annual rate of absenteeism due to causes like sickness and accidents, social and religious and other causes have not shown a consistent trend towards increase or decrease during the period from

Table 11.6

Annual rate of absenteeism in tea industry by causes  
1974-1989

| Years              | <u>Absenteeism due to</u> |                      |              |
|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
|                    | Sickness or accidents     | Social and religious | Other causes |
| 1974               | 6.06                      | 4.26                 | 10.65        |
| 1975               | 5.22                      | 1.73                 | 12.79        |
| 1976               | 7.55                      | 3.38                 | 10.03        |
| 1977               | 5.75                      | 3.97                 | 9.72         |
| 1978               | 5.58                      | 4.48                 | 8.07         |
| 1979               | 6.03                      | 3.56                 | 10.25        |
| 1980               | 5.13                      | 4.26                 | 7.45         |
| 1981               | 6.34                      | 4.97                 | 7.83         |
| 1982               | 4.88                      | 4.88                 | 7.21         |
| 1983               | 5.30                      | 2.11                 | 4.44         |
| 1984               | 4.87                      | 1.65                 | 5.59         |
| 1985               | 4.22                      | 3.19                 | 7.99         |
| 1986               | 3.66                      | 1.72                 | 7.51         |
| 1987               | 3.99                      | 3.23                 | 7.49         |
| 1988               | 4.26                      | 1.20                 | 4.90         |
| 1989               | 4.72                      | 1.90                 | 6.78         |
| Mean               | 5.22                      | 3.16                 | 8.04         |
| Standard Deviation | 0.96                      | 1.23                 | 2.14         |

Source : Data compiled from Labour in West Bengal, 1974 to 1990, Published by the Ministry of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal.

1974 to 1989. A comparison of standard deviations for the three causes of industrial absenteeism over the period 1974-89 indicates that the variation between absenteeism rates is insignificant for sickness or accidents and social and religious causes. However, other causes leading to labour absenteeism are quite significant in the sense they contribute to an average rate of absenteeism of 8.04 per cent per year during the period under study as shown in table 11.6. The year to year fluctuations in the rates of absenteeism by other causes is also comparatively higher than the other two causes of absenteeism like sickness and accidents and social and religious causes as it is revealed by comparatively higher value of standard deviation. It means that the average rates of labour absenteeism in tea industry arising out of different causes have remained more or less at the same level. But the 'other' causes have contributed relatively higher rates of absenteeism in tea industry than the religious, social, accident or sickness causes.

Some of the important causes included in 'other' causes of absenteeism have been discussed below :

i) Absenteeism among the male workers is generally due to their liquor addiction. Absenteeism among the women workers are due to different reasons. Household work and child rearing activities are the main reasons for absenteeism among the women workers. After receiving weekly wages at least half of the male workers absent themselves from the work for a day or

more as they go for a prolonged drinking session. Among the tea workers the Ghasis and Baraiks remain more absent than all other adivasi and non-adivasi workers. Without any apparent reasons they remain absent from the work. Traditionally the Ghasis were drummers and musicians and Baraiks were the weavers. It seems that they are ill suited for the plantation work which is basically agrarian in character.

ii) It is found that most of the tea workers suffered from low vitality. This is because their take home pay is small and their families are large and they have to spend a lot of money on social occasions, etc. The result is that they just can not afford nourishing food. Lack of nutrition and insanitary living conditions are the causes of a low state of health among tea workers. This is one of the major causes of absenteeism.

iii) The tea workers are found to be in the clutches of money lenders. In fact, being always short of cash, they tap all resources for whatever they can get; and when they find it difficult to pay back, as it often the case, they absent themselves from work, in order not to be traceable. Such a worker's mind always remains worried about financial matters. This naturally causes a strain on his health and life, and consequently results in absenteeism.

iv) The tea workers are usually educated to a very low standard which makes their thinking very narrow; consequently,

they can not manage to come out of their old beliefs and practice, as for example, spending excessively on marriage/deaths/feasts; unplanned family life, animals living, etc. As a result, we get an attitude of mind, of which absenteeism from work is one of the facts.

#### 11.7 Remedial Measures to Combat Labour Absenteeism

The above diagnosis of the problem of labour absenteeism in tea industry during the last 16 years (1974 to '89) or so reveals the broad dimension and the severity of the problem. Labour absenteeism in tea industry as we have analysed has not been a simple problem admitting of an easy solution. It is unfortunate that the tea garden management has not given adequate attention to such a serious problem. No <sup>proper</sup> garden level or industry level statistics are being collected except by the Department of Labour and no proper remedies are being thought by the managements to solve the problem. Besides better attention is given to other problems like strikes and lock outs to the neglect of the problem absenteeism. The Department of labour, no doubt is collecting and publishing statistics relating to absenteeism in the tea industry. But, effective steps have not been adopted even by this Department to combat the problem. The management of each tea garden should be compelled through a legislation to collect adequate statistics relating to the problem and analyse them with a view to adopting proper remedial measures to combat the evil. In this, the trade unions,

the employers' organization and the Department of Labour should co-operate with the managements of individual garden.

Alcholism is the prime cause of absenteeism among the male workers. It is, therefore, inevitable on the part of the both management and trade unions to launch an anti-alcholism programme among the tea workers. The workers should be made to realise the harmful effects of alcholism.

There is a pecularity in tea industry that the permanent workers are not paid for the weekly holidays. It causes a frustration to them and they absent themselves from the work frequently. Thus, the system of weekly paid holidays to be introduced in tea industry.

Finally, apart from providing suitable housing facilities and recreational amenities, the workers should be made to realise the harmful effects of absenteeism through effective propaganda and publicity.

#### 11.8 Summary

There is no trend is discernible as regards the number of conflicts, workers involved and the man-days lost in the data relating to work stoppages in tea industry between 1972-1990, they indicate the enormity of the problem, viz. on an average, 11 conflicts per year involving 11,852 workers and resulting in about 1,23,268 man-days lost per year during the period already mentioned.

The comparison between strikes and lock-outs reveal that the incidence of strikes was far greater than the incidence of lock-outs between the years, 1972-1980, and thereafter the number of lock-outs was more than the number of strikes during the rest of the period (1981-90). On an average, 55,446 man-days lost accounted in per strike against 3,66,582 in per lock-out between the year 1972-1990. On an average, a worker was involved in lock-outs for 27 days against 3 days in strikes during the period already mentioned. This relatively shorter duration of strike proved the decline in the sustaining power and consequent fall in the bargaining power of the workers of tea industry.

The industry wise distribution of work-stoppages in West Bengal for the period 1981 to 1990, reveals that the annual average incidence of work-stoppages is 4.38 per cent during the period 1981-90, against 28.55 per cent in Engineering industry and 11.25 per cent in Jute industry during the same period of time.

The industry wise analysis of the problem of labour absenteeism in West Bengal between 1974 to 1989 reveals that the tea industry has the highest degree of absenteeism with the annual average of 16.42 per cent followed by Engineering industry with 15.70 per cent. Chemical industry with 14.78 per cent and Cotton industry with 12.94 per cent. The important inference arising from the cause wise analysis of

absenteeism in the tea industry is that though there are short term fluctuations in the absenteeism figures from time to time, over the period as a whole, they remained significantly at the same level. Thus, though the man-days lost in tea industry of West Bengal due to strikes and lock-outs is insignificant as compared to the same in the Engineering and Jute industry, but as regards the man-days lost due to absenteeism the tea industry of West Bengal has command over other major industries of the state, viz. Engineering, Jute etc.

The cause-wise analysis of the rates of absenteeism over the period 1974 to 1989, reveals that the 'other causes' accounted for the highest rate of absenteeism with 8.04 per cent, on an average over the period already mentioned as compared to 5.22 per cent on account of sickness or accidents and 3.16 per cent due to social and religious causes. Among the important causes included in 'other causes' of absenteeism in tea industry; 'alcholism' is the prime one.

Notes & References

1. Ross, A.M and Hartman, P.T. 1960 "Changing Patterns of Industrial Conflict". John Wiley & Sons, Inc. New York, quoted by A.Gani, "Industrial Relations in Jammu and Kashmir" in Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.26, Number July 1, 1990. p.57.

## CHAPTER XII : Micro Study in Some Tea Gardens

### Content :

- 12.1 Family Members.
- 12.2 Employment.
- 12.3 School Going Children.
- 12.4 Literacy.
- 12.5 Trade Union Membership.
- 12.6 Position in Trade Union.
- 12.7 Reasons for Joining Union.
- 12.8 Workers' Participation in Union Activities.
- 12.9 Change of Unions.
- 12.10 Sex-wise Distribution of Union Leaders.
- 12.11 Literacy of Union Leaders.
- 12.12 Contribution of Leaders for Trade Union Success.
- 12.13 Problems Faced by the Leaders in Achieving the Targets.
- 12.14 Workers' Attitude Towards Work Schedule, Wages, Welfare, Ration and Management.
- 12.15 Impact of Trade Unionism on Women Workers.
  - 12.15.1 Women Literacy.
  - 12.15.2 Women's Participation in Union Activities.
  - 12.15.3 Change of Unions by Women Workers.
- 12.16 Summary.

We have chosen three tea gardens of Terai by (Standard) Sampling Method to study the impact of trade unionism on the tea garden areas. These gardens are Mohurgong & Gulma Tea Estate, Kiran Chandra Tea Estate and Sanyasisthan Tea Estate. The period of study was from March 1994 to June 1994.

We have chosen total 304 respondents from 304 families of these three gardens as follows :

|                              | Male | Female | Total |
|------------------------------|------|--------|-------|
| Mohurgong & Gulma Tea Estate | 56   | 41     | 97    |
| Kiran Chandra Tea Estate     | 51   | 51     | 102   |
| Sanyasisthan Tea Estate      | 59   | 46     | 105   |
| Total                        | 166  | 138    | 304   |

We have studied the following :

- (1) Type of family members, viz. adults and minors.
- (2) Employment pattern.
- (3) Literacy of workers.

- (4) Trade union membership.
- (5) Position of the workers in trade unions.
- (6) Reasons for joining trade unions.
- (7) Workers' participation in union activities.
- (8) Extent of change of unions.
- (9) Position of male and female in the trade union leadership.
- (10) Literacy of trade union leaders.
- (11) Contribution of leaders for trade union success.
- (12) Problems faced by leaders in achieving the targets.
- (13) Workers' attitude towards work-schedule, wages, welfare, ration and management.
- (14) Impact of trade unionism on the social status of women workers.

#### 12.1 Family Members

We have found total 1212 members in 304 families in the three tea gardens. The mix of adult and minor members has been shown in Table 12.1.

In our sample, out of total 1212 family members in the three tea gardens 692 i.e., 57.10% are adults and 520 i.e., 42.90% are minors.

Table 12.1  
Adult and Minor Members  
(Percentage in brackets)

| Type of members | Mohurgong & Gulma T.E. | Kiran Chandra T.E. | Sanyasisthan T.E. | Total          |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Adult           | 307<br>(58.25)         | 230<br>(52.87)     | 155<br>(62.00)    | 692<br>(57.10) |
| Minor           | 220<br>(41.75)         | 205<br>(47.13)     | 95<br>(38.00)     | 520<br>(42.90) |
| Total           | 527<br>(100)           | 435<br>(100)       | 250<br>(100)      | 1212<br>(100)  |

Source : Field Survey.

## 12.2 Employment

We have found that out of 1212 members in 304 families of the three tea gardens, 539 member i.e., 44.47% are employed. The number of permanent and casual workers has been shown in Table 12.2.

Table 12.2  
Permanent and Casual Workers  
(Percentage in brackets)

| Type of employment | Mohurgong & Gulma T.E. | Kiran Chandra T.E. | Sanyasisthan T.E. | Total          |
|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Permanent          | 126<br>(56.25)         | 116<br>(64.09)     | 68<br>(50.75)     | 310<br>(57.51) |
| Casual             | 94<br>(43.75)          | 65<br>(35.91)      | 66<br>(49.25)     | 229<br>(42.49) |
| Total              | 224<br>(100)           | 181<br>(100)       | 134<br>(100)      | 539<br>(100)   |

Source : Field Survey.

In our study, 310 i.e., 57.51% of the total workers are permanent and 229 i.e., 42.49% are casual workers. The percentage of casual is the highest in Sanyasisthan Tea Estate with 49.25% of the total workers followed by Mohurgong & Gulma Tea Estate with 43.75% and Kiranchandra T.E with 35.91%.

The break up of adult and minor employed and dependent has been shown in Table 12.3.

Table 12.3

## Adult and Minor Employment and Dependents

| Name of tea garden    | Adult          |                |              | Minor        |                |              |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
|                       | Employed       | Dependent      | Total        | Employed     | Dependent      | Total        |
| Mohurgong & Gulma T.E | 218<br>(71)    | 89<br>(29)     | 307<br>(100) | 5<br>(2.27)  | 215<br>(97.73) | 220<br>(100) |
| Kiran Chandra T.E.    | 165<br>(71.74) | 65<br>(28.26)  | 230<br>(100) | 17<br>(8.29) | 188<br>(91.71) | 205<br>(100) |
| Sanyasisthan T.E.     | 134<br>(86.46) | 21<br>(13.54)  | 155<br>(100) | -            | 95<br>(100)    | 95<br>(100)  |
| Total                 | 517<br>(74.71) | 175<br>(25.29) | 692<br>(100) | 22<br>(4.23) | 498<br>(95.77) | 520<br>(100) |

Source : Field Survey.

Table 12.3 shows that 517 i.e., 74.71% of the total adult members are employed and 175 i.e., 25.29% are dependents.

22 i.e., 4.23% of the total minor members are employed and 498 i.e., 95.77% are dependents.

### 12.3 School Going Children

The number of school going children has been shown in Table 12.4.

In our survey, 226 i.e., 45.39% of the total minor dependents go to school. It means that 272 or 54.61% of the total minor dependents neither go to school nor go to work.

Table 12.4

No. of Children goes to School

| Name of tea garden     | Minor dependent | School going children | % of school going children to minor dependents |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
| Mohurgong & Gulma T.E. | 215             | 119                   | 55.35  |
| Kiran Chandra T.E.     | 188             | 73                    | 38.83  |
| Sanyasisthan T.E.      | 95              | 34                    | 35.79  |
| Total                  | 498             | 226                   | 45.39  |

Source : Field Survey.

### 12.4 Literacy

The level of literacy of the workers of three tea gardens has been shown in Table 12.5.

