

Chapter 7

Decline of the Bengali Entrepreneurship

The tea producing areas of North Bengal such as Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts, situated at the foot of the Himalayas in a sub-mountain region are famous for three T's- tea, timber and tobacco. Among the three T's, I have chosen tea plantation because this is the oldest and biggest investment sector in North Bengal and North Eastern India. However, the most noteworthy feature of the tea planting districts of Northern Bengal like the Dooars region of the Jalpaiguri district and the hill area and Terai region of the Darjeeling district was the growth of an economic enclave in the form of the tea plantation sector. Except eight gardens located in the area west of the river Tista, all the gardens were in the Dooars. Similarly, except near about thirty gardens located in the foothill of the Darjeeling Himalaya that is the Terai region, all the gardens were in the hill area. Tea was introduced into the western Dooars from the Darjeeling district by the British planters. Tea was first planted in Darjeeling in 1839 and thereafter in Sylhet and Cachar in about 1855, in Terai in 1862 and in the Dooars in 1874¹. Tea plantation sector itself remained under extensive European control in terms of ownership and management. But certain circumstances prevailing within Jalpaiguri's society and economy led quite early in the history of the districts tea industry to the emergence of a core of indigenous capitalist entrepreneurship. From the last phase of the nineteenth century the Bengali planters made a little bit entry into the field of tea plantation. In terms of social origin the Indian entrepreneurs came mainly from Jalpaiguri town based families of Bengali Hindu and Muslim service holders, legal practitioners, traders, service holders and also of a few Marwari merchants. In this respect, the first Bengali entrepreneurs were the timber merchants, though their numbers were very meagre. Then came the lawyers and lastly the jotedars². The year 1879 was a great landmark in the history of tea plantation by the Bengali entrepreneurs of Jalpaiguri.

At the initiative of a number of energetic immigrant Bengali legal practitioners of Jalpaiguri, the first Indian joint stock tea company was formed. Its name was 'Jalpaiguri Tea Company Ltd'³. Within the European controlled plantation sector and highly superficial administrative framework the Indian entrepreneurs had a subordinate status. As late as in 1947 – 48 approximately 65 per cent gardens of the

total covering area were under the ownership and management of European concerns. In this respect it would not be exaggerate to say that the fall of Union Bank in the year of 1848 in Calcutta was addressed by a good number of historians in Indian economic history as the sunset of the Bengali entrepreneurship in trade and commerce. Professor Narendra Krishna Sinha rightly comments that ‘The union bank is no more, nor Cockerel nor Tulloh. Nor is there any ship on water, only Chhatu and Latu are crying and rolling in the dust’.⁴ European enterprises were afterwards recognized without Indian partnership and all Dwarkanath Tagore’s ventures passed to exclusive European control ⁵. But as a researcher in economic history especially on North Bengal we highly expressed our frown with this view. Because during the middle of nineteenth century though we saw the sunset of Bengali entrepreneurship in Calcutta with the fall of Union Bank but on the other hand we could see fortuitously the sunrise of Bengali entrepreneurship in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district as well. During the last half of the nineteenth century a number of tea estates began to setup in North Bengal and in Assam (Surma valley)⁶.”The total number of Indian public limited companies having registered offices in the Jalpaiguri District was 89 ⁷. A few Bengali entrepreneurs adorned the chair of various associations not even only in Calcutta but also across the whole country. Sometime this phenomenon was also extended in London also. For instances we can articulately utter the name of some stalwarts in this arena like Biren Chandra Ghosh honourable member of ITA in London, Debesh Chandra Ghosh honourable secretary of TAI North Bengal ⁸, Tarini Prasad Ray chairman of ITPA Jalpaiguri, A.C. Sen honourable secretary of DBITA and so on ⁹. The pivot role played by these Indian planters in developing the socio – economic condition not only confined to Jalpaiguri and Siliguri town only, it was also expanded in Calcutta ‘the Venice of Bengal’. To cite an example we can remember the name of Guru Das Paul Chaudhury who was said to have donated the big clock adorned on the tower of the Presidency College in Calcutta as yet ¹⁰. Perhaps, the economic historians mentioned above were unaware about this vast region which is far away from the mainstream of Bengal. Thus we can assert with confidence that when the Sun of Bengali e`ntrepreneurship set in one part of Bengal, it rose in the other part of Bengal simultaneously.

The predominance of our pioneer Bengali entrepreneurs in tea industry began to change during their third or fourth generation. We cannot see such

predominance holding by them over the tea industry of North Bengal which was set up long before by their forefathers. There is a very age – old common proverb prevailing in the society that “the family associated with the timber business cannot retain their business until their third generation”. Though it is once applicable exclusively to the timber merchant family ¹¹ but nowadays, it comes true even to the family engaged in the tea business over the years. Today they have few tea estates to exist of their own. Almost every tea estates are transferred in the hand of the non-Bengalis, excepting a few cases like Washabarie T.E. in Dooars and Bijaynagar T.E., Fulbari T.E., Kiranchandra T.E., Satish Chandra T.E., Mohargaon Gulma T. E. in Terai as well as Makaibari T.E. in Darjeeling hill. Today the number of Bengali tea-planter’s family still residing in Jalpaiguri and Siliguri town are very meagre. Either they have been settled permanently in Calcutta after selling their tea estates or nobody knows where they are now spending their life. In short, their whereabouts are unknown as if they have disappeared into oblivion. This factor actually drew me outrageously to make a study in this field. According to the field survey carried out by me, three factors identified to be highly responsible behind the fall of the Bengali entrepreneurship in the tea plantation industry in the post – independence period such as social factor, economic factor and political factor. However, before we delve into the main context of discussion, we would like to focus on one thing that is the emergence of other Indians in the tea plantation industry among which the Gujrati and Marwari community ranked first. Except the Bengali community we could not find any other Indian community stepping in this economic venture particularly before independence. The Marwaris during that period entered the tea business, not indeed as producers but as purchasers of tea from small village growers for sale to local tribal people ¹². Since independence, we find a dramatic change in the tea plantation industry of North Bengal. They are the only two communities among the whole non – Bengali’s residing in Bengal who owned most of the tea estates once run under Bengali ownership. Most importantly, it also helped us to understand the backdrop why most of the industries, business commenced by the Bengali entrepreneurs are now being controlled and managed by this two trader class only. We think it would be a futile attempt to analyse the transfer of the Bengali entrepreneurship in the tea plantation industry to other Indians since independence without discussing the role of these two business communities on the prospect of tea industry in the region under reviewed.

Tea plantation industry in India was originally initiated and developed by British enterprises. It was started on a commercial scale in India after the British monopoly of trade in tea with China was abolished in 1833 and wild tea plants, indigenous to Assam, were found in the early part of the nineteenth century¹³. In Jalpaiguri there were 18 Sterling tea companies and 33 British Rupee Public Limited tea companies. These companies employed agents or secretaries in Calcutta to implement the policies and programmes formulated by the Board of Directors in London¹⁴. The management of the estates of various Sterling and British Rupee Public Limited tea companies were vested on the British Managing Agency Houses of Calcutta. They played an important role in converting either a personal lease or proprietary estate into a public limited company¹⁵. As the Managing Agents were the organizers of the companies, they kept control over the companies. In some cases they bought the controlling shares of the companies and grants were sold to the agency houses by the private individuals generally for two reasons. Either the profits earned from the business did not satisfy their demand or they found the price offered by the agency houses too attractive to resist. These estates or grants were converted into joint – stock companies under the control of the agency houses. All the British owned companies in North – Eastern India having their head offices in London or Calcutta were dominated by British capital and their management entrusted to one or the other of the Calcutta based Managing Agency Houses¹⁶. Ellenbarrie and Manabarrie Tea Estate in Jalpaiguri Duars were established by a Calcutta Bank manager, a Darjeeling planter and a sub – manager of the Land Mortgage Bank and later came to be managed by Duncan Brothers¹⁷. The Hansqua Tea Estate was established by Arthur Currie in the 1865. Currie sold this property to Messrs R.D. Hamilton and C. F. A. Denev in 1913. D. F. Clive was the manager of this garden from 1913 to 1917. Following some misunderstanding, Denev sold his interest to Mr. Hamilton in 1916 and left to his own country England in the very next year. Mr. Hamilton also established another Tea Estate namely Gaya Ganga Tea Estate in the year 1916 and appointed his nephew A. Robertson as the manager of the garden. Since then Mr. Hamilton along with his nephew continued to reside at Gayaganga Tea Estate. The factory of both the garden was established in the year 1926. Duncan brothers formed the Hansqua Tea Co. Ltd. and purchased the Hansqua Tea Estate from A. Robertson in 1934 along with the Gayaganga Tea Estate¹⁸.

In 1947 a much greater divide could be in business history than it was in reality. With the snapping of such bonds in 1947, the colonial firms fell from grace and made a hasty retreat from India. Although some British managing agencies packed up after 1947, many others remained. Even in 1960 Calcutta had Andrew Yule, Gillanders and others that were still under British control.

The Capital Issue Control Act implemented in 1947 made a drastic change in the ownership and management pattern of tea estates in India. It compelled all joint – stock companies to obtain official permission for bonus issue of all types of securities. Under this situation, some of the tea estates owned by foreign companies transferred their ownership to Indian hands. The changes in structural development of tea industry received further momentum when the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947 and Export Import Control Act, 1947 were also implemented. The foreign tea companies were restricted to earn foreign exchange and were compelled to take official permission to import any commodity. Thus it restricted the competition among the foreign companies to secure domestic market for local producers. In view of the above, some of the foreign companies desired to sell their tea estates to the Indians. Henceforth, the foreign owned tea estates which were mainly dominated the tea industry, apprehended nationalization and decided to change their ownership to Indian hands²³.

The European tea companies were also affected by the Minimum Wages Act, 1947 and the Factory Act, 1948. The Minimum Wages Act provided that wages in tea plantation industry were to be fixed and notified by the respective Governments from time to time. The Factory Act contained various provisions limiting the permissible hours to work of a factory labour. The foreign companies which mainly dominated the tea plantation industry thus feared the possibility of low production of tea under the implementation of these acts, and found unprofitable to run business in India after meeting all the expenditure²⁴. Moreover, incessant interceptions like protest, gheraos created by the tea – garden labourers in attaining their demands and of course the slogan “Bilati Malik London Bhago” (white tea planters Go Back London) given by the same group along with the railway workers union during the Tebhaga movement in Dooars region compelled the European planters to think whether they would retain their business in India or not?²⁵ As a result the European tea companies began to shift their business in South Africa, Uganda, and Rhodesia

after selling their gardens to the native Indians²⁶. These Indians began to form the limited liability companies under the management of mainly Indian agency houses and board of directors. The Tea Act of 1953 restricted cultivation of tea in India and export of tea from India. The foreign tea companies thus felt further handicapped on account of this act²⁷.

Structural changes in the tea industry began to take place rapidly from 1956. During the period between 1956 and 1975 important legislations and policies like Industrial Policy Resolution 1956; Companies Act 1956; Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1969; Second Five Year Plan 1956 – 1961 ; Third Five Year Plan 1962 – 1967; Fourth Five Year Plan 1969 – 1974 and Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1973 were introduced. These had crucial bearing on the course of major industries. Tea being one of the major organized industries, the implementation of those legislation and policies led to far reaching changes in the structure.

The Foreign Exchange Regulation Act of 1973 stated that foreign tea companies should be converted into Indian tea companies with Indian participation not less than 26 per cent of the equity of the company. Its main objective was to prevent private monopoly, managing agents and concentration of economic powers. As a result, the tea industry where there was a monopoly of foreign companies and managing agents had undergone significant changes particularly in its ownership and management pattern. Companies like Andrew Yule, Goodricke could manage to weather the storm. But other famous firms like McLeod, Gillanders Arbuthnot and Duncan did not succeed in many of their concerns²⁸. For examples, we can mention that Duncan's Group was bought up by Keshav Prasad Goenka; MacLeod Russel by Radha Kissen Kanoria²⁹.

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, the tea-industry was financed and controlled from Calcutta but it also needed local movement of funds for the smooth working of the industry. This was supplied both by the commercial banks and tea-garden kayahs that is Marwaris whose main function was to supply commodities. The rate of interest charged by them varied from 30-60 per annum while the rate of co-operative bank was only 12.5 percent per annum. The Bengali entrepreneurs drew loans from them in lien of bond or mortgage against their land. The contract of

mortgage was done in such a way that if the owner of the tea estate failed to repay the loan within a stipulated period of time, the ownership over mortgage land would automatically be transferred to the money-lender as soon. To repay the loan what was most important to do, firstly to make inspection regularly of their gardens and secondly, to enhance the rate of production but they had no time to do it. In this way, the ownership of estates began to shift to the non-Bengalis where the Daga, Kalyani, Agarwala groups took the leadership³⁰. In Darjeeling hills, the scenario was also the same. Many British planters on account of the pressure of depression (1929-33) abandoned or closed their gardens and it was transferred to the money-lenders to whom it was mortgaged. Either as members of the board of Directors or the owner of T.E. they gradually began to control tea investment. Moreover, after 1947, the British planters began to hesitate whether they would retain their own enterprises or not. This hesitation ultimately culminated into the gradual change of ownership in favour of the Indian community among them Goenka family of Kurseong or Bhojraj family of Gangtok were prominent. The Kanaj Banias of Uttarpradesh were active in the operations and also entered into ownership of plantation. By 1970 the ownership pattern was found to have changed significantly³¹. It is very interesting to note that in between 1954-72 the share of sterling companies had declined. In 1972, altogether 105 sterling companies were operating in the country as against 134 in 1954. In case of Darjeeling hills, in between 1960- 76, the number of sterling companies has come down from 15 to 11.