Table 12.5  
Level of Literacy  
(Percentage in Brackets)

| Level of Literacy | Mohurgong & Gulma T.E. | Kiran Chandra T.E. | Sanyasisthan T.E. | Total       |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Can sign          | 4 (4.12)               | 5 (4.90)           | 15 (14.29)        | 24 (7.89)   |
| Primary           | 14 (14.43)             | 18 (17.66)         | 8 (7.62)          | 40 (13.16)  |
| V to IX           | 20 (20.63)             | 17 (16.66)         | 18 (17.14)        | 55 (18.09)  |
| S.F.              | 2 (2.06)               | 3 (2.94)           | 1 (0.95)          | 6 (1.97)    |
| XI to XII         | 2 (2.06)               | 4 (3.92)           | 1 (0.95)          | 7 (2.30)    |
| Graduate          | 0 (0)                  | 0 (0)              | 0 (0)             | 0 (0)       |
| Illiterate        | 55 (56.70)             | 55 (53.92)         | 62 (59.05)        | 172 (56.59) |

Source : Field Survey.

In our study 132 workers i.e., 43.41% of the total respondents are found literate. Here literates are those who can at least sign their names. Out of these literates 108 i.e., 35.53% of the total respondents has formal education, and the remaining 24 workers or 7.89% can sign their names only. 13.16% of the total respondents read upto primary level and 13.16% has crossed the primary level but could not cross the Madhyamik level. Only 6 i.e., 1.97% of the total respondents passed the Madhyamik level and 7 i.e., 2.30% read upto XII. There is no graduate.

### 12.5 Trade Union Membership

In the three tea gardens, we have studied, we have found the existence of CITU, INTUC, UTUC and NFITU affiliated unions. The break-up of union membership is given in Table 12.6.

Table 12.6  
Break-up of Union Membership

| Name<br>of the<br>union | Central<br>Affili-<br>ation | Mohurgong<br>&<br>Gulma T.E. | Kiran<br>Chandra<br>T.E. | Sanyasi-<br>sthan T.E. | (Percentage in Brackets) |         |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------|
|                         |                             |                              |                          |                        | Total                    |         |
| DDCKMU                  | CITU                        | 72 (74.23)                   | 30 (29.41)               | 55 (52.38)             | 157                      | (51.64) |
| NUPW                    | INTUC                       | 23 (23.71)                   | -                        | 2 (01.90)              | 25                       | ( 8.22) |
| DCBWU                   | UTUC                        | -                            | 37 (36.27)               | 42 (39.05)             | 78                       | (25.66) |
| RCMC                    | NFITU                       | -                            | 35 (34.32)               | 07 (6.67)              | 42                       | (13.82) |
| Non<br>members          | -                           | 2 (2.06)                     | -                        | -                      | 2                        | (0.66)  |
|                         |                             | 97 (100)                     | 102 (100)                | 105 (100)              | 304                      | (100)   |

Source : Field Survey.

The CITU affiliated unions have members in all the three tea gardens. The membership of the CITU is also highest among the respondents. 157 workers i.e., 51.64% of the total respondents have the membership of the CITU affiliated unions. In membership strength the CITU is followed by the UTUC. It has unions in Kiranchandra T.E. and Sanyasisthan T.E. 78 workers i.e., 25.66% of the total respondents are the members

of its affiliated unions. The membership strength of the NFITU affiliated union is 42 which constituted 13.82% of the total respondents. The INTUC affiliated union has a small number of union membership. It has 23 members in Mohurgong & Gulma T.E. and only 2 in Sanyasisthan T.E. In terms of percentage its membership strength is 8.22% of the total respondents. In our study 2 out of 304 i.e., 0.66% of the total respondents are found nonmembers.

#### 12.6 Position in Trade Union

We have found two types of union members in the tea garden unit, viz. General members and office bearers. The office bearers are the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer etc.

In Table 12.7 we have presented the positions of the respondents in the tea garden unit.

In our sample survey, 271 i.e., 89.14% of the total workers are general members, 31 i.e., 10.20% are office bearers and 2 i.e., 0.66% are non-members.

Table 12.7  
Position in the Tea Garden Unit  
(Percentage in brackets)

|                 | Mohurgong &<br>Gulma T.E. | Kiran Chandra<br>T.E. | Sanyasisthan<br>T.E. | Total       |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| General members | 83 (85.57)                | 93 (91.18)            | 95 (90.48)           | 271 (89.14) |
| Office bearers  | 12 (12.37)                | 9 (8.82)              | 10 (9.52)            | 31 (10.20)  |
| Non-members     | 2 (2.06)                  | -                     | -                    | 2 (0.66)    |
|                 | 97 (100)                  | 102 (100)             | 105 (100)            | 304 (100)   |

Source : Field Survey.

#### 12.7 Reasons for Joining Union

We have received various reasons for joining trade unions among the respondents in the three gardens. The respondents talked about more than one reason.

The different reasons for workers' joining unions have been presented in Table 12.8.

It can be seen from Table 12.8 that the most of the workers join unions with the expectation to get higher wages and better facilities. These two reasons have influenced about 60% of the total membership. Very few number of workers have become the members of a union by the influence of the trade

Table 12.8  
Reasons for Joining Unions

| Reasons                                   | Mohurgong<br>&<br>Gulma T.E. | Kiran<br>Chandra<br>T.E. | Sanyasi-<br>sthan<br>T.E. | Total   |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------|
|   | N = 95                       | N = 102                  | N = 105                   | N = 302 |
| a) To get higher wages                    | 73                           | 96                       | 85                        | 254     |
| b) To get better facilities               | 86                           | 101                      | 101                       | 288     |
| c) Relatives are the members of the union | 33                           | 64                       | 3                         | 100     |
| d) Influenced by the trade union leaders  | 31                           | 49                       | 2                         | 82      |
| e) Influenced by the fellow workers       | 37                           | 55                       | 13                        | 105     |
| f) Others                                 | -                            | 2                        | 2                         | 4       |

Source : Field Survey.

union leaders. This reason constitutes only about 10% of the total membership.

#### 12.8 Workers' Participation in Union Activities

The measurement of workers' participation in union activities like meetings, processions demonstration etc. indicate the workers' awareness about their unions. In

Table 12.9 we have presented the level of workers' participation in union activities.

Table 12.9

**Workers' Participation in Union Activities  
(meetings, processions etc.)**

(Percentage in bracket)

|                        | Mohurgong<br>&<br>Gulma T.E. | Kiran<br>Chandra<br>T.E. | Sanyasi-<br>sthan<br>T.E. | Total       |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| Regular participant    | 49 (51.58)                   | 29 (28.43)               | 43 (40.95)                | 121 (40.07) |
| Occasional participant | 40 (42.11)                   | 70 (68.63)               | 58 (55.25)                | 168 (55.63) |
| Non-participant        | 6 (6.31)                     | 3 (2.94)                 | 4 (3.80)                  | 13 (4.30)   |
|                        | 95 (100)                     | 102 (100)                | 105 (100)                 | 302 (100)   |

Source : Field Survey.

It is found in Table 12.9 that 121 i.e., 40.07% of the total respondents regularly participate in union activities and 168 i.e., 55.63% occasionally participate and 4.30% of the total respondents do not participate in any union activities. The rate of regular participation in union activities is high in Mohurgong & Gulma Tea Estate with 51.58% of the respondents followed by Sanyasisthan Tea Estate with 40.95% and Kiran Chandra Tea Estate with 28.43% of the respondents.

### 12.9 Change of Unions

The tea garden workers often change unions. We will get the extent of change of unions in the following table.

Table 12.10  
Extent of Change of Union  
(Percentage in brackets)

|                            | Mohurgong<br>& Gulma<br>T.E. | Kiranchandra<br>T.E. | Sanyasisthan<br>T.E. | Total       |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Changed<br>unions          | 18 (18.56)                   | 33 (32.35)           | 51 (48.57)           | 102 (33.55) |
| Did not<br>change<br>union | 77 (79.38)                   | 69 (67.65)           | 54 (51.43)           | 200 (65.79) |
| Non-<br>members            | 2 (2.06)                     | -                    | -                    | 2 (0.66)    |
|                            | 97 (100)                     | 102 (100)            | 105 (100)            | 304 (100)   |

Source : Field Survey.

It can be seen from the above table that 102 i.e., 33.55% of the total respondents have changed unions and 200 i.e., 65.79% have not changed unions. 2 i.e., 0.66% of the total respondents are found non-members of any trade union. The extent of change of unions is the highest in Sanyasisthan Tea Estate. Among the respondents who have changed unions, 50% belonged to Sanyasisthan Tea Estate. The extent of change of unions is also highest in this garden. Nearly 49% of its 105 respondents have

changed unions followed by Kiran Chandra Tea Estate with 32.35% and Mohurgong & Gulma Tea Estate with 18.56%.

#### 12.10 Sexwise Distribution of Union Leaders

The sexwise distribution of union leaders in the three tea gardens, we have studied, is given in Table 12.11.

Table 12.11  
Sexwise Distribution of Union Leaders

(Percentage in brackets)

|                           | Male      | Female    | Total    |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Mohurgong &<br>Gulma T.E. | 9 (75)    | 3 (25)    | 12 (100) |
| Kiran Chandra T.E         | 8 (88.89) | 1 (11.11) | 9 (100)  |
| Sanyasisthan T.E          | 8 (80)    | 2 (20)    | 10 (100) |

Source : Field Survey.

It is found that the most of the union leaders are male. Among the total respondents of 304, 31 are the union leaders, out of which 25 (80.65%) are males and 6 (19.35%) are females. This shows the male dominance in the leadership structure of trade unions in the tea gardens.

### 12.11 Literacy of Union Leaders

The level of literacy of union leaders has been presented in Table 12.12.

Table 12.12  
Level of Literacy of Union Leaders  
(Percentage in Brackets)

| Level of literacy | Mohurgong & Gulma T.E. | Kiran Chandra T.E. | Sanyasisthan T.E. | Total      |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Can sign          | 1 (8.33)               | -                  | 2 (20.00)         | 3 (9.68)   |
| Primary           | 2 (16.67)              | 1 (11.11)          | 1 (10.00)         | 4 (12.90)  |
| V to IX           | 5 (41.57)              | 2 (22.23)          | 4 (40.00)         | 11 (35.48) |
| S.F               | 1 (8.33)               | 1 (11.11)          | -                 | 2 (6.45)   |
| XI to XII         | 1 (8.33)               | 1 (11.11)          | -                 | 2 (6.45)   |
| Graduate          | -                      | -                  | -                 | -          |
| Illiterate        | 2 (16.67)              | 4 (44.44)          | 3 (30.00)         | 9 (29.04)  |
|                   | 12 (100)               | 9 (100)            | 10                | 31 (100)   |

Source : Field Survey.

It can be seen from the above table that the union leaders are more literate than the general workers (Table 12.5) Out of 31 leaders of the three tea gardens studied 9 (29.04%) are found illiterate and the remaining 22 (70.96%) are literate. Out of these literates 9.68% can sign only, 12.90% read up to primary level and 35.48% read up to class

IX. Two leaders (6.45%) passed madhyamik and two (6.45%) passed class XII.

#### 12.12 Contribution of Leaders for Trade Union Success

In Table 12.13 we have presented the responses of the members and leaders of the three tea gardens studied about the success. The number of reasons are more than the number of respondents as the respondents talked about more than one reasons.

It is clear from Table 12.13 that most of the members and leaders feel that social support extended by the members is responsible for trade union success, and two thirds feel that commitment, efficiency and sincerity of leaders are responsible for the success of trade union. Very few number of members and leaders feel militant attitude of leaders is responsible for trade union success.

The responses show no variations in the opinions of leaders of the three gardens we have studied. But the responses of the members of Sanyasisthan Tea Estate vary from those of the Mohurgong & Gulma Tea Estate and Kiranchandra Tea Estate. The majority of the members of Sanyasisthan Tea Estate feel that commitment of leaders is responsible for the success of trade unions.

Table 12.13  
Contribution of Leaders for Trade Union Success

| Reasons                                   | Response of            |                 |                    |                |                   |                 |                  |                 | Total |  |
|---|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|-------|--|
|   | Mohurgong & Gulma T.E. |                 | Kiran Chandra T.E. |                | Sanyasisthan T.E. |                 |                  |                 |       |  |
|   | Members<br>N=83        | Leaders<br>N=12 | Members<br>N=93    | Leaders<br>N=9 | Members<br>N=95   | Leaders<br>N=10 | Members<br>N=271 | Leaders<br>N=31 |       |  |
| A) Commitment of leaders                  | 41                     | 4               | 52                 | 3              | 78                | 6               | 171              | 13              |       |  |
| B) Efficiency of leaders                  | 61                     | 7               | 69                 | 6              | 10                | 1               | 140              | 14              |       |  |
| C) Sincerity of leaders                   | 61                     | 9               | 51                 | 4              | 40                | 5               | 152              | 18              |       |  |
| D) Militant attitude of leaders           | 13                     | 6               | 20                 | 4              | 1                 | -               | 34               | 10              |       |  |
| E) Social support extended by the members | 61                     | 10              | 83                 | 8              | 40                | 8               | 184              | 26              |       |  |

Source : Field Survey.

Table 12.14  
Problems Faced by Leaders in Achieving the Targets

| Reasons                                     | Response of            |                 |                    |                |                   |                 |                  |                 |
|---|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
|   | Mohurgong & Gulma T.E. |                 | Kiran Chandra T.E. |                | Sanyasisthan T.E. |                 | Total            |                 |
|   | Members<br>N=83        | Leaders<br>N=12 | Members<br>N=93    | Leaders<br>N=9 | Members<br>N=95   | Leaders<br>N=10 | Members<br>N=271 | Leaders<br>N=31 |
| A) Opposition from the rival unions leaders | 19                     | 7               | 84                 | 5              | 62                | 7               | 129              | 19              |
| B) Non-cooperation from the public          | 5                      | 3               | 1                  | 1              | -                 | -               | 6                | 4               |
| C) General apathy of the workers            | 3                      | 3               | -                  | -              | -                 | -               | 3                | 3               |
| D) Opposition from Govt.                    | 6                      | 3               | 18                 | 1              | -                 | -               | 24               | 4               |
| E) Opposition from management               | 50                     | 2               | 66                 | 7              | 84                | 10              | 200              | 19              |
| F) Others                                   | 29                     | -               | 17                 | -              | -                 | -               | 46               | -               |

Source : Field Survey.

### 12.13 Problems Faced by the Leaders in Achieving the Targets

Though the trade union leaders contribute for the success of trade union, they have also faced several problems in achieving the goals. In Table 12.14 we have presented the problems faced by leaders in achieving the targets. The respondents identified more than one problems.

It can be seen from the above table the majority of the members and leaders feel that opposition from management has been a major problem in achieving the target of the leaders. Next to it the opposition from rival union leaders is identified as an obstacle.

### 12.14 Workers' Attitude Towards Work Schedule, Wages, Welfare, Ration and Management

In Table 12.15 we have measured the workers' attitude towards work schedule, wages, welfare, ration and management.

It can be seen from Table 12.15 that the most of the respondents of the three gardens, we have studied, express their dissatisfaction about the work schedule, wages, welfare, ration and management. The responses show variations in the opinions of respondents from garden to garden. For example, the most of the respondents of Mohurgong & Gulma Tea Estate express their satisfactions about work schedule, welfare and

Table 12.15  
Workers' Attitude Towards Work Schedule, Wages, Welfare, Ration and Management

(Percentage in brackets)

|               | Mohorgong & Gulma T.E. |                        |                                  |             | Kiranchandra T.E. |                        |                                  |              | Sanyasisthan T.E. |                        |                                  |              | Grand Total    |                        |                                  |              |
|---------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
|               | Satisf-<br>ied         | Dis-<br>satisf-<br>ied | Partia-<br>lly<br>satisf-<br>ied | Total       | Satisf-<br>ied    | Dis-<br>satisf-<br>ied | Partia-<br>lly<br>satisf-<br>ied | Total        | Satisf-<br>ied    | Dis-<br>satisf-<br>ied | Partia-<br>lly<br>satisf-<br>ied | Total        | Satisf-<br>ied | Dis-<br>satisf-<br>ied | Partia-<br>lly<br>satisf-<br>ied | Total        |
| Work Schedule | 48<br>(49.48)          | 24<br>(24.74)          | 25<br>(25.78)                    | 97<br>(100) | 54<br>(52.94)     | 23<br>(22.55)          | 25<br>(24.51)                    | 102<br>(100) | 11<br>(10.48)     | 92<br>(87.62)          | 2<br>(1.90)                      | 105<br>(100) | 113<br>(37.17) | 139<br>(45.72)         | 52<br>(17.11)                    | 304<br>(100) |
| Wages         | 17<br>(17.53)          | 63<br>(69.95)          | 17<br>(17.52)                    | 97<br>(100) | 24<br>(23.53)     | 67<br>(65.69)          | 11<br>(10.78)                    | 102<br>(100) | 3<br>(2.86)       | 100<br>(95.24)         | 2<br>(1.90)                      | 105<br>(100) | 44<br>(14.47)  | 230<br>(75.66)         | 30<br>(9.87)                     | 304<br>(100) |
| Welfare       | 47<br>(48.45)          | 22<br>(22.68)          | 28<br>(28.87)                    | 97<br>(100) | 31<br>(30.39)     | 38<br>(37.25)          | 33<br>(32.36)                    | 102<br>(100) | 3<br>(2.86)       | 96<br>(91.43)          | 6<br>(5.71)                      | 105<br>(100) | 81<br>(26.64)  | 156<br>(51.32)         | 67<br>(22.04)                    | 304<br>(100) |
| Ration        | 38<br>(39.18)          | 31<br>(31.96)          | 28<br>(28.86)                    | 97<br>(100) | 39<br>(38.24)     | 32<br>(31.37)          | 31<br>(30.39)                    | 102<br>(100) | 4<br>(3.81)       | 95<br>(90.48)          | 5<br>(5.71)                      | 105<br>(100) | 81<br>(26.64)  | 158<br>(51.97)         | 65<br>(21.39)                    | 304<br>(100) |
| Management    | 35<br>(36.08)          | 21<br>(21.65)          | 41<br>(42.27)                    | 97<br>(100) | 35<br>(34.31)     | 43<br>(42.16)          | 24<br>(23.53)                    | 102<br>(100) | 4<br>(3.81)       | 97<br>(92.38)          | 4<br>(3.81)                      | 105<br>(100) | 74<br>(24.34)  | 161<br>(52.96)         | 69<br>(22.70)                    | 304<br>(100) |

Source : Field Survey

ration and dissatisfaction about wages and partial satisfaction about management. The majority of the respondents of Kiran Chandra Tea Estate are satisfied about work-schedule and ration but dissatisfied about wages, welfare and management. The majority respondents of Sanyasisthan Tea Estate express their dissatisfaction over all the issues. Whatever may be the variations in the opinion of the respondents from garden to garden, all of them feel that the wage paid to them is meagre and management always acts against them.

#### 12.15 Impact of Trade Unionism on Women Workers

The women form the half of the total working force in tea industry. There is no other organized industry in India which employ such high proportion of women in the work structure. The social status of the women in the tea industry is much below than that of male. Here we have attempted to give some light on this issue.

##### 12.15.1 Women Literacy

The Table 12.16 below give the level of literacy of women workers.

It can be seen from Table 12.16 that 81.17% of the female respondents are illiterates, and the remaining 18.83% are literates. We had earlier seen that 56.59% of the total

Table 12.16  
Level of Literacy of Women Workers  
(Percentage in brackets)

| Level of Literacy | Mohurgong & Gulma T.E. | Kiran Chandra T.E. | Sanyasi-sthan T.E. | Total       |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Can sign          | 1 (2.43)               | 0 (0)              | 1 (2.17)           | 2 (1.45)    |
| Primary           | 5 (12.20)              | 5 (9.80)           | 1 (2.17)           | 11 (7.97)   |
| V to IX           | 3 (7.32)               | 4 (7.85)           | 4 (8.70)           | 11 (7.97)   |
| S.F               | 0 (0)                  | 0 (0)              | 1 (2.17)           | 1 (0.72)    |
| XI to XII         | 0 (0)                  | 1 (1.96)           | 0 (0)              | 1 (0.72)    |
| Graduate          | 0 (0)                  | 0 (0)              | 0 (0)              | 0 (0)       |
| Illiterate        | 32 (78.05)             | 41 (80.39)         | 39 (84.79)         | 112 (81.17) |
| Total             | 41 (100)               | 51 (100)           | 46 (100)           | 138 (100)   |

Source : Field Survey.

respondents (including male and female) were illiterates (Table 12.5). Thus, the level of literacy of the female workers in Tea industry is much below than the that of male workers.

#### 12.15.2 Women's Participation in Union Activities

In Table 12.17, we have presented the number of women workers participate in union activities like meetings, processions etc.

Table 12.17

## Participation of Women Workers in Union Activities

(Percentage in brackets)

|                           | Mohurgong<br>& Gulma<br>T.E. | Kiran<br>Chandra<br>T.E. | Sanyasi-<br>sthan<br>T.E. | Total      |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Regular<br>participants   | 17 (42.5)                    | 8 (15.69)                | 9 (19.57)                 | 34 (24.82) |
| Occasional<br>participant | 21 (52.5)                    | 41 (80.39)               | 36 (78.26)                | 98 (71.53) |
| Non-<br>participant       | 2 (5.0)                      | 2 (3.92)                 | 1 (2.17)                  | 5 (3.65)   |
| Total                     | 40 (100)                     | 51 (100)                 | 46 (100)                  | 137 (100)  |

It can be seen from Table 12.17 that majority of women workers are occasionally participate in union activities. Out of the total respondents 98 i.e., 71.53% occasionally participate and 34 i.e., 24.82% regularly participate in union activities. 3.65% of the respondents do not participate in any union activity. The percentage of regular participant of women workers is less than that of all workers (male and female), which is 40.07% of the total male and female respondents (Table 12.9).

12.15.3 Change of Unions by Women Workers

The extent of change of unions by women workers is presented in Table 12.18.

Table 12.18  
Change of Unions by Women Workers  
(Percentage in brackets)

|                       | Mohurgong<br>& Gulma<br>T.E. | Kiran<br>Chandra<br>T.E. | Sanyasi-<br>sthan<br>T.E. | Total      |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Changed unions        | 10 (24.39)                   | 16 (31.37)               | 19 (40.30)                | 45 (32.61) |
| Did not change unions | 30 (73.17)                   | 35 (68.63)               | 27 (58.70)                | 92 (66.67) |
| Non-members           | 1 (2.44)                     | -                        | -                         | 1 (0.72)   |
| Total                 | 41 (100)                     | 51 (100)                 | 46 (100)                  | 138 (100)  |

Table 12.18 shows that out of the total 138 women respondents 45 i.e., 32.61% of the respondents have changed unions. This percentage is more or less same of the total respondents (male & female), (Table 12.10).

#### 12.16 Summary

In our sample survey of 304 families in the three tea gardens we have found total 1212 members, i.e., about 4 members in each family. Out of these 1212 members 57.10% are adults and 42.90% are minors. 44.47% of the total members are found employed. 74.71% of the total adult members and 4.23% of the total minor members are employed. 25.29% of adults and 95.77%

of minors are dependent. 45.39% of the minor dependents go to school and 54.61% neither go to school nor go to work.

The percentage of casualization is 49.25% of the total employment.

The literacy rate of the workers of three tea gardens is found very low. Only 43.41% of the total respondents (male & female) are literates. The percentage of the women workers for the same is only 18.83%. There is no graduate among the respondents .

In the three tea gardens surveyed almost 100% of the respondents have the membership of trade unions. The membership of the CITU is the highest among the respondents followed by UTUC, NFITU and INTUC.

Out of the total respondents 89.14% are the general members, 10.20% are office bearers and only 0.66% are non-members of any union.

About 60% of the respondents have became members of trade unions to get better wages and better facilities. Only 10% of the respondents join trade unions by the influence of the leaders. Remaining 30% have joined unions due to other reasons, such as, relatives are the members of the same trade unions, influenced by the fellow workers etc.

40.07% of the total union members (male & female) regularly participate in union activities. The percentage of the female

union members for the same is only 24.82%.

33.55% of the total respondents (male & female) have changed the unions during their workingl life. This percentage is more or less same among the female respondents.

In the leadership pattern of trade unions we have found the male dominance. Out of the total leader respondents 80.65% are males and 19.35% are females.

The union leaders are comparatively more literate than the general workers. The literacy rate of the union leaders is 70.96% of the total union leader respondents.

One third of the members and leaders respondents have felt that the social support extended by the members is the prime cause of the success of trade unions, and two thirds feel that commitment, efficiency and sincerity of leaders are responsible for trade unions success. Majority of the members and leaders have identified that the opposition from the management is the greatest obstacle in achieving the target of the leaders.

Most of the respondents of the three gardens studied have expressed their dissatisfaction about work-schedule, wage, welfare, ration and management. However, the responses show variations in the opinions of respondents from garden to garden. But as regards wages the respondents of all the three gardens studied have expressed their dissatisfaction.

### **CHAPTER XIII: Summary and Conclusions**

The tea industry has its far-reaching influences over the national economy particularly in respect of its export earnings and employment potentials. However, this study is designed to find out the nature of Industrial relations in tea industry in West Bengal with special reference to its tea gardens in Terai regions since independence. For this purpose, the following aspects have been thoroughly analysed; these are - the growth of tea industry, recruitment system, type and growth of employment over the period, condition of women in tea industry, growth in wages, existing labour welfare measures, intensity of industrial conflicts and the changing pattern of trade union movement. However, this chapter summarises the findings of this study.

We have found, that the rate of expansion of area under the cultivation of tea in West Bengal has remained more or less stagnant during the post-independence period. It has grown by only 0.62% annually, on an average, over the period, 1951 to 1990, against 1%, .81% and .70% respectively for Assam, North India and All India. As regards production of tea the State

has also lagged behind than Assam, North India, South India and all India average. During the period, 1951 to 1990 the average annual rate of growth of production in West Bengal estimated at 1.68% against 2.46% for Assam, 2.20% for North India, 3.17% for South India and 2.40% for All India. As regards yield per hectare the state has also lagged behind than the other tea growing regions of India.

Availability of land for extension of tea area in West Bengal having been identified as a major constraint, it would not be out of place to mention that the loss of planted areas in estates bordering rivers due to erosion is no less a significant constraint and demands urgent preventive measures. It is also imperative to establish an irrigation grid through the harnessing of numerous rivers and streams following through the tea growing areas of North Bengal.

We have found that all most all the labourers in the tea plantations, of Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling hills are immigrants and their descendants. Labourers of Terai and Dooars were mainly recruited from the aboriginal areas of Chotonagpur (Bihar). Labourers in Darjeeling hills were recruited from Nepal. Many abuses were caused by the employers in the course of the recruitment of labour. Even in the tea gardens the recruits suffered from several cruelty and hardship, unhygienic condition of living, bad and inadequate food, poor housing condition etc.

There was no specific legislation regarding the recruitment of labourers in tea gardens. The recruitment was done mainly through arkatis who employed dubious means to recruit unsuspecting tribals. By 1861 the British Government began to concern about the policy of recruitment of labour in tea gardens. The first Inland Emigration Act was passed in 1863. This Act and its subsequent amendments gave more protection to the employers than the tea garden labourers. This was in 1921, when several legislations had come into being seeking to protect plantation labour.

The employers encouraged families rather than individual to migrate for to tea gardens. We have found that the percentage of immigrations in Jalpaiguri tea gardens continuously increased at least up to 1921, thereafter the percentage decreased. Thus, after 1921 the industry had come to have a settled labour population who were begetting their successors.

We have observed that in early days the employers favoured the settlement of the retired labourers near the tea gardens, to keep secure the future supply of labour force for the tea industry. Some employers also allotted unused garden land which was in their possession much in excess of their own requirements. As a result the families have settled completely on a tea estate, and they are multiplied. At present in West Bengal tea gardens more than 92 per cent of the workers are resident labour. They all seek jobs in the tea gardens, subsequently the present position of labour supply in tea industry of West

Bengal had revised from shortage to surplus and unemployment in tea gardens appeared in the scene.

In the organization hierarchy of tea industry the level of management and staff are dominated by the outside educated Bengalis. A tribal worker can hardly be promoted to the level of sub-staff. Again this promotion is only available for the male workers and not for the female workers. Thus, the organization hierarchy in tea garden evolves ethnic crisis as well as sexual crisis.

The employment of labour force in the tea gardens of West Bengal increased significantly during the pre-independence period. The labour force increased by 73% during the period 1901 to 1941, against 52.14% increase in the area under the cultivation of tea. The gross employment area elasticity (Eg) is computed at 1.58 for the period 1901 to 1941. Labour per hectare also increased from 2.10 in 1901 to 2.68 in 1941.

But during the post independence period the scenerio of employment has been changed. The labour force in the tea gardens of West Bengal sharply decreased during the period 1952 to 1960. More than 125000 workers were reduced during that period. It is mainly due to the enactment of the plantation labour Act, 1951. Another significant cause of it is that the changing of ownership pattern was taking place during that period. Britishers were selling their gardens to the Indians.

Large number of labourers were retrenched during this course of conversion.

The period between 1961 to 1990 also did not show any improvement in the employment of labour force in the tea gardens of West Bengal. The labour force increased by 28.50% during the period 1961 to 1990, against 22.34% increase in the area under the cultivation of tea. The gross employment area elasticity (Eg) is computed at 1.253 for the period 1961 to 1990. The ratio of labour per hectare also remained constant during this period and it varied between 2.20 and 2.45. But we have found that the labour force in the Terai tea gardens of West Bengal had grown at a faster rate than that of West Bengal and other tea growing regions of India. It had grown at the rate of 2.68% annually during the period 1961 to 1990 against 0.84% annual rate of growth of West Bengal tea gardens during the same period of time. During the last 11 years (1980 to 1990) the labour force in the Terai tea gardens had grown at the rate of 4.52 annually, on an average, against 1.17%, 1.72%, 1.06% and 1.40% respectively for West Bengal, Assam, South India and All India. The gross employment area elasticity (Eg) of Terai tea gardens computed at 2.233 for the period 1961 to 1990. The labour per hectare in the Terai computed at 2.84, in 1990, which is also higher than that of West Bengal and other tea growing regions of India.