Table 7.1 Position of Sterling tea Companies in Darjeling Hill between 1960 – 76.

Year	1960	1976
No. of Gardens	97	97
N.A.	3	3
Sterling companies	15	11
Rupee companies	45	44
Private Ltd companies	9	14
Proprietary companies	25	35

(Source: Private Documents, Darjeeling Branch Indian Tea Association)

It shows that in between 1960-76, the no. of Private Ltd. companies has gone up where as the no. of sterling companies has gone down ³². Prof. Manash Dasgupta also illustrated the same picture through a table mentioned below-----

<i>Ownership Categories</i>	Ownership since 1947		Ownership since 1970	
	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Non-Indian</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Non-Indian</i>
Proprietary	31	3	32	--
Private Ltd	1	0	12	--
Public Ltd	31	10	41	--
Sterling Co	-	30	-	16
Total	53	48	85	16

(Source: Private Documents, Darjeeling Branch Indian Tea Association)

In this context, it is important to note that the decline of London Auction and the coming up of Calcutta in 1947 interpreted as a warning for the British planters to leave. However, altogether 122 gardens were put on sale in between 1947-76 which mean that over 41 percent of the total numbers of tea-garden has changed its ownership during this period.

<i>From to</i>	<i>Indian Proprietary</i>	<i>Rupee Public Ltd</i>	<i>Rupee Pvt. Ltd</i>	<i>Total</i>
British Proprietary	6	2	--	8
Indian proprietary	10	1	3	14

Rupee Pvt. Ltd	1	--	--	1
Rupee Public Ltd.	1	--	4	5
Sterling Company	1	2	2	5
Total	19	5	9	33

(Source: Private Documents, Darjeeling Branch Indian Tea Association)

It shows that 19 estates have come under Indian proprietary's from their British counter part, joint stock companies both Rupee sterling and Indian proprietors themselves. This is the trend of change since 1947. That is to say, ownership became to move gradually from the house of early adopters and late adopters to the house of mortgages and financiered and also to the ration supplier of estates.

Table 7.3 Community wise direction of change -a survey of 33 gardens in hills						
From	Beng	Marwari	Gujrati	Other	British	Total
Bengali	5	1	1	--	--	7
Marwari	--	8	1	3	--	12
Gujrati	--	1	1	--	--	2
British	1	10	--	--	--	11
Other	--	--	--	1	--	1
Total	6	20	3	4	3	36

(Source: Private Documents, Darjeeling Branch Indian Tea Association)

It proved that in between 1947-70, highest number of tea estates was transferred from the British ownership to other Indians. There are two important features of this table mentioned above. One is for all changes and second is for inter-community changes. In first phase, ownership had been changed from British to the Indians and second case from Bengali community to other Indians especially Marwaris. This inter-community change is of much greater importance than inter-national change³³.

Here I am giving some instances to clarify the fact---

- The Longview T.E.

Its first owner was James Warren Co. Ltd. later transferred to the Daga Family of Jalpaiguri.

- Bagdogra T.E.

It was sold to Maindhandas Agarwala by the EF Southern company in 1956.

- Atal T.E. and Sington T.E.

The two estates were sold to N.C. Goenka (Kurseong) in 1947 from the Andrew Yule Company. After his death, the firm was shifted to Calcutta.

- In 1944, K.M.Sicka (came from Kathiwar) purchased 4 gardens from the kingsley family of Darjeeling.
- The Kananji family of Sahu (supplier of commodities in Dooars) who had *gaddi* at Damdim in Jalpaiguri becomes the owner of gardens in the hills³⁴.

To clarify the scenario some examples are given below-

Longview Tea Estate

This tea estate was incorporated on 16th January, 1879 by James Warren and Company Ltd. (formerly known as Planter's Stores and Agency Co. Ltd.) who had been looking after the management of the company as secretary and treasurers, registered on 31st January, 1950³⁵. In 1970 the ownership of this tea estate was transferred to Dagapur Tea Co. Ltd., Jalpaiguri, a private company incorporated in the year 1933 under Indian Companies Act 1913. In the same decade ownership of other tea estates controlled under Long View Tea Company came under the ownership of Daga family such as Rohini, Orange valley, Phugri. The Daga family has also promoted other industrial enterprises including Deepak spinners Ltd, Deepak Industries Ltd and continental profiles Ltd³⁶.

Bagdogra Tea Estate

The foundation of this tea estate was laid down by E.F. Southern and Others³⁷. It was sold to Maithan Das Agarwala in 1956. He along with his son Ajit Prasad Agarwala formed Terai Tea Co. Ltd. This company now possesses 8 tea estates under its management. However, all these estates were bought from the British and Bengali tea companies.

Lohagarh Tea Estate

This tea estate was incorporated by Octavious Steel Company Ltd. Later its ownership was transferred to National Indian Traders Pvt. Ltd in 1960's. Their head office was at 49, Steeple House B.B.D. Bag, Kol-1. On 15th April 1976, the ownership of this tea estate was further transferred to Maithan Das Agarwala³⁸.

Atal and Singhton Tea Estate

These two estates were laid down by the Andrew Yule and Co. Ltd. It was primarily a managing agency who made their money in trade or as labour contractor in tea estates. Andrew Yule started in trade and entered the fields of coal and steamships before they took up the jute industry. Later they started their venture in tea industry³⁹. Their first venture in tea industry of the Terai region was the Atal Tea Estate and Singhton Tea Estate in Darjeeling hill. Later this two estates were purchased by N.C. Goenka, a trader from Kurseong in 1947⁴⁰.

Chuniajhora T.E., Jayanti T.E., Phanskhowa T.E., Bhatpara T.E.

These four tea estates lying in the border area of Bhutan were opened up by the McLeod Russel India Ltd, a group of William Magor and Company with its head office in London. Two Englishmen namely Captain J.H. Williamson and Richard Boycott Magor based in Calcutta formed a partnership firm namely Williamson Magor and Company to service the requirements of tea estates in North – East India under the flagship of McLeod Russel and Company. The office was originally at 7 new China Bazar Street, Calcutta before they moved to Four Mangoe Lane in 1894 where the company is still located today. It was renamed as Williamson Magor and Company Ltd.⁴¹ When it changed its status to a limited company in 1954 Brijmohan Khaitan, an East Indian merchant who used to supply fertilizers and tea chests to the

tea estates of this company was asked to join the board of the company in 1963. Thus he became the Managing Director of the Company in 1964. In 1967 the Guthrie family in U.K. sold their all shares to the McLeod Russel group which included the Makum and Namdung Tea Companies to the Khaitan family, making the way to form the Macneill and Magor group. In 1992 Macneill and Magor group was renamed as Williamson Magor and Company Ltd. It was originally incorporated as Ever Ready Company India Pvt. Ltd on 5th May 1998. The company's tea is marketed under the registered Elephant trade mark. The present Managing Director of the company including the tea estates is Aditya Khaitan ⁴².

More examples relating to the context mentioned above are given below -

Name of the Tea Estate	Earlier Owner	Present Owner
Bhagatpur	Arbuthnot Gillanders	Bhagatpur Tea Co. Ltd.
Ranichera	McLeod Russel Group	Nirmal Kumar Jhunjhunwala
Raimatang	Wallace Tea Co.	Kanoi Brothers
Marianbari	Longview Tea Co.	Jayashree Tea & Industries
Belgachi & Panighata	Devenport Tea Co.	Dalmia and Sharaff group
Ord Terai	Duncan Brothers	Tarachand agarwal
Putinbarie	Duncan Brothers	Bangalore Pesticide
Jaybirpara	Andrew Yule and Co.	Mehta Borthres (Gold Brew Agro Industries Ltd.)

(Source: Touji Dept. District Magistrate office, Jalpaiguri)

It is true that a large number of foreign tea companies after went back to their own country a few of them further put their steps in India like Goodricke Tea Company which has its main head quarter in London. After went back to England, this tea company further incorporated in India on 14th June 1977 and the certificate of commencement of business was obtained on 27th June , 1977. It was formed to take over the Indian business and assets of eight sterling tea companies comprising 17 tea estates. Now it has eight tea companies like The Assam – Dooars Tea Company Limited, Hope Tea Company Limited, Lebong Chulsa Tea Company Limited, The Darjeeling Tea Company Limited, Chulsa Tea Company Limited, Leesh River Tea Company Limited, Danguajhar Tea Company Limited, Meenglass Tea Company

Limited. These are amalgamated with the Goodricke tea Company since 31st December 1977. However, some examples are given below to help the readers to know that how many tea estates which were worked earlier under Indian management are now being owned and controlled by this foreign tea Company⁴³.

Name of the Tea Estate	Previous Lease	Present Lease	Date of Transfer
Gendrapara	Assam Duars Tea Co. Ltd.	Goodricke Group	09/08/1980
Laxmipara	Assam Duars Tea Co. Ltd.	Goodricke Group	09/08/1980
Dalimkote	Meenglass Tea Co. Ltd.	Goodricke Group	09/08/1980
Patibari	Leesh River Tea Co. Ltd.	Goodricke Group	09/08/1980
Hope	Hope Tea Co. Ltd.	Goodricke Group	09/08/1980
Aibheel	Chalsa Tea Co. Ltd.	Goodricke Group	09/08/1980

(Source: Touji Department, District Magistrate Office, Jalpaiguri)

Question may arise that why most of the European tea estates were sold only to the non – Bengalis, not to the Bengalis since then a large number of Bengali tea planters were very much there. To cite an example we can mention the Sonali Tea Estate as a case – study. This tea estate was established in 1906 by a Sterling Company named “The Empire of India and Ceylon Tea Company”. Up to 1960 Sonali was a division of Bagrakot Tea Estate which was founded in the year 1876⁴⁴. Sonali was then known as the Saongaon Division of Bagrakot Tea Estate. In 1960 it was sold to an Indian managed Tea Company the “Great Gopalpur Tea Company “ (Regd. No. 21692) in exchange of Rs. 2 lakhs. Since then it acquired a separate identity and began to run with a new name. The owner of the Bagrakot Tea Estate B.C. Ghosh of Jalpaiguri town renamed the tea estate with his daughter’s name ‘Sonali’. The garden had a total area of 1174.63 acres of which 458.16 acres were under tea. It had no its personal factory within the garden premises and hence all teas produced in the garden were sold to the nearest factory of Good Hope Tea Estate controlled under the name

of the Duncan Goenkas. As the years went on, the Gopalpur Tea Company faced some financial problems to run the garden due to the fall of tea price in 1970's and most of its shares were sold to khemka brothers namely Bijay Kumar khemka and Krishna Kumar khemka. Since their period the garden was mortgaged to the United Bank of India (U.B.I.) and the khemka brother's fled away from the garden silently before the Durga Puja in 1973 ⁴⁵.

Several reasons were responsible for this situation. Firstly, the Bengali tea planters always fought against the British Government either to set up their own gardens or even to set up their own economic identity by establishing various tea associations like "Indian Tea Planter's Association" (ITPA) in Jalpaiguri town and "Terai Indian Planter's Association" (TIPA) in Matigara, Siliguri. What is more interesting is the recognition of the Indian Planters' own Associations like ITPA, TIPA by even the ruling British planters against whom the founder had waged a persistent *Jehad* right from the moment of its birth against the mechanization of British influence. They could not deny the popularity of these Associations in spite of their bitter feeling towards it ⁴⁶.

Secondly, the Bengali tea planters like Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, Sashi Bhushan Neyogi, Tarini Prasad Ray had a major role in India's Freedom Struggle by affording all sort of assistance to the freedom fighters or even with the participation in the Swadeshi movement ⁴⁷. So we could see that from the very beginning a monstrous tussle was there in between the European and Bengali tea planters.

Thirdly, though a large number of Bengali tea planters were there but they were not in a position to buy another tea estate on account of their weak financial condition and feudal life style ⁴⁸. The drastic fall of tea price in 1970's and 1980's hit their tea estates badly. They had no reserve fund at all to survive their tea estates from this financial depressing condition. So, under the circumstances it was really impossible for them to buy another tea estate owned by the Europeans rather surviving their own tea estates.

With the depression of the 1930s, the drastic contraction of the export and import trade hit European business badly. Due to the fall of share prices in 1930s and again in 1937-39 a few managing agencies were quick to realize that they could not continue on the rump of jute, coal and tea. As in 1930s most of the European gardens

had cash shortages, the Marwari Banias continued to refinance these gardens, held on to the shares and thus got themselves into boards. However, the companies that survived the 1930s and 1940s and remained after 1947 and were prosperous until the mid 1960s finally sold to marwaris. It was not so that the Raj had come to an end. Deeply in debt, these companies were brought up by their old banias: Duncan by Keshav Prasad Goenka. This opportunity was engulfed by the Marwari, Gujrati traders as a whole during the economic depression in 1930's and most importantly after independence. Their relation with the European firms as managing agents or as a guaranteed broker, colloquially "Banian" brought to them the opportunity of buying the tea estates from the European companies. Sometime the relation between the guaranteed broker and the European firm were far closer than the simple relationship. For examples, Goenka group were closely related with the Duncans; Tarachand Ghanshyamdas itself became Banian to Wallace Tea Company; Radha Kissen Kanoria was closely related with the McLeod and Co. from 1887⁴⁹. Timberg observes that where opportunities were less or competition potent, they moved less rapidly. Their migration were rapid to those fields which formed, in the words of Timberg, a "commercial vacuum" and where the indigenous population were neither well organized nor provided with the other requisites to exploit the new trading opportunities opened up by the British⁵⁰. This type of privilege was available in the tea industry of North Bengal since independence. The Bengalis, the pioneer tea planters among the Indians after the British could not grab the opportunity due to their financial weakness. In addition to that the long – absence of any Indian merchant in the tea industry of North Bengal actually helped the Marwaris to buy the tea estates from the foreign tea companies⁵¹. Lastly, the most notable feature about this community is that they always present themselves as a closed – knit community anywhere in this vast country. They used to take good care of each other, provided food and shelter to those who would come later to try their luck⁵². Sometimes they would even collectively contribute a small amount of money so that one newly arrived could start a business of one's own⁵³. Due to this attitude this community now stands as the major owner of tea estates not even in North Bengal but across all over India.

Lastly, another factor which accelerated the emergence of the non – Bengalis in the tea plantation industry in North Bengal since independence was the

formation of their own association namely the “Tea Association of India” (TAI) in the year 1955. It’s most prominent members belonged to the Marwari Community like Jalan, Birla, Goenka, Mintri and this may be the reason for the formation of a new body. It is, affiliated to the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta ⁵⁴. However, this Association has seven branches all over India. In North Bengal this Association has two branches in Ethelbari, Dist - Jalpaiguri and Siliguri, Dist – Darjeeling ⁵⁵. Since its inception the Marwari traders coming from various parts of Western India and of course after the formation of Bangladesh in the year 1971 began to take interest in the tea plantation industry of this region. This Association actually strengthened the hands of these Marwari businessmen (most of them were jute traders) from all angles having compelled to migrate to this area of North Bengal due to the jeopardous condition caused by the formation of Bangladesh in 1971, they started investing in the tea industry ⁵⁶.

Therefore from the above discussion we can say that among the whole non – Bengali communities dwelling in Bengal why the Marwari, Gujrati ranked first in purchasing the tea estates owned and controlled by the Europeans in post – independence period. Literally to say, particular socio – economic condition had to facilitate the advent of the Non – Bengali merchants in the tea – plantation industry of North Bengal. Their relation with the European firms as managing agents or as a broker brought to them the opportunity of buying the tea estates from the European companies. Furthermore, the cooperating mentality of this community to the new comers belonging to the same community in any form and of course the organizational mastery in Indian business since the British period was itself a prime advantage to the rise of Marwari, Gujrati traders in the tea – plantation industry of North Bengal. Finally to say, the advantage of the long – absence of any Indian merchant except the Bengalis in the tea industry of North Bengal in post – colonial period was taken up by the Marwari community very quickly and that is why, a definite shift in Indian entrepreneurship took place from 1947 onwards. Not only the estates owned by the British proprietors or sterling companies changed hands but also the ownership estates of the Indians changed into group or community within the same community. The new owners in this respect were mainly of three Indian communities i.e. Bengalis, Marwaris, Gujratis among them the Marwaris took the supreme position. This situation surely strengthened the hands of these two

communities for the pretext of buying sick tea estates owned and controlled by the Bengalis.

So having been analysed the scenario behind the advent of the non – Bengalis in the tea – plantation industry in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts which surely helped us to understand that in what way and for what type of interest they switched over to the new economic venture after coal and jute industry in the post – colonial period. Attention now have been given on the fall of the Bengali entrepreneurship, side by side the transference of the tea estates owned and controlled by the Bengalis to the non – Bengalis. Among the causes responsible behind the fall of the Bengali entrepreneurship first of all I will analyse the social causes.

(a)social Premise

Indian enterprise, according to Professor Rajat Kanta Ray, was confined to the second – class tea gardens in Jalpaiguri district. Within the European controlled plantation sector and highly superficial administrative framework the Indian entrepreneurs had a subordinate status⁵⁷. They started with very small capitals which they could gather as none could subscribe a large portion of the capital. Practically it was an association of poor men to do a big thing⁵⁸. Till their second generation the tea Bengalo owned tea estates did not come across any major problem. But since their third or fourth generation the scenario began to change. The financial liabilities of the weak tea-estates began to mount on a large scale. They failed to repay the loans drew from various financial institutions. Under the circumstances the system of direction and control was required to be changed. But the entrepreneurial behavior remains unchanged. They failed to go ahead with the tempo of change of the contemporary period. Therefore the entrepreneurial function of the Bengalis came to an end.

Even as directors they seldom attended the meeting. Inspection was made very infrequently. As we know, opportunity for profession and services had begun to multiply with the passage of time. Professions ranged from independent practice to salaried job. It also attracted them to live a safe life rather than taking risk and liability of the industry. Thus when the first generation of the promoter entrepreneurs had retired from the scene their places were filled up by their successors who unhesitatingly pursued the policy of partial environment .They occupied the position

of their father in the Board of Directors but did not show greater interest in investment than their forebears had done in their regime ⁵⁹. This situation no doubt created a massive gap in between the management and the owners of the Bengali – owned gardens.

As we know the first generation Bengali entrepreneurs did not indulge in leading a sedentary life of having a nap after the lunch. They were very kinetic in their work. They had no time to visit their gardens. Literally to say, they loved to visit their gardens with their own affections, not as a duty. They always remained busy to talk with others pertaining to the development of their gardens ⁶⁰. Unfortunately, this type of attitude was not present among their third or fourth generation. They looked after their gardens as ancestral property, not as their duty.

One of the fundamental drawbacks of the Bengali planters was their excessive reliance on the local financiers. This, no doubt, set a limit to their capacity to raise adequate funds. On the other hand, the high rate of dividends declared by the tea-companies made debentures in their fixed income. In this respect it is desirable to mention that the first dividend declared by a Bengali owned Tea Company was the ‘Gopalpur Tea Company’ in 1922 ⁶¹. However, to maintain the legacy the third generation Bengali planters started to give dividends whether the situation was suitable or not. To prove their efficiency and keep the share-holders satisfied, the third generation entrepreneurs distributed most of the revenue. Therefore, no reserve was set aside at all. This dividend policy, as a result, posed an ulcer in the way of running their tea- gardens. As a matter of fact, the companies, even when profit was very high, had to rely to a large extent on external finance to run the estate from one year end to another. As a result, they extended their hands to the banks for receiving loan. It is important to mention here that Reserve Bank of India have formed some committees like Dutta Committee, Chaube Committee, Tendon Committee, Ghosh Committee to draw loans to the financially weakened gardens. But where lies the main problem is that these gardens could not draw loans up to their need. The part-time directors actually did not know what to do under such circumstances. In some cases the private financiers or public financial institutions purchased the estates in order to salvage the money which they lent out to the garden in the form of loan ⁶².

To cite an example we can mention the Sonali Tea Estate case. This tea estate was established in 1906 by a Sterling Company called “The Empire of India and Ceylon Tea Company”. Up to 1960 Sonali was a division of Bagrakot Tea Estate which was founded in the year 1876. Sonali was then known as the Saongaon Division of Bagrakot Tea Estate ⁶³. In 1960 it was sold to an Indian managed Tea Company the “Great Gopalpur Tea Company” (Regd. No. 21692) in exchange of Rs. 2 lakhs. Since then it acquired a separate identity and began to run with a new name. The owner of the Bagrakot Tea Estate B.C. Ghosh renamed the estate with his daughter’s name ‘Sonali’. The garden had a total area of 1174.63 acres of which 458.16 acres were under tea. It had no its personal factory within the garden premises and hence all teas produced in the garden were sold to the nearest factory of Good Hope Tea Estate controlled under the name of the Duncan Goenkas. As the years went on, the Gopalpur Tea Company faced some financial problems to run the garden due to the fall of tea price in 1970’s and most of its shares were sold to khemka brothers namely Bijay Kumar khemka and Krishna Kumar khemka. Since their period the garden was mortgaged to the United Bank of India and the khemka brother’s fled away from the garden silently before the Durga Puja in 1973 ⁶⁴.

The concept of “socialist pattern of society” declared by prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1963 deteriorated the tea estates owned by the Bengali entrepreneurs to a large extent. It changed the big invest sectors like tea into a socialist sector ⁶⁵. Prior to 1962, jute, coal sectors have already been socialized. In 1964, Central Govt. took the responsibility of import-export business of food into his own hand ⁶⁶. It jeopardized the Bengali entrepreneurs by speculating that monopoly and huge income from tea gardens would be impossible in future. Even they were not sure whether the Govt. would pay any reparation or not once the tea estates are taken out. Because the owners of the coal mines till then did not get any reparation. A number of cases were put on trial in the Supreme Court pertaining to this issue. Hence, a large number of Bengali entrepreneurs decided to sell their gardens and this opportunity was taken by the non Bengalis. Because after establishing a sound control on export-import business of food grains, of which a large portion was in the hand of the non Bengalis before 1962, they started to find out a big sector where they could invest their black money comfortably. In this way the ownership of a huge number of tea estates were transferred from Bengalis to non Bengalis in between 1964-67. But

when Morarji Desai, the finance minister of prime minister Smt. Indira Gandhi's cabinet ministry announced that India did not require the 'Socialist Pattern of Society' because it had already its social control over banking and other investment-sector no doubt disheartened the Bengali entrepreneurs because prior to it damages had already been done to them as the ownership was transferred to the non-Bengalis. In 1967, approximately forty percent ownership has been changed ⁶⁷.

The Bengali entrepreneurs always favoured to spend their life in a Zamindari or feudal style ⁶⁸. They did not collect everyday news about their garden, not tried to increase the controlling power in the board of directors, or even to increase the number of shares under their names. As they were so much involved in leading an indisciplined aristocratic lifestyle in Calcutta, it was not at all possible for them to pay heed to their own gardens situated in the far – flung areas from Calcutta. Consequently this practice was ultimately culminated in creating a massive gap between the management and the Bengali owners. Nevertheless, the third or fourth generation Bengali planters used to visit their gardens now and then with their friends, relatives and the huge expense of these tours were borne by the tea garden authorities alone. In addition to this, whenever some respectable dignitary like ministers, film stars used to come to their gardens extravagant arrangements were made for their stay during those days and for highly entertainment also. Even sometimes, half day holiday was declared in honour of the aforesaid guests. Needless to mention, these social factors exterminated the repository fund of the gardens expeditately ⁶⁹.

Moreover, family-feuds among two brothers made the situation worse when one of them often secretly leaked the secret number of shares in the market just to make the other one insignificant and irrelevant. By taking advantage of this situation, most of the non – Bengali merchants assigned these shares to his name through the High Court and thus he became the director of the board by keeping highest number of shares under himself ⁷⁰.

The first generation Bengali entrepreneurs had a great habit to gather valuable books regarding tea and tea business. They themselves read those books and also allowed their colleagues to go through these. They assimilated the ideas collected from these books and implemented those in their gardens. Some venerable names in this regard are the renowned tea planter Pasupati Nath Banarjee of Happy Valley Tea

Estate, Darjeeling⁷¹ and Jogesh Chandra Ghosh of Jalpaiguri town⁷². They possessed a rich library which consisted of different types of nationally and internationally acclaimed books. The first generation Bengali planters went through these books, discussed and debated the matters, open heartedly received advises from others, tried to keep up with the development of the tea business in the national and inter – national scenario. They used to invite connoisseurs of the tea industry and held long discussions with them for taking help from their experience and implemented those ideas to enrich their own gardens⁷³. Needless to say, their third generation were devoid of such qualities as was exercised by their forefathers.

One of the pillars of success of an industry rests on reliable individuals. As we know in 1930's with the World wide economic depression the tea industry received a monstrous set back. It compelled plenty European tea companies to sell their tea estates to the Indians. This crisis period also hit the tea estates owned and controlled by the Bengali planters but not to a large extent. With the untiring efforts of Sir R.N. Mukharjee, tea industrialist Tarini Prasad Ray and Jogesh Chandra Ghosh of Jalpaiguri town who could relieve a number of Bengali owned gardens from such financial crisis⁷⁴. But unfortunately such mentality was not possessed by their shiftless third generation. They used to treat their garden managers, staffs rudely. Experience was never paid heed to. Rather they gloated for the degree which they acquired in the abroad. Thus the management of their gardens usually collapsed with the turn of a year.