Thus, as regards employment of labourers Terai is much ahead than the average of West Bengal and other tea growing regions of India.

We have found that the concept of land labour ratio in tea industry still remains controversial. After the general strike of 1969, in a settlement, the Co-ordination Committee of Planters' Association (CCPA) agreed to maintain 2.72 workers per hectare. But in fact it exists more as a notion than in reality. At the end of 1990, except Terai in no other tea growing regions of India this agreement has been fulfilled. More than 1,46,000 additional workers could have been employed in all tea gardens of India by the execution of this agreement.

We have calculated the elasticity of employment with respect to average price of tea, production and area under the cultivation of tea. The results show that the employment is more elastic with respect to area of tea than the other factors. Since the ratio of labour per hectare is more or less stagnant throughout the period, there is very little hope to increase the employment in tea industry unless the new area of land is brought under the cultivation of tea.

We have found that in the pre-independence period the temporary employment in tea gardens of West Bengal had more and more given way to permanent tenures. The percentage of casual workers in Jalpaiguri tea gardens decreased from 30.97% in 1901 to 3.46% by 1941, and in Darjeeling tea gardens the same decreased from 40.03% to 2.67% during the same period of time. But in the post independence period particularly during the last few

decades the proportion of casual workers increased significantly. Since there is no published data on casual workers in tea industry and there is also a tendency on the part of the employers to suppress the real figure of casual workers, we have based on some field survey made on the subject in different time. Consulting these survey reports we have found that the percentage of casual workers in Terai tea gardens was 24.4% in 1973, 21.2% in 1981 and 36.8% in 1991. In our field survey in 1994 we have found the presence of 42.49% of casual workers in the total employment. Thus, it may be concluded that the increment in the total employment in tea industry of West Bengal after the seventies had been made much in the form of casual workers than the permanent workers.

Along with casualisation we have also found the presence of child workers in the work-structure of tea industry. The employment of child workers in tea industry is a practice since the pre independence period and it continued even after independence. More than 75,000 child workers were engaged in tea industry of India in 1990. Nearly 95% child labourers are employed in the tea plantations of North-east India. In the tea plantations of West Bengal nearly 6% of the total working force are the child labourers. In Assam they account for more than 10%. During the period 1961 to 1990 the child labourers in West Bengal tea gardens have grown at the rate of 0.33% per year while in the Terai tea gardens they have grown at the rate of 4.03% per year, during the same period of time. We have found a decreasing trend

of the employment of child labourers in all tea gardens of West Bengal since the seventies, but in the Terai tea gardens the employment of child labourers always found increasing tendency throughout the period 1961 to 1990.

By employing children in the work structure the employers get economic benefit. As a child worker is allowed half the wages of adults, but they work more than half of the period of that of adults. Again the employers have to provide subsidised ration to the dependents (up to 18 years of old) of adult workers. So they could save the cost of subsidised ration by employing those dependents as casual workers. On the other hand, due to economic crisis in family the workers send their children to work. The trade union leaders also ignore the aspect of child labourer on the ground of family income. So the children have been employed to fulfil the needs of both workers and employers.

The total labour force in the tea industry of West Bengal increased by 28.50% over the period 1961 to 1990. In Terai tea gardens the labour force increased by 121.21% during the same period of time. When we exclude the proportion of child labourers from the total working forces the above two percentages are changed to 29.84% and 53.92% respectively for West Bengal and Terai tea gardens.

Thus, as regards employment of labourers the Terai tea gardens had shown a higher rate than all tea growing regions of

India due to employment of more number of casual workers and child workers in the working structure.

We have observed that during the pre-independence period the wages of the tea garden workers were extremely low. In 1948, the total cash wages of a male worker in Terai was 1 Rupee, 1 anna and 6 paise (including Basic hazira, Doubli and Dearness allowance). After independence, The Government of West Bengal set up Minimum Wages Advisory Committee for tea Plantations in March, 1950. In 1952, the Committee fixed the minimum wage of a male worker in the Terai at Rs. 1.16 per day. In 1959 it increased to Rs. 1.81. The Central Govt. appointed the Central Wage Board for tea plantation industry in December 1960. The Board took 6 years and 3 months time to declare its final recommendation. However, during this tenure the Board declared two interim increments. By the final recommendation of the Wage Board the daily wage of a male worker increased to Rs. 2.10 in April, 1966. Between 1966 to 1973, wage increased at a very slow rate either through the recommendations of bipartite meetings or through the demand of the trade unions. By June 1973 the daily wage of a male worker in the Terai increased to Rs. 2.94.

The CCTPW submitted 19 point charter of demands including the revision of wage in June, 1973 and gave a threat of continuous strike w.e.f 6th August 1973 if the demands are not fulfilled. For the revision of wages the Govt. of West Bengal

set up the Second Minimum Wage Fixing Committee in July 1973. A few increments were granted by the committee during its four years term. But it could not come to any decision regarding the new rate of wage of the workers. Ultimately in May 1975, a consensus was reached. Accordingly, the committee granted a yearly increment of 45 paise per day in the daily wage of an adult worker for the next two years w.e.f July, 1975. Finally the committee recommended that the wage of all daily rated workers would be increased by one rupee annually w.e.f July, 1975. Thus, by June, 1979 the daily wage rate of an adult male worker in the Terai stood at Rs. 6.24. Since then the rates of wages of a daily rated worker in West Bengal tea industry have been fixed by tripartite agreements. The term of every tripartite agreement is three years. Till July 1994 six tripartite agreements have been made on the wage issue. They are in June 1977, May 1980, August 1983, June 1987, August 1990 and in July 1994. The tripartite agreement of August 1990 expired in June 1993, but the next agreement was signed in July 1994. The CCTPW demanded for the monthly rated wages for the tea garden workers, but the employers rejected the demand and agreed to increase the rates of daily wages by Rs. 7/- for the next three years, w.e.f April 1994. During the first two years the wage of a daily rated worker will be increased by Rs. 2.50 annually and in the third year by Rs. 2.00. It was also agreed that the workers will be provided 'Compensatory Settlement Money' for the period December 1993 to 31st March 1994. After this agreement the daily wage of an adult worker in Terai stood at Rs. 21.74 in July

1994.

Analysing the trends of wages we have found that money wage rate of the workers of Terai increased at a very slow rate. Between the period 1952 to 1994 the daily wage of a male worker increased by Rs. 20.58 i.e., 49 paise annually, on an average. Money wage increased at some what faster rate only after 1977. Between the period 1952 to 1977, the daily wage of a male worker increased by 12 paise annually, on an average. But the same increased by 97 paise annually, on an average, during the period 1977 to 1994. But during this period the Consumer Price Index (C.P.I) for plantation workers increased at a very faster rate.. As a result the extra increment to money wage could not increase the real wage rate satisfactory.

In spite of organized trade union for the last 40 years the money wage rate of a tea garden worker less than that of an agricultural labour in north east India. Since the beginning of tripartite wage agreement we have found that the employers actually accepted less than half of the wage rate demanded by the CCTPW. The surplus population in tea garden becomes the main obstacle for the trade unions in wage negotiation. Due to backwardness of the areas no other employment opportunity is generated in the vicinity of the tea gardens. Education among the children of the workers also did not expand. As such they are depended upon the employment of tea industry generation after generation. This situation gave wide scope to the employers

to employ more number of casual workers and child workers in the work structure. In tea gardens most of the casual workers are related to the permanent workers; permanent workers are beneficial as their family income increases. Thus, when the trade unions demand for higher rate of wages for the workers, the employers give threat to reduce the number of casual workers. The reduction of casual workers will directly affect the permanent labour force as their family income will reduce.

Thus, in order to make the wage negotiation more favourable to the workers all efforts to be made to remove the surplus population from the tea garden areas. To over come this problem the tea garden regions are to be developed for generating other employment opportunities. In this juncture we may suggest to connect the tea garden areas with the nearest Panchayat. Primary education among the children of the workers is to be expanded. The adolescents are to be imparted some technical skills so they can seek employment outside the tea garden areas. In this connection we may suggest to extend the training scheme of Nehru Rozgar Yozona amongst the children of the tea garden workers. At present the scheme is only available for the poorer section of municipal and Panchayat areas.

More than 48% if the total working force in West Bengal tea gardens are the female workers. Employing women in tea was more profitable for the employer for many years since the Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act, provision of creche etc.

were not applied. We have found that the ratio of female workers in per 1000 males showed a decreasing trend since the eighties. This is perhaps due to the implementation of Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act etc. Though these Acts were passed before the eighties, but in tea gardens the employers started to give effect of the Acts from the eighties.

In tea gardens the women are the subject of exploitation for a long period of time. Till the end of colonial era cases of rape; forcible seduction, buying and selling of women and decoying young women by various artifices were rampant. After independence though their sexual assultation had been stopped, but they were exploited in different forms. Even after the enactment of the Equal Remuneration Act in 1975, they were given less wages at least up to 1983. Though it is obligatory on the part of the employers to provide creches for the children of the women, the employers are deliberately ignoring the aspect of creches in many gardens. Consequently, they have to strapp their babies to their backs along with 25 kg/30 kg plucked tea.

In tea industry the literacy rate of women is much less than that of males. In our field survey we have found that only 19% females are literate. we have also found that inequality between men and women has been fully carried over into the trade union organization. In the leadership structure of trade union the male workers always dominate. But if a procession or a demonstration is staged the women are placed at the front. In

organization hierarchy she does not get promotion to the sub-staff position along with male tribal workers. Neither the trade unions nor the government raise voice against such exploitation of women in the tea gardens.

In order to improve the social status of women it is needed to change the reproductive burdens under which women toil presently. Creches are a facility which can relieve women temporarily from their continuous preoccupation with child care. Enforcing of other statutory rights like adequate sanitation and water supply in the plantation living areas will also lighten the domestic burdens of women. This will enable them not only to participate more actively in their workplace and trade unions, but will also help them to overcome inherent handicaps like illiteracy over time.

There are three possible agencies whose intervention can bring the change of women's position, namely, management, government and trade union.

The plantation managements intervene only to those issues which improve their profits. Hence, they are unlikely to take any initiative to improve the status of women workers unless they find there is a correlation between the status of women and their productivity.

The government is the single most important agency which can bring about change in the position of women by enacting the various laws. But the main drawback on the part of the

government is the effective enforcement of these laws due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of adequate political will. But the importance of such legislation is that it creates a political space in which labour unions can legitimately agitate for their legal rights.

Trade unions can play a vital role in enforcing implementation of legislation by building pressure from below. So far they have successfully raised the issues concerning improvement of wage and bonuses, but the women's issues have been conspicuously absent from the agenda of the trade unions. Essentially the patriarchal perspectives of trade unions may be at least partially responsible for this neglect.

Thus, the only way in which permanent change can come about is through organized activity by the women themselves. This implies that women need to organize themselves along gender lines so that their concerns are adequately addressed. Educating themselves regarding their rights and creating mutual support facilities would be as important as pressuring managements and government for equality. Once their unity is manifest, trade unions will have to come to terms with the demands and concerns of woman labourers.

We have observed that the communists were the first to introduce trade unionism in tea gardens in around 1946. The railway workers played an important role in organizing tea garden workers in the Dooars. The Tebhaga movement in North

Bengal deeply influenced the tea garden workers in Jalpaiguri. The demand for a larger share of the crop was seen as a necessary adjunct of the movement for concessions from plantation companies. The strike of 1955 affected gardens in the Dooars as well as in the Terai and though the strike was called off by the unions, it compelled the owners to pay a bonus for the first time in the history of tea gardens. In August, 1969, however, the strike was almost total in West Bengal. After 1969, no organized movement took place in tea industry.

We have observed that the labour militancy in tea industry rose its peak during the United Front Government regime in 1967 and 1969. Because the U.F. Govt. was at the back of the workers, helping them in their movement against the employers. The police was also kept themselves aloof from the labour agitation. After 1969, the labour militancy considerably reduced due to development of negotiation processes. The negotiations succeeded to regulate the two main economic issues like wages and bonus. But the other economic issues like provident fund, gratuity etc. yet to be regulated. There are number of tea gardens where the employers have been defaulted to deposit the workers' provident fund money.

The CCTPW has not initiated any joint movement on the issues of labour welfare, though there is huge laxity on the part of the employers on the implementation of the provisions of the PLA. We have observed that only 12% tea gardens of West Bengal have

constructed 100% houses of total requirements. The medical aspect is deliberately ignored by the employers. The number of Doctors, Midwives, Nurses, Compounders and Health Assistants are less than one in per 1000 population in the tea gardens of West Bengal. The commitment of the employers as regards other obligatory welfare provisions like creches, sanitation, drinking water, education of the children of the workers etc. is also very poor. The trade unions could not succeed to improve these issues due to weakness of trade union at the garden level. Trade unions at the garden level do not initiate the movement jointly but individually. The different trade unions vie with each other to secure the backing of workers. Accordingly, when a union submits a Charter of Demands before the management on different issues of the workers, the other unions do not support it rather protest against it. So it is needed to form a common forum at the garden level to develop the collective bargaining strength of the trade unions at the garden level. At the same time CCTPW should also take initiative to improve the welfare facilities at the garden level through joint action.

We have observed that there is no uniform and regular upward or downward trend in industrial disputes (strike and lock-out) in tea industry of West Bengal. There is also no correlation existing between the figures relating to the number of work-stoppages, number of workers involved and the mandays lost. During the last 19 years (1972-1990), on an average, about 11 work-stoppages involving around 11852 workers and

resulting in loss of more than 1,23,268 mandays.

We have observed that there is a changing nature of industrial relations in tea industry since 1981. Between the period 1972 to 1980, the mandays lost due to strike was more than that of lock-out. But since 1981 there is a marked increase in the number of mandays lost due to lock-outs in tea industry. Average duration of strike was also becoming shorter since 1981. This proved the unequal strength of the labour management and decline in sustaining power and consequent fall in the bargaining power of the workers of tea industry.

The industrywise distribution of work-stoppage in West Bengal for the period 1981 to 1990, reveals that the annual average incidence of work-stoppages is 4.38 against 28.55% in Engineering industry and 11.25% in Jute industry. Thus, as regards strikes and lock-outs the tea industry is the least dispute prone in West Bengal than the other major industries in the state. But as regards inarticulate disputes like absenteeism the tea industry is much ahead than the other major industries of the state. The tea industry in the state accounts for the highest rate of absenteeism with 16.42% p.a over the period 1974 to 1989, against 15.7%, 14.78% and 12.94% in case of Engineering, Chemical and Cotton industry respectively over the same period of time. Household work and child caring

activities are the main reasons for absenteeism among the women workers. But alcoholism is the prime cause of absenteeism among the male workers.