Andrew Carnegi in his book “The Empire of Business” has stressed on the importance of the dignity of labour. According to him, whoever wants to rise in a prominent position in the business must have the seeds of this business sown in his mind long before his arrival in this territory. Carnegi's observation is quite adequately applicable to the first and second generation Bengali planters. They never regarded any job menial or undignified. From labourers to bearers – all had an egalitarian weight age in their eyes. Henry Kaiser in his book “Seven keys to Success” stated that most of the people implemented just one part of their work strength out of ten per cent. So whenever a worker exercises half of his capabilities, he succeeds in his endeavour. This is aptly applicable for the first and second generation Bengali entrepreneurs. In addition to that the first or second generation Bengali entrepreneurs were courteous, assertive, friendly and family oriented,

generous yet cautious with money. They always valued honesty, attention and compatibility and most importantly were always willing to take risks. These praiseworthy qualities made them a successful tea planter in the colonial period ⁷⁵. Unfortunately, these were never perceived by their third or fourth generation. Exceptions are there but the number is very negligible.

There is one more important factor that led to the fall of the Bengali entrepreneurship in tea industry and that, I think, is the most crucial factor. It was the excessive responsibilities vested on the managers and excessive reliance on them. The managers of tea gardens play a momentous role in the management of the gardens, promotion of plantation and improvement the quality and quantity of production, in maintaining good labour management relation and also public relations ⁷⁶. During the reign of the first and second generation Bengali entrepreneurs the managers worked under them were very friendly and also competent professional managers. His (the manager) family members always could enter the garden owner's house at any time. Sometimes children of both the families studied in same school. This type of behaviour no doubt created a bond of friendship between the two families which inspired the manager to do always better for the garden. In this respect the establishment history of Madhu tea estate is worthy to mention. Jay Govinda Guha was the most able associate and competent manager of Tarini Prasad Ray. After the sudden demise of his elder son Madhusudan Guha who was a bright young medical practitioner, Jay Govinda Guha decided to take retirement from his active life. It made Tarini Prasad Ray so anxious about the 'Tea Man' and that is why he set up another tea estate in commemoration with the name of his friend cum managers elder son Madhusudan Guha. It honoured him very much and he devoted his whole energy to make it a success ⁷⁷. References also should be made to Paritosh Kumar Dutta, the manager of the Mornai Tea Estate in Jorehat, Assam. It was established by the tea planter Nahata family of Jalpaiguri town and run under the name of the Bhutan – Dooars Tea Company. He was said to have saved the garden from its distress condition in 1990's singlehandedly ⁷⁸. This sort of business technique was not present among the third or fourth generation Bengali planters. They used to treat their managers as their paid servant. Naturally their managers never showed any interest to improve the garden.

However, the pace of change in the modern World is very fast and if the professional manager in tea has to play his rightful role he too will have to take steps to modernise his knowledge, aptitude and attitude. It is a task which will have to be fulfilled jointly by the individuals themselves and organisations like Producer Associations, Institute of Management and Research Bodies and so on. Unfortunately these criteria mentioned above were not available among most of their managers because most of them were appointed in the garden by owner's own choice, not by the requisite qualities. In addition, excessive responsibilities vested on the managers by the owner residing at Calcutta also deteriorated the gardens run under the Bengali entrepreneurs to a large extent. It was seen that in many Bengali owned gardens the managers were appointed on contractual basis like for three or four years and it was his foremost duty to earn huge profit at any cost. It no doubt mounted Himalayan pressure on them and hence the quality of teas produced in their gardens deteriorated as the years went on. This problem endangered many Bengali owned gardens as the buyers refused to purchase the teas owing to its bad qualities. It became a major problem for the Bengali planters to retain their gardens especially in 1970' and 1980's when the price of tea fell drastically in international market ⁷⁹. Nevertheless, there were also other reasons which weakened the Bengali gardens conclusively –

- (a) The luxurious life - style maintained by the managers in spite of the deplorable condition of the garden created financial bankruptcy;
- (b) As we see from the above discussion that the third generation Bengali planters often visited their garden. Sometime it was once or twice in a year. It certainly created a gap between owner and the management. By taking advantage of this situation many cunning managers became the owners of the garden or sometime sold the garden without the consent of the real owner; ⁸⁰
- (c) Lastly, the servile behaviour maintained by the manager with the labourers along with the trade unions obviously have given birth to numerous strikes, *gheraos* within the garden. This situation obviously intercepted the management to run the tea estates smoothly ⁸¹.

It is also observed that owing to the lack of suitable family member (such as single daughter married and settled in abroad) to carry on the line of heredity, most of the Bengali planters were uninterested to run their business. One can intrinsically arise the question that why he did not give its authority to the other member of his

family. The answer, we must say, should be the family feuds. For example we can tell how the Bhojnarayan tea estate was transferred from Banerjee Tea Co. to Saha Tea Co. Siliguri⁸².

Even since the coming into operation of the West Bengal Estate's Acquisition Act, 1953, the tea gardens have been in possession of their lands without lease from the Government. The absence of a valid and subsisting document of title creates legal difficulties for the tea estates in securing loans from their Banks, financiers⁸³. It actually dipped a large number of Bengali – owned tea gardens into financial crisis as they had no reserve fund at all.

Appointment of several people from Eastern Bengal as a staff on behalf of relation with the planter deteriorated the garden from two angles-

Firstly, it created financial bankruptcy over the garden and;

Secondly, assembling of numerous inefficient staff collapsed the managing system of the garden. For example Sarada Tea Estate in Dooars had its seventy four official staff when the garden was running through financial crisis in 1990.⁸⁴

Incessant shifting of tea gardens Head office during the tenure of the third or fourth generation Bengali tea planters from Jalpaiguri town to Calcutta was also a prime cause behind the decline of the Bengali entrepreneurship. They soon realised that to cope with the present day changing life and most importantly for better future of their wards it would be better to stay in Calcutta rather than living in such a gloomy town like Jalpaiguri. To cite an example we can mention the name of Debesh Chandra Ghosh (commonly known as D.C. Ghosh in tea World), the worthy son of the pioneer and the first generation entrepreneur Jogesh Chandra Ghosh. D.C. Ghosh was the joint secretary of ITPA from the year 1928 – 1943⁸⁵. He shifted the Head offices of three tea estates like Subhasini, Jogesh Chandra, Bijayanagar to Calcutta in 1955 and since then he became the permanent resident of Calcutta along with his family⁸⁶. His brother renowned planter Birendra Chandra Ghosh (commonly known as B.C. Ghosh in tea World), and Tejesh Chandra Ghosh did not follow this trend and they kept the head offices of their tea estates within the home town Jalpaiguri only. However, this notion of shifting head offices influenced other Bengali planters consecutively and it made a gap in between the owner and the management (rather it is better to say in

between Jalpaiguri and Calcutta). Thus a number of Bengali tea estates changed their hands to others⁸⁷. In this context it is highly important to mention that this situation did not affect the entrepreneurship run under D.C. Ghosh in Calcutta and the tea estates as yet run under the possession of his successors.

The partition of Bengal took place in 1947 also played an exordium role behind the collapse of the Bengali entrepreneurship in tea industry. The deviation of Bengal into two parts like Eastern Bengal (Pakistan) and Western Bengal elevated two choices in front of the Bengali Muslim entrepreneurs dwelling in Jalpaiguri town – whether to remain in India or to go to Pakistan. Ultimately most of the Bengali Muslim entrepreneurs chose the second option and began to migrate there after selling their tea estates, properties and so on. To cite an example, we can remember the name of Nawab Khan Bahadur M.L. Saheb, the harbinger among the Bengali Muslim entrepreneurs, as a case study. Twenty two tea estates across the whole Terai – Dooars as well as in Assam were said to have established under the tutelage of the Nawab Saheb⁸⁸. The partition of Bengal made Nawab Saheb highly contemplative about his future in India and this led him to go to Pakistan. He was a prominent member of the Muslim League and also endeavoured to annex Jalpaiguri sub – division with Eastern Bengal. However, he did not succeed in his dream⁸⁹. It can be heard that he was said to have established another tea estate there namely Surma Tea Estate in Shylet⁹⁰. However, the migration of Nawab Saheb originated a big hole in the management task because after him none was there to conduct the business with dexterity. Nawab Musharaff Hossain, son – in – law of Nawab Saheb and also a congress M.L.A. in West Bengal Legislative Assembly, somehow tried at his optimum level to run the industry but not up to the best mark. That is why a number of tea estates began to sell to others among them the Marwaris ranked first. The first tea estate purchased from the ownership of the Nawab family in the year 1955 was the Sukna Tea Estate situated in Darjeeling Terai. The buyer late Sitaram Kalyani was himself a renowned tea planter of Jalpaiguri town⁹¹. Now days, the Nawab family of Jalpaiguri have no tea estate to exist of their own excepting one that is Naxalbari Tea Estate. It is now run under the possession of late Jabbar Saheb's (son – in law of Nawab Musharaff Hossain) family⁹².

Another major social factor that accelerated the setting of the Sun of the Bengali entrepreneurship in tea industry was their beneficiary activities⁹³. Giving

monetary help to the parents of unmarried daughters, playing a pivot role in prospering the socio – cultural condition of the Jalpaiguri town and above all like their predecessors paying dividends to their shareholders whether the situation was permit table or not – all these, diametrically to say, declined the Bengali entrepreneurship. Actually, they paid utmost attention in such social activities rather than looking their business vulgarly. That is why they became gradually detached from their business as the years went on ⁹⁴. If they had abided by the rules and regulations of the Company’s Act things would not have come to such a pass ⁹⁵.

It is, however, important to mention that the central govt. afforded a financial package Rs 43 Cores to survive the tea estate of West Bengal. MLA Ananda Pathak , MLA Song Dopal Lepcha and MLA Arobinda Ghosh requested the central minister Ram Dulari Sinha to constitute an advisory committee to keep an eye over the package . But unfortunately their proposal did not come into effect and a major portion of the package was engulfed both by some opulent tea planters and so- called consultants of the tea industry ⁹⁶.

So, to draw the quintessence on the social causes behind the fall of the Bengali entrepreneurship we may say it is crystal clear that excepting some eminent Bengali businessmen like Dwarkanath Tagore, business blood does not run in the veins of the Bengalis. It would not be exaggerated to say that they are capable of breaking grounds in many spheres such as art, literature, acting or even clerical jobs but not in business at all. In the pre – independence days, most of the medium and small scale industries were owned by the Bengalis but now the scenario has turned upside down and the Bengali business community has become microscopic. The non – Bengalis are reigning in this sphere almost uncompleted by any Bengali businessmen. History has taken its course as regards the tea industry also. At last but not the least is the famous observation of writer N.C. Chaudhury – “Bengali community is self – demolishing”. Though this observation is somewhat rude but this is the cruel and grim reality. On account of family – feuds Bengalis were never distained to maintain the subservience either in Zamindary or in other business. And they regressed at a great pace in this sphere.

Economic Premise

The depression of 1930s endangered the tea estates owned by the Bengali entrepreneurs but not to a large extent. Because the first and second generation knew very well how to handle the situation and run their tea estates smoothly. In spite of this phenomenon, some tea estates were put into a financial crisis due to their shortage of funds because virtually all profits were declared as dividends⁹⁷. However to solve the problem, Sir Rajendra Mukherjee (R.N. Mukherjee) was persuaded by Tarini Prasad Ray, the contemporary chairman of ITPA and also by Gagan Ch. Biswas who was the District Engineer of Jalpaiguri and a class-mate and friend of Sir Rajendra, to extend the benefit to hypothecation finance to a large number of Indian Companies. DR. B.C. Roy, then a renowned physician of Calcutta also used his influence on Sir Rajendra in this matter. Later Sir Rajendra Mukherjee's timely help in the above matter saved the tea industry from an imminent crash⁹⁸. Nevertheless, as we know in the nineteenth century there were no large banking establishments in Jalpaiguri. So the money-lending business was entirely put into their hands, which according to Grunning, was few in numbers and formed a closed ring. They sometime advanced big loans to the tea-garden owners. For example, Kalu Kaiya lent Rs.15000 to Gopal Chandra Ghosh of MongolKata T.E. in 1884 to save the garden from bankruptcy⁹⁹. These incidents showed us an example regarding the dexterity of the pioneer Bengali entrepreneurs in financial distress condition. We did not find such cautious contemplation among the third generation Bengali planters. They were always remained wanton about this forth coming jeopardy owing to their sluggish life style spending in Calcutta arbitrarily. Consequently, when the tea price began to fall quickly in 1980's and 1990's the Bengali concern tea estates began to collapse financially. How and in what way the tea estates run under Bengali planters began to collapse financially are given as follows –

Third or fourth generation of the Bengali entrepreneurs lacked the experience of management of tea gardens. Their quick profit tendency made their gardens either sick or uneconomic. Bushes of their gardens were more than thirty years of age and finance was an impediment towards replanting and that lead to lower yield. This enforced them towards crop based production policy rather than a quality based one¹⁰⁰. Therefore the demand of tea of their gardens began to reduce in both domestic and international market. In between 1961-96, the share of Indian tea in the world

export market was gradually on the decline¹⁰¹. More over India has been over taken by Sri Lanka by 1988. Even china was coming up sharply in 1991; marginally less than that of India and in 1996 it went ahead of India. Kenya with a market price share of 0.22 per cent in 1961 was also in a position to force into the market for Indian tea and kept India behind in 1996 by snatching a share of 21.47 per cent of the world export market¹⁰². Furthermore, in 1996 China, Kenya, Sri Lanka gained an edge over India. Under such circumstances, the market share of Indian tea declined massively in international market and improved the situation of Kenya and China between 1961 and 1996. Though the tea plantation in India had increased in between 1951-96, but its share to total world production had come down from 40.96 per cent to 29.64 per cent in 1996¹⁰³. In contrast, other countries like Kenya, China's production and percentage of tea to total world tea had increased in varying degrees¹⁰⁴.

Table 7.4 **Decline of Share of Indian Tea in International Market between 1951 – 1996.**

India	1951	1961	1971	1981	1985	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Production	285.3	354.4	435.5	559.6	620.8	714.7	720.3	754.2	703.9	758.1	609.3	616.5
Share (%)	40.96	36.48	33.68	29.81	27.13	28.34	28.36	30.94	26.62	28.71	23.18	23.43

(Source: 1961 – 1991 FAO and 1992 – 1996 FAO Statistics)

There were other reasons which reduce the amount of Indian tea in world market. The terror attack in the U.S on September 11 followed by bombing in Afghanistan (which used to import 36 million kg yearly) further degraded the prospect of Indian export. More over, as we know in earlier days, near about 10 – 12 percent Indian teas were sent to Soviet Russia from the tea gardens of the Terai – Dooars region. The role played by the Siliguri Auction Centre to enhance the demand and supply of Terai – Dooars tea in Soviet Russia in spite of the availability of Assam tea is worthy to be mentioned here. But this boom situation did not last long. Two reasons were highly responsible for this. Firstly, the political disturbances prevailed in Soviet Russia due to its separation into 13 states 1990's certainly gave a setback to the demand and supply of Indian teas. Secondly, since 1990's the quality of Indian tea began to degrade over the years owing to numerous reasons such as lack of supervision; quick profit tendency of the new comers, uses of old bushes and so on. This situation definitely endangered many countries to take Indian teas due to its bad quality which made the platform behind the decline of value and demand of Indian tea in world export market. This situation hit the tea gardens strongly run by the Bengali

entrepreneurs in Terai – Dooars region as they had no reserve fund at all on account of their extravagant life - style.

Table 7.5 Volume, Value and share of Export of Major Tea Producing Countries of the World

India	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Volume	200.3	206.3	202.1	241.2	202.9	166.359	153.159	150.874	158.333	132.70
Value	248.09	260.93	204.86	501.5	483.7	360.933	331.845	308.399	359.054	278.70
Kenya	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Volume	0.98	1.2	33.5	75.5	175.6	172.033	199.379	176.962	258.564	260.819
Value	20.3	25.7	34.9	135.3	277.4	297.775	347.432	302.59	373.212	406.400
China	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Volume	32.00	48.9	76.1	107.5	190.2	180.834	206.659	184.071	169.788	173.145
Value	21.43	34.93	57.57	210.6	407	380.066	376.855	315.407	293.501	303.773

(Source: 1951 – 91 FAO Report and 1992 – 96 FAO Statistics)

In addition to that, the severe drought condition prevailed in the tea gardens during 1980 and 1981. The market also depressed during the second half of the octennium [1978-1981]. All this caused a negative GP (Gross Profit) in a number of concerns. Dooars declined fastly followed by Terai. The condition of cash was bad and remains, by and large, constant. Even non- cash assets have swelled. There was not a single tea estate under the Bengali entrepreneurs that did not under go the sad experience of negative working capital (WC) ¹⁰⁵.

Table 7.6 Companies Showing Negative Working Capital (WC)

Year	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Terai	12	13	15	14	14	15	14	13
Dooars	6	5	4	5	6	7	9	11
Darjeeling Hill	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	5

(Source: Tea Board of India, Tea Statistics, 1979-80, Calcutta, P.123)

Therefore, it can be deduced from the above discussion that the decades following independence especially up to 1970 Indian tea had a dignified status in International Market. Countries like Kenya, China, Uganda was not yet prepared them to endeavour into taking over the status as was enjoyed by India. In the International Market, India reigned as an unchallenged King. And the foremost reason behind this

is at that time a lion's share of the tea industry was under the control of the Bengali planters of Bengal. It is true that a negligible number of gardens were under the ownership of the European Companies but even in them Indians were share holders. The tea produced in West Bengal qualitatively held a position of high esteem just after Assam. The incessant maintenance of this rich quality was mainly due to the fact that the management of the tea estates were aptly controlled by the first and second generation Bengali entrepreneurs. Till then the profit oriented outlook greedy owners had not yet set its foot in this industry. But as the years went on, the majority of the tea estates taken over by a group of traders who had no previous experience in this field.

Hence it is evident that since the 1970's the advent of the new comers in the tea industry can be felt. In this decade, most of the Bengali controlled gardens were in the hands of either third or fourth generation. There was huge resemblance between the new tea garden owners and these third or fourth generation Bengali planters. Both of them were inclined towards quantity rather than on quality. Consequently, in the 70's and 80's the quantity of tea production in India increased but it took its toll on quality. As a result of this, Indian tea started to lose the firm ground under its foot in International Market. It had a direct impact on the financial health of the Bengali owned gardens and they started facing extreme pecuniary crisis ¹⁰⁶. This resulted in transferring the ownership of numerous Bengali owned gardens to other Indians ¹⁰⁷. In addition to this, other allied matters such as executing the financial responsibility towards the labourers, violent trade unionism and huge debt burden of the banks – all these aggravated the already worsening condition of their gardens ¹⁰⁸.

Now an obvious question arises in spite of such lien phase in the business how could the non – Bengali tea garden owners (although small in number) keep their gardens functioning and kinetic in the contemporary period? And why the Bengali planters initiated disposing off their gardens? The fact is that there never existed a reserve fund in Bengali owned gardens and neither had they any other business to compensate for the loss incurred in tea business. As such either those gardens were pledged to the banks or were sold to the non – Bengalis traders. On the other hand, the non – Bengali owners always retained a steady inflow of capital which they arranged from their other business or from other sources such as business friends.

In 1984, an order was passed namely Tea Marketing Control Order (TMCO) by which the tea companies were compelled to sell seventy five percent of the teas in the auction centre and other twenty five percent to the open market. It was continued till 2004. But the main problem was that the total amount of tea which was sent to the auction centre from various gardens did not reach as a whole. As per Tea Digest-2000, tea sold through auction in W.B. was 41.62% in 1998, 54.82% in 1999, 51.69% during 2000 and the trend continued. In spite of this mandatory order propagated in TMCO, seventy five per cent teas produced in the country were sold through auction¹⁰⁹. The main cause lies here that as every tea companies used to send tea to the auction market via brokers or middle men, the later usually snatched teas from every cartoon send from the garden and sold these teas to the market after giving it a packaging form in their own warehouses. Sometimes the actual owner of the garden remained in obscure about the actual selling rate of the tea auction centre. This facilitated the middle men earned a lot and thus they became the owner of various tea-gardens when these were put into auction by the nationalised Banks due to its non-payment of loan. For instances, the Raja T.E. in Dooars which was under the ownership of B.C. Ghosh was handed over to the United Bank of India due to its non-payment of loan. Then it was sold to the Terai Tea Company Pvt. Ltd headed by Ajit Prasad Agarwala in the year of 1984¹¹⁰.

The role of Tea Board, established in 1953 is truly ridiculous in this respect. Now the question is that why this TMCO hit strongly the Bengali entrepreneurs, not the others. The answer is that The Bengali entrepreneurs had no other business except depending on their gardens. Therefore, while the garden ran through a financial crisis, they drew loan either from the banks or the money lenders especially Marwaris in lieu of bond or mortgage of their land. In contrast, the Marwaris have various way of income. Naturally when this type of situation had occurred, they replenished the crisis by pouring the profit derived from other business¹¹¹.

Moreover, there was also an another notable event in the tea plantation industry which heavily affected 343 established tea gardens of West Bengal in 1980's was the BLF (Brought Leaf Factory) system. In the initial years of the BLF (Brought Leaf Factory) system the actual number of small tea growers, their area under tea and total production was fully ascertained to the Government. However, there were 56 Brought Leaf Factories registered under Tea Board which had declared a production

of 12 million Kg.¹¹² The small tea growers had, literally to say, little over head expenditure in comparison with the 343 established tea gardens of West Bengal. This advantage helped the BLF system to become a cheaper source of supply of made tea. Consequently, the small growers share in Indian market was registered a tremendous growth from 6.92 per cent in 1991 to 19.91 per cent in 2001. One of the reasons that the tea prices were not moving up as the immediate demand was met privately. The auctions constitute only 35 of the disbursal mechanism and much of the buyer demand was met outside the system. As a consequence of liberation tea auction system lose its importance as primary marketing mechanism of tea. This increased the number of private sales which also failed to achieve a better price recovery in the face of emergence of BLF and small growers¹¹³.

Thus, we see that the BLF (Brought Leaf Factory) system in 1980's brought a new crisis because a number of cunning businessmen after buying tea leaves from the small tea planters sold it to the market in a packaged form. Across the whole Terai – Dooars region especially in Jalpaiguri and Siliguri if we make a field study any one can find a number of warehouses conducted under some respectable Marwari merchants engaged in various type of business. The rates of tea manufactured in such warehouses are obviously low than the actual price of the tea market and the general people became massively attracted to it due to its low rate. Under the circumstances the tea planters became unable to sale teas produced in their own garden factories and this situation finally pushed the Bengali owned tea estates in to a new sea of crisis in 1980's¹¹⁴.

However, today the Central Government has recently issued the Tea Marketing Control Order (TMCO) in 2003 in suppression of the previous order incorporated in the year 1984. It has now become obligatory to get registration, licence from the Tea Board under sub – section 3 of section 3 of Act, 1953 in respect of manufacturing and trading activities of tea. Now every manufacturer including BLF, buyer, auction organiser, and broker requires submitting returns to the Tea Board in E - form stating the opening stock, tea purchased during the month with source of purchase, Sale during the month detailing the name of the purchaser etc. The aforesaid regulations have brings more transparency in the trade as well in improvement of prices which ultimately proved beneficial for the tea industry. It is a

fact that there is still a big gap remains between the tea price in auction and the price paid by a consumer.

The collapse of the environmental base played also an important exordium in dragging the Bengali owned tea estates towards acute monetary crisis. The North Bengal Rivers generally originate from the hills of the Darjeeling district and the Bhutan Hills and flow through Terai and Dooars region. Such rivers pose constant threat of flooding and erosion of the tea estates. Here example may be cited involving such tea estates adjacent to Bhutan boundary run under the Bengali ownership namely Dheklapara, Bandapani, Makrapara, Riyabari, Kathalguri, Joy Birpara, Dalmore. The suspended particles of the cement industries in Bhutan along with Dolomite particles mixed in the water of the rivers flowing through the hilly areas had a major share of responsibility in the degradation of the environment. This can be identified regarding two significant rivers such as Reti and Dimdima which at the time of overflowing its banks leads to the sedimentation of the Dolomite and suspended particles mixed with water in the habitat of this area. Dolomite is always hostile towards tea production and as such rivers which have their source in Bhutan have ultimately brought about a tremendous loss for the tea gardens of the Dooars region ¹¹⁵. The Tea Statistics Report of the year 1990 reveals a dismissal fact that the P.H. Value level in some tea gardens adjacent to Bhutan borders had already crossed its P.H. Value level seven whereas for the good production of tea the P.H. Value level should range from 4.5 to 5.5. This degradation of the soil quality had ultimately taken place its toll on tea production and thus the tea production of these Bengali owned tea gardens came down drastically in this region ¹¹⁶. Here it is worth mentioning that this severe problem still blowing over the tea industry even today. A possible solution to the problem may take shape in the form of long term measures by taking up the matter appropriately with the Bhutan Government and a large scale of soil conservation scheme may be evolved to maintain the hydrological balance. A short term anti – soil erosion scheme needs to be worked out jointly by the Government and the industry on top priority basis.

Long before the initiation of nationalised Government Banks in Jalpaiguri town, financial institutions appeared in the scenario with the private enterprise. And the most worth mentioning name and definitely the oldest among them were the ‘Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation Limited’ established in 1889 and later taken over by the State Bank of India in 1967. Apart from this two other financial

institutions were the 'Bengal Dooars Bank Limited' established in 1911 and the 'Raikot Industrial Bank' established in 1920. Empowered by an order by the Central Government the management of these two private enterprises went into the hands of the State Bank of India in 1966. In addition to this, there were also another private financial institution namely the 'Jotedar Banking and Trading Corporation' established in the year 1911. In 1962 the above mentioned institution was renamed as 'Jotedar Trading and Loan Corporation Limited' and its salient features were changed from a Bank to a non – Banking financial corporation. Jalpaiguri district can boast of such many other privately controlled financial establishments like 'Bengal Dooars Bank Limited', 'Raikot Industrial Bank', 'Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation Limited', 'Jotedar Trading and Loan Corporation Limited' and Kumilla bank which later merged with the United Bank of India, Jalpaiguri town ¹¹⁷.