Finally we have done a field survey in Mohurgong & Gulma Tea Estate, Kiran Chandra Tea Estate and Sanyasisthan Tea Estate of Terai region to study the impact of trade unionism on tea garden areas. We have observed that about 100% of the workers are the members of the trade unions. The CITU has the highest number of members among the respondents followed by the UTUC, RCMC and NUPW. It is found that the workers became the members of the unions more because of getting better facilities than the influence of the leaders. We have observed that the trade unions have failed to regulate the issues like work-schedule, wages, welfare provisions as per P.L.A. ration etc. As the most of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction on these issues. Attitude of the workers towards the management also found hostile. The workers expressed their dissatisfaction on the management. Trade unionism in tea gardens also could not improve the literacy rate of the workers. Trade unions are neglecting the aspect of the education of the children of the workers. We have found that about 55% minor dependents neither go to school nor go to work.

In India, tea becomes an important industry and it is meaningful in many ways in the national economy. India is one of the largest producer and exporter of tea in the world market.

Tea contributes a substantial part in the export led development of India. It becomes the second biggest export earner after the engineering goods industry in the country. This industry is highly labour intensive; about a million workers are directly employed in this industry. But the industrial relations in this industry remains a matter of continual tension and dispute prone due to the non-implementation of the statutory obligations by the owners of the tea industry. Besides the role of the trade unions, government should come forward with utmost sincerity to convince the owners for immediate implementation of the statutory obligations so that the country's tea industry may run smoothly.

Select BibliographyBooks

Awasthi, R.C : 1975, Economics of Tea Industry in India, United Publishers, Gauhati.

Agarwal, R.D (ed.) : 1979, Dynamics of Labour Relations in India, Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Company Ltd.

Bhowmik, Sharit : 1981, Class Formation in the Plantation System, People's Publishing House, New Delhi.

Bhowmik Sharit : 1992, "Tea Plantations" in Sharat Davala's Employment and Unionisation in Indian Industry, Friedrich Elbert Stiftung, New Delhi.

Bhadra Mita : 1983, Life and Labour of Plantation Women Workers (unpublished Ph.D. thesis), University of North Bengal, Darjeeling.

Bhowmik, Dhruba Jyoti : 1987, Political Movements in India, Anmol Publications, New Delhi.

Birds Eye : 1991, 'North Bengal Yellow Pages'.

Cooper, Bruce M. & Bartletta, A.F : 1976, Industrial Relations - A Study in Conflict, Heinemann, London.

- Cok, Jacqueline Jackson, Maqueeney John & Thirkell, J.E.M : 1987, Strategies, Issues and Events in Industrial Relations, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- Dayal, Sahab : 1980, Industrial Relation System in India, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
- Davar, R.S : 1983, Personnel Management And Industrial Relations, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
- Dash, A.J : 1947, Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling District, Superintendent, Government Printing, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal.
- Economic Times : 1990, ET Survey of Tea Industry.
- Ghosh, Tushar Kanti : 1987, Tea Gardens of West Bengal, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi.
- Giri, V.V : 1962, Labour Problems in Indian Industry, Asia Publishing House, Bombay.
- Ghosh, Biswanath : 1976 : Personnel Management - Its Theory and Practices in India, The World Press Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta.
- Griffiths, P : 1967, The History of The Indian Tea Industry, Weidenfeld and Nicolsan, London.
- Ghosh, B.C : 1970, The Development of Tea Industry in the District of Jalpaiguri, 1869-1968, in Jalpaiguri District Centenary Souvenir, 1869-1968.
- Hunter, W.W : 1974, A Statistical Account of Bengal - Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling Districts, Vol.X, (Reprinted), D.K. Publishing House, Delhi.
- Karnik, V.B : 1974, Indian Labour Problems and Prospects, Minerva Associates (Publications) Pvt. Ltd. Calcutta.
- Lloyd, G.Reynolds, Stanley, H.Masters & Colletta, H. Moser :

- 1986, Readings in Labour Economics and Labour Relations, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.
- Lal Das, D.K : 1983, Industrial Relations in India, S.Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi.
- Moran Michael : 1977, The Politics of Industrial Relations, The Macmillan Press Ltd., London.
- Mitra, A.K : 1953, Census of India 1951, Vol.VI, Part IA (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore), Report, Calcutta.
- Masood, A.Mirza : 1982, Workers Participation in Management in India and Abroad, Printwell Publications, Aligarh.
- NITIE. Alumni Association : 1988, Social View of Industrial Relations, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay.
- Nagarju, S : 1980, Industrial Relations System in India, Chugh Publications, Allahabad.
- National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) : 1977, Techno-Economic Survey of Darjeeling Tea Industry, New Delhi.
- O'Malley, L.S.S : 1907, Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling District, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta.
- Phukan, Umanand : 1984, The Ex-Tea Garden Labour Population in Assam, B.R.Publishing Corporation, New Delhi.
- Phelps, Orme, W : 1961, Introduction to Labour Economics, McGraw Hill Book Company Inc, New York.
- Ramaswamy, E.A. (ed.) : 1978, Industrial Relations in India, The Macmillan Company of India Ltd., New Delhi.
- Ramaswamy, E.A & Ramaswamy, Uma : 1981, Industry and Labour, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Rao, A.V. Raman : 1965, Essays on Indian Labour, Popular Prakashan, Bombay.

Rao, B. Shiva : 1939, The Industrial Worker in India, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London.

Roy, Monoranjan : 1987, Sanrajyabad Birodh Sangram O Sramik Andolan (Bengali), National Book Agency, Calcutta.

Sen, Satyendra Nath & Piplai, Tapan : 1968, Industrial Relations in the Jute Industry in West Bengal, Bookland Private Ltd, Calcutta.

Sharma, Baldev Raj : 1974, The Indian Industrial Worker, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Kanpur.

Saxena, R.C : 1953, Labour Problems and Social Welfare, Jaiprakash Nath & Co., Meerut.

Sarker, Kanchan : 1992, Study of Trade Union Organization Among the Tea Workers in Terai and Dooars Regions (unpublished Ph.D. thesis) University of North Bengal, Darjeeling.

Tea Board : 1982, Techno Economic Survey of Terai Tea Industry, Calcutta.

West Bengal Rajya Loka Sanskriti Parishad : 1992, Lokashruti.

#### Reports :

Govt. of India; 1931, Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, Calcutta.

Govt. of India : 1966, Report of the Central Wage Board for Tea Plantation Industry.

Govt. of India : 1966, Report on the Survey of Labour Conditions in Tea Plantations and Tea Factories in India, 1961-62, Delhi.

Halder, S.K : 1948, Report of an Enquiry into the Living Conditions of Tea Plantation Workers in Darjeeling-Terai, West Bengal, Calcutta.

I.L.O (International Labour Organization) : 1950, Basic Problems of Plantation Labour, Geneva.

I.L.O (International Labour Organization) : 1960, Recent Development in Certain Aspects of Indian Economy, Industrial Labour Office, New Delhi.

I.L.O (International Labour Organization) : 1961, Report of the Fourth Session of the Committee on Work on Plantations, Geneva.

J.Thomas & Company Pvt. Ltd : 1990, Tea Statistics, 1989.

Modak : 1951, Report of the Minimum Wages Advisory Committee for Tea Plantations, Calcutta.

NCL (National Commission on Labour) : 1969, Report of the Study Group for Plantations (Tea), Delhi.

Rage, D.V : 1946, Report on and Enquiry into Conditions of Labour in Plantations in India, Delhi.

Tea Board : Tea Statistics, 1955 to 1990-91, Calcutta.

Terai Planters' Association (TPA) : 1954, Proceedings on Annual General Meeting of 1953.

Terai Planters' Association (TPA) : 1955, Proceedings of Annual General meeting of 1954.

Terai Planters' Association (TPA) : 1956, Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1955.

Terai Planters' Association (TPA) : 1959, Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1958.

Terai Planters' Association (TPA) : 1960, Proceedings of Annual General meeting of 1959.

Terai Planters' Association (TPA) : 1961, Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1960.

Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association (TBITA) : 1965,  
Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1964.

Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association (TBITA) : 1967,  
Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1966.

Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association (TBITA) : 1968,  
Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1967.

Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association (TBITA) : 1969,  
Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1968.

Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association (TBITA) : 1970,  
Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1969.

Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association (TBITA) : Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1972.

Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association (TBITA), 1974,  
Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1973.

Terai Branch of Indian Tea Associations (TBITA) : 1975,  
Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1974.

Terai Branch of Indian Tea Association (TBITA) : 1978,  
Proceedings of Annual General Meeting of 1977.

Tea Association of India (North Bengal Branch) 1992 :  
Memorandum of Settlements.

Articles :

Arya, P.P : "Workers' Identification with His Union and Its Correlates", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.25, No.1, July 1989.

Bhattacharjee, Debasish : "Evolution of Unionism and Labour Market Structure - Case of Bombay Textile Mills, - 1947-1985", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXIV, No.21, May 27, 1989.

Bhowmik, Sharit : "Wages of Tea Garden Workers in West Bengal", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XVII, No.40, Oct. 1982.

Bhowmik, Sharit : "Plantation Labour Act and Child Labour", Economic and Political Weekly, Oct 17, 1992.

Balagopal, Gopalan : "Women in Tea Plantations - A Case From Dooars Area of West Bengal", The Indian Journal of Social Science, Vol.3, No.3 (1990).

Banerjee, G.D : "Structural Changes in Tea Plantation Industry", The Assam Review & Tea News, Vol.74, No.9, Nov.1985 & Vol.74, No.11, Jan 1986.

Correspondent Report : "The Plantation Workers : Another Frace of a Wage Rise", Economic and Political Weekly.

Correspondent Report :"Lessons of Two Major Industrial Disputes in West Bengal", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXIV, No.2, January 14, 1989.

Gani, A : "Industrial Relations in Jammu and Kashmir", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.26, No.1, July 1990, Vol.XXII, No.31, August 1, 1987.

Gani, A : 1992, "Membership Participation in Union Activities", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.27, No.3, January, 1992.

Hannangan : "Darjeeling Plantations", "The Assam Review & Tea News", Vol.76, No.2, April 1987.

Misra, Bhubanes, "Quality Investment and International Competitiveness - Indian Tea Industry, 1880-1910", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXII, No.6, February 7, 1987.

Murty, D.V. Giri & Rath, B.P, "Counciliation Machinery in Orissa", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.21, No.4, April, 1986.

Prasanneswari, "Industrial Relation in Tea Plantations", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XIX, Nos. 24 & 25, June 16-23, 1984.

Passey, S.L : "Role of Trade Unions : Need for New Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.25, No.4, April, 1990.

Roy, Biren, "Appeasement of Employers Fails to Pay", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXIII, No.25, June-18, 1988.

Rath, G.C, Giri D.V & Parida, S.C, "Industrial Relations in Orissa", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.27, No.2, Oct. 1991.

Ramjas, "Trade Unions and Wages : A Study of Selected Manufacturing Industries in India", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.24, No.3, January 1989.

Reddy, Y.R.K : "Strategic Approach to Labour Relations", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.23, No.1, July, 1987.

Sodhi, J.S., "Philosophy and Activities of Trade Union Leaders Regarding Family Planning of Industrial Workers : Results of Micro Studies in Ernakulam (Kerala) and Ghaziabad (U.P)", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.27, No.1, July, 1991.

Singh, Lakhwinder, "Changes in the Inter-Industry Structure of Wages : The Case of Punjab", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.27, No.2, Oct 1991.

Sircar, Kalyan Kumar : "Coolie Exodus from Assam's Chargola Valley, 1921. An Analytical Study", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXII, No.5, January, 31, 1987.

Seth, Vijay K & Seth Ashok, K., "Labour Absorption in the Indian Manufacturing Sector", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.27, July, 1991.

Sharma, Basu, Determinants of Membership Participation in Union Activities", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.22, No.4, April, 1987.

Venugopal, G.Rao, P.Subba & Rao, Ram Prasad, "Trade Union's Goals and Achievements", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.27, No.2, Oct 1991.