Long before the appearance of the State Bank of India in the scenario, the Banking business was dominated by the 'Loyed Bank', Marwari businessmen and the 'Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation Limited'. The financial transactions of the European tea estates in Jalpaiguri district were conducted through the Loyed Bank and the rest of the financial transactions were met by the Marwari businessmen and the 'Jalpaiguri Banking and Trading Corporation Limited'. The rates of interests in all these local Banks ranged from 6 to 48 per cent. With the flourishing tea business the socio – economic need of the Banking system was keenly felt. In the year 1894 the first branch of the Bank of Bengal was established outside Calcutta and it is needless to mention that it was set up at Jalpaiguri town. The Presidency Bank in 1921 took over the management of this Bank. This renamed as the Imperial Bank of India. After independence in 1955 the State Bank of India established its full control over this Bank and consequently renamed as the State Bank of India, Jalpaiguri. The first and foremost duty of this Bank was to lend remittance to different tea estates functioning in Dooars. Here it is worth mentioning that this Bank was also used to extend advanced payment to the Indian controlled gardens and at the end of the year collect those advances from them ¹¹⁸.

Let us now discuss why, in spite of the existence of a strong banking system Indian gardens especially Bengali owned gardens had to face such acute financial crisis? And why the Banks could not extend their helping hands to those gardens. The above mentioned local banks could not sustain their business and hence

collapsed untimely. Just immediately in pre and post – independence period, these Banks began to efface out from the Banking scenario of the Jalpaiguri town.

Reasons more than one responsible for these set back are given hereunder -

1. These banks did not run in the given pattern of the nationalised Government Banks.

2. Bank rate of interest was exceedingly high.

3. Payment of interest was not conducted on any laid down rules.

4. Without paying any heed to the banking regulations, they extend loans and these were often not repaid.

Consequently, most of the private Banks began to fall and some of them were merged with Government Banks.

The third – fourth generation Bengali planters would have existed if they got financial support from such Trading banks as their forefathers used to receive from these Banks earlier. But when time came during their tenure as garden owners most of these Banks were brought under direct control of the Government and they had to mortgage the title deed to receive loans from these banks. And many other strict conditions were to be obeyed. The Bengali owners were unable to cope up with this situation as they already collected monetary help by submitting the title deeds of their gardens from the outside financiers, most of them belonged to the Marwari and Bihari class. As such at that time of crisis the Government did not stand by their side and as they have already drew loans from local financiers and could not repay them the ownership of their gardens changed hands ¹¹⁹.

There were also some Government agencies to assist the Bengali gardens but they could not grab this opportunity as the terms of assistance were much too stringent to be of any help. To cite examples we can say that the State Government and the Tea Board of India had several schemes to provide assistance to such tea estates that went through some financial turmoil against proper securities. But the Bengali – owned tea estates were not in a position to receive such assistance as they had already mortgaged the title deeds of their gardens to the banks to offer as security from which loan had been secured against hypothecation. Under the circumstances,

unless further securities or guarantors were available, the Bengali – owned tea companies would be in a position to take advantage of the financial assistance in the shape of loans. In course of time, the part time directors were forced to seek the financial assistance from outsiders and had, ultimately, to yield pride of place to them

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So this is quite evident why some non – Bengali traders became tea gardens owners over night. They were neither attached with the administration of the gardens nor did they have any experience of the operations of the gardens. Though there are few exceptions too.

Another fact which became quite pronounced was selling problem. The market was, in the then period, controlled and maintained by some already established tea traders. They had the ability of down sliding the prices of tea at any time. The owners of large tea estates run under Big Tea Houses like Goodricke, Duncans Goenka did not have to bear the brunt as they had a well established system of direct selling. They usually used to import, export, buy and sell in different names. But the Bengali tea concerns did not enjoy such privileges. They depended as a whole on the Central Government controlled Tea Auction Centres. But unfortunately these operated since its initiation in a lack adaisical attitude. Therefore the Bengali owners had to depend on some corrupted middle men and these brokers indulged in various mal practices like fluctuating the prices of tea according to their own interest wherever and whenever. If it had happened otherwise, the Indian people would have enjoyed a steady supply of good quality teas at a reasonable price and also the Bengali owned tea gardens would have survived easily. As well as this, if the rate of interest applied by the Central Government on the loans would not have been exorbitantly high, the Bengali tea garden owners would have benefited the most as in 1980's and 1990's. But the condition of the Bengali owned tea gardens were very deplorable in comparison with other tea estates controlled and owned by other Indian races. During that phase the Bengali owned tea gardens were passing through a very lean phase and their financial liabilities were piling up as the years went on ¹²¹.

The Central Government controlled Tea Board cannot shriek from the responsibility of the fall of the Bengali entrepreneurship in the tea plantation industry. As we know the Tea Board became functioning in 1953 with a view to assist the

garden run smoothly and to implement regulations stipulated in the Plantation Labour Act to look after the interests of the tea garden labourers. The Tea Board Consisting of thirty members among whom one of the members performed the duties of the Chairman. This body exercises huge powers such as –

1. Keeping strict vigil on the amount of tea production.
2. Supervise the export of tea.
3. Paying utmost attention towards quality control of tea.
4. Collecting relevant information by sending inspectors.
5. Bringing clarity in the circulation of sell products of tea.
6. Looking after the welfare of the labourers.
7. Above all paying attention towards the selling process as well as smooth functioning of the Auction Market.

But the Tea Board did not perform its duties at par excellence. Otherwise the Bengali tea owners would not be dipped in various crises like socio – economic and political and their gardens would have remained of their own till date ¹²².

As a matter of fact, the Tea Board is an idle establishment. Grasping this opportunity some corrupted owners are now a day running their gardens keeping the Central Government totally obscure regarding tax payment. This is resulting in the deterioration of the all round development of our Country as well as in declining the prices of Indian tea in international market. This caused for urgent attention. Public opinion should be constructed against such mal practices which are going on unbarred for a considerable period of time. In this regard the members of the Parliament should come to the forefront and adopt an active role to curb this situation once and for ever.

There were other notable events in the tea plantation industry, not all with favourable results. When due to a few special but short market factors the price of tea went up very high during the first phase of 1970's the central Government in order to bring down the price of tea for the domestic consumer, introduced an Export Duty of Rs. 5 per Kg. It also abolished the excise duty rebate on exported items. The result of this was a lower unit value realisation by the tea companies. The Government's

objective was realised to a large degree and the price of tea at the auctions came down considerably when the New Year's crop started coming to the market. Many tea companies took the step of distributing tea directly to the domestic consumers at very reasonable prices. The retail trade in tea was much slower in responding to the decline in the wholesale price. Curiously enough the tea industry was blamed by many for this but it pushed a number of tea estates into financial distress condition deeply. This problem deteriorated the condition of the Bengali owned gardens more harshly in comparison with the others as the Bengali owners had no reserve fund at all.

The catalogue of events will not be complete if I do not mention the steep enhancement of the Agricultural Income Tax in the State Budget presented in the month of September 1977. The rates of the Agricultural Income Tax were raised from 55 paise to 65 paise in the rupee for income up to Rs 1 Lakh, and from 65 paise to 75 paise in the rupee for income up to Rs 1 Lakh. These rates were applicable to Indian companies and for foreign companies the rate was raised to 80 paise in the rupee irrespective of the quantum of profit. It meant that the enhancement of the rate of tax in the two slabs for Indian companies and foreign companies were 18 per cent and 25 per cent, and 45.5 per cent and 33.3 per cent respectively. To cap it all the enhancement of the rates was made effective from the 1st April, 1977, which meant that the profits earned during the year 1976 were subject to the enhanced rates of tax. Most of the companies, as is required under law, had closed their accounts for the year 1976 by the end of June 1977. Distribution of the profits had been made by declaration of bonus to the workers, allocation of reserves, and payment of dividend to the shareholders. All this, no doubt, made the planters so upset.

As we know, 60 per cent of a tea company's profits are subject to the State Agricultural Income Tax and the balance 40 per cent are subject to the Central Corporate Income Tax. The result was that if the rate of the Agricultural Income Tax is higher than the rate of the Central Corporate Income Tax, a Tea Company is worse off than other companies engaged in the manufacture of other products. With the introduction of is precisely what happened to the tea industry in the State? By one stroke the tea industry was put in a position where it was being single out and penalised and where it would have to pay a larger percentage of its profits as tax than other industries even it earned the same rate of profit. To give an example if a tea industry in West Bengal earns a gross profit of Rs. 25 Lakhs it would have to pay out

a total sum of Rs. 17,025 lakhs as Income Tax, as against Rs. 14, 4375 lakhs to be paid by, say, an engineering or Jute manufacturing company. This put the tea industry of West Bengal in an unenviable position. With increasing emphasis on development of rural economy and the agricultural sector it is really difficult to understand this discriminatory attitude against an industry involved solely in the rural areas and so heavily labour intensive. The industry was not left with enough resources for plough back. It compelled the British as well as Bengali Planters to retreat from the tea plantation and this gap was fulfilled by the other Indians to a large extent ¹²³.

Thus we can say precisely that sharp increase in the rate of the Agricultural Income Tax in 1977 had monstrously deteriorated the financial condition of the planters and their future programme of development of the plantations. After meeting tax liabilities out of the profits only meagre resources were said to have left for utilisation of development works in the gardens. The imposition of multiple sales tax by the State Government was also gave a blow to auction sales at Calcutta and Siliguri.

There was yet another proposal in the Budget in 1961 – 62 which affected the tea industry adversely. I am referring to the introduction of multiple rates of Sales tax and levy of Sale tax on tea sold through public auctions. However, the proposal of indirect tax on betel nuts, Kerosene, matches, tobacco, tea, coffee, cigarettes, cotton fabrics and other consumer goods raised the cost of living of the plantation workers which led them along with their respective union to a clamour for enhancing their wages. The higher rate of excise duty on diesel oil, the proposed duty on some items like machinery and components no doubt increased the rate of expenditure to run the gardens. The fact is that it affected the industry conclusively and the tea trade in our State suffered a lot in comparison to those in other States indeed. This situation, needless to say, pushed the Bengali owners into a hole of crisis as they had no reserve fund at all ¹²⁴.

It is, however, needless to say that with such a severe reduction in the internal resource generation due to mopping up of profits through high rate of tax the programme of development drawn up by the industry might be affected seriously. If the rate of tax remains higher than in other tea producing states, the rate of growth of the industry in the State will be slower than elsewhere even today.

In 1970's the inflow of tea in the Auction Market was calculated at 56 per cent of the total tea production whereas the ex – factory sell increases by leaps and bounds to 27 to 80 per cent. It did not stop here. In 1981 the per cent of the ex – factory sell reached at a staggering 30 per cent. Such increase of the ex – factory sell left a negative impact on the market. And an atmosphere of loss prevailed. So in 1983 the Indian Government was compelled to somehow convince the garden owners or make them bound to sell their garden teas through the Auction Market. But this venture was sizzled out. Such monstrous situation struck the Bengali owned tea gardens selectively hard ¹²⁵. The reason behind this was that they had already withdrawn themselves from the sphere of tea business and was habituated in leading an extravagant life in Calcutta or elsewhere. So they did not possess any knowledge how much tea was disposed to the Auction Market, what was the yearly production and such other relevant information pertaining to their gardens. Hence they had to dispose off their gardens in 1990's due to the artificial and manmade crisis created in tea business. On the other hand, a huge number of traders had already ventured in tea business and were flourishing at a great pace. It is worthy to be mentioned here that though this crisis also hit them but they withstood the onslaught of this crisis because they siphoned off the capital from other existing business ¹²⁶. In spite of such a gloomy picture some Bengali garden owners continued their tea gardens with their head held high amidst this turmoil such as Makaibari Tea Estate in Darjeeling hill; Kiran Chandra Tea Estate, Satish Chandra Tea Estate, Naxalbari Tea Estate, Bijaynagar Tea Estate in Terai; Washabari Tea Estate, Meteli Murti Tea Estate, Subhasini Tea Estate in Dooars.

Stagnation of the Bengali owned tea gardens in post – independent period was the result of bad management by their third or fourth generation. They usually used their gardens as a means of quick profit and also gave emphasis on quantity rather than quality as they had no other way of income. This quick profit earning tendency almost made their gardens sick and uneconomic respectively. Consequently, by 1971, a number of Bengali owned tea gardens became sick and uneconomic.

Table 7.7 **Age – Group of Bushes in Dooars during 1990**

Age Group	Area Covered (Hect.)	Percentage to total
Below 5 Years	4.152	6.52
6 to 10 Years	4.465	7.01
11 to 20 Years	6.044	9.49
21 to 30 Years	9.646	15.15
31 to 40 Years	5.881	9.24
41 to 50 Years	3.370	5.29
Above 50 Years	30.122	47.30
All Groups	63,680	100.