## **Appendices**

Appendix-I  
Area, Production and Yield Rate 1951 to 1990

| Year | Area in hectares |       |        |        |        |        |       |        |        |       | Production in Thousand kg. |        |        |        |        |        |      |     |      |      | Average Yield per hectare (in kg.) |      |      |      |     |     |     |     |     |  |
|------|------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|-----|------|------|------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|
|      | Dooars           | Darj- | Ter-   | West   | Assam  | North  | South | All    | Dooars | Darj- | Terai                      | West   | Assam  | North  | South  | All    | Doo- | Da- | Ter- | West | Ass-                               | Nor- | Sou- | All  |     |     |     |     |     |  |
|      | eel-             | ai    | Bengal | Valley | India* | In-    | In-   | In-    | ee-    | ee-   | Bengal                     | Valley | India* | In-    | In-    | In-    | ars  | ri- | Ben- | gal  | Val-                               | In-  | In-  | In-  | In- | In- | In- | In- | In- |  |
| 1    | 2                | 3     | 4      | 5      | 6      | 7      | 8     | 9      | 10     | 11    | 12                         | 13     | 14     | 15     | 16     | 17     | 18   | 19  | 20   | 21   | 22                                 | 23   | 24   | 25   |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1951 | 54609            | 16569 | 8402   | 79580  | 155674 | 248593 | 68247 | 316840 | 63994  | 7838  | 6376                       | 78158  | 150370 | 233525 | 51874  | 285399 | 1172 | 473 | 759  | 982  | 966                                | 939  | 760  | 901  |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1957 | 53754            | 18810 | 8748   | 81312  | 158177 | 251874 | 71410 | 323484 | 60242  | 7253  | 7902                       | 75397  | 161360 | 240873 | 69929  | 310802 | 1121 | 386 | 903  | 927  | 1020                               | 956  | 979  | 961  |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1958 | 53998            | 19000 | 8638   | 81636  | 159254 | 253350 | 72006 | 325356 | 59967  | 8502  | 7724                       | 76193  | 171161 | 251786 | 73439  | 325225 | 1111 | 447 | 894  | 933  | 1075                               | 994  | 1020 | 1000 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1959 | 54213            | 18526 | 9210   | 81949  | 159119 | 253507 | 72988 | 326494 | 62554  | 8592  | 8961                       | 80107  | 171046 | 255813 | 70142  | 325955 | 1154 | 454 | 973  | 978  | 1075                               | 1009 | 961  | 998  |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1960 | 54526            | 18562 | 9243   | 82331  | 161940 | 255740 | 73998 | 330738 | 63282  | 10123 | 8118                       | 81523  | 157500 | 243302 | 77775  | 321077 | 1161 | 456 | 878  | 990  | 973                                | 948  | 1051 | 971  |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1961 | 54756            | 18605 | 9344   | 82705  | 162367 | 256928 | 74301 | 331229 | 66898  | 10107 | 9253                       | 86258  | 182311 | 273305 | 81092  | 354397 | 1222 | 543 | 990  | 1043 | 1123                               | 1064 | 1091 | 1070 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1962 | 55272            | 18359 | 9233   | 82864  | 163281 | 258117 | 74407 | 332524 | 65610  | 9939  | 9151                       | 84700  | 173900 | 262831 | 83904  | 346735 | 1187 | 541 | 991  | 1022 | 1065                               | 1018 | 1128 | 1043 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1963 | 55950            | 18337 | 9328   | 83615  | 163874 | 259402 | 74634 | 334036 | 64586  | 10038 | 8832                       | 83456  | 169663 | 257445 | 88968  | 346413 | 1154 | 547 | 947  | 998  | 1035                               | 992  | 1192 | 1037 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1964 | 56682            | 18517 | 9631   | 84830  | 166251 | 263098 | 74776 | 337874 | 69637  | 10021 | 9720                       | 89378  | 195726 | 290013 | 82472  | 372485 | 1229 | 541 | 1009 | 1054 | 1177                               | 1102 | 1102 | 1102 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1965 | 56793            | 18381 | 9857   | 85031  | 169659 | 266823 | 74939 | 341762 | 67700  | 9547  | 9074                       | 86321  | 181355 | 273246 | 93128  | 366374 | 1192 | 519 | 921  | 1015 | 1069                               | 1019 | 1243 | 1072 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1966 | 57270            | 18357 | 10021  | 85648  | 172305 | 270120 | 75135 | 345256 | 69223  | 8716  | 9076                       | 87015  | 189221 | 280387 | 95596  | 375983 | 1208 | 475 | 906  | 1016 | 1098                               | 1038 | 1272 | 1089 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1967 | 57716            | 18462 | 10215  | 86393  | 174130 | 272633 | 75020 | 347653 | 76088  | 10449 | 11651                      | 98188  | 190888 | 293628 | 91131  | 384759 | 1310 | 536 | 1141 | 1137 | 1096                               | 1077 | 1215 | 1107 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1968 | 58406            | 18559 | 10510  | 87475  | 176812 | 276380 | 74685 | 351065 | 77175  | 10089 | 11086                      | 98350  | 202614 | 305257 | 97232  | 402489 | 1321 | 544 | 1055 | 1124 | 1146                               | 1104 | 1302 | 1146 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1969 | 58720            | 18258 | 10590  | 87568  | 179417 | 279064 | 74295 | 353359 | 68856  | 9530  | 10205                      | 88591  | 204738 | 297563 | 96025  | 393588 | 1173 | 522 | 964  | 1012 | 1141                               | 1066 | 1292 | 1114 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1970 | 59210            | 18067 | 10712  | 87989  | 180065 | 280126 | 74007 | 354133 | 79169  | 10058 | 11970                      | 101197 | 212027 | 317348 | 101169 | 418517 | 1337 | 557 | 1117 | 1150 | 1178                               | 1133 | 1367 | 1182 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1971 | 59485            | 18245 | 10769  | 88499  | 182325 | 282729 | 73787 | 356516 | 80840  | 10293 | 12954                      | 104087 | 223665 | 332331 | 103137 | 435468 | 1359 | 564 | 1203 | 1176 | 1227                               | 1175 | 1398 | 1221 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1972 | 59530            | 18204 | 10822  | 88556  | 184244 | 284706 | 73969 | 358575 | 84359  | 11477 | 12740                      | 108576 | 239206 | 352687 | 103309 | 455996 | 1417 | 630 | 1177 | 1226 | 1298                               | 1239 | 1397 | 1271 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1973 | 59988            | 18173 | 10864  | 89025  | 185113 | 286053 | 74055 | 360108 | 85554  | 11414 | 13521                      | 110489 | 251825 | 368161 | 103791 | 471952 | 1426 | 628 | 1245 | 1241 | 1360                               | 1287 | 1402 | 1311 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1974 | 59652            | 17679 | 10893  | 88224  | 187408 | 287512 | 74151 | 361663 | 92246  | 11453 | 14329                      | 118028 | 265281 | 389808 | 99667  | 489475 | 1546 | 648 | 1315 | 1338 | 1416                               | 1356 | 1344 | 1353 |     |     |     |     |     |  |
| 1975 | 59861            | 17910 | 10983  | 88784  | 188794 | 289503 | 73800 | 363303 | 88025  | 10687 | 13248                      | 111860 | 263055 | 380578 | 106559 | 487137 | 1470 | 593 | 1197 | 1260 | 1393                               | 1315 | 1444 | 1341 |     |     |     |     |     |  |

contd ...

## Appendix-I contd ...

| 1    | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5      | 6      | 7      | 8     | 9      | 10     | 11    | 12    | 13     | 14     | 15     | 16     | 17     | 18   | 19  | 20   | 21   | 22   | 23   | 24   | 25   |
|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1976 | 59801 | 17958 | 11040 | 88799  | 189338 | 290105 | 74170 | 164275 | 92722  | 11344 | 13657 | 117723 | 276308 | 400639 | 111178 | 511817 | 1550 | 632 | 1237 | 1326 | 1459 | 1381 | 1499 | 1405 |
| 1977 | 60099 | 18134 | 11020 | 89253  | 190621 | 291915 | 74361 | 366276 | 102157 | 11577 | 15002 | 128736 | 293837 | 427794 | 128473 | 556267 | 1700 | 638 | 1261 | 1442 | 1541 | 1465 | 1728 | 1519 |
| 1978 | 60734 | 18151 | 11064 | 89954  | 192427 | 294598 | 74586 | 369184 | 103617 | 11529 | 16731 | 131877 | 297033 | 433400 | 130446 | 563846 | 1706 | 635 | 1512 | 1466 | 1544 | 1471 | 1749 | 1527 |
| 1979 | 61171 | 18360 | 11472 | 91007  | 195459 | 298924 | 74823 | 373747 | 98621  | 10812 | 14545 | 123978 | 276190 | 404416 | 139360 | 543776 | 1612 | 589 | 1268 | 1362 | 1413 | 1353 | 1863 | 1455 |
| 1980 | 62782 | 19241 | 11474 | 93497  | 200569 | 306039 | 75047 | 381086 | 104624 | 12689 | 15872 | 133185 | 300700 | 438455 | 131095 | 569550 | 1666 | 659 | 1383 | 1424 | 1499 | 1433 | 1747 | 1494 |
| 1981 | 63418 | 19239 | 11314 | 93971  | 203038 | 309066 | 74563 | 383629 | 100241 | 12226 | 15732 | 128259 | 305130 | 437790 | 122637 | 560427 | 1581 | 635 | 1395 | 1365 | 1503 | 1416 | 1645 | 1461 |
| 1982 | 65074 | 19484 | 12055 | 96613  | 211323 | 319955 | 74215 | 394170 | 102915 | 14134 | 16216 | 133265 | 299076 | 437031 | 123531 | 560562 | 1582 | 725 | 1345 | 1379 | 1415 | 1366 | 1665 | 1422 |
| 1983 | 65265 | 19739 | 12166 | 97170  | 213007 | 322170 | 73896 | 396066 | 108218 | 14262 | 17225 | 139705 | 321641 | 466259 | 115225 | 581484 | 1658 | 722 | 1416 | 1437 | 1510 | 1447 | 1559 | 1468 |
| 1984 | 65475 | 20012 | 12301 | 97788  | 214741 | 324584 | 73869 | 398453 | 115250 | 13491 | 19552 | 148293 | 338533 | 491428 | 148436 | 639864 | 1760 | 674 | 1589 | 1516 | 1576 | 1514 | 2009 | 1606 |
| 1985 | 65816 | 19804 | 12395 | 98015  | 215117 | 325290 | 73676 | 398966 | 121956 | 12921 | 22494 | 157371 | 352538 | 514295 | 141867 | 656162 | 1853 | 652 | 1815 | 1606 | 1631 | 1576 | 1926 | 1641 |
| 1986 | 67209 | 20015 | 12905 | 100129 | 222618 | 332961 | 74686 | 407647 | 110008 | 10362 | 20900 | 141270 | 335492 | 481299 | 139504 | 620803 | 1662 | 518 | 1620 | 1426 | 1507 | 1446 | 1868 | 1523 |
| 1987 | 67422 | 20012 | 13096 | 100530 | 225783 | 336570 | 74765 | 411335 | 116229 | 12099 | 21289 | 149617 | 363739 | 518373 | 146878 | 665251 | 1750 | 605 | 1626 | 1503 | 1611 | 1540 | 1965 | 1617 |
| 1988 | 67295 | 20041 | 13280 | 100616 | 227517 | 339502 | 74845 | 414347 | 114066 | 12049 | 23919 | 150034 | 369428 | 524723 | 175291 | 700014 | 1695 | 601 | 1801 | 1491 | 1624 | 1546 | 2342 | 1689 |
| 1989 | 67620 | 20055 | 13325 | 101000 | 229428 | 340204 | 74749 | 414953 | 111380 | 12162 | 19626 | 143168 | 379855 | 529571 | 158534 | 688105 | 1647 | 606 | 1473 | 1418 | 1656 | 1557 | 2121 | 1658 |
| 1990 | 67760 | 20065 | 13345 | 101170 | 230363 | 341004 | 75559 | 416563 | 114124 | 14499 | 21130 | 149753 | 388181 | 545106 | 175232 | 720338 | 1684 | 723 | 1583 | 1480 | 1685 | 1599 | 2319 | 1729 |

Source : Data compiled from different years' Tea Statistics, Tea Board, Calcutta.

\* Includes all tea growing areas in North India.

\*\* Includes all tea growing areas in South India.

\*\*\* Includes all tea growing areas in India.

Appendix-II

Estimated Average Daily Number of Labour Employed in Tea Industry  
1961-1990

| Year | WEST BENGAL |        |       |        |       |        | TERAI |        |       |       |       |       |    |
|------|-------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|
|      | Male        | Female | Adol- | Child- | Total | Gross  | Male  | Female | Adol- | Chil- | Total | Gross |    |
|      | 1           | 2      | 3     | 4      | 5     | 6      | 7     | 8      | 9     | 10    | 11    | 12    | 13 |
| 1961 | 90285       | 89854  | 6384  | 6988   | 13372 | 193511 | 7959  | 8502   | 319   | 342   | 661   | 17122 |    |
| 1962 | 86474       | 89549  | 6207  | 7738   | 13945 | 189968 | 8194  | 8470   | 216   | 431   | 647   | 17311 |    |
| 1963 | 91168       | 90073  | 7097  | 8066   | 15163 | 196404 | 9216  | 9496   | 239   | 521   | 760   | 19472 |    |
| 1964 | 87916       | 92711  | 5274  | 9145   | 14419 | 195046 | 9135  | 9556   | 262   | 606   | 868   | 19559 |    |
| 1965 | 85774       | 91608  | 5145  | 9237   | 14382 | 191764 | 8490  | 8810   | 223   | 589   | 812   | 18112 |    |
| 1966 | 84575       | 91065  | 5366  | 10667  | 16033 | 191672 | 8474  | 8465   | 145   | 604   | 749   | 17688 |    |
| 1967 | 82548       | 88960  | 5249  | 10855  | 16104 | 187612 | 9563  | 9411   | 131   | 1025  | 1156  | 20130 |    |
| 1968 | 80453       | 87636  | 9818  | 11838  | 21565 | 189745 | 8737  | 9003   | 156   | 941   | 1097  | 18837 |    |
| 1969 | 81639       | 88836  | 5762  | 11623  | 17385 | 187860 | 8788  | 9307   | 221   | 1060  | 1281  | 19376 |    |
| 1970 | 85848       | 95385  | 6599  | 12448  | 19047 | 200280 | 8329  | 9553   | 247   | 1048  | 1295  | 19177 |    |

contd ...

Appendix-II contd ...

| 1    | 2      | 3      | 4    | 5     | 6     | 7      | 8     | 9     | 10  | 11   | 12   | 13    |
|------|--------|--------|------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|-------|
| 1971 | 85681  | 94349  | 6500 | 11490 | 17990 | 198020 | 8863  | 9616  | 260 | 975  | 1235 | 19714 |
| 1972 | 84331  | 92863  | 6398 | 11309 | 17707 | 194901 | 8225  | 8924  | 241 | 905  | 1146 | 18295 |
| 1973 | 85002  | 92901  | 6668 | 11558 | 18226 | 196129 | 8631  | 9316  | 236 | 992  | 1228 | 19175 |
| 1974 | 85278  | 95557  | 6667 | 12291 | 18958 | 199793 | 9025  | 9570  | 213 | 1345 | 1558 | 20153 |
| 1975 | 84201  | 94989  | 7616 | 13325 | 20941 | 200131 | 8646  | 9856  | 164 | 1384 | 1548 | 20050 |
| 1976 | 84834  | 94597  | 7821 | 12797 | 29618 | 200049 | 8784  | 9370  | 395 | 1506 | 1901 | 20055 |
| 1977 | 87289  | 96255  | 8003 | 13919 | 21922 | 205466 | 9051  | 9222  | 427 | 1504 | 1931 | 20204 |
| 1978 | 92219  | 95283  | 8389 | 14098 | 22487 | 209989 | 9895  | 9577  | 570 | 1436 | 2006 | 21478 |
| 1979 | 93604  | 96489  | 9442 | 13765 | 23207 | 213300 | 9981  | 10073 | 494 | 1313 | 1806 | 21861 |
| 1980 | 97374  | 100388 | 9005 | 12081 | 21086 | 218848 | 10787 | 10384 | 682 | 1437 | 2119 | 23290 |
| 1981 | 95698  | 98920  | 7045 | 12007 | 19052 | 213670 | 10163 | 10407 | 416 | 1254 | 1670 | 22240 |
| 1982 | 97804  | 99554  | 7334 | 12303 | 19637 | 216995 | 10638 | 10517 | 569 | 1486 | 2055 | 23210 |
| 1983 | 102801 | 101128 | 7768 | 9363  | 17131 | 221060 | 10565 | 10438 | 843 | 1605 | 2448 | 23451 |
| 1984 | 105079 | 102529 | 7724 | 9329  | 17053 | 224661 | 11001 | 10325 | 655 | 1567 | 2222 | 23548 |
| 1985 | 109308 | 106406 | 5996 | 10843 | 16839 | 232553 | 11224 | 10806 | 483 | 2380 | 2863 | 24893 |

contd ...

Appendix-II contd ...

| 1    | 2      | 3      | 4    | 5     | 6     | 7      | 8     | 9     | 10  | 11   | 12   | 13    |
|------|--------|--------|------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|-------|
| 1986 | 108249 | 107218 | 5699 | 10194 | 15893 | 231360 | 11404 | 10686 | 588 | 1544 | 2132 | 24222 |
| 1987 | 109171 | 111750 | 7370 | 10676 | 18046 | 238967 | 12101 | 12517 | 377 | 1392 | 1769 | 26387 |
| 1988 | 116525 | 115444 | 7170 | 12941 | 10111 | 252080 | 15584 | 14522 | 642 | 1985 | 2627 | 32733 |
| 1989 | 115393 | 118370 | 6042 | 9502  | 15544 | 249307 | 17446 | 16282 | 601 | 1661 | 2262 | 35992 |
| 1990 | 114003 | 119889 | 5821 | 8958  | 14779 | 248671 | 18575 | 17140 | 675 | 1485 | 2160 | 37875 |

Source : Data compiled from different years' Tea Statistics, Tea Board, Calcutta.