(Source: Techno – Economic Survey of Dooars Tea Industry, Tea Board of India, Calcutta, 1995, April, P. 06)

The above table shows that 72 per cent of tea bushes of most of the Bengali owned tea estates were more than 50 years old. So, there was need for replanting before 1940 or even after independence. Moreover, the demand from large scale buyers necessitated acquisition of modern processing machines. But the manufacturing process in many Bengali owned tea gardens too did not change. Many tea estates did not feel it necessary even at that stage to switch over to the new system. Thus in course of time the tea produced in their gardens lose its market both in national and international level and the buyers were also not interested to buy the tea leafs owing to its bad quality¹²⁷.

It may be observed from the above table that more than 47.3 per cent of the total area in Dooars contained bushes which crossed the age of 50 years. Young bushes below 10 years of age constituted around 14 per cent while bushes between 11 to 40 years of age accounted for around 34 per cent of the total planted area in the district. This situation undoubtedly dipped many Bengali owned gardens in Dooars into a new series of crisis because tea bushes of most of the Bengali owned tea estates were more than 50 years old.

Political Premise

After narrating the socio – economic factors behind the fall of the Bengali entrepreneurship emphasis now have been given on the political factors which also played a pivot role in the sun set of the Bengali entrepreneurship in 2000 A.D. –

Amongst the legislations proved well for the well to do of the tea garden labourers the most first and foremost important is the Plantation Labour Act incorporated in the year 1951. The clauses laid down in this act improved the living standard of the tea garden labourers as well as enlarged the periphery of thinking. It also brought some changes and transformations among the labourers in social phenomena. However, in spite of that most of its provisions have not been implemented in the tea garden. With the inception of the trade unionism in the tea gardens some changes began to take shape in the tea gardens of the Terai and Dooars region. It organised the labourers under one umbrella for the pretext of achieving the demands. Since it was the traditional phase where the planters saw their power gradually being eroded by labour legislation, the situation of industrial unrest was bound to arise. Since then the conflict between the labourer and the management turned more intensive¹²⁸.

It would be difficult to find out a tea garden in West Bengal in those days where the facilities as per the plantation Labour Act 1951 had been implemented perfectly. What the planters did not seem to understand was that instead of being a financial burden labour welfare could be viewed as an investment which would increase productivity and improve labour management relations¹²⁹. During that period the trade unions became more aggressive and militant in nature. They made unreasonable demands frequently to the management. As a result there was a constant struggle between the labourer and the management leading to bitter industrial relations. In this context it is important to mention that the labourers working in the Terai tea gardens at first did not respond to these insurgences against the management. They, better to say, remained as a mute spectator to these ongoing events. Thus when the whole Dooars went against the tea garden management to obtain their demands stipulated in the Plantation Labour Act the labourers of the terai region remained cool and calm due to the absentee of trade unionism. But this situation received a new dilemma with the advent of trade unionism in 1954. Since

then the tea garden labourers began to raise their demands to the management in various flaks like mass agitation, strike and so on.

During the year 1959, tea gardens of Terai and Dooars region witnessed several clashes between the workers and management on the issue of work load. Labour agitation became highly aggressive during the sixties. The incidents of strikes, gheraos and lock out had become a regular feature of the tea gardens. As per the Terai Indian Planters association report, total of 36118 man days and wages Rs.56613 were lost due to these strikes ¹³⁰. The loss suffered in Dooars was far higher than in Terai. According to reports so far to hand 19,147 man days were lost to members of Indian Tea planters Association, since February 1954, on account of strikes and lockout ¹³¹.

Table 7.8 Status of Industrial Disputes in Terai Tea Garden during the Period 1966-1970

Year	No. of Strikes	Man days Lost	Loss of Production (in k.g.)	Wage cost(in Rs)
1966	4	13282	77802.00	372309.60
1967	11	10712	38912.50	210175.00
1968	11	11354	31121.00	164293.35
1969	NA	241265	987579.00	4972742.93
1970	Nil	9215	21413.00	118665.00

(Source: Detailed Report of Terai Inidan Planters Associaiton for the year 1966 – 1970)

In 1967 there was a major political development which further helped in the degeneration of industrial relation in tea industry of West Bengal ¹³². The United Front Government gave its full fledged support to the trade union movement in the tea gardens. Being in forced by the support of United Front Government, the trade union accelerated its movement against the management. As a result, the labour agitation soon received a militant character ¹³³. It is true that from the beginning of Seventies, labour unrest in various tea gardens of the Dooars region came down as a result of

negotiation in bipartite and tripartite level but it did not last long ¹³⁴. The peaceful environment which was soon received a major setback when the Central Government imposed emergency in India in 1975. During this period, large scale labour unrest took place across the whole country. It also put its impetus in the tea industry of West Bengal on a mount scale ¹³⁵.

However, towards the late Seventies, with the arrival of the Left Government the industrial relation again began to turn soon. Soon after the assumption of power by the leftist Government in 1977, the labour militancy in Dooars and Terai got its momentum back ¹³⁶.

Table 7.9 Number of Strikes in Tea Industry of West Bengal during the Seventies

Year	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
No. of Strikes	15	17	11	7	4	10	17	5	10

(Source: office, Indian Tea Planters Association and Terai Indian Planters Association and Dooars Branch Indian Tea Association)

Table 7.10 Number of Strikes in Tea Industries of West Bengal during Eighties

Year	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. of strikes	Nil	Nil	1	5	8	Nil	3	Nil	Nil	Nil

(Source: office, Indian Tea Planters Association, Jalpaiguri)

For the tea industry, however, it has not been a bed of roses all the way. There were serious agitations and unrest on almost all tea gardens in connection with the payment of Bonus before the Durga Puja. As we told earlier that most of the Bengali tea garden owners were dipped into crises due to various socio – economic causes, hence it became impossible for them to give bonus in accordance with the demands. The employers or the management were ready to pay the amount of bonus in accordance with the statutory provisions of the Bonus Act. In regard to bonus the

Central Government had just restored to the workers bonus at a minimum rate of 8.33 per cent irrespective of profit or loss. But there were consistent demands for payment at the maximum rate of 20 per cent irrespective of what would be payable according to the Bonus Act. Unfortunately the workers demanded more and started agitation in form of strikes, gheraos, intimidation and coercion ¹³⁷. The situation became so explosive that the employers had to concede the demand for making extra payment beyond what is provided under the law to preserve peace and tranquillity in the gardens and to carry on work of production and manufacture unhampered. This was indeed very unfortunate and side by side formidable for the management ¹³⁸.

In a particular tea estate, the manager confronted with this type of manoeuvring by a new flanged union, which virtually brought his garden work to a standstill, signed an agreement with the union leader, reducing some tasks, in the fond hope that there would be an end of his troubles. He was soon disillusioned. The agreement was acclaimed by the union as a tactical victory and was used as a means to enhance its prestige with the workers and gained fresh followers. Conditions became so chaotic that the manager after due warning to the workers and notice to the authorities declared a lock out. After the lockout had lasted for two weeks, the union became sensible and in conciliation preceding that followed an agreement. But the ink of the agreement was hardly dry when the same union again cooked up a fresh set of demands that the workers must be given full days wages by working 3 to 4 hours in the morning only in the plantation that the factory workers must not work more than 4 hours. When the management refused to consider these extravagant demands, they were filthily abused and threatened with assault. The Assistant Labour Commissioner, who tried to mediate, was treated by the workers with scant courtesy and failed to bring about normalcy in the garden ¹³⁹.

Reference may be made to another case, proceedings u/s. 107 Cr. P.C. was pending before a Magistrate against some workers of an estate. The Magistrate, on police report, cancelled the bail of two of them and ordered their arrest. When the police went to the estate and arrested the persons proceeded against, the workers in a body declared a lightning strike which continued for three days, they demanded the dismissal of the manager, because the manager was believed to have influenced the police to report against their comrades. When the management was seriously thinking of a lock out, some responsible labour leaders were able to persuade the workers to

return to work. According to reports so far to hand 19, 147 man days were lost to the members of the “Indian Tea Planters’ Association” (ITPA), since February 1954, on account of strikes and lock out. It was also written in annual proceedings of the ITPA (February 1954) that these unions had no care for the man days lost to the industry and the wages lost to the workers so long as their methods serve to bring adherents to their political creed. ¹⁴⁰ “If there is no dawning of good sense among the workers who are being misguided by the aforesaid unions in the whole Terai – Dooars region the whole industry will face a severe loss in future” ¹⁴¹. This was proved absolutely true in 1970’s and 1980’s when a number of tea estates owned and controlled by the Bengalis was declared sick and lock out.

It has been observed that in many gardens tasks were fixed at a much lower level than what is prevalent in other gardens. These gardens had to suffer a big loss on account of this and this may be ascribed to be one of the main reasons for their economic weakness. Efforts also had been made to persuade the workers and their unions to agree to a rational and equitable revision of tasks in those gardens but all efforts had been in fructuous so far for non – cooperation on the part of workers and their representatives. The gruesome murder of B. K. Tripathi, Assistant Manager of the Gaya Ganga Tea Estate (P.O. Bagdogra, Dist – Darjeeling) is worthy to be mentioned here. This incident had shaken the morale of the managerial and supervisory staffs of all the gardens in the Terai region ¹⁴².

There was other political turmoil which demolished the management of most of the Bengali – owned tea estates once and for ever was the ‘Challaan Bandh’ movement. For instance the workers of the Bundapani Tea Estate had shrugged off a list of demands to the management through their union. The management requested the respective union of their garden that they could not take any steps against the authority as the financial base of the garden was so feeble. But the workers led by their union declared strikes. In the meantime the union also tried to expand the sway of the movement into endemic ‘haats’ for the pretext of popularising it among the other sections of the workers. Professor Sarit Kumar Bhowmik argued that “if a union decided to start a strike, its volunteers could prevent workers from working so that they all plunged into the course of the action. In the ‘Challaan Bandh’ movement, the process was more painstaking”¹⁴³.

In the Terai - Dooars region, the effect of this labour insurgence hit the small garden owners badly. It could not cause much financial damage to the management owned by a big industrial house like Goodricke, Duncans, Andrew Yule (owned by the Indians in post – colonial period) and so on. As we know the financial base of these gardens since their inception was too sound. However, such political turmoil proved so dangerous particularly to the small gardens controlled by one company who had no other garden in the proposed region. In the Terai region, there were a large number of Bengali tea garden owners who had no other tea garden. Hence the impact of this movement collapsed numerous small tea gardens owned and controlled by the Bengali's of the Terai region ¹⁴⁴.

Another problem during the strikes period was that an overwhelming proportion of the garden workers employed in the field were highlighting their agricultural character in case of plucking leaves. If proper and quality leaves were not plucked quality of manufactured tea was affected and manufacturing cost also went up ¹⁴⁵.

Another very important and perhaps unique factor that set the shining Sun of the Bengali entrepreneurship in the tea plantation industry was the problem of the employment ratio. As we know tea production of the Jalpaiguri district touched the pinnacle of its glory in the mid of 50's but with the passage of time it bowed down with years. In association with this, the sewerage system of all most of the Bengali owned gardens received a jolt on account of floods occurring consecutively for some years. In this dismal backdrop, the shady trees 'Posera' exercised a final blow to the tea production because during draught these trees shed their leaves and engaged in a fierce competition with the tea plants to draw as much water from the soil to meet its demand. At this juncture, during the 60's the tea market became a mere puppet in the hands of the customers. Other factors which proved effective in this scenario were the dearth of capital, drying up of reserve fund, existing Bank credits and others ¹⁴⁶.

The Bengali owned and controlled gardens dealt with another serious problem – permanent labourer ratio. The Big Corporate House managed gardens was able to keep itself aloof from this acute problem but the Bengali garden owners found it hard to tide over the situation ¹⁴⁷. Prior to independence, the number of permanent labourers was negligible in European gardens and they relied mostly on contractual

labourer and machinery. The Big Corporate Houses run under the Marwari, Gujrati traders also followed the same legacy in such European gardens which was later, as we know, owned by the non – Bengali traders from the European tea companies in post – colonial period. Thus the Big Corporate Houses became able to keep them aside from such permanent labourer ratio problem. This green situation actually came to the forefront in the year 1969 as per the advice of the Kader Nawaz Committee. The committee stipulated to maintain one labourer per acre in all type of tea gardens. It is obvious that most of the garden owners did not abide by this instructions as such consequent tense situations evolved in the Bengali owned gardens whereas the gardens run under Big Houses like Duncans Goenkas, Goodricke, Andrew Yule, Margaret Hope's, Tata Finely were almost untouched by this issue because they got into an unholy nexus with the trade unions in the initial stages. But for the want of foresight most of the Bengali owners found them in this turmoil situation but there were a few exceptions also.

Following the footsteps of the European managed plantation system; the non – Bengali garden owners came to a compromising situation with the trade unions and elapsed this crisis period almost remaining unefected. During the labour unrest in the tenure of the United Front Government it was decided that the number of labourers in each garden could not be curtailed from the number which existed till the 1st January 1969. In addition to it, gardens with an area of 250 acre should engage 20 labourers, 500 acre to 25 labourers, 500 – 700 acre to 30 labourers and finally 1000 acre to 35 labourers more than that was the actual labourer ratio. It is true that the Bengali owners were not affected much by this decision. But it is also a fact that it was just a forecast of the tempest which was to follow. And the reason behind this was on August 1977, a tripartite agreement was held which concluded that each garden should engage an additional 9,000 labourers. This superceded the margin that was decided in the agreement of 1969. And it is obvious that the Bengali owners had to bear the burnt of this decision as they already maintained a higher employee ratio than the gardens run under the Big Corporate Houses. These gardens were mostly machinery depended. As a consequence, labour insurgence became widespread in the Bengali owned gardens ¹⁴⁸.

The permanent labourer ratio and the heavily engaged labourers as per 1977 agreement inflated the employment ratio in their gardens to a large extent. As had

been mentioned earlier the Bengali gardens in comparison with the gardens run under Big Houses had a scarcity of reserve fund, so there was a disparity in the pay structure and other allowances which ultimately resulted in tension among the labourers. It is worth mentioning here that it was quite astonishing that the movements to increase the employment labourer ratio were quite unnoticeable in the gardens run under Big Houses ¹⁴⁹.

Nevertheless, the Bengali gardens managed by the companies of the then Jalpaiguri town had to engage 0.5 labourers in order to produce a Kg. of tea whereas the other gardens used to engage just 0.25 to 0.30 labourers for the production of the same qualities of tea. Say, the labourer wage was Rs. 10 so a Bengali owner had to spend Rs. 5 whereas the other got the same outcome in tea production but paying just Rs. 3. Therefore, they already could make a profit of Rs. 2 in comparison with the Bengali owner's even before the tea reaching the market. In order to bring about a satisfactory solution to this crisis, a committee was formed under the Labour Minister of the W.B. Government Krishnapada Ghosh along with Mr. B.K. Goswami the then Chairman of the Tea Board of Calcutta but this effort was also proved futile ¹⁵⁰. How could the Big Corporate Houses keep itself out of the purview of this crisis? This is a glaring question for the answer of which we are looking forward for future researches.

Finally, a word may be added that absenteeism among the workers during the movement led by their respective unions always remained high. Women workers kept absent themselves rather than the male workers. Diseases due to under-nourishment and wide spread drink habits like alcohol, *haria* among the workers led to absenteeism ¹⁵¹.

It is however important to be mentioned here that trade unionists always tend to influence the workers only when they realised that certain developments in their socio-economic life especially through the three-tier *Panchayat* system as well as from the Government level may endanger their position in the respective gardens. They also feared that this situation may keep them aside from collective bargaining. Hence they always tried to remain their influence within the garden either in form of strikes or *gheraos*. These political instruments, diametrically to say, are creating interceptions as yet to run the tea plantation industry even today ¹⁵².

Therefore, we find that during the late eighties of the twentieth century man days lost due to both strikes and lock outs took its optimum shape. Number of strikes hiked more rapidly than the number of lock outs. The improvident attitude of the trade unions as well as the inability of the garden owners to run their tea estates arbitrarily was highly responsible for this political turmoil prevailed in the tea industry as well. Thus, we may say with confidence that certain crisis prevailing in their gardens like continuous threat of strikes, demand for workers full days wages by working only 3 to 4 hours and huge donation demanding from the management definitely compelled the third or fourth generation to ponder over the ongoing stalemate and to decide better to sell the tea estate rather than going ahead with risk and liability.

Thus it can be stated that various factors contributed largely to the decline of the Bengali entrepreneurship of the tea industry in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district, yet few number of gardens are still surviving under the Bengali entrepreneurs. Regular inspection made to their garden and restoring the profit actually enabled them to survive during the crisis period. The names of such tea gardens are as hereby mentioned below:-

Table 7.11 **Name of Gardens still controlling under Bengali Entrepreneurship**

Name of the tea Estate	Previous Bengali owner	Present Bengali owner
1. Makaibari	Raja Banarjee	Dipankar Chattarjee
2. Mahargaon Gulma	Amitava Pal Chaudhury	NatanTara Pal Cahudhury
3. Bhojnarayan	Prakash Saha	Prasenjit Saha
4. Washabari	Amitava Pal Chaudhury	NayanTaraPal Chaudhury
5. Bijaynagar	D.C. Ghosh	Subhojit Ghosh
6. Fulbari	Sen Mjumdar and Co., Birbhum	Dipankar Chattarjee
7. Meeteli Murti	Do	Do
8. Kiran Chandra	Badal Bhattacharya	Do
9. Satish Chandra	Satish Kar	Sudarshan Kar
10. Subhashini	D.C. Ghosh	Subhojit Ghosh
11. Mogolkata	D.C. Ghosh	Subhojit Ghosh

12. Naxalbari	Iqbal Zabbar	Lalit Zabbar
13. Sreenathpur	Parswanath Ghatak	Debamitra Dey Sarkar
14. Mission Hill	Parswanath Ghatak	Nilmani Ray
15. Red Bank	D.N. Bhowmik	Rabin Pal (Red Bank Group)
16. Dharanipur	D.N. Bhowmik	Rabin Pal (Red Bank Group)
17. Surendranagar	D.N. Bhowmik	Rabin Pal (Red Bank Group)

(Source: Assam Tea Directory Hand Book, Year 1999 - 2000, Calcutta, p. 212.)

Table 7.12 **Names of tea estates transferred from Bengali entrepreneurship to other Indians**

Darjeeling District

Name of the Tea Estate	Previous Bengali owner	Present Owner
1. Happy Valley	Banrjee Family, Kolkata	Bansal & Co., Kolkata
2. Thanjhora	Ghosh & Co., Jalpaiguri	New Tea Co. Kolkata
3. Atal	Chattarjee & CO., Kolkata	Do
4. Azamabad	Nawab Family, Jalpaiguri	Garg Tea Co., Sevoke Road, Siliguri
5. Matidhar, Bijlimani	Sen Family, Kolkata	New Tea Co. Kolkata
6. Kamalpur	Haldar Family, Bagdogra	Jayanti Prasad Agarwala
7. Kamala	S.P. Ray, Jalpaiguri	S.P. Agarwala, Kolkata
8. Manjha	Mitra Family, Jalpaiguri	Kishan Kr. Kalyani Jalpaiguri
9. Kharibari	Do	Terai Tea Co., Siliguri
10. Sukna	Nawab Family, Jalpaiguri	Shib Kr. Kalyani, Jalpaiguri
11. Sayyadabad	Mitra & Ghatak, Siliguri	Terai Tea Co., Siliguri
12. Sahabad (Jayantika)	Sambhunath Saha	Birla Family, Kolkata
13. Simulbari	Ranjit Banarjee & Others	Bansal & Co., Siliguri

14. Sannyasisthan	Rabindranath Mitra, Siliguri	C.P. Kanoi, Kolkata
15. Nischintapur	Sen Brothers, Kolkata	GargTea Co., Sevoke Road, Siliguri
16. Tindharia	PalChaudhury Family , Kolkata Then Chattarjee Family, Kolkata	Kanoria Brothers & Co. Ltd., Kolkata
17. Chandmani	Binay Sen, Siliguri	Laxmi Township (Now Uttarayan Township)

Jalpaiguri District

Name of the Tea Estate	Earlier Bengali Owner	Present Owner
1. Chamurchi	Musharaff Hossain	R.S. Kejriwal (Kolkata)
2. Ambari	Saha Brothers	Sanjib Singhanian
3. Kalabari	S.P. Ray, Jalpaiguri	R.S. Bachwat, Kolkata
4. Needam	S.P. Ray, Jalpaiguri	Matilal Singh, Jalpaiguri
5. Raja	B.C. Ghosh, Jalpaiguri	R.D. Agarwal, Kolkata
6. Anandapur	Rahut family, Jalpaiguri	Sharat Bajarria, Kolkata
7. Ramjhora	S.P. Ray, Jalpaiguri	S. Bagla, Kolkata
8. Altadanga	Habibur Rahaman	Terai Tea Co., Siliguri
9. Mujnai	Nawab family, Jalpaiguri	G.S. Kalyani, Kolkata. Now G.S. Kanoi, Kolkata
10. Chuniajhora	Nawab family, Jalpaiguri	G.S. Agarwal, Kolkata. NowSekhar RayChaudhury (NRI, Malayasia)
11. Madhu	T.P. Ray, Jalpaiguri	K.M. Patel, Kolkata
12. Saraswatipur	P.D. Raikot, Jalpaiguri	Kalyani Group, Jalpaiguri
13. New Glanko	Abu Seikh, Jalpaiguri	S.K. Saria, Kolkata
14. Rahimabad	Musharaff Hossain	Tarachand Agarwal, Kolkata. Now Sekhar Ray Chaudhury(NRI, Malayasia)

15. Merry View	M. Rahaman, Jalpaiguri	C.K. Dhanuka, Kolkata
16. Turturi	Samaddar Family, Alipurduar	Nahata Family and Mithilesh Ganguly, Jalpaiguri. Then Sekhar Ray Chaudhury(NRI, Malayasia)
17. Majherdbari	Samaddar Family, Alipurduar	Dayananda Agarwal, Siliguri
18. Patkapara	Samaddar Family, Alipurduar	Tarachand Agarwal, Kolkata
19. Kohinoor	Bengal Dooars National Tea Co. Ltd., Jalpaiguri	Daga Family, Jalpaiguri. Then Narendra Berelia, (owner of Sevoke Motors, Siliguri)
20. Dhawlahjhora	Bengal Dooars National Tea Co. Ltd., Jalpaiguri	Do
21. Nimtjhora	Niyogi Family, Jalpaiguri	Shyam Goyel, Siliguri
22. Atiabari	Ray Family, Jalpaiguri	Narendra Berelia, Siliguri
23. Nepuchapur	Niyogi Family, Jalpaiguri	Ajit Prasad Agarwal, Kolkata
24. Kathalguri	Ray Family, Jalpaiguri	Darjeeling Plantation Industries Ltd., Kolkata
25. Diana	Nawab Family, Jalpaiguri	Sanjib Singhanian Group, Kolkata
26. Lakshikanta	Ghosh family, Jalpaiguri	H.V. Kejriwal, Kolkata
27. Malnudy	Nawab Family, Jalpaiguri	Ashok Ganguly, Kolkata Then T.R. Goyel, Siliguri
28. Makrapara	Nawab Family, Jalpaiguri	G.S. Kalyani, Then J. Mantosh, Kolkata
29. Singhanian	Nawab Family, Jalpaiguri	S.K. Sutodia, Kolkata
30. Bandhapani	S.P. Ray, Jalpaiguri	S.B. Mehta, Alipurduar
31. Dheklapara	K.N. Karmakar, Jalpaiguri Then D.N. Moitra, Jalpaiguri	Kanoi Brothers, Kolkata

32. Palashbari	Banarjee family, Jalpaiguri	S.P. Saharia & Co., Kolkata
33. Debpara	Do	Tarachand Agarwala
34. Rahimpur	Nawab Family, Jalpaiguri	M. Bansal, Kolkata
35. Gopalpur	Ghosh Family, Jalpaiguri	S.P. Agarwal, Kolkata
36. Kadambini	Do	Do
37. Bamandanga	Do	Do
38. Sonali and Rupali	Do	Do
39. Mathura	Ray Family, Jalpaiguri	Williamson Magor Group (Khaitan Group, Kolkata)
40. Gurjanghora	Nawab Family, Jalpaiguri	Kishan Kumar Kalyani, Jalpaiguri
41. Bhandarguri	Raikot Family, Jalpaiguri	Do
42. Shikarpur	Do	Do
43. Malhaty	Ghosh Family, Jalpaiguri	Berelia Group, Siliguri
44. Radharani	Sinha Family, Kolkata	Garg Tea Co., Siliguri (M.D. Mr. Ashok Garg)
45. Rheabari	Nawab Family, Jalpaiguri	New Tea Co., Kolkata (Roshan Lal Agarwal)

Assam

<u>Name of the Tea Estate</u>	<u>Earlier Bengali Owner</u>	<u>Present Owner</u>
1. Krishnakali	Sinha Family, Kolkata	Garg Tea Co., Siliguri (M.D. Mr. Ashok Garg)
2. Fatemabad	Nawab Family, Jalpaiguri	D.K. Chaudhury & Others
3. Manmahinipur	Banarjee family, Jalpaiguri	Dipankar Chatterjee
4. Gaur Nitai	Karmakar Family	Kalyani Family, Jalpaiguri

(Source: data have been collected from various tea associations)

Therefore, we may draw the conclusion on the above discussion that the fall can be attributed to the Bengalis almost innate inability to run their tea estates. Partners quarrelled with each other and sold shares in a huff (a classic example being the Mitra Brothers divide that ruined their ownership over Coronation tea company of Jalpaiguri town); close relatives who were given prominent position turned out to be grossly inept managers; sons squabbled and squandered the spoils in protracted, expensive litigations.

Lastly, the frequent change in the ownership since independence has severely affected the tea industry as well. The profit-oriented outlook of the new – comers has resulted in the increase of crop at a low cost but the quality tea has deteriorated to a great extent. Strike, lock-out become a nominal feature of their gardens. They systematically stripped off the gardens of their assets, drained the surplus and siphoned it off to other industries situated in Bombay, Delhi or Rajasthan. The commercial approach of quick back return of the new traders has been the fundamental spot of weakness in the tea industry in North Bengal.

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