Appendix-III

**Money Wage, CPI, Real Wage, Labour Productivity and Unionisation  
in Tea Industry 1961-1990.**

| Year | Money Wage<br>(per day)<br>(in Rs.) | CPI (Base<br>1961=100) | Real Wage<br>(in Rs.) | Labour<br>Productivity<br>(in kg.) | Index of<br>Unionisation<br>1961 = 100 |
|------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 1    | 2                                   | 3                      | 4                     | 5                                  | 6                                      |
| 1961 | 1.81                                | 100.00                 | 1.81000               | 541                                | 100.0                                  |
| 1962 | 1.89                                | 103.90                 | 1.81905               | 529                                | 101.2                                  |
| 1963 | 1.89                                | 110.92                 | 1.70393               | 545                                | 113.7                                  |
| 1964 | 1.95                                | 118.38                 | 1.64723               | 497                                | 113.5                                  |
| 1965 | 1.95                                | 140.31                 | 1.38977               | 502                                | 105.1                                  |
| 1966 | 2.08                                | 168.82                 | 1.23208               | 513                                | 102.9                                  |
| 1967 | 2.10                                | 186.79                 | 1.12421               | 579                                | 115.3                                  |
| 1968 | 2.19                                | 143.86                 | 1.52231               | 589                                | 107.8                                  |
| 1969 | 2.39                                | 135.77                 | 1.76032               | 527                                | 109.9                                  |
| 1970 | 2.48                                | 140.67                 | 1.76299               | 624                                | 108.6                                  |
| 1971 | 2.71                                | 145.98                 | 1.85641               | 657                                | 112.3                                  |
| 1972 | 2.94                                | 152.30                 | 1.93040               | 696                                | 106.1                                  |
| 1973 | 3.09                                | 184.53                 | 1.67452               | 704                                | 109.0                                  |
| 1974 | 3.34                                | 230.16                 | 1.45116               | 711                                | 113.0                                  |
| 1975 | 3.79                                | 221.71                 | 1.70944               | 656                                | 112.4                                  |
| 1976 | 4.24                                | 213.69                 | 1.98418               | 681                                | 110.3                                  |
| 1977 | 5.24                                | 231.65                 | 2.26203               | 743                                | 111.0                                  |
| 1978 | 6.24                                | 233.84                 | 2.66849               | 779                                | 118.2                                  |
| 1979 | 7.14                                | 247.83                 | 2.88100               | 665                                | 121.8                                  |
| 1980 | 8.04                                | 279.34                 | 2.87821               | 681                                | 120.6                                  |

contd ...

## Appendix-III contd ...

| 1    | 2     | 3      | 4       | 5   | 6     |
|------|-------|--------|---------|-----|-------|
| 1981 | 8.94  | 304.89 | 2.93220 | 715 | 125.0 |
| 1982 | 8.94  | 338.95 | 2.63755 | 699 | 128.5 |
| 1983 | 9.69  | 363.65 | 2.66465 | 735 | 127.6 |
| 1984 | 10.44 | 401.98 | 2.59714 | 830 | 129.6 |
| 1985 | 11.19 | 429.23 | 2.60699 | 904 | 133.8 |
| 1986 | 11.19 | 492.25 | 2.27323 | 863 | 134.2 |
| 1987 | 12.04 | 536.39 | 2.24463 | 839 | 149.5 |
| 1988 | 12.89 | 461.84 | 2.79100 | 731 | 182.9 |
| 1989 | 13.74 | 482.44 | 2.84802 | 545 | 204.9 |
| 1990 | 16.44 | 565.59 | 2.90669 | 558 | 216.9 |

Source : Data compiled from different years' Tea Statistics, Tea Board, Calcutta.

## Notes :

1. The data presented in Appendix-III are related to the Terai tea gardens of West Bengal.
2. In Tea Statistics monthly CPI is given. We have computed yearly CPI by using simple average method. 1961 is taken base of CPI. We have also converted the base year of CPI to 1961. We have used the CPI for the plantation workers of Darjeeling District. The details CPI can be seen in Appendix-IV. CPI for the last three years (1988 to 1990) have been found out by Trend methods.
3. Due to non availability of yearly data in respect of amount spent in providing ration and other welfare facilities for the workers, we have taken the figures of money wages to estimate the real wages.
4. Labour productivity if found out by dividing the total production by the average daily number of labour employed. The data on production and labour employed can be seen in Appendix-I and II respectively.
5. To estimate the union membership we have taken the average daily number of adult male and female workers employed. The detail data can be seen in Appendix-II.

Appendix-IV

Consumer Price Index Numbers for Plantation Workers of Darjeeling District  
1961-1987

| Month   | 1961          | 1962         | 1963         | 1964         | 1965         | 1966         | 1967         | 1968         | 1969         | 1970         | 1971         | 1972         | 1973         | 1974         |
|---------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|         | Base-<br>1948 | Base<br>1948 | Base<br>1948 | Base<br>1948 | Base<br>1948 | Base<br>1948 | Base<br>1948 | Base<br>1960 |
|         |               |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |
|         | = 100         | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        | = 100        |
| Jan     | 116           | 118          | 125          | 125          | 150          | 186          | 192          | 177          | 157          | 160          | 161          | 172          | 182          | 247          |
| Feb     | 116           | 118          | 125          | 129          | 149          | 189          | 192          | 176          | 156          | 159          | 160          | 171          | 184          | 247          |
| Mar     | 116           | 118          | 124          | 130          | 152          | 194          | 194          | 168          | 155          | 160          | 162          | 171          | 188          | 261          |
| Apr     | 115           | 118          | 129          | 131          | 151          | 192          | 196          | 169          | 155          | 161          | 163          | 170          | 192          | 266          |
| May     | 117           | 119          | 126          | 131          | 157          | 196          | 207          | 170          | 158          | 164          | 167          | 170          | 207          | 267          |
| Jun     | 117           | 122          | 129          | 132          | 160          | 189          | 224          | 169          | 161          | 165          | 172          | 176          | 211          | 269          |
| Jul     | 117           | 122          | 131          | 133          | 173          | 184          | 229          | 165          | 162          | 166          | 172          | 179          | 217          | 272          |
| Aug     | 116           | 123          | 132          | 143          | 166          | 183          | 234          | 167          | 162          | 167          | 177          | 184          | 228          | 282          |
| Sep     | 118           | 123          | 133          | 153          | 179          | 185          | 244          | 167          | 163          | 169          | 181          | 186          | 241          | 293          |
| Oct     | 120           | 127          | 137          | 160          | 181          | 189          | 253          | 173          | 166          | 176          | 184          | 193          | 254          | 295          |
| Nov     | 121           | 130          | 137          | 152          | 183          | 190          | 244          | 168          | 160          | 172          | 182          | 190          | 248          | 281          |
| Dec     | 120           | 126          | 135          | 149          | 176          | 189          | 223          | 158          | 158          | 163          | 176          | 184          | 248          | 263          |
| Total   | 1409          | 1464         | 1563         | 1668         | 1977         | 2266         | 2632         | 2027         | 1913         | 1982         | 2057         | 2146         | 2600         | 3243         |
| Average | 117.42        | 122.00       | 130.25       | 139.00       | 164.75       | 188.83       | 219.33       | 168.92       | 159.42       | 165.17       | 171.42       | 178.83       | 216.67       | 270.25       |

contd ...

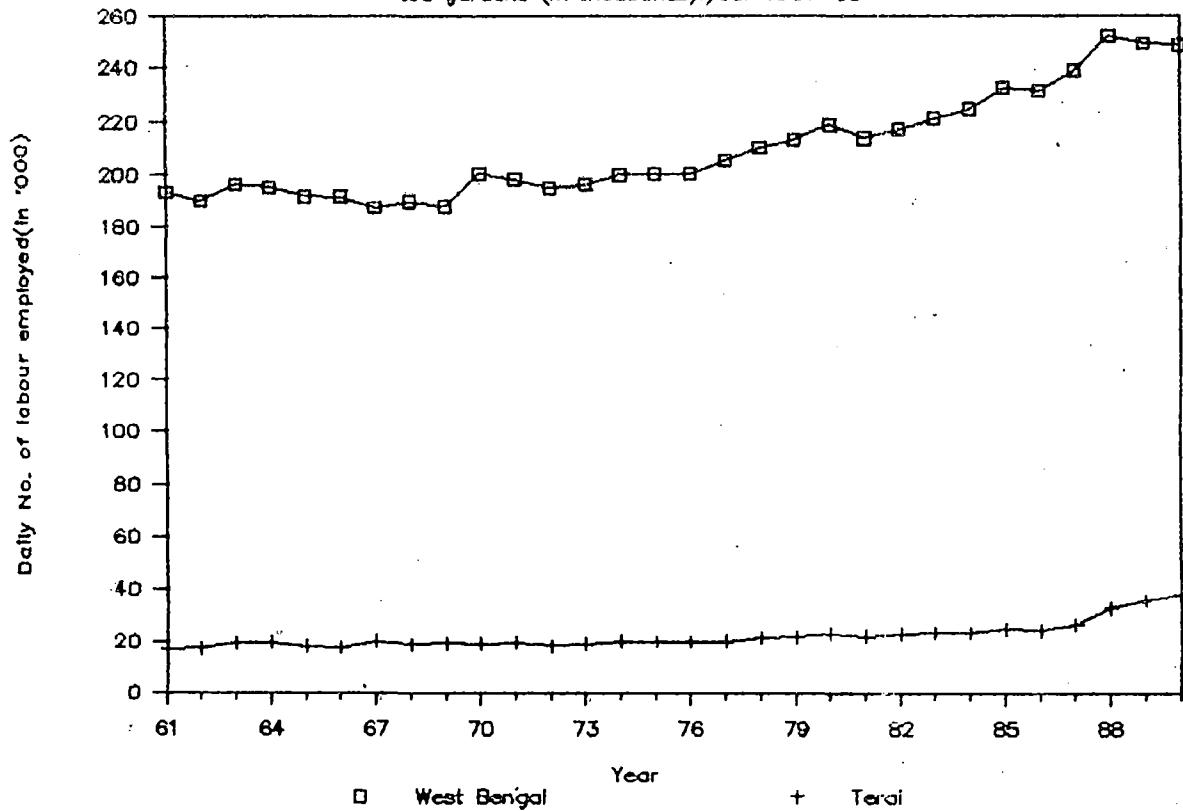
Appendix-IV contd ...

| Month   | 1975                   | 1976                   | 1977                   | 1978                   | 1979                   | 1980                   | 1981                   | 1982                   | 1983                   | 1984                   | 1985                   | 1986                   | 1987                   |
|---------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
|         | Base-<br>1960<br>= 100 |
|         |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |
| Jan     | 259                    | 240                    | 256                    | 271                    | 276                    | 308                    | 341                    | 382                    | 411                    | 463                    | 482                    | 628                    | 580                    |
| Feb     | 259                    | 283                    | 259                    | 269                    | 273                    | 313                    | 334                    | 380                    | 414                    | 459                    | 481                    | 629                    | 583                    |
| Mar     | 255                    | 235                    | 262                    | 268                    | 279                    | 312                    | 344                    | 378                    | 417                    | 460                    | 481                    | 544                    | 586                    |
| Apr     | 257                    | 239                    | 263                    | 266                    | 279                    | 313                    | 347                    | 381                    | 424                    | 452                    | 487                    | 543                    | 590                    |
| May     | 263                    | 243                    | 271                    | 268                    | 280                    | 321                    | 348                    | 386                    | 434                    | 457                    | 490                    | 556                    | 600                    |
| Jun     | 264                    | 243                    | 271                    | 272                    | 286                    | 325                    | 350                    | 389                    | 438                    | 464                    | 500                    | 557                    | 612                    |
| Jul     | 259                    | 251                    | 272                    | 275                    | 289                    | 327                    | 360                    | 396                    | 449                    | 473                    | 507                    | 558                    | 622                    |
| Aug     | 265                    | 253                    | 278                    | 277                    | 295                    | 331                    | 365                    | 405                    | 256                    | 478                    | 513                    | 565                    | 666                    |
| Sep     | 267                    | 255                    | 289                    | 277                    | 301                    | 337                    | 376                    | 413                    | 470                    | 484                    | 518                    | 571                    | 681                    |
| Oct     | 269                    | 256                    | 287                    | 287                    | 311                    | 350                    | 376                    | 421                    | 471                    | 487                    | 528                    | 596                    | 680                    |
| Nov     | 260                    | 257                    | 281                    | 285                    | 312                    | 352                    | 379                    | 421                    | 470                    | 501                    | 537                    | 597                    | 689                    |
| Dec     | 247                    | 256                    | 275                    | 280                    | 315                    | 348                    | 378                    | 419                    | 469                    | 489                    | 529                    | 587                    | 679                    |
| Total   | 3124                   | 3011                   | 3264                   | 3295                   | 3496                   | 3935                   | 4298                   | 4771                   | 5123                   | 5667                   | 6053                   | 6931                   | 7558                   |
| Average | 260.33                 | 250.92                 | 272.00                 | 274.58                 | 291.00                 | 328.00                 | 358.00                 | 398.00                 | 427.00                 | 472.00                 | 504.00                 | 578.00                 | 630.00                 |

Source : Data compiled from different years' Tea Statistics, Tea Board, Calcutta.

## Appendix - V

Average daily No. of labour employed in  
tea gardens (in thousands): year 1961-90

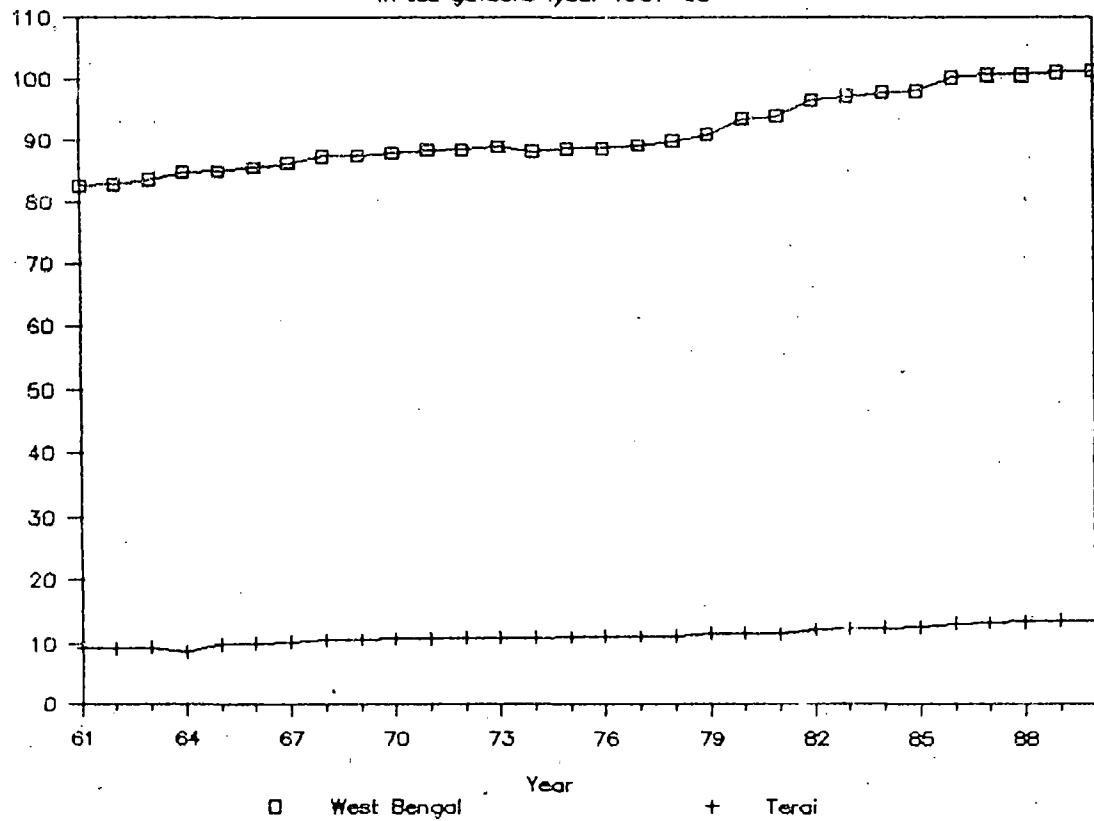


## Appendix - VI

## Area under tea (in '000 hectares)

in tea gardens (year 1961-90)

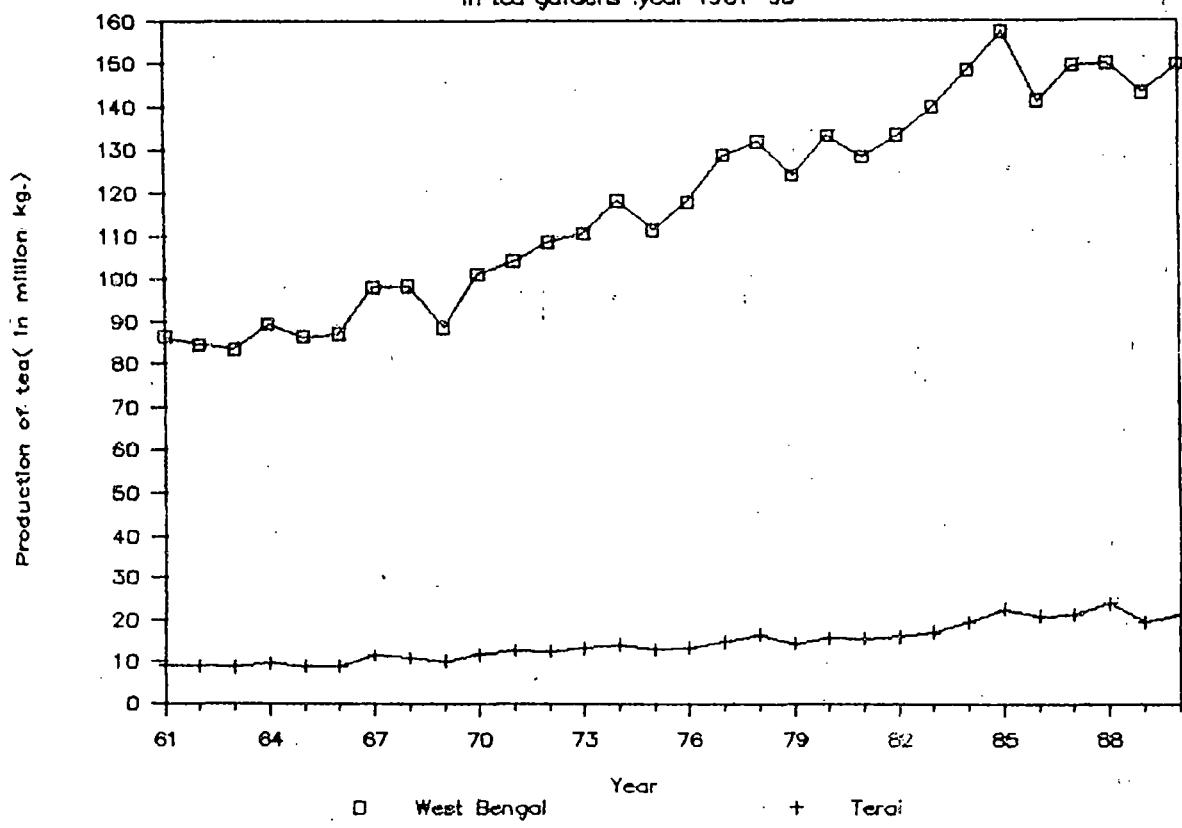
Area under tea (in '000 hectares)



## Appendix - VII

## Production of tea (in million kg.)

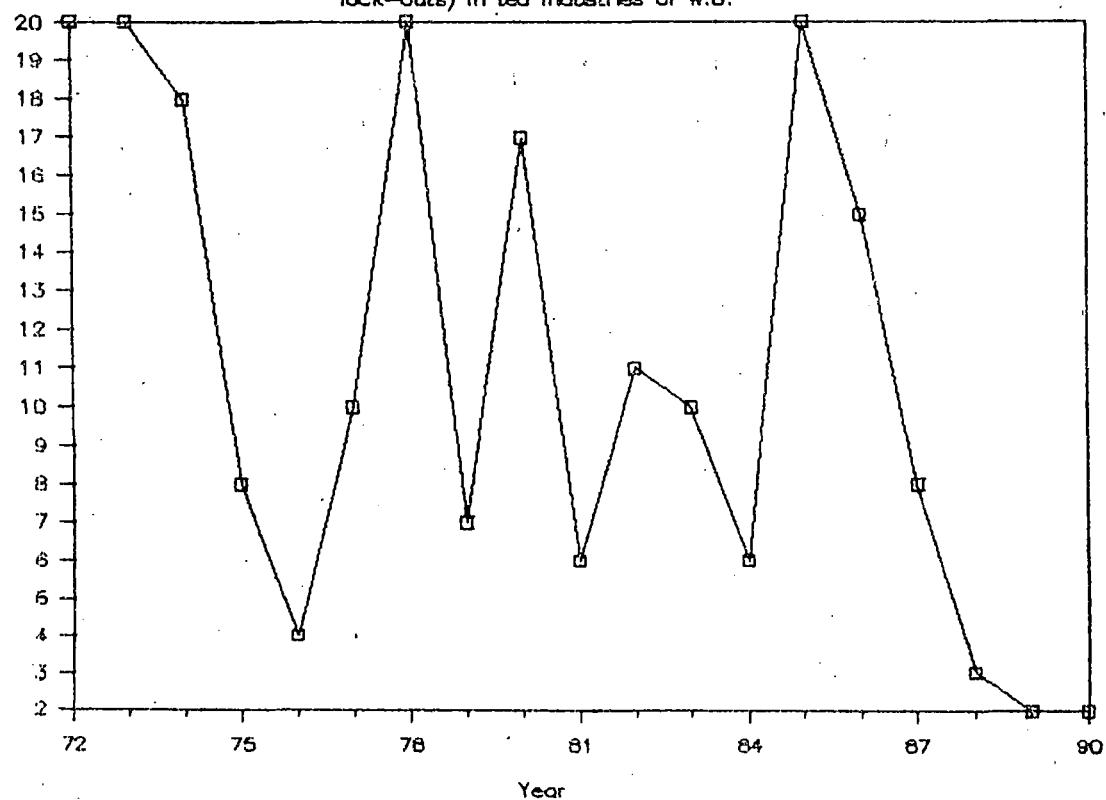
in tea gardens (year 1961-90)



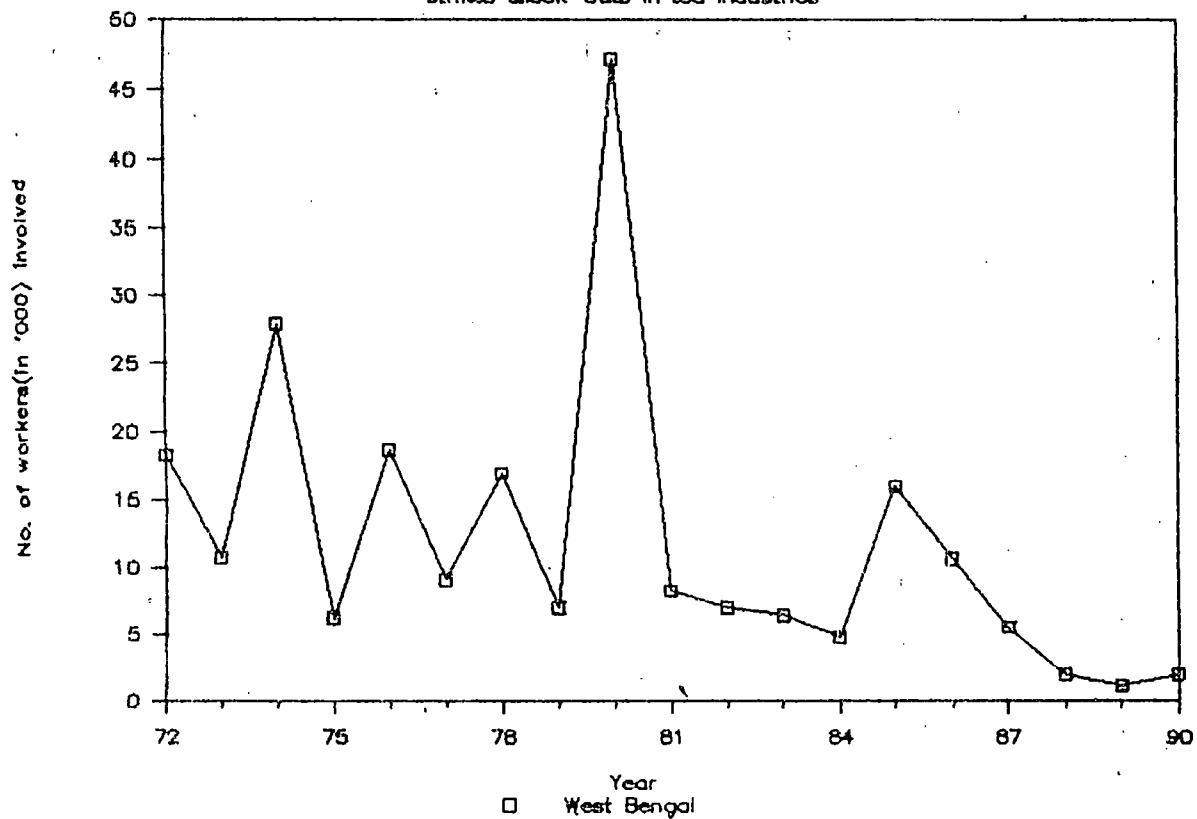
## Appendix - VIII

## No. of Industrial conflicts(strikes &amp;

lock-outs) in tea industries of W.B.

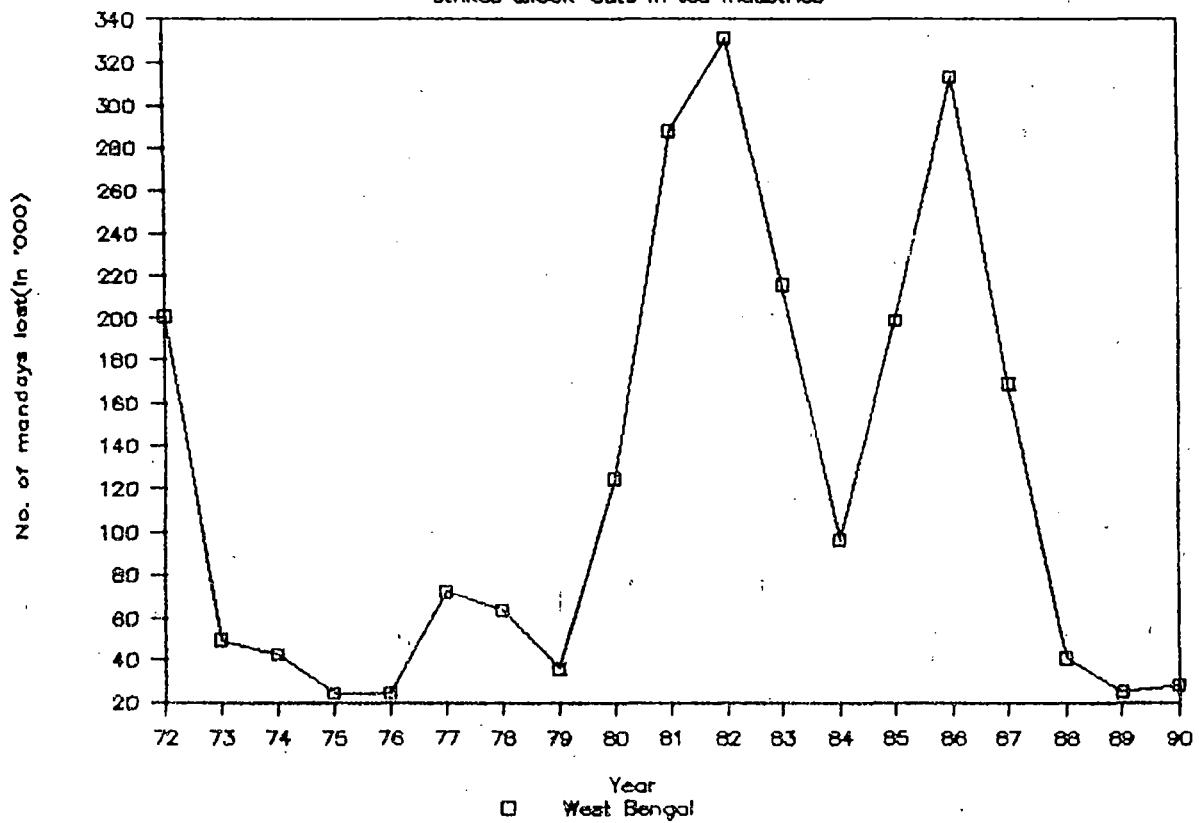


## Appendix - IX

No. of workers(in '000) involved in  
strikes & lock-outs in tea industries

## Appendix - X

No. of mandays lost(in '000) due to  
strikes & lock-outs in tea industries



## Appendix - XI

## Absenteeism Rate by industries in W.B.

Year 1974-89

